





APSE Wales, Climate Change & Renewables Advisory  
Group - 14th November - Llandrindod Wells

# Fairbourne

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# Fairbourne?

- A small coastal community of c. 1200 home owners in South Gwynedd
- Approximately 570 houses, 120 of which are holiday homes
- Built on land reclaimed from the sea, surrounded by mountains
- One of Gwynedd's holiday resort with locals and visitors enjoying the coast throughout the year. Population is almost entirely aged 50+
- The coastal protection asset is in the ownership of NRW.
- Transformation and change are aspects of nature and especially the coast. Change will happen, whether we plan for that change or not.



# Why is there a story to tell?

- Fairbourne is covered by the Arthog Shoreline Management Plan
- This was presented to the Community Council in early 2013 and a Project Board was established to support the community through the managed realignment challenges
- The Community Council failed to inform it's residents to allow them to be involved and take decisions. Taking early action can open opportunities to allow people to plan their future
- On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014, Fairbourne was hit with bad weather and parts of the village were flooded



# What happened next...?

- BBC produced a 'Week in, Week out' programme on Fairbourne with the opening line being **'how would you like to be told the village you're living in won't be here in 10 years time?'** Fairbourne became the centre of a media storm and plans cannot address the issues of individual loss.
- Manageable changes can be triggered by environment / social changes and the community needs adaptation plans, as the risk of storm damage becomes more acute.
- The coast in Fairbourne is changing, but it is not possible to predict a specific date when a large storm will occur.

# What assumptions did we make...?

- We made assumptions about the existing levels of communication within the village
- We treated them in the same way as all other communities
- We under-estimated the resources required to carry out a continuous engagement process to support the community
- We under-estimated their challenges to the adaptive discussions and the need for involvement in the process throughout each stage

# How did we address these assumptions...?



- We built good relationships with the community (this takes time)
- Established a formal Project Board “task and finish” groups to address front-line issues
- We implemented an effective ‘inclusive’ communication strategy; but the level of engagement to involve people in addressing challenges is 5 times higher than originally thought.
- We were open, honest and transparent and we did what we said we were going to do



On 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016, we received some disappointing news.... the community announced they were hiring a barrister with a view to bringing a claim in relation to:

- **The dataset used to predict the timescales in the SMP2**
- **The blight on the village, caused by the SMP2**

A great deal of media attention followed, further increasing the blight in the village. Sadly, FFC took full advantage of the press coverage.





# Where are we now...?

- Using the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 as a framework - Long term, Integration, Involvement, Collaboration, Prevention - with a proactive, responsive and an informed community
- Flood Warden Scheme (being held as an example of good practice)
- Proactive Asset Management and monitoring
- Counselling Scheme and 'Fairbourne Tea & Cake Club' meetings
- Annual Reports and quarterly newsletters which are welcomed by the community
- Creating a Fairbourne **Masterplan**
- Assessing the merits of a Fairbourne Community Interest Company



# What is the Masterplan?

It is a researched, planned process to **decommission** the village, over a long period of time.

Why use the term 'decommissioning'? Decommissioning is a general term for a formal process to remove something from an active status.

It takes into account the environment which is constantly being shaped by natural processes such as rainfall, sea level rise, wind and waves.

The community need to take a lead role in making things happen over time.



# Why do we need to do this?

Irrespective of the Shoreline Management Plan (2), the effects of natural processes are happening in Fairbourne and due to its location, these effects are not easily managed.

Because we are now aware of these effects – we have to do something to support the future of the village. This is not a simple task and does not involve one single solution. It is an exceptionally complex and long-term, change-management process.

The final decisions and implementations of ideas will be developed over a long time period

# Why do we need to do this?



This plan will be flexible enough to take account of – and respond to – changes in scientific information as it becomes available. This means certain aspects of the plan may not happen for some considerable time. However, if we continue to experience storms and weather such as those we've seen recently, we may need to bring certain aspects of that plan forward.

Within the overall structure - issues and ideas will need to be determined at a local level.

The plan needs to look for positive changes, wherever possible, and influence future decisions that can be made.



# Masterplan progress...

- Technical Modelling Group – defences, sea levels, fluvial and groundwater
- Infrastructure Group
- Social & Economic Group
- Regional Emergency Planning Service meetings – dealing with a major event
- Governance structure and long term commitment – Board of Directors supported by a Management Board, to determine issues at a more local level.



# Leading the way....

- There are no templates for such a Masterplan, no precedents set.
- This means we'll be faced with huge challenges and problems. This process will need to work for example with utility service providers.
- At the highest level of governance the Masterplan is community lead and taken forward as a multi agency project.
- We need to work with others to find the solutions e.g. Pembrokeshire County Council and Newgale.
- We need to periodically undertake 'blue sky thinking'



# Fairbourne Community Interest Company

- Aim is to reinstate a level of choice for homeowners in Fairbourne
- Initial research was for a “Buy to Let” scheme
- FCIC involves obtaining funding to establish a company to purchase a number of houses. A “Innovate to Save” bid to Nesta was successful
- The Business Plan to be completed by March 2018 needs to demonstrate a return on investment
- The FCIC would be run by a Board consisting of community members and stakeholders.

This in part addresses the desires of the local community in terms of social, economic and environment aspects.

# What have we learned..?

- The value of working ‘as a community and multi agency team’
- It’s **really** difficult, when no precedent has been set, no lessons to learn from others
- It’s ok to say ‘we don’t know’ and we’ve gained a lot of respect by saying that
- The task in getting other partners involved should not be underestimated and it can’t be done overnight
- The challenge of engaging with local authority departments
- Managing expectations of government



# What have we learned..?

- In implementing the SMP2 in other areas, we need to take account of costs, social and economic impacts
- We need to fully communicate this to the relevant stakeholders
- We must educate **all** stakeholders in a meaningful way for now and in the future – as staff turnover often means starting again
- We must share these lessons across Wales to enable and support other communities facing similar challenges
- The breadth of knowledge required is vast and continues to grow
- Sometimes, you have to say ‘no’

# Looking forward...



- Are we really informed about the impact of implementing SMP2 will have on our country, regions, counties and communities?
- Do we have the money to implement it?
- Do we have the skills and resource to implement it?
- Do we fully understand the links between implementing the SMP2 and poverty?
- How and when will we act nationally on the findings from, for example, the Welsh Audit Committee's report?



- We still believe that the SMP2 is a positive way forward, informing stakeholders and decision-makers up-front, about the support required to face the inevitable effects of climate change.
- Central to this is the principal that adaptation cannot be solved through a single action but is rather a process to be managed over time
- Strong emphasis on a Masterplan being lead by the community
- It's giving us all the opportunity to plan ahead.



Any questions?

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