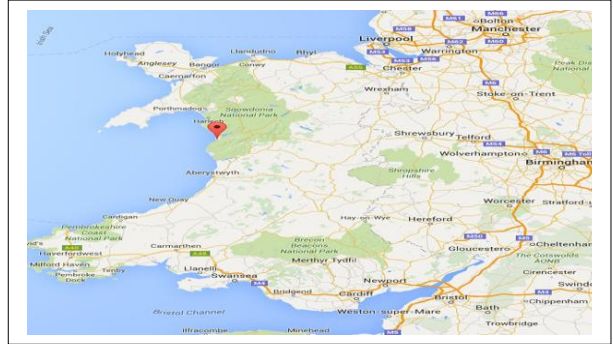


# Knowledge Organiser #18: Fairbourne

Where? **Fairbourne, North Wales, UK**

What's the problem? **climate change threatens to consign the town to the sea. Rather than building hard sea defences, managed retreat is being put into action in Fairbourne.**

How does this link to climate change? **Sea level rise is linked to climate change due to increasing temperatures causing melting ice caps. This causes sea levels to rise. Low lying areas, like Fairbourne are most at risk.**



## Fairbourne

- Gwynedd Council has decided it can no longer defend the homes from rising sea levels driven by increasing global temperatures.
- Within a 26 year period – or earlier if forecasts worsen or a storm breaches the sea defences – a taskforce led by the Council will begin to move the 850 residents of Fairbourne out of their homes.
- The whole village – houses, shops, roads, sewers, gas pipes and electricity pylons – will then be dismantled, turning the site back into a tidal salt marsh.
- It will become the first community in the UK to be decommissioned as a result of climate change.
- Gwynedd Council has said it will complete the decommissioning by 2045.
- The current flood defences at Fairbourne include: an embankment, rock armour.

## Socio-economic Impacts:

- House prices have collapsed by as much as 40%.
- Lenders have pulled away from mortgaging property as the risk on the asset is perceived too high.
- If the defence is breached, there would be an immediate torrent of water with the threat of loss of life.
- Conflict has developed between the council and local residents who feel let down that the flood defences will no longer be maintained.
- Residents can no longer get house insurance for their homes.

## Are there any solutions?

- Existing residents will receive help in resettling them but they will get no compensation for loss of value on their property.
- Nearby towns where the residents will be re-homed may not be able to cope with the number of people who need re-homing.
- Out of 452 properties and owner-occupied caravans and chalets located in either the Fairbourne Seafront or Fairbourne and Arthog Flood Warning Areas, 432 are registered to receive warnings. This means that 96 percent of the population of Fairbourne is better prepared for the possibility of tidal flooding in the future.



## Key terms

- Climate change - a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide.
- Hold the line – sea defences are maintained and upgraded or replaced where funding permits. This is to keep the coast line in its current position.
- Managed retreat - the application of **coastal zone management** and mitigation tools designed to move existing and planned development out of the path of both short- and long-term **coastal** hazards.