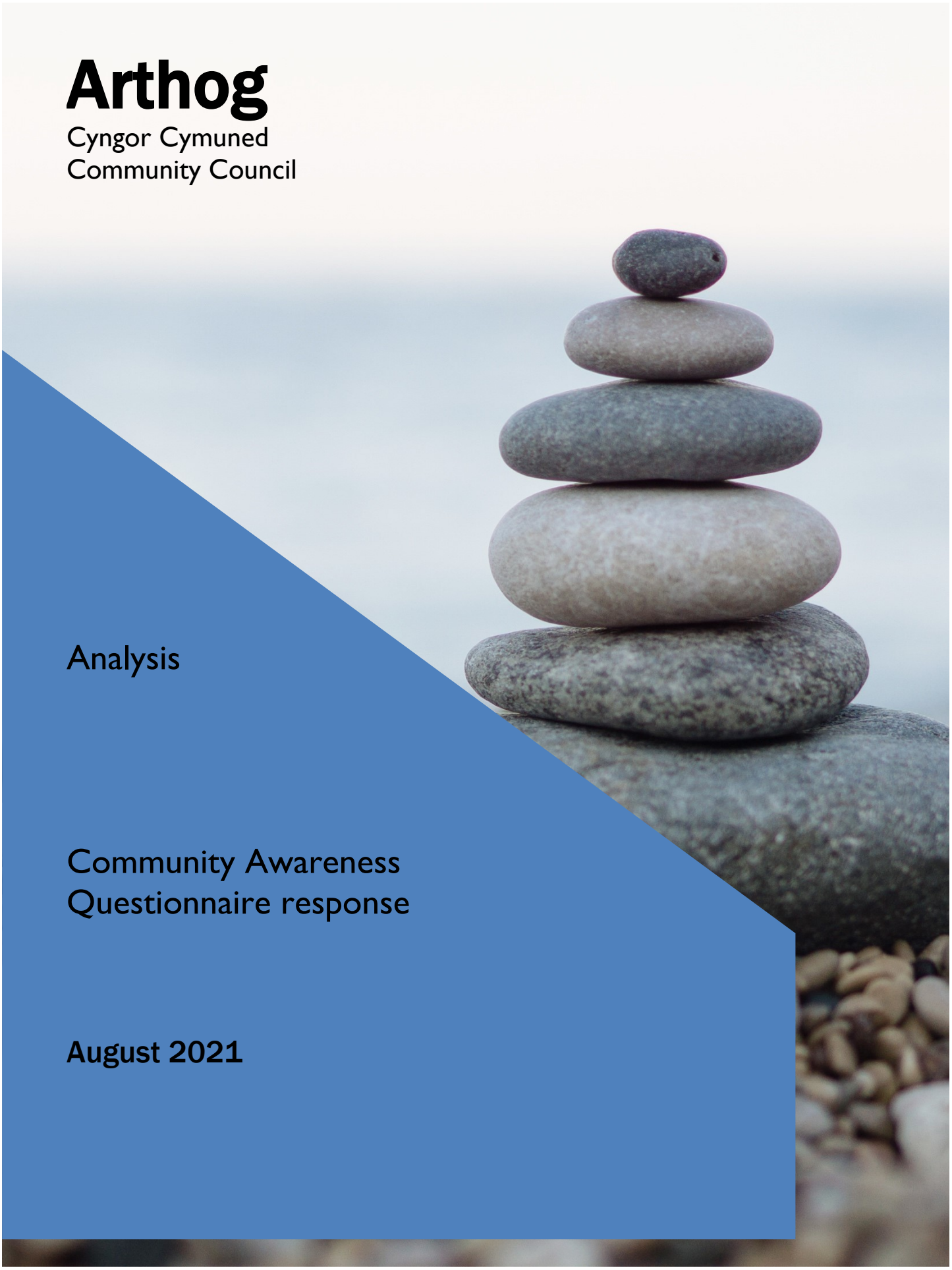
Arthog

Cyngor Cymuned
Community Council



Analysis

Community Awareness Questionnaire response

August 2021

Introduction

Context

The purpose of the newsletter and questionnaire is to ensure that the community is aware of what the Community Council and the representatives have been endeavoring to achieve. To measure the level of understanding of the current situation and to ensure that the Community Council has the confidence and mandate of its residents.

- There were 136 respondents in total (29Th August 2021).
- 6 from Friog.
- 14 from Arthog.
- 116 from Fairbourne.
- There are 461 properties and owner-occupied caravans and chalets (GCC) in the community.
- Of the 461 properties and owner-occupied caravans and chalets approximately 100 + are second homes rentals or holiday homes.
- This represents a return from residents of 38%
- The level of return is encouraging and allows for a reasonable level of confidence,

Fairbourne

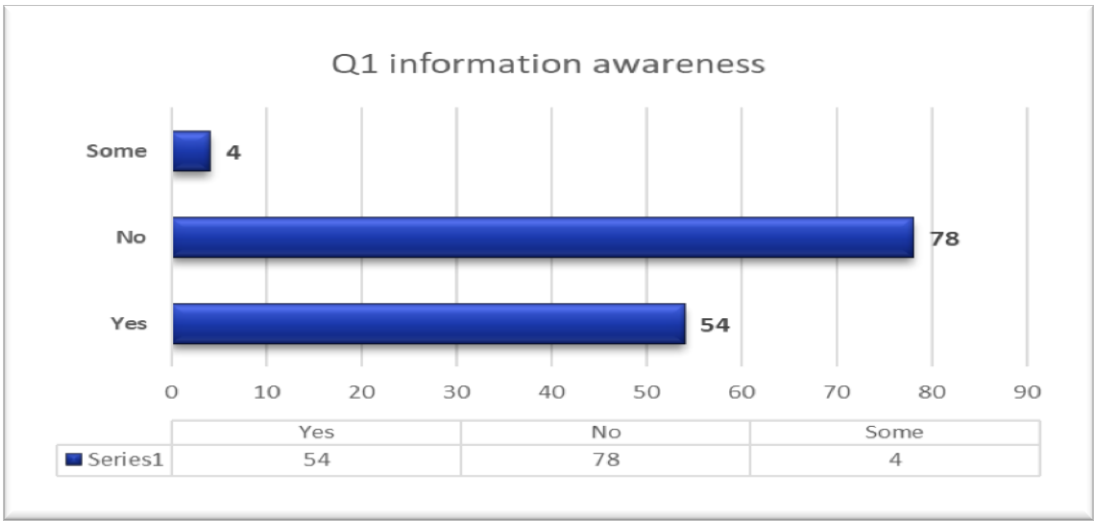
Analysis

Question 1

This outlined the current situation regarding the answers available to the following issues:

Where will we be moved to? What would trigger a move? Will families be moved together? Who pays for this?

The fact there is no form of compensation available. There is no dedicated evacuation plan for Fairbourne and that the generic Evacuation Plan is deemed too "red sensitive" by Gwynedd County Council for residents or the ACC to see or hold a copy. Residents were asked if they were aware of these statements.



- 2% of respondents said they were aware of some of the issues raised.
- 58% of respondents said they were not aware of these issues
- 40% of respondents said they were aware of the issues

Comments

These ranged from:

- "*We cannot expect the Council to give us answers now to a question that may not pose itself until the medium-term future. I am sure that the authorities have contingency plans which will cover any eventuality*"

through

- "*We are the people whose lives and family will be affected and as such we should not be kept in the dark as to the evacuation plan, we have a right to know, it's our lives*"

to anger

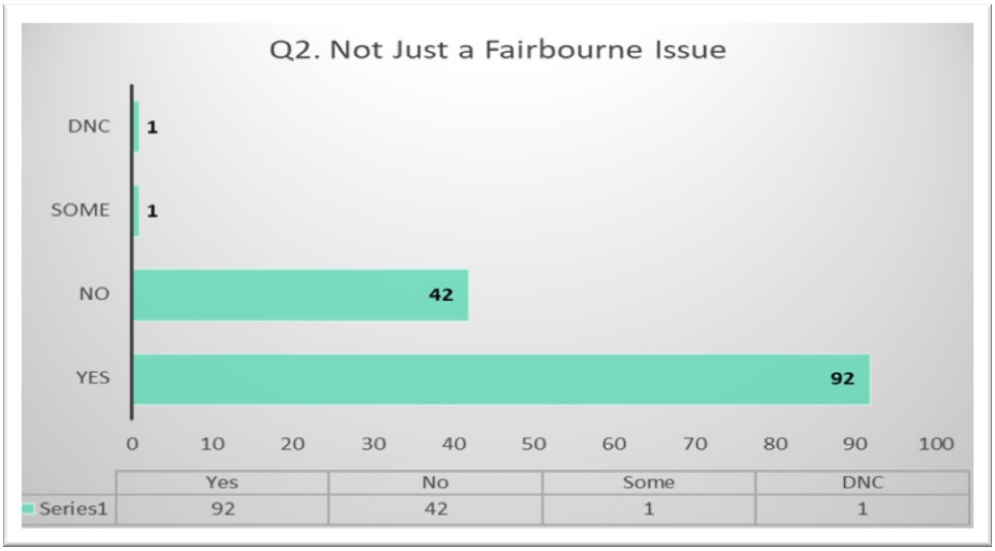
- "*The arrogance of GCC is disgraceful We have a right to know what is being planned for our future*"

and despair

- "*No plan = anxiety. After such a long time, further comments feel pointless*"

Question 2

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the fact that up until the present decommissioning has always been referred to in terms of Fairbourne alone. However, recently published flood maps show that sea level rise/climate change is an issue for the whole of the UK coastline. It also needed to be recognised that some coastal areas of North Wales will be in more or equal danger than Fairbourne.



- 68% of participants stated that yes, they were aware that it was not just a Fairbourne issue.
- 31% were of the opinion it was only relating to Fairbourne.
- 0.5% were unsure.
- 0.5% did not complete this section.

Comments

These ranged considerably:

The pragmatic stated:

- *"It is only logical that other places beside "US" are at risk – some of these have already been exposed to flooding, which we have not"*
- *"Common sense tells you that there are a lot of coastal resorts in a more precarious position than us, as a lot already flood anyway, Barmouth and Aberystwyth for example"*

There is considerable aggrievement as shown by the following examples:

- *"We are aware that there are many communities at risk of coastal erosion and rising sea level We have the impression that Fairbourne is being singled out for abandonment when in fact other towns/villages in same area have been more affected by storms and rising sea level. We would argue the village should be treated fairly and appropriately according to the facts and the risks"*

- *"Down to inaccuracies in the media that Fairbourne has been labelled as Village of Doom and house*

prices have gone rock bottom and I think is unacceptable"

- *"I feel strongly about this, I feel that we are being made scapegoats, my wife feels the same"*

There are also doubters who point out inconsistencies of approach and who question the accuracy of the information:

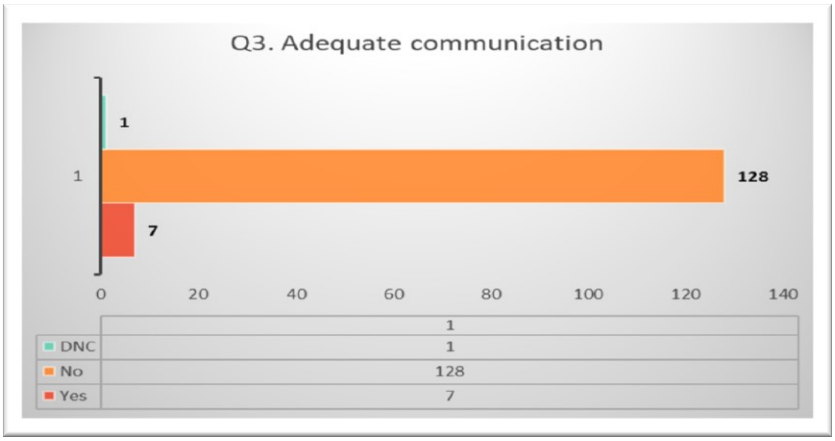
- *"SMP2 who undertook initial investigation of "sea rise" didn't use the same figures as another group in different parts of the Welsh Coast The same figures should have been used all along the coast If the sea rises, surely the height will be the same, north or south so that "investigation" very inefficient and not true"*
- *"What are the plans to protect the railway line? Currently £30million pounds being spent on Barmouth Bridge seems to contradict plans to move Fairbourne residents. If Fairbourne is at risk so it the railway line."*
- *"Why do GCC use 1mtr sea level rise by 2100 when NASA EARTH DATA quote 0.6m for our coastline?"*

Worryingly there are also allegations that relate to race and equality:

- *"Fairbourne has obviously been deemed an easy target I wonder if this is because it's an "English" community in a Welsh Country? And I am a Welshman born and bred"*
- *"And yet we are the only ones to be Climate Refugees!! Fairbourne should be treated on a par with other coastal villages"*
- *"Why is Fairbourne being singled out? Is it political, or is there another "hidden" agenda?"*
- *"We should not be treated differently to any of these other areas and we should certainly not be thought of as an experiment" in dealing with these issues"*

Question 3

This sought the answer to a relatively straightforward query: "Do you feel that the community, and you as individuals, have been adequately communicated with, and informed regarding the future of Fairbourne by



both Gwynedd County Council and Welsh Government?"

- An overwhelming 94% felt that communication had been inadequate.
- 5.5% replied they had enough information.
- 0.5% did not respond to this question.

Comments

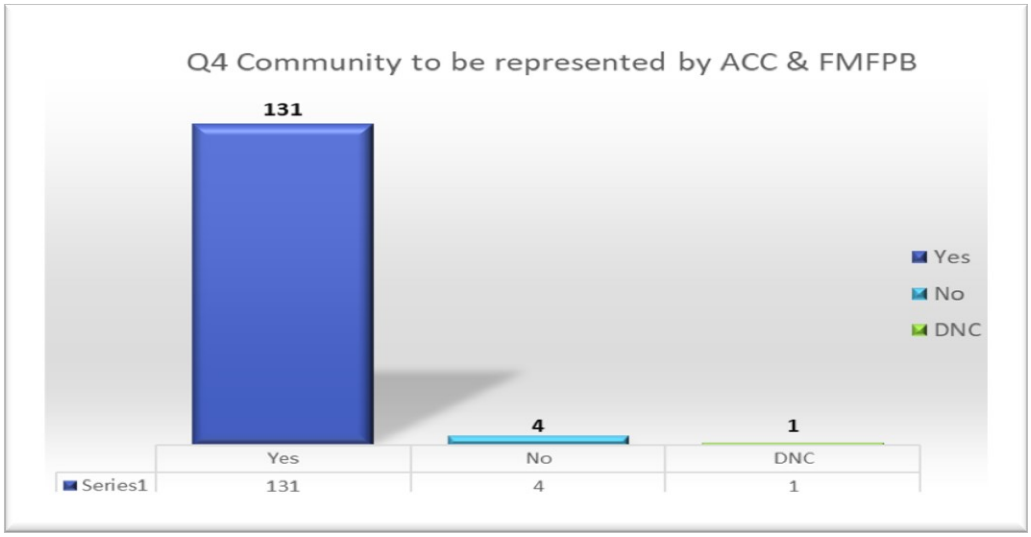
The Comments arising from question 3 did not vary largely, they did however illustrate outrage and indignation in the resident's perceived treatment:

- "*Having attended the multi-agency meeting in the village hall, residents are "stone walled", not listened too and told what to do without our views being considered I feel this why some people may not engage as they feel it is useless."*
- "*Most people are aware of significant sums spent by GCC on glossy publications and consultants but nothing in real terms.*"
- *"If there had been good communication between parties then we wouldn't be in such a position Politicians don't seem to look further than their term of office"*
- *"If Welsh Councillors lived in Fairbourne, results from GCC and Government would be different, as in the eyes of those bodies, there are too many English in our village, so we are dismissed."*

Question 4

This raised the issue that the ACC and the members of the FMFPB are concerned that Fairbourne is being discussed and decisions were being made without engagement with the Community, either via the ACC or the Project Board. The difficulties that Covid has presented in bringing residents up to date, along with the disturbing fact that Gwynedd Council have an internal Fairbourne Project Board of their own but with no representation from the Community Council.

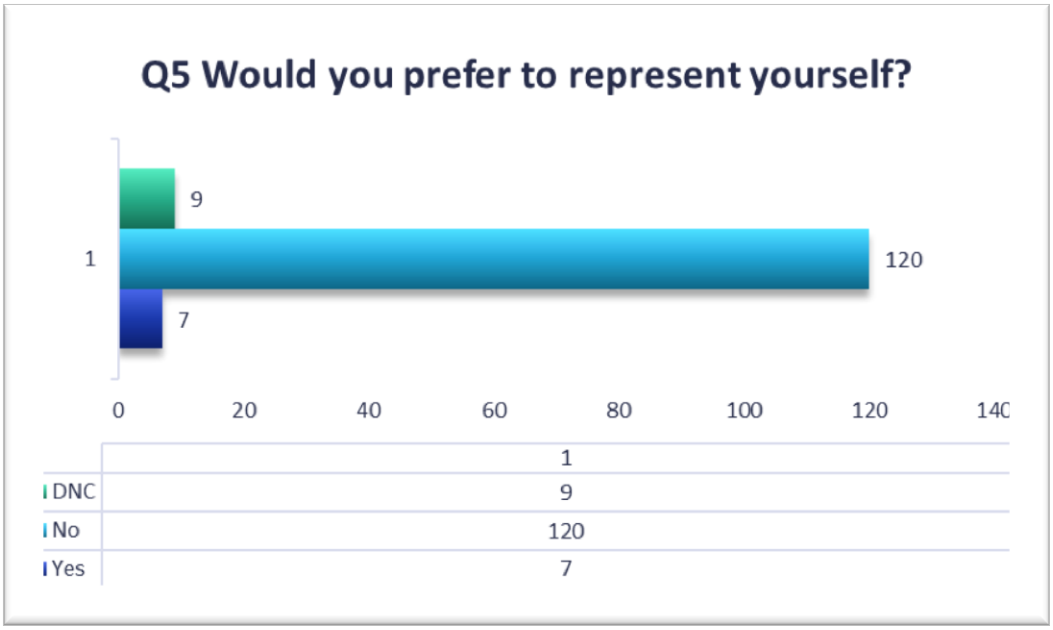
This question asked the respondents for a mandate for the Community to be represented by the ACC and the FMFPB, until such time as open events can be held and to keep asking Gwynedd Council to answer the many vitally important questions that have been asked since 2014.



- An overwhelming 96.5% of participants wanted to be represented by the ACC & FMFPB
- 3% they did not wish to be represented by the ACC & FMFPB.
- 0.5% did not respond to this question.

Question 5

Asked "Would you prefer to represent yourself?"



- 88% replied No.
- 7% Did not complete this question.
- 5% responded that they wished to represent themselves.

Comments

Reasons given for this were:

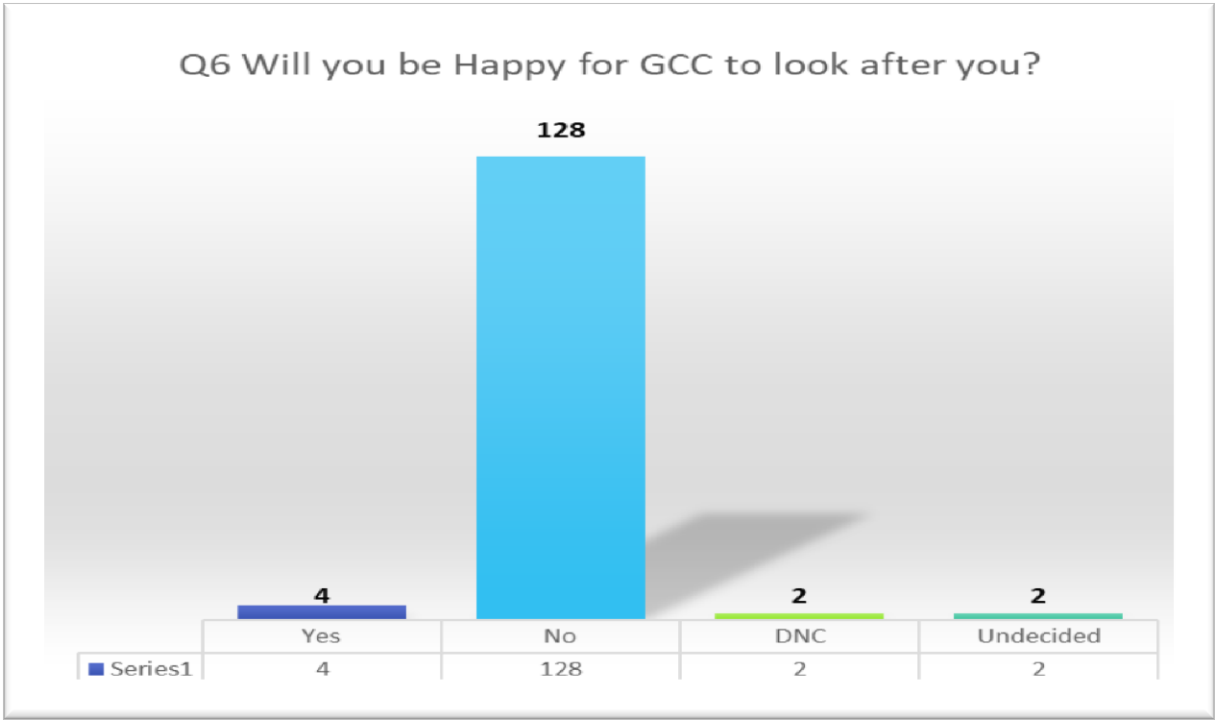
- *"Individual action is pointless with GCC as they appear to have a policy of ignoring such representation – they do not, in my experience, acknowledge any request other than by an automated email response which they then fail to act upon anyway."*
- *"The Project Board and ACC is the best way forward, but we are struggling to get or make any progress with GCC."*
- *"ACC & FMFPB should be kept fully informed by GCC so they can keep our village informed of any decision made by GCC so we may oppose or accept them."*
- *"ACC and FMFPB between them should be in a good position to put relevant points to GCC and ask proper questions and counteract propositions when necessary GCC not doing any open actions, keeping decisions secret"*

Suggestions were:

- *"There should be direct reporting lines to our ACC with regard to any discussions re Fairbourne. The newsletter is appreciated. As stated above others at risk should be included."*
- *"I would like to attend meetings when they can he held again."*
- There were also several offers of involvement

Question 6

This asked if residents were happy to take no action and rely on Gwynedd Council, in the event of evacuation, to place residents and their families into any accommodation available (including B&B), in any location.



- 3% of participants said they were happy for GCC to place them in any accommodation in any area.
- 94% replied that they were not happy for GCC to place them in any accommodation available regardless of type and location.
- 1.5% Stated they were undecided.
- 1.5% Did not complete this section.

Comments

The comments in response showed a range of responses:

From poised:

- *"I would like multiple plans to represent the variety of unknowns that exist in the very large (politically) time scale"*
- *"We MUST understand what is being proposed and have meaningful dialogue to amend as appropriate"*
- *"It would be much better to have some plans in place rather than none AND/OR for GCC to have risk assessment plans in place"*
- *"This is a difficult question to answer. I think that now is the time to allow GCC to let us know how they can take care of us before anything bad happens."*

To Fearful:

- *"We are all facing a crisis, the NHS, transport systems are breaking down; how can anyone depend on anyone else."*
- *"We just don't know what to do We feel old and beaten, after a lifetime of trauma"*
- *"At my age I would be bothered to be put in any accommodation without my approval"*

The majority of comments were unfortunately distrustful:

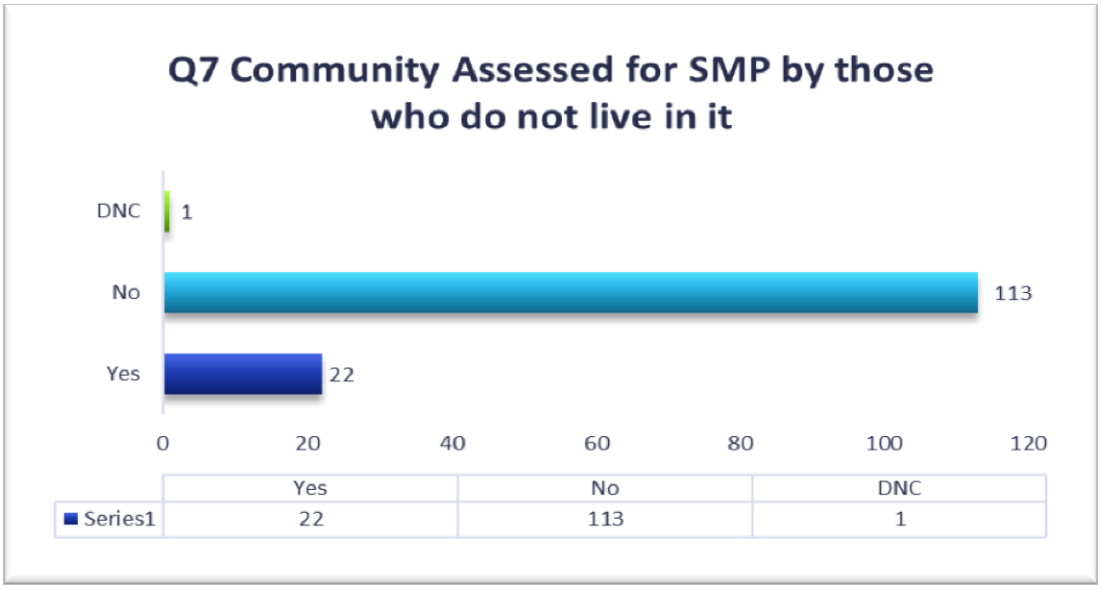
- *"It's unacceptable for residents not to be consulted and yet to be impacted so fundamentally in terms of lives, families and property by the decisions taken"*
- *"I don't trust the GCC to treat us fairly, given their actions so far."*
- *"I don't believe GCC puts the well-being of residents to the forefront."*
- *"GCC hardly inspires confidence in so many fields that it would not be advantageous to the local residents for it "to look after them"*
- *"GCC holding back important and highly relevant information, along with long since passed and unanswered questions, shows their willingness and attitude towards residents, proves their inability."*

And again, the issue of race and equality raised its head:

- *"GCC have never looked after this area. Once we moved from Meirionnydd to Gwynedd we were forgotten about."*
- *"Ms. Goodier's comments regarding re housing suggests that decommissioning Fairbourne is more about ethnic cleansing than climate change"*
- *"GCC want rid of Fairbourne and its inhabitants"*
- *"It's unacceptable for residents not to be consulted and yet to be impacted so fundamentally in terms of lives, families and property by the decisions taken"*

Question 7

This question asked if residents were aware that the Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) is undergoing a "refresh" in all areas. Communities are not invited to submit any information that they deem to be of importance to the end conclusions. Were you aware of this statement?



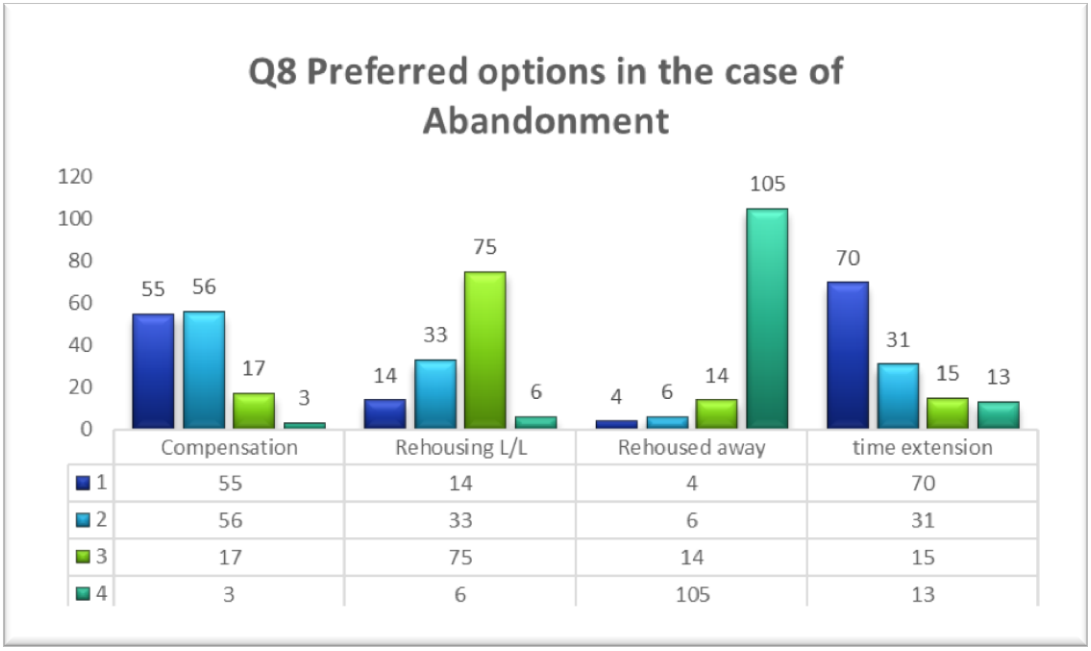
- Residents replying yes, they were aware accounted for 16%
- Residents replying no, they were not aware of this totaled 83.5%
- There was one respondent who did not complete this question accounting for 0.5%

There were very few comments attached to this question:

- *"And it disgusts me. It has been stressed at public meetings and acknowledged by NRW that local knowledge is important. Is GCC just relying on consultants with computers?"*
- *"This is typical of GCC"*

Question 8

Asked what, as a homeowner, in Fairbourne, would be the ideal answer to the future abandonment of Fairbourne? Please indicate by numbering 1 to 4, with 1 being your first choice, and 4 being your least favorite choice. A. COMPENSATION FOR LOST PROPERTY B. REHOUSING IN LIKE FOR LIKE ACCOMMODATION C. RE-HOUSED AWAY FROM THE AREA D. AN EXTENSION (IF VIABLE) TO 2054.



	Compensation	Rehousing L/L	Rehoused away	time extension
1	55	14	4	70
2	56	33	6	31
3	17	75	14	15
4	3	6	105	13

NB *The data for this question is slightly unbalanced because a number of respondents selected only one or two options, the majority followed instructions and ordered their preferences as directed. This was compensated for by using the total for each option returned.*

Option A compensation for lost property

- 42% graded this 1
- 43% graded this 2
- 13% graded this 3
- 2% graded this 4

Option B rehousing in like for like accommodation

- 11% graded this 1
- 26% graded this 2

- 58% graded 3
- 5% graded this 4

Option C re-housed away from the area

- 3% graded this 1
- 5% graded this 2
- 12% graded this 4

Option D an extension (if viable) to 2054.

- 50% graded this 1
- 22% graded this 2
- 11% graded this 3
- 9% graded this 4

Surprisingly residents have been somewhat pragmatic in their response to this question.

50% of respondents had a time extension as their preferred first option.

11% wanted like for like accommodation as a first choice.

3% wanted to be rehoused away from the area

42% wanted compensation for their property as a preferred first option

NB Being rehoused away from the area was a large fourth choice indicating the community wanted to stay within the surrounding area.

Conclusion

Question one illustrated that although 40% stated that they were aware of the issues facing Fairbourne a worrying 58% were still felt ill informed. The comments highlighted feelings of frustration, impotence and anxiety caused by the perceived lack of openness on behalf of GCC and the Welsh Government and the perceived lack of planning that left residents feeling vulnerable, anxious and fearful as well as angry.

Question two showed that most of the participants were aware that this was not just a Fairbourne issue (68%), however, 31% still thought only the village was going to be affected. Many felt aggrieved that Fairbourne was being singled out unfairly by the media and seemingly also by GCC. Along with evidence that other villages that were likely to be affected at the same time as Fairbourne had not suffered the same 'fall out' with regards to negative press coverage and the reduction of housing stock values. It has also fostered feelings that Fairbourne is the victim of the nationality of the majority of its residents and that they have not been treated with the same equality and parity as other communities within the GCC area. In addition, residents highlighted the inconsistency in approach i.e., £30million being spent on a bridge that may be redundant in 30 years and the choice of data used in the SMP2.

Question three Clearly illustrated that residents felt communication from GCC and the Welsh Government to be poor and that having attended meetings held by GCC they felt they were not listened too and their opinions were not valued. There was also cynicism displayed about the 'glossy brochure' that gave the community no answers about what would happen to them.

Question four shows residents clearly giving the ACC and the FMFPB a mandate to act on their behalf.

Question five was asked to ascertain if people wanted to represent themselves only 5% said they wished too. The Comments reveled that resident had a high level of confidence in ACC and FMFPB. The majority were satisfied their voice could be heard via this route and expressed concern that there was a lack of progress with GCC. It was stated that the newsletter was very much appreciated and that several respondents would like to come to any meetings available.

Question six asked if residents were happy for GCC to look after them in the event of an evacuation, 94% stated they were not happy, mostly this was because there were no plans available, no visible risk assessment and no visible evacuation process in place. This gave residents no reason to have confidence in GCC as it seems to be holding back on information.
Once again, the issue of race and equality raised its head through various comments that residents made. This should be a major point of concern for GCC and the Welsh Government

Question seven related to the SMP 'refresh' 83.5% of respondents were not aware that this was taking place it was expressed that if SMP2 was based on flawed data how would this be any different?

Question eight asked for residents' preferred choice in the case of abandonment. The data for this question became somewhat unbalanced because many of the respondents did not follow the guidance and only selected one or two options of the four available. This forced compensation by using the totals for each available choice. Option D having an extension until 2054 came in first, with Option A - compensation for lost property coming in second and rehousing in like for like accommodation, Option B, the third choice. Only 3% said option C - Being rehoused away from the area was their main preference. The overall conclusion drawn from this is that people are waiting to see what happens and will not make choices until all possibilities are definitively and clearly laid out.

Glossary

ACC	Arthog Cyngor Cymuned – Community Council http://www.cyngorarthogcouncil.cymru/index.php/en/
FMFPB	Fairbourne Moving Forward Project Board
GCC	Gwynedd Cyngor/Council https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Council.aspx
NASA Earth Data	National Aeronautics and Space administration. https://www.nasa.gov/topics/earth/index.html
SMP2	Shore line Management Plan

https://data.gov.uk/dataset/2f843faa-5296-484c-b580-38a8a3897c7b/shoreline-management-plan-smp-2