



FAIRBOURNE

Winter Newsletter 2025 – 2026

Residents and visitors alike may have been aware that a seasonal shoreline path was not made available this summer (2025); as it had been for the two previous years. Allowing better access to the lower shore these access points were from the Penrhyn Road South promenade car park, where the old slipway was.



 *Photo of Fairbourne beach*

The primary reason for no access being made this summer was due to upcoming work by Natural Resources Wales to replenish and strengthen (the southern end of) the shingle bank by shifting shingle from the northern end of the beach to Friog Corner, maintaining the bank's sustainability and its ability to defend.

The Partnership were also made aware that to continue with this annual work programme of shoreline access a Flood Risk Management Plan (FRAP) would be required. This is due to a concern that the development of these paths would provide an easier route for water to flow landward should there be a storm event.

In 2025 the costs to prepare the FRAP and construction would be approximately £6000.



 *Llun o traeth Fairbourne*

Since the path reaches a point that is submerged by the mean high-water spring a Marine Licence would also be required, adding further costs and time. A marine licence is required when:

- Any deposit or removal of material or substance, using a vehicle or vessel. Deposits or removals by hand are not marine licensable activities
- Construction, alteration or improvement works (including works hanging/suspended over the marine licensable area and works beneath the sea bed eg tunnels, bridges and piers)
- Scuttling vessels or floating containers
- Dredging
- Incineration of objects
- Deposit and use of explosives
- Harvesting or growing aquaculture (seaweed or shellfish)

Albeit a non-permanent structure the solution offered a temporary grading of the shingle bank to allow an easier descent and ascent to and from the shore at a time of year with less storm action which often rework the profile of the shingle bank to the steeper and uneven profiles.



 *Photo of Fairbourne beach*

The sum above is small in comparison to having a permanent structure in Fairbourne. A feasibility study for a permanent structure was undertaken by YGC in 2020/2021 and the options investigated were as follows.

1. A reinforced concrete slipway that would be similar to that existed before.

2. A wooden slipway similar to that used at the RNLI station in Borth, Ceredigion.

3. Timber boards such as those seen at Newgale, Pembrokeshire.

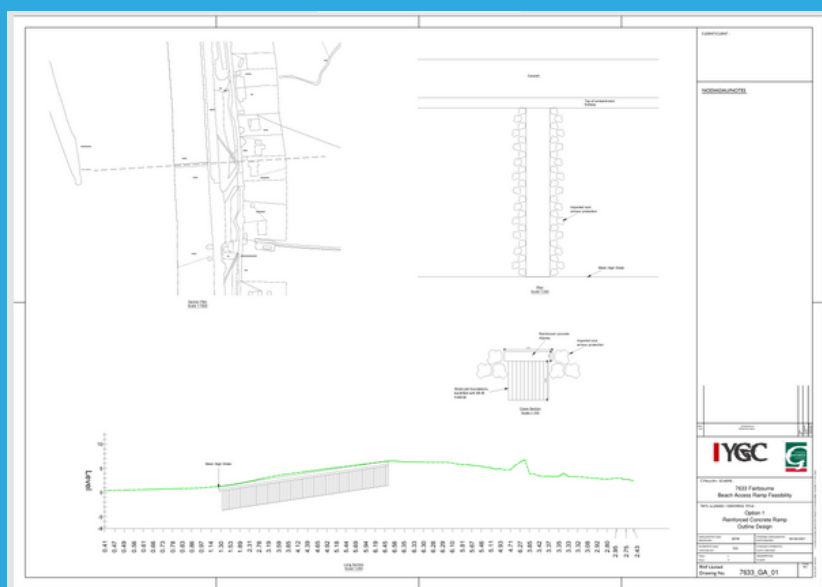
For any of these to work however it needs to be considered that:

· A new ramp is designed with no or minimal effect on the long shore drift process.

· Structurally sound ramp considering the dynamic forces of the beach.

· Climate change resilience – consideration of stronger storm events.

The permanent option (1) was then estimated to cost over £300k to build, excluding any associated costs. Its construction would likely have a significant effect on the long shore drift processes. Like the issues of the previous slipway, this ramp would act like a substantial groyne on the shingle embankment impacting the natural movement of shingle up the beach. This was evident on the old slipway, as shingle built up on the southern side and depleted on the northern side, eventually causing the collapse of the old slipway. This was removed in 2019 as it posed significant danger to beach users.



 *Photo of the Outline Design of the Ramp*

It is likely that it would be possible to construct a structurally more stable ramp that could deal better with the processes than the previous slipway, however it is highly likely that it would still require periodical removal and replenishment of shingle on both sides to ensure the structure is not compromised.

The second option was estimated to cost in the region of £170k excluding associated costs and would allow for the movement of shingle beneath the surface of the slipway by the long shore drift process. However, referring to the Active Travel Guidance provided by Welsh Government which states that the absolute maximum gradient for ease of use should be 1:12 and that gradients steeper than 1:40 is impossible for many wheelchair users.

A gradient of 1:12 at Fairbourne would require a ~75m length slipway and would place the end of the slipway ~35m beyond the mean high-water level. The key difference between the slipway constructed at Borth and proposed here for Fairbourne is the intended use. As a beach access ramp only, the realistic gradient of 1:8 not only falls outside of the guidance parameter set by Welsh Government but also considering the demography of Fairbourne as a village of older residents and the mobility issues that occur with age, it is an unsuitable gradient given the circumstances.

Furthermore, placing a timber structure in a marine environment requires a more involved maintenance schedule compared to a concrete structure. Marine and environmental restrictions don't allow for heavy timber treatment in marine environments therefore the choice of timber for construction is key to the longevity of the structure and prevent bio-deterioration of the timber.



 *Photo of Fairbourne beach*

The third option would have timber boards sitting un-fixed on top of the shingle. However, the steepness of the shingle at Fairbourne beach is not suited for the use of these timber boards.

They would also be extremely vulnerable to winter storm events when the waves crash onto the shingle above the mean high-water mark. The forces of the waves during winter would likely destroy the boards and could potentially cause dangerous debris to be left on the beach after the storm event. In addition, the natural profile of the shingle embankment at the old slipway location in Fairbourne is 1:5. This gradient is much steeper than the maximum 1:12 stated as suitable for pedestrians in the Active Travel Guidance provided by Welsh Government.

All the factors above mean a new structure being constructed at Fairbourne is unlikely in the foreseeable future. Notwithstanding every effort will be made by the Partnership to seek alternative solutions with its members at NRW and the Maritime department at Cyngor Gwynedd.

For more information, visit the Fairbourne website

