

Community-led responses to sea level rise



Alex Arnall
School of Agriculture, Policy and Development
University of Reading













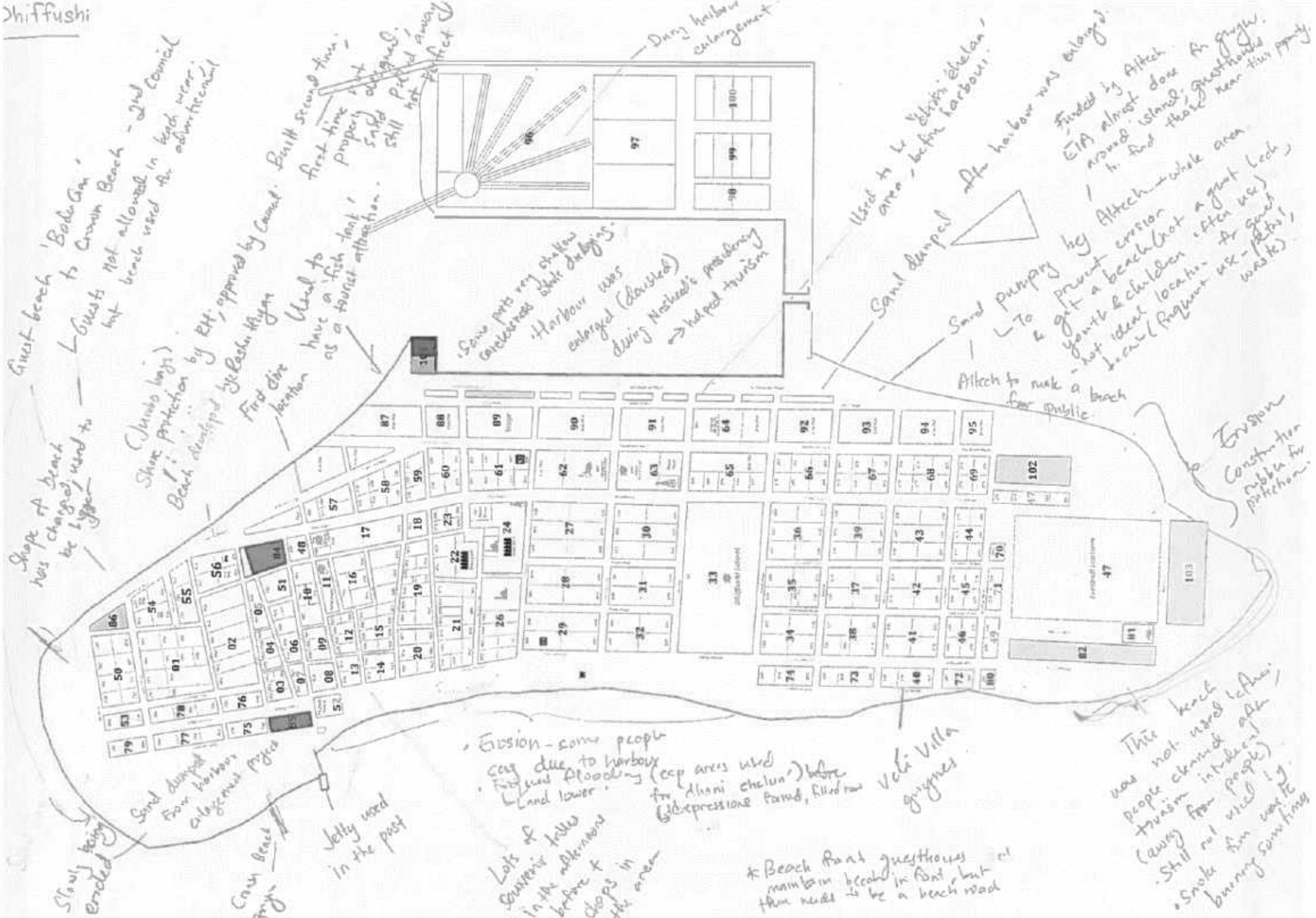
Key questions

- What have communities done to respond to sea level rise?
- What has worked?
- What have been the main challenges faced?

- I have identified three main themes
- I will illustrate these themes with examples from the UK and the Maldives

1. Built knowledge of how their coastline works

- Not just knowledge of sea level change – also knowledge about sediment, sea defences and flood risk
- Scientific and local knowledge
- ‘Hierarchy of knowledge’
- Local knowledge can be overlooked or discounted



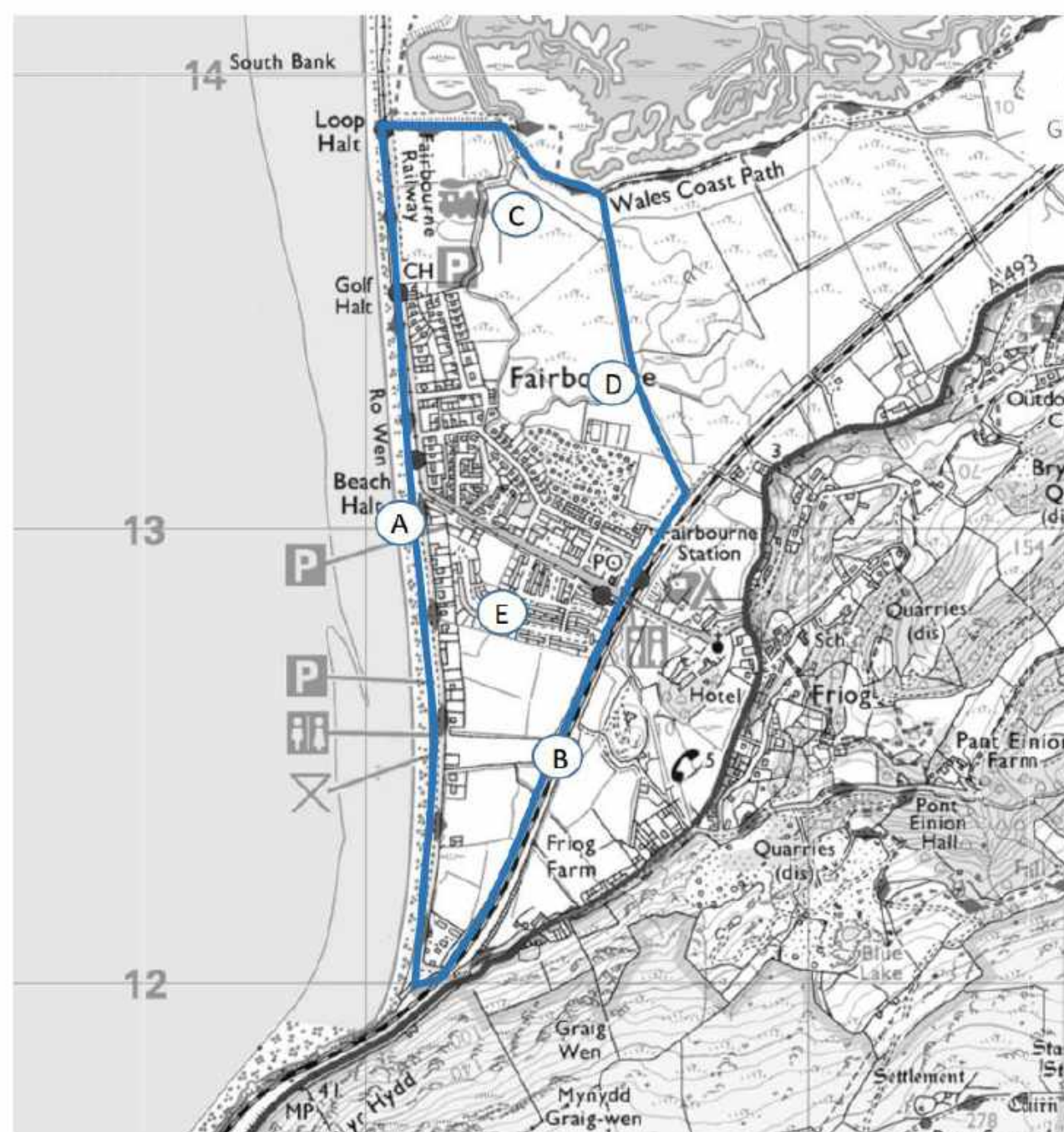


Figure 10: Proposed flood protection scheme for the village of Fairbourne

2. Raised and clarified social justice issues

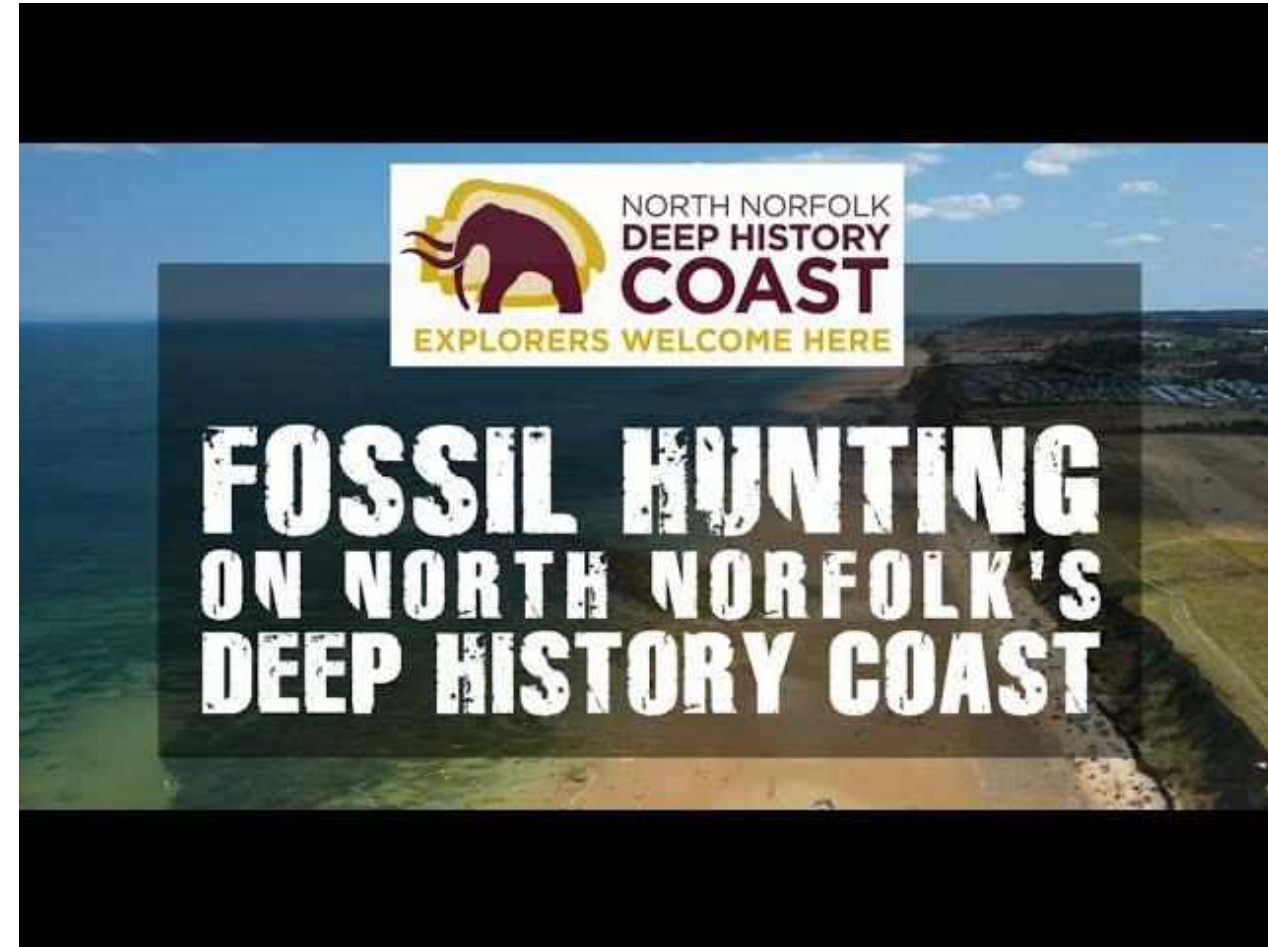
- Built-up places with large populations and economic assets will normally be protected; smaller, rural communities will not
- Establishing a position on what is fair and what is not
- The importance of solidarity and working together
- Understanding where community divides and differences exist





3. Built a story about change

- How can change be explained and what does it mean to those experiencing it?
- Awareness raising and securing external support
- Creating connections with other coastal communities facing sea level rise



DROWNED OUT

A sleepy seaside village in Wales could be the first in the UK to be wiped out by the ocean. Sea defences in Fairbourne are due to stop being maintained in the 2050s.



FAIRBOURNE, NORTH WALES



1000 ft



Key messages

- Responding to sea level rise is about the community ‘software’ as well as the ‘hardware’
- There is a lot that coastal communities can achieve by working together
- Building knowledge and awareness is important...
- ...as is ‘controlling the narrative’ – i.e. what kind of stories of change do communities want to tell? And how?