

# For website

## Q&As

### What has caused the landslips?

- The landslips are largely related to local geology but there is also a link to high rainfall.
- There is also evidence that historical coal mining and quarrying activity may have played a role.
- There is weak material in the area as a consequence of historical slips.
- The steepness of the topography is also a factor.

### How many people are affected?

- At present a terrace of ten properties occupied by a maximum of 20 residents has been the subject of prohibition notices. Only two of the properties continue to be occupied contrary to the requirements of the prohibition notices. The owner(s) of one of the properties which continues to be occupied has appealed the notice. This appeal is due to be heard on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Any further action taken by the council will be based on expert advice and empirical evidence.

### Is the problem likely to spread?

- The council does not believe homes outside the designated hazard area to be at risk. However our assessment is extending beyond the current hazard zone to ensure that we are maximising our knowledge of the risk.
- The Hazard Risk Map was developed to establish the extent of the risk to residential properties
- The map has been revised and updated to ensure its accuracy over the years. We will continue to update it in light of the outcome of further investigations.

### How is the council helping those affected in the ten properties?

- The council has a number of systems in place to help those affected.
- Since the notices were issued on the properties of Cyfyng Road, the council's housing team has been working with each family affected to help them relocate to suitable alternative accommodation.
- All those residing within the terrace of ten properties affected by recent enforcement action have been written to with information about the action being taken, and they were each provided with support by both environmental health and housing officers.
- Only two properties continue to be occupied. The residents from the remaining houses have been relocated.

## **How is the council communicating with residents?**

- Direct communication, in writing, on the phone and face to face has been taking place with residents of the ten properties affected by the emergency prohibition notices.
- Every owner and occupier of properties within the existing hazard Risk Zone has been written to advising them of the public meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> September where the council will be able to advise residents of the latest information.
- A dedicated helpline (01639) 686288 and email address [pantteg@npt.gov.uk](mailto:pantteg@npt.gov.uk) have been set up to take calls and queries from residents. The helpline is answered during office hours (8.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am – 4.30 pm Friday). An answer machine will pick up any calls received outside of those hours. Messages will be responded to within 24 hours during the working week.
- A Pantteg page has been set up on the council's website which is regularly updated.
- Locally elected Councillors are ensuring a further link between the residents and the various departments within the council who are involved in this process.

## **Why is this action being taken now?**

- The council has been inspecting the area for a number of years. Investigations and assessments have been carried out regularly since 2012.
- However the number of landslip events has increased recently, with four separate events in the last twelve months.
- Furthermore, two independent expert assessments and reports have concluded that the overall landslip system cannot be stabilised.
- These two recent events have led the council to change its position as we cannot confirm that residents in the area are safe to stay in their homes.

## **Why wasn't this action in relation to the terrace of 10 houses taken earlier?**

- The council has been monitoring the situation for a number of years and investigations and assessments have been carried out in the areas regularly since 2012.
- It is the outcome of the most recent assessment, as well as the increased frequency of landslips in the past year, two of which have been in an area previously identified as being low risk. This has led to action being taken.

## **You say you've been monitoring the situation for some time – how?**

- The council has been inspecting the area for a number of years and investigations have been carried out in the area.
- Over this period several consultants have been employed to advise the council and various reports and independent assessments produced. Following the landslide in 2012 a report known as the Jacobs

report was written and published (December 2013) this is on our website. A further report was undertaken by Earth Science Partnership in September 2016 which will be published following the public meeting. ESP continue to monitor the landslide area and are in the process of updating the Hazard Zone map for the council as a consequence.

- The Hazard Risk Map was developed to establish the extent of the risk to residential properties – this has been revised and updated to ensure its accuracy over the years.
- A monitoring regime in relation to ground water levels and surface movement is ongoing. This is through the use of monitoring equipment which has been placed into existing and new boreholes which have been created throughout the Pantteg area. This equipment will identify changes in ground water levels in addition to movements of the ground. Lidar surveys are also being undertaken which will map out the area at the moment. These areas will be re-surveyed early next year to establish whether and where there has been ground movement.
- The Council allocated £440K to monitor the landslip, enhance the drainage and rebuild retaining walls over the next three years.

### **I live close to the affected area - is my home at risk?**

- The Council does not believe homes outside the designated hazard area to be at risk. Nevertheless the assessment work which is currently taking place is looking at a slightly larger area than that previously mapped within the Hazard Zone Map. This is intended to capture as much data as possible to clearly identify whether the size of the hazard risk area has changed over time.
- The Hazard Risk Map was developed to establish the extent of the risk to residential properties in the area.
- The map has been revised and updated to ensure its accuracy over the years and we are continuing to update it in light of recent events.

### **How can you prove that our homes are not safe?**

- The Council has a duty to protect residents from harm.
- The monitoring and assessment work currently being undertaken has categorised property, infrastructure and land into high, medium and low hazard areas. Further quantitative analysis will inform whether or not residents will be able to safely remain in their homes.

### **Will I have to move out of the area?**

- We have been working with the affected residents within the ten properties which have been the subject of emergency prohibition notices to try to find suitable temporary accommodation which was in the right location, as close as possible to their existing addresses in addition to being of a suitable size and affordable.
- Only those residents who have been served prohibition notices have required alternative accommodation.

### **Will the ten affected properties be demolished?**

- The properties have been vacated due to the expert advice received by the council that the residents within the ten affected properties were at imminent risk. The Council has commissioned further surveys of the Pantteg landslip area and advice in relation to the terrace of ten houses on Cyfyng Road. The notices which have been served upon the owners and occupiers of the properties also requires them to take action to identify what measures can be taken to address the risks. The next steps including whether demolition is proposed is dependent upon the further advice received from the council's consultant and the advice obtained by the owners and occupiers of the terrace of ten properties affected.

### **I am new to the area, why wasn't I made aware of the problem when I bought/rented my home?**

- While the council has been monitoring the situation for a number of years, it was not perceived that resident's health and well-being was at risk
- Recent events (i.e. the findings of the most recent assessments and the increased frequency of landslips) have led the council to take a new, much more serious view as we cannot confirm that residents in the terrace of ten properties are safe to stay in their homes.
- Despite all of the above, landslides within this area are well documented including the incident which took place in 2012 and the subsequent report. When purchasing properties, it is always advised to carry out a full land survey especially in areas where there is a history of landslides and mining and quarrying.

### **If the affected area is 'high risk' and further slips are imminent, why is the road still open where pedestrians and through traffic including buses use it constantly.**

- Currently, there are no proposals to close the road. Further investigations are being undertaken and the council will act on the resulting advice.

### **What monitoring is being undertaken, where is it being undertaken and why?**

- The Council has commissioned a consultant to undertake numerous surveys; these include LiDAR surveys in addition to installing instruments to gather data on ground water and movements within a number of boreholes throughout the Pantteg area. The information collected will enable us to update the existing Hazard Risk Zone which will in turn enable everyone to have a better understanding of the risks to residents, property and infrastructure.
- The information collected from monitoring within the area has enabled us to update the existing Hazard Risk Zone which will in turn enable everyone to have a better understanding of the risks to residents, property and

infrastructure. The new draft hazard map is available to view on the Council's website and will be available to view at the public meeting.

### **Why isn't digital imagery being used as a solution?**

- The council's consultants are using both traditional surveying methods as well as LiDAR surveys to monitor ground movement, the latter of which will produce a digital image of the area. This data gathering in addition to other data capture from instruments which have been installed throughout the Pantteg area will enable the council to have a better understanding of the risks to residents, property and infrastructure. Digital imagery is a data gathering and monitoring tool, not a solution.

### **Following the 2012 slip, the council gave assurances to the community, the mountain and in particular, drainage would be regularly monitored, is this happening?**

- The council is responsible for the adopted highway drainage system which is regularly inspected and maintained.
- In regard to watercourses, the maintenance of these is the responsibility of the private land owners.
- However, the council has commissioned consultants to undertake surveys of the area to enable us to get a better understanding of the risk. In terms of drainage, much of this is on private land and as such is the responsibility of the land owner to ensure that the drainage is fit for purpose and maintained.

### **What action have you taken following different consultants' reports?**

- We have cleared and re-profiled the area which was affected by the slip in 2012, in addition to clearing trees, and maintaining highway drains. We have concentrated our efforts on monitoring the highway, associated drainage systems and retaining walls. We have also recently installed monitoring equipment within existing and new boreholes on council land and by agreement with owners on some privately owned land to measure ground water and ground movements and are currently undertaking Lidar surveys- new work has been carried out in the wake of each report that we have commissioned.
- In 1987 and 1989 reports into the Pantteg and Godre'r Graig landslips commissioned by the former Lliw Valley Borough Council produced a Hazard and Risk Assessment Plan.
- In 1997, following local government reorganisation, Neath Port Talbot Council carried out its own review into the landslip areas resulting in a revised Hazard Risk Zone Map.
- Following a landslip in December 2012, Neath Port Talbot Council commissioned Jacobs Engineering UK to review and update the existing risk assessment of the landslip areas. This report was published in January 2014 including an updated Hazard Risk Map.

- The report made a number of recommendations for risk reduction measures, the majority of which were implemented. The report also recommended a further quantitative assessment including the implementation of systems to record and assess rates of ground movement.
- In 2015 Neath Port Talbot Council commissioned Earth Science Partnership to undertake a geotechnical assessment and advise the council on quantitative assessment methods and a suitable monitoring and management regime for the landslip area.
- The report (2016) recommended the development of a formal management strategy based on long term monitoring and assessment of quantitative data such as ground water levels and topographical data from LiDAR surveys (a technique using laser light to monitor ground and surface movements).
- The recommendations to develop a formal management strategy of the landslip area are being implemented; for example boreholes are in place within which data-loggers are collecting critical information and the first LiDAR survey has been completed.

### **Why did the council change the highway drain on Cyfyng Road?**

- The work referred to related to the re-opening of an existing inspection chamber, the cover of which had been tarmacked over. This inspection chamber led to an existing highway drain which upon inspection was operating satisfactorily. There have been no changes to the alignment of drains by the council.

### **Whilst the council has a duty under the Housing Act, have the actions to date in relation to the ten affected properties on Cyfyng Road been hasty?**

- The council is not prepared to wait for an accident to occur. Based on site reconnaissance, knowledge of the wider landslip, geomorphology of the slopes to the east of Cyfyng Road and recent ground water monitoring following storm Doris (February 2017) it is considered likely that additional ground movement will occur in the short and medium term, possibly destabilising the structures and adjacent areas. Because of the proximity of the failures to people and property, it is considered that there is an immediate risk to those receptors (high probability, significant impact). This is why we are taking proactive action rather than reactive action.

### **Why has the Council identified land suitable for housing close to the area where residents are being asked to leave their homes?**

- Outline planning permission was granted on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007 for a mixed use redevelopment including part residential (186 dwellings), part industrial (B1, B2 & B8) and part business use (A2 and B1). The application reference for this development is P2007/0009. This planning permission established the principle of the uses rather than the detail. The Council is currently in receipt

of the application which proposes the detail. This is known as the Reserved Matters. It proposes 121 residential units and was submitted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2013. There are a number of outstanding issues associated with the planning permission which is why it still remains undetermined. The planning application reference is P2013/0737 and can be viewed on our website via the following link:

<http://planning.npt.gov.uk/detail.asp?AltRef=P2013/0737&ApplicationNumber=P2013%2F0737&AddressPrefix=&submit1=Go>

As a consequence of the grant of outline planning permission in 2007, the land has been allocated as a residential site within the adopted Local Development Plan. This site lies outside the boundaries of the Hazard Risk Zone as currently defined, and the allocation of the land for residential purposes was made prior to the most recent landslides. Nevertheless all currently known material considerations will be taken into account in the determination of the reserved matters application.

**The latest report actually recommends a formal Management Strategy for the area. Are you doing this?**

- The Council has an independent consultancy team working on the situation since 2015 who are working to develop a management strategy in association with the Council's Environmental, Housing and Engineering departments.

**Is this all about saving money for the council?**

- This is not a money-saving exercise for the council.
- The safety and wellbeing of residents is our only concern.
- The council has been funding projects to deal with landslips in the area for many years.

**What is the council's legal duty?**

- Whilst the council is not a significant land owner within the area, we are responsible for the highway infrastructure in the area.
- The council also has responsibilities which are clearly set out in the Housing Act 2004; we have a duty to protect residents against the risk of harm.

**Are there other similar situations anywhere else in the County Borough that are causing you concern?**

We are aware that there are a number of both active and dormant landslides throughout the county borough which have been mapped by the British Geological Society. However apart from that which is in existence at Pantteg we have no concerns regarding their impact at the present time.

**Are you liaising with the Welsh Government about the situation?**

- The Leader has written to Welsh Government to keep them updated about the situation.
- We have asked the Welsh Government to provide any assistance necessary.
- A political stakeholder briefing attended by local councillors, AMs and MPs took place on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.