The Lighthouse Newsletter (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

When Marta moved to the small coastal town of Brennan Bay, she expected peace and little else. The houses leaned into the wind, the harbour smelled of salt and diesel, and the single bus left twice a day. What she had not expected was the argument that was quietly tearing the community apart. Every inhabitant of the town, from the fishermen to the retired schoolteachers, had an opinion about the old lighthouse.

The council wanted to sell it. A developer had promised a hotel, jobs and visitors, and the mayor kept repeating that money for the harbour repairs would follow. Marta listened at the first public meeting and found the promises strangely thin. The developer spoke about "heritage" while showing pictures of glass balconies. It was, she thought, a beautifully constructed illusion: something that looked solid but would dissolve the moment anyone touched it. Nobody had been given real numbers, and the plans were vague.

After the meeting she went home and could not sleep. Her initial reaction had been simple annoyance, but by morning it had hardened into something more useful. She decided to take the initiative herself rather than wait for someone braver. She began by asking the council office for documents, and she was told to bring her ID before anyone would let her into the archive room. The clerk was polite but slow, and Marta had to learn not to appear impatient while he searched through folders that had clearly not been opened for years.

The documents were dull, but they were revealing. In one folder she found a survey of the cliff, and at the back of the report an index listed every section by subject. Under "structural risk" she found a paragraph stating that the ground beneath the lighthouse was moving. The figures quoted in the mayor's presentation were simply incorrect, and she could prove it with two pages. There was also a note about a minor incident the previous winter, when part of the cliff path had collapsed after heavy rain. Nobody had been injured, and the matter had never been discussed publicly.

Marta was increasingly convinced that the town was being sold a story. She spent a fortnight writing a short newsletter, printing forty copies and pushing them through letterboxes. She was careful not to impose her own opinion on her neighbours; instead she set out the evidence and let them decide. She did not want to invent anything, so she kept her imagination firmly in check and included only what the documents supported. Underneath each fact she added a line of practical info: dates, file numbers, and the phone number of the county surveyor.

The response surprised her. Neighbours she had never spoken to knocked on her door to inform her that they had noticed cracks too. Within a month the council agreed to commission an independent survey, mostly because refusing would have looked like an admission of guilt. The developer's enthusiasm cooled noticeably, which everyone read as a clear indication that the profits had never been as certain as claimed. Initially, Marta had only wanted quiet; now she chaired a small committee. The strongest incentive to keep going, she admitted later, was simply the pleasure of being taken seriously.

Try our 6-step method for free and make these words stick.

Listen to this episode online: https://course.interactivelessons.nl/local/podcast/episode.php?id=25760

Start this course for free: https://course.interactivelessons.nl/mod/quiz/view.php?id=1746