

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 3 March, 2009 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT

**Councillor David Richardson – Chairman
Councillor Dewi Owen – Vice-chairman**

Councillors Alun Wyn Evans, Louise Hughes, Anne Lloyd Jones, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Brian Bates and D Hughes (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr Desmond George (Dyfi Yacht Club), Mr W Bracwell (Aberdyfi Partnership) and Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club)

Officers

Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Paul Edwards	-	Aberdyfi Harbour Master
Huw Davies		Group Engineer
Mrs Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer
Mrs. Mererid Watt	-	Translator

Apologies: Councillors Tom Ellis and Trevor Roberts (Gwynedd Council), Mr Nick Dawson (Outward Bound), Mr Nigel Scott (Aberdyfi Rowing Club).

1. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee held on 21 October 2008.

Resolved: To receive and approve the minutes as a correct record.

2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Item 5 (B) (i) – Light in the Public Shelter near the Harbour Master's Office

Reported: By the Maritime and Country Parks in response to a query from a member regarding the latest on the above, that he had contacted the Property Unit and was awaiting for them to undertake the necessary work. The officer acknowledged that the shelter had been misused and he was of the view that CCTV cameras would help to alleviate problems and he would seek funding to place this on the priority list.

Whilst agreeing that a CCTV camera in the Shelter had made a difference, the member was of the view that it was important to install a light there since it was so dark and it was not possible to interpret a camera recording in order to identify underage drinkers and those causing a mess.

Resolved: To receive and note the above.

3. **THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT**

Submitted: The report of the Maritime Officer, Mr Barry Davies on the activities in Aberdyfi harbour with specific reference to the following:-

- (i) Fees and charges

- (ii) Budgets
- (iii) Navigation
- (iv) Staff
- (v) Beach Award
- (vi) General Issues
- (vii) Beach Concession
- (viii) Analysis of Customer Questionnaire

Reported: (a) By the Maritime and Country Parks Officer

- (i) in the context of **fees and charges** that the statutory officers and Portfolio Leaders had approved an increase of 3% on the fees of those residing permanently within Gwynedd, whilst the increase for those residing outside Gwynedd was 5%. It was anticipated that inflation for Gwynedd harbours would be 3.97% which equated to a required increase of £11,270 in the Harbour's general income target for 2009/10. It was noted that the total income target for the Maritime Unit was £2,121,900 and in light of the current financial climate this was a very challenging sum for the service.

It was noted that 80 mooring application forms for next season had been received thus far and a shortlist would be drafted to extend offers to others. In response to an enquiry from a member regarding how this figure compared with last year, the Maritime Officer stated that it was fairly similar, however, applicants tended to return their application forms late. Generally, the numbers were low in all the harbours and the maritime industry may see a reduction in users due to the additional tax on red diesel to travel in a powered boat. Since 1 November 2008 a new act had come into effect that meant charging tax on red diesel used in a powered boat. It was noted that there was no additional tax on red diesel used for heating boats. This meant substantial work not only to administer the process, but individuals would have to declare what use was made of the red diesel. It was emphasised that the cost would remain low to commercial users and that no additional tax was payable for commercial boats.

The local member asked how much marketing did Gwynedd Council undertake to attract customers and visitors to their Harbours. He felt that this was a very important element bearing in mind that the Council expected to receive revenue in their coffers, but they did not sufficiently market the harbours. The local member would raise this matter again in one of the Council's appropriate meetings. .

In response, the Maritime Officer explained that the Maritime Unit did not have specific finance for marketing, however, an element of publicity was given to the beaches.

The Chairman added that it was dependent on how Gwynedd Council considered its harbours, either as a financial burden or as an element for creating revenue. From the mariners' perspective access to the Harbour in Aberdyfi was not convenient due to the lack of suitable pontoons and the Chairman was of the view that the Harbour should be made more attractive for marketing. The same comments were supported by several members as well as the importance of marketing the navigation element be that in magazines or in boat shows.

A member felt that the provision for powerboats and Personal Watercraft had to be improved before marketing for more applications for moorings as the provision was full up last year. In response, whilst accepting the comment, the Maritime Officer explained that if the number of moorings were increased then certainly they would have to be stationed more out seawards and consequently this would have an impact on other activities on the estuary. The importance of retaining a balance between activities and working in collaboration was noted.

It was suggested that activities should take place not necessarily only during the holiday season, but also during the winter to attract visitors to Aberdyfi. The Maritime Officer agreed and Aberdyfi had seen improvements over the years and some developments had been currently set aside until it was known what future plans and developments would be undertaken by the Aberdyfi Partnership.

Various concerns were highlighted by members such as silting in the Penhelyg area, anchor chain laid by Western Fisheries in the 60's. The Maritime Officer appealed to members to contact the Harbour Master without delay regarding minor improvements to the harbour as it was necessary for the service to be pro-active in order to resolve any problems immediately and not wait to present them to this Consultative Committee. In the meantime, the Harbour Masters in Barmouth and Aberdyfi were requested to meet and look at the possibility of locating pontoons in appropriate places in Aberdyfi harbour.

- (ii) It was noted that there was an increase in the number of bookings to caravan parks this year and it was trusted that people would holiday in Wales rather than overseas. In the context of **budgets**, a very difficult decision would have to be made by members because of the corporate cuts that would have an impact on all Council services. Members' attention was drawn to the deficit in the income target for Aberdyfi Harbour of £7,719. This caused concern and reference was made to the seriousness of the general situation as the service would have to lose half a Harbour Master post in Pwllheli which was one of the County's busiest Harbours.

In response to a query by a member regarding the sand clearance budget this year, the Maritime Officer explained that this budget was the responsibility of the Coastal Protection Service.

The Maritime Officer guided members through the relevant headings within the financial sheets and gave members an opportunity to ask questions if they wished.

The Chairman commented that he was aware that the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee at its last meeting in October 2008, had recommended that a deputation should meet the relevant officers in Caernarfon to discuss the possibility of the Highways and Municipal Unit transferring a percentage of the car park receipts in Barmouth to the Maritime Service, bearing in mind that it was the Harbour facilities that attract users to the car park and to Barmouth. It was asked if it was possible for this Consultative Committee to present a similar request.

In response, the Maritime Officer explained that the above request was not practically possible from the point of view of Barmouth nor Aberdyfi. Every service had to make efficiency savings and had to reach challenging income targets. As part of the cuts the Lifelong Learning Unit led by Mr Rhys Wyn Parri would cease after the 31 March 2009. Therefore, this meant that Mr Rhys Wyn Parri's post of Head of Lifelong Learning would be removed from the current structure and the Maritime Officer hastened to add that Mr Parri had been very enthusiastic and had taken a keen interest and was very supportive to the work of the Maritime Unit over the years he had been in post. Consequently, the Maritime and Country Parks Unit would be transferred to the Economic Development Service from the 1 April 2009 under the leadership of Mrs Sioned E. Williams, Head of Economy and Regeneration. This would give the Maritime Unit an opportunity to work closely with experts in the field of economic development, especially in the context of finding sources for relevant grants for any harbour developments.

- (iii) in the context of **navigation**, the Harbour Master gave an update on the aids to navigation. A member requested that all the aids to navigation were stationed on 1 April this year
- (iv) he elaborated on the **staffing** situation and noted the need to appoint a temporary seasonal officer to the post of Harbour Assistant in Aberdyfi to commence on 1 April 2009. One Beach Officer would be appointed for mid June and two officers appointed for Tywyn beach.

A comment was made by a member that young people in the area were not eager to apply for beach officer posts because of people's attitude to them and this was unacceptable.

- (v) in the context of **beach awards**, it was disappointing to report that the Maritime Unit would not be in a position to submit an application for the International Blue Flag Award for Aberdyfi beach in 2009 as the bathing water quality had not reached the required standard. However, the Maritime Unit had submitted an application for an Urban Beach Award for Aberdyfi. Members were guided through the detailed list of bathing water test results in Aberdyfi as well as looking at the bathing water results in Barmouth.

Members' disappointment was expressed that Aberdyfi had lost the Blue Flag status and it was asked why the water quality had not reached the required standards and that the reasons should be investigated. Various suggestions were noted by members that could contribute to water quality such as heavy rain and substandard sewerage pipes. Concern was expressed regarding the method of testing and the exact locations where samples were taken.

In addition, concern was noted regarding the cleanliness standard of the beach and in response the Maritime Officer suggested that a Voluntary Group be set up in Aberdyfi as has occurred in other parts of the County where voluntary groups were established to clean beaches.

There was an increasing problem during high tide with trees being washed up on the beach and as a result this caused a danger to beach users. It was asked if it was possible to appoint a contractor to clear the beach. In response, the Maritime Officer explained that if such a problem arose then the Harbour Master would make arrangements to transport litter from the beach and an appeal was made to members to contact the Harbour Master without delay if any such problems arose.

- (vi) In the context of **general issues**, members were reminded that the footbridge leading to Picnic Island from the highway crosses a 'live' railway. It was noted that the Maritime Unit would repair the footbridge as any defects arose, however, it was anticipated that there would be further repairs in the future and it would be difficult to find funding to undertake these.
- (vii) members' attention was drawn to the **analysis of customer questionnaire** attached to the agenda and a correction was noted on page 10 in point 11 in English to amend the wording "regular dredging" with "new slipway". Disappointment was noted that only half the forms had been returned, however, this did at least give customers an opportunity to express their views if they so wished.

A member drew attention to the fact that he had never received or completed the form, although he did sail a dinghy.

Members of the Consultative Committee that represent the various clubs were requested to appeal to their members to complete the customer questionnaires.

Resolved:- To receive and note the contents of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer's report.

4. **DRAFT SHIPPING REGULATIONS**

Submitted: To members during the meeting, the relevant sections of the regulations for consultation by the Department of Transport to exempt mariners in specific categories of ships from the offence of exceeding the prescribed alcohol limits stemming from Section 80 (2) Railways and Transport Act.

Reported: By the Maritime Officer on the Act that was proposed to be presented before Parliament. The Government had noted that they tended to exempt rowing and paddling boats and sailing dinghies from the breath restrictions and associated tests. There was some support in the consultation to the figures based on the suggested parameters regarding an exception based on boats with a maximum speed of 7 knots and less than 7 metres long.

It was noted that the Government was working on separate measures to deal with Personal Watercraft to ensure that Personal Watercraft were included in the Act and this was not part of this consultation.

Members were asked for their comments on the consultation.

The members welcomed the regulations within the Act, however, concern was expressed regarding users of Personal Watercraft. The Harbour Master gave an assurance that if individuals were under the effect of alcohol that he contacted the police at all times.

Resolved: To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer conveys this Consultative Committee's approval of the regulations referred to above.

5. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Reported: By the Group Engineer that the Consultancy Service would undertake the work of sand clearance this year for three days commencing on 23 March 2009.

A member suggested that when the sand was cleared would be possible to leave a dip in the sand to give the beach a gradient. In addition, the officer was asked to look at the area near the steps by the car park.

Resolved: To receive and note the above.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was reported that the next meeting of this Committee would take place on Tuesday 3 November 2009.

Resolved To receive and note the above.

CHAIRMAN