

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 25 September 2012 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT:

Councillors Anne Lloyd Jones, Dewi Owen, Mike Stevens (Gwynedd Council), Cllr Brian Bates, Cllr David Richardson (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr W Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Mr Dave Williams (Aberdyfi Advertising and Improvements Committee), Mr Andy Jeffrey (Outward Bound Trust), Mr Desmond George (Aberdyfi Yacht Club), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club).

Officers

Llŷr B. Jones	-	Senior Manager - Economy and Community
Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Ken Fitzpatrick	-	Assistant Maritime Officer - Harbours
Mr Paul Edwards	-	Harbour Master
Mr Huw Davies	-	Principal Engineer
Mrs Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt	-	Translator

Apologies: Councillor Megan Reynolds (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr Roger Lawson-Mole (Member of Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

(a) The name of Councillor David Richardson was proposed to take the Chair for the 2012/13 year but he declined and asked the following to be recorded in the minutes:

“Over the past three years as Chair of this Committee I have always tried to be a proactive Chairman for the benefit of the Harbour and Aberdyfi. However, I have become increasingly aware that this is not what the Maritime Officer wants. Over the past 6 months I have e-mailed him on what I think are serious issues – I am still waiting for a reply. So I have come to the conclusion that over 50 years experience on the river is not valued by the Maritime Officer. So I decline the nomination.

I still stand by my statement which I said last October at the Barmouth Harbour meeting that the Maritime Department do not know what sailors and yachtsmen want.”

(b) A Member expressed disappointment that no reference had been made to the Portfolio Leader on the Membership list and it was felt that this Consultative Committee should have a constitution with a procedure in place to refer the minutes for the attention of an appropriate Committee so that it would be possible to work proactively for the benefit of Aberdyfi and Tywyn. It was noted further that it was important that Aberdyfi received due and worthy attention considering that Harbour activities brought income into the village for the benefit of the local economy.

(c) Another Member endorsed the above concern and stated that in the past he had suggested that the minutes should be submitted to a Maritime Committee but this had not happened. The current system was not working and better arrangements were needed regarding the minutes and communications for all the Harbours.

(ch) The Senior Manager – Economy and Community accepted the observations and noted that he would investigate the allegations made against the Maritime and Country Parks

Department. It was noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the role of Consultative Harbour Committees (Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Porthmadog and Pwllheli) because it appeared that the arrangements for the four Committees were different and one of them was a legal statutory Committee. It was acknowledged that it would be worthwhile standardising these Consultative Committees across the County and to establish the role and remit of Harbour Committees. In terms of referring the minutes to a specific central Committee, it was explained that the Council's governance system had changed since the last election in May of this year and that the Council now operated by means of a Cabinet. Further consideration was needed with the Cabinet Member on the procedure for the minutes.

(d) Since Mr Richardson had declined the offer of the Chair, the name of Councillor Dewi Owen was proposed but the Members Support Officer noted, following directions by a solicitor, that it would not be possible for a Member to be a chairman of two Committees.

Resolved: (a) To elect Councillor Dewi Owen to the Chair for this meeting until a further explanation is received regarding regulations involving Members serving as Chairmen on more than one Committee.

(b) To request that the Senior Manager - Economy and Community holds a discussion on establishing a constitution and remit for the Consultative Committees with the relevant officers.

The Chairman noted, whilst accepting the Council's language policy, that he would hold the proceedings in English but anyone present was free to speak in the language which was felt most comfortable for them.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To elect Councillor David Williams as Vice-chairman of this Committee for 2012-13.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

4. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee held on 28 February 2012.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as a true record.

4.1 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones thanked the Maritime and Country Parks Officer for ensuring that the ceremony for launching the annual Welsh Blue Flag awards took place in Tywyn this year.

5. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

Prior to submitting his report, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he felt very frustrated and uncomfortable to submit a report following the comments of Mr Richardson, knowing how much work had gone into the coastline and country parks with so few resources and budget.

At the same time, he apologised for the format of the report and he explained that lack of capacity in the Maritime and Country Parks Service was responsible for this and the main reason was that administrative support was not available for the service until mid-November.

Submitted: The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer, Mr Barry Davies, on activities in Aberdyfi Harbour with specific reference to the following:

(i) **Navigation and Moorings**

(a) It was noted that it was intended to submit a review of the Harbour Safety Code to the next meeting of this Committee in March for discussion on the harbour's responsibilities and arrangements etc. Members were reminded that copies of the Safety Code had been given to Members some years ago now and it was timely for the Safety Code to be reviewed.

(b) In terms of navigation aids, because of a technical matter with the moorings contractor and not being able to use other contractors, the maintenance and renewal work had not been completed except for the navigation lights. It was accepted that the navigation aids in terms of their condition did not appear at their best and there was considerable work to be undertaken on them. One buoy needed to be replaced but the Service did not have the capacity to undertake this without the assistance of a contractor. The Contractor's boat had received a safety inspection and an embargo had been placed on it so that it could not be used until it complied with HSE and Coastguard guidelines. However, it was noted that the boat had now passed the test and the relevant certificates were awaited. However, on the whole, the navigation aids had remained on station except for one seasonal port buoy and it was acknowledged that the situation was not acceptable.

(c) A report had been received, following a recent inspection by Trinity House, noting that the buoys were acceptable but their condition did not meet the required standards. Consequently, four of the navigation aids would be replaced over the winter months and it was anticipated that the cost would be approximately £8 - £10,000 for this work. All the navigation aids would have to be taken ashore and it was confirmed that the Harbour Master and the Assistant Maritime Officer – Harbours would prepare a detailed work programme for this. However, it was noted that the lights were acceptable but it was acknowledged that the lights on Buoy No. 3 did not work and the lights on Buoy No.2 were not on station. A Notice to Mariners had been published, drawing attention to the faults in the navigation lights.

(ch) In response, Mr Richardson noted that he had e-mailed the Maritime Officer on 26 June drawing attention to serious issues with navigating into the estuary. Mr Richardson was of the view that the navigation marks were very important and that the bar buoy was smaller than the second starboard buoy making it extremely difficult for sailors to sail into the estuary safely from the South. The second buoy is more highly visible and if a mistake was made boats can be wrecked and especially if you have a strong tide ebb with a force 4 wind. Mr Richardson added that he had been to see the Harbour Master regarding his worries as well as the Maritime Harbour Assistant as well as e-mailing the Maritime Officer on 26 June but nothing had been done to resolve the matter, yet it seemed that priority was given to erect a fence around the buoy storage. Mr Richardson maintained that this was a serious issue particularly if a tragedy was to happen and Gwynedd Council could be sued.

(d) Mr Andy Jeffrey stated that if sailors adopted recognised and safe practices and navigated in a correct procedure and with due regard to good seamanship they should not be in any danger. Whilst agreeing with Mr Richardson that the Spit buoy is more visible, sailors would be foolish if they decide to cut corners and enter the estuary from a different direction.

There has to be some degree of duty of care from sailors in that they should have a passage plan which is mandatory and only a few recreational sailors adhere to this requirement.

(dd) Mr Bracewell noted that he could see both sides to the above and from his experience of being out in fog in the estuary that it was not always possible to see the outer buoy and the Bar buoy in the swell. In practice, the tendency was to navigate towards the Bar buoy. The more that could be done to assist to assist mariners in this respect, the better.

(dd) It was enquired whether the Maritime Service had any way of penalising mariners if they had no passage plan, given that it was mandatory.

(f) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer thanked everyone for the above observations and the responses were as follows:

- There were no statutory guidelines regarding the size of buoys but assurance was given that they were on their correct stations and had lights on them
- The Bar buoy was a special buoy for shallow depths and in order to take the tides. Buoy no. 2 had come ashore during inclement weather and the buoy had been destroyed by the sea
- A few visitor boats came into the Harbour by crossing the bar but usually they contacted the Harbour Office by mobile phone or radio to receive directions on how to navigate into the Harbour
- It was acknowledged that a passage plan was crucial for mariners but unfortunately the by-laws were very restricted in what the Maritime Service could control and the tendency was for people to take risks without considering the implications and the dangers.
- The fence around the buoy storage area had been removed following directions from the Health and Safety Executive as a consequence of an accident when a member of staff had been injured.

Resolved: To accept and note the above and to ask the Maritime and Country Parks Service to ensure that the maintenance work on the navigation aids is completed by next season.

(ii) Maritime Statistics

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer referred to the appendices attached to the agenda noting comparisons of craft, mooring statistics and power boats and sailing boats statistics. It was noted that a challenging situation faced the Harbour in achieving the income targets to ensure that there was no overspend on the budget.

(b) Mr Richardson noted that if the Council raised the charges the likelihood was that there would be fewer boats in the Harbour. It appeared that Pwllheli Marina was more expensive than any other Harbour and he was not surprised that there had been a reduction in the number of boats there. Mr Richardson noted that the Council should consider charging a fee on visitors' boats by the metre and not per night's visit as this would increase income.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iii) Budgets

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that he would submit the final budgets at the next meeting of the Consultative Committee in March but he noted that the Harbour had not met its income target thus far. Members were reminded of the need to maintain several elements

within the Harbour. Currently, approximately £20,000 had been generated in income against a target of £42,000. Substantial expenditure had been made and continued to be spent in Aberdyfi and some of the examples were listed:

£1,000	Purchase of cabin as a result of relocation of work area
£3,000	Erection of safety fence
£1,000	Sand clearance
£3,000	Clearance of sand and litter around the compound
£800	Flag poles

It was noted that it was important to consider increasing fees and charges because of the deficit facing the Service every year and, therefore, the possibility of an increase should be considered for next year. Currently, a fee of £5.00 per night was charged on visitor boats to Aberdyfi and £6.00 per night in Pwllheli Marina.

A Member noted that this would not correspond to the maintenance costs of navigation aids but attracting visitors to Aberdyfi would facilitate hidden spending in the local shops and local economy.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iii) Events

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer was confident that Officers from the Environment Agency could be invited to the next meeting of this Committee in March to report on bathing waters. It was not timely for the officers to attend this meeting because the results had not yet been confirmed. Any developments that they suggested could be discussed and consequently consideration could be given to the type of applications for awards the Maritime and Country Parks Service could submit in 2013. There was a danger that many beaches would lose the Blue Flag status as a result of the quality of the water. It was decided not to move the sampling point from Cemetery Beach because most of the activities took place at this point.

(b) In terms of the cost of applications for Beach Awards, a Member suggested that the Maritime and Country Parks Service should contact the relevant Community Councils to ask for their contribution so that it could be included in the precept. £8,000 per annum was an enormous amount of money for beach award applications and there was no budget earmarked for it but it was acknowledged that these awards were very important for tourism and the local economy.

(c) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that a consultation was ongoing regarding a new Dogs Order with Community Councils etc. It was anticipated that more authorised officers would become available such as officers from the Maritime and Country Parks Service to issue fines to dog owners who allowed their dogs to foul without clearing it.

In response to an enquiry from a Member requesting information on the number of cases that had been implemented, the Harbour Master noted that he had not issued any fines but had discussed the prohibition with dog owners and nine out of ten of them had complied.

A Member added that this would be a good way of generating income especially in the prohibited zones. Members were reminded that the Harbour Master had received training and had the authority to issue a fine to individuals who refused to clear their dog's foul. Although officers had had the power for some years no fines had been issued in the Aberdyfi area by a member of staff of the Maritime and County Parks Service.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iv) Concessions and Improvements

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that:

- Work had been completed on the Penhelyg Gardens Shelter with the Trust contributing £1,500 towards the cost with the remainder of the funding coming from the Harbour budget. It was acknowledged that the place was important but it was an added cost for the Service.
- A safety fence had to be erected urgently around the buoy storage area because of health and safety implications. Several complaints had been received and some had asked for it to be demolished but the fence was effective and was a barrier to prevent individuals from falling over the side. In response, the Chairman noted that there had been many complaints about the size of the fence and that it was not in keeping with the area. However, it was understood now that the fence had to be erected in accordance with the directions of the HSE.
- With regard to the ladders and the quay wall, in 2010 a report had been received from a specialist company on the condition of the wall. It appeared that a further survey was required and a report was awaited during the next month. After receiving the report, assurance was given that it would be circulated to the Community Council and Members of this Consultative Committee to ascertain whether or not the situation had deteriorated. The scheme would mean looking at renewing the wall with the possibility of attracting 48% of convergence funding and the Council finding the remaining 52%. The Senior Manager – Economy and Community added that over the next month a start would be made on discussions and project prioritisation for the next cycle and Aberdyfi had been identified, specifically the area of the quay, as a focal point for a range of activities. As part of the process there would be a willingness to collaborate with local organisations and bodies. In response, the Chairman noted that there was 100% support locally for the above and he was pleased that work would be progressing considering all the work Mr Bracewell and his colleagues had achieved with the project. It was added that there was a need to keep in contact with the Outward Bound Trust as it was a very important resource for them in their activities.
- It was proposed to undertake an inspection of Picnic Island Bridge and funding would have to be programmed for it.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(v) Security of Marine Equipment

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the Police were eager to circulate the Marine Watch scheme registration form (attached to the agenda) as a result of much theft on the coast. An appeal was made for Members to circulate the form to organisations / bodies which they represented and encourage them to complete the forms. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer promised that he would send e-mail details to Members of the contact point and timetable.

Resolved: To request the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to send e-mail details to Members of the contact point and timetable for completing the form.

(vi) Harbour Staff

Mr Wil Stockford had been appointed Aberdyfi Harbour Assistant from 1 April until 30 September 2012. It was greatly hoped that he could be re-appointed next year. In terms of winter staffing, Barmouth Harbour Master would be required to assist in Aberdyfi along with staff from Porthmadog. Similarly, the Aberdyfi Harbour Master would be expected to assist with harbour duties in Barmouth. It was emphasised that the maintenance programme would be a crucial part of the Harbour Master's work programme.

It was noted that Mr Stockford was an excellent officer and was dependable on the water and on the shore.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

6. MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- (a) An increase in moorings and encroachment of the area that was traditionally used for sailing in front of the Outward Bound and Dyfi Yacht Club. This was in response to general concern of the possibility of boats becoming trapped, especially following two incidents in the summer when "Toppers" became trapped under the boat of the moorings contractor. These incidents were near misses.
- (b) Location of moorings for next spring in view of the dingy race.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that the Harbour Master and the Maritime Officer – Harbours would be requested to prepare a plan showing the location of moorings for 2013 and that the plan would be submitted at the next meeting in March 2013. There was certainly room to reduce moorings and move them to other spaces further up the estuary. In view of the fact that Members had brought the above matter to the attention of the Harbour Master's Office, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer suggested that discussions should be held with officers to create a specific leaflet so that a report could be sent to him in Pwllheli to identify any similar incidents in future.

Resolved: To request the Maritime Officer – Harbours and the Harbour Master to prepare a plan showing the location of moorings for 2013 to facilitate arrangements for the dingy race and to ensure that there are no dangerous incidents.

- (c) Deterioration of the tarmac in the area of the quay

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he anticipated deterioration in the tarmac in the area of the quay and again this was an issue that would have to be prioritised depending on funding. He would communicate with users of the area, such as the Outward Bound Trust, Rowing Club, and RNLI to ask for a contribution towards the cost of resurfacing the area.

A Member also noted that there had been initial discussions to consider renewing the lifeboat facility in two to three years' time and various organisations in the area would be consulted. Consequently, it would not be prudent to renew the surface should the RNLI start building on the land in the near future.

Resolved: To request the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to correspond with the various organisations to ask for contributions to the cost of resurfacing the tarmac in the area of the quay and to prioritise the work.

(ch) Concrete decay on the slipway and the appearance of rusty rods in the concrete (this was bad at the start of the season and Harbour staff had dealt with the matter).

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer promised that the slipway would be cleared and he was aware of the above deterioration and this again was an issue which had to be prioritised depending on funding.

It was suggested that traffic was responsible for the deterioration, especially in the lower part of the slipway. However, a Member disagreed and he was of the opinion that it was the erosion of the foreshore and the impact of the sea and poor construction which were responsible.

A Member expressed his opinion that it was important to deal with this matter as the rods were sharp and approximately six inches long and this was important for the health and safety of the public. This matter should be at the top of the list of priorities in view of the fact that many children used this area.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer emphasised that inspecting similar areas was a key part of officers' work and it was crucial to act immediately should any work be required.

Resolved: To request the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to address this matter.

(d) Storage of dinghies, rowing boats, canoes, storage trailers etc

A Member noted that the condition of the above storage area was completely out of control and he enquired whether it would be possible to move the rowing boats out of the compound and/or charge owners for their storage.

In response, the Harbour Master noted that there was no suitable secure place to keep them. Currently, they were securely chained in the storage area.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted his dissatisfaction that this issue had not been resolved as it had been discussed in this Consultative Committee in March 2011, and that this matter would have to be resolved once and for all as part of the work programme.

Resolved: To request the Assistant Maritime Officer – Harbours and the Harbour Master, as part of the work programme, to prepare a racks management plan and to consider charging a fee as suggested above so that a system is in place before the beginning of the next season.

7. ELECTION OF OBSERVERS

Resolved: To elect Councillor David Richardson to attend meetings of the following committees as an observer when convenient to him:

- (a) Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee
- (b) Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee
- (c) Pwllheli Harbour Consultative Committee

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was reported that the next meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee would be held on 5 March 2013.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN