

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 28 February 2012 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors Alun Wyn Evans, Louise Hughes, Anne Lloyd Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr. Brian Bates, Cllr. Megan Reynolds (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr W Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Mr Roger Lawson-Mole (Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade), Mr Dave Williams (Aberdyfi Advertising and Improvements Committee), Mr R D Usher (Dyfi Yacht Club), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club), Mr J Eddington (Aberdyfi Rowing Club).

Officers

Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Huw Davies	-	Principal Engineer
Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt	-	Translator

Apologies: Cllr Ioan C. Thomas (Cyngor Gwynedd), Mr Sam Wilding (Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association), Mr Desmond George (Dyfi Yacht Club), Mr Nick Dawson (Outward Bound), Mr Llŷr Jones (Senior Manager Economy and Community) and Mr Paul Edwards (Aberdyfi Harbour Master).

1. **WELCOME**

The following were welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman, Councillor David Richardson:

- (a) Mr R D Usher who was attending on behalf of the Dyfi Yacht Club in the absence of Mr Desmond George.
- (b) Mr John Eddington who was attending on behalf of Aberdyfi Rowing Club and he explained that he had been appointed Regional Coordinator, Planning and the Environment to the Royal Yachting Association.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

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

3. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee held on 18 October 2011.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as correct subject to the following amendment:

Page 4 – last paragraph in point (e) delete the word ‘criticism’ and change to ‘comment’ to read “and the only comment made was ...”

- 3.1 Following the approval of the minutes, the Chairman noted his discontent with regard to the lack of information within the minutes which he verbally submitted to the last meeting relating to the number of visiting boats to Aberdyfi.
- 3.2 The Chairman noted that Aberdyfi Community Council had submitted the following items for discussion at this meeting but they did not appear on the Agenda.
- (i) Re-development of the Quay – it was anticipated that the shuttering cannot be used after 2016 and it was asked what plans were in place to deal with the situation
 - (ii) Penhelyg Shelter – the current situation regarding maintenance
 - (iii) Sand Clearance – need to clear sand from the Promenade/Car park.

The Member suggested that the above should be dealt with at the end of the meeting as part of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer's report.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that item (i) had been included in the report and there would be a reference to sand clearance. He did not envisage that the maintenance of a shelter in Penhelyg garden was a matter that should be considered by the Harbour Committee, although the shelter was maintained by the Maritime and Country Parks Unit.

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

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

(i) Aberdyfi Bathing Waters

(a) It was reported that bathing water quality at Aberdyfi had met the required mandatory standard in 2010, and despite not having achieved the standard required for the International Blue Flag Award, an application would be submitted for the Resort Beach Award in 2012.

(b) Members were reminded that the new European Bathing Waters Directive would come into force in 2015 and achieving the stringent bathing water criteria set by the new Directive would be challenging. Discussions were held with Environment Agency officers and bearing in mind the temperamental standard of Aberdyfi bathing waters over the last five years, the bathing water could be categorised as being of a 'poor standard' under the new directive in 2015.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the Unit had made a request for the annual Wales Blue Flag Ceremony to be held in Tywyn in 2012, with the aim of attracting positive publicity to the area.

(c) The Maritime Officer confirmed, in response to a query from a Member, that dog faeces on beaches would not be a consideration for the above award and the main factor that the Maritime Unit had no control over was the quality of bathing water. However, whilst accepting that dog fouling was a problem to not pick up dog faeces was an offence. It was further explained that if a person's dog fouled and if the owner did not pick the faeces up then appropriate Council officers, including the Harbour Master, could present a spot fine to that owner if the dog had fouled on the beach or on a footpath. Barmouth Harbour Master was very active regarding this in Barmouth. Aberdyfi Harbour Master had the same rights and authority to act in Aberdyfi for approximately four years now, although no fine had been given by the officer in Aberdyfi.

(ch) Concern was highlighted by a Member regarding the poor standard of bathing water in Aberdyfi and he expressed disappointment that an officer from the Environment Agency was not present at the meeting to report back on the test results which had been undertaken since the last meeting. The Member was of the view that it would be useful for Environment Agency officers to attend every meeting in order to respond to queries and comments by the Members who knew the area well. He was aware that officers had visited the majority of farms over the winter, however, it was felt that there were other locations that they could investigate that may contribute to pollution that was carried down the river. Regular monitoring should continue and pressure should be placed on individuals to resolve any defects in order to improve the quality of bathing water in Aberdyfi.

In response, the Maritime Officer reminded all that the Consultative Committee had received a very comprehensive report at the last meeting from the Environment Agency and that it would be more appropriate to invite officers back to the next meeting in October.

Resolved: (i) To accept and note the above.

(ii) To request that the Maritime Officer invites officers from the Environment Agency to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee to present a progress report regarding monitoring bathing water quality in Aberdyfi.

(ii) Fees and Charges

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that an increase of 2.5% was recommended in harbour fees and charges for all vessels moored within the jurisdiction of Aberdyfi and Barmouth Harbours in 2012/13. It was anticipated that the increase in Aberdyfi harbour for 2012/13 was 2.08% a figure based on a number of factors that fluctuate beyond the level of inflation (electricity etc.). It was noted that there was an overall increase in the income target for Aberdyfi in 2012/13 of £830, bringing the total income target to £40,700 for the year. Although the income target was small in comparison with other sites, it was a very challenging target for a small harbour.

It was noted that the moorings contractor had been warned this year not to install the moorings until he had received clear instruction on the locations from the Harbour Master. It was trusted that the contractor would comply with the requirements and there would be an improvement in the arrangements for this year.

(b) A member expressed disappointment that Aberdyfi harbour had not achieved the income target and from his experience of sailing for 28 years he had not seen improvements in the Harbour during that period. Whilst he acknowledged that the Yacht Club had undertaken improvements the Council had not spent any money at all in this part of the county and it appeared that thousands of pounds were being spent in Pwllheli Harbour and Doc Victoria. Efforts had been made to get a pontoon in Aberdyfi but they had been unsuccessful. The Member was of the opinion that the Service should make more of an effort as Aberdyfi was an extremely attractive village and if no deserving consideration was given to improve harbour facilities then boats would disappear completely and go to other harbours.

(c) The Chairman supported the above concern and he listed the name of several boats who had left the Harbour due to the lack of quality facilities. He further noted that the Service would have to be more proactive by holding discussions with customers regarding what they would wish as improvements to the facilities. It was no surprise that there was a reduction in the number of boats that came to Aberdyfi Harbour and consequently the Harbour did not achieve its income target and this was mainly due to the lack of facilities available to mariners in the Harbour. The Chairman reminded Members of the 'Welcome Pack' provided by him in 2010

to be distributed to boat owners visiting Aberdyfi which included extensive information regarding the area, local businesses etc. He was of the view that the welcome packs had not been distributed last year and he intended to provide some again this year in the hope that they could be given to visiting boat owners. The need for the Service to attract more customers to Aberdyfi Harbour was noted through extensive advertising, designing and exhibiting posters etc.

(ch) In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer reminded Members that the Council had invested in Aberdyfi Harbour, although the improvements were not visible such as investigating the feasibility of having a pontoon but unfortunately the quay's condition did not permit this. Members were reminded that substantial investments had been made in Aberdyfi in order to try and establish a marina in the Harbour. Substantial money had been invested in studies and reports. It was noted that the Service was cooperating with other clubs such as Barmouth Yacht Club in order to secure grants funding. The Maritime Officer noted that external organisations could attract grants from various sources that would not be available to the Council. However, it had to be remembered that the trend of sailing along the coast was down due to the economy's situation. It was noted that only 310 applications for moorings out of 421 had been received at Hafan Pwllheli thus far, and that this was not a reflection on the lack of dredging in the harbour. Whilst accepting that it would be necessary for the Service to consider the possibilities, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer felt that there were not many options that they could undertake and there was no purpose to develop additional facilities to what was offered by the Yacht Club.

It was emphasised that resources were very scarce and the Service had strived with the group of individuals to develop a marina in Aberdyfi, but unfortunately this did not materialise for several reasons.

(d) Another member suggested whilst he understood the situation regarding scarce resources, in the short term it was necessary to make the best of the money available and try to raise standards in the Harbour. There would be another opportunity in four years time to look at the shuttering on the quay and perhaps then consideration could be given to the possibility of extending the facilities.

(dd) A Member noted that there was a waiting list of boats awaiting moorings.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that he was of the view that no waiting list existed in Aberdyfi and if individuals required a mooring then room should be found to site a mooring for them. He was of the view that a waiting list did not exist in a harbour with so few boats moored within the area of the Harbour's jurisdiction.

(e) The Chair reminded all of the exercise he had undertaken last year by sending 40 letters to individuals on the waiting list to find out if they required a mooring or not. From the response received it was found that some had sold their boats, others had bought smaller boats and the actual figure on the short list now was 12. It also seemed from the above that 20 moorings were empty every year and therefore, although the owners paid mooring charges to the Harbour, these individuals did not contribute to Aberdyfi's economy.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was of the view that room should be found for the 12 and that there was no reason why this could not be done. He confirmed that he would discuss the matter with the Harbour Master without delay.

(f) Concern was expressed by a Member that sand had caused enormous difficulties this year and that the slipway was a nightmare for mariners. The Member was of the opinion that sand should be cleared from the slipway as the public tended to use it as part of the beach. A Member of the Yacht Club supported this and their association had experienced problems this

year and because of the depth of the sand it attracted people to use it as a beach and some children/adults were seen burying themselves in the sand as it was deep in parts.

(g) Stemming from the above, a member added that the sand should have been cleared over last winter and that there should be a procedure to maintain the slipway seasonally in order that it was sustainable over the summer. Another Member noted that stones caused problems in the same way as they were washed ashore on the slipway from Church Bay.

(ng) In response, the Principal Engineer confirmed that the sand would be cleared with appropriate machinery on 19 March 2012 and it was likely to be on the site for four days. It would be cleared into the dunes in accordance with the usual procedure in consultation with the Countryside Council for Wales and the Golf Club. A Member asked the Principal Engineer to inform the Highways Department of this in order that they could work together to clear sand from the car park at the same time.

(h) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that they should try to maintain the slipway more frequently. Winter had been exceptional this year and sand in Barmouth was four foot deep in parts along the promenade and there was no point in removing it as it would be back after a tide. The Maritime Officer gave an assurance that they would organise a team of workers from the Maritime Service to assist with sand clearance from where dinghies are stored on the racks as the heavy machinery was not suitable to clear sand from the boat/dinghy park.

Resolved: (i) To accept and note the above.

(ii) To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer organises sand to be removed from the boat/dinghy park .

(iii) Budgets

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer guided Members through the balance sheet for Aberdyfi and Abermaw for the third quarter of the financial year up to 31 December 2011 and noted that the income target for Aberdyfi harbour in 2011/12 was £39,870 with the total created up to the end of December 2011 being £30,983. It was anticipated that general expenditure would be approximately -£2,000 under the required target due to underspending under some budget headings. The surplus meant a decrease in the number of staff over the winter period in an attempt to meet the budget target. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer stressed that due to the current financial climate and the need to identify more savings, it was therefore noted that 2012/13 would once again be a challenging year for the Maritime and Country Parks Unit and especially for the harbours of Aberdyfi and Barmouth which indicated that they required additional financial support to maintain them.

(b) Reference was also made to the Municipal Port Review which was currently in the initial process conducting a review of the financial situations of harbours. As part of the review it was proposed to safeguard those harbours who make a profit.

(c) A comparison was made with Barmouth Harbour's financial balance sheet and Members' attention was drawn to the Beaches budget.

(ch) In response to concern highlighted by a Member regarding the lack of budget especially in terms of the health and safety of the public who use Harbour facilities, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that in accordance with the Harbour Act it was a requirement to maintain the standards of the navigational buoys, however, it was the Council corporately who was responsible for the health and safety element.

- (d) A Member noted that Pwllheli Harbour made a profit and that Aberdyfi should also be looked at as part of all the sailing facilities within Gwynedd.
- (dd) A Member added that part of the activities of European Windsurfing would be held in Aberdyfi and that it was important for the village as it attracted many people to the area. It was stressed that every activity and visitors to the area helped the area's economy.
- (e) A Member noted that she understood that the booklet of tide timetables would not be produced, although no loss was made from their production. It was evident that there was a demand for them and since the Council did not make a deficit from their production shouldn't they continue to produce them? Approximately 3,000 were produced and each one was sold.
- (f) In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that historically the tide timetables had been produced and although the Service did not make a loss by producing them he was of the view that their price should be increased in order to make some profit or to consider if an organisation/club or private company would produce them.
- (g) A Member suggested that consideration should be given to attracting sponsors to advertise in the booklet as Cyngor Ceredigion did, and this in turn would promote and enhance the profile of Gwynedd Harbours. It was noted that Ceredigion Council sold their tide timetables for £1.
- (ng) Another Member noted that there was no purpose in having different tide timetables for each Harbour – shouldn't they produce one standard booklet for all Gwynedd Harbours indicating + or – for high tide times. Although it was easy to get access to tide timetables via mobile phones or a computer the member was of the opinion that a tide timetable booklet was a very good tool for marketing and it was useful to have a hard copy.
- (h) The above matter would be submitted for the consideration of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee at its meeting on 27 March 2012. The Maritime and Country Park Officer added that the Council advertised in the pilot book 'North West Venture Yacht Club – Cruising Anglesey and Adjoining Waters' and had also discussed with the author the possibility of including Aberdyfi and Barmouth harbours in the pilot book in a year and a half.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iv) Navigation

- (a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he had nothing to add in the context of aids to navigation to what had already been stated in his report, except that it was necessary to ensure that every buoy was on station before Easter.
- (b) A Member noted that the location of the Bar buoy had changed and that the Harbour Master was aware of this. He appealed that the moorings contractor should receive a detailed brief regarding this in order to assist him to identify the main channel. It was noted that one or two aids were not on station, however, it was understood that arrangements were in hand to re-locate them in their appropriate stations.
- (c) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer asked if Members saw any value in continuing to have buoy no. 2.

In response, a Member stated that it was necessary to install buoy no. 2 as mariners sometimes could not see buoy no. 1 and aimed straight towards buoy no. 3.

Resolved: To accept and note the above observations.

(v) Staff

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the Maritime Service advertised the post of Harbour Assistant for Aberdyfi to commence 2 April 2012 until 30 September 2012. It was anticipated that the post would not be permanent in the future and seasonal Beach Officers would also be employed. No Harbour Assistant would be employed in the Harbours of Pwllheli and Porthmadog this year. It would be necessary for Aberdyfi staff to ensure that an appropriate level of proactive service and supervision happened in the waters of Aberdyfi Harbour.

(b) During the meeting the Harbour Master's worksheet was circulated to Members which listed his priorities for October/November and December. From the work programme it appeared that there were 9 days of proactive work and 27 days in terms of non-reactive work. It was noted that it was important to see progress in the proactive work and that it was vitally important to ensure progress in the daily work programme over the winter months.

(c) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was expensive for the Maritime Service to dispose of dead sheep that had been washed up on the beach and it was not possible to identify or find out who owned them.

Stemming from the above, a Member noted that he himself had recently removed 5 dead sheep that had been washed ashore on the beach. The Member explained that it was possible to identify the owners of the sheep through the ear-mark and /or ear tag.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(vi) The Quay Wall

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that there were no current specific details to be conveyed regarding the maintenance of the quay wall. The Council was considering all available options and continued to make enquiries to decide if the quay wall could be considered as a coastal defence structure or as an amenity quay wall. A definition of the wall's purpose would determine the level of funding that may be available when the sheet piling would be replaced. Measures had been implemented in order to reduce the impact of accelerated low water corrosion and sacrificial anodes were placed on the sheet piling. It appeared that the position of the anodes on the sheet piling did not seem to be effective as the sacrificial anodes required replacing on a frequent basis.

(b) It was noted that it was important to look at the whole picture for the benefit of improvements to Aberdyfi and to earmark resources now in good time and have plans in place in order to include this on the list of priorities.

(c) A representative from the Yacht Club made a reference that it would be beneficial to consider the possibility of making a bid for financial resources from the European Fund to fishermen that was available until 2013.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was of the view that it was not possible to submit an application to the fishermen's fund for improvements of the type mentioned above in the quay.

(ch) Another Member stated that the Economy and Community Department should lobby the Welsh Government for funding because if the quay fell then the cost of re-building would be much greater than renewal costs.

Resolved: To accept and note the above observations.

(vii) Harbour Facilities

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

- It was proposed to maintain the Penhelyg Shelter from April onwards with the intention of claiming 50% of the costs from the Richard Roberts Trust.
- That the condition of the footbridge to Picnic Island caused him concern and substantial investment was required to take down the footbridge and replace it. It was not an option to close the footbridge and the safety of the railway below caused concern. An inspection was conducted in 2011 at a cost of £1,350 and a further detailed survey would be commissioned from the Consultancy Unit during Spring 2012. It was trusted that a detailed design would be available at the next meeting of this Consultative Committee.
- That he had received a telephone call from the Manager of the Rights of Way stating that the boardwalk – Golf footpath was not the responsibility of his Department and it was not in the Department's ownership. The Boardwalk had been inspected and it was estimated that the costs for renewal were approximately £3,500.

(b) It was noted that it was unfair that the Maritime Unit had to take responsibility for the Picnic Island footbridge, and it was suggested that an application be submitted to Outward Bound and the Community Council to create a partnership to adopt the footbridge. Creating a partnership would enable them to submit applications for European financial resources e.g. Access Funds etc which were out of reach of the Council itself.

(c) In the context of the boardwalk, it was understood that bodies such as Countryside Council for Wales, Snowdonia National Park and the Golf Club had contributed to its construction, however, no one had considered taking on responsibility for its long term maintenance. It was suggested that perhaps it would be possible for them to contribute once again. Councillor Dewi Owen gave an undertaking that he would raise the matter at the next Golf Club meeting.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was reported that since the Council's governance arrangements would change following the Elections in May 2012, that the draft calendar of Council meetings had not yet been approved.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN