

**Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 16 March, 2010 at the Council Chamber, Area Office, Barmouth**

PRESENT:

Councillors Tom Ellis (Chair of Development Scrutiny Committee), Trevor Roberts, Gethin G. Williams, Eryl Jones-Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Councillors Peter Bunce (Barmouth Town Council), Julian Kirkham (Arthog Community Council), Mr K. J. Probert (RNLI), Mrs. Wendy Ponsford (Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users), Mr Denis Howell (Meirioneth Yacht Club).

Observer: Cllr. David Richardson (Chair of Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee).

Officers

Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Huw Davies	-	Group Engineer
Mr Glyn Jones	-	Harbour Master
Mrs Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer

Apologies: Councillor W. Roy Owen (Portfolio Leader Lifelong Learning) and Councillor R. Aeron Williams (Barmouth Town Council).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

Councillor Julian Kirkham declared a personal connection to Item 4 – Maritime Officer’s Report but specifically point 9 – Ferry Licence Requirements as he would be working part-time as a Licensed Boatman during July and August 2010.

The member was of the view that there was a prejudicial interest and withdrew from the Chamber during the discussion on this item.

The above member enquired further if it was necessary for him to resign as a member of this Consultative Committee due to his personal interest, and that he would be working part-time as a Licensed Boatman.

In response, the officers explained that it would not be necessary for him to resign. However, if an issue arose in future meetings where a personal interest was considered as being prejudicial then members would not be allowed to speak or vote and they would have to leave whilst the matter was under discussion.

2. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee held on 6 October.2009.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as correct subject to amending the English translation in point 5 (e) third sentence in the last paragraph to read ‘Harbour Assistant’ rather than ‘Harbour Master’.

2.1 The Chairman stated that he was of the view that the minutes of the Harbour Consultative Committees should be submitted to Council Committees such as the Scrutiny Committee, or Area Committees in order that members could follow up any recommendations made. Whilst he accepted that the Harbour Consultative Committees were not statutory

meetings, except for the Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee, the Member felt that the minutes should be submitted to a further committee. He was aware that the Monitoring Officer intended to investigate further into some of the duties of the Council Board in relation to harbours, but currently in accordance with procedure the officers would act on any decision made by the Harbour Consultative Committees.

2.2 Matters arising from the minutes

(a) Item 6 (3) – Cleaning the harbour area – pigeons under the railway bridge

The Chairman reported that the work of renovating the railway bridge was being undertaken and in accordance with the request a net would be placed under the bridge to prevent access to pigeons. It was trusted that this would alleviate the problem of having to clean their droppings from the pavement in the Harbour area.

(b) Item 6 (6) – Control of Dogs and Dogs fouling on the beach and promenade

A member asked the Maritime and Country Parks Officer if the Maritime Service took this matter seriously and if officers were willing to fine dog owners if their dogs fouled on the beach or the promenade. A group of volunteers had recently been formed to try and sort out this problem.

In response, the Maritime Officer felt that it was a duty on dog owners to ensure that they cleared dog mess from public locations. Not clearing dog faeces was an offence. It was acknowledged that officers took the matter seriously and ensured that staff received training, however, it had to be borne in mind that the control of dog fouling was not one of the main duties of Harbour staff and it was difficult to ask them to assign hours during the day for this, considering the other duties they had within the Harbour. It was noted, however, that Barmouth Harbour Master was one of the best within the service for undertaking this duty and several other members of staff in the Maritime Unit had received training and had been authorised to issue penalties if dog owner did not clear dog mess.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

3. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

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

- (i) Fees and Charges
- (ii) Budgets
- (iii) Navigation
- (iv) Staff:
- (v) Beach Award
- (vi) Pontoon Scheme
- (vii) Beach/Promenade Concessions
- (viii) Visiting Vessel Welcome Pack
- (ix) Ferry Licence Requirements

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

(i) that fees and charges for the next financial year 2010/11, had been forwarded to the statutory officers and the Portfolio Leader and it was recommended that the charges for those residing permanently in Gwynedd were not increased whilst they would be increased by 1% to those who resided outside Gwynedd.

It was noted that the increase in inflation for every harbour in Gwynedd was negative at -1.5% based on the assumption of the next pay award being 1%. This equated to a slight decrease in the overall Harbour income target of £2,600 during the next financial year. Members were reminded that the Barmouth Harbour income target had not reached the required target for a number of years and it would be necessary to take further measures to ensure that general expenditure and income targets achieved their targets without compromising standards.

The fees and charges relating to launching and registration of Powerboats and Personal Watercraft had not been increased this year.

Attention was drawn to the general increase in the income target for all harbours and marinas in 2010/11, namely £9,070 which compared to a higher target of £51,020 in 2009/10. This meant an increase in the general income target of the Maritime Unit of £2,130,970 in 2010/11.

(ii) Members were guided through the **budgets**, and it was noted that the income target for Barmouth harbour was £52,010 for 2009/10 and the total income up to the end of December 2009 was £35,409, compared with £32,821 for the same period last year. It was envisaged that the deficit of **£16,601** could not be made up in income during the last quarter of the current financial year which meant that the target would not be reached. Members' attention was drawn to the seriousness of the situation since as it was anticipated that there would be an overspend of £3,300 in the Aberdyfi Harbour budget by the end of March which meant a current total deficit for both harbours of £24,300 and it would be necessary to overcome the overspend together with the shortfall in income.

Due to the economic climate it was emphasised that it was necessary to identify efficiency savings within local government and therefore it was necessary to operate in a cost effective way to try and safeguard existing facilities in Barmouth and Aberdyfi Harbours. .

In response to a query from a member regarding the money for selling sheds, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that there were regulations and guidelines to be followed in such transfers and it was possible to earmark 50% of the funding to the maritime service.

In the context of the disposal of Victoria Dock, Council Members had re-considered this because of the potential for development with a grant pledge. Approximately 42 boats visited Victoria Dock which generated approximately £110,000 in income and in the same manner there was profit in the Hafan, Pwllheli.

A member felt that Barmouth and Aberdyfi harbours were not advertised sufficiently like other harbours in the County by the National Assembly, and there was no reference to them in the North Wales Tourism magazines.

(iii) In the context of **navigation**, an update was given by the Maritime and Country Parks Officer regarding the maintenance of navigational aids and the need to identify funding in the current revenue budget to meet the cost. Members' attention was drawn to the locations of the navigational aids. It was noted that the marker for the outfall pipe that indicated the distance of the pipe with the sewerage outfall buoy, caused concern although Welsh Water were aware of the situation that the navigation buoy was deficient.

It was noted that the condition of the Perch aid continued to deteriorate and it would be renovated by placing it on a stake at a cost of £45,000. However, in the meantime the aid would have to be moved at the start of spring and a temporary aid stationed in the channel to indicate the location of the obstruction. It was trusted that this would indicate the exact location of the obstruction and ensure that the boats navigating the channel would be directed away from the obstruction. It was proposed to notify mariners of shallow draught vessels that navigate across the northern shore at high tide of the obstruction.

It was recognised that the Perch aid was vital for mariners and that stationing a buoy permanently on the site would be a mistake and that a high stake of some sort would be more acceptable.

A representative from the Yacht Club made an appeal to ensure that mariners were notified especially during the Three Peaks Race.

(iv) The officer elaborated on the **staffing** situation and noted that many officers from the Maritime Unit continued to be on secondment. It was noted that the Harbour Assistant from Aberdyfi (who had been seconded to a post in Abersoch) had been appointed Harbour Master in Porthmadog.

Although there were 2 permanent posts within the Barmouth Harbour staffing structure, it may be necessary to reconsider the appointment of a full time Harbour Assistant for next year. In the same manner, this would also be true in the context of Aberdyfi Harbour with the pattern of collaborative working between the staff of both harbours continuing.

Regarding the appointment of beach officers, it was trusted that a maximum of 4 could be appointed, however, it was emphasised that they had to be industrious in order to ensure value for money for the service.

(v) It was pleasing to note that the bathing water quality had attained the requirements and enabled the Maritime Unit to submit an application for the **Blue Flag Beach Award**. Members were referred to the results of the bathing water tests attached to the report in order to compare these with the results for Aberdyfi and Tywyn.

(vi) Members were updated on the development of the project to install a **pontoon** that would extend from the quay wall opposite the Harbour office for a distance of approximately thirty metres in order to improve access and the safety of passengers/mariners boarding and disembarking at Barmouth. The officer elaborated on what needed to be considered such as the current condition of the quay wall, FEPA licence, planning application and consultation with the Countryside Council for Wales. A survey of the wall would be undertaken by consulting engineers in order to ensure a detailed and full assessment of its condition and further consideration would be given to the pontoon development following this. If the development proceeded it was noted that the pontoon would be a seasonal facility and it would have to be dismantled and stored on land during winter and repositioned for the summer season activities.

The Harbour Master noted that he was still awaiting the costs for second-hand pontoons.

Representatives from the Yacht Club and the Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users were under the impression that the intention of the project was to have a new pontoon rather than a second-hand one in the hope of attracting money from the SPLASH fund. They were also not certain of the size of the pontoon and could not imagine its exact location in accordance with the Maritime Officer's description.

In response, the Maritime Officer suggested that it was therefore necessary to discuss the exact location of the pontoon further and the Yacht Club should submit to the Maritime Service their observations regarding what they had in mind and desired in terms of the location and bearing in mind the space in the harbour for visiting boats.

The Group Engineer supported the need for a specialist survey of the condition of the Harbour wall together with rough plans for the pontoon's location in order to ascertain if it was practical to station a pontoon on the wall in its current condition.

The Chair reported that it was proposed to hold an informal meeting with representatives from Aberdyfi to discuss costs and collaborative working between both harbours, as they were also making enquiries to locate a pontoon in Aberdyfi harbour. The Chair gave an assurance that he would convene a meeting with officers if appropriate to discuss the development further.

(vii) No application had been received thus far for **beach concessions**, however, it was anticipated that an application would be submitted to operate leisure activities and donkey rides on the beach. It was noted that the Land Train attraction would not be able to operate on the promenade until the beginning of May at the earliest, due to the need to complete the repair work on the northern end of the promenade.

(viii) It was reported that stemming from an idea by Councillor David Richardson, Chair of the Aberdyfi Consultative Harbour Committee, that it was proposed to prepare a **Welcome Pack** to be presented to visiting boats in the County's harbours. This would include information on the harbour's facilities, local amenities, tides, restaurants, emergency services etc. The Cambrian Railway Development Officer had also promised a supply of materials such as post cards etc, for inclusion in the pack. A representative of the Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users added that they had also gathered useful information in conjunction with the Communities First officer to be added to the pack. This information comprised time-tables, pamphlets, walking paths around Barmouth, restaurants etc.

A member suggested that it would be an idea to place maps of Barmouth on the notice boards near the promenade in order to promote the town's attractions. In response, the Chair confirmed that he would raise this matter with Barmouth's Chamber of Trade.

Members felt that the welcome packs were a positive step forward and Councillor David Richardson was thanked for his initiative.

(ix) Members were reminded that the Maritime Unit had issued three Owner's Licences and eight Boatman's Licences for a Ferry service between Barmouth and Penrhyn Point in 2009. Reference was made to the definition of 'favourable weather' as noted in the publications submitted by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and any licence issued would be based on the requirements in the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) Code of Practice for commercial vessels.

During the meeting a consultation document was presented to members outlining the requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency regarding a Boat master's Licence and the Maritime Officer read his response by stating that boatman's licences were issued by the local authority for the waters of Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Porthmadog and Menai subject to the applicants supplying the following evidence:

- RYA Powerboat Level Two Award with 12 months relevant experience
- Valid First Aid certificate
- VHF Licence
- Sea Survival Certificate

Whilst accepting that a Maritime and Coastguard Agency Level 2 Licence for a restricted estuary would be welcomed, officers were of the view that the current requirements were much too comprehensive for the proposed operators to be able to reach the required standard for the Master Boatman Licence taking into consideration that they operate within designated waters (c) and that they were masters on operating small commercial vessels to carry no more than 12 passengers.

If the Level 2 Boat Master's Licence of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency was implemented via consultation with the Consultative Harbour Committees, the likelihood was that the Maritime

Service would demand that the licence was a requirement prior to making an application for the authority's Boatman Licence or consider if the authority's Boatman's licence was required if the applicant had a valid licence from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

The response also noted consideration for a new level to the licence for the operation of small boats for passengers and that the officers were of the view that commercial certification was a requirement for those who operate in designated waters C and D and the qualifying period should be 12 months rather than 3 months. Also, it would be necessary for them to have a Sea Survival Certificate, VHF licence and a valid first aid certificate.

There was a difference of opinion amongst members regarding the requirements – on one hand it was felt that the requirements would destroy the ferry service serving Barmouth to Penrhyn Point, which has been an asset to the harbour for many years, and would also have an impact on the narrow gauge train that transports ferry passengers from Penrhyn Point to Fairbourne. On the other hand, it would be necessary to give serious consideration to the issue of upgrading the facility in terms of public health and safety if an accident occurred on the estuary.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the document received from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency was comprehensive and to be fair to Members it was suggested that they should read it before forming a final opinion and attention and further consideration would be given to the matter at the next Consultative Committee in October. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave an undertaking to forward the response dated 5 March 2010, that was sent by him to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, to members in order that they had an understanding of the requirements.

Resolved: (a) Accept and note the contents of the report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer.

(b) That the Members consider the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) document for further consideration at the next meeting of this Consultative Committee to be held in October.

(c) To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer forwards his response, dated 5 March 2010, that was sent to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, to Members for further information to be considered jointly with the above document.

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

The following issues were considered, that had not been discussed during this meeting, and the officers gave their response:-

(1) Electrical Points in the Harbour

It was asked if it was possible for the electrical points in the harbour to be repaired/changed as the current ones had rusted.

The Harbour Master promised that he would ensure that they were repaired as soon as possible.

(2) Moorings

A representative from the Yacht Club reported that several anchors had been raised and moved and as a result it was asked for how long the two boats, currently moored in the Harbour for the

purpose of transporting rocks to the Tywyn coastal defence scheme, would remain in the Harbour?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer stated that if moorings were raised that this was a good thing in terms of controlling and checking the moorings and the cost of raising any anchors was the responsibility of the individual. If there was any difficulty regarding moorings, members were asked to contact the Harbour Master directly in order to solve any problem that arose.

It was proposed to submit a moorings standard plan to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee.

The Chief Engineer noted that the majority of rocks had arrived in Tywyn, however, the boats had to moor in Barmouth.

(3) Taps in the Harbour

A representative from the Barmouth Harbour and Estuary User's Association asked if it was possible to install an additional tap in the Harbour for mariners to wash their feet.

In response, the Harbour Master stated that there was already a sufficient supply of taps in the Harbour and installing another could not be justified.

(4) RNLI Life Savers

It was asked why Gwynedd did not use the RNLI Lifesavers.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that the Council would have to pay for the service of the RNLI Lifesavers and their duties had been limited to lifesaving only. By using their own wardens the Council could be flexible with their duties and responsibilities. It appeared that the Councils of Anglesey and Conwy followed the same procedure as Gwynedd Council regarding this.

In response to the above, several members expressed concern and discontent with the situation and Councils who employed the RNLI Lifesavers saw them as useful.

(5) Dredging Scheme for Gwynedd Harbours

It was asked what the plans were for dredging harbours this year?

The Group Engineer explained that the only scheme before them this year was to dredge Pwllheli harbour and Victoria Dock and that there was no intention to dredge any other harbour within the county. It was added, that there was no funding available due to financial constraints to dredge all the harbours.

The dredging scheme in Pwllheli Harbour where sand was disposed into a purpose built bund was elaborated upon.

(6) Fishermen's Compound and surrounding green land

It was asked if the green land around the Fishermen's Compound was for sale by the Council?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that he was aware that the Property Department had received a request from an individual to buy a parcel of land measuring 20m x 5m for the purpose of erecting a fence around it to prevent litter from being thrown there.

It was understood by the Chair that several letters of objection had been received against the sale of the land and if representatives from the Yacht Club were of the same opinion it was suggested that they should send a letter of objection in the same way to the Property Department. It appeared that the Assembly Government encouraged local authorities to dispose of land in their ownership.

(7) CCTV Cameras

A member of the Meirioneth Yacht Club contacted the Maritime Service regarding the above and had not received a reply.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that a reply had been sent to the individual in question. Whilst being grateful for a capital contribution towards the cost of buying and installing CCTV cameras, it was important to bear in mind that the maintenance cost would fall onto the maritime service. It was suggested that if the Yacht Club was anxious to install their own system that they were free to do so and discuss this further with the Maritime Service.

Resolved To accept and note the comments made together with the response of the relevant officers to these..

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Chinese Lanterns

It appeared that releasing Chinese Lanterns to mark various events was popular these days and they were often mistakenly identified as emergency flares. Following a recent announcement on the news asking the public to inform maritime authorities when they released Chinese Lanterns, a member suggested that a press release should be prepared in consultation with the Chair of this Consultative Committee to ask the public to notify the service if they intend to release lanterns in the Meirionnydd area.

Resolved: Accept and note the above and that the member contacts the Chair to agree on the press release.

(b) Membership of Consultative Committee

A member reported that it was unlikely that Mr E L Vaughan, representative from the Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association would attend future meetings due to a long term illness.

Mrs Wendy Ponsford, representative of the Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association, gave an undertaking to find out if the Fisheries Association was anxious to appoint a successor to Mr E L Vaughan in order to invite a representative to future meetings.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was reported that the next meeting of this Committee would take place on Tuesday, 5 October 2010.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN