

**Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee
that took place on 4 October 2011 in Parlwr Mawr, Dragon Theatre, Barmouth**

PRESENT:

Councillors Eryl Jones-Williams, Trevor Roberts, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Louise Hughes (on behalf of Arthog Community Council). Mr K. J. Probert (RNLI), Mrs. Wendy Ponsford (Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Association), Mr Denis Howell (Meirionnydd Yacht Club), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association).

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

Officers

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

Apologies: Councillors W. Roy Owen (Portfolio Leader Maritime and Country Parks), Ioan Thomas (Chair Development Scrutiny Committee), Cllr. Aeron Williams and Peter Bunce (Barmouth Town Council) Cllr. Eric Wilding (Arthog Community Council).

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Trevor Roberts as Chair of this committee for 2011/12.

2. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

Resolved: To re-elect Mr K John Probert as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2011/12.

3. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

Councillor Trevor Roberts stated that he was a life member of the Yacht Club and he took no part in discussion associated with the Club.

4. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee held on 8 March 2011.

Reported: By the Chairman that the minutes of the Harbour Consultative Committee would be presented to the Council Board from now on. It was explained that there would be changes in how Gwynedd Council would be governed that would come into effect from May 2012, when there would be a change from a Board arrangement to a Cabinet and consequently the minutes of the Harbour Consultative Committees would be presented for the consideration of the Cabinet.

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

5. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

Submitted: The report of the Maritime Officer, Mr Barry Davies, in a different format to the usual report with bullet points only, due to budgetary cuts in the Department, a significant increase in work requirements and the lack of capacity to maintain a service of the same standard.

The activities in Barmouth harbour were reported on with specific reference to the following:

(i) Navigational Aids

That it had been a stable period in terms of navigational aids in Barmouth and an inspection was expected by Trinity House soon. Permission was received to establish a permanent Perch Port buoy that would appear on the charts.

In the context of the Perch aid, it was proposed to install a southern cardinal navigational aid on the northern side of the channel that was currently being marked with yellow buoys. There had been a some delay before it was installed as the quote received was high in the sum of £3,000. Two additional competitive quotations were expected and it was hoped that the aid could be installed by November 2011.

It was necessary to undertake a substantial cost to the remaining aids namely £1,200 to take down the Perch, maintenance cost of £1,100, lights £1,000 and the maintenance of the remainder was £1,800. The Maritime Officer recognised that it was very challenging to try and find the above funding, in light of the current economic climate, and in addition to this it was necessary at the request of the Town Council to demolish the shelter at a cost of £2,300.

It was noted that the number of beach zone marker buoys would be reduced this year as a substantial number had been lost over the last two years.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions on the contents of the above and the following observations were made:

(a) Why were the yellow buoys not on station

In response, the Maritime Officer stated that it should be ensured that they were back on station without delay and he was amazed that these buoys were not on station. It was essential that the buoys were inspected daily.

(b) In terms of the Perch Aid, it was noted that this matter had been discussed in meetings of this Consultative Committee since 2008 and several quotations had been received in the past. A request was made for a specific time-table by when it was expected the aid would be back on station as several mariners had made enquiries about this.

In response, the Maritime Officer recognised that the matter had been in the pipeline for some time now. However, the Port buoy assisted mariners to sail in and out of the Harbour. There was no similar buoy to the Perch in any of the Council's other harbours, however, it was assured that it would be on station by Christmas.

(c) It was further asked what was the cost of the yellow buoys and what was the cost of placing the Perch aid back on station.

In response, the Maritime Officer confirmed that the cost of the yellow buoys was not significant and the installation cost of the Perch Aid had not been analysed and this would be presented to the Members at the next Consultative Committee meeting.

(ch) That the aid at the end of the point was in poor condition and required repair work soon

In response, it was reported that the aid was not in poor condition but general maintenance work needed to commence. The Maritime Officer confirmed that it appeared as Item 3 on the Harbour Master's work programme list (circulated to members during the meeting).

(d) That complaints had been received from the Three Peaks Race mariners that navigational aids were not on their correct stations and a Member was of the opinion that they were not inspected regularly.

In response, the Chairman stated that the Harbour Master should be informed at the time if there were any difficulties in order to act immediately rather than raising the matter months later. The Maritime Officer added that he would discuss the issue with the relevant officers. The Maritime Unit had not received any complaints regarding the location of the navigational aids.

(ii) Proprietor and Boatman Licences

(a) The Maritime Officer stressed that it was a requirement that every holder of a proprietor and boatman's licences conformed with the terms of the licence. A number of letters had been received by the Maritime Officer from the operators of the two ferries accusing each other of not conforming with the requirements. The coastguard had investigated the claims by undertaking secret inspections, however, no boat was seen to operate in a way that caused concern and he was confident that they were operating safely. It was necessary to be very cautious when making unfounded allegations against each other. In the same manner, the Maritime Officer – Harbours had investigated the claims several times and he saw no reason that caused concern. A letter had appeared in the local press that one operator had sailed his ferry in inclement weather. It was noted that the safety of passengers was of the utmost importance and every skipper should be certain that weather conditions were favourable for the journey that was to be undertaken. It was stressed that this was the responsibility of the licensed the boat skipper, and the Maritime Unit could not be available for twenty four hours as a service to make a decision regarding the definition of 'favourable weather' . Several photographs had been received as evidence, however, it was only the boat that could be seen. In addition, the maritime staff spent a whole day investigating evidence from the CCTV camera but no evidence was seen to justify issuing the operator with a warning. Approximately three weeks ago one operator sailed up close to the quay wall and steps were taken to write to the operator in this case.

It was emphasised that the Council would not issue a licence to operators unless the boats were safe for their purpose.

(b) The Chairman reported that it appeared that the Council could not be accused of any dysfunction stemming from the above, and that there was a clash of personalities between the two operators in question. This issue had taken the limited time of officers to try and resolve, and evidently this could not go on. The Chairman suggested that a meeting should take place without delay with the parties in question, before Christmas, in order to seek a solution and put an end to this matter.

(c) Another Member, who was Chair of the Council's Licensing Sub-Committee, added that if such an issue had occurred under the rules of that committee then any allegation would have to be proven with evidence and the person committing the offence would be open to a fine of up to a £1,000.

(d) Councillor Louise Hughes was given an opportunity to read a question she had been given, although the question was not valid by now as it had been proven that the ferry operators conformed with the licence requirements.

The member added that she was concerned regarding the situation, and she had had many discussions with the Maritime Officer and the only important issue for her was public safety. It was understood that the operators had been rowing publicly and it was obvious that there was a clash of personalities that unfortunately damaged the Council.

RESOLVED: To request that the Chairman organises a meeting before Christmas with the Operators and Members / Officers to resolve the issue and that the owners behave respectfully towards each other in the future.

(iii) Maritime Statistics

(a) The Maritime Officer guided Members through the statistics that noted the total number of powerboats namely 63 in Barmouth and 10 at Caerddaniel. There had been a reduction of 50% in powerboats at Barmouth compared with other areas along the County's coastline. It was stated that the economic climate had a serious impact on these activities as a result of fuel prices etc.,

(b) In addition, a reduction of 50% was seen in the personal watercraft registrations in Barmouth Harbour and members attention was drawn to statistics for powerboats and yachts together with the waiting list and from the figures before them it was noted that there was a general reduction.

(c) It was noted that 94 (67.1%) out of 140 moorings had been occupied with 57 being Gwynedd residents and 37 from outside Gwynedd.

(ch) For information, the comparisons of boat statistics in the context of average LOA, length and draught were noted with a comparison of boat statistics in each harbour in 2011.

(d) The list of boats moored in Barmouth Harbour was confirmed and the length and draught of the boats were noted, and if they were local or otherwise.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the above.

(iv) Harbour Budgets

(a) The Maritime Officer guided the members through the harbour budget and drew members' attention to the financial situation up to 31 August 2011, together with the expenditure budget and income targets for 2011/12. Once again this year, concern was expressed regarding the income target for Barmouth Harbour and it was noted that up to the end of August 2011 a target of approximately £14,000 was seen and due to the need to undertake repayments the situation was getting worse.

(b) In response to a query from a Member regarding the income from the sale of Harbour assets in Barmouth, the Maritime Officer explained that he understood that 50% of the total was retained centrally with the remaining 50% referred to the Economy and Community Department. It was explained that this was how the disposal of assets were implemented.

(c) The Member was of the view that a contribution of the above money should be earmarked for Harbour activities. Members were not aware of how much money was

generated having sold the assets and it was trusted that this information would be available by the end of the current financial year.

The Maritime Officer gave an undertaking that he would present this information to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee indicating the assets sold together with a balance sheet for the sale.

(ch) In response to a query from another member regarding the future of the SS Dora building, the Maritime Officer confirmed that the building would not be developed, and it was not proposed to dispose of it and they were seeking to get possession of the vacant units for harbour use.

RESOLVED: (a) To accept and note the above.

(b) To request that the Maritime Officer submits information to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee in March 2012 stemming from the sale of Council assets in Barmouth.

(v) Events

(a) The Maritime Officer appreciated the cooperation of the Three Peaks Race Committee for all the work undertaken to realise the success of the race in Barmouth and it was trusted that it would go from strength to strength in the future. An appeal was made to members if they received observations regarding navigational aids during the Race, that in the future they transfer that information to the Harbour master without delay.

(b) The Canoeing Regatta Weekend had to be postponed due to the unfavourable weather.

(c) Things were looking favourable to receive the Blue Flag Award as the water quality this far had reached the required standards. It was noted that one test had failed on 11 August, with another test on 8 September reaching the minimum standard and it was trusted that these results will not impair on the 2012 standards. During the meeting the results of the test were submitted for information to Members.

(ch) Concern was expressed by the Maritime Officer that a JCB had been located on the beach, in the absence of the Harbour Master, during the Motor Cross provisions last year. The Company had been warned to ensure that they complied with the rules to avoid any future difficulties as it was essential to safeguard natural vegetation on the beach.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the above.

(vi) Concessions and Improvements

(a) The Maritime Officer reported that access to the maritime storage caused difficulties for the Maritime Unit and was costly for the service to dispose of waste which entailed half a day of staffing resources. They would try and ensure that every space holder receives a commercial waste agreement and it was proposed to place a barrier on the access.

(b) It was confirmed that they would invest in the Harbour ladders in the hope that this work could be completed during the next few months. The Maritime Officer – Harbours and the Harbour Master would proceed with this work over the winter months.

(c) Work in connection with the developments for a pontoon would continue and it was envisaged that it would be located between the slipway and the corner of the Harbour wall.

(ch) It was noted that units in Aberamffra Harbour area had been sold but that the land and the quay were retained in the Council's possession. An assurance was given that the owners of the units would not have a right to park on the land only for the purpose of loading and unloading goods.

(d) The Maritime Officer was concerned about the quality of the surface of the walls in the Diesel Store and it was necessary to invest to repair them.

(dd) Several applications had been received for beach and promenade concessions from local businesses. However, there had been difficulties with individuals who had taken advantage of the situation by establishing a business on the promenade under the Hawker Licence system. Enquiries had been made with the police regarding this and it was understood that although the holder confirmed that the Police had given him permission that they had not issued a licence. Specific steps would have to be taken next year in order to safeguard the interests of individuals and local businesses.

(e) The Chairman added that the individual continued to operate on weekends and that the Town Council objected to this.

(f) Another Member noted that the Council, as the licensing authority, in consultation with the Police should be aware of the situation in order to take appropriate steps to prevent any abuse of the licence.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the above.

(vii) Safety of Maritime Equipment

Reference was made to the marine watch registration form that was attached to the agenda, to be implemented in conjunction with the Police who were anxious to re-implement the scheme with the authority. It was proposed to correspond with each one of the Harbour customers encouraging them to register their property and it was trusted that they would receive their support to be part of the scheme in 2012. There were many crimes concerning maritime equipment.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the above.

(viii) Harbour Staff

The arrangements for staffing of the Harbour during Winter 2011/12 were elaborated upon, namely that the Harbour Assistant's contract had ended at the end of September and that Barmouth Harbour Master would assist in Aberdyfi Harbour for one day a week. Unfortunately, the budget did not allow the employment of two members of staff in Barmouth over the winter period.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the above.

7. 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 officer gave his response:-

(1) Hafan Pwllheli Pontoon Moorings – Winter 2011/12

(a) A letter was read out by a Member representing the Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Association, that had been sent by the Maritime Officer to boat owners offering mooring holders (that are not in the marina) an opportunity to moor their boats in Hafan Pwllheli (the marina) for a reduced fee. This was on a first come first serve basis to annual mooring holders who had paid their full fee in the Harbours of Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Barmouth and Aberdyfi. The period would extend from 1 October 2011 until 31 March 2012 for £72 a month, including VAT and electricity (subject to availability).

The Member stated, although she had no objection to the proposal, that she felt that it was unfair to attract customers from the Barmouth area and that it would have a detrimental impact on local businesses including shops, public houses etc.,.

(b) In the same manner another Member added that it would have an impact on the income of Barmouth Harbour as well as the Yacht Club. A further comment was made, although it was an excellent offer it had been sent rather late in the year and the insurance policies of some boat owners would end around November.

(c) The Maritime Officer thanked the members for their comments and he explained that as an officer he had to look at the service in its entirety and he had a duty to seek the best for the Harbours. By giving this offer it was hoped that the sailing season at Pwllheli could be extended and he added that navigation into Pwllheli Harbour was fairly convenient. In response to the comment made regarding the loss of income to the Yacht Club, it was not proposed at all to undermine the Club's activities and it would be interesting to see next year if there was any loss to the Club. Statistics would be submitted to the next meeting of the Consultative Committee on how many boats will have taken advantage of this offer.

(ch) Another Member stated that Pwllheli had received negative publicity recently and this had been highlighted in a national sailing magazine and emanated from the silting problem. When mariners saw in magazines that it was not possible to gain twenty four hour access into Pwllheli Harbour, as a result they tended not to visit Cardigan Bay. The member was of the opinion that this in turn had an impact on the Harbours at Aberdyfi and Barmouth. It was felt that officers did not understand the situation as they were not experienced and professional mariners.

In response, the Maritime Officer stated whilst accepting that Pwllheli had received negative comments recently, he was of the view that this did not stop boats from sailing to Aberdyfi nor Barmouth and that the main reason for the lack of visiting boats was the economic climate. £700,000 net profit had been made from the activities in Pwllheli Harbour and it was important to bear in mind that each one of the other Harbours benefited from this income. It was difficult for him to accept that Pwllheli had a negative impact on the other harbours without strong evidence to support this. There would be a dredging campaign next winter to try and resolve the problem and a leveller had been used during the summer when an improvement had been seen.

It was very unfair to undermine the quality and professionalism of the officers as professional and experienced mariners did work for the service.

(2) Fenders on ladders

It was reported that Members had been concerned for several years regarding the fenders on the ladders that need to be changed without delay.

In response, the Maritime Officer confirmed that this would be added to the Harbour Master's work list and he would go about to undertake this work over the winter season.

The Chairman added that day to day issues that are a matter of concern to Members could be raised with the Harbour Master rather than waiting to raise this at the Consultative Committee meetings.

(3) Pontoons

The Chairman added that there was a meeting to discuss the above on Wednesday, 12 October 2011 and that the scheme and proposal were to be seen in the Harbour Master's Office.

(4) Access to fresh water

The Maritime Unit was thanked for the electricity supply on the quay and it was asked further if it was possible to receive a water supply from the tap near the SS Dora building and it was often turned off. More taps were required on the Quay as customers used them for different needs.

The Maritime Officer was very disappointed that a further request had been made for fresh water following a substantial investment to improve the supply in 2011. He was of the view that it would not be possible to add to the number of water taps on the quay.

(5) Advertising the Harbours

Members felt strongly that small harbours such as Aberdyfi and Barmouth should have more publicity by advertising in appropriate places. Material had been prepared in the form of posters, leaflets in the context of Aberdyfi harbour which had been placed in the other harbours but unfortunately the Council did not advertise the harbours to attract customers.

Resolved (a) To accept and note the comments made together with the answers from the officers to these.

(b) To convey to the Head of Economy and Community the wish of the Consultative Committee that the service to advertise Harbour events in places and appropriate magazines should attract more future customers.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was reported that the next meeting of this Committee would take place on Tuesday, 27 March 2012.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN