
**PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE,
12 March 2008**

Present: Councillor Ieuan Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Selwyn Griffiths and June Jones, (Gwynedd Council), along with Messrs Gwyn Davies (Porthmadog Town Council), Peter Lunt Williams (Lifeboat Institution), Dr John Jones Morris, (Leisure Interests).

Also Present: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), John Hughes (Acting Harbourmaster), Malcolm Humphreys (Beach Officer) and Ioan Hughes (Committee Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Richard Parry Hughes, (Gwynedd Council), David Eastwood, (Harbour Interests), Robert Owen, (Commercial Interests), David McLean, (Porthmadog Harbour Committee).

WELCOME

At the beginning of the meeting the Beach Officer, Malcolm Humphreys, was welcomed to his first committee.

ILLNESS

Reference was made to the recent illness of Eifion Davies, one of the Maritime Museum staff and the committee wished him well for a full and speedy recovery.

1. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 26 September 2007 as a true record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Reference was made to the condition of the surface water discharge pipe at Borth y Gest and it was emphasised that the situation should be monitored.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that officers shared the concerns of members and that they were corresponding with Welsh Water in order to discuss the situation. The officer suggested that it was timely to contact Welsh Water as they were currently working in Cricieth.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

3. THE REPORT OF THE MARITIME SERVICE

Submitted – the report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer and the various items were considered individually:

Maintenance

It was reported that substantial maintenance work had been carried out in the Porthmadog Harbour during the winter months in preparation for the busy holiday season.

Fees and Charges

Detailed information was submitted on the Porthmadog harbour fees and charges. It was intended to increase the charges for those residing permanently in Gwynedd by 3%, whilst the increase for those residing outside of Gwynedd be increased by 4%. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that this reflected the efforts made to protect local interests.

It was reported that the inflation for every harbour in Gwynedd in 2008/09 was forecasted to be 3.97%, which equated to an increase of £11,270 in the income target. It was emphasised that this would be a considerable challenge.

Information was submitted regarding the fees and charges for launching and registering Personal Watercrafts, which would increase by an average of 7%.

It was accepted that only a few boats had been launched at Porthmadog, despite the slipway having been extended. However, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that some people, such as members of the Rowing Club, used it and that extending the slipway had been a worthwhile scheme.

Reference was also made to the entrance fee of £3 to the beach at Morfa Bychan which would apply throughout the summer. It was accepted that this was reasonable and the Beach Officer was thanked for the work carried out there.

In relation to registration fee, it was explained that the fee was £15 by post and £20 at the office. This system was established as some people gave a false address and dealing with the matter by post would eliminate this.

The overall increase in the income target for the Maritime Unit for 2008/09 was £62,040 and this would increase the overall income target of the Maritime Unit to £2,070,880. In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that this included everything within the maritime work but that the Country Parks were separate.

Pleasure Boat Licence

Information was submitted regarding the rules to be followed when issuing a Pleasure Boat Proprietor's Licence.

Although no application for such a licence had been received in Porthmadog for many years, the vessels were entitled to operate in the harbour. As a result, the Maritime Unit was required to ensure that any applications would be given due consideration.

Further information was submitted in relation to inspecting vessels and the minimum equipment required by the owners of vessels in categorised waters. Members were given an opportunity to voice their opinions on the various issues and the officers' recommendations were supported.

Budgets

Information was submitted in relation to the financial position of Porthmadog Harbour as of 31 January 2008. It was noted that the income target relating to the harbour for 2007/08 was £75,020 and that the total income generated to the end of January 2008 was £76,159. It was not anticipated that a significant amount of income would be generated in February and March.

It was reported that expenditure on some issues had exceeded the budget. This caused concern as additional expenditure was anticipated in February and March. It was emphasised that a significant investment had been made in Porthmadog and an expenditure of approximately £1,500.

It was noted that this funding would have to be identified and a warning was made that 2008-09 would be a challenging year for the Maritime Unit and especially, therefore, for the Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Aberdyfi and Barmouth harbours. It was emphasised that the over expenditure and deficit in income at some harbours would need to be overcome, especially given the current financial climate facing the Authority.

£100,000 was received as a result of parking charges at Black Rock Sands. This was a little lower than the previous year, but the Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the obvious reason for this was the weather.

Navigation

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer was pleased to report that the majority of aids to navigation leading to the Porthmadog Harbour had remained on station during the initial part of the winter months. Difficulties had been experienced in the past, but this year's report was very positive.

The no. 5 Starboard buoy would have to be repositioned on station as soon as the weather would allow. One new lantern had been installed at a cost of £1,000 and the officer was satisfied that the lanterns system, which was used on a trial basis, had worked well and the matter would be given further attention later on.

In accordance with the request of the RNLI and members of this Committee, two additional guiding marker buoys had been positioned in the channel leading to Portmeirion. It was noted that constant changes to the channel through the winter months had caused difficulties when maintaining the navigable waterway.

It was added that all moorings had been inspected and maintenance work was carried out, in preparation for the summer. The cost of maintaining moorings and aids to navigation during the spring of 2008 would be £2,800 and the standard of work carried out would also be inspected in detail.

It was noted that £5,000 had been spent on maintenance work in the Porthmadog Harbour.

Staffing

It was reported that a number of officers from the Maritime Unit were currently on secondment in other areas of the service. In addition, the Harbourmaster, who was currently located at Porthmadog, would move to Abersoch at the end of March.

It was confirmed that a Harbourmaster would be responsible for Porthmadog throughout the summer. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer thanked all staff for their conscientious work and the way in which they ensured the highest quality service without causing any difficulties for the customer.

This was supported by the members and it was noted that members of the public frequently referred to the high quality service.

The Harbourmaster thanked everyone for the support he had received throughout his time at Porthmadog.

Harbour Control Boat

It was reported that a new power boat had been purchased to be used to control the harbour. The existing boat had been used successfully since 1998.

The new boat was expected to be used prior to the first bank holiday in May. The cost of ensuring that the new vessel was operational would be in the region of £21,000.

General Issues

It was reported that the yacht tender tracking system that was installed during the early part of 2007 had proved to be of benefit. The security fencing would be extended during the spring at a cost of approximately £1,800 and it was explained that this would tidy the site as well as improving the service.

Reference was made to an incident in January 2008 when it was reported that a parcel of drugs had been washed ashore at Tywyn.

The public were advised to be vigilant and to report any suspicious activity to the Police immediately.

Particular attention had been given to complaints received regarding quad bikes being used in the sand dune area during the winter months. It was noted that the dune area was a Special Site of Scientific Interest and causing damage to such a site was an offence.

It was reported that staff from the Unit had been on additional patrols on the beach for a period of some weeks, despite having other work demands.

The Maritime Unit would be calling for additional assistance from the Countryside Council for Wales in order to ensure tighter management of the dune area at weekends, especially during the winter months.

Concern had been expressed by members who had received complaints about the bikes and had seen them on the dunes themselves. But it was emphasised that the work carried out and the co-operation with the police was appreciated and that the situation was improving. Members were grateful for the signs installed reminding everyone of the rules, although some people chose to ignore them.

To ensure better management of the beach area, a new member of staff would be appointed on a seasonal basis to start on 19 March. Two additional members of staff would be available to assist as required.

Reference was made to recent sightings of turtles on some of the beaches. It was noted that the public were advised not to touch the turtles, but to inform the authorities.

It was confirmed that an application had been made by Welsh Highland Railway Ltd to build an additional suspended walkway above the Porthmadog Harbour waters. The officer did not anticipate that the walkway would cause any difficulties from a maritime viewpoint.

This was accepted and it was noted that the design and other details of the bridge would be planning issues.

In response to an enquiry, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that acquiring better buildings for staff near the entrances to Morfa Bychan Beach was considered a priority. It was anticipated that the work could be completed within two or three years.

Harbour By-laws

It was reported that whilst the draft By-laws had been approved by the Harbour Committee a while ago, they had not been confirmed by the Welsh Assembly Government. It was added that the Council's Legal Unit had discussed that matter with representatives of WAG, but there had been some confusion recently with WAG noting some doubts regarding who was responsible for the by-laws.

Although there had been some development, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer expressed considerable dissatisfaction as the matter had been in the pipeline for years now. It was very much hoped that the Legal Unit would continue with the work of confirming the Porthmadog Harbour By-laws as an urgent matter.

Sailing Club

An application had been received from the Madog Sailing Club which wished to have an extension of 36 meters on its pontoons system in the direction of the Harbour Bridge. In a letter received from the Club, it was noted that the extension would not impact on the slipway.

It was agreed that this was a matter for the Area Committee and that detailed plans would be required. Members were asked to contact the Maritime and Country Parks Officer within a month to voice their opinion on the application.

It was noted that neither Councillor Ieuan Roberts nor Selwyn Griffiths had taken part in this discussion.

The meeting commenced at 6pm and concluded at 7:15pm