
PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
11 MARCH 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Ieuan Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Selwyn Griffiths (Gwynedd Council), along with Messrs Gwyn Davies (Porthmadog Town Council), Dr John Jones Morris (Leisure Interests) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests).

ALSO PRESENT: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer) and Ioan Hughes (Committee Officer).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Alwyn Gruffydd, Dyfed Edwards, (Chairman of the Council Board), Dai Rees Jones (Vice-chairman of the Council Board), Peter Lunt Williams (RNLI), Trefor Jones (Harbour Master).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received from any member present.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 24 September 2008, as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was noted that the need for additional pontoon moorings continued and the representative of leisure interests was confident that there was no need to be concerned about the lack of space between the slipway and the boats. He emphasised that what was intended was an appropriate place for both local boat owners and visitors.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer had no objection in principle to the request and he was aware of the Sailing Club's desire to promote the harbour. The Officer also referred to the need to address the use made of the slipway and it would be possible to address this issue in due course. He added that collaboration between the Sailing Club, the Council and the Private Sector was crucial.

It was noted that whatever the final decision, it would be impossible to undertake any development prior to next winter at the earliest.

RESOLVED that the Council, the Sailing Club and the Private Sector will hold further discussions in order to move forward to install additional pontoon moorings if all are in agreement.

4. REPORT OF THE MARITIME SERVICE

The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was submitted and attention was given to the following matters individually:

Fees and Charges

In respect of Porthmadog Harbour, it was proposed to increase the charges by 3% for permanent residents of Gwynedd and an increase of 4% for those residing outside the county. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer added that the VAT reduction from 17.5% to 15% would ensure a reduction in the net cost for users.

It was foreseen that the rate of inflation for Gwynedd harbours in 2008/09 would be 2.67%, which would correspond to an increase of £7,540 in the total target income for harbours in 2009/10.

The target for Porthmadog Harbour had been achieved for several years. However, considering the current situation, the officer emphasised that further steps would have to be taken to ensure that expenditure and income targets could be met without compromising standards.

The Officer was glad to note that it was not proposed to increase launching fees and registration fees for power boats and personal water craft in the next financial year. It was anticipated that this would encourage more people to use the facilities in the Porthmadog area. The Officer emphasised that the registration system was crucial and he was eager to see all users conforming to Council rules.

The Officer added that the total increase in the target income for the Maritime Unit for 2009/10 was £51,020. Consequently, the total target income for the Unit would be £2,121,900.

The Officer explained that it was anticipated that the fees and charges for 2009/10 would be confirmed by the Statutory Officers and the Lifelong Learning Portfolio Leader.

A draft copy of the fees and charges had been sent to all customers to ensure that they were aware of all the changes.

Budgets

The financial position of Porthmadog Harbour as of 31 January 2009 was reported. The target income for 2008/09 was £78,260, and the total income to the end of January 2009 was £75,890. It was not anticipated that the income generated during February and March would be substantial but the Maritime and County Parks Officer was confident that the target income would be slightly higher than the target at the end of the financial year. The officer noted that this situation was excellent.

In response to an enquiry, it was explained that all Gwynedd harbours would be considered on an equal basis to ensure financial balance.

Concern was expressed by the officer that the expenditure was higher than the budget in several fields. In addition, it was foreseen that further expenditure would be required during February and March.

Members were reminded that the 'NT 53 12 01' (£12,050) expenditure had been established for minor improvements within the harbour. This included improvements to the diesel facility which had now been completed, extending the slipway, renewing chains and improving storage facilities.

Considering the current economic situation and the challenge facing the Council, the Officer emphasised that 2009/10 would be an extremely difficult year for the Maritime Unit. He added that any overspend or financial deficit would have to be overcome.

Navigation/ Moorings

Most aids to navigation leading to the harbour at Porthmadog had remained on station during the beginning of 2009. The Officer added that more resources had been made available to monitor the channel regularly.

He made reference to major changes which had occurred in the channel opposite the area of 'Cwt Powdwr'. The Maritime Unit advised mariners to exercise caution when navigating in this area.

The Officer referred to the maintenance work undertaken on the navigational aids and the additional on-going work. It was noted that all lanterns had remained on station during the winter months and the Officer believed that this had been of benefit. The Officer anticipated that this arrangement would continue next winter.

Maintenance work had been completed on the navigation channel buoy and it would be returned to its position during the spring. The Harbour Master and the Harbours Maritime Officer would install the buoy before the Whitsun Bank Holiday this year.

The Officer further reported that all the moorings would be inspected and replaced so that they would be secure and safe for the sailing season. Qualified contractors had been invited to submit estimates for the work and the lowest estimate of £2,750 had been accepted. There would be an additional cost of £650 for realigning moorings.

It was reported that the cost of mooring chains and shackles used for maintaining moorings and navigational aids within Porthmadog harbour during the spring of 2009 would be £4,000. It was noted by the Officer that this was significantly higher than the total of £2,800 in 2008.

All moorings situated in Borth y Gest had been inspected by the Harbour Master and none would need to be removed during the winter.

Staff

The Officer referred to some changes which would take place within the Unit but it was noted that this would not have an effect on the service. He added that there were difficult decisions to be made but he did not foresee that there would be any cuts in Porthmadog.

With regard to duties, he emphasised that staff would have to use the boat more often so that clients could see that the work of ensuring control was being undertaken. He added that it would be a challenge to improve the standard of service in a difficult financial period and this called for all Maritime staff to adopt an enthusiastic and professional approach.

Harbour Bye-laws

Members of this committee had already approved the Harbour Bye-laws but they had not been confirmed and adopted.

The Officer referred to the disappointment and dissatisfaction expressed by members of this Committee in the past because of the delay in adopting the Bye-laws. He noted that Gwynedd Council had worked diligently on this matter for some time.

The Officer elaborated on further work undertaken as part of the required consultation process. The draft Bye-laws had been sent to the Casework and Environmental Branch of the Ports Division of the Department of Transport in London. Also, the Casework and Environmental Branch had further consulted with Trinity House and the Royal Yachting Association and had compared the suggested/required modifications to the draft Bye-laws.

It was confirmed that the draft amended Bye-laws would be circulated to members of this committee as soon as possible.

Draft Shipping Regulations

The Officer reported on the consultation work currently undertaken by the Department of Transport regarding regulations to exempt amateur mariners in certain categories of ship from the offence of being over the prescribed limit of alcohol.

Having considered the views of enforcement agencies, leisure mariners and the public, ministers decided on an exemption for people on ships shorter than 7m and not capable of a speed of more than 7 knots.

A member noted that some consumed a lot of alcohol and then used boats. The proposal to introduce new regulations was welcomed.

RESOLVED to ask the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to convey this Consultative Committee's approval of the regulations referred to above.

Analysis of Customer Questionnaire

The Officer expressed his disappointment that only half of mooring users at Porthmadog had returned their questionnaires but members emphasised that such a response was heartening.

In the responses, it was noted that 33% believed that the standard of the harbour service was excellent and 43% reported it was good. None had expressed the view that the service was poor.

66% believed that safety measures in the harbour were sufficient and 22% noted that there were insufficient safety measures.

It was seen that 80% believed that the charges and fees for moorings reflected a fair service. In respect of the cleanliness of the Harbour, 16% believed it was excellent and 58% believed that it was good.

An opportunity was given to users to list services or facilities they wished to see in the harbour. It was confirmed that the Maritime Unit would address the observations received and would attempt to improve areas where improvement was needed.

Borth y Gest Outfall Pipe

The Officer reported that the outfall pipe which flowed into the navigation channel had been a cause for concern for several years. Following further difficulties, it was confirmed that work had commenced and this was welcomed by the members.

Meeting

A member referred to a meeting held between the Maritime and Country Parks Officer and the Friends of Morfa Bychan.

A member thanked the Officer for his willingness to attend the meeting of the Friends.

RESOLVED to accept the report with gratitude to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer and employees of the Unit for their work and for a successful year.