
PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
24-03-09

Present: Councillor Michael Parry (Chairman)

Councillors Robert J. Wright, Sion Selwyn Roberts, Peter Read, (Gwynedd Council), Michael Sol Owen (Pwllheli Town Council), David Bayly and David Dewsbury (Hafan Pwllheli Berth Holders Association), John Morris (Pwllheli Maritime Traders Association), Stephen Tudor (Pwllheli Sailing Club), David Hughes (Pwllheli Chamber of Trade), Dr.J.L.Jones Morris (Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee)

Also present: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), Huw Davies (Group Engineer), Wil Williams (Hafan Pwllheli Manager), Dafydd Phillips (Harbour Master) and Ioan Hughes, (Committee Officer).

1. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Consultative Committee meeting held on 4 November 2008, as a true record.

6. REPORT OF THE MARITIME SERVICE

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer's report was submitted referring to individual matters:

FEES AND CHARGES

The officer reported that the fees and charges had been approved by now and he added that 372 agreements for Hafan moorings had been confirmed. It was expected for the outstanding 34 would be returned soon.

This year, 62 former-customers had withdrawn from the Hafan thus far. This number was slightly lower than last year but the officer added that the aim was to have as little movement as possible. There were 325 still on the current waiting list but it was noted that 252 of these had been offered moorings but had decided to refuse this year.

The officer noted that the situation in the outer harbour was positive.

In relation to the increase in fees and charges, the officer explained that the increase in pontoon moorings without electricity in Hafan Pwllheli had been 4%; with a 6% increase in pontoon moorings with electricity provision. In the outer harbour moorings, there would be an increase in charges of 2% for clients who were permanent residents of Gwynedd and an increase of 4% for clients who were not permanent residents of Gwynedd. However, the reduction in VAT from 17.5% to 15% from 1 December ensured that the net cost for the client had been reduced.

The officer emphasised that the Maritime Unit faced a difficult and challenging year, with an increase of £51,020 in the income target. Consequently, the total target income for the Maritime Unit would increase to £2,121,900 in 2009/10.

Concern was expressed by the officer in respect of the Hafan's target income, particularly because of the 10% payable to the Crown Estates. He added that there was concern regarding the way in which fees were increasing. He was confident that the market could be reached this year and although some clients had chosen to leave the Hafan, the officer anticipated that they would take advantage of the resources available in the outer harbour or other harbours in Gwynedd.

The officer emphasised further that the fees could not continue to increase at a rate higher than inflation for years to come. Consequently, it was confirmed that steps required to be taken to examine fees more strategically.

Significant concern was expressed regarding the increase of 6% for the Hafan's moorings with electricity supply. The Hafan Berth Holder's Association representative emphasised that this amount was far higher than the rate of inflation and he wanted to note specifically that a total increase of between 25% and 30% had been introduced during the past three years. He was of the opinion that this was unreasonable.

The member suggested further that a procedure whereby mariners who had moorings in the Hafan could pay the fees on a monthly basis would be beneficial and he enquired whether it would be possible to introduce a system whereby local residents received a discount similar to the procedure which already existed in the outer harbour.

Consideration was also given to fairer ways of paying for electricity and officers noted that options would be considered.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that these issues were already being addressed and he would be able to submit further information to members in future and hopefully there would be guidelines for 2010/11. He did not anticipate that a monthly payment system over a period of 12 months would be likely.

Considerable attention was given to the method of establishing the fees and a full explanation was called for.

RESOLVED:

- i) that a further report is to be submitted on the payments made for the lease to the Crown Estates,**
- ii) that a report is to be prepared by the Maritime and Country Parks Officer after further consideration is given to the possibility of giving local people who have moorings in the Hafan a discount and the possibility of allowing users of the Hafan the right to pay fees on a monthly basis,**
- iii) that a report is prepared on systems that could be introduced to pay for electricity,**
- iv) that a request is made for a representative from the Council's Treasury Department to attend the next meeting of this committee so that detailed information can be received on the procedure that is followed when fees are established.**

BUDGETS

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer referred to difficulties resulting from the economic climate. He noted that it was crucial that the Unit achieved its income

target. Should the target not be achieved, cuts would have to be introduced in other places. However, because of its importance, this would not have an impact on the Hafan's budget.

The officer was confident that the Hafan would achieve or perhaps exceed the target income but he stated that there was a small deficit in the income of the outer harbour.

A member noted that the report was based on a period of ten months. In response, it was suggested that the time when this Committee was convened would be more appropriate in May and December.

The officer noted that the procedure for convening the county's harbour consultative committees had usually been at the beginning and end of the season. The officer suggested that final annual figures could be sent to members for information but he added that the timing of harbour consultative committees for Porthmadog, Aberdyfi and Barmouth would have to be reconsidered.

RESOLVED that a request is made for meetings of this committee to be held in May and December and should this not be possible, that the proposal of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to send the final figures to members is accepted.

NAVIGATION

The officer noted that some work was required on the navigation aids and it was noted that every risk and safety would be fully considered.

Three specific buoys had been placed in the harbour mouth and it was noted that the Unit was in discussion with Trinity House to consider whether it would be possible to install lanterns on them. It was explained that too many lights would complicate the situation.

Maintenance work had been completed on all the outer harbour navigation aids and further reference was made to the proposal to install an additional buoy near the Partington site to ensure that mariners did not get too close to the south wall. This decision had been made because of the current accumulation of silt there.

RESOLVED to accept the report

SAILING ACADEMY PROJECT

It was reported that the Project of developing the Sailing Academy in Pwllheli continued to develop. It was expected that JOP Consulting would complete the work of preparing a report on the Socio-economic and Language Impact Assessment which would be submitted to the Technical Group in the near future.

The Chairman noted that a number of beneficial meetings had been held in the community with local members and the Chairman of this Committee serving on the Technical Group.

As part of a project for the entire harbour, a company had been commissioned to examine the Hafan's slipway and entrance. It was noted that the slipway had not been designed for the heavy use that was being made of it by now and the company would be examining the possibility of submitting detailed plans for widening the slipway substantially and examining an alternative access to Penrhyn Glandon.

The officer added that ensuring safety was an important element of this project.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

WAKESTOCK FESTIVAL /FOOD FESTIVAL

It was noted that it was proposed to hold the Wakestock festival on 10 - 12 July 2009. The Maritime Unit had not received any complaints regarding the festival last year when it was held over three days for the first time. The Llŷn Food Festival would be held on 23 -24 May.

In respect of the Wakestock Festival, it was noted that the advice of local members had been heeded and the closure of the road on North Quay had reduced difficulties. A member noted that it was expected that the same system would continue this year.

Concern was expressed regarding the condition of the land which was the centre for both festivals. It was accepted that the matter would be addressed and the officer noted that retaining the greenness of the grass was important but there was also a need to consider the convenience for customers.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

SAILING CLUB

The officer thanked the Sailing Club for its contribution to the annual events and reference was made specifically to the National Optimist competition which had been extremely successful at Pwllheli in 2008. The Mirrors World Championship would be held in Pwllheli this year.

The Club's representative noted that they were eager to meet with the Chamber of Trade so that attention could be drawn to the programme of events that have been arranged and the number of people expected in Pwllheli. As a consequence of this, the benefits resulting from these events could be underlined.

As an additional event pontoon had been installed, the Officer explained that the size of the pontoon had been doubled and it was anticipated that this would be beneficial when boats were moored during the period of the competitions.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

DRAFT SHIPPING REGULATIONS

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer submitted information regarding the proposal to pass legislation through Parliament which would bring the law regarding consuming alcohol on recreational vessels to the same level as those prescribed for driving a vehicle on the highway.

The proposed regulations would be simplified by including vessels which were over 7m in length or not capable of a speed of more than 7 knots. The law would also be changed so that personal water craft would be included within the legislation.

It was also proposed to amend the Act so that only the Police could take a breath test if maritime officers caught anyone that could be in breach of the law.

A member expressed concern that the Act would be prejudicial to those on board vessels, even if they were moored or tied to a pontoon. After reading the Act, the Officer did not believe that this was true but he pledged to make further enquiries regarding this matter in respect of the new legislation.

Information regarding the way in which those using jet skis without lights would be dealt after these water craft had been included under the legislation. The officer explained that boats had to comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the Committee welcomes the new Legislation**
- ii) that further enquiries are made to the way in which the legislation could affect those on board anchored water craft or those tied to a pontoon.**
- iii) that enquiries are made to the way in which jet skis are to be dealt with without lights when they are included as water craft in the legislation.**

CUSTOMER OPINION

Disappointment was expressed by the Officer that only 38% had responded to the questionnaire distributed to mooring holders in Pwllheli so that they could express their opinion on the service provided.

It was noted by the Hafan Pwllheli Berth Holders representative that they had also completed a detailed survey in the Hafan and the harbour and a high percentage had responded. Their willingness to share the results with the officer was expressed and this co-operation was welcomed.

REORGANISATION OF SERVICES

The officer referred to recent changes as a consequence of the Council's challenging financial situation. For many years, the Maritime Unit had been part of the Lifelong Learning Service. By now, the lifelong Learning Service had been disbanded and the Maritime Unit had become part of the Economic Development Service.

The officer emphasised that the cuts were inevitable and the workforce was a field which could not be ignored. However, he added that the number of workers were few and they were working under considerable pressure. Apart from the Hafan, only ten officers maintained the service during the winter and during most of the summer.

Considering the situation, it was explained that jobs would not be lost but reorganisation was a possibility and finding ways of getting more value for money from that which had been invested in the area's harbours.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

RED DIESEL

The officer reported on a new procedure which came into effect in November 2008, in accordance with European Legislation.

Rebate duty payable on red diesel for use by pleasure craft had ended. Consequently, there was an additional duty of .4066p per litre of red diesel purchased. The price of red diesel would therefore increase to £1:06p a litre.

The officer was concerned that the increase could have a substantial detrimental impact on the use made of pleasure craft. The increase was not relevant to commercial operators, namely, fishing vessels, passenger ships, workboats etc.

The officer elaborated on further rules and how they would be implemented. He explained that the duty would not be payable if the red diesel was purchased for heating the boat or charging the battery. The additional duties were therefore relevant for red diesel used to power pleasure craft.

However, before receiving the diesel, the purchaser would be required to complete and sign a statutory declaration to calculate the amount of red diesel required for manoeuvring the boat and the percentage used for heating/charging the boat. The percentage recommended was 60% for manoeuvring and 40 % for heating/charging.

The fuel supplier would be responsible for collecting all the additional duty and responsible for informing the Customs and Excise of the additional duty collected. However, the officer emphasised that there would be no further responsibility on the supplier and they could not question the information provided by the purchaser.

It was noted that the Maritime Unit was concerned about the likely delay that the process would cause near the fuel pontoon when completing the statutory declaration and the work involving calculating the duty. It was added that comprehensive preparatory work had been completed and the officer called for everyone to be patient as the procedure was statutory and there could be delays at busy periods.

Various ways of facing the difficulties were suggested, including the possibility of issuing the necessary forms beforehand or to set one price for red diesel and sharing it reasonably at the end of the season.

A member referred to a computer system which would reduce the time taken for purchasing and it was accepted that it would be reasonable to enquire for more details regarding this possibility.

According to a member who had used the system when purchasing red diesel, it took three minutes more than usual and he could not see that there was a need to be overly concerned. It was further noted that users should be informed of the new system.

The Hafan Manager reported that it would be easier to express an opinion on the matter at the end of the season when the Unit had had experience of dealing with the system.

RESOLVED:

- i) to accept the report**
- ii) that a letter is sent to all users, informing them of the legislation and the new system and the Pwllheli Berth Holders Association also wish to inform their members of the new system.**
- iii) that enquiries are to be made to the possibility of using a computerised system that will facilitate the work.**

HAFAN PWLLHELI'S HOIST

It was reported that a new hoist would be purchased to work in Hafan Pwllheli within approximately five months. There had been some delay as it was now a requirement to advertise the need to replace the boat hoist on the Buy 4 Wales website.

It was added that repair work had been completed on the existing hoist which was now working much better.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

DREDGING THE HARBOUR

The Group Engineer reported that the Unit had a list of suitable contractors and the next step would be preparing documents and receiving environmental permission in order to go out to tender and proceed to dredging the harbour during next winter.

A member referred to a consultation report on dredging the harbour and he expressed disappointment because all the information was not available for the entire harbour. He added that the consultants had been directed to submit a report on the channel and the basin of the Hafan only.

In response, the Group Engineer explained that everything had been considered from the financial perspective and the work that could be achieved within the budget. The member believed that it would be better if the consultants could

have submitted a report on the entire harbour and the Unit could then later consider what could be achieved.

Further concern was expressed because of the deterioration in some parts of the harbour and the silt affecting the movement of some boats. In addition, it was noted that the flow of water in the channel was extremely strong because of the silt deposited there was making the channel exceptionally narrow. A warning was given that even experienced local mariners were having difficulty because of the situation and a serious accident could happen if there was no improvement soon.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that in the past there had been an element of over-dredging but by now the channel and the Hafan had reached levels that were in accordance with the original design made many years ago.

The officer was satisfied that the work would be done during next winter but he also accepted that some moorings would become dry. He added that it would be difficult to receive the required permissions to dredge other parts of the harbour because the value of the silt from the environmental aspect was so important.

The officer emphasised that the channel and the basin of the Hafan were the elements to be considered and that these were being addressed. From the aspect of other parts of the harbour, he stated that the tide would have to be borne in mind when navigating towards a mooring in the outer harbour. Also, the work of disposing the silt would have to be addressed and to find a suitable place for it.

Concern was expressed by a member who was of the opinion that an inordinate delay in dredging in some places would create further difficulties when attempting to receive the requisite permissions in future as the conservation levels became stricter.

Another member wished to draw attention to the advantages resulting from over-dredging which had occurred in the past and he suggested that it would be better to undertake similar work without delay and ensure these benefits for a further period.

Considering the situation as a whole, a member believed that the lack of money was the basis of all the problems. He could not see that it would be possible to get the required developments without leasing the harbour to a private company. Reference was also made to the need to create additional moorings and improving resources so that more people would use the harbour. It was further emphasised that there was a need to attract youngsters and to have suitable facilities for them.

In response to an enquiry, the Group Engineer confirmed that the work of repairing the sea wall near the entrance to the harbour would be completed during the next financial year.

A question asked by Councillor R.J. Wright regarding the way in which silt was being deposited in the harbour would be a basis for a further discussion but it was agreed that it would be better to receive full reports by the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the Group Engineer is to send copies on computer disks of the reports prepared by consultant engineers so that members can further consider the problem of silt deposited in the harbour at the next meeting of this committee.

BOAT

At the request of the Llŷn Fishermen Association, reference was made to a boat which has been abandoned at the far end of Partington Marine/Pwllheli Seafoods. The Association was concerned that the boat was untidy and was in a dangerous condition.

It was confirmed that the matter would be addressed.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 13 October 2009.

The meeting commenced at 6pm and concluded at 8.10pm.

CHAIRMAN