
PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
11-10-11

Present: Mr David Dewsbury (Chairman)

Councillors Robert J. Wright and Ioan Thomas (Gwynedd Council), Councillor M. Sol Owen (Pwllheli Town Council), Brian Edmonds (Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association), John Morris, W.A. Partington, Robert Riddell (Marine Traders Association), Andrew Picken (Pwllheli Chamber of Trade) and Stephen Tudor (Pwllheli Sailing Club).

Also present: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), Wil Williams (Manager, Hafan Pwllheli), Huw Davies (Chief Engineer), Llyr B. Jones (Senior Manager – Economy and Community) and Gwyn Parry Williams (Committee Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Peter Read, Sion Roberts

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Mr David Dewsbury as Chairman of the Committee for 2011/12.

2. VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Mr Stephen Tudor as Vice-chairman of the Committee for 2011/12.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of the Consultative Committee held on 29 March 2011, as a true record.

A member noted that there was no reference in the minutes to a matter raised regarding a review of the management arrangements of the harbour. In response, the Senior Manager – Economy and Community notified members that there was reference in the minutes to work in respect of identifying options which would take place during the current financial year.

5. REPORT OF THE MARITIME UNIT

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer referred to changing the format of the report in comparison with past reports. Historically, detailed written reports would be submitted to the committee's attention, with full details of the different issues. This time it had not been possible to do so due to several factors relating to the unit's lack of capacity to submit these reports. He noted that the amount of detail included in the reports was the same. It was important that service levels across the county were maintained.

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

- Navigation and Moorings
- Dredging

- Harbour Budgets
- Events
- The Sailing Academy
- Maritime Statistics
- Harbour Staff
- Security of Marine Equipment

Navigation and Moorings

In respect of the navigation aids, the officer noted that many changes had been undertaken with these over the years, as the channel by now had become narrower and had changed direction. Three permanent illuminated port buoys had been installed in the harbour entrance and additional starboard buoys had been installed within the channel opposite the harbour master's office. It was intended to review the value and benefit of the navigation aids which were on the training wall.

He noted that discussions would be held with Welsh Water about the aid near the pipe which discharged sewage into the harbour at times of heavy rainfall, as the pipe was currently under approximately four metres of sand. Welsh Water would be pressed to remove the pipe or repair the navigation aid.

He stated that the beach zone buoys had worked well this year, and that the boats had generally adhered to the rules of the small bay in Abererch.

In terms of mooring maintenance, the officer stated that work had been undertaken during March and April, and the cost of having them inspected by a professional team had been around £3,000. £1,400 had been invested to move the pontoons to facilitate navigation in the harbour. Generally, the maintenance costs of moorings in the harbour were fairly low and were less than £1,500 this year, to date. Trinity House had conducted an inspection this week, and their feedback was awaited. No problems were anticipated, however.

In response to an enquiry from a member with regard to installing an additional pole on the training wall, the officer notified the committee that he would be willing to look into the possibility. He noted that navigation into the harbour was fairly easy in comparison with some of the other harbours. He agreed to submit a report on the matter to the next committee.

Dredging

The officer reported on the work that had been completed to dredge the harbour entrance at the start of the sailing season, as so many materials had entered the harbour entrance over the winter months, which had resulted in the channel becoming significantly narrower and had caused problems for navigating boats into and out of the harbour. He noted that around 55,000 tonnes of silt had been removed from the harbour, and had been left as a stockpile to dry on the nearby land. He emphasised that the stockpile area was now full, and that there was no further capacity on the land to store additional material from the site.

The officer distributed a hydrography plan of the harbour that had been prepared by the Chief Engineer in May 2011. He noted that one of the plans being considered for implementation was to remove the existing stakes within the deep water. A pontoon for mooring fishermen's boats which was already located on the outer row, had been moved and relocated, with the fishermen's agreement, on the inner row of stakes. This had improved the situation in terms of navigating boats.

The Senior Manager - Economy and Community reported on the plans for the 2012/13 season. He highlighted that there were around 40 empty moorings in Hafan at present and that it faced several challenges. The economic recession had affected businesses, individuals and sectors, especially the maritime sector. Costs within the sectors had also been a factor over the past year in terms of VAT, fuel, and credit budgets available to customers. He referred to the challenges regarding the silting levels in the channel, which had been highlighted during the past year. Furthermore, there were issues regarding the area's capacity to deal with residue from the dredging works which was required around the harbour and channel. He noted that the unit was keen to complete an action plan in order to respond to these challenges, which would include many actions for the short/medium term and also for the long term. In terms of analysing the various challenges, he noted that there were two main fields being addressed at present, namely dredging and fees. In respect of the dredging work, it was anticipated that improvement would be needed for the next season, with consideration to implementing a package of projects over the winter to facilitate dredging arrangements. With respect to the stockpile which was currently full, it was intended to transport it from the site during the winter as part of a plan to restore beaches such as Carreg y Defaid mainly, which would also contribute to flood prevention work in Pwllheli.

The officer referred to a project to carry out improvements to the channel into the harbour, and he noted two main options to be completed by 2012/13. The first option involved removing some of the existing stakes which were close to the middle of the channel, with the aim of enabling a natural depth so that the channel could be used for navigation. This would be part of a wider plan, and an interim arrangement would be looked at where the stakes would be removed and options considered for relocating the moorings the following year. Should this be undertaken, it would be required to consider the needs of existing customers and offer a provision within Hafan on similar terms to the current ones.

The officer noted that the second option would be to build on the work carried out in August 2011 in terms of levelling the harbour bed. There had been some success as a result of this work, and the option intended for consideration would be to continue with this work but using heavier machinery for 2012/13. These would be actions for 2012 and 2013 specifically, because it was anticipated around September 2012 that there would be suitable dredging equipment in the harbour as part of the Sailing Academy plan. Another part of the work intended to be carried out over the winter was to consider options for incorporating additional aspects of dredging works. More significant improvements in terms of dredging were anticipated in 2013. The department was aware of the need and was keen to put arrangements in place by the start of the next season in order to improve navigation within the channel.

In response to a question from a member regarding undertaking the dredging work during the winter with occasional dredging work throughout the year from then on, the officer noted that this could be considered. He anticipated in respect of the machinery used over the summer that there would be some success, and it was intended to look at having heavier machinery for next season in order to have a greater impact on the level of the harbour bed.

In response to a question regarding problems with silting in the channel, the officer noted that strong winds during last winter had caused the channel to become narrower unexpectedly. He anticipated that this would need to be planned into the work programme in order to undertake the dredging works annually.

In response to a question from a member regarding installing groynes on the beach in the direction of Carreg yr Imbyll and moving the stakes on the northern side, by the river bend, the officer noted that they would need to address the work of moving the stakes next year for the Sailing Academy Plan. With regard to the groynes, he promised to

discuss the matter further with his fellow officers. The officer drew attention to South Beach where the paths that had been created in the original plan were now covered in sand.

A member noted that it had been suggested in the 2008 strategy that the groynes should be repaired during the 2008/09 financial year, but it appeared that this had not happened. In response, the officer stated that they needed to prioritise the budget and the work would be undertaken where there was sufficient funding available.

A member referred to a meeting that was held in August 2011 with Mr Brian Clark of the British Marine Federation, and enquired whether any feedback had been received from the meeting. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he had attended the meeting, and that Mr Clark had noted that the best person to undertake any strategy would be Mr Mike Ward, Marina Project. This person had been appointed to carry out work on the dredging strategy for Pwllheli Harbour. The Senior Manager – Economy and Community noted that background work was currently being undertaken following the meeting in August 2011, and that it was not restricted to the academy's field of work. He noted that the field of work had been extended to include the harbour's boundaries and updating/reviewing the dredging strategy. These discussions had therefore led to initial work.

In response to a question from a member with regard to ensuring licences/permits etc. to carry out necessary work in the harbour, the officer stated that a licence from the relevant body was required to hold events such as Wakestock. They did try and be flexible to facilitate the staging of such events. It was confirmed that the Council would not apply for licences where they were not required.

Harbour Budgets

Details regarding the income and expenditure of Hafan Pwllheli and the outer harbour for 2010/11 and up to August 2011 were presented.

The officer noted that the target income for Hafan this year had been £1.6m, and to date they had reached £1.3m. He referred to the vacant moorings in Hafan, and due to this it must be ensured that the target income could be achieved as closely as possible. In relation to the 2010/11 financial year, the target income had been £1,562,630, and £1,569,573 had been achieved, which showed that the position then had been better than it was at present during the current financial year.

He noted that the expenditure in the outer harbour this year was not a cause for concern and he was confident that expenditure would be within the budgets. However, he expressed grave concern that the harbour at present (end of August) was £29,000 short of the target income, and this pattern also existed in the other harbours in Gwynedd. In relation to the 2010/11 financial year, he noted that there was £16,000 overspend and an income deficit of £8,400.

A member noted that he had been given to understand at one time that the Hafan staff would also be responsible for running the remainder of the harbour. In response, the officer notified members that the Manager of Hafan, who was by now the Harbour Manager also, could coordinate work daily.

A member referred to the substantial loss of income and the fact that 47 of the pontoon moorings were currently vacant in Hafan, and that action should be taken during the year to try and attract more boats to the harbour. In response, the officer stated that the empty moorings was an indication of the seriousness of the situation, and that work would be undertaken on a plan to respond to the problem.

A member enquired whether it would be possible for customers and prospective customers to receive information, by 1st January, on the number of moorings that would have been filled or not at the harbour. In response, the officer notified members that the information had been released much too late last year and that the boaters had already made alternative arrangements. He noted that the Council's financial strategy would not be confirmed until the end of February when it would be too late, and that steps would be taken to ensure that Hafan fees were exempt from those arrangements, so that the fees could be confirmed in November, if possible.

In response to a question from a member, the officer stated that the Manager of Hafan had made enquiries with everyone who had left the moorings. He noted that the numbers who had left last year, on average, were no worse than the numbers in previous years.

In relation to the fees, the officer notified members that it was anticipated that inflation for next year would be around 4.2%. Consideration was currently being given to not increasing the fees of Hafan or the outer harbour during the next financial year.

In respect of the hoist in the harbour, the officer noted that there were regulations that the Council had to adhere to, and that £180,000 had been allocated for purchasing a new hoist to replace the existing one. It was expected that the new hoist would be in place by summer / autumn 2012.

Events

The officer welcomed the fact that Wakestock festival had returned to the area, attracting thousands of people in its stride. He noted that there was some concern that the event would be moving to the Faenol, but it was emphasised that Pwllheli would be the best location, and it was expected for the event to return there next year.

He also thanked the organisers of the Food Festival. It was intended to hold discussions with the festival's organiser due to the changes that would be happening in Penrhyn Glandon through the sailing academy, in order to ensure that the festival could be held over the development period.

He expressed his pride at seeing so many events having been arranged by Pwllheli Sailing Club.

The representative of the sailing club noted that they had had a successful season yet again this year. He referred to the following competitions that had been held there -

- a) Optimist UK competition where 457 had participated.
- b) The UK Sprint Championship where 58 had taken part.
- c) The UK 420 Championship where 48 had taken part.

He noted that a local team had participated in the Olympic Test Event in Weymouth, and it was expected that a team from Pwllheli would be participating in the Olympic Games next year. The club had appeared on the "Hwyllo Pen Llŷn" television programme. Next year, the "Optimist and Topper Nationals and Finn World Masters" would be held in Pwllheli. He noted that there were dates for different competitions up until 2015 in the diary.

The Sailing Club was thanked for all its hard work in attracting the competitions to Pwllheli.

The officer referred to an article that had appeared in the "Practical Boat Owner" magazine, which noted that the fees at Pwllheli Harbour were the dearest in Wales. This was incorrect, as it had not been a true reflection of the actual fee, and he noted that he had contacted the individual who had written the article and was awaiting his response.

The Sailing Academy Plan

The Senior Manager – Economy and Community provided an update on the Sailing Academy plan. He noted that a professional team had now been appointed, and considerable progress would be expected during the next few months. He referred to the different aspects of the plan, namely –

- a) Relocate the access road to Glandon due to the need to create a development site which was outside the floods boundary, which offered good links in terms of access to the beach, and also on elevated land where visibility would be better. He noted that the Planning Committee had approved a planning application to move the road and develop the quay wall, and the technical aspects were currently being prepared. Contractors would be appointed soon. It was anticipated that work on the site would begin during December 2011 or January 2012. As part of the work, initial work had already been undertaken in respect of the environmental aspects of the harbour. It was intended to appoint specialist consultants who would be responsible for preparing and submitting the different applications.
- b) The building. It was expected that a special building could be developed to complement the vision of establishing the Welsh National Sailing Academy in Pwllheli. A team of architects had recently been appointed who would be meeting next week. As part of a detailed design package for the building, broad consultation work had been incorporated in the brief. It was intended to stage a public display in order to show the proposed plans, prior to submitting a planning application early in the new year. The timetable for this was currently being discussed, but the original aim had been for the work on the building to commence in June 2012. Perhaps this would need to be revised, given that so many important championships would be coming to Pwllheli in 2012. He also referred to important competitions that were to be held in summer 2013, and it would be ideal if the work on the building had been completed by then. From a maritime perspective, the preparatory work had begun and it was anticipated that an environmental assessment would need to be prepared. Statutory applications would then be prepared, and tenders awarded for appointing contractors. From a practical point of view, it was not anticipated that work could commence on the site before September 2012.

Maritime Statistics

In relation to the moorings in Hafan, the officer noted that there had been a reduction in the number of boats berthed in the moorings this year, and that there had also been a reduction in the number of boats visiting the harbour. There had also been a reduction in the number of registered personal water crafts and power boats, which derived mainly from increased fuel prices and the current economic situation. He noted that there had been a general reduction in the other harbours also.

A member expressed concern as regards the electricity charges for moorings during the winter. In response, the officer noted that it was intended to address the matter further for next year.

Harbour Staff

He noted that all seasonal staff had finished for this year. He drew the committee's attention to the fact that half the budget for the post of Pwllheli Harbour Master had been abolished as a saving during the last three years, and in light of that, the harbour was being operated with less staff resources.

In relation to the work programme, the officer promised to send a copy to the committee members as well as a list of boatmen who had left the moorings at Hafan.

A member referred to the security company which worked in the evening at Hafan, and asked for information regarding costs. In response, the officer noted that it was intended to tender this work during the coming months in an attempt to seek more competitive prices. Consideration had already been given to employing either an individual or a company to undertake the work, and it had been found that employing a company would be slightly cheaper than employing an individual directly to undertake the work.

Security of Marine Equipment

The officer noted that the police were keen to recommence the Marine Watch Scheme in light of the number of crimes, and to look specifically at Aberdyfi, Abersoch and Pwllheli Bay. It was intended to communicate with all customers at the beginning of the year, asking them to register with this scheme.

Resignation

The Chairman noted that he had received a letter of resignation from Mr John Morris and he thanked him for his service to this committee over the years.

RESOLVED to accept the report with thanks to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer and all harbour staff for their conscientious work.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 13 March 2012.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 8.30pm.