
PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
13-03-12

Present: Mr David Dewsbury (Chair)

Councillors Robert J. Wright and Sion S. Roberts (Gwynedd Council), Councillor M. Sol Owen (Pwllheli Town Council), W.A. Partington (Maritime Traders Association), Andrew Picken (Pwllheli Chamber of Commerce) and Stephen Tudor (Pwllheli Sailing Club).

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

Apologies: Councillors W. Roy Owen, Peter Read, Ioan Thomas

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Consultative Committee meeting held on 11 October 2011 as a true record.

3. MARITIME SERVICE REPORT

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer submitted his report which addressed the following matters specifically:

- Fees and Charges
- Budgets
- Navigation, Moorings, Dredging
- Events
- Public Slipway

Fees and Charges

The officer informed the Committee that the fees and charges for Hafan Pwllheli relative to the next financial year had been approved by the Council Board. The fees and charges relating to the Outer Harbour area of Pwllheli and for other harbours and beach areas had also received the support and approval of the Portfolio Leader. He noted that for moorings within the Outer Harbour of Pwllheli there was a requirement for the charges to be increased by 5% and that this was the first increase of its kind for vessels in this part of the Harbour in many years. Given the fragile status of the economic climate, the Council Board had decided not to increase the fees and charges for Hafan marina in 2012. Furthermore, a generous discount on the current berthing fees had been authorised to be applied to all customers who confirmed their intention to berth in Hafan marina in 2012.

He noted that the inflation rate for the Outer Harbour for 2012 was predicted to be 4.81% in comparison with a negative inflation rate of 0.13% in 2011. The inflation rate for Hafan Pwllheli for 2012 was predicted to be 4.29% in comparison with an inflation rate of 1.90% in 2011. The overall income target for the Outer Harbour area for 2012/13 would be £123,810 in comparison with £118,130 in 2011. The overall income target for Hafan in 2012 would be £1,607,470. In general, income targets and expenditure targets were

increased in line with the predicted rate of inflation. He noted that the increase in the overall income target for the Maritime Unit for 2012/13 was £97,590 which compared with an increased target of £57,330 in 2011/12. This increased the overall income target of the Maritime Unit (not including Country Parks) to £2,467,550 in 2012/13 – a significant target which would be challenging to achieve in such an ever-changing and fragile economic climate. He highlighted the fact that the income target at Hafan Pwllheli and the Outer Harbour had previously been achieving and at times surpassing the target. Unfortunately, in 2011/12 it was anticipated that there would be a slight deficit in the overall balance of the budget. Action would need to be taken throughout the Maritime and County Parks Unit in order to ensure that the overall expenditure and income targets achieved their targets without compromising standards for clients.

He also noted that the fees and charges relating to the registration of Powerboats and Personal Watercraft had also been increased for the next financial year. The Launching Fees remained at standstill, as had been the case for the last few years.

He highlighted the fact that 328 customers had confirmed that they required a mooring in Hafan this year in comparison with 358 last year. He was fairly confident that the same number as last year could be achieved. He noted that Hafan had lost 51 customers this year, which was a lower figure than in previous years. With regard to the Outer Harbour, confirmation had been obtained that 94 required moorings there, but due to changes, 16 of them would be moored in Hafan. In order to draw attention to the opportunities available at Hafan, an advertisement had been placed in two magazines.

Budgets

Submitted – details regarding the income and expenditure for Hafan Pwllheli, the outer harbour and the beaches as of 31 December 2011.

The officer noted that the income target relating to the Outer Harbour for 2011/12 was £118,130 and that the total income generated to the end of December 2011 had only achieved a total of £89,130, leaving a significant deficit of £29,124 that would need to be identified from within expenditure budget headings. It was not anticipated that significant income could be generated in the Outer Harbour during the month of March 2012, and it was therefore anticipated that the income target would once again not reach its target during this financial year.

The income target relating to Hafan Pwllheli for 2011/12 was £1,567,470, and the total income generated to the end of December 2011 had reached £1,372,008 and this total was in comparison with having generated £1,485,007 of income for the same period the previous year. The deficit in income at Hafan Pwllheli as of 31 December 2011 was £195,462 which was in comparison with £77,623 for the same period the previous year. It was envisaged that the income target might fall slightly short of the required target in the current financial year. Whilst the deficit appeared significant as of 31 December 2011 it was predicted that the overall Budget for the Maritime and Country Parks unit would be within the target.

The officer noted that the fee in relation to the Crown Estate agreement with regard to the harbour was based on the gross income of Hafan Pwllheli. For a number of years the payment to the Crown Estate Commissioners had been 10% of the gross income with fuel income being exempt from the income total. The fee paid to the Crown Estate Commissioners in 2011/12 remained at 145K which was a significant sum and did not include the fee payable for the foreshore lease relating to the outer harbour and other beach foreshore leases in Gwynedd. It was hoped that dialogue with the Commissioners' agent could be commenced in the very near future regarding the possibility of reducing the significant amount paid to them.

He noted that the expenditure to date had exceeded the budget on a number of headings in the Outer Harbour and at Hafan and this was causing some concern as additional expenditure was anticipated during March. The additional income generated would be allocated to certain headings in order to ensure that the overall budget met the required target. He also noted the significant increase in the cost of electricity in comparison with electricity costs in 2007/08. The overall expenditure on the electricity budget heading would be reduced due to the income target on the electricity income budget having reached its target.

Navigation/Moorings/Dredging

The officer informed the committee that all the Aids to Navigation leading to Pwllheli harbour had remained on station during the winter months. The majority were fixed on the Training Wall and there had been exceptional difficulties with gaining access to the upper parts of the marker posts in order to undertake maintenance work. Given that the channel leading to the marina basin had changed significantly since the harbour had first been developed, a survey of the Aids to Navigation would be undertaken during the next few months. Whilst it was envisaged that navigation buoys afloat would be the most cost effective and most practical method of marking the channel, consideration was being given to the possibility of using more permanent structures for this purpose. The cost of purchasing and positioning Navigation Piles would restrict this consideration. He noted that the Fairway Buoy had recently been brought ashore for maintenance work and that the buoy was now back on station. The Port navigation buoys situated in the harbour entrance had been upgraded and would remain in their current position for the foreseeable future.

He noted that, in order to address the ongoing situation whereby suspended material was being deposited at the entrance to the inner harbour, a contractor had recently been appointed to undertake this project and work would commence on removing the material during the Easter Holiday. Mariners could rest assured that this essential work would not affect navigation during this period. The work of removing the deposited material from the harbour entrance would be undertaken using land based machinery and the dredged material would be stored on the present stockpile site. Whilst in previous years grant aid to the value of 85% of the total cost had been available for previous beach replenishment works, no grant aid had been available for this project. Funding for this work had to be identified from within the Maritime Unit's budget. The cost of moving the material from the stockpile to Carreg y Defaid and for dredging the harbour entrance would be approximately 131K.

As a further measure to improve navigation for vessels entering and departing the harbour, it had been identified and concluded that a number of mooring piles would need to be removed from the area adjacent to the public slipway. Given the importance of this work, the application for a Marine Licence had been submitted to the Marine Consents Unit of the Welsh Government at the end of 2011. Suitable companies had been invited to tender for the work. Whilst a total of 30 pile moorings would no longer be available in the Outer Harbour, removing the mooring piles would ensure that some class of vessels would be able to navigate the channel at most states of the tide. He noted that, over recent years, the direction of the channel has settled in this area and it was therefore prudent for this work to be undertaken. In the long term, removing the piles would be of benefit to the harbour as a whole and would significantly reduce the costs associated with the dredging of the channel and disposal of the findings. Upon completion of the work to dredge the harbour entrance and to remove the mooring piles, a detailed hydrographical survey of the harbour area would be undertaken.

It was a requirement that all seasonal Beach Zone Marker Buoys on Abererch beach and the beach at Marian y De be in position before 26 May 2012 and the Speed Limit marker buoys situated at the harbour entrance would be required to be on station before

1 May 2012. Given that all general moorings within the Outer Harbour area had been maintained to a high standard for a number of years, it was not anticipated that a further inspection and maintenance work using a diving contractor would be required in 2012.

In relation to the area opposite Partington Yard, a member enquired whether the channel would remain the same or whether it was likely to move slightly. In response, the officer informed him that when dredging work for the Sailing Academy would take place, the dredger could also be used to dredge the channel and the basin. The Senior Manager – Economy and Community noted with regard to the long term plan that arrangements were in place to remove the piles which would facilitate navigation arrangements in the channel, and with regard to the short term that it was proposed to install a pontoon between the existing piles.

Events

The officer reported that the 'Wakestock' festival was scheduled to take place in the harbour from 5 to 7 July 2012 inclusive.

He gave details of the forthcoming national and international sailing competitions that were scheduled to be held at Pwllheli in 2012. The exceptional work and achievement of Pwllheli Sailing Club in attracting major sailing events to Pwllheli was praised. A representative of the sailing club noted that it was anticipated that this would be an extremely busy year and that 300 competitors were expected to attend for one of the competitions in April. The income that these competitions would bring to the area would be substantial.

He drew to the members' attention the new European Bathing Waters Directive which would come into force in 2015. Whilst achieving the stringent Bathing Water criteria set by the new Directive would be challenging in a number of areas, it was not envisaged that the bathing Water Quality for Marian y De would be affected. The standard of Bathing Water at Pwllheli over the last six years had been constant and it was anticipated that the profile for Bathing Water at Pwllheli beach would be classified as 'Excellent' standard under the new Directive in 2015.

Public Slipway

The officer informed the committee that the slipway used by the public for the launching and recovery of vessels was situated adjacent to the harbour office within the Outer Harbour area. The slipway was managed by the Harbourmaster who was responsible for the collection of launching fees and for ensuring that all vessels were registered with the Council. During the main part of the sailing season, between April and September, the slipway was generally managed seven days per week between the hours of 09.00 and 17.00. Although the slipway was popular and was used by a number of vessels, especially during periods of fair weather, the staffing resources required to manage the slipway were extensive. Supervising the slipway entailed a member of staff being present on site throughout the day and although there was flexibility in the work routine, certain tasks could not be completed due to staff having to allocate part of their duties to managing the slipway. The total income derived from the collection of daily launching fees in 2011 was £4,509 but this sum did not include Registration Fees nor the income derived from customers purchasing a Season Launching Permit. Customers with such a permit were permitted to launch their vessels on any slipway in Gwynedd.

He noted that the aim of the Unit was to ensure that all aspects of the Harbour were managed in accordance with the expectation of the customer. The presence of a Harbourmaster in and around the harbour was a very important function. It was a requirement for any member of staff in the Unit to be in a position to give guidance to customers and advise on harbour issues whilst on duty. At times, due to the requirement

to ensure that the slipway was effectively managed, certain tasks within the harbour were not undertaken. The intention of the Unit was to ensure that the Harbourmaster (or his deputy) was able to effectively patrol the harbour on foot and by boat and to be able to undertake other duties as required. He noted that, due to the current economic climate, it was not possible to employ a Seasonal Harbour Assistant this year. He was of the opinion that, in order to be in a position to effectively manage the harbour with very limited resources, consideration should be given to outsourcing the management of the slipway. It was envisaged that suitable companies or individuals would be invited, through a public tender, to submit their proposal. The successful applicant would be able to collect launching fees from those paying a daily launching fee. The applicant would be required to ensure that all craft launching on the slipway were registered with Gwynedd but would not be authorised to charge a Registration Fee or to incur a further charge or re-charge from the Council for customers holding the Annual Launching Permit. Members were asked for their opinions on the matter.

A member was of the opinion that the launching cost of £12 was low and that consideration should be given to increasing it. In response, the officer informed the committee that a number of those who used the slipway to launch vessels bought a season ticket.

RESOLVED that the relevant officers consider the various methods of trying to resolve the situation with regard to the slipway.

RESOLVED to accept the report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer.

4. MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

a) Hafan, Pwllheli

The Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association representative thanked the Council and especially the Maritime Unit officers for listening to the concerns of the members regarding the reduction in the number of berth holders and for responding positively to reverse the reduction.

b) Disposing of dredged material

The Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association representative noted that the annual dredging from the harbour entrance and the grant loss of doing that, together with the increasing cost of disposing of the dredged material using the highway, fell on the Association, and that it was unsustainable. The current method of dredging meant that Abererch Beach was depleted of the natural material which maintained the sand dunes, causing serious erosion to the beach, and if not rectified it could cause serious flooding. The Association was requesting that the current method of disposal be reviewed, and that consideration be given to depositing some of the dredged material on Abererch Beach.

In response, the Chief Engineer informed the committee that Abererch Beach was the responsibility of the Environment Agency whilst the Council was responsible for Traeth Crugan, Llanbedrog. He noted that it was cheaper to dispose of the dredged material on Traeth Crugan than on Abererch Beach. With regard to the loss of grant, he believed that this was merely a temporary measure.

c) Pwllheli Wakeboarding Wire

A member referred to the application from the owner of the Pwllheli Wakeboard Training School, which had been considered by this committee last year, to install a

Wakeboarding wire along part of the Pwllheli outer harbour. The wakeboarding wire had been granted planning permission, but the Council as landlord had not been asked for permission to access the land. By now, since the work on the Sailing Academy was progressing, it was understood that the Council required land to dispose of the dredged material. He asked the committee to consider whether it would be possible to assist them in any way.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer informed the committee that discussions had been held with the former owner of the Wakestock Company regarding the potential to establish a wakeboarding school in Pwllheli, when consideration had been given to several potential sites and specifically the land between the island and Morfa Garreg. When the matter had been considered by this committee the previous year it had been accepted in principle. The applicant's attention was drawn to the fact that he would be required to go through several processes prior to commencing the initiative, including obtaining planning permission. The Maritime Unit had submitted representations on the planning application, drawing attention to the fact that this land would be required for future development, either for the development of the marina or for the disposal of dredging material etc. He noted that the applicant was eager to promote this initiative in Pwllheli. After receiving planning permission the applicant had not realised that further action would be required, e.g. the need to consult with the Consultancy Department and the Property Unit. He noted that, initially, the venture would be based on an annual permit rather than permanent permission. The applicant had already undertaken some work to establish this initiative in Pwllheli, including pricing for connecting electricity to the wire. With the development of the Sailing Academy it was anticipated that the land would be required for the disposal of dredged material etc and the area had been identified as one which had the potential for this. It was understood that the applicant had met with the Manager of Hafan to discuss other potential in Pwllheli.

RESOLVED that the relevant officers and local members discuss with the applicant other options for supporting the initiative.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 23 October 2012.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.45pm.