

Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 23 October 2017 at the Dragon Theatre, Barmouth

PRESENT

Councillor Gethin Williams - Chairman
Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams - Vice-chairman

Cllr. Julian Kirkham (Arthog Community Council), Cllr. R. Triggs (Barmouth Town Council), Cllr. Mark James (RNLI), Mrs Wendy Ponsford (Member of the Meirionnydd Yacht Club), Mr Martin Parouty (Barmouth Harbour Users Group), Mr Mike Ellis (Three Peaks Race Committee), Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group)

Officers

Mr Llŷr B. Jones - Senior Manager - Economy and Community
Mr Barry Davies - Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Glyn Jones - Barmouth Harbour Master
Mr Alex Hills - Harbour Assistant
Mrs Glynda O'Brien - Members' Support Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt - Translator

Apologies: Councillor Ioan Ceredig Thomas (Cabinet Member - Economy), Cllr. Louise Hughes (Gwynedd Council), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association), Mr Arthur F. Jones (Senior Harbours Officer).

It was explained that Councillor Ioan Ceredig Thomas, Cabinet Member, Economic Development was now responsible for the Maritime Service and not Cllr. Craig ab Iago as noted on the Council's website. The Member Support Officer was asked to contact the relevant officer to correct this on the website.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Gethin Williams as Chair of this Committee for 2017/18.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2017/18.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

The following members declared a personal connection for the reasons noted:

- (a) Cllr. Gethin Williams – member of the Community Trust
- (b) Cllr. Julian Kirkham - related to one of the ferry operators
- (c) Mr Mike Ellis - member of the Three Peaks Race Committee
- (d) Mrs Wendy Ponsford – member of the Yacht Club and the Community Trust
- (e) Cllr. Rob Triggs – member of the Community Trust and the Yacht Club
- (f) Mr Martin Parouty – a commercial operator in the Harbour and member of the Yacht Club and the Community Trust

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(g) Dr John Smith – member of the Yacht Club and the Community Trust

Members did not vote on the matters that dealt with their personal interest.

4. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 14 March 2017.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as a true record.

5. ENQUIRY REGARDING ANY OTHER BUSINESS ITEM

Before proceeding, a member drew attention to the fact that there was no item on the Agenda for 'Any Other Business'. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that this item was not usually on the agenda, however, he stressed that if Consultative Committee Members had any matters of concern then they should bring these to the attention of the Maritime Service staff without delay.

A member noted that he was aware that the public contacted the Department regarding complaints e.g. animal carcasses washed up on beaches, however they did not receive a response.

In response to the above, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that the Service received a good number of reports daily in the context of the above and they could not always respond every time. However, it was ensured that each complaint was recorded and the Service acted as required.

A Member asked if it would be possible to consider implementing an automatic response system to the public when they submitted complaints and/or to the Contact Centre at Penrhyndeudraeth who dealt with calls.

Resolved: To request that the Senior Manager - Economy and Community considers implementing automatic responses to be sent to the public.

6. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

Submitted: The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer, Mr Barry Davies, updating the committee on Harbour management matters with specific reference to the following:-

(a) Membership of Consultative Committee - the Barmouth Viaduct Access Group was asked to submit their constitution and minutes of their Annual General Meeting to the Member Support Officer, in accordance with the resolution of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet in 2014.

The organisations / institutions would need to submit this information annually.

(b) Barmouth Moorings and Boat Registration - an additional list was presented to Members during the meeting and reference was made to two boats that had recently broken away from their moorings.

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It was stressed that there was nothing wrong with the moorings, but the link between the front of the boat and the buoy had broken and this was the responsibility of the boat owner. Boat owners are regularly encouraged to ensure that they follow the appropriate guidance and that the moorings are fit for purpose. In response to an enquiry from a member, it was confirmed that Harbour staff checked and ensured that the strops were suitable. The Maritime Service felt frustrated in light of the fact that there were arrangements in place to submit appropriate current documentation to the Harbour master, however, some individuals did not conform. In future, it was suggested that an audit of all the moorings should be conducted and if they were not in accordance with the Service guidance, there would be no other option but to exclude them from the Harbour and instruct the moorings to be removed.

The importance of establishing a robust process to deal with the above matter was emphasised and it was suggested that it would be useful to revise the By-laws in order to operate in a stricter way in the future. The support of the Consultative Committee to this suggestion was welcomed and Members were encouraged to spread the message to their organisations about the importance that moorings reach the requirements and are fit for purpose.

In response to an enquiry regarding the statistics for powerboats / yachts and that the percentage in Meirionnydd had reduced compared to the increase in Pen Llŷn, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that Pwllheli had been identified as a location to stage local races and the town had a strong sailing industry.

It was added that the Meirionnydd Yacht Club did excellent work with the youth in the town of Barmouth.

Resolved: To approve that the Maritime Service conducts a review of the Harbour By-laws in order to establish a strong procedure to be put in place to submit appropriate documentation of the suitability of moorings.

(c) Port Marine Safety Code

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the Coastguard Agency's inspectors (MCA), Welsh Government Transportation Department, carried out a review of the current safety arrangements and systems of the County's harbours and their report would be submitted to the next Harbour Consultative Committee meeting in spring. It was not anticipated that there were any problems emanating from the review and their initial view was that the Service conformed with the general requirements but a comprehensive training matrix was required for staff. The review focussed on the harbours of Aberdyfi, Porthmadog and Pwllheli and due to a lack of time they had not visited Barmouth. They noted that there was a need to tidy-up the area around Aberdyfi harbour quay and verbal comments had been made regarding the width of the channel at Pwllheli Harbour.

It was intended to conduct a second visit within 12 months and following a discussion with the inspectors it was suggested that it would be beneficial for the date to correspond with the date of the Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee and to invite representatives from the Consultative Committees of Aberdyfi, Barmouth and Pwllheli to the meeting.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ch) Navigation

It was reported that the investment made with the navigation aids had been a success as each one had remained on station. One report was submitted to the Marine Accident Investigation Board (MAIB) following an incident in the Harbour that had occurred due to the individual's

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lack of experience and understanding. There than been correspondence with the person in question and guidance regarding training had been given.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(d) Maintenance

The Harbour master outlined his work programme over the winter and noted that this would be circulated to Members, and that he and his assistant were responsible for the area from Llandanwg to Fairbourne. Attention was drawn to the following matters:

- Restore and repair signage
- Repair locks
- Work on the public stairs opposite the toilet block
- Clean the slipway, promenade wall from sea algae
- Repair shelters that continue to be subject to vandalism
- Repair the handrails along the quay
- Repair the Fairway buoy
- Repair the floodgate due to damage

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer added that if Committee Members were aware of any additional work required, they were encouraged to contact the Harbour master.

In response to an enquiry by a Member that the emergency phone located at the car park of Benar Beach worked and was checked regularly.

It was further noted that a survey had recently been conducted on the use of emergency telephones in the county and it was seen that not much use was made of them as people tended to use mobile phones in emergencies.

It was suggested that it would be useful for the Consultative Committee to receive a report at the next meeting on the use of the area's Emergency Telephones.

Resolved: (a) To request that the Harbour Master distributes his work programme to Members of the Consultative Committee.

(b) To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer presents statistics on the use of emergency telephone service to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee.

(dd) Staffing matters

Alex Hills, Assistant Harbour master was welcomed and introduced to the meeting and it was explained that his employment period had been extended to assist with the harbour maintenance work programme over the winter months, subject to the financial position.

(e) Harbour Matters

(i) Safety Barrier in the Quay Area

It was reported that a safety barrier had been installed in the quay area in order to try and improve public safety. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer apologised that the Service had not engaged with harbour users before installing the safety barrier. However, it was understood that the barrier had been a great assistance and the safety risk had improved in the area. It was proposed to continue with the arrangement and the Service was more than willing to receive observations.

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A member noted, having discussed this with users and accepting the fact that the area in question needed to be controlled, that there was concern regarding the colour of the barrier.

In response, it was explained that it would be possible to discuss this further and the Harbour Master intended to contact sign makers in Dolgellau for the various options.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ii) Pontoon

Mr John Smith was thanked for coordinating the meetings in order to move forward and resolve the pontoon's ownership and it was understood that the Barmouth Community Trust had expressed an interest in taking on its ownership. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer emphasised that the Council did not own the pontoon, but that Harbour staff had undertaken maintenance work on the structure in the past. It was trusted that over the next few months the ownership could be resolved with confirmation of future ownership. It was further noted that the pontoon was an excellent resource for the harbour and that the Council was not in a position to continue with its future maintenance.

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams read out an extract, as follows, from minutes of the Snowdonia National Park Authority who had contributed to the project through the CAE fund:

“Pontwn Cymuned Harbwr Abermaw Merioneth Yacht Club Pontoon

- The project aims to install and maintain an open access permanent (four season) pontoon in a sheltered part of the harbour to allow access to a range of marine, estuarine and river recreational activities for all users including those with additional needs
- This proposal is therefore for a completely new type of provision to meet the current and growing needs of tourist, sport and recreational users
- CAE has contributed £25,000 towards the project”

Mr John Smith explained that the matter was not proceeding very quickly. He further explained that although there was a perception that the Meirionnydd Yacht Club owned the pontoon, this was incorrect. What had happened was that a group of individuals had come together to be eligible to submit applications for various grants. Gwynedd Council gave a financial contribution at the time and confirmation that the Council would support the maintenance, however, it was made clear that the Council would not replace it.

It was noted that discussions had taken place for a year between the Trust and the Maritime Service who had been supportive, however, there were some elements that needed to be resolved.

1. Licence from the Council to attach the pontoon to Council property
2. Confirmation by the Council regarding public liability as it was for public use
3. Formulate and agree on a management plan for the pontoon

In order to proceed without delay, the Chairman suggested that officers from Barmouth Community Trust and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer organise a meeting soon to resolve the three elements noted above.

Resolved: To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer organises a meeting soon with the relevant officers

(iii) Safety Signs

It was noted that with the assistance and kindness of the RNLI signs would be in place by 1 April 2018.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iv) Parking Safety

In relation to introducing a new system that would prohibit unauthorised persons from parking on the area parallel to the harbour compound, a Member noted that a further discussion was required regarding its control.

The Maritime Officer noted that the arrangement had improved the situation and perhaps a discussion was required with the Harbour master regarding controlling its use. The intention was that the area should be available for commercial harbour users and there was no intention to hire out the area to persons without any link to the harbour.

Another Member noted that persons had parked in front of Bathhouse for many years and was there anything that could be done to prevent people from parking there?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was not possible to include the area as part of the parking enforcement, but it was emphasised that the area was the Council's property and Harbour staff needed space to park vehicles. It was noted that signs had been erected to retain 2 parking spaces for Harbour staff and the intention was to try and keep control of land that was Council property and it was trusted that individuals could comply with these arrangements.

In terms of the status of the section coloured with yellow lines near the side of the SS Dora building, it was asked if this space could be included as part of the parking order. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he could make enquiries regarding the above.

Resolved: To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer investigates the above concerns.

(f) Financial Matters

Reference was made to the budgetary balance sheets that indicated an overspend of £13,275 to the end of September 2017 and as Service Manager, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted his concern that the income target was not substantial with expenditure of £29,463 and therefore the target was short of £3,857.

A Gwynedd Council elected member expressed his concern in light of all the proposed savings that any cuts to the Maritime Service would have a detrimental impact on the area's economy and consequently on jobs and tourism. It was suggested that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development be invited to the next meeting of the Consultative Committee to air the matter and escort him around to see harbour activities.

In response, the Senior Manager Economy and Community explained that discussions were currently proceeding and the intention was to conduct specific workshops to discuss different savings options per Department. However, any support to protect the Service budgets for the future was welcomed.

Resolved: To accept and note the above and invite the Cabinet Member for Economic Development to the next Consultative Committee meeting.

(ff) Events

It was heartening to note all the events that take place in Barmouth and the community's work and efforts were appreciated. Whilst accepting that staff attendance at events had not been 100% this year during the autumn season, it was ensured that more of an effort would be made next year. However, it had to be considered that there was a reduction in resources with the Harbour Master working from April to September every weekend, and at times two

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members of staff were required on duty in terms of safety. It was ensured that staff would be available for the Motor-cross event on the beach that would take place on the weekend 28/29 October.

A Member expressed concern that the date conflicted with half term and the car parks would be full up. Originally, this event took place following the tourist season in order to extend the season and not on school half term holidays.

It was added that the event affected the ferry business as people could not get onto the beach.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer suggested that the matter could be considered by the Town Council and instruction could be given to the Maritime Service to discuss this with the organisers for it not to take place during half term, if this was their wish.

In future it would be useful for the Harbour staff to receive a list of events to take place and guidance regarding what was expected from the staff as part of the events.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 12 and 13, Part 4, Schedule 12 A, of the Local Government Act 1972. These paragraphs applied as the individuals in question were entitled to privacy and there was no overriding public interest that required the disclosure of personal information relating to those individuals, nor their identities. Consequently, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

8. CONCESSIONS AND TRADING DURING EVENTS

Stemming from the concerns highlighted regarding concessions / pedlar and trading licences during the events:

Resolved: To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer suggests to the Town Council that they invite Heilyn Williams, the Council's Licensing Officer to their meeting to discuss licences and the rights of pedlars / illegal trading /revision of by-laws.

The meeting was re-opened to the press and public.

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

(that had not been considered as part of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer's report)

(a) Request for a cordoned off activities area

The Chair reported that he had received a request to designate a cordoned off activities area in the harbour for leisure activity use.

Resolved: To approve that the matter is investigated and to ask the persons who made the request to contact the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to discuss their ideas further.

(b) A request to hold a local competition to design (and build) a unique 'beach hut' for Barmouth

The Chair reported that something more aesthetic than what already existed was required that would be of benefit to tourism.

Resolved: To approve the idea in principle and for those interested in the above to contact the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to further discuss any ideas that come to hand.

(c) General tidiness and storage around the Harbour

A complaint had been received from a member of the public about fishing tackle in the harbour and there was no room for children to go crabbing. The importance that fishermen store their fishing tackle in the compound was noted.

Resolved: To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer discusses the matter with the fishermen to ensure that the pots are stored and to leave a gap for people to be able to walk around them.

(ch) Income Streams

It was asked if there was any way to increase the Harbour's income? It was noted that many more canoes and kayaks were to be seen and did the authority charge them a fee?

A member stated that there was so much coming and going by boats in the Harbour area that increasing water use around the Harbour would create a safety risk.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that they tried to encourage activities in the Harbour and no fee was charged as it would not be cost effective, in light of the fact that it would cost more to administer the arrangements to collect the fees.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(d) Parking on the road near the compound

It was noted that the contractors would be given first choice in terms of parking on the above land.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(dd) Mooring Maintenance and feedback forms

It was reported that the above matter would be discussed with the relevant staff in November.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(e) The latest regarding management of Penrhyn Point

Cllr. Julian Kirkham reported what had been discussed at a recent meeting of Arthog Community Council and they would be making an application to the Council's Highways Department for assistance to:

- Paint parking areas near the turning and passing area
- Install a pay and display machine in the parking area, with the following words to be included on the pay signs "Money from this pay and display machine will go towards keeping Friog toilets open".
- Erect a strong height restriction barrier. It would be necessary to erect notice signs on the road to Friog and also on Penrhyn Drive North, for information to drivers of large vehicles.

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- Repair the 'Keep Clear' sign at the top of the road down to the gate.
- With the permission of the Maritime Officer a gate was installed to close out the area at the top of the slipway in order to prevent vans etc. from parking on the road where people launch boats.
- A sign made specially to replace the temporary sign.
- It was further noted that residents were of the opinion that the owners of camper vans only contribute a little or none at all to the area's local economy, and they tend to take up two parking spaces and totally ignore the Council notice 'No Overnight Parking' and worse than that there were no toilet facilities at Penrhyn Point. It was further noted that Fairbourne Railway had placed gates to prevent access to the tunnel. The Community Council felt strongly that the environment should be protected and by restricting parking where there were no facilities the problems would be reduced.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that whilst he accepted that the above was frustrating the Maritime Service had no legal powers to move the camper vans.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(f) Penrhyn Drive South Slipway

It was noted that Arthog Community Council was of the opinion that the last thing required at this location was a slipway. This would extend its use to allow vehicles to gain unrestricted access to the foreshore. Generally, this section of Fairbourne beach was safe, and a safe place to swim. Vehicles whizzing past up and down would be very dangerous to the public and there would be an opportunity for the unauthorised launching of boats and personal watercraft.

Access to pedestrians only was requested in the form of a length of e.g. coconut matting, but at a width of two pushchairs in order that families can reach the beach. A sign would be required e.g. "unsuitable for wheelchairs" to be erected at the location. It would be impossible to have a zig-zag path due to the movement of the rough gravel.

In response to the above comments, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that a purposeful boat was available in the harbour to go out to Penrhyn Point to ensure that no boats launch from there.

Regarding the ramp, whilst accepting that improvements needed to be made, it was explained that there were many movements on the beach and the matter would be discussed further with Mr Julian Kirkham.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(g) There was very little space for boats

It was noted that there was less space for Fin Keel boats.

(h) It was possible to use the concrete scour matting to rectify the drop at the bottom of the slipway

In response, the Harbour Master noted that he would consider the options of the above suggestion.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(i) Moorings - a request to take the moorings ashore every winter

Barmouth Harbour Users Group were concerned about the number of moorings that had failed in the harbour this season. As a result not only did this have an impact on safety but may also have an impact on future insurance premiums. It was asked if the moorings should be taken ashore every winter, as in Aberdyfi and would it be an idea to reinstate buoys to mark the bathing zone once more?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that ideally the above should occur but it was difficult in Barmouth due to the quality of the sea bed and the fact that there was insufficient room to store them safely.

The Harbour Master added that Aberdyfi moorings were much smaller and lighter and traditionally the ones in Barmouth had been left in place over the winter. It was anticipated that there would be an additional difficulty with the arrangements to put them back and to receive the required administrative work.

Customers could be encouraged to lift them, however, they could not be forced and the standard and quality of the moorings here already should be improved. An appeal was made to the organisations to emphasise to users that the moorings needed to be checked regularly.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(j) Powerboat / Personal Watercraft exclusion zone

It was noted that at one time there was a row of buoys from Barmouth beach marking the prohibited zone to powerboats to ensure a safer place to bathe. If there were buoys there or not any wise mariner responsible for a boat would either keep far enough away from the area or would proceed very carefully. Unfortunately, everyone did not do this. Therefore was there a case for reinstating the buoys to mark the bathing zone?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was of the view that reinstating the buoys would not make much difference in Barmouth and there was no risk to the public.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(h) Fin Keel moorings

In response to an enquiry by Cllr. Rob Triggs, it was suggested that he, the Harbour Master, Mr Mike Ellis and Mr Dave Niven should discuss the matter further.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

9. ELECTION OF OBSERVERS

To consider nominations for observers to serve on the following committees:

- (a) Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
- (b) Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee
- (c) Pwllheli Harbour Consultative Committee

The names of the following three Members were submitted and they will decide amongst themselves which meeting they will attend:

Cllr. Rob Triggs
Cllr. Julian Kirkham

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Mr Martin Parouty

Resolved: To request that the Member Support Officer sends the dates to them in order to decide and confirm who will attend the meetings.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 6 March 2018.

The meeting commenced at 10:30 am and concluded at 1:50 pm.

CHAIRMAN.