

ABERDOVEY HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 10/03/16

PRESENT

Councillor Dewi Owen - Chair
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones – Vice-chair

Councillors Mike Stevens (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. David Richardson (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr W Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Mr Dave Williams (Aberdyfi Advertising and Improvements Committee), Mr Desmond George (Dyfi Yacht Club), Mr Paul Fowles (Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade), Mr Nick Dawson (Outward Bound Wales), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club), Mr Huw Evans (Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association).

Officers

Mr Llŷr B. Jones, Senior Economy and Community Manager
Barry Davies, Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr William Stockford, Aberdyfi Harbour Master
Mrs Glynda O'Brien, Members' and Scrutiny Support Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt, Translator

Apologies: Councillors Gethin Williams (Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee)
Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member - Economy), Cllr. Brian Bates (RNLI).

1. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

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

2. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 12 November 2015.

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

2.1 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

(a) Item 5 (a) – Visitor Figures in Aberdyfi

An apology was given that the above figures had not been included within the report before the committee and an assurance was given that they would be circulated to Members in the next few days. However, in the meantime, the following figures were noted:

2014 - 53 boats visited Aberdyfi
2015 - 18 boats visited Aberdyfi

It was further noted that the weather had been very unfavourable and it was hoped that there would be better weather this season. Thanks was also given for the information pack provided by Members to visitors and they would try to encourage mariners to visit the different harbours within the County.

(b) Control of Personal Watercraft

It was not anticipated that it was possible to have more control of the Leri river area, despite having a discussion with relevant officers from Natural Resources Wales. However, it was trusted that control could be improved from the Harbour authority side through the appointment of an officer to assist the Harbour Master who would be operational on the water during the main summer holiday period.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding what action could the Harbour Master take to deal with the control of personal watercraft, it was explained that the Harbour Master had statutory powers but did not have the right to issue on the spot fines, however if there was evidence of any misuse of the rules then they could be prosecuted. It was further noted that the Police gave good support in such cases.

(c) Maintenance

Mr Desmond George reported that he was continuing to discuss the design of a purposeful winch for use by boats that are launched and land near the Yacht Club. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer thanked him and once any information was received it would be forwarded to the engineer in order to consider the possibility as part of the wider scheme for the quay wall. The best option would be for the winch to be located in one place and not as part of a vehicle or mobile winch.

(ch) Movement of Sand

It was reported that the sand removal work had been completed during the last few weeks and work was proceeding at the same time to remove sand from the car park and promenade.

In response to a concern highlighted regarding sand, Mr Paul Fowles noted the following:-

By artificially extending the dunes by 4 metres up to the car park sea defence steps and blocking the small levee that runs behind the sand hill, which floods each Spring Tide, would allow the dune system to move east to south east without the needs of controlling devices such as a stockade. However, obliquely oriented beach groins would help in the short term to divert the sand away from the car park and lifeboat station, until the dunes can establish themselves closer to the yacht club end of the beach.

Up until the early 60s, prior to the car park first being built there was a small green and sand dunes running along the length of the village beach front to the old OBSS Black Sheds, with associated railway line. Any windblown sand was arrested by the dunes and Marram grass before it made its way into the village or covering the rail track. There is a lot to be said in reverse engineering the beach to how it used to be without the need for great expense.

He promised to forward a report that referred to examples such as the above to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer as a matter of interest.

The Chairman noted that a great deal of sand had been blown onto the harbour this year and he was concerned about the future especially as this would be the last year that finance would be available to remove sand.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the above.

(b) To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer sends a letter on behalf of the Harbour Consultative Committee to Jones Brothers company to express their gratitude for the work they undertook to remove the sand.

3. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

Submitted: The report of the Maritime Officer, Mr Barry Davies, on activities in Aberdyfi Harbour with specific reference to the following:-

(A) Port Marine Safety Code

Members were reminded that safety elements and risk assessments were vitally important to the Harbour Service and the safety code belonged to Harbour users and Committee Members and Harbour staff depended on them to submit their observations. It was noted that the Safety Code was a live and voluntary document. An audit would be received from the Coastguard Agency Policy Department to discuss the way forward and to receive feedback from the Coastguard Agency Policy Department. It was noted that it was important that the code should comply with the requirements of the harbour, especially smaller harbours such as in Gwynedd and that it should not become too bureaucratic.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(B) Navigation and Moorings

It was reported that the aids to navigation had worked well while accepting that the Channel had changed. The contractors were currently working in Porthmadog but would move to Aberdyfi within the next few days.

Reference was made to 4 notices:

- The Fairway Buoy's lamp was not working
- Buoy Numbers 1 and 3 were off station
- Buoy Number 2 was off station

It was anticipated that not many boats would visit the Harbour during the Easter holidays since it was early this year. It was noted that a yellow light had been installed on the Harbour internal buoy. In addition, it was noted that the Harbour boat had been launched for the season.

In response to the above, a member noted that it was clear where the Harbour started and the Aberdyfi Boat Club wished to thank the Harbour Master for his work.

It was further noted that the beach zone buoys would be in place by the end of May. Inspections had been undertaken by Trinity House and a meeting took place recently where concern was expressed regarding the administrative element of the buoy removal provision.

It was confirmed that the moorings would be installed during the next few weeks by the local contractor and it was emphasised that every mooring owner was required to have an appropriate certificate. It was further confirmed that the appropriate certificates were in order by the contractor and in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance.

In response to concern regarding the changes in the channel and consequently the reduction in the space available for boats to moor, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it had to be accepted that some boats would not be able to go back to the same location and the location would have to be adapted to the type of boat in terms of length and depth, etc.

It was asked if it was possible for the Harbour Master to take photographs in order to compare how things had changed over the years. In response, it was explained that the Mark Roberts company was undertaking investigations for the Maritime Service regarding this.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(C) Harbour Budgets

- (i) A summary of the financial position up to 29 February 2016 was submitted to Members and they were guided through the information drawing attention to the following points:
- that there was an underspend of £14,000 in the wages budget
 - there was £18,000 in the maintenance budget, bearing in mind that £10,000 had been transferred to Aberdyfi Harbour from another heading for some years now.
 - That the financial position was fairly healthy with an income target of £33,000, with £25,000 received thus far and a shortfall of £8,000.
- (ii) In response to a question regarding the number of registered boats, the Harbour Master noted that it was anticipated that there would be 77 and 70 had already completed the relevant registration forms before the end of February. It was noted that 6 boats would not be returning.
- (iii) In terms of fees, the inflation increase of 1% was noted.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(D) Improvements

(i) Quality of Bathing Water

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that bathing water quality was very important to Aberdyfi bearing in mind the number of water activities that were available. Members' attention was drawn to the following points:

- The importance that the the public were aware of the bathing water quality
- That the bathing water standard had reached an acceptable standard this year and it was trusted that it would not have a poor standard again in the future.
- An application had been submitted to designate Cemetery Beach and confirmation had been received from the Welsh Government that it complied with the relevant requirements under the bathing water directive in Aberdyfi.

In response to the above, the following points were highlighted by individual Members of the Committee:

- (a) That the red flag was flying all the time and therefore its purpose was diminished and consequently people did not take notice of the swimming hazards.
- (b) The red flag was a recognised warning that persons swimming did so at their own risk.
- (c) Would erecting signs near the red flag be more appropriate?
- (d) The Chairman expressed huge concern regarding designating the Cemetery Beach as a bathing beach especially as the beach was out of sight. It was further noted that the National Park had also expressed concern due to the location of suitable facilities.
- (e) If it had been designated it was noted that it was important to indicate the risks to the public from strong currents at this location.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that discussions had been undertaken with Tywyn Town council regarding a similar matter on Tywyn beach and if there was potential to do anything else to draw attention to the risks from the rip currents, this would be welcomed however the need to safeguard the public was stressed particularly as the speed

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of the tide was 6-8 knots on Aberdyfi beach. However, whilst accepting the comments individuals had to also take responsibilities for themselves as well. The red flag had been taken down in Barmouth, however it had to be put back up at the request of the Town Council because of concern of the risk to the public.

A Member explained that the RNLI considered safety seriously and were anxious to reduce any possible risk to the public.

The RNLI have been discussing issues in terms of rescues and one of the main issues is how to deal with tidal issues, the red flag and also how you make people aware of rip currents and what to do. RNLI are happy to work with individuals, Gwynedd Council, Community Councils to come up with an appropriate signage, to lend more weight to the information and have them at appropriate spots. With regard to Cemetery Beach, is it right to encourage people to go and swim there, there are issues that have to be dealt with. Signage would be appropriate on the boardwalk in Aberdyfi, with a bit more information about tides. A lot of the signage, so far, are on life guard beaches and there are no such facilities in Tywyn / Aberdyfi. The RNLI are happy to discuss with Tywyn Town Council, Aberdyfi Community Council to resolve the matter and come up with appropriate signage and the majority of it can be paid for by the RNLI.

Discussions and joint working with the RNLI was welcomed especially to ensure that individuals have an awareness of what is meant when the red flag is flying. They had to be very mindful of the arrangements especially when there was no qualified person on the County's beaches to authorise when and how the red flag should be flow.

Resolved: To accept the offer of the RNLI to conduct further discussions with Tywyn Town Council, Aberdyfi Community Council and the appropriate officers from the Maritime Service on the best way forward to resolve the above.

(ii) Beach Management 2016

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that in terms of the financial cuts facing the Council, that the Harbour service was being safeguarded, however, it was decided to make cuts to the beaches budget by only managing Blue flag and Green flag beaches. This meant that there would be no beach patrol in Aberdyfi this year and Harbour staff would have to cope with this.

In response, the Chairman noted that every service had to make savings and they would have to make the best of those services available.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iii) The Quay Wall

During the meeting, a report for information was submitted to the Members from Gwynedd Consultancy on the condition of the quay wall and it appeared that the quay wall had a remaining lifespan of six years. The Senior Economy and Community Manager explained that an application had been submitted to the National Park, however, there had been a delay as the Park had requested further information specifically regarding the environmental aspects of the scheme and it would be necessary to commission work to prepare this information. Although this was disappointing, it could be argued that the harbour authority was however entitled to proceed with the scheme.

In terms of funding the scheme, as part of Gwynedd Council's application, that Aberdyfi quay was included as a priority and discussions were on-going with the Welsh Government. One of the main requirements of the programme was a project appraisal report for each application.

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Its purpose was to show that all the options had been considered and that the scheme offered value for money.

Some positive news had been received from the Welsh Government that they were willing to fund the project appraisal report for the sum of approximately £20,000 from the Coastal Innovative Fund. The informal offer was welcomed and a formal confirmation would be awaited in the next few days. The need for the project appraisal report to comply with the planning application was stressed. It was proposed to proceed with the planning application as it was difficult to foresee that the project appraisal report would identify another option.

In terms of the financial programme, the Senior Manager, Economy and Community noted that grants up to 80% of the cost were available and the remaining 20/25% would have to be found. In terms of the likely period in question, if the planning application was successful then 2018 would be a practical target.

In the context of the report before them, that the contents gave some information regarding the short term risks, that there was 9 years remaining of lifespan for the quay wall. However, it was emphasised that the quay was coming to the end of its life and a solution had to be found.

A Member noted the importance of the quay wall that it not only protected the harbour but also the village of Aberdyfi.

- Resolved:**
- (a) To unanimously approve to support the request and to proceed without delay with the necessary steps with this application.**
 - (b) To request that the Maritime Service circulates the information for the attention of Harbour users in order that they may respond to the scheme.**
 - (c) That a progress report would be submitted to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee.**

(iv) Development of RNLI Building

It was reported that the above development was proceeding and it was forecast to be completed prior to the May Bank Holiday. All were thanked for their cooperation and support during the development and they would continue to work with the Harbour Master.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(v) Planning application - Aberdyfi Tourist Information Centre

Reference was made to a planning application from Snowdonia National Park to improve the existing Aberdyfi Tourist Information Centre as well as to partly change its use to A3 in order to give an opportunity to develop part of the building for business enterprises to produce additional income.

It was noted that it would be necessary to keep control of the development as they were not keen to see tables/chairs as part of the proposed cafe placed across the quay, especially in terms of health and safety.

It was trusted that the National Park would contact the relevant officers when appointing contractors, in order to be able to discuss the arrangements for access, control etc.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

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- (a) It was suggested that a better and more constructive use of half of the building would be as a location for commercial fishermen to process fish, with a small exhibition of local seafood. It was further noted that Aberdyfi Harbour was a traditional working harbour and it was difficult for fishermen to make a living and having a purposeful location would be ideal. The Consultative Harbour Committee was requested to contact Mr Huw Evans, representative of the Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association, to see if they had any suggestions regarding suitable locations for such an enterprise.
- (b) In terms of the Maritime Service, it was noted that discussions had taken place with commercial fishermen to air the options for a purposeful location.
- (c) That a change of use was a means to retain the building as a Tourist Information Centre.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(vi) Aberdyfi Compound Waste Management

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that he had visited the above site and there was concern regarding the waste within the compound that was polluting the site. The estimated cost to clear the site was £6-£9,000 and it was trusted that this could be undertaken before May. Amongst the waste within the site there was fishing equipment that had not moved from the site for many years. An appeal was made for Mr Huw Evans to discuss this with the fishermen and to draw their attention to the Maritime Service's discontent and the need to clear the site without delay. A warning was given that any unused material would be disposed of unless the equipment was identified as something that needed to be retained by the fishermen.

Mr Desmond George reported that the Yacht Club had equipment in the compound and the Club was willing to comply and contribute towards some of the cost to clear their stuff. He gave an undertaking to write to Yacht Club members to organise this.

The Chairman suggested that it would be an idea to re-erect a purposeful fence to prevent people from throwing waste onto the site in order to get better control.

In response to an enquiry regarding the designation of the site, it was confirmed that Gwynedd Council was responsible for the site.

Resolved: To accept and note the above and approve for representatives of the relevant organisations to appeal to their members to assist by clearing the site without delay.

(DD) Staff Arrangements - Spring/Summer 2016

- (i) The post of Harbour Assistant in Aberdyfi had been advertised and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was confident that an appointment would be made and the post would be operational by mid April.
- (ii) In terms of the maintenance work programme, it was proposed
 - to install a lamp on the Fairway Buoy
 - create an area to store trailers
 - repair slabs on the quay
 - repair the timber boardwalk
- (iii) A member noted the importance of repairing the timber boardwalk because if it did not exist there would be a gap to the sea and the golf course would not exist either.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(E) Natural Resources Wales Consultation

Submitted for information, a letter received dated 19 January 2016 from Natural Resources Wales regarding Special Areas of Conservation for harbour porpoise and proposed new and extended Special Protection Areas for seabirds

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

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

In response to an enquiry regarding the removal of trailers near the promenade, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave an assurance that from 1 April 2016 they would charge the owners and a licence would be available for each site.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: To request that the Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer specifies a date in early November for the next Harbour Consultative Committee, rather than the 11 of October 2016 as approved recently by the Full Council, as this date was rather early in the season.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN.