
PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

10/03/21

PRESENT:

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths (Chairman)
Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Vice-chair)

Councillor Llywelyn Rhys (Porthmadog Town Council Representative), Dr John Jones-Morris (Leisure Interests Representative) and Will Walker Jones (Cricieth RNLI Representative).

OBSERVERS: Councillors Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member - Economy and Community) and Rob Triggs (Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Barry Davies (Maritime Manager), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Malcolm Humphreys (Porthmadog Harbourmaster) and Eirian Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

1. CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chair of this Committee for 2020/21.

2. VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Nia Jeffreys as Vice-chair of this Committee for the year 2020/21.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, David Eastwood (Harbour Interests Representative) and Ian Roberts (Industrial Interests Representative).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 11 March, 2020 as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The reports below were presented, and members were invited to give feedback on safety matters and harbour operational matters.

- (1) The Senior Harbour Officer's report, updating the committee on Harbour matters for the year ending March 2021.

Members were requested to send any observations on the Port Marine Safety Code to the service.

The Principal Maritime Officer noted that an estimate of the harbour budget from 1/4/20 to 31/3/1 had been sent very recently to members, and he gave details on the current situation and noting:-

- During the first lockdown the Council was required to consider reducing the fees and costs for mooring holders, as there was a balance to be struck between retaining future customers, or losing them completely to other harbours.
- He wished to thank local members for the support given to reduce costs to customers by 30% during the period May-July last year.
- That not charging any fee on customers was not an option at all during this period, as harbour maintenance costs continued.
- The details of the individual budgets were as follows:-

| Group | Description | Budget £ | Expenditure up to 31/03/21 £ | Over / Under Spend £ |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Staff | Staff Costs | 60,180 | 60,899 | 719 |
| Property | Land and Property | 23,140 | 10,907 | (12,233) |
| Transport | Boat and Vehicles | 640 | 640 | 0 |
| Equipment & Tools | Equipment & Tools | 9,930 | 12,252 | 2,322 |
| Income | Harbour Income | (74,580) | (47,645) | 26,935 |
| Total | Total | 19,310 | 37,052 | 17,742 |

- Due to the pandemic and the reduction in the number of boats moored in the harbour last year, that the harbour income was approximately £27,000 lower than the target for the year.
 - That the target at the end of the year, taking the income and expenditure into consideration, was that Porthmadog Harbour cost £19,000 for the ratepayers, but unfortunately, due to the lack of income, the difference was £37,000 as the harbour would have an overspend of approximately £18,000 this financial year.
 - This was the first time for many years for the service to report on such a serious financial position of the harbour, and 2021 was also likely to be a difficult year, bearing in mind the major uncertainty in the maritime industry.
 - The pontoons could assist the situation as they were there throughout the year.
 - Harbour Fees and Charges for 2021/22 had now been authorised by Council officers and leaders for publication.
- (2) The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the navigational and operational matters that had arisen between October 2019 and March 2021, including maintenance matters.

The Harbourmaster noted that harbour staff wanted to send their best wishes to Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, following his recent ill-health. The Chair agreed to send a

message to the member, on everyone's behalf, members and officers, wishing his a full and speedy recovery.

The Harbourmaster further noted:-

- The Fairway Buoy had gone out on station at the end of last week, and Buoy Number 2 had been replaced by Buoy Number 1, and Buoy number 3 replaced by Buoy Number 2.
- That another transformer would arrive in 2023 and the Principal Maritime Officer had commenced discussions with the company.
- Divers had undertaken an underwater inspection of harbour moorings in the last few days, and had already replaced approximately 48 risers. The cost of the work was significant, however an additional year had been gained, as this type of work was not conducted last year, as there had been so little use made of the harbour.
- There was a need for a substantial sum of expenditure on the 'Dwyfor' boat. The service was currently seeking prices for the work and it was hoped that the boat would return to Porthmadog within about two weeks.

Officers and harbour staff were thanked for all their work in maintaining the service during an incredibly difficult year, and officers were requested to pass this message on to all.

During the ensuing discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- That the transportation of the transformer from Morfa Bychan beach to Trawsfynydd had worked particularly well, and had attracted many people, and staff had been very willing to talk with people and children, explaining what was happening. The only difficulty was the failure to cut trees beforehand, and this had to be undertaken on the day. In response, it was explained that it was intended to consult the harbour committee and the community to ensure that the transport of the second transformer, that would arrive around June 2023, would go smoothly, and the next time to work of cutting trees would occur about a week beforehand.
- Reference was made to concerns that had arisen last year that personal watercraft and powerboats went too close to the beaches, particularly in Bae Samson, where people were swimming in the water. In response, it was agreed that it was necessary to tighten control of boats in Bae Samson and in Morfa Bychan and Cricieth, and an assurance was given that this would occur in 2021. It was further noted that support was given to appoint more wardens this summer and a team of 3 would be working at Morfa Bychan from 1 April onwards, with 9-10 joining the team as the season got busier.
- It was noted that the gate to prevent the tide from overflowing onto Borth y Gest car park was working well; however, people should use common sense, and not complain that it was closed. In response, it was noted that the staff would open the gate once the weather would improve and it was safe to do so.
- Reference was made to a problem that arose last year with parking on Lôn Treflys causing congestion from Morfa Bychan back to the High Street, Porthmadog, and it was noted that discussions were underway with the Highways Department to introduce double yellow lines on this section of the road. In response, it was explained that if there was congestion again this year in Morfa Bychan, the Council had a plan to reduce the problem for the village by allowing free access to Mora Bychan beach until the congestion had cleared. It was also noted that the Police had been very supportive, working as part of the team, and came down to Morfa Bychan when difficulties arose.

- It was noted that the sand dunes in Mora Bychan were healthy, and that the beach level had risen substantially, creating a large dip in the entrance. It was proposed to clear the sand before Easter to enable traffic to go on the beach.
- Reference was made to the collaboration between the Economy, Environment and Highways Department of Gwynedd Council to try and cope with the number of visitors this summer, and members were asked to inform the Council if they anticipated any problems.
- It was asked what lessons had been learnt from the difficult period over last year. In response, it was noted that vehicle control plan at Morfa Bychan had worked well, by restricting vehicles to one section only of the beach, releasing the rest of the beach for people to walk, play games etc. safely. This had also facilitated the work of monitoring the beach, and had reduced the problem of vehicles becoming stuck in the sand, and lost to the sea. There was no opportunity to speed now, as vehicles were fairly close to each other. It was added that technology had also assisted and it was hoped to be able to disconnect the 999 telephone near the entrance to Morfa Bychan beach, and connect to a fast BT line, that could receive electronic payments. The boat registration system had also changed, with registrations moving on-line only, and therefore releasing staff at the centres to undertake more practical work on the beaches. Also, as a result of the collaboration with the Highways Department, there had been an increase in the number of litter collections on the beaches, and recycling had also been looked at. There had also been an increase in the number of staff, and this was an opportunity to strengthen the teams for the coming season. The service was also working on technology to draw attention to the dangers of the sea.
- In response to a question, it was explained that everything would be ready to charge an admission fee to Morfa Bychan beach by 1 April, however, this was totally dependent on what would happen with lockdown. Therefore, there would be an opportunity to trial this prior to the commencement of the peak period in May.
- It was noted that the Cricieth Lifeboat crew had not had the usual opportunity to practice over the last few months, and people needed to realise that the Lifeboat would not go out as quick as the regulations would have to be followed and ensure that all the crew was safe.

The Chair implored members to contact the Council if they see any difficulties arising over the summer, and he noted that Gwynedd was very willing to welcome visitors who show respect to the area.

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 5 October, 2021.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 6.15 pm

CHAIR