

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, 28 MARCH 2023

Present:

Members:

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams ((Cyngor Gwynedd) Chairing), Councillor Robert Williams (Barmouth Town Council), Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group), Ashley Field (Three Peaks Race, Barmouth to Fort William Race), Ian Sadler (Barmouth 10k Race).

Officers:

Bryn Pritchard-Jones (Maritime Service Manager), Llŷr B Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department), Kane A Triggs (Barmouth Harbour Assistant), Einir Rh Davies and M Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officers) and E Mererid Watt (Interpreter).

Also in Attendance: Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member - Economy and Community), Councillor June Jones (Observer, Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee), Desmond George (Observer, Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Rob Triggs (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Councillor Louise Hughes (Cyngor Gwynedd) as well as Daniel A Cartwright (Barmouth Harbourmaster), Arthur F Jones (Senior Harbours Officer) and Mark James (RNLI).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 8 November 2022, as a true record.

4. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Report of the Senior Harbours Officer and the Harbourmaster

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting, and it was noted that many were attending for the first time, and the opportunity was taken for everyone to introduce themselves. In addition, it was noted that many were off sick, and it was agreed to send a message to wish them a speedy recovery.

Due to the sickness absence of the Senior Harbours Officer, the report was presented by the Maritime Services Manager. The Maritime Services Manager took the opportunity to remind the Committee that Barry Davies, the former Maritime Services Manager, would be retiring on 31/3/23 after 27 years' service to the Council. Barry Davies was thanked for his work and guidance.

Barmouth Moorings and Boat Registration

It was confirmed that maintenance work had been undertaken to the trots moorings and the condition of the equipment was acceptable. A Local Mooring Contractor had confirmed that 2 out of 3 visitors' moorings had been raised as they stood on a sandbank, however the contractor had found it difficult to raise the mooring nearest to the railway bridge.

The on-line registration system for powerboats was now in operation, and this was a great help with GDPR regulations. It was confirmed that the teething problems had been resolved and generally the system ran smoothly.

Port Marine Safety Code

Reference was made to the New Act for Powerboats that would be operational from 31/3/23 namely, the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023, and it was noted that further guidance was needed, although an initial meeting had taken place with the Police.

It was confirmed that the Senior Harbours Officer was leading on the Safety Code, and that improvement work had been undertaken to ensure that the Harbour was as safe as possible, in collaboration with Captain Matt Forbes, Conwy Harbourmaster.

Staffing Matters

It was reported that Kane A Triggs had been appointed as Assistant Harbourmaster and he was welcomed to his first meeting. The intention to appoint five beach officers was confirmed, with two of these commencing in post before Whitsun, and the officers would continue with the maintenance work, and there was no intention to employ more staff in the Harbour.

Members were invited to offer observations on the above, and it was noted as follows:

The on-line registration system was in operation, and any concerns had been resolved.

A request had been received for the Seasonal Beach Officers to receive further first aid training. It was expanded that the time for training last year was insufficient, however prior to Covid advanced first aid training was part of the induction training, and this was something that had slipped, but it was intended to organise training this year. It was noted that the Police and the RNLI had also raised the same point. It was reported that there was good cooperation on the beaches with the Coastguard, the RNLI and the Police and that they all appreciated each other. The Assistant Head of Economy and Community reinforced the comment regarding the change in Legislation for personal Watercraft, particularly the concern that they did not fall into the boats category, and he confirmed that they were still awaiting guidelines and it would take time to receive the operational arrangements, however he agreed to circulate the information once it comes to hand.

The Chair asked whether it would be possible for the Officers to visit caravan parks in the area to highlight the new Act and it was confirmed that this work was afoot to remind people of their responsibilities.

Financial matters: Financial Situation of Barmouth Harbour

Reference was made to the table and a further explanation was given:

Staffing Costs - underspend of £12,948 - as a result of the previous Harbourmaster leaving and the delay before making a new appointment.

Land and Property - nearly in agreement.

Boat and Vehicles - (alternative budget) - expenditure of £90 on petrol for the boat. The boat had not been launched a great deal as it had been out of use for a while.

Equipment & Tools - it was reported that there was expenditure of £20,004 with investments in additional buoys, chains, new lights together with a trailer for the Harbour boat.

Harbour Income - £30,760 was the target and £30,869 had been received.

Therefore, the budget total was £52,950 with the expenditure total at £45,964, and an underspend of £6,986 - this was based on discussions with the Finance Unit in November 2022. The Committee was informed that the £6,986 underspend was likely to be reduced by the end of the month.

The Members noted their pride in seeing that the income was increasing, and it was noted that Barmouth was a busy place, however concern was noted that the Harbour would be criticised for making a profit.

Fees and Charges 2023/24 - Mooring Fees

It was confirmed that mooring fees had been increased by 8.5%, and that some fee headings had been raised higher than inflation, and the details were given as follows:

Powerboats	previous fee £50 Now £60
Launching	previous fee £150 Now at £170

It was suggested that the launching fee should be frozen at £20 this year, with boats smaller than 30hp increasing from £30 to £35.

It was noted that every income source had to be looked at, however the service was of course dependent on tourism and good weather.

The Chair noted that the fees were quite reasonable.

HARBOURMASTER'S REPORT

Navigation Matters

It was confirmed that the channel was dynamic and had moved. It was expected that the contractor would move the aid to navigation before Easter. Two notices to mariners were currently in operation due to the sand - (5/22 and 2/23), while the fairway buoy had been taken out of the water ready to be re-stationed once the contractor is available. It was confirmed that the inspection by Trinity House of the aids to navigation had confirmed that everything reached the expected standard. It was noted that encouragement was given to mariners to contact the Maritime Office directly with or for any information.

Operational Issues

Reference was made to the need to buy a new trailer, with finance coming from the alternative budget, and the boat would be launched next week. The Service has four working boats, and it was confirmed that the statutory requirements to code the boats had changed and the investment work had been undertaken to conduct a structural survey, label the wires etc.,.

Maintenance

It was reported that staff had undertaken and continued to undertake a great deal of work on the moorings and had commenced the work of numbering each mooring.

Staff had been sharing good practice in other Harbours so that it was possible to share staff should the need arise.

Good work had been undertaken to install the moorings, new doors, work on the SS Dora store and the Diesel Store and tidying-up, and it was noted that the Harbour was looking good. Staff were thanked for their work.

Members were invited to offer observations, and in response the following was noted:

The representative of the Barmouth Viaduct Access Group referred to the work on the bridge, and specifically access to water users, and it was noted that the area between the central span had been restricted. The Maritime Service Manager was not aware of this, however, he noted that they worked closely with Network Rail, and had a contact point at Network Rail regarding any work on the bridge. The Harbour Assistant confirmed that he had spoken with the contractor, and he was awaiting further information and would make arrangements to share any information he received. In addition, it was noted that there was wire and debris on the estuary bed in the area and it would be problematic for swimmers or canoeists, and it was asked if it was intended to address this? It was agreed that the Representative of the Barmouth Viaduct Access Group would send photographs for the Harbour staff to act appropriately.

Other matters

It was reported that the company who were renewing the Bridge were eager to remove the irons and transport them off the site. It was reported that a couple of suggestions had been made but it was agreed that transporting them on a barge to Pwllheli or Aberystwyth would be the most convenient way. The Chair noted that this was of course dependent on the course of the channel, and it may be necessary to remove some moorings.

The Chair noted that he had heard a rumour regarding a date for the bridge closure, and he noted concern regarding the date, as it was very close to the beginning of September. The Maritime Service Manager confirmed that he had not received a date from Network Rail, and unfortunately, he had no influence regarding the date.

At a previous meeting there was a reference to the wish to install an electronic barrier on the Compound Road, however, unfortunately it was noted that the cost was over £5,000 and there was currently no intention to buy a barrier, however, bollards would be installed in specific parking areas.

It was confirmed that sand together with timber fences had been erected, and it was assumed that this was very successful as it was a natural barrier and it was confirmed that the YGC department would clear the sand before Easter and the causeway.

It was noted that several events applications had been received, and he would communicate these with Local Members and Town Council Members.

Members were invited to offer observations, and in response the following was noted:

It was noted that it was good news about the clearance before Easter, however it was noted that many concerns had been raised regarding the fence, although signage had been erected regarding safety. The Maritime Service Manager felt that the fences were prominent, and signage had been erected but unfortunately it was not possible to close the beach. A representative from Barmouth Town Council noted that a great deal of concern had been noted, especially by those who walked along the beach in the evening.

There was an enquiry about the Coronation Celebrations (7/8 May), and it was confirmed that specific details had not been received from Katie Price, although there was a suggestion that the Town Council was looking to organise a street event on 8 May, with a request to possibly use the beach.

As the discussion on this item came to a head, the Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department reminded all should they have any concerns, they should contact the Harbourmaster's Office in Barmouth.

Everyone was thanked for their contribution.

RESOLVED

To note and accept the reports.

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

None to note

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 24 October 2023.

The meeting commenced at 3.00pm and concluded at 4.05pm

(Chair)