
BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 23/03/21

Attendance:

Members:

Councillor Gethin Glyn Williams, Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams, Councillor Rob Triggs (Barmouth Town Council), Councillor Matthew Harris (Barmouth Resort Improvement Group), Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group), Wendy Ponsford (Meirioneth Yacht Club), Mark James (RNLI) and Ian Sadler (Three Peaks Race Committee)

Officers:

Barry Davies (Maritime Manager), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Bergitte Evans (Barmouth Harbour Assistant) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democratic Services Officer).

Others invited:

Steve Richardson (Griffiths Engineering)
Rob Williams (Water and Environment Service Manager – Gwynedd Consultancy – YGC)
Osian Gruffydd Richards (Senior Technical Engineer – YGC)
Peter Appleton (Three Peaks Race Committee – observer)

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member – Economic Development), Councillor Louise Hughes, Councillor Brian Woolley (Arthog Community Council), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association) and Llŷr B Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department)

1. CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Gethin Williams as Chair of this Committee for the year 2020/21.

2. VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2020/21.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee that was held on 22 October 2019, as a true record subject to correction: 5 (ch) Specific facility for jet skis – *'It was reported that jet skis did not bring any income to the harbour'* > 'that registered jet skis did bring income to the harbour' and 8 (a) Barmouth Harbour Development Plan – *'A wish to draft a development plan was highlighted'* > 'The need to draft a development plan was highlighted'.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- Barmouth Harbour Development Plan Taskforce
It was highlighted that work had not proceeded as every 'developmental' matter had been set aside as a result of the covid 19 crisis. It was added that priority would be given to re-opening for when people could visit. **It was suggested that the Maritime Manager should ask the Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department about the way forward.**

It was added that it was good practice to hold the Barmouth, Aberdyfi and Pwllheli Harbour Committees and that the Porthmadog Harbour Committee was the only statutory meeting in terms of legislation requirements. It was noted that if legislation enforced harbour development plans, the intention would be to ensure consistency across the four harbours (Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Porthmadog and Pwllheli). **A request was made for the Maritime Officer to look into the requirements of the Act that gives guidance that a harbour development plan was essential.**

6. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Brigitte Evans (Barmouth Harbour Assistant) was welcomed to her first meeting. Officers and harbour staff were thanked for all their work in maintaining the service during an incredibly difficult year.

(a) Senior Harbours Officer's Report

A report was presented by the Senior Harbours Officer giving a brief update on Harbour matters for the period ending March 2021

Moorings

It was reported that there had been a significant reduction in the number of moorings as a result of restrictions associated with covid-19. It was noted that many vessel owners had chosen not to utilise their vessels in 2020 – a general pattern that was seen across Gwynedd Harbours.

Port Marine Safety Code

In response to a question regarding compliance with the code and whether this was something that was difficult to operate, it was noted that the safety aspects were the main challenges together with conducting risk assessments and an external audit. It was added that the process of 'constructing' the code was one that was gradually developing. It was reported that a letter would be sent from the Service to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency having undertaken the annual external audit of the safety management system.

In response to a question regarding the fishermen's pots being left on the harbour, it was noted that this was only a temporary arrangement and as the fishing season gets nearer the pots will be relocated.

Staffing Matters

It was reported that there had been a number of staff changes during the year and Mr Glyn Jones, Harbourmaster, had left to work with the Welsh Ambulance Service. It was highlighted that Brigitte Evans and Jordan Hewlett had been appointed to undertake Harbour duties and they were continuing to be trained and developed.

In response to a question regarding sufficient resources to cope with visitors to the area during the summer, it was noted that the Cabinet Member had highlighted concern about the situation and that the matter had been discussed in the Tourism Group, under the leadership of the Chief Executive. Following further discussions with the Maritime Unit, and an effective agreed plan for the work, it was suggested that the staffing level would be sufficient for the Harbour and the beach. Staff from other departments will also be available to manage matters in the town.

Financial Matters

The harbour budget was presented to highlight the current financial position up to the end of March 2021. An overspend of £8,061 was estimated.

In response to a question regarding funding from Welsh Government to compensate for the reduction in income, it was reported that £4,500 had been received and included in the budget. It was noted that mooring fees would increase in line with inflation (2%), however, there would be no increase in launching, registration and re-registration fees.

Barmouth Viaduct Repair Work

A presentation was given by Steve Richardson (Griffiths Engineering) regarding the repair work to be undertaken to Barmouth Viaduct over the next two years. Reference was made to the work timeframe included in the Harbourmaster's report.

Main points arising from the discussion:

- The bridge will not open – it had not been designed to open
- There was no plan to raise the sand level
- The work will not limit the use of the navigational area
- The old timber and iron will be available to local artists.
- The size of the new timber will be too large and therefore they will need to be sawn to the correct size and the off-cuts will be available for a reasonable price with the money to be contributed to the RNLI and other local charities.

Suggestions to be referred to SR

- Some sections of timber will be re-used to repair paths
- If there was a need for repair work in the harbour, it was stated that resources would be available – the company were open to discussions.
- Although it was proposed to open a shop on the site to share information with the public, this had not been possible under the covid 19 restrictions/guidance
- The old mechanical wheel will remain in place and will not be available as a 'decoration' for the gardens – this was a decision by CADW
- **Steve Richardson's details to be distributed to Members**

(b) Harbourmaster's Report

A report was presented by the Harbour Assistant detailing navigational, operational and maintenance matters. Attention was drawn to the following matters:

- That the course of the navigable channel when approaching Barmouth Harbour had remained fairly consistent over last year. However, following a request from Trinity House to change the position of the Fairway Buoy (safe water mark), to correspond better to the navigable channel with buoys, permission was given to position it at 52° 42.815 N. 004° 04.887 W.

- The Coronavirus epidemic and the associated Welsh Government restrictions imposed had had a major impact on the Harbour's operations during 2020.
- Whilst fishing vessels had been allowed to continue to operate throughout, tourism and leisure movements in the harbour were fundamentally restricted with many owners deciding to leave their vessels ashore for the year.
- At the height of the 2020 summer season when some Coronavirus restrictions were lifted, the harbour frontage became a very busy area – with not much attention given by visitors to social distancing measures imposed by Welsh Government.
- Visitor moorings located in the harbour underwent an annual inspection and service in 2020. This was undertaken by an external contractor. With movements of the navigable channel under review, it is very possible that these moorings may well have to be re-located for the forthcoming season, in order to maintain their deep water status.
- During the period in question, maintenance of the navigation aids had been undertaken by an external contractor at a net cost to the Service of £2600.
- Damage had occurred to the two new harbour ladders fitted to the harbour wall last year. The damage was caused by vessels moored alongside the quay wall. The Service will seek to undertake repairs to the ladders in conjunction with the owners of the vessels involved and will also seek to recover the costs from vessel owners
- Subsidence around the harbour infrastructure continues. A collapse of the sea wall beneath Viaduct Gardens had led to rock armour being placed in the vicinity to prevent further damage. Subsidence of the harbour ground near the dinghy rack had also become exacerbated. Gwynedd Consultancy have been informed of the subsidence and inspections were undertaken in the area to determine the appropriate course of action.
- Following a local consultation process between the Service and harbour stakeholders, a report was prepared and presented to the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) to secure funding in association with the Welsh Government's local development strategy, for a feasibility study into proposed dredging works in the harbour. It was reported that YGC were forming the tender package for the work – **update on the position October 2021**. FLAG were thanked for the funding to undertake a review and feasibility study.
- Parking spaces on Compound Road had been marked to assist water based Commercial Operators to continue their activities in a busy harbour environment, particularly during the summer period. Unfortunately, since the placement of bollards to prevent indiscriminate parking by unauthorised individuals, many bollards had received unreported damage. The Service cannot continue to foot the repair costs of such damage. The matter was now subject to review. It was intended to consider alternative schemes in the future – it is not proposed to impose a parking order in the area – priority was being given to higher profile sites in the County.
- When organising any event, it was essential to comply with the prevailing Coronavirus Regulations and the advice produced by the Welsh Government by contacting the Harbour Authority or the Gwynedd Events Group. Applications will be considered and engagement measures will be undertaken with the local community regarding staging events. Members were encouraged to be realistic regarding what could be done bearing in mind the current position. The need to consult with the public and share information in a timely manner was emphasised.

11:00am – a minute to think and reflect on the experiences of the past year. To mark a year since the start of the first national restrictions on movement in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sea Defences Schemes – update on the North Promenade Scheme and Viaduct Gardens Scheme by Rob Williams and Osian Richards YGC.

It was reported that a meeting had taken place on 6 January 2021 – the minutes had been shared with Members.

Main points arising from the discussion:

North Promenade Scheme:

- Geophysical work undertaken to investigate the condition of the structure space
- Detailed design to model the beach
- A business case had been submitted to Welsh Government
- No sand dunes will be created as this will not allow sufficient time for the marram grass to root. Need to consider possible options that include stabilising the grass that already exists. Further discussions to be held.

Viaduct Gardens Scheme:

- Work to update the business case is being completed
- A survey of the entire quay wall had been completed – a report of the findings was yet to be received
- Next steps – detailed design for the work – match funding available for the work through the Council's assets
- Drainage improvement work to be completed in the road -
- Need to improve the standard of sea flood defences. It was proposed to consult with the public – the area was sensitive – need to consider the finished appearance together with the appropriate level of defence.
- Access plans to be incorporated with the defences plans – ideas to be forwarded to the Economy Department
- Quay Wall – following initial survey, the wall had stabilised but needs a further survey prior to opening to the public. Further discussions to be undertaken with YGC – if 'additional pressure' is required, this can be incorporated in the Viaduct Gardens Scheme.

RESOLVED to accept the reports.

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 19 October 2021. A request was made on behalf of the Cabinet Member to consider another date and time as Tuesday mornings clashed with Leadership Team meetings and therefore prevented the Cabinet Member from attending. A request was made for Members to consider another convenient day and time.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.30pm.