

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 5/10/21

PRESENT:

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

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Gwynedd Council) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative).

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

1. CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chair of this Committee for the year 2021/22.

2. VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Nia Jeffreys as Vice-chair of this Committee for the year 2021/22.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Llewelyn Rhys (Porthmadog Town Council Representative), David Eastwood (Harbour Interests Representative), Chris Fisher (Cricieth RNLI Representative) and Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member - Economic Development).

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 committee meeting held on 10 March, 2021, as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

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

- (1) The Senior Harbours Officer's report, giving a brief update to the committee on harbour matters for the period from March 2021 to October 2021.

Referring to part 2 of the report - Porthmadog Moorings and Boat Registration - the Senior Harbours Officer noted that 1,302 Personal Watercraft (Jetskis) and 1,308 Powerboats had registered online and in person, giving a total of 2,610 of registered vessels.

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In response to a question by the Chair regarding who is responsible for dredging the harbour, the Maritime Manager explained:-

- Under the Porthmadog Harbour legislation, the Council did not have dredging powers without going through processes, and the Marine & Coastal Access Act had tightened environmental protection considerably, and also the ability of harbours to dredge without going through statutory processes.
- Porthmadog Harbour was a harbour that was gradually silting up, with material slowly returning into the harbour.
- Natural processes had been hampered significantly when the Cob and Pont Glaslyn were constructed.
- There was a warning when the pontoons were granted that this would create an area of quiet waters, and everything transported down-river would be left in the harbour, as there would be an insufficient flow for it to be carried out to sea.
- Regarding the pontoons area, the Council would certainly not dredge an area where it had no responsibility or lease.
- It would be very difficult to dispose of mud from Porthmadog harbour. It would have to be sucked up and pumped out into the sea, however, it would have to be tested first, and probably obtain a marine licence, prior to commencing the process.
- Although at a quite different scale, plans to dredge Victoria Dock, Caernarfon and Hafan, Pwllheli were worth £280,000.
- It would take time to conduct habitats regulations assessments.
- He was willing to look into the matter, however, no promise could be given that it would be possible to dredge Porthmadog harbour in the future.

A member agreed with these observations and noted:

- He did not believe that there was any purpose to dredge the harbour, as the channel within the harbour had not altered much in 45 years.
- If there was a wish to increase the number of moorings, it would be much better to install pontoons down the centre of the harbour, in order for water to flow either side, and possibly have a system to transport people to their boats.

The Maritime Manager noted that an estimate of the harbour budget from 1/4/20 to 31/3/21 and 1/4/21 to 31/9/21 had been sent very recently to members, and he gave details on the current situation and noted:-

- That a larger number of staff had been appointed this year to cope with the anticipated number of visitors to the coast over the summer, and it was pleasing to see so many enjoying what this area has to offer. However, disappointment was expressed that some people had behaved in a threatening way towards staff.
- The need to spray water to harden soft sand near the entrance for vehicles at Morfa Bychan had an impact on the numbers who were able to gain access to the beach at certain times during the summer.
- Because of the pandemic, we were £22,500 short of our income target in 2020/21, and this had led to an overspend of £23,000 in the harbour during the year.
- An overspend was anticipated of a little less than £18,000 in our budget for this year.

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- The income target for this year was £65,000. Thus far, the harbour had managed to reach £64,000, and it was envisaged that the income target would be reached for the year.
- In terms of the harbour's maintenance, the budget was £10,000, and the expenditure thus far was £25,000. Therefore, it was anticipated there would be at least £5,000 in additional expenditure, this would mean an overspend of £20,000 under the equipment and tools heading in the harbour this year.
- Everything possible would have to be done in the winter to reduce costs to the ratepayers.
- The whole maritime budget could cope with the £18,000 of overspend in Porthmadog, and we were also very fortunate that 2,610 boats had been registered this year and this would be a boost to the income budget. In addition, there had been an increase in the number of boats in the Harbour and at Hafan Pwllheli (378 compared to the anticipated 280) that had assisted the income stream to contribute to the budget.
- Investments would continue in Porthmadog, however, the budget for them was quite small.

In response to a question, the Maritime Manager explained that only a very small amount of income came from the registration of Personal Watercraft to the Porthmadog harbour budget, and that the income went into the beaches budget, unless the craft was launched directly into the waters of Porthmadog Harbour. It was noted that the situation could be looked at, however, it appeared that the small car park at the back of the harbour brought in much more income than boat launching. It was also noted that the £18,000 overspend in Porthmadog would be subsidised via other maritime budget headings. It was asked if it would be possible to extend the car park to generate more income. In response, the Maritime Manager agreed to make investigations regarding the car park during the winter in order to evaluate the options.

In response to a question regarding the overspend on the 'equipment and tools' heading, the Maritime Manager explained that it had been necessary to purchase a number of chains for moorings and navigation aids. Also, approximately £13,000 - £14,000 had been spent on maintenance to bring the 'Dwyfor' boat up to the Navigation Code standard.

- (b) The Harbourmaster's Report, summarising Navigational and Operational matters undertaken and encountered during the period March 2021-October 2021, including maintenance matters, the situation of the navigational channel and aids to navigation, winter work programme and the Borth y Gest area.

Referring to section 4 of the report, the Maritime Manager reminded members of the public consultation regarding ensuring that personal watercraft (including jetskis) is covered by legislation. It was noted that the consultation would close on 1 November, 2021.

It was explained that the consultation offered four options, namely:-

- Option 1 - do nothing
- Option 2 - introduce new primary legislation (this would take years)
- Option 3 - legislation under the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 (preferred option)
- Option 4 - amend the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 definition of a 'ship'

The Committee was requested to support option 3. This option was supported by the members, and it was also asked if a clause could be added to the response to

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emphasise the importance of ensuring training in addition to an age limit for driving recreational and personal watercraft.

The Maritime Manager thanked Robert Owen, Commercial Interests Representative, for the opportunities he offered, as a seller of Personal Watercraft and pleasure boats for people to receive training. It was noted that the numbers that participate in the training courses were increasing, and he was also asked to convey the harbour committee's gratitude to the trainers.

The Maritime Manager noted further that only a few complaints had been received regarding Personal Watercraft in the Porthmadog / Morfa Bychan area, and on the whole people conformed to the regulations. The Harbourmaster noted that the movement towards the online registration of powerboats and Personal Watercraft had taken a great deal of work from the Department and beach staff.

Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative) suggested that their main trainer, who runs a business from the boatyard, could make a valuable contribution to the harbour committee's work. In response, the Maritime Manager noted that there was one vacant seat on the committee, however, in accordance with the constitution the representatives had to fit in to the membership categories that already exist. He agreed to discuss this further with the Chair and the member to map the way forward.

RESOLVED

- (a) To note and accept the report.**
- (b) To respond as follows to the Department of Transport Consultation Paper "Strengthening enforcement of the dangerous use of recreational and personal watercraft":-**
 - That this committee preferred option 3, namely creating legislation under section 112 of the Railways and Transportation Safety Act 2003 to extend the relevant provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, and relevant regulations, to include recreational and personal watercraft.**
 - To emphasise the importance of ensuring training for users and a call to increase the age limit for driving recreational and personal watercraft.**

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 8 March, 2022.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 6.30 pm

CHAIR