

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 11/10/22

PRESENT:

Councillor Gwilym Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd) (Chair)

Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Llyr Beaumont Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department), Barry Davies (Maritime Manager), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Malcolm Humphreys (Porthmadog Harbourmaster) and Eirian Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

Councillor Gwilym Jones was welcomed to his first meeting of this committee.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Gwilym Jones as chair for 2022/23.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor June Jones as vice-chair for 2022/23.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor June Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Dr John Jones-Morris (Leisure 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 committee meeting held on 8 March 2022, as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

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

- (1) The Senior Harbours Officer's report, giving a brief update to the committee on harbour matters for the period from March 2022 to September 2022.

Matters were raised under the following headings:-

Introduction

Referring to the Harbour Committee's Constitution, which was included as an appendix to the report and which listed the committee's membership, the Maritime

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Manager expressed his concern that so few of the representatives of the harbour users' various interests were attending the meetings. He stated his intention to contact those representatives to highlight the importance of securing their members' input, or that of their delegates, in order to have a cross-section of observations in the meetings.

Port Marine Safety Code

The Chair noted that Porthmadog Town Council had received a letter recently complaining that Personal Watercraft were coming too close to the shore in Samson Bay, and he asked if the maritime staff could have a word with those responsible.

In response, the Maritime Manager noted the following:-

- The Service shared those concerns, and the maritime staff had dealt with fatal accidents involving Personal Watercraft, and also powerboats over the past years.
- The Service was trying to improve control of this in this area of the harbour, especially over the summer season, but the incident in question had happened on 2nd of October, two days after the maritime staff had finished working on the beaches for the season.
- There was photographic evidence available of the incident, and the Service would have a word with the owner of the watercraft and the owner of the company that provides training.
- The number of complaints about Personal Watercraft and powerboats were decreasing overall, which showed that the Service's management of the situation, and people's behaviour, was improving.
- If the public or staff could not flag down a driver of a watercraft who was driving irresponsibly or too close to the shore, the Council had a registration system in place so that the owner could be identified fairly quickly. It was agreed that it was not always easy to see the registration number, but the driver was bound to come ashore somewhere.
- Robert Owen, as the representative for this industry on the committee, was proactively encouraging responsible and good use of the watercraft.
- PWC Gwynedd had held the 'Black Rock Blast' event to promote responsible and safe behaviour when using Personal Watercraft. The Council was also sharing evidence of irresponsible behaviour with PWC Gwynedd so that they could upload it on their website.
- It was difficult to police the length and breadth of the coastline, and although the Service had a boat in Porthmadog Harbour it was not always possible to get it out. However, the Service would try to improve this for next year.
- Anglesey and Conwy Councils had adopted a system of registering watercraft, as had existed in Gwynedd for years, and it would be good if this became a statutory, national arrangement so that it was a requirement that all watercraft are registered.
- The Town Council had forwarded the complainant's letter to him, and he had asked the Harbourmaster and the Senior Harbours Officer to provide a comprehensive response on behalf of the Harbour Authority.

The Chair asked how often did the Police boat call at the harbour. In response, the Maritime Manager noted:-

- That this happened very infrequently, but the Police had been running a publicity campaign in the area during the summer season.

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- An officer from Natural Resources Wales was on-board the boat, together with police officers and divers.
- The boat operated from the Wirral, Manchester and Liverpool mainly, and also covered North-west England.

The Chair noted that the silt level had risen in the harbour, and he enquired when had the harbour been dredged last. In response, the Maritime Manager noted the following:-

- There were 28 years since the harbour had last been dredged.
- Any increase in seabed levels would affect boats in some part of the harbour.
- The development of the pontoon had slowed down and changed the flow of the water. Silt was being left behind when the tide went out of the harbour, and silt coming down the river was also being deposited in the harbour.
- The silt was likely to increase until it reached an equilibrium, a situation they were not far off he believed.
- It was not believed that the silt affected what was happening within the harbour in terms of the statutory element, since the navigation was still being overseen regularly and the buoys were still being stationed in the correct places.
- It was acknowledged that the situation was inconvenient for some boats that were used to going out on any tide level within reason, but that was expected.
- When the harbour had last been dredged, lorries were used where machinery lifted the silt into the lorries, but the act no longer allowed this. Also, the silt would have to be transported to a registered waste site.
- The cost of dredging the harbour would be around £500,000 or more.
- Perhaps in a year or two they could look at the possibility of pumping water into the harbour to try and remove some of the silt. The Sailing Club themselves could do this because all the income from the pontoons went to the Club.
- There were also pockets of silt in the walls on the quay-side, but the process of removing it would involve major work.
- The Service continued to monitor the situation, but there were no plans at present to carry out any dredging work in Porthmadog Harbour.

The Leisure Interests Representative noted as follows:-

- He hadn't noticed that the silt level in the quay walls had changes at all in 45 years.
- He did not believe that dredging would have any effect since the silt would return to the harbour in time.

Financial Matters

The Maritime Manager noted that the harbour's latest budget was as follows, and that he would circulate the information to the members following the meeting:-

Group	Description	Budget £	Expenditure up to 31/03/21 £	Over (Under) Spend £
Staff	Staff Costs	63,530	67,132	3,602
Property	Land and Property	24,440	22,898	(1,542)
Transport	Boat and Vehicles	670	919	249

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Equipment and Tools	Equipment and Tools	12,120	7,006	(5,114)
Income	Harbour Income	(73,830)	(61,619)	12,211
Total	Total	26,930	36,337	9,407

He further noted that they hoped the £9,407 overspend could be reduced against the budget of the current financial year by making less expenditure under the Property heading.

Fees and Charges

The Maritime Manager noted:-

- That they had not received the inflation figures from the Finance Unit yet, but those figures would not be as low as in previous years.
 - They did not wish to increase the fees so high that no-one could afford to moor in Porthmadog Harbour, but they would have to be realistic when assessing the figures and the fees to see whether there were alternative ways of increasing the harbours' income.
 - They needed to look at the Borth-y-gest area because those aspects might be slightly lower than what the market there could accommodate. As such, they intended to increase fees in that area, but it would not have a particularly harmful impact on the customers there.
 - They would also need to look at the launching and registration fees and costs elements of Black Rock Sands, possibly.
 - Once there were firm figures and recommendations available, they could be circulated to the members outside a formal committee meeting, and also consult with the Cabinet Member in future.
- (2) The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the Navigational and Operational matters that had arisen between March and September 2022, including maintenance matters.

Matters were raised under the following headings:-

Navigation Matters

A member enquired about the findings of the annual inspection by Trinity House of navigational aids in the harbour and the channel approach. In response, the Harbourmaster noted that no issues had arisen in Porthmadog, or in any other harbour. The Maritime Manager added that the Service had worked to improve the aids to navigation, and the fact that there were no issues arising in Porthmadog or in any other harbour was a credit to the harbourmasters.

The Maritime Manager stated that some things had come up on assets that the Service were not responsible for, but as a local lighthouse authority, there was a duty on the Maritime Service to follow these up with a third party. The Service had been trying to do this for years without success, and it was important that the third party took this seriously.

Maintenance

The Harbourmaster noted:-

- That a new rowing club in Porthmadog had been granted permission to store a rowing boat at the back of the harbour.
- The work at the back of the harbour would be one of the largest projects over the winter.

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- The boat named 'Dwyfor' needed a new propeller blade and required cleaning, and maintenance work was also needed on the Fairway Buoy.

On behalf of the committee, the Chair thanked the local groups and individuals who had been involved in beach cleaning activities on Black Rock Sands.

The Maritime Manager thanked the Chair and Councillor Nia Jeffreys for their interest in the Service, and in Black Rock Sands and the harbour, and expressed his hope that this would continue in future.

RESOLVED to note and accept the report.

8. ELECTION OF OBSERVERS

The committee was invited to elect an observer to receive information, or attend the meetings of the other three harbour committees.

RESOLVED that since so few members were present at this meeting, to defer the election of an observer to serve on the Aberdyfi, Barmouth and Pwllheli Harbours Consultative Committees for the time being, and to contact all the members as soon as possible to invite anyone interested to put their names forward.

9. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 7 March 2023.

At the end of the meeting, the Maritime Manager noted that this was possibly his last meeting of the committee as it was highly likely that he would be leaving the Council's employment early in 2023. Nonetheless, he hoped to be able to continue supporting his colleagues to prepare for the next meeting in March.

The Chair and the committee members thanked the Maritime Manager for all his work over the years. It was noted that he was a professional, conscientious and experienced officer who was always willing to offer guidance and to help and listen. He had also developed the Maritime Service over a number of years, and proof of his hard work could be seen clearly in the Service. It was noted that he would be very much missed, and he was wished well in future.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 6.40 pm

CHAIR