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**PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE,  
6 MARCH, 2013**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Chairman)

Councillors: E. Selwyn Griffiths and Jason Humphreys (Gwynedd Council), along with Messrs Gwyn Davies (Porthmadog Town Council), Dr John Morris (Leisure Interests Representative) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests).

**ALSO PRESENT:** Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), David O'Neill (Harbour Master) and Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**APOLOGIES:** David McLean (Landowners' Interests) and Peter Lunt Williams (RNLI).

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer referred to an apology by Mr Ken Fitzpatrick, Assistant Maritime Officer – Harbours. Mr Fitzpatrick had intended to be present because he would be retiring in August of this year and there would be no further opportunity for him to attend a meeting of this Committee.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer added that Mr Fitzpatrick's contribution to the Service had been immensely valuable.

These observations were endorsed by the Chairman and other members and the officer was wished well on his retirement.

**1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

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

**2. MINUTES**

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee, held on 10 October 2012, as a true record.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Reference was made to the enquiry made regarding disabled parking on beaches and land of the Maritime Department.

Specific attention was given to the possibility of allowing free parking for the disabled on Morfa Bychan beach. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the issue had been considered approximately seven years ago. At that time, it was decided that it would be unfair for some to take advantage of avoiding payments and no reduction should be approved.

He added that this was an entrance fee rather than a fee for parking and he did not anticipate that any change would be introduced in 2013.

Some members expressed dissatisfaction and it was noted that some needed to visit the beach for medical reasons.

A member referred to an arrangement that had existed in the past when local residents had free access to the beach. He suggested that this arrangement could be re-introduced or at least an arrangement could be introduced so that some of the receipts could be submitted for the benefit of the local community.

**RESOLVED that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer submits observations at the next meeting on the two principles of:**

**a) allowing residents free entrance to Morfa Bychan Beach;**

**b) to present a proportion of the beach entrance fee to a fund for the benefit of the local community.**

#### **4. MARITIME SERVICE REPORT**

a) The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was submitted and he referred specifically to the following matters:

##### 1) Work Boat

It was noted that the work boat, Dwyfor, namely an Aquastar 27, was now in Porthmadog and was working from there almost permanently. He added that the boat had been in use since 1994 and there was a need to replace it in the near future if the service was to continue to keep the standards of the navigation aids of Porthmadog harbour. It was further explained that three workers had to be on the boat before it could be used and this would create difficulties following the retirement in August of the Assistant Maritime Officer – Harbours.

##### 2) Trinity House

It was noted that inspections had been undertaken by Trinity House and they were generally satisfied with the situation in Porthmadog.

##### 3) Beach Zone Buoys

It was explained that it was intended to take the beach zone buoys out onto the beaches in Morfa Bychan and Criccieth before the beginning of May. Furthermore, it was noted that some modifications would be made in terms of the location of the navigation buoy and buoy number 9.

##### 4) Mooring Maintenance

Members were reminded that the moorings had not been inspected last year but a company from Dyffryn Ardudwy had been appointed to undertake the work under the supervision of the Harbour Master.

##### 5) Disposal and Safety of Pyrotechnics – (flares)

It was noted that there was a substantial cost of disposing of pyrotechnics. During the last few weeks, £2,500 had been paid for their disposal and when the flares had to be ignited on the site, a £100 fee had to be paid on each occasion to ensure safety.

It was added that a licensed storage was required to comply with regulations.

In response to an enquiry, it was noted that it would be better to provide what was required as a service rather than claiming a payment in order to overcome the hazards.

A member noted that manufacturers were currently collaborating and perhaps in future they would allow free return of the flares.

It was agreed that every possible step should be taken in an effort to ensure safety and it was confirmed that the procedure was that flares had to be returned to the Harbour Master.

#### 6) Maritime Statistics

It was emphasised that the statistics reflected the current economic situation and the manner in which this affected the Service generally. It was noted that a total of 1169 power boats had been registered in 2011 and the total had decreased to 868 in 2012.

Along with the economic situation, it was noted that the price of fuel and the severe weather had had a detrimental effect on the situation.

It was added that only eight power boats had been launched from Morfa Bychan in 2012 compared with 29 in 2011.

A similar situation had been seen with personal watercraft and in 2012, 86 had been registered in Morfa Bychan beach compared with 168 in 2011.

It was added that the Service had contacted every customer again this year but the response had been very slow.

It was explained that next year contact would be made electronically rather than by letter in order to reduce costs and to be more effective.

In response to an enquiry, it was noted that work was in the pipeline for marketing the harbour as part of the Council's website. It was added that Corporate Regulations meant that this publicity had to be created as part of the Council's website. However, it was confirmed that discussions were being held in order to try to have a prominent place for the Maritime Services on the Council's website.

#### 7) Budgets

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer guided members through the report dealing with budgets and he made the following main points:-

- it was expected that there would be an underspend of £11,000 in the staffing element of Porthmadog Harbour;
- the above underspend was based on the fact that no full-time staff were employed;
- there was a budget of over £20,000 for general maintenance in terms of the land and the harbour;
- the above budget included an alternative budget of £12,000 and therefore it was not a fair reflection of the situation. An underspend of approximately £9,500 was anticipated on this budget but £8,000 had already been committed for maintenance of moorings and navigation aids;
- there was a need to identify £8,000 for engines for the harbour boat;
- there was a budget of £10,000 for equipment and furniture and it was foreseen that there would be an overspend of £2,500;
- there was a target income of approximately £78,000 for moorings and launching in the harbour. It was expected that there would be an underspend of less than £16,000 in Porthmadog. Considering the alternative budget, the underspend would be £4,000 which would also include the underspend regarding staff;
- the general situation showed that there was a considerable investment in Porthmadog harbour in terms of maintenance and quality;
- in terms of beaches, it was anticipated that costs on the staffing commitment could be recovered. Furthermore, an underspend of £11,000 was expected on land maintenance, an underspend of £2,500 on the costs of vehicles and an overspend of £4,500 on the remainder of beach services;
- the cost of collecting and disposing of refuse from beaches was £140,000 between 1 April and the end of September;
- there was an income target for beaches of nearly £200,000 and the inclement weather affected this greatly;
- any reduction in income was seen as an overspend and consequently savings had to be identified;

- if the target was exceeded, the additional income would be invested back in the Service;
- the scheme of zoning the harbour had been fair and successful;
- launching fees had been reduced from £12 to £10 in anticipation of being able to attract more people to the area.

#### 8. Improvements

It was noted that the pay and display machine in the car park at the rear of the harbour had proved a success with approximately £4,000 being secured for the service's funds. However, an application to install a similar machine in Borth y Gest car park had been refused.

In terms of the beach in Morfa Bychan, control had been established on one access during the winter by closing Lôn Gwydryn. In addition a scheme to demolish the former building and construct new toilets on the beach with the assistance of a grant of £15,000 from the Green Seas Scheme had been completed.

It included solar panels and a new technical sewerage scheme had been constructed as part of the building.

Additionally, an application had been submitted to the relevant authority for the International Blue Flag Award. If the application was successful, then it would be the first time for Morfa Bychan beach to win the award.

As a consequence of the Coastal Path, the dog zone on the beach had been amended and the order would come into force on 1 April. Now, workers would have the right to impose fines on those who failed to comply with the rules.

Furthermore, reference was made to the constant improvement in the standard of bathing waters in Morfa Bychan beach.

#### 9. Staff

Since the Assistant Maritime Officer – Harbours would be retiring in August, it was decided to appoint a harbour assistant for a period of six months in addition to the team which was already in Porthmadog.

It was intended to do this annually in anticipation that the term of employment could be increased in future.

Reference was made to the way that workers had installed 250 large posts in Morfa Bychan beach to protect the sand dunes. The work had been completed in a few days and this was the third part of a three year plan. Already a substantial improvement had been seen in the condition of the dunes.

The officer and members emphasised that the conscientious work of members of staff was greatly appreciated.

#### **Next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 9 October, 2013.

The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and concluded at 6.45pm