
PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 22/10/13

Present: Councillor Peter Read (Chairman)

Councillor Michael Sol Owen, Robert J. Wright (Gwynedd Council), David Dewsbury (Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders' Association), Bob Lowe (Pwllheli Sailing Club), W.A. Partington (Maritime Traders Association), Andrew Picken (Pwllheli Chamber of Commerce), Councillor Mici Plwm (Pwllheli Town Council)

Also present: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), Llyr B. Jones (Senior Manager – Economy and Community Department), Wil Williams (Pwllheli Harbour Manager), Gareth Wright (Unit Manager - FCERM) and Bethan Adams (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Rod Green (Pwllheli and District Boat Owners Association), Stephen Tudor (Pwllheli Sailing Club), Councillor John Wynn Jones (Cabinet Member – Economy) and Councillor David Richardson (Observer)

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Peter Read as Chairman of the Committee for 2013/14.

2. VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Michael Sol Owen as Vice-chairman of the Committee for 2013/14.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Consultative Committee held on 19 March 2013, as a true record.

5. MARITIME SERVICE REPORT

Sailing Academy Developments

An update was provided by the Unit Manager - FCERM on Sailing Academy developments and dredging.

It was noted that redesign work had been undertaken on designs for the Sailing Academy building as submitted tenders offered prices that were higher than the budget. Research had been undertaken into less costly ways of constructing the Academy and it was decided to use materials that were more in keeping with the area to create the frame of the building. It was noted that a period of inviting tenders would soon commence for a period of five weeks. It was proposed to assess the tenders and make an offer to the successful applicant. This process would take until the Christmas period and the work would be commenced early next year with a target to complete the work by April 2015.

In response to an enquiry, in relation to the impact of the slippage in timescale on receiving a grant, the Unit Manager - FCERM noted that an allowance for inflation had been included in the budget and that flexibility with the expenditure of grant funding from Europe enabled

the Council to spread the expenditure over financial years but that there was no flexibility in the Assembly's TMF grant expenditure.

The value of re-tendering was emphasised because the type of frame that had been initially selected meant that there was insufficient competition for the tender as it would be a specialist activity. It was noted that changing the fabrication of the frame would not change the external appearance of the building.

In relation to the dredging work, it was noted that an application for a maritime licence and a planning application had been submitted at the end of June.

In April 2013, the responsibility for maritime licenses was transferred from the Assembly to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the restructuring had caused a delay due to a lack of resources to deal with the application. Following a ten week delay by NRW on commencement of the process, a request had been received for more information.

The Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), namely the NRW's scientific consultant, noted that more sampling work should be done at Hafan where dredging would take place and at the land reclamation area. It was noted that the timescale to take the samples was the problem, as well as additional costs, and that a suitable tide had to be identified to undertake the work. A window of a week commencing on 4 November had been identified to undertake the sampling work. It was hoped that NRW would grant permission on the condition that the dredging work would not commence until confirmation had been received from CEFAS that they were satisfied with the outcomes of the sampling work. Following further discussions with the Contractor regarding the programme, it was proposed to construct a bund before Christmas and start dredging in January – a confirmation had been received from CEFAS.

A member noted that the planning application would be submitted before the Planning Committee on 4 November.

In response to an enquiry, the Unit Manager - FCERM noted that more information had been sent to NRW (the element that had the duties of the former Environment Agency and Countryside Council for Wales) and that the Planning Service had received confirmation from NRW that they were satisfied with the information provided, therefore it was hoped that there would be no complications.

A member noted that the delay prior to the commencement of the work had had an impact on the Hafan, Pwllheli Sailing Club and ultimately the Academy and that this was frustrating.

In response to a question from a member that the Architect and the Quantity Surveyor should have been able to anticipate that the materials would not be easily available in the area and their accountability for the delay, the Unit Manager – FCERM noted that several individuals were associated with the scheme along with the Architect and the Quantity Surveyor, that a number of cost plans had been formulated, that they had tested the market and created a detailed cost estimation based on a bill of quantities which had indicated that it would be possible to undertake the work through this method.

A concern was expressed that berth holders were leaving the Hafan which would lead to a financial loss for the Hafan, the Council and traders and have an impact for years.

A request was made to receive a report on this scheme thus far, in relation to the situation of the Sailing Academy and the Hafan, at the next meeting of the Consultative Committee.

In response, whilst accepting the frustration with the situation, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that there was a need to have a positive outlook for the future and that it

was an exciting development for Pwllheli. It was noted that the sailing world would recognise Pwllheli as a leading place for these activities when the process would pick up speed.

Harbour Consultative Committees

Reference was made to the Cabinet Member's report submitted to the Cabinet on 17 September 2013, to update operational arrangements and accountability for the management duties of the County's Harbours in accordance with the Marine Safety Code and to adopt a standard constitution for the Harbour Consultative Committees.

The Senior Manager – Economy and Community elaborated upon the contents of the report. Attention was drawn to the three relevant elements of the code namely accountability for marine safety, documents and Harbour Committees. It was noted that an annual report would be prepared to the Council Cabinet and that any conclusions/opinions of the Consultative Committees would be fed into the report. It was proposed to strengthen the link between the Consultative Committee and the Cabinet Member – Economy by inviting the Cabinet Member to attend the meetings.

Reference was made to a revised terms of reference that had been formulated by the Legal Unit for the Consultative Committees which corresponded with the Council's Constitution and reconciled arrangements. The following main points were highlighted:

- The Council Cabinet was responsible for appointing members of the Consultative Committees.
- The Chair and Vice-chair of the Consultative Committee was elected from amongst members who were county councillors.
- A quorum for meetings of the Committee would be a quarter of the members with voting rights, which would include at least one county councillor.
- The Committee would also consider and advise the Cabinet on any related matter that was referred to it by the Cabinet.

In relation to other members to represent the various interests of Harbour users on the Committee, a member noted that a list of potential representatives had been created for the Caernarfon Harbour Trust Consultative Committee and that a representative on behalf of the environment served on it and that he would provide a copy for the Maritime and Country Parks Officer for consideration.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer drew the attention of members to the Draft Marine Safety Code that had been sent to them and he noted that only an English version had currently been published but that a request had been made to the UK Department for Transport for us to receive it in Welsh.

Members were asked to consult with the bodies they represented on the contents of the code and they were welcome to provide observations on the document. He noted that it was proposed to submit the full code together with the appendices to the Consultative Committee at the March meeting with the intention to adopt it in April 2014. The Harbour Safety Code was not a statutory document but was deemed good practice.

Personal Watercraft and Powerboat Regulations and Registration

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was not compulsory in every Council to register personal watercrafts but it was considered good practice, and other Councils such as Anglesey and Conwy wanted to adopt the system.

It was noted that fewer complaints had been received this year, and there had been two accidents near the Warren beach and on Black Rock sands. After the accidents had been

reported the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) had come to the conclusion that no further action was required.

It was emphasised that it was compulsory for individuals to register their vessel or watercraft in Gwynedd and also to certify that they had insurance cover.

In response to a question from a member regarding the lack of control/representation on the slipway to the southern side of the Hafan, the officer informed the committee that following changes to the staffing structure no control had been transferred to an external company due to problems with property issues. He noted that he was confident that arrangements would be in place before 1 April 2014.

In response to an additional question, the officer noted that the problem of vehicles parking on the slipway needed to be examined and an attempt made to put a robust plan in place to stop this from having an effect.

Navigation and Moorings

It was reported that Trinity House had undertaken an inspection of the navigational aids and that they were satisfied with them. It was noted that stakes had been removed to create deep waters in the channel in order to assist boats to enter and exit. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer informed the committee that discussions would be held during the winter with the Pwllheli Harbour Manager on re-examining the markers on the land and add to the number of beach markers in Abererch Bay to strengthen the situation.

The committee was informed that maintenance work had been completed on the moorings and that they should continue to be of standard for two years.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that following a request from the Maritime Service to remove a buoy, Welsh Water had looked at their buoy on top of the pipe which had been discharging sewage into the Harbour in the past. It was not possible to use the pipe as it had been covered with sand therefore, in the service's opinion, the buoy should be removed.

A member noted that Pwllheli Harbour was not easy to access at night as the lighting of the crossing affected visibility, the underwater training wall did not have enough markers to provide assistance. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave thanks for the observations and noted that he would talk with the member about the matter.

A member referred to the vacant seat of the RNLI on the Committee and that they should be encouraged to nominate a member to represent them or perhaps they should consider other organisations to take the seat if they were satisfied for the local member to express their observations. In response, the local member noted that he would try and get a nomination from the RNLI.

Maritime Statistics

It was reported that a substantial increase had been seen in the numbers who visited Gwynedd and that the fine weather had been a great help. Discussions had recently been held between the Maritime Service and the RNLI regarding supervision of the areas. Reference was made to the reduced number of vessels at the Hafan and the aim was to increase numbers but that it was difficult in the current economic climate which had an impact across the United Kingdom.

The Pwllheli Harbour Manager noted that there were currently 302 annual berth holders at the Hafan and that he anticipated that the situation would improve from 2015 onwards. The number of visitors had been good which was due to the fine weather during the summer.

A member noted that the number of people who parked and launched had increased and that the length of vessels at the Hafan had decreased. The committee was informed that the Plas Heli company had received a grant to market the Hafan with the aim of increasing the numbers.

A member made an observation in relation to addressing the fees structure of Hafan in an attempt to attract more people to use the Hafan and an attempt perhaps to attract more small vessels to the Hafan. It was noted that marketing the Hafan in other ways should be examined.

Budgets

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it had been a challenging financial year and the vulnerable economic situation had not been of assistance to achieve the income targets. It was emphasised that it would be likely for the 2013-14 financial year to be much more challenging due to large cuts to Local Authorities' budget therefore efficiency had to be improved.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer informed members that when examining the financial situation in the first quarter they had anticipated that Pwllheli Harbour would overspend £300,000 by the end of the current financial year, but looking at the figures of the second quarter the likely overspend was down to £200,000 by the end of the financial year. He noted that careful spending had to be done during the winter months as the deficit in the Harbour budgets affected other services in the Economy and Community Department.

In response to an observation by a member regarding Hafan's income of £790,898 for 2012-13, the officer noted that any income as a service assisted other elements of the Council which helped taxpayers.

In response to an observation by a member regarding the staffing level of the Maritime Service, the officer noted that there had been one and a half post less in recent years but that the level of the work was the same and that maintenance work had increased. It was added that staffing resources of the Hafan were used in the External Harbour which enabled the service to be maintained.

The Senior Manager – Economy and Community Department informed members that strategic reviews were undertaken in the Economy and Community Department and that there would be initial work over the coming months to identify long term options for Hafan management models. It was emphasised that it was initial work and perhaps it would be beneficial in the next few months to hold a special meeting of the Committee to specifically share ideas and receive feedback on the criteria.

RESOLVED that Officers, in consultation with the Chairman, will arrange a special meeting of the Consultative Committee if required.

It was added that a project group would be established by the Council to consider the vision and options to attain the vision but there was a desire to engage with others such as local members, Pwllheli Town Council and users.

A concern was expressed that the Hafan that had been established for the benefit of the local community was being managed from afar.

A member noted that the Hafan made a substantial profit for the Council compared with other services. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that an investment had been made in the past which had enabled this income situation and that Pwllheli had a bright future and that work was proceeding at a fast pace despite the financial and economic situation.

The committee was informed that a review of fees and payments for 2014/15 had commenced and that income targets usually increased with inflation. It was noted that there was a need to be very cautious with increasing the fees following a reduction in numbers. There was some work to be done to determine 2014/15 fees and in increasing the fees there was a risk that the numbers would be less, when maintaining the original fees perhaps some would leave anyway and nobody would take their place and if they were to be reduced would the reduction be more than the generated income.

A member noted that several people visited other countries such as France, Portugal and Spain and that the fees were about half the amount of Pwllheli fees and that there was an incentive to remain there for several years and that it should be noted that competition came from far and wide. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer emphasised that the coast was of substantial value to the economy of Gwynedd due to the investment made in the past.

Red Diesel Sales

The members' opinions were sought regarding stopping red diesel sales at the Hafan as white diesel had only been sold recently due to difficulties where vessels had been filled with red diesel, and not used for a long period of time, and had developed engine problems.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the difference in price between red and white diesel was 10p a litre and an observation was made that it would be worth paying more in order to conserve the engine.

A member noted that using red diesel in some countries, such as France and the Netherlands, was illegal.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer asked the representative of the Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders' Association to report back to the Maritime Service once he would have gathered the observations of the body he represented.

Marketing

It was reported that the Cruising Anglesey guide now included Barmouth and Aberdyfi therefore included the whole of Gwynedd and that there was an advert in Practical Boat Owner magazine along with an article about Pwllheli. It was noted that a complaint had been submitted from the service to PBO that the article did not include enough information and that it was not positive enough.

It was added that a Draft Marketing Strategy Plan had been formulated for the Hafan and that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer would share the document with members once it would be confirmed and that there would also be information packages for the Hafan.

On behalf of the berth holders, a member gave thanks to a member of staff from the Maritime Service for their work at the Hafan and the Harbour.

Marine Equipment Security

The committee was informed that the police followed a number of criminal cases in relation to maritime equipment and the PCSO, Paul Duggan, had been appointed to oversee elements involving maritime equipment. Everyone was encouraged to register their property through Marine Watch and the representative of the Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association was asked to encourage his members to register as it made it easier to return any stolen equipment to its owner.

Winter Arrangements 2013/14

It was noted that the Maritime Service continued with their maintenance scheme over the winter which included rewiring pontoons 8 and 9, smartening up the showers, landscaping work and staking navigational aids. In relation to the dredging work, the Manager of Pwllheli Harbour noted that there was a need to move boats to enable the work to proceed and that there was pressure not to cause disturbance.

In response to an enquiry from a member regarding the condition of the pontoons, the manager noted that the framework itself looked good but the decking was starting to deteriorate and that their condition was being monitored annually and the essential work was being done in accordance with the maintenance system.

Pwllheli Sailing Club

A representative from Pwllheli Sailing Club referred to a summary of events held by the Sailing Club in 2013 and it was noted that encouraging feedback had been received.

It was reported that a World Championship would be held at Pwllheli in August 2014 and three World Championships and one European Championship in 2015 when the Sailing Academy would be open. Following receipt of a grant for a two year marketing post, it was noted that the Plas Heli company could push the calendar forward to 2016-2018.

The Sailing Club was thanked for its work which was key to the success of the Harbour.

RESOLVED to accept the report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 19 March 2014.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.50pm.