

**Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee
that took place on 8 November 2016 at the Dragon Theatre, Barmouth**

PRESENT

Councillors Louise Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Julian Kirkham (Arthog Community Council), Cllr. R. Triggs (Barmouth Town Council), Cllr. Mark James (RNLI), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries), Mrs Wendy Ponsford (Member of Merionnydd Yacht Club), Mr Martin Parouty (Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Group), Mr Mike Ellis (Three Peaks Yacht Race Committee Member).

Officers

Mr Llŷr B. Jones - Senior Manager - Economy and Community
Mr Barry Davies - Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Arthur Jones - Senior Harbours Officer
Mr Glyn Jones - Barmouth Harbour Master
Mrs Glynda O'Brien - Members' Support Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt - Translator

Apologies: Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member - Economy), Cllr. Rob Williams (BRIG), Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group), Cllr. David Richardson (observer representing Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Gethin Glyn Williams as Chairman of this Consultative Committee for 2016-17.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chairman of this Committee for 2016-17.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

The following members declared a personal connection for the reasons noted:

- (i) Cllr. Julian Kirkham – a relation to one of the ferry operators
- (ii) Mr Martin Parouty – a member of the Yacht Club and a commercial trader in the Harbour

4. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 22 March 2016.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as a true record.

4.1 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 2.1 (a) - Wintering Boats

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, the Harbour Master noted that he had not received any requests for wintering boats on a section of the Council's car park.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

5. REPORT OF THE MARITIME AND COUNTRY PARKS OFFICER

Submitted: A report by the Maritime and Country Parks Officer updating the Committee on Barmouth Harbour management matters.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer guided Members through the contents of the report.

The Senior Harbours Officer read the report regarding maintenance to members and specific reference was made to the following:

(a) Barmouth Harbour

- In terms of how busy the harbour was, there was stability in terms of numbers with five boats leaving the harbour by the end of 2015/16. The Harbour Master would contact customers to find out why they had left the Harbour.
- There was an increase in the number of powerboats and personal water craft registered compared to 2015, and it was pleasing to note that the complaints had reduced regarding personal water craft and there was a consistency in the numbers that had registered.
- In response to a query from a Member regarding complaints and was this as a result of buoys not being installed? It was explained that through discussion there had been an agreement by the Consultative Committee not to install buoys, however, if this caused concern the position could be reconsidered and it was confirmed that buoys had been installed east of the Railway Bridge. However, it was further noted that the Service had not received a complaint regarding misuse by powerboats in the harbour.
- It was added that the Council had formal arrangements and a process to follow when a complaint was submitted and the Service complied with and contacted the appropriate officers when a complaint was received.
- In terms of oral complaints, the procedure was explained namely that any complaint would be noted in the Harbour office diary as occurred in every other Council harbour. Any written complaint would be recorded via the Council's Complaints system.
- That the Marine Safety Code was relevant to every Harbour and was reviewed regularly. In January 2017, an external inspector would spend time with the Harbour master to review the code and the systems of all the harbours under the Council's control.
- During the summer no issues relevant to the Harbour's statutory duties had been raised and it was trusted that this would continue.
- Reference was made to the tragedy that occurred in August when two young lads had lost their lives and a tribute was given to Harbour staff, service Staff, the RNLI and the local community for their praiseworthy efforts during this tragic incident.
- As a result of the above, a meeting took place with the Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Member of Parliament and other relevant agencies to discuss public safety issues and specifically a scheme for signage in order to try and improve future information to visitors and beach users.
- One boat broke free from its mooring during strong winds and the Railway Bridge had to be closed for a short period in order to enable the Coastguard and the RNLI crew to pull the boat from the bridge. It was confirmed that no damage was caused to the bridge following this incident. The railway had been examined by railway experts to ensure that no damage had occurred to the bridge itself.
- In terms of discussions regarding beach lifeguards, it was explained that discussions were on-going with the RNLI. It was noted that the current arrangements in place along the coast were consistent. It was noted that the Council was willing to consider local solutions in response to local problems. It was noted that there were significant financial implications regarding appointing beach lifeguards. In the context of signage, a package of suggestions had been submitted by the RNLI on how to improve this and

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it was resolved to implement some of the suggestions by 2017, however, it was important to note that this would be part of a wider discussion.

- In response to an enquiry regarding the Red Flag status, it was explained that if the red flag was flying then this indicated danger.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(b) Operational Issues

- Investments had been made in terms of navigational aids and it was heartening to note that all the buoys had remained on station.
- A new buoy had been installed by Trinity House on behalf of Welsh Water to mark the outfall pipe. It was stated to Welsh Water and Trinity House that the remains of the navigational aid had to be removed from the outfall as a matter of urgency, as the remaining pole was a hazard to boats navigating in this area, especially on high tide.
- In response to a query from a Member regarding the installation of a buoy in place of a pole, it was explained that a buoy endured the weather better and there was a tendency for a pole to be damaged, however, the Maritime Service did not get an opportunity to give their observations.
- It was understood that Cllr. Rob Triggs had written to Trinity House expressing concern regarding the hazard due to this pole and several members stated their concerns regarding the safety of mariners and the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of Trinity House.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(c) Work Programme

The Senior Harbours Officer submitted a work programme for the Harbour from October 2016 to March 2017 and Members were guided through the list noted on the work programme.

In response to an enquiry from a Member regarding the workload, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that assistance would be available from staff in other Harbours to undertake some duties. It was further noted that the employment of the two Harbour Assistants in Barmouth and Aberdyfi had been extended up to the end of December 2016.

Eight applications had been received from volunteers to assist in the Harbour and the next step would be to conduct risk assessments and discuss the type of work to be undertaken ensuring that it was acceptable to them. The need for appropriate arrangements to be in place was emphasised and volunteers were thanked for their interest and enthusiasm. The individuals who had stated a willingness to volunteer in the Harbour were thanked.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ch) Other matters

It was noted that since the pontoon had been installed on the quay wall close to the SS Dora building, the Maritime Service had thus far contributed approximately £20,000 for maintenance as well as regular inspection. It was noted that the weather and waves had an adverse impact on the pontoon. Whilst accepting that the pontoon had been of benefit to Barmouth with mariners getting better access to the water, however, the Maritime Service was of the view following the receipt of comments from the Council's Engineer that the fingers should not be re-installed on the main pontoon structure in the future as they were not suitable for this location. It was explained that the fingers had been taken off the pontoon on 31 October 2015 as they were a strain on the main pontoon structure and had caused several cracks to the pontoon framework. Currently the fingers had been moored safely in the Bathhouse area. It was further noted that there was significant work to be undertaken to repair the pontoon. It

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would soon be necessary to receive confirmation regarding the pontoon's ownership as well as a maintenance plan from the group.

A representative from the Yacht Club noted that a small group had come together and had received substantial grants namely £50k from the National Lottery and £20k from Snowdonia National Park to purchase the pontoon and she was of the view that it had to be repaired and it was a valuable asset to Barmouth and its main purpose was for visiting boats to be able to gain convenient access to come and go in the Harbour and not to moor boats permanently. She was aware that the Yacht Club had offered £2,000 towards the maintenance costs and to repair the damaged sections. Another member stated that the pontoon was popular and in the short term, as the fingers had been taken off, there was a gap on the pontoon that prevented any use to be made.

The Chairman noted that clarification was required regarding the situation with ownership and to have arrangements in place for better communication. It was further suggested that a sub-group should be established with representation from the relevant organisations to discuss the way forward and in the meantime the Yacht Club representative was requested to contact the pontoon manufacturers to find out if it could be repaired. It was also suggested that local engineers should be asked to inspect its condition.

Resolved: (a) To establish a sub-group to include representatives from the following organisations:

**Dr John Smith, Barmouth Viaduct Access Group
Mrs Wendy Ponsford Meirionnydd Yacht Club
Mr Martin Parouty, Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Group
Cllr. Rob Triggs, Barmouth Town Council
Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Harbour Master**

(b) In the meantime, prior to convening a meeting of the above Sub-group, that the following members further investigate the condition of the pontoon and if it could be repaired:

**Mrs Wendy Ponsford to contact the manufacturers
Cllr. Rob Triggs to contact the engineers to examine its condition**

(d) Ferry Licences

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that complaints had been received this year regarding the conduct of ferry operators and as a result a draft plan was submitted before Committee indicating the navigation course for each ferry to follow. It was felt that following one course would prevent vessels racing each other and cutting across other boats.

The process of licensing ferries was explained and it was ensured that there were arrangements in place for inspections on land as well as an inspection of the boats on the water.

Although he had declared an interest, one of the ferry operators was granted the right to express his opinion and noted that ferry operators were experienced and they would assess the conditions and choose the safest route.

In response therefore to a request for opinions in relation to 'Ferry Licences' and 'Navigation' a member suggested that, under certain circumstances (such as on a spring tide ebb), a pilot might choose to navigate further to the east, away from the channel and directly across the harbour in a southerly direction thus avoiding Trwyn y Gwaith (the Ynys y Brawd breakwater) and the rough water which can develop at the harbour entrance in wind against tide situations.

He suggested that this choice would be in accordance with safe navigational practise, as it may give the pilot; more room to manoeuvre; more time to take effective avoiding action should it be needed, (as the give way vessel meeting another entering the harbour); a less restricted view; and a smoother passage.

The member also reminded the committee that the pilots regularly engaged in carrying passengers to and from their vessels, and in providing boat trips, both of which would require alternative route planning.

The member also voiced the opinion that the ferry pilots, with their considerable day to day experience of navigating the waters within the harbour, were in a very strong position to make good decisions about safe pilotage.

Reflecting on the 2016 season, the member was of the opinion, (in terms of amicable relations between the pilots) that the season had been a good one thanks to; suggestions and encouragement from the Senior Harbours Officer and the Barmouth Harbour Master; the efforts of the pilots themselves and the changes they had collectively made to the operating procedures of the service; and lastly, in no small part, because the service had operated in equilibrium ie. that with three boats supplying a seating capacity of twenty four, demand for the service had been met with a comfortable margin.

To conclude, the member noted that he was willing to discuss suggestions with Maritime Service staff.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were highlighted:

- It was suggested, if possible, to consider an option for a navigation route that would be suitable for the operators.
- That passenger safety was tantamount
- Three licences were released this year and a fourth licence was granted for trips up the estuary.

Resolved: (a) To approve that the ferry uses the navigation route as outlined in the plan submitted to Committee when the tide allows, and uses an alternative route to be discussed and agreed between the operators and the Harbour master.

(b) To request that the Maritime Officer submits information regarding the procedure for licensing pleasure boats to the next meeting.

(e) Financial Matters

Reference was made to the financial balance sheet and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer guided members through the budget and noted that an under expenditure was anticipated on Harbour income of £11,332.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(f) Fees and Charges

It was anticipated that there would be an increase of 2% on Fees and Charges in 2017/18.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ff) Events

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer thanked everyone associated with the arrangements of events in Barmouth Harbour and it was heartening to see so many boats in the Three

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Peaks competition that took place on 11 June 2016. It was noted that the race would celebrate 40 years in 2017.

The 2017 'Mawddach Paddlefest' would take place on 15/16 July.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

6. MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(a) Penrhyn Point Management Plan

Cllr. Julian Kirkham, Arthog Community Council, thanked the Maritime and Country Parks Officer for his assistance and support in overcoming some parking issues at Penrhyn Point.

However, camper vans of all sizes ignored the 'No overnight parking' sign. It was noted that someone had turned the sign around so that it was not visible and it was asked if it was possible for the Maritime Service to re-install the sign. It was further noted that camper vans especially larger ones, had taken to parking in the area above the slipway and ignored the sign and it was suggested that another 'No overnight parking' sign could be placed where the lifebuoy ring was.

It was also understood that the Transportation Department intended to erect 30 mph signs on the road to the point. Did this mean that vehicles who had parked overnight on the main road were subject to prosecution? It was added that there were no parking places on the turning area. One of the members of the Community Council had investigated the by-laws regarding 'wild camping'.

A request was made to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer for a contact point in the Legal Department in order that Arthog Community Council Clerk could contact them to request a meeting and to investigate the possibility for Penrhyn Point to become a 'test point'.

It was noted that Fairbourne Railway agreed that a gate could be installed to prevent camper vans from using the area above the slipway; the Community Council's first objective was to install a gate with a lock and appropriate code, that may be given to *bona fide* holders for a free licence to launch their boat, having made a request to Arthog Community Council for a licence.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported:

- That the Maritime Service had invested in signage and it was agreed to place a gate here, however, an objection was received and this had to be re-considered as the road was the only access to the boat launching site at Penrhyn Point.
- It was welcomed that the Transportation Department had agreed to erect 30 mph signs on the road to the point.
- That overnight parking issues existed throughout the County and it was difficult to control.
- It was agreed that the Harbour master would erect additional signage on the site before the end of March 2017 and would repair the damaged sign before the end of 2016.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(b) Business Plan (Harbour Development Plan)

- (i) In response to a query regarding a harbour development plan, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that the Maritime Service did not have the budget or resources to lead on developments.

The Chairman noted further that the Community Steering Group was considering a wider project and it was premature to discuss a harbour development plan until the impact of the Steering Group development over the next year could be seen.

- (ii) In the context of a query regarding the land behind the Harbour Master's office, the Senior Harbour Officer was requested to look at the possibility of developing the land into car parking and to report back to Cllr. Rob Triggs.

- (iii) Cllr. Rob Triggs noted that there was a substantial space on the quay at Aberamffra that could be used.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the units at Aberamffra had by now all been sold and it would be necessary to consult with the Coastal Protection Unit regarding the condition of the wall. It was suggested that the ideas of Cllr. Triggs (units of garages) should be discussed directly with the Senior Harbours Officer and the Harbour Master in consultation with the Coastal Protection Unit.

(c) Dangerous pole at the bottom of the outfall in Aberamffra Harbour

It was noted that an effort had been made to remove the pole, however, it was not possible to cut it.

(ch) Update regarding sand

The Chairman noted that a draft report was available and would be available to the public once it had been confirmed.

(d) Sandbags / Gate at top of slipway

It was asked if it was possible close the gate at the top of the slipway especially at high tide.

In terms of sandbags, it was understood that the Council did not supply any sandbags and concern was highlighted that sections of Barmouth suffered from flooding and the provision of sandbags should be re-considered. A letter was presented to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer on behalf of the owner of the Last Inn public house expressing concern regarding the above for further submission to the Coastal Protection Unit.

In response to the above, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave an assurance that there would be no difficulty with locking the gate at the top of the slipway during the winter and at high tide. The Harbour master would ensure that the gate was locked during spring tide and opened during neap tide.

(dd) Petrol Fuel Station

A representative from the Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Group asked if it would be possible to consider having a petrol fuel facility for the harbour. Whilst accepting that there were health and safety elements to consider, the facility was seen as a means of generating additional income.

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In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer promised to consider the matter further in terms of risks and relevant regulations and he would report on his findings to the next meeting of this consultative committee in March 2017.

(e) Moorings

- (i) Annual Charges - if a mooring had not been occupied was there a policy for charging a reduced rate or retaining fee? If there was none, could the council consider such a policy?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that if a person was keen to retain a mooring then the fee would have to be paid. If a person could not launch due to valid reasons, the Harbour master would be flexible regarding charges.

- (ii) Confirmation of ground tackle specification. Were there any stipulations for ground tackle, did this apply to all moorings or did the stipulations for temporary moorings differ from permanent moorings? Who was responsible for moorings, temporary or permanent, if they should drag and cause damage to a third party?

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that the moorings had to comply with the relevant specification that included the size of the chains and anchor. The owner of each mooring had to submit an appropriate valid certificate to the Harbour master prior to mooring any boat. The Harbour master would not inspect every mooring as this was not the responsibility of the Maritime Service, however, in terms of Council moorings the Senior Harbours Officer and the Harbour master would inspect these.

Regarding the type of mooring, it was noted that the Service would consider this and confirm their decision at the next meeting.

It was suggested that the Harbour Master should send the mooring policy to members.

- (iii) Regarding concern about safety, it was requested that the Three Peaks moorings in the entrance to the harbour should be marked with an illuminated buoy.

In response, in light of the fact that it was unlikely that boats would sail in during the night, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it would be possible to give a notice to mariners rather than install an illuminated buoy.

(f) Dead Fish

Concern was expressed regarding environmental issues as the remains of over 270 filleted mullet were observed littering the harbour.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer appreciated the receipt of this information. It was added that persons had a duty to disclose who was responsible if they were aware of the case, and who was responsible for illegal fishing in the harbour.

- (g) In response to an additional enquiry regarding an improvement with receiving mooring certificates, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was necessary to tighten certificate operations and they would be willing to discuss this further with the Senior Harbours Officer and the Harbour master.

Resolved: To request that the relevant officers act in accordance with the suggestions made above.

7. BARMOUTH SERVICES PROJECTS

Submitted, for information, a list of Barmouth Services Projects discussed by the Community Steering Group.

Resolved: To accept and note the list.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: It was noted that the next meeting of this Consultative Committee would take place on 14 March 2017.

The meeting commenced at 10:30 am and concluded at 1:15 pm.

CHAIRMAN.