
ABERDYFI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, 17 OCTOBER 2023

Present:

Gwynedd Councillors: Councillors Robert Dewi Owen and Anne Lloyd Jones.

Co-opted Members: Freddie Collier (RNLI Aberdyfi), David Williams (Aberdyfi Improvements and Advertisement Committee), Desmond George (Member of Dyfi Yacht Club), Al Crisp (Outward Bound Trust Wales) and Nigel Willis (Member of Dyfi Boat Club).

Observers: Councillor Rob Triggs (Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee) and Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member - Economy and Community).

Officers in attendance: Llyr Beaumont Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department), Bryn Pritchard-Jones (Maritime Service Manager), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), William Arthur Stockford (Aberdyfi Harbourmaster) and Ffion Elain Evans (Democracy Services Officer).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED To elect Councillor Dewi Owen as Chair of the Committee for the year 2023/24.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED To elect Councillor John Pughe as Vice-chair of the Committee for the year 2023/24.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gwilym Jones (Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee) and Guy Shaw (Aberdyfi Rowing Club).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 21 March 2023, as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The following reports were presented, and Members were invited to give observations on their content and to ask questions.

The Senior Harbours Officer's report, giving a brief update to the committee on harbour matters for the year ending March 2024.

Moorings and Boat Registration

- There had been 73 boats on annual moorings in Aberdyfi Harbour in 2023 and this was an increase of one boat compared to the number in 2022. It was hoped that this upward trend would continue in 2024, however the prevailing economic situation and in particular the current cost of living, remained a factor when trying to attract customers to the harbour.
- It was noted that most members of the public wishing to launch powered craft into the waters of the Gwynedd coast now registered their powered craft on-line, via the Cyngor Gwynedd website and 1269 powerboats and 1240 personal watercraft had registered in Gwynedd this season.

Port Marine Safety Code

- It was explained that the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) set out a national standard for every aspect of port marine safety and that its aim was to enhance safety for everyone who uses or works in the port marine environment.
- It was noted that the Service regularly reviewed the Code for the harbours under its jurisdiction to remain in full compliance with the current requirements of the Code.
- Members were reminded that it was essential, as part of the review process, that the Service received the comments and views of Consultative Committee Members on the suitability of the Port Marine Safety Code.
- Reference was made to the incident in the estuary in March that involved three personal watercraft and a powerboat. It was confirmed that the Service was collaborating with the Police regarding the investigation to the incident's circumstances and this was in relation to potential offences disclosed under legislation that had recently come into force, the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023.
- Concern was expressed about individuals who went out on the water without a certificate or appropriate training. It was asked whether it was possible for the harbourmaster to request evidence of certificates prior to them going out on the water?
 - In response, it was explained that the Harbourmaster did not have any statutory enforcement powers to see certificates or insurance documentation.
 - It was noted that many people attended training and officers in the Harbour office were pro-active in encouraging people to attend training courses and an increase had been seen in the number of people who attended training courses.
- In response to a question, asking whether it was possible to get the necessary statutory powers to see certificates, it was explained that the powers regarding this were in the hands of the Westminster Government.
 - However, it was explained that new regulations had been introduced and a 'jet ski' now fell under the definition of a 'vessel' or 'boat'. It was noted that this was a step in the right direction.
 - It was explained that the Council also had internal regulations and everyone who registered with the Council received a copy. It was noted that most people adhered to the regulations.

- It was noted that the Council did everything it could within its existing powers and would continue to discuss this with the Welsh Government and the UK Government until the requirements could be tightened further.
- It was asked how it was possible to monitor the activity of people launching after beach wardens and officers left at the end of the working day or people who launched from nearby beaches?
 - Recognition was given to the fact that people were definitely coming from other areas and that the slipway was open outside working hours. It was confirmed that they could not be supervised outside working hours.
 - The work of beach officers was praised, they were proactive in asking people whether they had registered etc. and that this was a useful way to catch any individuals who did not comply with the regulations.
 - It was noted that the on-line system now meant that people could register before visiting the site.

Staffing Matters

- It was noted that the staffing level at Aberdyfi Harbour had not changed since the last report had been submitted to the Committee and the Harbourmaster, William Stockford, continued to be supported by his assistant, Oli Simmons.
- It was explained that harbour staff assisted and collaborated with staff at Tywyn, Barmouth Harbour and on the beach at Morfa Bychan during the summer.
- The seasonal staff wardens who worked in Aberdyfi and Tywyn were thanked for their hard work over the summer.

Financial Matters

- The statistics set out in the table on page 14 of the pack were noted as based on a review with the Council's Finance Department. It was clarified that the review was carried out at the end of August and therefore 5 months of actual expenditure and expenditure had been projected for the remainder of the period up to March 2024.
- It was explained that the figures for the income as a whole were encouraging but that this could change significantly as it was difficult to predict what might happen between now and the end of March. It was noted that unexpected costs could arise, especially in the event of severe winter weather.

Fees and Charges 2024/25

- It was noted that no decision had yet been made on the level of fees for next season.

The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the Navigational and Operational matters that had arisen between March and October 2023, including maintenance matters.

Navigation Matters

- It was noted that the navigation channel to Aberdyfi Harbour had been monitored by harbour staff over the summer. The channel is dynamic in nature and therefore harbour staff must carry out regular surveys on the river to determine how far the sandbanks were moving.

- It was explained that an annual inspection of navigational aids had been carried out at Aberdyfi Harbour by the General Lighthouses Authority, Trinity House, on 11 October 2023, and they were satisfied that the navigational aids were appropriate. It was noted that a yellow special marker buoy would be installed within a week.
- It was reiterated that mariners should contact the harbour office before entering or leaving the harbour to receive updates on weather and navigation. It was stipulated that changes to any navigational aids would be circulated via a Local Notice to Mariners.

Operational Matters

- It was explained that construction of the new quayside was more or less complete and there was now only a small amount of remedial work left.
- It was noted that a pair of gates would be installed across the entrance to the harbour wharf and that this would improve public safety when fishing operations took place at that location.
- Concern was raised about the structural condition of the harbour office building and the Council's Property Department was aware of the issue. It was noted that they were waiting for further information, but the Service was looking at relocating harbour staff to temporary property as an interim measure, pending a decision on the building's future.

Maintenance

- It was noted that maintenance had been completed and new equipment had been provided for the moorings and that local berthing contractors had installed the moorings.
- It was explained that maintenance work had been completed on the engines of the harbour Powercat patrol boat before the start of the busy season and that this work had also been carried out by a local Gwynedd company. It was noted that the vessel continued to perform efficiently and that annual inspections would be carried out to ensure it complied with maritime requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, in the context of the boat's construction and equipment standards.
- It was noted that harbour staff had started maintenance work on the seating benches. It was explained that they were looking for persons with maritime links to Aberdyfi to commemorate them on the benches and members were encouraged to contact harbour staff if they had any suitable suggestions.

Other matters

- Local stakeholders were thanked for their efforts in trialling equipment to remove a large collection of sand that had collected on the slipway adjacent to Dyfi Yacht Club and the RNLi Lifeboat station. It was noted that the process would continue and would possibly be reviewed.
- It was noted that the Service continued to hope that electricity and water services could be provided in the harbour compound to assist local fishermen.
- Members were reminded that animal carcasses washing ashore on the foreshore continued to result in several days of responsive work by harbour staff. People had been asked to report as soon as possible should they see a carcass, so that the necessary steps may be taken immediately.

Events

- It was noted that a number of events had taken place in the harbour over the summer, including:
 - Swimming events
 - Sailing events with Dyfi Yacht Club
 - The Noble Marine Allen RS 3000 National sailing event
 - Rowing event by Dyfi Rowing Club
 - Dyfi Fest
- Harbour staff were thanked for their work and the support provided over the past year and reiterated that they had a good working relationship between the stakeholders and harbour staff.

Economy and Community Performance Management Dashboard

- The Maritime Manager provided a summary of the statistics included in the Economy and Community Performance Management Dashboard.
- It was noted that there had been no reduction in customer numbers on Gwynedd harbour moorings but that the situation was not yet back to 2021 figures. It was hoped that the numbers would increase over the next year.
- It was explained that signs with 'QR Codes' had been placed around the harbours to try to establish consumer opinion – 89% of respondents identified Gwynedd harbours as 'good' or 'very good'. People were encouraged to complete the questionnaires so that the Service could understand the main concerns/frustrations associated with the harbours.
- They questioned how much space there was for boats on the river and raised concerns that there was a lot more sand in the river which meant less room for boats.
 - In response, it was noted that this was a task that must be handled by the Harbourmaster and the Moorings Contractor, however they continued to regularly monitor the channel.
 - The Maritime Manager noted that the Service planned to purchase a drone in the coming weeks in the hope that it may be useful to monitor the course of the channel and to see where the sandbanks were.

RESOLVED

To note and accept the reports.

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

The management plan for sand removal from the harbour slipway

- Concern was expressed about the sand collecting on the harbour slipway and it was noted that some residents were concerned that this may lead to a rise in water level that would then enter properties. It was noted that methods for sand removal should be considered before the problem worsened and led to problems in the village.
- In terms of the management plan, it was explained that it would need to be cost effective so that it could be done on a regular basis. It was noted that vigilance was also needed and that the sand being washed away did not collect further down the channel and create sandbanks.

- Thanks were given for the work of Yacht Club members who had been trialling the use of a pump to remove the sand. It was noted that from the photos this seemed to work.
- It was noted that it would be beneficial to have cooperation between the Service and stakeholders on the matter and that a meeting would be arranged to discuss the benefits and concerns associated with the matter.
- It was made clear that a wider discussion with Highways Department officers might be needed to see what the long-term solution was.

Update on the condition of the head of the slipway

- Concerns had been raised about the step and sand that had collected at the bottom of the slipway and it was noted that the lifeboat was having difficulties launching at low tide and this could lead to delays in their response time and damage to the boat.
- It was explained that several options had been discussed to place a structure at the bottom of the slipway to facilitate the lifeboat launch and that the Council had arranged for an expert to come and give his view on the best way forward. It was noted that the Council hoped to receive a report from him in the coming weeks to see the possible options.

The public footpath

- Concern was raised about the impact of coastal erosion on the public footpath which ran from the cemetery, across the golf club to the beach and it was noted that the steps installed a few years ago were no longer usable. It was noted that action was needed before the sea further eroded the land.
- It was proposed that some members of the Committee could arrange a meeting with the officers to go and see the situation and try to find a solution.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be on the 12 March, 2024.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m. and concluded at 12.05 p.m.

(Chair)