

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 18 October 2011 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT:

Members: Cllr. David Richardson (Aberdyfi Community Council), Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Dewi Owen (Gwynedd Council), Alun Wyn Evans (Gwynedd Council), Cllr Megan Reynolds (Aberdyfi Community Council), Cllr Brian Bates (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr Desmond George (Aberdyfi Yacht Club), Mr W. Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Mr Nick Dawson (Outward Bound Wales), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club), Cllr. Dave Williams (Member of the Aberdyfi Improvements and Advertising Committee).

Officers

Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Huw Davies	-	Principal Engineer
Mr Ken Fitzpatrick	-	Maritime Officer - Harbours
Mr Paul Edwards	-	Aberdyfi Harbour Master
Mrs Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt	-	Translator

Apologies: Cllrs. Ioan Thomas, Louise Hughes and Trevor Roberts (Gwynedd Council), Mr Roger Lawson –Mole, (Member of Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade), Mr Sam Wilding, (Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor David Richardson as Chairman for the year 2011/12.

The member thanked the committee for the honour and he looked forward to working jointly with the Maritime Unit during the coming year.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Dewi Owen as Vice-chair for the 2010/11 year. The member thanked the committee for the honour.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

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

4. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee held on 15 March 2011.

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

5. REPORT OF THE MARITIME AND COUNTRY PARKS OFFICER

Submitted: The report of the Maritime Officer, Mr Barry Davies, in a different format to the usual report with bullet points only, due to budgetary cuts in the Department, a significant increase in work requirements and the lack of capacity to present reports of the same standard.

The activities in Aberdyfi harbour were reported on with specific reference to the following:

(i) Navigation and Moorings

(a) Members were reminded that the Service had invested significantly in navigation aids and the officer referred to the attached appendix listing the expenditure on each, that was on average a total of £4,122. It was noted that the Fairway buoy had been removed and the work had been completed without instruction and it was emphasised that it was the Harbour Master's responsibility to give instruction on maintenance of the aids and that the contractor should not commence any work unless clear instruction had been given by the Harbour Master.

The Chair noted that one of the aids had been off station since August this year and consequently it was difficult for mariners to sail from the North into the Harbour. However, the Harbour Master was of the view that the buoy was back on station.

In response to the above and to ensure that there was no mix-up regarding the locations of the buoys, the Maritime Officer explained that they would produce a chart to indicate their exact locations and this would be presented to members before Christmas 2011.

(b) In terms of maintenance, it was noted that the Council owned some moorings, however, the majority were in private occupation and were stored in the compound near the Golf Club. Although some of the owners were under the impression that it was the Council who had responsibility for these moorings, the Maritime Officer stressed that this was incorrect and that the site in question was not under the Council's management. It was the responsibility of the mooring owners to inspect them for safety and to ensure that they conformed with the relevant requirements. It was the responsibility of the Harbour Master to instruct an external contractor on the locations of moorings. It would be recommended that every mooring owner submits a certificate to certify that the anchor was in compliance with requirements. The compound had been cleared but unfortunately it was back in the same tragic condition once again.

It was further noted that the maintenance costs for moorings was high for the Council and that it was necessary to consider if it was worthwhile investing in additional moorings. It was noted that the Crown Estate was looking to recommend charging an additional cost of £30 for each of the moorings.

(c) It was noted that Trinity House had conducted the annual inspection of aids to navigation however, their observations had not been received thus far.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ii) Proprietor and Boatman Licences

It was noted that there had been difficulties in a nearby harbour and Members' attention was drawn to the need to conform at all times with the requirements of the Proprietor and Boatman's licences especially in categorised waters under MSN – 1719. The requirements referred to sailing in 'favourable weather' and members were reminded that it was the responsibility of the owner of any boat to determine if the weather was reasonable for the boat to sail and not the Harbour Master. The Officer expanded on this and referred to the steps taken and the requirements that had to be satisfied before any proprietor and boatman's licence was issued. Independent inspections were conducted by the MCA and the report received indicated that the arrangements in place by the Council were operating effectively.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iii) Maritime Statistics

(a) The Maritime Officer guided Members through the statistics which stated the total number of registered powerboats namely, 25 in Aberdyfi Harbour and 1 in Tywyn. There had been a reduction compared with last year and it was stated that the economic climate had a serious impact on these activities as a result of fuel prices, the weather etc. It was further noted that there was an excellent slipway in Tywyn yet not as much use was made of it.

(b) In the same manner the personal watercraft statistics had decreased this year but this was true nationally.

(c) It was noted that 95 (79.2%) of the 120 moorings were occupied and 45 were Gwynedd residents with 50 from outside the county. Whilst accepting that the number had reduced this was true of all Council harbours except for Doc Victoria as it was a sheltered harbour.

(ch) For information, comparisons were noted with boat statistics in the context of the average length and draught and a comparison was also made of the boat statistics for each harbour in 2011.

(d) A list of the boats moored in Aberdyfi harbour was confirmed, and the length and draught of the boats were noted and if they were local or otherwise.

(dd) The Chairman noted that in connection with the number of moorings that approximately 20 were empty during August this year. Although 95 moorings appeared on the statistics only 75 boats were on their moorings which meant that the owners of some moorings did not use them and it was therefore a loss for Aberdyfi and individuals spending in local businesses. Although there was a figure of 120 for moorings in Aberdyfi it was felt because of silting problems that it was not practical to have 120. The Chair had sent approximately 40 letters out, at his own expense, to individuals on the waiting list wishing to have a mooring in Aberdyfi. However, from the response it was discovered that some had sold their boats, others had purchased smaller boats and the actual figure on the waiting list now was 12. He emphasised the need to write to the individuals in question to ask what their intentions were regarding the moorings that they did not use.

In response, the Maritime Officer thanked the Chair for undertaking the above task and noted that the service should be more pro-active to this end in the future. He was very disappointed and was concerned that the service had not taken this action. The Harbour Master and the Maritime Officer- Harbours had been instructed to prepare a detailed plan to identify all the mooring sites and it was hoped that this would be circulated to members before Christmas 2011.

(e) Reference was made to a letter sent by the Maritime Officer to boatowners offering an opportunity for mooring holders (that were not in a marina) to berth their craft at Hafan Pwllheli (the marina) for a reduced fee. This was on a first come first serve basis for annual mooring holders who had paid their full fee in the Harbours of Pwllheli, Porthmadog and Aberdyfi. The period would extend from 1 October 2011 until 31 March 2012 for £72 per month, including VAT and electricity (subject to availability).

The Maritime Officer noted that the intention of the above was to try and ensure that boat owners had an opportunity to sail over the winter season and give them an opportunity to berth their boats in a comparatively sheltered harbour over the severe winter weather. This also ensured that boats contributed to the income at Hafan Pwllheli during the winter, but they would return to other harbours during the summer. One boat from Aberdyfi had already taken advantage of the above offer.

The Chair was of the view that the above offer was a very good idea bearing in mind that Aberdyfi had lost the use of the crane and the only criticism he had was that they should have corresponded earlier than September with individuals.

(f) Concern was noted from representatives of the Boat Club that the work of installing moorings during the last two seasons had not reflected the needs of members. It was suggested that the reason for this was that the moorings contractor did not consult with the Harbour Master prior to installing the moorings at the start of the season. It was asked what action was proposed to be taken to ensure that the contractor only installed moorings following consultation with the local harbour authorities.

In response, the Maritime Officer gave an assurance that a meeting would be held with the contractor and harbour staff to highlight the estuary plan with all the moorings clearly marked on a chart. It was trusted that a detailed plan would be produced before Christmas to indicate the moorings.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iv) Harbour Budgets

(a) The Maritime Officer guided members through the harbour budgets and drew the attention of members to the financial situation up to 31 August 2011, together with the harbour expenditure budget and income targets for 2011/12. It was noted that there was an underspend of £11,961 under the maintenance heading and the officer explained that this was not a permanent part of the budget but money had been added temporarily in order to improve facilities at Aberdyfi Harbour. It was further noted that Aberdyfi Harbour expenditure budget was much better than expected this year and the forecast indicated that they were approximately £8,000 better off at the end of September. An income target of £39,000 had been noted for Aberdyfi Harbour and a comparison was made with the budgets for Barmouth Harbour which was approximately £46,000.

It was stressed that there was a need to look at fees and charges for the coming year with the intention of recommending that the fees are raised by approximately 2% - 3.5%.

(b) A Member made an appeal for officers not to cut the sand clearance budget this year as sand had been a nightmare especially for the Yacht Club and the moorings. There had been difficulties to sail into the Harbour in light of the fact that the sand had been blown on the slipway and individuals had used it as a beach. A day's work with a JCB to clear sand from the slipway would have made a difference to the situation.

In response, the Chief Engineer confirmed that they would remove sand this year, however, he disagreed that there was much sand to be removed during the year and that it was strong winds that were responsible for blowing sand onto the slipway. In response to a suggestion to use another method of clearing sand such as purpose built pumps, rather than using heavy plant, the Chief Engineer explained that other methods had been considered but the conclusion was that they would be more expensive.

It was suggested that posters should be posted on the slipway to inform the public that it was a thoroughfare for boats.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(v) Events

(a) Mr Tom Lewis, Environmental Officer with the Environment Agency from Buckley, Mold was welcomed to the meeting to report on the results of the bathing water quality in

Aberdyfi. From the tests and results submitted to Members during the meeting things seemed promising for good results next year. A comparison was made with previous years and it was noted that on average the results over the last three years had been fairly good. However, under the new European Bathing Waters Directive which would come into effect in 2015, it would be necessary to meet strict criteria and therefore the standards would have to be maintained for four years.

In response to a view submitted by a Member stating that the results would be good if the tests were undertaken during high tide rather than an ebb tide, Mr Lewis explained that whilst he accepted that the tide had an impact on results that the times and dates for sampling had been specified for the whole year. There was no intention to maximise the number of tests and it was accepted that there were influences on the estuary that could change in a period of half an hour.

Another member added that he was of the view that during the previous years severe weather could have an impact on the results, but this year the weather had been more favourable. Whilst agreeing with the member, Mr Lewis explained that it was possible to take severe weather into consideration within the directive and that the Agency could refer observations to DEFRA regarding this.

A Member noted that it was unfortunate that a report had appeared in the press stating that the beach at Aberdyfi was a risk to health as it did not comply with the relevant tests, and consequently this had created a poor impression of the village. It was asked if the discharge of sewage further up the river could contribute to the poor results.

In response, Mr Lewis confirmed that he had undertaken a few thorough inspections of both sides of the estuary and it appeared that the sewage works in Machynlleth had discharged effluent during heavy rain. His colleagues had visited several farms that were assumed to be a high risk to advise them of good practice. Inspections had been undertaken of domestic septic tanks as well as commercial ones and walking along the water course. Two large caravan sites had also been visited in the area to inspect sewage works and a significant improvement should be seen as a result of substantial investment in one of these sites. In the Officer's opinion there were several sewage works sites such as Derwen Las, Machynlleth, Darowen, Mallwyd, Pont-ar-ddyfi, Pantperthog that could contribute to the water quality results in Aberdyfi. In the context of the sewage works in Machynlleth, a meeting had taken place with the North Wales Sewage Works Management Team to express concern regarding discharging effluent into the river and it was confirmed that the Dyfi area would be treated as a high risk case. Therefore, it appeared that the poor results emanated from the river and not from the sea. Mr Lewis confirmed that the next step would be to bring pressure to bear on Welsh Water to solve any deficiencies in order to improve bathing water quality in Aberdyfi and data would be collected following further tests at the caravan sites. An appeal was made to members that if they saw anything that could contribute to poor tests in future that they should contact the Environment Agency directly.

A Member added that he had concerns regarding the discharge from a nearby caravan site especially during heavy rain and that an eye should be kept on this site. It seemed that a pipe discharged water into the road when surface water and could not cope during severe weather. In response, Mr Lewis promised to visit the site during the winter season. During his recent visit he had seen that there were no covers on the tanks that could create a huge problem when leaves fell.

Mr Lewis was thanked for his presentation and it was trusted that the water tests in future would be positive and would meet the relevant criteria.

(b) The Maritime Officer noted that the Time and Tide Bell had by now been installed and was looking good, and it was trusted that it would attract many future visitors.

On behalf of the Community Council and the residents of Aberdyfi, Cllr. Dewi Owen took the opportunity to thank officers for their cooperation and for permission to install the bell under the wharf. He was certain that the bell would be a valuable attraction to draw visitors into Aberdyfi.

(c) In terms of public safety on the beach, the Member noted that although not many accidents had been recorded for approximately four years, he warned that they should be cautious in the area of the beach from Trefeddian to the cemetery due to the rip tide. Although this area was attractive it was felt that the public should not be encouraged to go there as this could create problems and the need to use emergency services etc.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(vi) Concessions and Improvements

(a) The Maritime Officer noted, whilst accepting that the repair of shelters in Aberdyfi used the Harbour budget, it was necessary to retain their standard. It was noted that there had been a deterioration in the Penhelyg shelter and it was envisaged that there would be an investment of approximately £12,000 from next year's budget and this would be discussed further with local proposals. In the same manner, it would be necessary to maintain the shelter near the Institute.

In response, it was understood that the Richard Roberts Trust was willing to contribute 50% of the costs to repair Penhelyg shelter with the Council contributing the remaining 50%.

(b) It was noted that the harbour ladders were inspected weekly by the Harbour Master and the Service kept a detailed record of the inspections. In the same manner, all the slipways were inspected weekly and a detailed record kept.

(c) In terms of the renewal of the quay wall and installing a pontoon, the Maritime Officer reported that finance was not available to realise this until 2013 onwards.

In response, a Member noted that he trusted that the service and the Council planned beforehand for this in light of the fact that Aberdyfi was totally dependent on harbour activities to attract customers and that they should be pro-active.

The Chair noted further that the ladders in Aberdyfi were not user friendly compared with Doc Victoria in Caernarfon. He therefore stressed how important it was to attract boats to Aberdyfi and that there was room for improvement with this. Plans should be prepared beforehand in order that they could then be submitted when money was available to implement them. Whilst accepting the above comment, the Maritime Officer noted that a plan had been before the Committee, however, further studies had to be undertaken. He further noted that the beach was also an asset to Aberdyfi and when the weather was fine the beach itself attracted many visitors. As a service they had cooperated with a group from Barmouth to try and attract funding from the SPLASH Scheme, however, unfortunately the application had been refused. In the same manner, they cooperated with Porthmadog Sailing Club to undertake improvements in the harbour and there had been 46 visiting boats in the harbour this year.

(ch) The Maritime Officer reported that the footbridge leading to the Picnic Island Bridge caused concern bearing in mind that the service had to adopt responsibility for the area in question. Discussions were on-going with officers from Network Rail with the intention of taking down the bridge and replacing it with a metal one, however, this was dependent on

finding a funding source for the work. In response to a query regarding the timetable, the Maritime Officer confirmed that no specific timetable had been stated.

(d) It was noted that the service had made a significant investment in the Diesel store.

A Member further noted that the Yacht Club had spent approximately £16,000 to improve their facilities and this would assist visiting boats.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(vii) Marine Equipment Security

Reference was made to the marine watch registration form that was attached to the agenda, to be implemented in conjunction with the Police who were anxious to re-implement the scheme with the authority. It was proposed to correspond with each one of the Harbour customers encouraging them to register their property and it was trusted that they would support being part of the scheme in 2012. There were many crimes concerning maritime equipment.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(viii) Harbour Staff

The arrangements for staffing the Harbour during Winter 2011/12 were elaborated upon, namely that the Harbour Assistant's contract had ended at the end of September and that Barmouth Harbour Master would assist in Aberdyfi Harbour for one day a week. Unfortunately, the budget did not allow the employment of two members of staff in Aberdyfi over the winter from October to March. If there was any additional work to be completed staff from Porthmadog and Pwllheli would assist.

A maintenance work programme was submitted for information to Members and it stated the priorities for next year.

A Member stated that the storage racks had been full this year with kayak owners using them and it was suggested that there should be some order and they should pay for their use.

In response, the Maritime Officer acknowledged that the kayaks had not registered, however it was pleasing to see boats on the water. Certainly, it was necessary to resolve the situation regarding charging for using the racks and it was the duty of the Harbour Master and the Maritime Officer – Harbours to act on this. The committee was reminded that the matter had been discussed at the meeting in March and the service should have taken steps to resolve the problem prior to the commencement of this year's Summer season.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

The meeting commenced at 10.30pm and concluded at 12.40pm.

CHAIRMAN