

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 15 March, 2011 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT:

**Councillor David Richardson – Chairman
Councillor Dewi Owen - Vice-chairman**

Councillors Alun Wyn Evans, Anne Lloyd Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr. Brian Bates, Cllr. Megan Reynolds (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr W Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Mr Andy Jeffrey (Outward Bound Wales and Aberdyfi Yacht Club), Mr Roger Lawson-Mole (Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade), Mr Dave Williams (Aberdyfi Advertising and Improvements Committee), Mr Sam Wilding (Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association)

Observer: Councillor Trevor Roberts (Cyngor Gwynedd)

Others invited: Mr Dafydd Williams, Mr Mark Medway (Environment Agency), Mr Marcus Vergette (Time and Tide Bell).

Officers

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

Apologies: Councillors Ioan C. Thomas, Louise Hughes, (Cyngor Gwynedd), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club) Mr Desmond George.

1. **WELCOME**

The following were welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman, Councillor David Richardson:

Mr Dafydd Williams and Mr Mark Medway – Environment Agency for one Item
Mr Marcus Vergette - Designer of the time and tide bell for one Item.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

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

3. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee held on 19 October 2010.

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

4. **THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT**

Submitted: The report of the Maritime Officer, Mr Barry Davies, on activities in Aberdyfi Harbour with specific reference to the following:

- (i) Aberdyfi Bathing Waters

- (ii) Fees and Charges
- (iii) Budgets
- (iv) Navigation
- (v) Staffing
- (vi) Tide and Time Bell
- (vii) The Quay Wall
- (viii) Slipway

Reported: (a) By the Maritime and Country Parks Officer

(i) That bathing water quality at Aberdyfi had met the required mandatory standard in 2010 and despite not having achieved the standard required for the International Blue Flag Award, an application would be submitted for the Resort Beach Award in 2011.

It was explained that the new European Bathing Waters Directive would come into force in 2015 and achieving the stringent bathing water criteria set by the new Directive would be challenging. It was noted that beach awards were very important and raised the status of beaches and as a result would attract visitors to the area. In the past, this committee had encouraged officers to submit an application for the Blue Flag award and one of the requirements was to comply with the quality of bathing water. Members were referred to the bathing water results over the last 20 years and they noted that the quality of the water was excellent in 2005 and 2006. The quality of bathing water had been discussed several times by this Committee and there were many suggestions by Members regarding the reasons why the water did not reach the required standards. Approximately a year ago discussions had taken place with the Environment Agency regarding the possibility of considering the re-location of the sampling point in Aberdyfi by looking at several possible locations such as the Cemetery Beach. The relocation of the sampling point would create difficulties for the Maritime Service responsible for the management of the beaches, and although no final decision had been made it was trusted that the usual sampling point could continue to be used with the positive element of holding activities that already exist on the water.

Mr Dylan Williams, Leader of the Gwynedd Environment Protection Team, Environment Agency was welcomed, with his fellow officer Mr Mark Medway, to address the meeting. It was noted that the two officers had dealt with bathing water quality for years.

In the context of Aberdyfi, it was confirmed that the water quality did not reach the highest quality consistently and had been the subject of research by the Agency for some years now. Welsh Water was facilitated by the improvements made by them in the area, as well as investigating specific issues that may impair on water standards.

Whilst accepting that Aberdyfi bathing water had varied in quality from being poor, good and sometimes excellent, there was no permanent pattern of decline or improvement. One of the most important issues that influenced water results were the site of the point specified for sampling in Aberdyfi in order that it reflected the site where the majority of bathing occurred. Whilst accepting that the river had an impact on the quality where the percentage of bacteria was higher, the water quality could be affected by any type of activity be that surface water running from the land from sources such as agriculture, land activities, sewerage and overflows in the area. The result was that there was no special point where there was a problem of high bacteria around Aberdyfi and the problem could stem from several factors. A study was undertaken by independent consultants who proved that over 95% of the bacteria came from sources in the catchment area and not directly from the Welsh Water pumping site. It was proposed to undertake additional investigations by looking at farms, septic tanks, walking the rivers, inspection of any sewerage systems within the catchment area, caravan sites and undertaking ad hoc sampling work in order to try and find more information.

In conclusion, Mr Williams made an appeal to members that if they saw any problems that may contribute to the above then they should contact the Environment Agency immediately.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

(a) Looking at the results it appeared that the poor samples were collected during an ebb and high tide and shouldn't a sample have been taken during a flood.

In response, Mr Dylan Williams explained that in terms of sampling it was necessary to be consistent and samples had to be taken where there were bathers, however, they tried to take samples at different times of the tide.

(b) Mr Williams confirmed that the Agency did not have any information of people who had been ill having bathed in Aberdyfi. A Member noted that she and her family had no health difficulties having bathed in Aberdyfi for several years.

(c) It was asked if the Environment Agency took samples on the southern side of Afon Leri as mariners had complained consistently of stench in this specific area and this perhaps contributed to pollution in the estuary.

In response, Mr Williams confirmed that tests had been taken and the result was that the River did not contribute to pollution in terms of the whole picture. It had to be recognised that there were several factors in estuary waters that contributed to a high percentage of bacteria such as mud etc.

Mr Williams and Mr Medway were thanked for their very comprehensive presentation and giving of their time to this Committee.

(ii) That all Harbour customers had received information regarding the proposed fees and charges for 2011/12 that would be approved in due course by the Council's Statutory Officers and the relevant Portfolio Leader. Members' attention was drawn to the proposal to rationalise the fees for all clients this year if they lived locally or outside Gwynedd, and it was anticipated that the system would be easier to control etc. Reference was made to the table before members in the context of inflation, and it was anticipated that inflation in Aberdyfi Harbour would be 1.53%. It was further noted that on the whole fees would increase by approximately 2%. It was emphasised that the service was under considerable pressure to reach the income targets and in the current economic climate it was very difficult to manage budgets with so little income sources available in addition to what existed already.

It was noted that the additional income that the Maritime Unit was required to collect in 2011/12 was £57,330 and it was stated that this increased the income target to £2,219,360 and this was extremely challenging with the need for the Unit to be competitive.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

(a) Could not a charge be made on those who used the storage racks near the slipway to increase income and as approximately 30 kayaks were stored free of charge.

In response, and while agreeing with the principle, the Maritime Officer explained that the Maritime Officer – Harbours and the Harbour Master intended to discuss the matter, however, the use of the racks for kayaks could not be guaranteed and they were located opposite the site used by tenders of mooring customers. It was reported that it was expected that the Maritime Officer - Harbours and the Harbour Master had commenced a scheme to control the racks and charge a fee for keeping kayaks on the racks before the start of the summer season.

(b) That the Chair of the Development Committee should be reminded that it was tourism that created income in Aberdyfi and every business paid Council Tax and should not the Council consider contributing back to the harbour.

(c) The Chairman noted that a translation of the word “diddymu” (cancel) should have been included on the form and that it had not been made very clear that the intention was to rationalise fees for local residents and those living outside the county. An explanation should have been included with the application form.

He added, as a matter of interest, that there was an article in a sailing magazine stating that out of the 14 marinas in Wales, Pwllheli was the most expensive and had been designated 41st out of 240 marinas in Britain.

(ch) That it was evident that there were a number of empty moorings in the Harbour and consequently not only was the maritime service losing income but this was also true of local businesses.

In response, the Chair explained that he had in consultation with the Harbour Master found out that only 15 customers on the waiting list were truly anxious to have a mooring. He noted further that Aberdyfi had lost out and that the waiting list policy should be tightened.

A Member mentioned that Ceredigion had a similar problem and had presented a fee of £25.00 to be on the waiting list and since then the waiting list had reduced.

The Maritime Officer reported that there was no reason for a ‘waiting list’ to exist in Aberdyfi especially bearing in mind that there weren’t a great many boats on moorings in the harbour. The income received via fees and mooring charges was very low and the Council could not refuse any request for a mooring at Aberdyfi. He confirmed that it was essential for the Maritime Officer – Harbours and the Harbour Master to ensure that all who wished to have a mooring at Aberdyfi received one in 2011 and there was no reason why there was no suitable location for a mooring in the harbour.

(iii) In the context of **budgets**, an income target of £39,270 was noted for 2010/11 and the total income up to the end of December 2010 was £31,003 compared with £31,694 for the same period last year. It was envisaged that there would be a deficit of approximately **£7,000** in income at Aberdyfi Harbour and it was emphasised that this sum would include a reduction in the number of staff over the winter period and would also include money presented to the budget from other maritime headings to complete projects in Aberdyfi. Members were guided through the budget spreadsheets and attention was drawn to the fact that the likely expenditure for Aberdyfi was approximately £77,000.

The need to increase permanent moorings was emphasised bearing in mind that £24,000 was the target and a little over £16,000 had been received thus far. Continuing with a low income sum was not sustainable.

It was further noted, that due to the current economic climate it was necessary to identify efficiency savings within local government and therefore it was a requirement to operate in a cost effective way to try and safeguard existing facilities.

To assist, the Chairman noted that he would once again send a poster to approximately 32 locations to try and promote Aberdyfi to visitors.

A member stressed that Aberdyfi should be marketed in exhibitions and boat shows especially bearing in mind the income received from moorings.

In response, the Maritime Officer stated that marketing would cost significantly and there was no budget available to undertake this.

(iv) In the context of **navigation**, it was noted that all the aids to navigation leading into Aberdyfi Harbour had remained on station during the first part of the winter and emphasised that the quality of the buoys were very good.

(v) the **staffing** situation was elaborated upon and it was noted that it was proposed to interview applicants for the post of Harbour Assistant in Aberdyfi and the successful applicant would be in post from 7 April to 30 September 2011.

It was proposed to appoint a Beach Officer in Aberdyfi to start in June and consideration was being given to the possibility of employing two seasonal Beach Officers in Tywyn.

(vi) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported on the background to the proposal to position the 'Time and Tide Bell' although it was not a direct matter for the Maritime Service. It was noted that he and the Principal Engineer had met with a representation from the Community Council to discuss the principle of this project as a starting point and it was trusted that they had given clear guidance on the Council's requirements in order to ensure that the time and tide bell would be positioned in an appropriate location namely under the jetty in Aberdyfi. In the context of the project, that no cost stemming from it should fall onto the Council nor the maintenance costs of the time and tide bell. That the Council would also not be responsible for any incident concerning the tide bell at this location. The Community Council had received guidance that an engineering report would be required that would refer to structures to ensure that the jetty was strong enough to take the bell in question. However, a report had been received that referred to the jetty's condition and not the structures. As a result, more studies were requested as there was no acceptable confirmation regarding the impact of the bell on the jetty structure.

The Chairman noted that this project was very exciting for Aberdyfi and Councillor Dewi Owen, Chair of the Community Council, added that this would attract more visitors to Aberdyfi. Members had worked diligently with this project over the last few months as well as submitting an engineering report to the Council which confirmed that there would be no pressure on the jetty. It was also ensured that the bell would not impair on the amenities of nearby residents in terms of noise and Members trusted that the project could proceed sooner rather than later.

Mr Marcus Vergette, Designer of the Time and Tide Bell was welcomed by the Chairman and it was supported that the project tied in well with the tale of Clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod. A public meeting was held in January 2010 when unanimous support was received from community residents to the project, however, by now there was a feeling of frustration due to the time it had taken to receive permission to move on and locate the tide bell on the jetty.

Mr Vergette added that there had been many discussions and it would certainly be an attraction for more visitors to Aberdyfi and would place the village on the map. Funding had been secured for the project, however, there was frustration with moving on and if it was not possible to resolve the Council's concerns swiftly he anticipated that the project would be offered to another location in the country.

In terms of the design, Mr Vergette gave an assurance that the jetty was sufficient in size and structure to support the bell and he noted that the weight was 18.4kg by 20kg. He was confident that the weight was suitable and he had offered solutions to problems that arose in different location in Britain where similar bells had been positioned.

In response, the Principal Engineer stated that whilst accepting that the permitted location stemmed from a meeting in September 2010 written confirmation was required on issues such as planning permission, permission from FEPA as well as compliance with the Environment Agency's Land Drainage Act.

The Principal Engineer added that in light of the fact that the bell would hang from the jetty that public safety would have to be considered. The Community Council had commissioned DATRYS, a company from Caernarfon, to prepare the engineering report, however, unfortunately what had been submitted was a survey of the condition with recommendations for action and thus far those recommendations had not been achieved.

According to the Chairman's understanding, it was necessary to receive an owner's certificate to submit a planning application consent to the Snowdonia National Park and it was proving difficult to receive the certificate from Gwynedd Council as the jetty owners.

Whilst accepting the element of responsibility for public safety, the Chairman confirmed that the weight of the tide bell had received attention from a professional expert. The element of jetty ownership should be dealt with easily by Gwynedd Council submitting a letter noting evidence of jetty ownership and it could not be understood why there was so much delay with this issue.

In light of the fact that technical issues were a matter of concern, the Principal Engineer and Mr Marcus Vergette would discuss these issues further following this meeting.

(vii) a plan was submitted to members that was updated by the Engineer regarding the work required to repair the **quay wall** stemming from a survey completed recently together with an estimate of the cost for the sum of £890,000 to only renew the wall. It was anticipated that the work would be programmed between 2015 and 2020 and the sum did not include the provision of pontoons. In terms of funding the work, the Principal Engineer was not convinced that it would attract European funding.

The Maritime Officer recognised the work of the Coastal Protection Unit in providing the plan during a challenging period in terms of resources and added that it was necessary to be realistic with the time-table.

(viii) In terms of the **slipway** the Maritime Officer noted that the improvements had been completed and the quality had improved. The Lifeboat slipway would receive attention in due course and they would be notified of this.

The Maritime Service were thanked by a representative from Outward Bound for ensuring that they had information and they appreciated the work recently completed in Church Bay.

Resolved: To accept, note the contents of the report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer together with the additional comments made above.

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

(a) Penhelyg Slipway – Barrier to prevent vehicles from parking near the entrance

This was linked to painting the top box of the Penhelyg slipway to prevent people from parking near the gates. There had been an increasing number of times when access to the slipway had been prevented.

The Maritime Officer explained that the service was not eager to open the slipway to public use , however, they were aware that tenders were stored in the area. The Harbour Master added that he had arranged and confirmed that lines would be painted there in April. It was noted that the gate leading to the slipway had been locked and the key kept under the control of the Harbour Master who would be willing at any time to open the gate if need be.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) **Development of Storage Facilities for Fishermen**

Mr Sam Wilding, Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association, was welcomed and asked to address the Committee in accordance with their request regarding the development of storage facilities for fishermen.

Mr Wilding explained that the hope was to ensure a budget from the National Assembly to a project for Cardigan Bay to develop a network of storage facilities for shellfish in order to improve access to local markets, as approximately 95% of shellfish caught in Cardigan Bay were exported. Consequently, fishermen lost income and local businesses could not benefit and it was feared that due to the increase in fuel costs the market for selling shellfish would disappear. Mr Wilson asked for ideas for suitable locations in Aberdyfi for further consideration for the above project and this might be coupled with a tourist attraction to promote local fishermen.

The Maritime Officer reported that he had discussed opportunities with officers in the Fishermen's Association in the past, and he was willing to discuss the proposed proposal further and perhaps it would be beneficial to look at a package to include Barmouth.

Resolved: To ask the Maritime Officer.

(b) **Sand Clearance**

Reported: By the Principal Engineer that the Consultation Service would not undertake sand clearance work this year.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was reported that the next meeting of this Committee would be held on Tuesday, 18 October 2011.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN