

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 5 March, 2013 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT:

**Councillor Dewi Owen - Chairman
Councillor David Williams - Vice-chairman**

Councillors: Anne Lloyd Jones, Mike Stevens (Gwynedd Council), Megan Reynolds, David C. Richardson (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr David Williams (Advertising and Improvements Committee), Mr Desmond George, Bob Usher, (Dyfi Yacht Club), Mr W Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Dr A. Stedman (Aberdyfi Rowing Club), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club), Mr Huw Evans (Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association), Mr Paul Fowles (Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade).

Officers

Mr Llŷr Jones	-	Senior Manager Economy and Community
Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Paul Edwards	-	Harbour Master
Glynda O'Brien	-	Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer
Mrs Mererid Watt	-	Translator

Apologies: Councillors Gethin Glyn Williams (Gwynedd Council as an observer), Brian Bates (Aberdyfi Community Council), Mr Ken Fitzpatrick (Assistant Maritime Officer - Harbours), Huw Davies (Principal Engineer).

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that Mr Ken Fitzpatrick had hoped to be present at his last meeting of this Consultative Committee, as he would be retiring from the service at the end of August this year. Mr Fitzpatrick had given many years of service to the Council as an Assistant Harbour Master in Porthmadog and Harbour Master in Pwllheli, and later as an Assistant Maritime Officer – Harbours. The service would certainly miss him and good wishes were extended to him on his future retirement.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Dewi Owen as Chairman of this Scrutiny Committee for 2013.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

The following members declared a personal interest in the matters below:

- (a) Cllr. Megan Reynolds in relation to Item 5 – Maritime Officer's Report and specifically point 5 – Lifeboat Planning Application as she was a governor of the RNLI.
- (b) Mr David Williams in relation to Item 5 – Maritime Officer's Report and specifically point 5 – Lifeboat Planning Application as he was the Operations Manager of the RNLI in Aberdyfi.

The members were of the opinion that they were not a prejudicial interest, and they did not withdraw from the meeting during the discussions on those specific items mentioned above.

3. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee held on 25 September.2012.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as correct subject to amending the word 'removed' in the English translation to read 'installed' in the last bullet point in point 6(f) in order that the sentence reads "The fence around the buoy storage area had been installed ..."

3.1 Matters arising from the minutes

Regarding point 1(ch), the Senior Manager Economy and Community reported that he had investigated the allegations that the Maritime Service had not responded to e-mails and it was fair to note that the e-mails referred to had not been received on the Council's computer system. It was noted that the Maritime Officer had not changed his e-mail address, in response to a query by Mr Richardson.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

4. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

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

(A) Navigation and Moorings

(i) Navigation and Moorings

(a) The Maritime Officer noted that the aids to navigation had received some attention and investment following guidance from Trinity House, however, he could not be certain if they would be on station by Easter. However, new buoys had been invested in and ordered and they were expected to arrive fairly soon. It was noted that the Fairway Buoy would be changed before the end of May and that discussions were on-going with Trinity House regarding its installation.

(b) A Member trusted that visibility and the size of the buoys would be considered when ordering and installing new ones.

(c) In response, an assurance was given that they would be visible and that it was necessary to consider the budget available for this namely £6,500, for the service to buy these, In the past, Trinity House had been responsible for their maintenance, however, following a review the responsibility had been transferred to the local authority. A report was made to Trinity House every three months to confirm that the aids were on station. In accordance with the Harbour Safety Code, a notice was given to mariners if the lanterns did not work.

(ch) It was confirmed, having received permission from Trinity House, that the red bar buoy would be re-positioned by the Harbour Master before Whitsun. The existing buoy would be returned to shore and maintained during the summer months.

(d) The Member noted that the system worked successfully when all the buoys were on station and welcomed the fact that the buoys would be upgraded in May.

(ii) Beach Zone Markers

It was reported that the beach zone markers would be on their specific stations by Whitsun.

(iii) Moorings Maintenance

(a) It was reported that there had been some difficulties with the moorings contractor last year as following an inspection it was discovered that his boat and vehicles did not comply with the appropriate HSE or Coastguard guidelines. However, following further reports/investigations confirmation and relevant certificates were received that the boat was suitable for purpose and the process of maintenance and installing the moorings would commence. The Service would have a total of 5 moorings with the remainder being private moorings. Assurance was given that the contractor would not install the moorings without instructions for the exact location from the Harbour Master.

(b) Cllr. Richardson noted that 7 days was not sufficient to return the application forms for moorings, especially for those with second homes in Aberdyfi who might not have received a form as they had not been to their second home.

In reponse, whilst accepting the comment of Cllr. Richardson, the Maritime Officer noted that the service was flexible regarding receiving forms back if people were on holiday. It was stressed that individuals should use their main address and not the address of their second home. This was to avoid the difficulties referred to by Cllr. Richardson. It was noted that developments were being undertaken to the service's information technology system to be able to administer the service more effectively in the future and apologies had to be tendered on behalf of the Service that some forms had been sent out with the incorrect boat name, however, this had now been resolved.

(B) Maritime Statistics

(a) Reported:

- that 42 mooring forms had been returned to the office which was rather disappointing compared with 96 last year. However, a reduction in number was a trend across the County's Harbours and it was not unusual to receive additional ones in late.
- There were 200 fewer personal watercraft registrations in 2012 and over 300 fewer powerboats and this was possibly due to the weather, the economic climate and the high price of fuel.

(C) Harbour Budgets

(a) Members were guided through the current budget targets 2012-13; current expenditure and income to the end of February and the third quarter review drawing attention to the following:

- It was anticipated that there would be an underspend of £10,000 on the staffing budget.
- An underspend of £3,600 was anticipated on the property budget and members were reminded that £11,000 had been transferred under this heading approximately 10 years ago for minor improvements and thus far this had been kept in this budget.
- That a sum of approximately £40,000 of income target had been specified for the Harbour and by the end of December it was envisaged that approximately £28,000 would have

been collected which meant a deficit of approximately £11,000 and by the end of the year it was anticipated that there would be approximately £2,000 in the budget.

- That the Senior Manager Economy and Community had managed following a review of the budget to have lower income targets for the Harbours in 2013-14.
- An investment had to be made to the buoy storage.
- Approximately £140,000 had been invested to clean designated beaches and it was noted that due to the rough weather it was anticipated that the beaches income target would be short of approximately £31,000.
- That it was a very challenging year and a report had been submitted to the Cabinet in order to raise awareness that income was low. A bid had been submitted for revenue funding but unfortunately it had not been successful. However, following discussions with the Finance Department, it was agreed to set realistic and reasonable target levels. It was trusted that this would strengthen the remaining budget and the accounts for next year would be published soon.

(b) Setting the income targets at a more realistic level was welcomed and it was hoped that this would have a huge impact on the budget in future.

(c) Reference was made to the table showing the impact of inflation on the budget and that 1% had been determined for Aberdyfi Harbour in 2013-14 which meant a final target of £41,110. It had been resolved to reduce the launching fee from £12.00 to £10.00 rather than raise it to £15.00, in the hope that this would encourage people to take advantage of launching facilities in Aberdyfi.

(ch) It was confirmed that the Information Technology Unit was currently developing a website for the Service in order to include fees etc on the web. It was trusted that for next year it would be possible to have more effective communication in electronic form between the Service and customers.

(CH) Events

(a) The Maritime Officer reported that the service had discussed the bathing water quality results with the Environment Agency and it was forecasted that the quality in Aberdyfi would be low, however, it was trusted that the forecast would improve. The water quality at Cemetery Beach had reached a high standard and following regular monitoring and keeping data of how many used this area, it was trusted that Cemetery Beach could be designated for a beach award in 2014.

(b) The Chairman expressed his concern in terms of public safety if users roamed to the river mouth and should not appropriate buoys be set to indicate which sites were safe.

(c) In response, the Maritime Officer noted that for 2014 the profile of the above beach would be submitted suggesting which areas of the beach could be used. It was stressed that land staffing resources would not be available, just the same as on other beaches in the County that had no supervision.

(ch) A Member added that the Beach Award did not take safety into consideration and did not refer to safe areas, but rather looked at the quality of the bathing water and the Lifeboat had responded several times to incidents near Trefeddian.

(d) It was further noted that the cycle path would come close to Cemetery Beach and it might attract more people onto the beach.

(dd) In terms of the quality of bathing water in Tywyn, the success of the Blue Flag was dependent on the average result for four years and due to recent work on the sea wall an application would not be submitted this year as the quality would not reach the required standard. However, a positive application would be submitted for the Urban Yellow Flag for Tywyn.

(e) In response to a request from a local Tywyn Member regarding setting up a Consultative Committee for Tywyn, the Maritime Officer noted that this was not possible and he encouraged the Town Council to refer maritime issues directly to him.

(f) Another member noted that it was important to make requests to coastal Town /Community Councils for financial contributions towards Beach Award fees in order that they could plan their precept beforehand for these contributions.

(ff) It was reported that consultation on the Dog Exclusion Order had been successful and from the 1st of April onwards officers could fine the owners of dogs seen on parts of beaches that prohibited dogs.

(g) The Member stated his disappointment with the Order's wording which contradicted Assembly Government guidance and the Council Cabinet had not received the required evidence to approve this. It was understood that the Chief Executive would be investigating the matter further.

(D) General Matters

(i) Promenade and Penhelyg Shelter – it was noted that these had not been maintained in the recent past, however, the Service had received a small grant to invest in Penhelyg shelter.

(ii) Harbour Workshop Safety Fencing – there had been local objection to put up the fence, however, this work had to continue.

(iii) Ladders – the Harbour Master noted that he had worked closely with the Assistant Maritime Officer- Harbours over the winter months on a work programme to maintain the ladders for this season. They would monitor the quality of the ladders regularly. A Member stated that he had lengths of timber (x2) which would be useful for the ladders if the Harbour Master was interested in using this.

(iv) Quay Wall – Following a discussion with the Principal Engineer, the Maritime Officer noted that the Unit continued to monitor erosion that had by now slowed down a little, and was investigating sources of funding for the work.

The Senior Manager Economy and Community added that it had been a matter for discussion for over two years now. A meeting was held with the Community Council in October and concerns were highlighted locally. The importance of the quay wall was recognised and the range of activities that stemmed from it. It was understood that a bid submitted to the full Council at its meeting on 26 February 2013 had been approved in the sum of £125,000 to prepare a detailed report and to receive statutory consents to implement the scheme. It was hoped that a meeting could be held in the next few weeks to make initial arrangements for the work to the quay wall.

The Chairman was pleased to receive the above information and it was a way forward following lengthy and protracted discussions.

The need to ensure in any planning application submitted for any scheme to the quay wall, that consideration was given to the fact that the quay was Victorian and any appropriate organisations in Aberdyfi should be contacted to give their input on the design at the appropriate time. In addition to attracting a grant, that it should be ensured that the Harbour walls included flood prevention work.

In response, the Senior Manager Economy and Community confirmed that as risks had been highlighted over the last six months that it was now possible to consider the work as part of a flood prevention scheme. It was proposed to target European sources for funding bearing in mind the amount of the work that had to be undertaken.

(v) Picnic Island Bridge – the bridge had to be closed to complete the work on the railway by Network Rail. An inspection of the condition of the bridge was undertaken annually and if it was possible to find money for its maintenance the service was willing to shoulder the cost.

(vi) Lifeboat Planning Application – Reference was made to the proposed plans attached to the agenda to extend the Lifeboat station and it was confirmed that the Property Unit had extended the lease of the property and land to the Lifeboat. The application had been submitted to Snowdonia National Park and the only comment made by the Maritime Service was the possibility that the floor, due to the levels, could fill with water on high tide. From the point of view of the service, it was stressed that if the responsibility for the maintenance of the land was the responsibility of the Lifeboat, it was asked if it was possible to place concrete in the front rather than tarmacadam.

Mr Desmond George noted that there was no objection in principle to the plan, attention was drawn to the following points that were a matter of concern:

1. Launching the boat would be less effective as a result of having to hook the boat up every time and turning around in a larger sized circle
2. That current safety issues would be more complicated due to excess activities on the small slipway which was disintegrating due to age and heavy use by the track vehicle
3. Reduce the footprint of the open space and as a result this would make it difficult for current users (Dyfi Yacht Club, Rowing Club and the Outward Bound) to operate effectively
4. Would present more danger and increase the risk of injury to the public

It was confirmed that the Community Council supported the scheme as it was very important for Aberdyfi, and in response to the above observations, it was noted that it was necessary to make the best use of the available space.

The Yacht Club supported the application especially with widening the road and facilitating the entrance.

In response, Cllr. David Williams explained that it was not possible to consider expanding the footprint of the scheme and they had been restricted due to the need to have a new lifeboat that was much bigger than the existing and therefore did not fit into the station. The gap between the Yacht Club and the Lifeboat building could not be closed due to the restrictions to the movements of other users and it had to be retained to an appropriate size. When the station was built there were restrictions on the height due to local objections from residents because of loss of views. It was emphasised that the Lifeboat had tried to consider the best possible plan for their needs as well as to ensure that the proposed scheme did not conflict with other nearby users. Whilst accepting the observations made by individuals, the situation had existed since 1963 and the method of operation would be no different bearing in mind that 80% of the

launches occurred down the slipway. The following points in favour of the application were added:

- That the RNLI could afford it
- That the best possible use would be made of the land available
- A suitable building was required to operate a modern boat
- In terms of the point raised that the tarmacadam should be renewed, it was not the Lifeboat that was responsible for the holes in the tarmacadam and that it was general traffic that was responsible for this. This had to be discussed further with the Maritime Officer.
- It was trusted that the work could be completed and operational by October/start of next winter.

(vii) Sand Movement 2013 – it was confirmed that sand would not be moved this year as the level of the beach had reduced.

(viii) Slipway Maintenance – it was noted that the Harbour Master inspected the slipways every fortnight and the only slipway that was required to be maintained was the one located in Church Bay.

Mr Richardson noted that the surface of the Cliffside slipway had broken up and had deep holes. It was further noted that the railings had become loose on the old Lifeboat slipway. The Maritime Officer stressed that all the slipways were inspected by the Harbour Master every fortnight and that any defects on the slipway should be maintained in order that there was no danger. This meant that there should be no seaweed or algae growth on the slipway.

The Maritime Officer noted that he would remind the Harbour Master that it was necessary to investigate and deal with the above issues.

(ix) Concern was expressed that a wall on top of May Bank slipway was falling into a site where dinghies were kept. It was understood that the wall was the private property of the owner of 1 Rhes Penhelyg and the Maritime Officer confirmed that they would write to him to draw his attention to the dangers of the wall and remind him of his responsibilities.

(x) Disposal and Safety of Pyrotechnics – Concern was expressed that the owners of pleasure boats left pyrotechnics outside the Harbour Master's office and during the last few weeks £2,500 had been paid for their disposal. A scheme for disposal at a legal site was considered in order to conform with the regulations. In the meantime, in order to ensure safety it was confirmed that the procedure would be for flares to be returned to the Harbour Master's office.

(DD) Staffing Arrangements

Interviews would take place for the post of Assistant Harbour Officer on the 20th March and seasonal staff would be appointed for Tywyn in June.

(E) Maintenance Work Programme

A summary was received by the Harbour Master of his work programme for maintenance in Spring. It was noted that attention would be given to:

- Moorings
- System for the storage of tenders together with keeping a current register

- Maintenance of ladders

5. MATTERS RAISED BY THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- (a) Concern was expressed regarding the condition of the concrete that linked with the tarmacadam outside the Lifeboat Station
- (b) Condition of the railings on the bridge over the Roman path
- (c) That coastal path signs had disappeared from the lamp posts

In response, the Maritime Officer gave an assurance that the above would be dealt with and that the Harbour Master would complete an initial assessment of the bridges as a matter of urgency and enquiries would be made with the Coastal Officer regarding the path signs.

In response to a general query regarding flying banners, the Maritime Officer noted that planning consent was not required to fly national flags.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of this Consultative Committee would take place on 24 September 2013.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN