

**Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee  
held on 8 March 2011 in the Council Area Office, Barmouth**

**PRESENT:**

Councillors Louise Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Gethin G. Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Councillor R A Williams (Barmouth Town Council), Councillor Eric Wilding (Arthog Community Council), Mr K. J. Probert (RNLI), Mrs. Wendy Ponsford (Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Association), Mr Denis Howell (Meirionnydd Yacht Club), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association),

Observer: Cllr. David Richardson (Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee).

**Officers:**

Mr Barry Davies	-	Maritime and Country Parks Officer
Mr Ken Fitzpatrick	-	Maritime Officer - Harbours
Mr Glyn Jones	-	Harbour Master
Mrs Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer

**Apologies:** Councillors W. Roy Owen (Portfolio Leader Lifelong Learning), Ioan Thomas (Chair Development Scrutiny Committee), Cllr. Trevor Roberts, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Peter Bunce (Barmouth Town Council), Mr Huw Davies (Principal engineer – Gwynedd Council).

**In the absence of the Chair from the meeting, the Vice-chair, namely Mr John Probert, took the chair.**

1. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

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

2. **MINUTES**

**Submitted:** Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that was held on 5 October 2010.

**Resolved:** To accept and approve the minutes as a true record subject to the following amendments:

(a) **Item 6 (i) – Navigation Aids**

**That the Maritime Officer had stated that Trinity House had inspected the navigation aids and had noted that the Perch mark required maintenance and was not to the expected standard.**

(b) **Item 6 (vi) – change the sentence “There were approximately 1,000 boats in Gwynedd Harbours, however, they did not visit the harbours of Aberdyfi nor Barmouth” to read “The vessels were either berthed within the harbours of Gwynedd throughout the year or were visiting various harbours. However, very few visited the Harbours of Aberdyfi and Barmouth”.**

### 3. **THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT**

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

#### (i) **Fees and Charges**

(a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer stated that the Easter holiday falls late in the calendar this year but as there will be an additional bank holiday due to the Royal Wedding, it is noted that there will be an extension to the holiday period at that time and the extension of the holiday period will hopefully bringing in more visitors to the area.

It was reported that the draft fees and charges had been prepared for approval by the Portfolio Leader and Statutory Officers with a view to increasing the harbour fees and charges for all vessels mooring by an average of 2%. All clients had been informed of the forthcoming changes and hopefully the fees and charges will be confirmed shortly.

It was also noted that a proposal had been submitted that fees and charges relating to Harbour Dues and Mooring Dues be standardised regardless of the mooring holder's main area of residence.

Members' attention were drawn to the changes made with particular reference to the spreadsheet on the rate of inflation on the income target which noted 0.25% inflation in Barmouth Harbour for 2011/12. The inflation rate is based on a number of factors that fluctuate beyond the level of inflation e.g. electricity, gas, staffing etc. This meant that the income target would increase but due to recent sale of assets in Barmouth such as the units at Aberamffra that were contributing slightly to the total income generated, the overall income target has been reduced from £51,600 to £46,080. However, the increase of VAT to 20% will unfortunately incur a further increase in costs to all users but will not contribute towards the overall income generated at the Harbour.

It was emphasised that the smaller Harbours such as those at Abermaw and Aberdyfi had not been reaching the required income target for a number of years and therefore further measures will need to be taken in order to ensure that the overall expenditure and income targets achieve their targets without compromising standards and safety.

The Maritime Officer explained that the increase in the overall income target for the Maritime Service for 2011/12 was £57,330 which increased the overall income target to the Service to £2,219,360 in 2011/12.

Members' attention was also drawn to the fees for launching and registering Powerboats and Person Watercraft which had been increased for the next financial year.

(b) As a point of interest and for information, one of the members who is also a client within the Aberdyfi Harbour commented that there was no English translation of the word "diddymu" on the mooring fee application and it was not made clear of the intention to rationalise the charges for local and non-local residents. There should have been an explanation sent out with the application form.

In response, the Maritime Officer took note of the comment made and will ensure next year that the translation is complete.

(c) a member asked why it had been decided to take away the concession for local residents. Another member added that he was not aware of being given a concession as a

local resident over the past 10 years. Also, it seemed from the figures that a local resident having paid £21.51 per metre would now be paying £25.88 i.e. an increase of 20% for local residents and similarly there was an increase of 10% in the Harbour Dues

In reply, the Maritime Officer stated that it was up to the individual to query any possible error in the calculation of the fees and charges with the Maritime Unit and if there was any refund to be paid the Maritime Unit would be more than willing to refund any over payment. However, the Maritime Officer was amazed as to how this would happen since all fees and addresses are rigorously checked.

As to withdrawing the concession for local residents, there were a number of issues that could have been investigated such as considering increasing the fees to possibly 8% but it was decided that it would be fairer to rationalise the local and non-local resident fee by an increase of 2% in order to try and increase the income target. The Maritime Officer stated that generally it was an increase of 2% but in some instances it was an increase of 20% to local residents.

(d) A member argued that a specific sum across the board rather than a percentage would be fairer and simpler.

The Maritime Officer appreciated the comment but this had to be done in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy and have to adhere to regulations.

(e) As a matter of interest, a member drew attention to an article in the Practical Boat Owners Price guide wherein it stated that out of the 14 marinas in Wales, Pwllheli was the most expensive, out of the 240 marinas in the UK, Pwllheli was the 41<sup>st</sup> most expensive. He further stated that it was a pity that some of the profit made cannot be regenerated into the other Harbours such as Aberdyfi and Barmouth.

Another member went on to say that if the Council do not invest in the Harbours, they will not bet any better.

## **(ii) Budgets**

The Maritime Officer referred members to the budgets of Barmouth and Aberdyfi Harbours as of the third quarter of the financial year up to 31 December 2010. Members' attention was drawn to the income target in respect of Barmouth for 2010/11 which was £46,100 and that the total income generated to the end of December 2010 stands at £32,569 leaving an income shortfall of £13,531. The Maritime Officer did not foresee that a significant amount of income will be generated during the final quarter of this current financial year and it is forecasted that the overall expenditure to be in the region of £7,000 above the required target. It was emphasised that the overall total includes a saving resulting from having reduced the level of staffing for the winter period.

However, in comparison the income target for Aberdyfi during the same period stands at £39,270 with a total of £31,003 having been reached leaving a deficit at Aberdyfi of £7,100. It was noted that it is expected that there will be a saving of approximately £14,000 in the expenditure budget which will demonstrate an overall under expenditure of approximately £7,000 in Aberdyfi which will offset the deficit of Barmouth Harbour.

The Maritime Officer emphasised the importance of endeavouring to maintain the present level of service especially given the current economic climate. It was very challenging for the Maritime and Country Parks Unit to find additional savings.

## **(iii) Navigation**

It was reported by the Maritime Officer that the majority of the navigation aids had remained on station throughout the winter months.

However, it was noted that the Perch Beacon was continuing to cause concern to members especially given that the Perch beacon had been taken down a few weeks ago by a contractor. The Maritime Officer had made initial investigation as to the cost of replacing the Perch which would be in the region of £12-£20,000. However, as a temporary measure, a replacement buoy had been positioned in the Channel to indicate the preferred position of the channel. Whilst members were of the opinion that a like for like replacement would be preferable, the location of the Perch mark requires for a specialist contractor to be involved in the design and positioning thereof. It was further noted by the Maritime Officer that whilst a temporary navigational buoy will not indicate the exact position of the obstruction, the floating aid to navigation, fitted with a lantern and radar reflector, will ensure that vessels navigating in the channel are directed away from the obstruction. The Maritime Officer did not foresee that the Perch Beacon would be back on station this season but it was assured that staff would monitor the efficiency of the temporary navigational buoy and that it be further discussed in the October meeting as to whether or not to reinstate the Perch Beacon either as a Port mark or an Isolated danger Mark.

Whilst appreciating that the Perch Beacon can be seen from afar as vessels navigate into the Channel and that possibly the RNLI are able to locate the beacon on radar, it was stipulated that the purpose of the Fairway buoy was to indicate entry into the Harbour channel and then mariners are able to pick up the other navigational buoys along the way to the Harbour. There may be a slight risk for smaller vessels not navigating into the Channel so it will be necessary to place an additional buoy to mark the obstacle. However, the Maritime Officer will depend on those members' views, which use the Channel, and those of the Harbour Master and the Maritime Harbours Officer before reaching a conclusion.

In response the members queried and made the following points:

(a) why was it not possible to replace the Perch with another wooden pole similar to the one that had been there for over a hundred years?

(b) what were the statutory duty and the responsibility for the Perch? It was understood that Trinity House was responsible as the general Lighthouse Authority and the Council as the local Lighthouse Authority and that the authority were not allowed to change the characteristics nature of lights without permission from Trinity House. The navigational light was supposed to be 3 metres high with a visibility of 5 miles and in this circumstance the temporary navigational buoy did not conform to these requirements and therefore the authority was in contravention of its statutory rights and therefore negligent, because vessels coming in from the sea will not be aware of the obstruction. It was further noted that the Perch had not been maintained for a number of winters and had to be taken down before it fell.

(c) that the Charts for the past 20/30 years show the Perch Beacon and have not been updated

(d) that the risk assessments undertaken for the Three Peaks Yacht Race were not at all happy with the temporary navigational aid because it is not stipulated on the Chart.

(e) some members felt that the sum of money to replace the Perch Beacon was minimal compared to the loss of revenue to the Harbour due to vessels not being able to navigate into the Harbour at night in difficult conditions when they rely on the navigational light.

(f) concern was expressed about vessels hitting the rocks and the consensus of opinion was that the Perch Beacon be reinstated in its position.

(g) if the Maritime Unit can demonstrate that he needs £20,000 to replace the Perch Beacon, then the Maritime Officer could make an application to the Portfolio Leader for funding,

because in not spending this amount of money could result in the authority receiving far bigger claims in litigation. It would be appropriate to make such proposal if this Committee had powers to do so.

(i) The Maritime Officer responded by stating that the navigational aids were inspected by Trinity House. It is a requirement that navigational aids are in an acceptable condition but the Maritime Officer had not seen statutory legislation insisting that the Maritime Service had to put the original Perch Beacon back in its position, and being that the Channel had been marked with alternative acceptable navigational aids and which are safe for vessels, the Maritime Officer was of the opinion that the authority had complied with its duties. The Perch Beacon in Barmouth is a unique navigational aid, one of a kind, and when contractors investigate the work they also assess the risk in replacing it. As to replacing the Perch with a wooden pole, the authority could not take the risk of going against the advice given by specialist engineers. The Maritime Officer stressed that he as an officer would be responsible if anything were to go wrong and he reassured the members that he was confident with the standard of the temporary measures that have been taken. The Maritime Officer would be more than willing to discuss the matter further and to hear members' views thereon at the next Harbour Committee.

The Maritime Harbours Officer reiterated that the Perch Beacon had deteriorated over time and whilst appreciating that the rocks are a hazard they should not pose a problem to proficient sailors. On the other hand it could be a problem for jet skis and smaller craft navigating in this area. A member agreed with the Maritime Officer that the temporary measure was sufficient for the time being, but if there were funds available to replace the Perch Beacon this would be the best option. The Maritime Officer emphasised the need to ensure that vessels should only enter the Harbour when the weather and tide are suitable. He also reiterated that being that the authority had sent notices of warning to sailors and to Trinity House and had taken temporary measures to ensure the safety of sailors; the authority has, for the time being, taken the necessary action to provide suitable navigation aids in Barmouth.

When Charts are sent to the Admiralty, they will be returned having been up-dated showing the temporary navigational buoy. It was further noted that lights such as Ynys Enlli, Sant Tudwal, Ynys Lawd, are subject to public consultations but local navigational lights are not and are the responsibility of the local Harbour Authority for any amendments thereto.

In response to the observation made with regard to the minutes of this Committee not being scrutinised, the Maritime Officer confirmed that arrangements were in hand to consider submitting the minutes to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee in due course.

In concluding, the Maritime Officer noted all the points made and reassured members that the two Harbour officers present at the meeting would also ensure that the requests made are adhered to. It was reiterated that it is the intention of relocating the Perch Beacon in due course when finance was available.

(ii) The Maritime Officer expressed concern regarding the loss of beach zone markers, although very thankful to the co-operation of the caravan parks in particular Caeraniel. Within this area, 37 yellow beach zoning marker buoys, together with 317 metres of chain and 25 anchors had been lost and the authority could not afford this loss annually at a cost of £3,200.

In response, one or two members stated that they had seen buoys and anchors having been washed down on the beaches.

By the representative from Aberdyfi Harbour that this matter had been brought to the attention of members of Aberdyfi Harbour when a simple solution of placing a ground chain with anchor on each end with the buoys going up on risers was proposed.

The Maritime Officer stated that the case was different in Aberdyfi in that it seemed that the beach zone marker buoys were deliberately being taken from Barmouth and members were advised, when they see any on the shores along the coast, that they contact the Harbour Master with this information.

A member suggested contacting the Customer Care unit with a view to making an appeal to members of the public to contact the Harbour Master if they do find any navigational aids along the shores of the coast.

**(iv) Staffing**

The Maritime Officer reported that the post of Harbour Assistant for the forthcoming season had been advertised and that hopefully interviews would be held in due course and the person appointed will be in post from 7 April to 30 September 2011. The post would remain subject to review due to the reduction in funding available to local authorities and it is essential that the Maritime and Country Parks Unit demonstrates that the post of Harbour Assistant at both Barmouth and Aberdyfi are required throughout the year.

It was anticipated that 3 or possibly 4 beach officers will be appointed to manage the Blue Flag Award Beach at Barmouth. One seasonal Beach Officer will be appointed for the Blue Flag Beach at Fairbourne.

**(v) Beach Award**

The Maritime Officer had submitted a Blue Flag Beach Award application in respect of Barmouth beach in 2011. The bathing water results for 2010 had reached the necessary standard but members were reminded that there were inconsistencies with the results last year. These were discussed with the appropriate officer and in view of the fact that the results were fairly consistent to date, he did not foresee a problem this year. New guidelines will be enforced in 2015 whereby the results will be based on a 4 yearly check however it was envisaged that the bathing water in Barmouth would be excellent by 2015.

However, the situation was different in Aberdyfi and an Environment Agency representative had been invited to the Aberdyfi Harbour committee to explain to members the procedures taken when sampling the waters.

**(vi) GENERAL ISSUES**

**(a) Beach Concession**

The Maritime Officer reported that applications for beach concessions continue annually whilst no application had been received to date, it was envisaged that a new application will be submitted for a concession to operate leisure activities and donkey rides on the beach.

**(b) Motocross**

The Maritime Officer reported that the motocross event had been a success last year however the public did raise concern about the damage caused to a section of the beach. After the event, it appears that the sand becomes exceptionally soft which can cause difficulties for those walking on the beach. If the event was to continue again this year, organisers will be required to ensure that there will be no damage to the beach especially since part of the Motocross course lies within a conservation area whereby permission of the Countryside Council for Wales needs to be sought for its use.

It was also stressed that organisers may not go on the beach with equipment without the permission and attendance of the Harbour Master.

**(c) Compound Area**

The Maritime Officer reported that the above area was still giving cause for concern due to the area been used for the disposal of unwanted household furniture. The Maritime Unit had removed several tonnes of material from the compound at a cost of £600 for the skip hire and land fill tax. Further security measure were been considered and although locking the security barrier may be of inconvenience, such measure would be a deterrent for those seeking to deposit waste illegally.

**(d) Public Shelter**

The Maritime Unit had issued instruction to the Property Unit that a suitably qualified contractor be commissioned to demolish the public shelter and it was anticipated that the work will have been completed before the Easter Holiday.

It was suggested that a bench and or / flower beds be installed in its place.

A member further suggested advertising the land for use as a renting plot for a retail cabin as a means of obtaining revenue. In response, the Maritime Officer stated that this may be competition with other retail businesses in the town and on the promenade but possibly the Town Council may wish to investigate the matter further in the first instance.

**(e) Electricity Points on quay**

The Maritime Officer reported that the electrical and water supply points on the quay had been inspected and it was the intention to renew the service supply points but due to high costs and limited use, it was questionable whether there was a need to renew them all. However, the budget to renew them would have to be sought from other areas within the service since there was no budget within the Harbour to so.

**(f) Sculpture at Ynys y Brawd**

The Maritime Officer stated that Ynys y Brawd was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and following lengthy discussions with the Countryside Council for Wales regarding the anonymous erection of the sculpture at Ynys y Brawd, it had been decided that the present sculpture be allowed to remain provided that no more sculptures appear on the site.

**Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the Maritime and County Parks Officer's report.**

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**MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The following issues were considered that had not been discussed during this meeting and the officer gave his response:-

(1) **Positioning of taps**

A request was made as to whether the taps could be positioned at the top of the slipway.

In response, the Maritime Officer stated that the positions of the taps could not be changed but that they would be renewed following inspection by the Harbour Master. It was further stated by the Harbour Master that a tap was installed by the Yacht Club but did not last a week.

**Resolved: That the above be noted.**

(3) **Fendering for ladders**

(a) Members were concerned about the fendering on the ladders which were in desperate need of replacing and were eager to know as to when this would be done.

(b) The Maritime Officer stated that one quotation had been received and another one was awaited. He further added that it was all very well asking for numerous replacements in the Harbour but members must realise that they do cost a considerable amount. However, he was well aware of the risk of individuals' safety by not replacing the ladders and as soon as the other quotation was to hand the work would be authorised immediately.

(c) The Harbour Master had discussed the possibilities with a suitable contractor who had identified a ladder fender whereby the ladder itself acts as a fender and made of hardened rubber.

(d) A member stated that such matters were being brought up in this meeting time after time whilst appreciating that they do cost money, the ladders were dangerous at the end of last season.

(e) The Maritime Officer noted the point made above but appealed to members that if they do have similar concerns in the future that they contact the Harbour Master and staff in order that they may take action immediately.

**Resolved: That the above matters be noted.**

(5) **Harbour Side Access**

(a) Concern was expressed by members that loading lighter boats proved difficult now because of the bollards and storage of boats within the above area. It was requested whether it would be possible to use the area by the picnic tables. It was further added that motorbikes seem to park by the bollards.

(b) In response, the Maritime Officer commented that the Maritime Unit would not be happy with this arrangement so as not to cause any more damage to the quay. The picnic tables were installed to restrict use of this area. It was felt necessary to restrict use of the harbour to one area due to financial restraint to avoid having to repair different locations within the Harbour on a daily basis. If there were emergency instances to use this area, the Harbour Master would be more than willing to assist clients in the short term.



(c) Concern was further expressed about the condition of the bottom of the slipway and it was believed that Councillor Trevor Roberts was meeting on site with Councillor Dewi Lewis, Senior Portfolio Leader, to investigate its condition.

(d) In response, the Maritime Officer stated that the slipway was in perfect condition and that problems arise due to the changes to the surface of the sea bed. The Maritime Unit were not in a position to carry materials to this area.

(e) A member further stated that the secretary to the Yacht Club had written to the Maritime Officer who had stated that the authority was not responsible for the sand at the bottom of the slipway and the member was of the view therefore that the authority was not responsible for the rest of the Harbour.

The reply also stated that the Maritime Officer did not envisage any problem launching down the slipway at high water.

However, the member further stated that now larger boats were launching at low water in order to keep the slipway clear during the high water period and they then park on the beach to allow the tide to come up.

(f) Another member was of the view that launching boats were much more convenient and safer now than in the past years. Sailors do not have any problems except getting trailers back from the beach due to the huge dips at the bottom of the slip.

**Resolved: (a) That the above be noted and whilst the views of Councillors Trevor Roberts and Dewi Lewis are known following their inspection of the slipway.**

**(b) That the Harbour Master and Harbour Officer consults with the harbour contractor to seek his views as to problems encountered by him.**

**(6) Environmental Concerns**

(a) A member stated that the Yacht Club had received a report on the analysis of the sand within the harbour but was not adequate since it was dated 2007 and no stipulation therein as to the sampling point, and no mention of the method of what was collected. It was more or less a soil sample and did not state that any sand from the Harbour was any more contaminated than any other sand. A request was made for an up-to-date sample of the sand in the Harbour.

(b) The Maritime Officer responded to the above by stating that taking further samples unnecessarily would be inappropriate use of funding. The Maritime Officer requested that the qualified specialist within the Yacht Club submits a scientific report to the Council indicating the reasons why the analysis is incorrect.

**Resolved: That the above be noted.**

**(7) Recent announcement of the massive multi-million pound investment at Pwllheli and how Barmouth and Aberdyfi Harbours could benefit as a result of this investment**

(a) A member stated that whilst welcoming the £7m investment in Gwynedd, he was of the view that surely other Harbours such as Aberdyfi and Barmouth should benefit from it.

Suggestions were made by various members such as:

- Preparing and putting up a map in Pwllheli Harbour of sailing times to Aberdyfi and Barmouth together with lists of good restaurants, shops, rail services, etc., which might encourage visitors to visit both of these Harbours.
  - Gwynedd Council should put pressure on the Welsh Assembly to take promotional stands at Caravan and Boat shows to market Wales and its marinas, etc., in order to help local businesses and the creation of jobs.
  - there does seem to be a willingness from the Council to carry out work in Pwllheli Harbour such as accessing and members would like that willingness to spread to other harbours.
- (b) The Maritime Officer noted the above and confirmed that the visitor welcome pack would be continued this year and the Maritime Unit would investigate the possibility of working closer with the Tourism Unit as to how to improve the marketing of the Harbours.

However, it was emphasised that even though the investment was not directly targeted to other Harbours it was an investment to Gwynedd as a whole and it should be celebrated that Pwllheli had been chosen as one of the best harbours to hold national and international sailing events. The investment was for developing a sailing academy and not for increasing the moorings, etc., Even though those events will not be held at other Harbours such as Barmouth and Aberdyfi it is anticipated that through working with others such as Network Rail, etc., that families will wish to visit other harbours.

**Resolved To accept and note the comments made together with the answers of the relevant officers to these.**

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was reported that the next meeting of this Committee would take place on 4 October 2011.

**Resolved To accept and note the above.**

**CHAIRMAN**