

**Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee
held on 5 October 2010 in the Council Chamber, Area Office, Barmouth**

PRESENT:

Councillors Eryl Jones-Williams, Trevor Roberts, Gethin G. Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Councillors Peter Bunce (Barmouth Town 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 Huw Davies	-	Group Engineer
Mrs Glynda O'Brien	-	Committee Officer

Apologies: Councillors W. Roy Owen (Portfolio Leader Lifelong Learning), Ioan Thomas (Chair Development Scrutiny Committee), Cllr. Aeron Williams (Barmouth Town Council), Cllr. Julian Kirkham (Arthog Community Council) and Mr Glyn Jones (Harbourmaster).

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Trevor Roberts as Chair of this committee for 2010/11.

2. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Resolved: To re-elect Mr K John Probert as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2010/11.

3. **WELCOME**

Mr John Johnson, representative of Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association was welcomed to his first meeting of this Consultative Committee.

4. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

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

5. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that was held on 16 February 2010.

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

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

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

- (i) Navigation and Moorings
- (ii) Boatowners and Boatmens Licences
- (iii) Harbour Statistics
- (iv) Harbour Budgets
- (v) Severe Gale of July 2010
- (vi) Harbour Committee Meetings
- (vii) Events
- (viii) Diesel Fuel Supply

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

(i) that the **aids to navigation** had been inspected by Trinity House on 21 September 2010 and they had stated that they were in an acceptable condition except for the Perch mark. It was noted that the Perch mark lantern had been switched off and that a local notice to mariners was operational. It was confirmed that they would continue to investigate the maintenance work for all the aids to navigation during autumn and winter and the Harbourmaster and Maritime Officer Harbours would prepare a comprehensive programme for the maintenance of the aids to navigation. It was noted that the condition of the Perch aid had deteriorated further and that the temporary anchoring system had withstood the rough weather experienced over the summer. A structural engineering report was awaited regarding this and proposals change.

Concern was expressed regarding the condition of the Perch aid by several Members, and that there was a need for an established aid rather than a buoy on the site in light of the fact that the rocks in this area assisted mariners to navigate in and out of the Harbour. The committee were of the view that the buoy was not acceptable at all as it was not easy to see and that the element of mariners safety was vital. The representative from the Yacht Club was not aware of any notice to mariners regarding this issue and concern was expressed regarding the lack of sending out a Notice to Mariners in Barmouth. Another member added that the lights had not worked for a period of 4/5 months and the Maritime Officer confirmed that the light had to be renewed without delay and the Harbourmaster with the assistance of the Maritime Officer Harbours would act at once.

Following a comment by Members, the Maritime Officer gave an undertaking to contact the Harbourmaster to ensure that some high visibility tape was placed on the other aids to navigation in the navigation fairway and certainly the notice to mariners should have been sent to all clubs and associations using the estuary.

(ii) four **Owner's licences** had been issued and seven **Boatmen's licences** for a ferry service between Barmouth and Penrhyn Point. Members were reminded that concern had been expressed in the past regarding the level of qualifications and experience that a mariner required before receiving a Boatman's Licence and the Maritime Unit had investigated this matter further.

A number of letters had been received by the Maritime Unit from boatmen accusing one and other of not complying with the requirements and because of this the claims were investigated by an officer of the Maritime Agency officially and unofficially. Following the investigation he saw no boat acting in a manner that would cause concern and was confident that they were operating safely. It was accepted that the Council had very rigid arrangements in place and that these would tighten again.

It was noted that the safety of passengers was of the utmost importance and every Captain should be certain that the condition of the weather at the time was favourable for the journey that was to be undertaken. It was emphasised that this was the responsibility of the skipper of

the licensed boat and the Maritime Unit could not be available twenty four hours a day as a service to take a decision regarding the definition of 'favourable weather' as the ferry continued to operate up to 8.00pm during the summer season. The wind and the condition of the sea had to be suitable for any journey. Members were referred to the definition in the attached report that was in the Maritime Agency's Code of Practice for commercial vessels.

Members were further referred to draft copies of Boatmen's Licences together with a current list of safety equipment. Attention was drawn to the need to present the following evidence:

- RYA Powerboat Level 2 (minimum) with logged evidence of 12 months relevant experience
- Valid First Aid certificate
- VHF restricted licence
- Sea Survival Certificate
- MCA ML5 Certificate of Medical Fitness (adapted for local licence)

It was proposed that the Council issued an amended application form equivalent to the MCA ML5, as the completed form would not be required to be presented to the MCA/RYA. For those not able to provide logged evidence, the Maritime unit would undertake an independent assessment of the applicant's competency.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency had undertaken research into the existing Boatmasters Licences and the responses were presented for information to the Members of this Consultative Committee during the meeting.

In response to the above, several Members stated that it was a pity that boatmen complained about each other, however, it was pleasing to note that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency did not state any concern and that the Council's arrangements were in hand and appropriate. It was emphasised that the ferry service was very important for Barmouth and they all should work together for the benefit of the Harbour and the town's economy.

(iii) in the context of **harbour statistics**, it was noted that 965 Personal Watercraft had registered with the Council in 2010, namely an increase of 73 and 112 powerboats. Attention was drawn to the mooring statistics that stated that 99 pleasure boats had moored in the Harbour which meant that 80% of the moorings were used in 2010, a very small reduction compared to 2009. Although there was a reduction in the number of boats it was pleasing to note that the general length of the boats in Barmouth had increased a little in 2010 – a general trend in other harbours within the County.

Members' attention was drawn to the comparisons with boats in all Harbours in the County, names of the boats in Barmouth harbour and the total length and draught of the boats.

(iv) The Maritime Officer guided members through the harbour budgets and drew members' attention to the financial situation up to 31 August 2010 together with an expenditure budget for harbours and income targets 2010/11. Concern was expressed regarding the income target for Barmouth harbour and it was noted that the target for this financial year was £51,600. Thus far, the Harbour had reached a target of £30,957 with a shortfall of £20,642 and it was not anticipated that there would be a significant addition to the sum between October and March 2011 except for winter storage fees and fees for the compound.

In response to a query by a Member regarding the need to keep the Harbour Assistant on until December, the Maritime Officer explained that it was necessary to invest in staff in accordance with output. It was vitally important that work targets were met and completed. It was

envisaged that the situation would not change and that another challenging year was ahead to try and reach the required income target and ensure that the service did not commit to expenditure that was higher than the budget.

(v) It was noted that a **severe gale** had struck the harbours and beaches of Gwynedd on 15/16 July 2010. Boats in Porthmadog harbour suffered extensive damage and some boats were totally destroyed. The Maritime Officer took the opportunity to thank Harbour staff for their assistance and support during this exceptional storm.

(vi) The Maritime Officer reported that a request had been received from Aberdyfi Community Council to consider introducing one additional Harbour Committee meeting to the calendar of all Council committee meetings. The additional Committee's constitution would be representatives from the 4 Harbour Committees (Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Porthmadog and Pwllheli) and would meet on dates that would be half way between the Committees already programmed, either during the summer months or at the end of December/ beginning of January.

Members were reminded that the four current Harbour Committees had nominated co-opted members to serve on the Harbour Committees as observers in order to share relevant information with every Harbour Committee. It was noted that the Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee was different to the other Consultative Harbour Committees as it was a Statutory Committee that had been established in accordance with Harbour Legislation. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer suggested that the current system worked effectively and in accordance with the Municipal Ports Review enabled Members to be updated and to contribute and comment on the relevant harbour's Port Marine Safety Code. The officer was of the view that it was worth considering having an additional Harbour Committee to discuss pro-active day to day technical issues and not strategic issues. The resources were not available either to establish and support an additional Committee.

It was further noted that the Democracy and Legal Service was looking into the possibility of presenting the minutes to one of the main Council committees.

Councillor David Richardson elaborated on the background to the request, namely that the minutes were not of any worth as they were not submitted further than the Harbour Consultative Committees and that observers could not contribute to the discussions of the other Consultative Committees (Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Porthmadog and Pwllheli). The feeling was that if a joint Consultative Committee would include all the members of the 4 Harbour Consultative Committees it would be possible to contribute to a beneficial discussion and create a corporate identity to assist the attractions in each Harbour. There were approximately 1,000 boats in Gwynedd Harbours, however, they did not visit the harbours of Aberdyfi nor Barmouth. An advertisement was sent out to 55 different places last year and as a result the number of boats that came to Aberdyfi increased from 11 to 40 which meant more benefit to the harbour and the local economy. The Member felt strongly that a joint Committee should be formed in order to discuss and formulate a plan to promote all the Harbours and with a little pro-active collaboration it would be beneficial to all.

Several Members agreed with the above view and they were supportive to the establishment of a joint Consultative Committee annually. It was also felt that tourism was the main industry in the area and that Harbours should be promoted by advertising in Boatshows etc.

In response to the above, the Maritime Officer confirmed that he would convey the wish of this Consultative Committee for the relevant officers to consider further.

(vii) In the context of events, it was pleasing to see so many boats competing this year in the Three Peaks Race from Barmouth harbour and the Race Committee were thanked for the arrangements.

It was noted that a special Canoeing event would take place in May 2011 in Barmouth and it was stressed that there was a need for the Maritime and Country Parks Service to be ready with arrangements in place in the harbour for this important event.

The bathing water quality in 2009 reached the required Guideline Standard and therefore it was awarded the International Blue Flag Award in 2010. It was noted that the bathing quality of Barmouth beach for 2010 appeared promising thus far, however, it was necessary to wait until the results had been published by the Environment Agency before the bathing water quality for 2010 could be analysed.

Members were referred to the sheet indicating the bathing water results although it was stressed that further samples would be taken during the remainder of the season.

A member noted that it appeared that there was an inconsistency in the Environment Agency figures and that there was no specific reason stated why the water did not reach the requirements. It was understood that Barmouth Town Council was concerned regarding the inconsistencies and the way that the results were provided and it was understood that it was proposed to request an explanation from the Environment Agency and it was trusted that the information could be submitted to the next meeting of this Consultative Committee.

(viii) The Maritime Officer noted that a new **diesel** tank (half the size of the previous one) had been installed in the Harbour at a cost of £1,735 and had the capacity to hold 5,000 litres of red diesel. Reducing the stock by half would ensure that the stock of diesel did not age and therefore there was less risk of contamination with condensation.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the Maritime and County Parks Officer's report and thank the harbour staff for their work.

(b) To adopt the Boat owner and Boatman Licences together with a list of safety equipment corresponding to the requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

(c) To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer investigates further with relevant officers from the Council, to establish a Joint Harbour Consultative Committee with other Harbour Consultative Committees to be held annually.

7. 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) Shelter situated on Marine Parade

In response to concern regarding the above shelter, the Maritime Officer confirmed that in accordance with the agreement of the Portfolio Leader, arrangements would be in place to demolish the shelter during the next few months. It was emphasised that the Portfolio Leader's authority was required before action could be taken.

(2) Fishermen's Compound

Concern was expressed regarding the safety of the fishermen's compound especially as a great deal of refuse had been left there. It was asked if it was possible to place an item on the agenda of the next Consultative Committee to discuss its future.

In response, the Maritime Officer explained that it had proven difficult in the past to keep the compound under control. Although the service had presented keys for access to individuals, the problem of unauthorised refuse continued.

The Maritime Officer gave an undertaking to write to the Town Council to discuss trying to have control of the land.

(3) Health and Safety Audit as the users were concerned about

- The condition of the ladders
- Bottom of slip
- Signage
- Nature of contaminated sand
- The Perch

A Member expanded on the concerns namely that the ladders had been dented, the bottom of the slip was slippery with a large hole that could be hazardous.

In response, the Maritime Officer explained that it was vital that the Harbour Master undertook an audit and weekly inspections of the above as part of his day to day work and that these were recorded. Certainly, the response should be positive by alleviating any difficulties and concerns especially on the basis of public health and safety. A appeal was made to Members to present any similar problems in future directly to the Harbour master in order for him to act as part of his day to day duties.

In the context of contaminated sand, the Chief Engineer explained that following dredging the harbour, as with any other harbour, there was low level contamination, however, an assurance was given that it did not cause a hazard the public. In accordance with procedure the sand would be dealt with and transported to Ffridd Rasmus.

In accordance with the request, the Chief Engineer gave an undertaking to send the laboratory test results to Mr Denis Howell.

(4) Old Ferry Steps – Reinstate to historical level

In light of the fact that four ferries operated in the harbour, it was asked if it was possible to reinstate the old steps as a point to drop off passengers.

In response, the Maritime Officer explained that this was not possible as the cost to reinstate them would be approximately £30-£40,000. Whilst recognising that four ferries would operate from the Harbour, the officer requested their cooperation to use the existing facilities or the slipway.

It was added that no finance was available to dredge the harbour either. The Harbour had been dredged several times, however, the problem continued.

(5) Update on pontoons

A Member reported that an application had been submitted to SPLASH for financial assistance to develop pontoons and having received quotations from three companies it was understood

that there was no funding available. However, it was resolved to re-submit the application. It was asked if the Maritime Service had any ideas and also if a feasibility study was available regarding the harbour wall.

In response, the Chief Engineer explained that in the context of the Harbour wall that it was essential to employ a specialist engineer to undertake a study of the Harbour wall – the Council did not have this expertise. The Maritime Officer and the Chairman added that the Harbourmaster should be contacted to find out what the situation was with prices etc. They were further advised to have costs and plans ready in order that they may submit these immediately when the opportunity arose.

(6) Electrical Points in the Harbour

It was reported that the electrical points were corroding and needed to be replaced and as a result concern was expressed that they were not safe.

In response, the Maritime Officer stated that he was under the impression that they had been tested during last few week in terms of safety, however, he would follow the matter up with the Harbourmaster.

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 8 March 2011.

Resolved To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN