

**Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee
that took place on 21 March 2014 at the Dragon Theatre, Barmouth**

PRESENT

**Councillor Gethin Williams - Chairman
Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams - (Vice-chairman)**

Councillor Louise Hughes (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Lark Davies, R A Williams (Barmouth Town Council), Cllr Eric Wilding (Arthog Community Council), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries), Mr Llew Griffin (Merioneth Yacht Club), Mr David Baily (RNLI), Mrs Wendy Ponsford (Barmouth Harbour and Estuary Users Association).

Also in attendance by Chairman's invitation was: Dr J P. Smith (BVAG and the Town Council's Planning Ahead Group)

Officers

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

Apologies: Councillor John Wynn Jones (Cabinet Member for the Economy).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

Councillor Gethin Williams and Mrs Wendy Ponsford declared a personal interest in relation to matters dealing with the Yacht Club as they were Members of the Club.

2. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee held on 21 October 2013.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as correct subject to changing the word 'cemetery' to 'graveyard' on page 7 of the English translation.

3. 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:

(A) Harbour Consultative Committees – Terms of Reference

(i) Reference was made to the Harbour Consultative Committee terms of reference which dealt with the Membership, Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair, Quorum and Voting, Frequency of Meetings and the function of the Committee, that would be adopted as soon as possible in order to reconcile the arrangements of the four Harbour Consultative Committees. It was stressed that the Porthmadog Harbour Committee was statutory and the Harbour Committees of Aberdyfi, Barmouth and Pwllheli had been established under Section 102(4) of

the Local Government Act 1972. It was further emphasised that matters for discussion on the agenda would be restricted to matters that are vitally important to the Harbour such as budgets, operation of the harbour, staffing, work programmes etc., and it would be possible to discuss issues outside the Harbour terms of reference directly with the Maritime Service.

(ii) In order to formalise arrangements, it was suggested that the best way forward would be to correspond with each one of the organisations who already serve on the Consultative committee as follows to:

- (a) Confirm the role and purpose of the Committee
- (b) Invite nominations to serve on the Committee
- (c) Request that organisations note the reasons and the opportunities where they can contribute as an organisation to the Consultative Committee's work.

(iii) It is trusted that the arrangements can be implemented in accordance with the terms of reference in October 2014. It was suggested that up to seven members should be elected to represent the interests of different Harbour User organisations and if more organisations show an interest than required as part of the Membership, it would be a matter for the Cabinet Member to consider and choose the final Membership.

(iv) It was stressed that the Meetings were not closed and it would be possible for individuals to attend to listen to discussions, however, they would not have the right to ask questions or to express their views. It was added that the Membership of the Consultative Committee received prior notice of the dates of meetings with an invitation to send items to the Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer for consideration on the Agenda with urgent items being referred via the Chair of the Consultative Committee. Therefore, if there was any matter concerning the Committee's terms of reference that individuals wished to air at the meetings it would be possible to raise those issues with the Chairman, local member or representatives of the organisations serving on the Committee.

(v) Referring to a clause in the constitution that stated that up to four local members of Gwynedd Council may serve on the Consultative Committee, a Member noted that three members were currently serving and would it not be appropriate to invite the Member representing the Brithdir and Llanfachreth/Ganllwyd/Llanelltyd ward as the boundaries of his ward extended to Bontddu and was within the Harbour's designated area. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the Member may be contacted to see if he was eager to serve on the Committee.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the above.

(b) To request that the Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer sends a letter to all the organisations who already serve on the Consultative Committee as outlined in (ii) (a), (b) and (c) above.

(B) Port Marine Safety Code

(i) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the Code was not statutory, however, it was good practice and its main purpose was to state the required arrangements in terms of accountability and processes with maritime safety. Members were reminded that the Code had been presented to the last meeting of this Consultative Committee with a request to receive any observations from individual members on its contents. No observations had been received on the contents of the Safety Code and therefore it was taken for granted that the Code should be approved and during the next few weeks appropriate documentation would be

attached i.e. such as byelaws etc., to be printed and distributed to the relevant organisations. It was emphasised that it was a structure rather than an Act.

(ii) In response to the surprise highlighted by a Member that the Code was not statutory, he asked what would happen if two boats hit each other? The Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that the existence of aids to navigation was sufficient and it would be impossible for the Council to be held responsible if two boats collide.

Resolved: To accept and approve the Port Marine Safety Code.

(C) Navigation and Moorings

(i) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the navigational aids had remained on station despite the rough weather that was experienced. However, two lights had been lost and an assurance was made that they would be re-installed by Easter. (A positive report was received from Trinity House regarding the condition of the buoys.

(ii) A tribute was paid to Harbour staff together with other Council workforces who had worked diligently with assisting during the adverse weather and a Member suggested that a letter should be sent to thank them on behalf of the Consultative Committee.

(iii) A Member noted that the aids to navigation should be praised this year, however, a request was made to move the conical green cone a little to the right.

(iv) It was resolved not to install the beach buoys due to the number that had been lost in the past with exception to the Caerddaniel site that jointly funds the cost with the Council. In response to a query from a Member regarding the cost of a buoy, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was approximately £150 and they used to install approximately 60 altogether. Not installing them had not caused any concern at all as a robust registration system was in place for boats and it was possible to find the number of any boat that does not conform with the requirements. In terms of supervising the Fairbourne area, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was up to the public to contact the Harbour Master or Police if they saw any abuse of activities.

(v) It was trusted that the moorings would be completed and installed by Easter and the contractor would be informed that no one can launch without the Harbour Master's permission. A suitable and current certificate had to be received regarding the quality of the anchor and they would tighten procedures regarding this, this year.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(D) Proprietor and Boatman Licences

(i) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that no negative reports had been received in terms of the operation and management of the ferry last year. The licence conditions had been amended last year and it was proposed to extend this once again this year. No complaints had been received that the operators were carrying more than the stated number on the licences.

(ii) A Member noted that boats were left near the bottom of the ferry steps which made it difficult for the public.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(DD) Harbour Budgets

- (i) A budget spreadsheet was submitted to Members during the meeting and they were guided through the information and noted that the Harbour income target was £44,730 with £32,570 reclaimed by the end of February 2014, which meant that they were £12,160 short of the target. In terms of expenditure there was a budget of £28,640 with £17,750 spent thus far leaving £10,855 remaining. It was noted that the position of the Barmouth Harbour budget was currently fairly healthy, but the financial situation of the Maritime Service had to be taken into consideration as a whole.
- (ii) Bearing in mind that the sum noted above was remaining, it was asked why it was not possible to employ an individual to guard Penrhyn Point, Fairbourne. In response, whilst accepting that there was money left that it was not possible to employ an individual under the Harbour headings, as there was a separate budget for beaches. In addition, it was stressed that it was necessary to invest in lights in the Harbour.
- (iii) It was noted that it was a shame that the Council had disposed of assets in Barmouth.
- (iv) It was further noted that if there was a budget remaining that it would be more beneficial to invest in order to save money in the long term in equipment such as CCTV to guard the pontoon. It was felt that this would benefit Harbour staff, the Police and the Council if they invested in this equipment for public safety. The need to re-consider this was stressed as in the long term it would be a saving for the service.
- (v) In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that in the next financial year they may investigate to see what the cost would be to install a camera at the side of the SS Dora, but it was stressed that it was necessary to prioritise in accordance with the budget available.
- (vi) In response to a query regarding VAT, the Maritime and Country Parks officer confirmed that the Council did not pay VAT but rather paid the net budget.
- (vii) Reference was made to the spreadsheet attached to the agenda stating the inflation on targets for every element of the Services and an increase of 2% was noted on fees and payments. Concern was expressed that only 48 mooring registration forms had been returned thus far. In response to a query regarding the form of payment, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that it was possible to contact the Council's Finance Department directly to organise to pay by direct debit, or in cash and/or cheque at the Harbour Master's Office. In addition, it was noted that it was possible to pay by monthly instalments, by arrangement.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(E) Events

- (i) We are looking forward to:
- Three Peaks Race and Mr Ken Fitzpatrick offered to assist with the equipment if the race committee desired.
 - Canoeing Regatta Weekend to take place on 31 May/1 June
- (ii) It was reported that further discussions would take place with the organisers of the Motorcross as it was proposed to move it to November to avoid conflict with school half term holidays in autumn as happened last year.

(iii) A Member noted that holding it during half-term holidays had caused considerable difficulties last year with parking for usual visitors.

(iv) In response, a Member disagreed as during the weekend in question visitors had received a notice not to travel and only a few visitors were in Barmouth on that weekend except for the competitors and Motorcross supporters.

(v) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the results of bathing water quality in Barmouth were excellent which was good news in terms of success to fly the Blue Flag next year. In the same manner, Fairbourne had attained the requirements for the Rural Beach Flag Award that is equal in principle to the Blue Flag but in the 'rural' category. If Fairbourne was anxious to submit an application for the Blue Flag the costs attached would be huge as it would be necessary to employ a member of staff on the beach and invest in a cabin for staff, equipment, furniture, toilets etc. It was stressed that the costs to submit a Blue Flag Award application were approximately £600 and by now the Maritime Service did not have a budget for this and proposed to write to Town/Community Councils to ask for a contribution in order that they may plan for this within their precept. In response to a query from a Member of Arthog Community Council regarding submitting an application for the Blue Flag for Fairbourne, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that it would be possible to discuss this further during his visit to the Community Council next week as well as staffing issues at Penrhyn Point.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(F) Improvements

(i) In response to a query regarding placing piles at the end of the pontoon fingers, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that there was no problem in terms of principle, and it would be possible to undertake this at a substantial cost of approximately £50,000 for a licence, research to include a study on the environmental impact and a land inspection. It had to be borne in mind that Natural Resources Wales would have different observations. The Senior Manager – Economy and Community added that preparatory costs were extremely high and they had to be realistic.

(ii) Boats are allowed to winter at the side of the Compound and not at the quay side. In response to a concern highlighted about the condition of the quay wall opposite the Yacht Club, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave an undertaking that he would discuss this further with the Chief Engineer.

(iii) It was noted that machinery was on the beach ready to move the sand and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer as well as the relevant officers, would visit the beach following the Consultative Committee meeting. Mr Llew Griffin showed photographs of the beach to Members and made specific reference to the fact that 2 foot of sand had gone onto the beach and consequently it was anticipated that the town side of the beach would be much busier this year. A Member for the Arthog Community added that there was an incident whereby a lady had an accident on the shingle and washed up rocks and it was necessary to re-locate these on the beach.

(iv) In response to a concern highlighted regarding a surge in the tide, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave assurance that Natural Resources Wales announced any surges.

(v) The Senior Manager Economy and Community explained that in terms of the impact of the adverse weather, that the Council had submitted applications for different grants and had received assistance via Visit Wales to try and support tourist zones and that capital aspects for

Barmouth to repair the promenade wall, minor improvements in the Harbour, look at the provision near the gardens would be completed between now and the end of April.

(vi) It was added that it was possible for local businesses that had been affected as a result of the adverse weather to submit a request for financial assistance of up to £5,000 subject to proving:

- Evidence of the impact on the business
- Justification why such an application was not suitable for insurance
- How would the assistance support the business for the coming season

They would advertise the financial assistance in the local newspaper and it was possible for businesses to contact Mr Colin Morris, Council Business Support Unit, via Galw Gwynedd in Penrhyndeudraeth.

(vii) They would continue with the scheme of disposing pyrotechnics.

(viii) In terms of the maritime compound the new contracts would be sent out in the next few days. The spare plot had been advertised and three applications had been received and they would contact the successful applicant in accordance with the relevant criteria.

(ix) There had been an investment in Harbour ladders.

(x) It was trusted that they could meet with the Yacht Club very soon to discuss the management of the pontoon. It was noted that a great deal of work had been undertaken on the pontoon due to the damage caused.

(xi) It was noted that one unit was for sale at Aberamffra which was an excellent area for fishermen as it was out of the way of the public and safe. The Council retains one unit with potential for future use.

(xii) It was noted that beach concessions for beach activities such as donkey rides, trampoline, swings etc. would continue, however, an application was refused for a golf course on the beach.

(xiii) It was confirmed that they would continue to maintain the slipways. A Member drew attention to an undertaking given by the Chief Engineer in the previous minutes of the Consultative Committee, to discuss the Yacht Club's ideas for a proposed slipway opposite the Yacht Club, however, this had not taken place. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer promised to remind the Chief Engineer about this.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(FF) Harbour Staff

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that a Harbour Assistant had been appointed to commence on 7 April until September 2014. It was proposed to appoint 4 additional members of staff on the Beach. Reference was made to Mr Ken Fitzpatrick's retirement on 14 March 2014. He was thanked for his commitment and praiseworthy work over the years and best wishes were extended to him on his retirement. Weekly assistance would be given by the Porthmadog Harbour Master to fill the gap created as a result of Mr Fitzpatrick's retirement. It was further noted that the majority of the programmed work had been completed.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(G) Harbour Trust

Dr John Smith was welcomed to report on the Town Council plans to establish a Charitable Community Trust to take over assets such as the Tollhouse for development. Reference was made to examples of similar successful groups in Aberdyfi, Talylyn, Fishguard, Penllyn Partnership and Trawsnewid. It was added that it would be beneficial to establish a Trust to be able to raise money and submit applications for grants in a way that would not be available to the Town Council.

In response, the Senior Manager Economy and Community explained that the Council's financial position was currently quite challenging and the forecast was that it would get worse over the next 2/3 years. Several authorities in England had to reduce services and it was believed that it was necessary to look for opportunities in terms of local services across the Council. Whilst accepting that the idea and enthusiasm were very heartening, the Economy and Community Department would have to consider how the Council could give support to the venture. In the context of the Harbour, it would be necessary to consider a Harbour Revision Order in terms of establishing this type of body and there are bound to be different options available for further consideration. It was stressed that any Community Trust would have to be financially viable to maintain the establishment and an example in Bethesda was noted where the group had been able to attract grants and restore buildings offering units for external bodies. However, it was further noted that the early efforts in Barmouth were very pleasing.

It was further explained that from 1 April this year the Leisure Service would transfer to the Economy and Community Department and consequently it would be necessary to look again at structures and support for established groups.

A Member noted that it would be beneficial to expand the Trust to include other nearby communities and it would be a matter that Local Members could promote.

Another Member noted the need to take into consideration the oceanography gauge in any development of the Tollhouse as it would be a sad loss if it were lost.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Member reported that there were inconsistencies on the Web regarding the guidelines for insurance and that it was necessary to update the photographs of Barmouth that appeared on the internet.

Resolved: To request that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer investigates the above.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved It was noted that the next meeting of this Consultative Committee would take place on Thursday, 16 October 2014.

CHAIRMAN