

**PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
22 SEPTEMBER, 2010**

PRESENT:

Councillors Selwyn Griffiths and Ieuan Roberts, Dai Rees Jones (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Trevor Roberts (Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee) together with Messers Gwyn Davies (Porthmadog Town Council), Stephen Shakespeare, (Leisure Interests), Robert Owen (Commercial Interests), Peter Lunt Williams (RNLI),

ALSO PRESENT: Llŷr B. Jones (Senior Manager Economy and Community), Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), David O'Neill (Harbourmaster) and Glynda O'Brien (Committee Officer).

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Ieuan Roberts as Chairman for the 2010/11 year.

2. VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Vice-chairman for the 2010/11 year.

3. APOLOGIES: Councillors: Alwyn Gruffydd, Dyfed Edwards, (Chair of Council Board), Dr John Morris (Leisure Interests Representative), and David McLean, (Landowners Interests).

4. WELCOME

Cllr. Dai Rees Jones (Vice-chair of Gwynedd Council Board), Mr Llŷr B Jones, Senior Manager Economy and Community and Mr David O'Neill (Harbourmaster) to the meeting.

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

6. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee, held on 10 March 2010, as a true record.

7. REPORT OF THE MARITIME UNIT

Before presenting his report, the Maritime Officer supported the warm welcome given to Mr David O'Neill who was attending his first meeting of this Consultative Committee since his appointment to the post of Harbourmaster in Porthmadog at the beginning of the season.

The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer was submitted and the following matters were addressed:-

- Navigation
- Sailing Club Developments
- Harbour Statistics
- Harbour Budgets
- Mooring Maintenance
- Severe Gale, July 2010
- Harbour Committee Meetings
- Fees and Charges
- Borth y Gest – Yacht Tenders and Dinghies

(a) Navigation

Because of regular changes in the navigation channel, a number of the navigation aids had to be relocated. The investment in the navigational lanterns situated within the inner harbour area have been of great assistance to mariners and Members were referred to the approaches plan attached indicating the 17 aids that are maintained. Staff were congratulated for ensuring that the lights on all the aids were in accordance with the requirements of Trinity House. It was noted that the risk of maintaining the aids on the sandbank was high during the winter, however, it was hoped that the standard could be kept in the future. Consideration was given to extending the aids to Portmeirion however, due to the high risk it was determined that this would not be feasible. It was confirmed that two additional fixed aids to navigation would be stationed in the vicinity of the Porthmadog Sailing Club and Doc Peilot.

Members' attention was drawn to the attached comprehensive programme which indicated the arrangements for the maintenance of navigational aids and it was hoped that this would have been completed by Christmas.

(b) Sailing Club Developments

Members were reminded that Madog Sailing Club had requested an extension to the existing pontoon facilities. The officer welcomed the opportunity for an improvement in the Harbour and that it was a good example of being able to achieve improvements by working in collaboration with local businesses.

Originally the concern was that adding to the size of the pontoon facilities would impair on the extended slipway and on the flow of water in the inner harbour. However, following studies undertaken over the Summer it was seen that extending the pontoon would not have a detrimental impact on the use of the slipway by other boats and would not have an effect on the tidal flow. An

assurance was required from the Yacht Club that extending the pontoon would not have any impact on the flow of water in the harbour.

The Maritime Service was consulted regarding the development in order to submit observations to Trinity House. As this Consultative Committee had agreed in principle to extending the facility the only further condition that the Maritime Service had suggested, subject to approval from Trinity House, was that fixed red lights should be positioned at each end of the proposed development.

Members were reminded of the previous discussions regarding the application and attention was drawn that the pontoon development included providing an access ramp to the pontoons for walkers over the historical slate steps. The access ramp to the pontoon would be secured by a gate on the landward end. If the proposed development was granted, it was a requirement that the public would continue to have unrestricted access to the harbour by using the pontoon access ramp. However, the Maritime Unit understood that the Yacht Club objected to the public using the ramp for commercial use (namely for access to a ferry) which was contrary to the scheme and previous understanding when the request was granted to position a pontoon. The Maritime Officer was of the opinion that the ramp should be available for public use, be that for commercial or private use, exactly as the users of the historical slate steps. The view was that a ferry service would be an attraction in the Harbour. The ferry would be licensed by the Council as it would not carry more than 12 persons and would operate in categorised waters.

Several members of the Consultative Committee added their concerns regarding the above and their disappointment in the Yacht Club's attitude and that this would sour the relationship. It was suggested that a strong letter should be written to the Yacht Club stating the Council's views that the understanding was that the ramp would be for the public's use. It was noted that the steps had been used by the residents of Porthmadog for over 200 years and in accordance with legislation a right of way had been established for many years and the ramp should be open for the public.

In response to the above concerns, the representative from the Yacht Club explained that there had been a misunderstanding as the Yacht Club did not object to the public using the access ramp but rather they were concerned regarding the public's health and safety. The gate was not there to prevent persons from gaining access to the ramp, it was there to warn them to be cautious of dangers and so much use was made of the pontoon during the summer by visitors and fishermen. Signs had been placed on the gate for the need for children to wear lifejackets. In the context of the ferry service, concerns were expressed by the Club of the need for appropriate insurance for customers who use the ferry especially when approximately 12-15 people are waiting to go on board and considering that the pontoon would be slippery and they should wear the relevant lifejacket. The representative promised that he would convey the concerns of the Consultative Committee to the Yacht Club.

Whilst welcoming and appreciating the collaboration between the Council and the Yacht Club, the Maritime Officer was of the view that it was the

responsibility of the Yacht Club to have appropriate insurance for the use of the access ramp. In relation to wearing a lifejacket, the Maritime Officer explained that it was not possible to force the ferry owner to make his customers wear life jackets but he should have a supply on board. This would be dependent on the owner's risk assessment.

The Yacht Club representative on behalf of the Club noted that they could not allow restricted access to the ferry service and that the owners would have to conform and work jointly with other users of the pontoon.

Following a discussion of the best way forward to resolve the above misunderstanding, the representative from the Yacht Club gave an undertaking that he would discuss the views of the Consultative Committee further with his fellow members and would report back to the Maritime Officer on the conclusions. The Chairman suggested to the Maritime Officer that if difficulties arose to solve this problem then he should convene an emergency meeting of this Consultative Committee.

(c) Harbour Statistics

In a table presented to members, it was noted that 955 Personal Watercraft had registered with Gwynedd Council in 2010, compared with 892 in 2009. It was noted that weaknesses continued for users to conform with the rules however this would be permanently strengthened in the future. A total of 1378 powerboats had registered, which again shows an increase.

The officer reported further that 177 pleasure boats had moored in the harbour this year compared with 180 in 2009, namely 75% of the moorings this was a reduction of 1%. The Maritime Officer was not too concerned about this as the overall length of vessels had increased and it was trusted that following the proposed development in the Harbour to position a pontoon that there was potential for a further increase.

It was noted that the quality of mooring maintenance had improved over the last few years.

In response to a concern highlighted by a member regarding the number of boats launching at Morfa Bychan with false permits, the Maritime Officer explained that Harbour staff had worked well with the Police regarding this.

(e) Budgets

Members were guided through the budgets and it was noted that Council Members would have very difficult decisions ahead regarding savings. The main challenge for officers was trying to make the most of the service with less funding.

For information, the final budget report of the harbour for the 2009/10 financial year was submitted, along with the revenue budget and target incomes of harbours for the 2010/11 financial year. The officer referred to the impact of the extremely unfavourable weather conditions during the summer and he warned that great care would have to be taken to ensure that the service would not commit finances beyond the budget. The Harbourmaster and the Maritime Officer – Harbours, would provide a detailed work maintenance programme for the autumn and winter, so as to identify expenditure priorities in Porthmadog Harbour.

The reasons for the underspend of £12,066.31 under the heading staff costs were explained namely that a number of staff over the last four years had been on secondments in order to ensure the best service to users.

It was noted that the income of Porthmadog harbour thus far was £7,070 lower than the target income. A target of £77,910 had been set and the income thus far was £70,839. The officer could not foresee that there would be a substantial increase in this between October and the end of March 2011.

The Maritime Officer confirmed that he would send the details of the beaches budgets to Committee Members within the month and that he would ensure that this information would be part of his report in future meetings.

(dd) Moorings Maintenance

The Maritime Officer reported that a different contractor had been appointed this year for the maintenance of moorings and that the work had been completed in accordance with the specification. The costs were much less this year, however, it would be necessary to invite tenders from qualified contractors for the work next year.

A Member commented that there was regular demand for moorings at Borth-y-gest and it was asked if it was possible for the Council to take over a private mooring when the individual did not wish to continue to use it in order that it may be re-let.

Whilst accepting the comment, the Maritime Officer explained that if the Council took responsibility for a private mooring then the mooring would have to be of an acceptable standard. He added that the Harbourmaster would cooperate by reviewing the situation and would work with local residents.

(e) Severe Gale, July 2010

The Maritime Officer reported that there was considerable damage to a number of boats in Porthmadog harbour due to a severe gale that occurred on 15/16 July 2010. A number of boats had been damaged beyond repair. However, the mooring equipment from the mooring riser to the anchors were undamaged demonstrating the effectiveness of the investment committed by the Council to

maintain the moorings in recent years. However, owners had a lack of knowledge regarding the type of rope that should be used to fasten large sized boats to the mooring to safeguard them from becoming free.

The opportunity was taken to thank the RNLI for their service following the above damage and Mr Peter Lunt Williams was asked to convey the Committee's thanks to the volunteers for their assistance and support and generally for their work in Cricieth. In the same manner Mr Ken Fitzpatrick and Mr David O'Neil were thanked together with the Coastguard for their commitment and work in the Harbour during and following the exceptional storm.

(f) Harbour Committee Meetings

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 to 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 if it was to discuss pro-active day to day technical issues.

The Senior Manager Economy and Community added that he could see the value in the current system of the four harbour Consultative Committees in order to receive an input from external representatives etc, but it was possible to look to the future in order to reconcile arrangements by defining their purpose and role.

Several Members disagreed that an additional Consultative Committee should be created especially as co-opted members would be invited to attend the Harbour Committees if they wished. However, it was suggested that the possibility of re-considering the Council's constitution should be considered where the minutes of the Harbour Consultative Committee should be submitted to the Council's main committee. Currently, it was noted that the minutes were submitted from one Harbour Committee to the next but of course officers acted on any recommendations raised as a matter of procedure.

To conclude the discussion, the Vice-chair of the Council Board explained that Board members were invited to attend this Harbour Committee and that the only way to change the system would be to re-consider the Council's constitution.

(ff) Fees and Charges – Draft proposal

It was noted that the annual report on fees and charges relative to the Maritime and Country Parks Unit for 2011/12 would be submitted to the Portfolio Leader towards the end of December. Careful consideration would need to be given to any increase that was required in order to maintain fees and charges in line with inflation during 2011/12 as VAT would be increased by 2.5% as of the 1st January 2011, thereby incurring additional costs on harbour customers.

Currently, Porthmadog Harbour had not been divided into different areas whereby different fees apply to different areas of the harbour. It was suggested that it would be possible to restructure the fees for 2011/12 to reflect the various areas in the Harbour and as a result would be a way of increasing the income target.

The Members' attention was drawn to a copy of the current fees and charges as well as the intention to increase fees in the future.

(g) Borth y Gest – Yacht Tenders and Dinghies

It was noted that the staff of the Maritime and Country Parks Unit had been clearing abandoned yacht tenders and neglected sailing craft from a specific area of Borth y Gest. It was proposed that the Harbourmaster would undertake further work to move yacht tenders during the winter this year and the owners of the moorings were also advised to contact him in order to register their mooring. Unregistered and unserviced moorings would be removed.

The Maritime Officer expanded on the proposed arrangements to control the access point on the foreshore at Borth y Gest by positioning a security bollard at the top of the access ramp in order to prevent unregistered craft from launching and recovering at Borth y Gest. Consideration had been given to issuing a key to those individuals who will comply with the terms of a Licence which would enable access through the security bollard.

A Member thanked the Harbourmaster for the work and the idea of removing boats from there was welcomed if the owners had not re-registered. From experience, the local boat owners found it difficult to go around the boats and that tidying up was a priority and it was trusted that there will be an improvement in the future.

RESOLVED to accept the report with gratitude and noting the observations made by members.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting of this Committee would be held on 16 March 2011.

The meeting commenced at 6.10pm and concluded at 7.45pm.

CHAIRMAN