
**PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE,
5 OCTOBER, 2011**

PRESENT:

Councillors Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd and Ieuan Roberts, (Gwynedd Council), along with Messrs Gwyn Davies (Porthmadog Town Council), Robert Owen (Commercial Interests), Dr John Morris (Leisure Interests Representative) and David Eastwood (Harbour Interests Representative).

ALSO PRESENT: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), David O'Neill (Harbour Master) and Iwan Hughes (Committee Officer).

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Ieuan Roberts as Chairman for the 2011/12 year.

2. VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Vice-chairman for the 2011/12 year.

3. APOLOGIES: Councillor Dyfed Edwards (Chairman of the Council Board), Peter Lunt Williams (RNLI).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee, held on 16 March 2011, as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In response to an enquiry, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that work had been done to erect the wall that had collapsed near Llyn Bach. However, some material remained in the river and it was emphasised that every effort was being made to find out who was responsible for clearing it away.

The officer noted that the situation caused concern as the material disrupted the flow of water and the nearby moorings.

A member noted that money obtained through the Assembly had paid for the erection of the wall and that this work should include clearing all material away.

RESOLVED to place further pressure so that the work of clearing the material from the river is completed.

6. REPORT OF THE MARITIME UNIT

Submitted – the report of the Maritime and Country Parks officer and he noted that the report did not follow the usual format this time as part of the efforts being made to achieve work targets, complete key tasks and assist the Unit's staff.

The officer submitted information on the following issues individually:

Navigation and Moorings:

It was noted that the aids to navigation had been kept in reasonable order and the officer made the following main observations:

- Although three aids had moved from their appropriate locations, they would be placed back in their correct location as soon as repairs on the boat used for this work had been completed.
- That over £2000 had been invested on the lights on the aids and that the Unit, through Trinity House, had agreed to use the lanterns throughout the winter.
- That navigation was obviously improving in Porthmadog and that no complaints had been received regarding the quality of the aids to navigation this year.
- That a contractor had been employed to undertake the work of bringing the beach aids to shore and that this was more cost effective.
- That substantial investments in the past meant that the mooring maintenance costs were reducing and that consideration was being given to the possibility of having no expenditure this year. That this would have to be weighed up against the damage that could happen should one of the moorings be damaged in strong winds.
- That Trinity House inspections had been postponed until 2012.

In response, the Leisure Interests Representative referred to one of the buoys that had turned on its side and this meant that the light on the buoy was not in plain view. He added that the situation was very good, on the whole.

A note was made of the comment and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that they were in contact with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor's Hafan Unit, considering the possibility of creating aids to navigation that would be more appropriate for estuaries where the water flowed quickly, especially on high tide.

Proprietor and Boatmen Licences:

It was explained that the waters in Porthmadog had been categorised and that one boat had been licensed in the past two years to operate within these waters. The officer elaborated on this and made the following main observations:

- That the licence allowed for up to eight passengers to be carried within the categorised waters.
- That any person who received a licence had to comply with the terms of the licence and adhere to the definition of 'favourable weather'.
- According to the observations received, that a licensed boat had been used in a nearby harbour when the weather had been unfavourable.
- That passengers had to be safeguarded and it was emphasised that the area of the waters was vast with the situation varying in different places.
- That no negatives were linked to **2011 Observations** and that the Sailing Club's cooperation in relation to the passenger sailing and landing point was appreciated.
- That it was acceptable for the **Competence** of those who received a licence to be a minimum of RYA Level 2 with other current qualifications attached. Nevertheless, it was expected for those who came to Porthmadog to be assessed by the Harbour Master and/or another officer from the Maritime Unit.

In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that the work done by the Sailing Club to increase the number of pontoons had been successful despite the fact that the weather had not been entirely favourable during the summer.

It was noted further that many enquiries had been received regarding the boat trips being run from the harbour in Porthmadog. Nevertheless, as the same person ran a similar service in Barmouth, the trips were not offered regularly. It was accepted that better arrangements could be made to advertise the service for next year.

When submitting information about **Maritime Statistics**, the officer noted the following main points:

- That the system for registering Personal Water Craft was improving on a regular basis and that the number of complaints received had reduced substantially.
- In general, a reduction had been seen in the total number of Personal Water Craft registered, namely from 965 in 2010 to 829 in 2011.
- That the number registered in Porthmadog had increased from 39 in 2010 to 51 in 2011, although the number in Morfa Bychan had reduced from 201 to 168.
- There had been a general reduction in the number of power boats from 1389 in 2010 to 1171 in 2011. In Porthmadog, the number had reduced from 28 to 24 and in Morfa Bychan it had reduced from 32 to 29.
- The main reason for the reduction was the economic climate with fuel costs and an increase in VAT having an effect.
- It had been decided not to impose the VAT increase on the Council's fees.
- That by comparing the number of power boats and sailing boats in Porthmadog, it was seen that 61.8% of them were sailing boats.
- That the moorings had been graded in order to ensure that the prices were fairer.
- That more moored on the general moorings in Porthmadog than in any other harbour in Gwynedd.
- That Hafan Pwllheli was important in terms of the economic benefit and that there had been a reduction in the number of boats moored there, with 40 of the berths empty at the moment.
- That the total number of boats on Gwynedd moorings was approximately 79%.
- A very poor July and August was had in terms of the weather and the best had been seen in March, April and the beginning of October. Nevertheless, the income targets on Morfa Bychan beach had very nearly been reached.
- That the seasonal staff employment period had ended in Morfa Bychan at the beginning of September, rather than at the end of the month as had been the case previously.
- That an offer was being made to everyone with a mooring to moor in Hafan Pwllheli over the winter months at a cost of approximately £70 a month. That there was no intention here to undermine local business, but rather, to introduce a sailing opportunity over the winter months.
- To date, one boat from Aberdyfi, two boats from Barmouth, two boats from Porthmadog and twelve boats from Pwllheli Outer Harbour had taken advantage of the scheme.

He noted that difficult decisions were to be made regarding the **Budgets** with the budgets and staff numbers being drastically cut. The officer elaborated on this and made the following main observations:

- That the reductions in posts up to the end of August 2011 had resulted in a saving with a remainder of £24,838.

- That it was expected that it would be possible to spend the budget in the maintenance field.
- That the total expenditure of Porthmadog Harbour was close to £71,000 and that there was a remainder of £50,000.
- The income target in Porthmadog was £75,000 and currently, almost £70,000 had been received and it was not expected for the situation to improve during the winter months.
- It was considered that the financial situation in relation to Porthmadog Harbour was very positive and the Officer gave thanks for the staff's commitment to maintaining the high quality of the Harbour.
- In terms of the Harbour's 2010/11 financial report, it had been managed, in general, to reclaim costs and this was considered to be very positive.
- That initial reports reported that inflation ran at 4.5½% and that this caused concern in relation to next year's fees and payments. It was hoped to avoid increasing fees in line with inflation.
- That the Crown Estate called for payments to be made for each mooring. This amount would be approximately £35 and it was emphasised that the clients would suffer.
- The Council would take every possible step to object to these costs.

Members expressed concern regarding the possibility of paying an additional amount to the Crown for each mooring. It was emphasised that no advantage was to be gained as a result of the payments to the Crown and a call was made for strong objection to be expressed.

RESOLVED to draw the attention of Gwynedd MPs to the matter and encourage them to support the Council's campaign to object to the additional payments.

Reference was made to the success of the **Cob 200 Celebrations** and a member gave thanks for the support obtained by the harbour master and all Harbour staff.

It was noted that the support of the Sailing Club and Rowing Club had been extremely valuable and that the race held had been very successful.

Following the success, it was intended to hold a similar event annually.

In terms of **Improvements**, the officer referred to the following developments:

- Improvements were made to the surface of the Quayside as it was difficult to walk from one end of the Quay to the other. Suitably coloured concrete had been placed there, which made the entire area safer.
- The paved area between the small car park and Harbour Office had been adopted. £15,000 had been earmarked to resurface the pavements and a target had been set to complete the work before Christmas.
- Ffestiniog Railway had requested to reclaim land in the Harbour area. As the proposal would not disrupt navigation or the harbour area, it was confirmed that no objection would be submitted. In response to observations made by members, it was noted that only a matter of days had been given to respond. Copies of the plans were distributed amongst members. A member also noted that it would have been possible to convene an urgent meeting of the Committee to consider the issue.
- Work had been completed to tidy up in the Borth y Gest Area and everyone would have to register their boat there also. In addition, two memorial benches had been placed there. The Town Council representative said that the work was appreciated, but he expressed concern as people from outside the area who left boats and equipment there caused difficulties for local people.
- The tender boat storage area in Porthmadog Harbour would be extended.

- Enquiries were being made in relation to the Porthmadog Harbour Way-leave with companies that were eager to bring ships into the Quay. They intended to load and unload materials from Trawsfynydd Power Station, as well as bring stone to the area. Work was being done to discover the exact wording of the Way-leave.

Information was submitted regarding **staff** and it was noted that there were only eight employees within the Service in the winter, and in Porthmadog there would be a Harbour Master and Beach Officer. Assistance would be received from the Harbours and Beaches Maritime Officer as required, however, the Porthmadog responsibility area would extend down to Llandanwg and up to Cricieth.

It was noted that the Police were eager for the **Marine Watch Scheme** to be re-established as many thefts took place off boats in harbours. Following the Police's request, the Maritime Unit would send a form to all its customers in February, asking them to register to be part of the Scheme. In addition, further information would be available in each harbour.

A member expressed concern as people from outside the area attempted to sell various products in Morfa Bychan to the detriment of local businesses. He gave thanks for the work done by the Council's employees in an attempt to prevent this.

RESOLVED to accept the contents of the report with thanks to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer and all harbour staff for their conscientious work.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting of this Committee would be held on 7 March 2012.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.20pm.

CHAIRMAN