

## ITEM

<b>MEETING</b>	PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
<b>DATE</b>	04 NOVEMBER 2008
<b>TITLE</b>	Wales National Sailing Academy and Events Centre Scheme
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To present details of the concept of a Wales Sailing Academy and Events Centre at Pwllheli
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Declare support in principle and request that officers fulfil further preparatory work.
<b>REPORT BY</b>	Sioned E. Williams, Head of Economy and Regeneration Service
<b>PORTFOLIO LEADER</b>	Cllr Dewi Lewis

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. On 28th November 2006, a report was presented to the Council Board regarding the concept of developing a Sailing and Events Academy at Pwllheli. At the time, there was support for the idea in principle and officers were asked to proceed with the preparatory and planning work prior to presenting a further report on the proposed scheme.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to present details of the work done thus far since then, and recommend further measures so as to do additional work on the scheme.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Since the development of the Hafan in 1994, Pwllheli has evolved into one of the principal sailing locations in Britain. It is also a location which has over the past few years hosted a significant number of successful sailing competitions, thus raising the area's international profile.
- 2.2. One of Pwllheli's principal features as a sailing centre is the easy access to some of the best sailing waters in Britain and its high standard to hold national and international competitions. Within the sailing world, Pwllheli is considered to be one of Britain's three most important locations and has the capacity to hold significant events for small dinghies (the other two locations are Weymouth in England and Largs in Scotland). These merits afford Pwllheli substantial opportunities and potential.
- 2.3. During 2007, as well as staging a substantial number of smaller competitions, Pwllheli Sailing Club also held 9 major championships, and it is estimated that this contributed towards over 20,000 evenings accommodation leading to an expenditure of approximately £1.65m to the local economy (the Sailing Club's estimate). During the summer this year, over 10 major championships were held, including world and national championships.

- 2.4. The exceptional standard of the area's sailing waters was also recently recognized as Pwllheli was awarded status as the only sailing training centre in Wales for the 2012 London Olympic Games.
- 2.5 Despite the success in terms of organization, holding and managing events at Pwllheli, the limitations on the land and water facilities and resources are becoming increasingly apparent. Investments in other important UK sailing centres, makes it increasingly difficult to continue to hold and attract major, additional competitions, and which are of a high standard, to Pwllheli. Consequently, the present facilities limitations hinder the area's capacity to realise the potential which the natural resources provide.
- 2.6 Taking the above into consideration, initial opportunities were identified as regards developing a Sailing Academy and Events Centre that would build upon and utilize the area's strengths in order to meet broader economic and social needs, such as :
- Building on Pwllheli's maritime investments and achievements and establish it as an international sailing centre with appropriate facilities to attract and hold competitions of the highest standard
  - Gain maximum benefit from attracting competitions, events and yachts to the area
  - Promoting sailing activities at all levels of ability and qualification, by providing courses, training and events to involve everybody, including the handicapped
  - Promote and encourage use of Welsh in all aspects of the activities.
  - Provide a resource to be used by the community, for instance through providing facilities that would enable schools to include sailing and water activities as part of their outdoor activities.
- 2.7 As outlined in the report presented to the Board, it was envisaged that the proposed scheme would contain capital aspects such as dredging work and providing berths and associated facilities in the harbour; as well as a proposed building to house the Academy.

### **3. PWLLHELI SAILING ACADEMY SCHEME TECHNICAL GROUP**

- 3.1. Further to the Board's previous decision, and building on initial discussions held with members of Pwllheli Sailing Club, a Technical Group was established to explore the opportunities for project development. It is an informal group whose principal role is to deliberate on various matters, challenges, opportunities and threats and provide technical input when developing scheme details.
- 3.2. In its role, representatives of bodies or groups who possess relevant expertise or technical information have attended the Group's meetings, including

Gwynedd Council (officers from various Services)  
Pwllheli Sailing Club  
Coleg Meirion Dwyfor  
North Wales Water Sports  
Wales Sailing Association

- 3.3. During the initial meetings, a Project Scheme was agreed upon on which the work programme would be structured. As a rough outline, the principal following steps were identified when doing the preparatory work:

- Step 1 – Initial Feasibility
- Step 2 – Prepare Concept Proposals
- Step 3 – Prepare a Detailed Design
- Step 4 – Prepare Full Specifications

- 3.4. These steps also reflect the nature of the scheme, and the range of considerations that the project would need to take into account.

Step 1 – Initial Feasibility

- 3.5 As a first step, a feasibility assessment was prepared as regards the main aspects of the scheme due to technical and environmental constraints that would be key considerations in such a development. This assessment was prepared as the Impact of Silting on a River Study that included an inspection of the harbour bed. The assessment was prepared by the Mouchel Parkman company, Civil Engineering Consultants, with financial support from the Welsh Assembly Government.

- 3.6 The inspection showed that the main material that would need to be dredged from the harbour in order to do capital work would be sand and gravel with a smaller proportion of clay. Although it had been noted that the Erch River low water channel could alter its course across the foreshore, the report concluded that it was unlikely that there would be any increase in silting from either the Erch River or Rhyd-gir River. The report also confirmed, if required, that river dredging work could be included so as to prevent the channel from altering course.

- 3.7 The initial study therefore concluded that a limited scale development to the north of the Hafan would be feasible, taking technical and environmental constraints into account.

Step 2 – Prepare Concept Proposals

- 3.8 Building on the conclusions reached by the Silting on River Impact Study, later on in 2007, a brief was prepared for commissioning concept proposals. Following a tendering process, the Council (with financial assistance from the Wales Assembly Government), appointed Marina Projects professional team (with Morgan Carey Architects and Peter Brett Associates) to undertake the task.

- 3.9 The consultants final study was received in August this year, and the next section of this report contains further information on the task's conclusions.

**4. CONCEPT PROPOSALS STUDY FOR WALES NATIONAL SAILING ACADEMY AND AN EVENTS CENTRE AT PWLLHELI**

- 4.1 Based on the brief's requirements, the consultants used a standardized and comprehensive method for the task of developing concept proposals, taking an objective and independent view of the opportunities, requirements and initial ideas identified. For this purpose, the preparatory process for the task was as follows:
- I. Gather baseline information, paratoi asesiad o'r safle, ymchwil marchnad ac ati
  - II. Hold consultations, and gather good practice from beneficiaries
  - III. Identify strengths, waeknesses, opportunities and limitations
  - IV. Draw up a specific Vision and Aims for the Scheme
  - V. Identify possible development concept options
  - VI. Recommend and develop a Favoured Concept (preparing a draft business plan, management and financial structures, design guidelines etc)
  - VII. Recommend a Programme for Action to further develop the concept
- 4.2 Preparing a Vision and Aims for the plan had a central role in the concept proposals development process (that would on the one hand, be based on initial assessments and consultations, and on the other be the main consideration when assessing various options). The Vision for the plan is as follows:

"Vision Statement"

*The vision is to create a Wales National Sailing Academy and an Events Centre that would maximize the potential of having a natural location and special sailing waters to be found around Pwllheli. The facilities will develop and build upon the location's current reputation, and confirm Pwllheli's status as an international location for dinghy sailing.*

*As a Centre of Excellence for providing training in sailing, it will provide first rate facilities for sailors of all standards and ability. As well as holding national and international dinghy events, the facilities will also provide for keel boat events, sailing regattas and other water sports activities.*

*The facility will have a unique identity through promoting the Welsh language and culture. In addition, through joint participation, the facility will be sustainable and generate a long term economic benefit for local communities, and its multi-purpose function will be at the disposal of the local community, businesses, schools and other training providers.*

*The Centre will make a substantial contribution towards the development of Pwllheli harbour and blend in with Hafan Pwllheli by providing new berths and land facilities for visiting sailors".*

- 4.3 Tied in with the vision are specific Aims that have been identified for the Scheme which have been included as Appendix 1.
- 4.4 In responding to this Vision and these Aims, several different possible options have been identified. The merits of these options have been considered againts their capacity to realise the vision/aims, and by detailed analysis, a Favoured Option has been identified.

## Outline of the Concept Proposals (Favoured Option)

- 4.5 It should be emphasised that only concept proposals have been prepared, not detailed proposals. However, the concept incorporates the following aspects:
- i) A new Academy building has been situated by the current dinghies launch slipway on land that is currently used as a road and part of a compound. Using such a location would avoid the need to cross the road thus reducing the clash with traffic. The location would also provide good solar orientation and offer views of the building over the bay where various competitions are held. This building could contain facilities such as ‘wet’ lecture rooms, showers, toilets, committee rooms where competitions could be held, a workshop, refectory, room for sail measurement, press office, jury room, lecture/multi-purpose assembly rooms.
  - ii) Adapt the current road to run in parallel alongside the harbour to the building that currently houses the Hafan before veering and re-joining the current road. The land created on the western side from the new road could be used for parking purposes, and there would be additional land to the east for an events and parking compound.
  - iii) Develop new berths to the north of the Hafan, with a dock for support boats (that could also be used to launch dinghies), access bridges, small cranes for launching or lifting boats (support or sailing), and flexible berths separated by footholds. Whilst the brief had originally mentioned 150 berths, the recommendations mention a much more flexible setting that reflects their purpose.
  - iv) Harbour dredging work for the proposed berths zone.
  - v) If a new building to house the Academy were to be developed, it is recommended that functions be transferred from the current centre, creating a new space that could for instance be used for ‘bunkhouse’ accommodation or training.
  - vi) Provide an opportunity to upgrade and expand the current slipway that serves the Hafan.
- 4.6 A scheme that summarizes the concept proposals is included as Appendix 2.
- 4.7 A draft 10 years business plan has been prepared based on the above-mentioned concept, and giving consideration to land as well as harbour developments. Whilst assuming that initial capital costs would depend on grants support, the financial evaluation concludes that this development could be financially viable but notes the importance of the following considerations:
- That the proposed berths have a key role, and require flexibility so as to provide a range of functions and sources of income
  - The berths would generate a monthly income for the scheme
  - That attracting a variety of sailing markets and local community groups to use the centre is crucial
  - That the Sailing Club’s support, work and activities contribute towards the scheme’s viability.
- 4.8 The study has also considered management options for the scheme, arrangements at other locations throughout the UK, the scheme’s function, as well as the various

bodies and groups that would be likely to use it. Consequently, it is proposed that the various partners come together to establish a not for profit company such as “Wales National Sailing Academy Trust”. Further work would be required in order to prepare, negotiate and agree on the management and operational arrangements.

4.9 The Study also recommends an Operational Programme for the further development of the scheme that refers to the following sections:

- Identify funding sources and secure the economic benefit of the scheme
- Establish an entity to develop and manage the scheme including legal work on land management;
- Detailed Designs;
- Assessments and consultations;
- Permission (including planning permission);
- Operate a tender;
- Operational and construction work

4.10 The current activities are based on the advantages provided by the surrounding area, including the natural setting and the excellent sailing waters. A key aspect of the favoured option is the use to which these natural advantages are put, which would be essential so as to ensure the scheme’s sustainability, and if the additional opportunities offered by the scheme are to be realised. Amongst these opportunities are:

- Potential for a range of community use
- Education and training facilities provision
- Promote, encourage and support use of the Welsh language and local culture
- Maximise the economic benefit and reinforce the links with the town of Pwllheli

4.11 It was concluded that proceeding with the scheme to the detailed development stage was justified. A real opportunity that exists at Pwllheli to work towards realising the Vision of a Wales National Sailing Academy and an Events Centre has been identified. Appendix 3 contains an Operational Summary outlining the main conclusions of the Concept Proposals Study.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY GWYNEDD COUNCIL**

5.1 It needs to be again emphasised that the aim is currently only at a conceptual stage, and that fully developing details would require considerable further work. However, it appears to be an exciting and ambitious aim that could meet recognized needs.

5.2 Through the Technical Group’s work, input was sought from relevant Council services or department officers including Maritime, Coastal protection, Economy and regeneration, Planning and Transport and Property. Taking into consideration that the Council is the site owner and is responsible for the Hafan, maritime service and harbour maintenance, the scheme’s development is very relevant to several of its activities. Whilst the success of such a scheme would depend on

input from several outside bodies, it is inevitable that the Council would be responsible for giving a lead in the further development of the concept.

- 5.3 When the idea was originally submitted to the Board in November 2006, it was clearly noted that financial constraints imposed on the Council would imply that the Council would not be well placed to give a commitment to providing the scheme with substantial resources. This presumption has been regularly reported since, and the study also confirms that the scheme would be reliant on external financial programmes. It is therefore important that any expectations that could possibly arise take the current situation fully into account.
- 5.4 Of the work that has currently been done, it is apparent that there is an opportunity to build on the success of the activity and events held at Pwllheli and that there is a potential here to confirm it as a location where international events could be held. The concept draws attention to opportunities that could respond to economic, social and educational needs; as well as the need to up-grade the current facilities as a consequence of increasing competition from other UK venues.
- 5.5 A Vision and Aims have been identified, as well as concept proposals for their realisation that has taken into account the area's social and economic features, various constraints on development, market demand and potential financiers, and the need to ensure that all aspects of the scheme are achievable, financially viable and sustainable.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Based on the above-mentioned comments, the recommendation is that :
- 6.1.1 The Council Board declare support in principle for the Wales National Sailing Academy Scheme and Pwllheli Events Centre concept proposals
- 6.1.2 The Council Board to declare support for officers to investigate and apply for financial support from grants sources to ensure additional preparatory work in accordance with the proposed implementation programme
- 6.1.3 That a further report on scheme details be submitted to the Board following further work on the proposed concept.

### Appendices

Appendix 1 : The Aims of the Scheme

Appendix 2 : A scheme outlining Concept Proposals

Appendix 3 : An Operational Summary of the Concept Proposals Study

**Sioned E. Williams**  
Head of Service  
SEW/nwhe 12/09/08

---

A. View of the Local Member:

---

B. View of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive:

“Clearly, the concept of the Academy is one which could build on the strengths of the Pwllheli area, as it appears to be an exciting and interesting opportunity. Having said that, there are a number of steps before any certainty can be given in moving ahead not least the funding package in respects of the capital costs in creating such provisions and then ensuring the financial viability of the trust which would run the proposed facilities.

The report seeks support to proceed to the next step for further preliminary work. Of course, it is possible that the proposals could fall on a number of steps and will involve prioritising the work and time of Council officers during the work. However, this should be considered against the opportunities offered for a development which would meet the objectives as noted as an appendix to the report”.

2. Monitoring Officer:

“I note that the report deals with concepts only and that it is support in principle that is sought; I therefore have no observations regarding propriety”.

3. Chief Finance Officer:

“I don’t have any objection to the recommendation, were the Council Board is asked to support the concept in principle.

However, because I have not seen the Business Plan in detail, it is premature for me to give any opinion to the suggestion (which is point 4.7, Head of Economy and Regeneration Service report) “the development can be financially viable”.

---

C. Background Papers:

---

D. Policy Implications:



---