

Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 14 March 2017 at the Dragon Theatre, Barmouth

PRESENT

Councillor Gethin Williams - Chairman
Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams - Vice-chairman

Cllr Julian Kirkham (Arthog Community Council), Cllr. R. Triggs (Barmouth Town Council), Cllr. Mark James (RNLI), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association), Mrs Wendy Ponsford (Member of the Meirionydd Yacht Club), Mr Martin Parouty (Barmouth Harbour Users Group), Mr Mike Ellis (Three Peaks Race Committee), Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group).

Officers

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

Apologies: Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member - Economy), Cllr. Louise Hughes (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Rob Williams (BRIG), Cllr. David Richardson (observer representing Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee).

1. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

The following members declared a personal connection for the reasons noted:

- (a) Cllr. Gethin Williams – member of the Yacht Club and member of the Community Trust
- (b) Cllr. Julian Kirkham - was related to one of the ferry operators
- (c) Mr John Johnson – had submitted an application to operate a ferry
- (d) Mr Mike Ellis - member of the Three Peaks Race Committee
- (e) Mrs Wendy Ponsford – member of the Yacht Club and member of the Community Trust
- (f) Cllr Rob Triggs – member of the Yacht Club and member of the Community Trust
- (g) Mr Martin Parouty – a commercial trader in the Harbour and member of the Community Trust
- (h) Dr John Smith – member of the Yacht Club and member of the Community Trust

Members did not vote on the matters that dealt with their personal interest.

2. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 8 November 2016.

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

3. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

Submitted: The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer, Mr Barry Davies, updating the committee on Harbour management matters with specific reference to the following:-

(a) Marine Safety Code

It was noted that the Safety Code was a live document and how important it was to receive regular comments on its contents in order that it may be reviewed and to ensure that it was relevant to harbour activities.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(b) Navigation

In response to an enquiry by Cllr. Rob Triggs regarding a buoy marking the sea outfall pipe. It was explained that an apology had been received from Trinity House for not contacting the service beforehand and the buoy conformed to requirements and Welsh Water were out of order as they had not informed the Council that they intended to commission work from Trinity House within the harbour boundaries.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(c) Maintenance

Committee Members were asked if they had any concerns or anything that required attention before the Easter holidays and the following matters were noted:

- (i) New sign near Tŷ Crwn
- (ii) The main slipway gate lock needed to be repaired as it could not currently be locked

(ch) Staffing Matters

(i) It was reported that the contract of the Barmouth Harbour Assistant (seasonal) had ended on 30 September 2016, however, it had been extended over the winter months with the post-holder based in Porthmadog. It was further noted that the Senior Harbours Officer was off work due to illness and if any problems arose Members were asked to contact the Service in Pwllheli.

(d) Operational Issues

(i) A report was received from the RNLI regarding safety signage in the Barmouth Harbour and beach area and via the Chair of this Consultative Committee, the Town Council and the RNLI there would be further discussion regarding what can be achieved by the Whitsun. It was emphasised that they had to be careful with the location of the signs due to the impact of the sand in Barmouth. In terms of maintaining the signs, it was anticipated that they would have to be removed over winter.

(ii) In response to a concern highlighted by a member whereby a person could fall into the channel in the bath-house area at times of low tide. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the Harbour Master would be requested to inspect the site and consider what types of temporary signage could be erected.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(e) Moorings - Three Peaks Race.

An application has been received from the Three Peaks Race Committee requesting permission to place concrete blocks and trot moorings in the area of the Harbour where there is constant deep water.

A representative from the Three Peaks Race Committee explained how important the race was for Barmouth in terms of public relations and the area's economy as the race attracted competitors and visitors from all over the world. If Barmouth Harbour was advertised in magazines etc. it would entail a huge cost to the Council and the Tourist Board, however, the race meant that Barmouth received attention via social websites etc., and from race followers and as a result this attracted a huge benefit to the area.

A further explanation was received of the need for the concrete blocks and it was stated that this type had been used for years and they had not moved from the seabed. It was understood that there were objections to the Committee placing blocks in the Harbour, however, the reasons were not known. An application had been made to install 16 concrete blocks, and thus far the Committee had received the names of 13 competitors for the race in the hope of course of attracting more. The concrete blocks were used as they were cheaper than steel anchors and chains. It was understood that concrete blocks were used in Aberdyfi and Trinity House also used them. The estimated cost was approximately £5,000 to £7,000 and it was proposed to strengthen the existing ones and install ground chains. It was further noted that the proposed blocks were much bigger and they would be installed by a local contractor. An appeal was made for a decision by the Consultative Committee due to the need for the contractor to receive instructions in order to get these ready by April. The Race Committee was willing for the Maritime Service to use the concrete blocks and the moorings following the race and for the remainder of the season without any additional cost.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer praised the Three Peaks Race Committee and the race's contribution to the economy of the harbour and the wider area bearing in mind that it was only volunteers who were part of the organisation etc. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the Council had historically supported the race and that the Maritime Service had invested in equipment and furniture in the past to facilitate arrangements.

It was further noted that the Maritime Service was open minded regarding the concrete blocks and they were not aware of any objection or complaint that had been submitted. In terms of the details of the moorings, a great deal of research had been done in the past and reference was made to the documents attached to the agenda listing the minimum specification for Council moorings. In addition, the importance that the anchor complied to standards was emphasised in order to keep boats safe. In the context of the application, attention was drawn to the fact that moorings already existed, however, specific assurance was needed of the number of additional moorings required for the race.

In terms of the use of concrete blocks, concern was expressed that if the chain broke and the concrete block remained on the seabed this may cause difficulties in years to come, however, at the same time it was good that it was proposed to use a ground chain.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the specification for concrete blocks, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that this was difficult and the only comment offered was that the concrete blocks used in the past had worked. It was anticipated that it would be possible to inspect them once a year, however, this would have to be at a cost to the Three Peaks Race.

The following comments were highlighted in response to questions from Members:

- That steel moorings were more expensive than concrete blocks
- That no written complaints had been received regarding installing concrete blocks

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During the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:

- Concern regarding the seawards lead buoy (top of the line of moorings)
- Would the new moorings clash with the existing ones
- Future developments - if equipment was left could this create difficulties to the existing moorings

In response to the above, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that it was likely that some of the existing moorings needed to be moved, and as a harbour authority it was noted that they had the right to ask a boat owner to move to a new location with the cost paid by the owner. The Senior Harbours Officer and the Harbour Master would together ensure that this work was completed before the main Summer season.

Whilst agreeing and understanding the dilemma of the Three Peaks Race Committee in terms of how many moorings would be needed, it was suggested that the best way forward was for the Maritime and Country Parks Officer/Harbour Master to further discuss the needs of the Three Peaks Race Committee and the use of Council moorings following the race. It was suggested that a meeting should take place as an urgent matter following this Consultative Committee.

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

(b) To support in principle the Three Peaks Race Committee's request for a provision of concrete blocks for the Three Peaks Race and ask the Maritime and Country Parks Officer/Harbour Master to discuss the matter further with the Race Committee officers regarding organisation, locations, use of moorings by the Council following the race and an assurance that the concrete blocks would not remain as waste on the harbour seabed in years to come.

(f) Sand Removal

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that sand would be removed next week.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ff) Quay Wall Pontoon

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that a positive meeting took place on 1 February 2017 with representatives from local groups and organisations as well as the Town Council present, when the ownership and maintenance of the pontoon were discussed. From this meeting, it was understood that the Barmouth Community Trust was considering taking ownership and future responsibility for the pontoon. The Consultative Committee was told that the Maritime Service did not own the pontoon and therefore was not responsible for its maintenance nor for arranging or paying for public liability insurance. It was further stated that there was no assurance that the quay wall was strong enough for the pontoon. There was also concern regarding the pontoon fingers that were currently moored in the Bathhouse area and the need to move them without delay, and if there was any difficulty with finding a location then the Harbour Master would be willing to organise a place to store them temporarily.

A Member noted that the Community Trust had presumed as the pontoon had been in use now for four and a half years, that it had been insured by the Council for this period.

A Member noted the importance of dealing with the above without delay.

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

- (b) To request that the Harbour Master investigates the possibility of a suitable site to move the pontoon fingers to temporarily and to contact the members of Barmouth Community Trust regarding arrangements to transport them.**

(g) Petrol Storage

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that following a request at the previous meeting regarding the possibility of storing and selling petrol on the quay for powerboats only, he had discussed this with the Council's Public Protection Department and they were of the opinion that this would not be possible because of the regulations. In accordance with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines the service had not been charging the correct fee for red diesel and this would have to be rectified. It was also trusted that by Whitsun it would be possible to offer a service of paying by card for diesel, fees etc. It would therefore be necessary to inform customers of the new system that would mean no credit once the card payment service was operational in the harbour.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ng) Owner's Licence and Boatman's Licence

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that Barmouth had an excellent resource between Barmouth and Fairbourne via the ferry service, however, it was necessary to consider tightening the arrangements. It was noted that three licences had been issued for a ferry to transport passengers between Barmouth and Penrhyn Point with one Licence approved for a boat that will offer trips around the estuary up to the toll-bridge only. The Committee's opinion was sought regarding:

- limiting the number of Owner's Licences
- establishing a maximum number of Owner's Licences permitted to operate in the harbour
- establishing a specific period and number of days when Owner's Licence holders can operate
- establishing a minimum number of operational hours
- any improvements or further requirements for consideration as conditions for an Owner's Licence or Boatman's Licence.

During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were noted:-

- the ferry offered a service to visitors and the community and it could be argued that they should be operational every day of the week, depending on favourable weather
- That Fairbourne Railway re-opened for the tourist season on the 1 April, however, ferry operators could not commence their service until 7 April and it was asked if it was possible for the ferry to operate from 1 April to be the same as the Railway.

In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the date was in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Act and if it was necessary to commence earlier than seven days before Easter, it would be necessary to discuss this with the Harbour Master and the possibility of having a winter licence that would comply with another section of the Act.

Resolved: (a) Approve to continue with the existing process of operation and review the situation in October on how the service was operated.

(h) Other matters

In response to an enquiry by the Member regarding launching from Penrhyn Point, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that they would employ a Harbour Assistant from

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1 April but unfortunately the Service's capacity did not permit staff to go over to manage Penrhyn Point. It was further explained that the Harbour Master was responsible for the registration of boats that register in the Harbour and for checking the relevant documents.

It was added that 7 applications were received last year from volunteers in Barmouth to assist with activities around the Harbour and this was welcomed again this year and it was requested that the Harbour Master allocates work for them as long as the qualifications of individuals are acceptable.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(j) Financial Matters

Reference was made to the summary of the Harbour budget that was attached to the Agenda.

Resolved: To accept and note the budget.

(k) Fees and Charges 2017/18

Reference was made to the fees spreadsheet that noted an increase of 2% on average with the commercial boats mooring fee increasing by 6%.

Attention was also drawn to the additional mooring fee from the Crown Estate of £25.00, that would be collected by the Maritime Service and would be re-paid to the Crown.

Resolved: To accept and note the fees.

4. MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(a) Penrhyn Point Management

Cllr. Julian Kirkham reminded the Committee of the increasing parking difficulties at Penrhyn Point with camper-vans who ignored the 'No overnight parking' sign and used the railway tunnel as a toilet. It was reported that the Community Council Clerk was investigating, in consultation with the Legal Department, of ways to control this type of parking.

It was asked if it was possible for the Harbour Master when he was in the vicinity to inspect and ensure that the sign was up and was robust.

(b) Penrhyn Point Slipway

In response to a query made regarding the damaged ramp, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that there was no option but to remove it and he took the opportunity to thank Arthog Community Council for £800 towards the costs.

(c) Update on the status of the Blue Flag Award

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that the Service had submitted applications on behalf of the Council and the communities, however, the guidelines now referred to the need for lifeguards on every beach. It was anticipated that the results would be received in May.

A Member noted that if they had to have lifeguards then the cost would be enormous and it was asked who would be responsible for the cost.

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In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that if did not manage to be awarded the Blue Flag Award then he did not anticipate that this would have a negative impact on the beaches.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: It was noted that the next meeting of this Consultative Committee would take place on 7 November 2017.

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 12:30pm.

CHAIRMAN.