

PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 19/3/19

Present: Councillor Hefin Underwood (Chair)

David Dewsbury (Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders' Association), W. A. Partington (Maritime Traders Association), and Stephen Tudor (Pwllheli Sailing Club).

Also in attendance: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), Llŷr B. Jones (Senior Manager – Economy and Community), Wil Williams (Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour Manager) and Bethan Adams (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Dylan Bullard and Peter Read, along with Councillor Mici Plwm (Pwllheli Town Council), Alwyn Roberts (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) and Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member - Economic Development).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee, held on 16 October 2018, as a true record subject to the amendment of the first sentence of the second paragraph on page eight of the English version of the minutes to read:

“In response to an observation by a member regarding depositing the materials removed from the harbour basin directly on Abererch beach, the Economy and Community Senior Manager explained that excessive fine silts were detected in material samples removed from the basin.”

4. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

- (a) The Maritime and Country Parks Officer guided the members through the report, drawing attention to the following main points:
- That the Harbour Committees' constitution noted their membership and that organisations were required to confirm their representative annually, and to send a copy of their constitution and the minutes of their annual meetings.
 - That the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Inspectorate's Chief Auditor had carried out a follow-up review of the safety procedures and systems of Gwynedd's municipal harbours on 5-6 March 2019 in order to ensure full compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC). In the case of Pwllheli Harbour and Hafan, that the Chief Auditor had noted the need to look at the channel.
 - No issue or cause of concern had been submitted for the attention of the service by Members of the Harbour Committee in 2018 in relation to the Harbour's statutory responsibilities and duties. The Safety Code was in the process of being reviewed, and a copy of the Code would be sent to members prior to the next meeting. It would also be available on the Council's Website.
 - Reference was made to a brief summary of the Harbour and Hafan's budgets and current financial situation up to the end of February 2019. That Hafan's income

performance was £1,198,506 against the target income of £1,351,780; which was encouraging given the number of empty berths. On the whole, the budgets were positive, with Hafan generating an excess despite all the necessary work and cuts to budgets.

- That the fees and charges for 2019/20 had been published in the handbook and on the Council's website in November 2018. In order to meet the budget challenge and the service's income target, Pwllheli Harbour and Hafan fees would increase by 3% on average for the 2019/20 financial year. There would be no increase in berthing fees for the Outer Harbour.
- That detailed plans for the Crib Groyne had been completed, and that the initial estimated costs submitted anticipated that the costs of renovating the groyne would be approximately £200,000. The necessary work to submit a Marine Licence had been completed and the application submitted to Natural Resources Wales. It was reported that the application result was expected before 27 June 2019 and that the consultation period would last for four months. It was explained that it was vital that the Council submitted an application for a Marine Licence as the footprint of the groyne extended farther than its current footprint. The Council would advertise the work and would invite tenders by qualified contractors on the Sell2Wales Website. It was anticipated that work on renovating the groyne would commence in September 2019.
- The stilling lagoon had been emptied during December 2018 and January 2019. Work was to be completed to raise the height of the pipe in order to allow more silt into the stilling lagoon. Samples would then be taken of the silt entering and leaving the pipe in order to determine how much had settled and how much was flowing out. There was a need to cut vegetation around the bund, and to complete work on the safety fence, before commencing with the dredging work.
- That a hydrography review had been undertaken on 8 March 2019, and that the results would be released to members once they were received.
- That the 'Royal Smals' company had been appointed to undertake dredging work in the navigation channel and in the Hafan/Plas Heli basin. The work would continue until 23 May 2019. This would cost approximately £130,000, which was quite favourable, considering the work involved. The dredger used by the company would mean that there would be less work to move boats, and that there would be no need to disconnect the pontoon. The Service had identified areas in the Harbour which needed prioritisation and the company was to focus on these areas.
- That the sand mound near the Harbour entrance was full and that it was not possible to undertake any dredging work using land based plant until the sand and gravel had been removed and relocated to the nearby beaches of Abererch and Carreg y Defaid. The Council was in discussions with Natural Resources Wales to consider the possible options. Samples of the matter had been sent to a specialist company in order to identify whether the sand was in any way polluted. The results of the tests had been received, noting that there were high levels of hydrocarbon in the matter. Further samples had been collected, and confirmation received that the sand was not polluted. The matter would therefore be further discussed with Natural Resources Wales.
- There was a need to consider the possibilities in terms of mixing the silt from the stilling bund with clean sand in order to create building material, taking into consideration the fact that space was needed to do work with machinery.

The Senior Manager - Economy and Community noted that positive feedback had been received from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Inspectorate's Chief Auditor, but that specific reference had been made to the navigation channel and the entrance to the harbour. He added that the reference to the channel would contribute to the evidence in terms of impact and health and safety concerns which would feed into discussions with Natural Resources Wales.

In response to comments by members concerning the channel, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the narrowness of the harbour's navigation channel was a serious concern and that the situation would be reviewed following the next dredging effort. He added that installing a flow meter on the pontoon was an option, but that the costs associated with installing and maintaining equipment of this kind had to be considered. The specialist's opinion could be used to advantage in discussions with Natural Resources Wales around statutory harbour responsibilities and requirements. He noted that the hope was to trial work elements in the harbour after coming to an agreement with Natural Resources Wales, thus cancelling the work should any environmental matter raise its head.

The Pwllheli Sailing Club representative noted that there was a need to move ahead with the dredging work in accordance with the Dredging Strategy. He added that there was a need to raise sailors' awareness in terms of the times at which special care should be taken when navigating the channel. The Maritime Traders Association representative referred to the Pwllheli Sailing Club calendar, noting that the tidal information provided on it was excellent.

Further discussion was held around the dredging work in the navigation channel and the Hafan/Plas Heli basin. The officers responded to the members' comments/questions as follows:

- The intended date of completion for the work was Whitsun. If time permitted, it was hoped that dredging work could be trialled at the entrance to the harbour, pumping the sediment over the sea wall. Environmental officers were not completely convinced, but something truly had to be done in the interest of safety;
- The harbour was located within the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation. Should the work be trialled, it was important that this should be implemented carefully, without destroying the environmentally significant Sarnau reefs;
- Discussions regarding the sand mound were to be held with Natural Resources Wales, that was eager to obtain matter to nourish Abererch Beach;
- The Council had a responsibility to prove that the trial would not cause environmental damage;
- The Council as a Harbour Authority had a responsibility in terms of safety, with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Inspectorate's report providing evidence of the need to do the work. It was hoped that Natural Resources Wales would agree to the trial in order that as much as possible of the clean sand could be removed from the entrance to the Harbour;
- The trialling work was not part of the agreement with the company, but it was hoped that it could be done following the work on the navigation channel and in the Hafan/Plas Heli basin, for an additional fee;
- Should the trialling work go ahead, the safety and quality of bathing water at Marian y De would have to be ensured.

The Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative noted that he would convey the information regarding the dredging situation to the association's members. He added that association's members paid for their berth in Hafan, and that they would expect to be able to use Hafan in the same manner as previous years. He did not anticipate a positive response, and predicted that some would leave.

In response to a further comment by the representative regarding the fact that discussions around the Dredging Strategy had been held for around ten years, the Maritime and Country Parks officer noted that processes took time, with environmental legal requirements trumping other legal requirements.

The Pwllheli Sailing Club representative noted that the trial would be in response to an emergency, and that the work should be completed as urgent work before summer under

the Council's powers as a Harbour Authority. He added that the channel in its current form made life difficult.

In response to the above observations, the Senior Manager - Economy and Community noted that Natural Resources Wales could be notified that the Committee, due to the seriousness of the situation in terms of the health and safety of users, noted that the Council as a Harbour Authority should conduct emergency works at the harbour entrance before summer. He expressed that officers felt the same frustration as Committee members, and that it was hoped that as much as possible could be done at the entrance to the harbour as part of the Harbour Authority's responsibility.

The Committee noted its support for the undertaking of works at the harbour entrance as emergency work under the Harbour Authority's responsibilities.

The Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative enquired whether the intended work on the Crib Groyne provided value for money; although something needed to be done, the consultant had not recommended what was intended. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the work on the Crib Groyne was part of the Dredging Strategy and that the prices would be assessed upon receipt of tenders for the works. He emphasised that it could not be left in its current state.

The Pwllheli Sailing Club representative noted that there had been plans to extend the Crib Groyne in the eighties, but that this had not been possible due to a Welsh Water pipeline. He was disappointed that there was no way of structuring the Crib Groyne according to the actual need, but was eager for the work to be undertaken and built upon in the future. The Maritime Traders Association representative noted that traders would welcome a long term solution or partial work.

In response to the above observations, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the Crib Groyne had been designed to protect Welsh Water's asset, meaning that there were additional costs.

In response to a question by the Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative concerning Hafan's income target, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that the true income of Hafan derived from all business in Hafan. This included income from fuel, parking and launching, and land rents - it was not confined to income from berths.

The Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative referred to Hafan's fees, noting that although the fees were increasing in line with inflation, that the Council's excess profit was increasing. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he understood the argument, but that the Council's procedure in terms of increasing fees had to be adhered to. He added that the Council had given its support to the reduction of Hafan's income target, and to raising fees at a lower rate than the inflation rate.

The Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative noted that the additional fee for customers paying by direct debit punished them. He added that the additional fee should be considered. The affordability of such a cost to customers had to be considered, and customers should be rewarded rather than punished. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the additional fee would be considered as part of the review of the fee procedure, and that it was hoped that the fees would be adjusted by 2020/21.

Pwllheli Sailing Club's representative provided an update on activities held at Plas Heli. It was noted that the first competition of the season was to be held in May and that dates had been set up to 2023, including the Royal Yachting Association's Youth Championships in 2020. It was explained that changes to staffing had been challenging but that they were happy to survive. It was noted that the events held at Plas Heli brought people into the area.

A member referred to the area around the stilling bund, noting that he had received complaints from residents with regard to its appearance and the need to tidy it up. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the intention was to ask for an estimated price to remove the existing fence and install a green fence which would be more pleasing to the eye. He added that residents had been patient and that the intention was to complete the work during the winter of 2019.

A member noted that more water was accumulating on the island's new paths and that the contractors needed to come back. The Maritime and Country Parks officer thanked the member for drawing the matter to his attention.

- (b) The Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour Manager presented a report which provided an update on harbour matters for the period between October 2018 and March 2019, including operational matters, staffing, and the annual statistics for the Harbour/Hafan. He drew attention to the following main points:
- A Mariners' Notice was to be operational from 25 March 2019 in relation to the dredging work, and mariners' attention was to be drawn to the lack of channel width in the harbour entrance area. It was envisaged that the situation would improve following the completion of the scheduled dredging work in 2019;
 - That the list of maintenance work for 2018/19 had been included in the agenda. The Committee members were asked to inform the Service of any other work which should be considered for inclusion in the work programme;
 - That a petrol fuel pump with a self-service facility had been ordered for Hafan's Petrol Quay. It was hoped that the new petrol pump would be operational by April, following a short delay with the paperwork;
 - That there was a total of 11 staff members at the Hafan/Harbour, including one overnight security officer from 'Draig Security'. A seasonal officer would commence in post as a fuel attendant in April;
 - That the Hafan and Harbour statistics for 2018/19 were included in the agenda;
 - From April 2019, Hafan Pwllheli's accounting system was to be transferred and centralised in the Council's income department. In future, every invoice e.g. for mooring, would be charged and sent from this department. All mooring payments, including those by Direct Debit, would be sent directly to the Council. It was also expected that customers would be able to pay for services on-line in the future.

The Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative referred to the annual number of boats, noting that there had been 14 fewer boats in 2018 compared to the figure for 2017. He noted that this decrease meant a substantial loss of income for the Council, and asked about the latest figures for 2019. In response, the Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour Manager noted that, due to a delay in sending out the mooring agreements for 2019, the total number of berth holders was not available, but that 140 agreements for the Hafan and 20 for the Outer Harbour had been received. He expanded upon this, saying that it was hoped that there would be a better idea of the numbers by the end of the month.

The Pwllheli Sailing Club representative noted that an application had been submitted to the Council with regard to improving the atmosphere and landscaping at the beach car park and the quay, along with improving drainage. He also explained that the flagpole would be moved to the entrance to Plas Heli in order to improve the appearance, and that he was very glad that this work was to be undertaken.

RESOLVED to note and accept the reports.

5. REVIEW OF PWLLHELI HAFAN AND HARBOUR

An update was given by the Senior Manager - Economy and Community on the management model review for the Harbour and Hafan. It was noted that, following the invitation of tenders in January 2019, Strategic Leisure had been appointed to undertake the detailed work of assessing the five options noted on the short-list, and developing an outline business case as part of the second phase. It was explained that a report was expected on the favoured option along with an outline business case by the end of April 2019. The eagerness to hold a meeting with Committee members around the report's conclusions in May was noted.

The Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association representative noted that he had submitted information via e-mail to the Maritime and Country Parks Officer, but that it had not been included on the agenda. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer apologised for the information having been left out of the agenda, but noted that he had mistaken it for a statement rather than a matter for the agenda.

The representative was given the opportunity to present the information. He noted:

- That Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association was seriously concerned that the adopted Pwllheli Harbour Dredging Strategy was not being complied with. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) appeared to be actively frustrating Gwynedd Council's ability to comply, resulting in restrictive water depth for boats. That Pwllheli Harbour Berth Holders' Association requested that Natural Resources Wales provide to the Pwllheli Harbour Consultative Committee, validation and documentation setting out their objections to the disposal options that were discussed and dismissed, including the controlled disposal on nearby beaches.
- That a recent on-line survey of Association members showed a concerning age profile of Pwllheli Hafan Annual Berth holders. This result was consistent with the issues raised by the British Marine Federation Futures Report 2018 which raised a number of pertinent challenges for the industry. With this background of challenges, coupled with the hard evidence of reducing numbers, it was important that the fundamental basis of the marina and harbour was restored and protected. This was needed in order to give a stable facility and thus enable concentration on the more esoteric issues facing the business. Unless drastic steps were taken to address the dredging situation it would make the Hafan unviable in a few years, with a significant loss of revenue to Pwllheli Town and surrounding areas.
- That the survey's results had been shared with the Senior Manager - Economy and Community and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer.

In response, the Senior Manager - Economy and Community expressed his appreciation upon receiving this useful information, noting that he had glanced at the survey's results, and that it highlighted the challenges facing Hafan and the Harbour. He added that the information would be presented to the consultants, and that it was intended to send a copy of the survey's results to Committee members.

RESOLVED to note the information.

6. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 15 October, 2019.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 8.10pm.

CHAIR