

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 22/03/22

Present:

Members: Councillor Gethin Glyn Williams (Gwynedd Council) (Chair), Councillor Louise Hughes (Gwynedd Council), Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Gwynedd Council), Councillor Rob Triggs (Barmouth Town Council), Peter Appleton (Representative for Cardigan Bay Fisheries Local Action Group Committee), Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group) and Ian Sadler (Three Peaks Race Committee)

Officers: Barry Davies (Maritime Service Manager), Bergitte Evans (Barmouth Harbour Master), Llyr B. Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community) and Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member - Economic Development), Councillor Brian Woolley (Arthog Community Council), Mr John Johnson (Barmouth and Cardigan Bay Sea Fisheries Association), Councillor Matthew Harris (Barmouth Destinations Improvement Group) and Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note.

3. MINUTES

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 19 October 2021.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- **Outdoor Swimming** - It was noted that the Outdoor Partnership had suggested that the company 'Swim Wales' should be contacted to discuss outdoor swimming developments in the Harbour. It was explained that the developments would be shared with the Harbour Master or with the Maritime Manager.

4. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The following reports were presented, and Members were invited to give feedback on their content and to ask questions.

a) **The Senior Harbour Officer's report, giving a brief update to the committee on harbour matters for the period from October 2021 to March 2022.**

Before beginning it was noted that the Senior Harbours Officer was sending his best wishes to the Committee. He was hoping to be back at work before the end of May. The Committee wished to send their best wishes to Arthur for a speedy recovery.

Attention was drawn to the following matters:

Barmouth Moorings and Boat Registration

It was noted that all applications had been sent to previous customers and that some had already returned. The online system to Register Powerboats and Personal Watercraft would be launched this week. It was noted that there were delays with the system of confirming a mooring on-line in all harbours; it was added that the system was developing fast and it would be live in March 2023.

Port Marine Safety Code

It was noted that inspections had been held by the Coastguard Agency and that the status of Gwynedd's safety code was confirmed. It was explained that a declaration that had been signed by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community had been sent to the agency to confirm compliance with the code. The harbours safety code would continue to be reviewed regularly. It was emphasised that the harbours team depended on the input of the Committee members noting it was important to bring matters relating to the safety of the harbour to the Officers' attention.

Enquiries were made on the results of the National consultation regarding jet skis. It was noted that comprehensive observations had been presented to the Government. It was foreseen that a response would be received from the Government mid-year and these observations would be available for members of the Committee. It was added that members of the Committee were welcome to receive a copy of the Council's response if they wished.

It was reported that the 'Black Rock Blast' event would not take place this year again due to Covid. There was hope it would be held next year. It was noted that this event had provided a robust platform to draw attention to good behaviour relating to power vessels and jet skis.

An observation was made on the complaints received regarding jet skis where the Maritime Manager dealt with the complaints swiftly; the Councillors were very happy with the result. The Councillors were encouraged to contact the harbours team as soon as possible if they received complaints in order to respond and deal with the situation immediately. It was added that the number of complaints received was low and that many of the complaints were related to a lack of understanding of regulations. It was hoped that a Police Officer would attend different harbours over the summer period and would go out around the coast. It was noted that revisiting the collaboration that used to exist with Police Officers was a positive step.

Staffing Matters

It was reported that the present Harbour Master would be leaving her post on 1 April. There would be a need to look at appointing a new Harbour Master for Barmouth recognising that it would be a challenge to have a presence in the harbour as often over the spring and the start of the summer period. The opportunity was taken to wish the Harbour Master well in her career noting that she was the only female Harbour Master in Wales. Her work was praised noting that she was always professional and enthusiastic and she was wished every success. It was hoped that the job advertisement would be out soon.

It was reported that the harbour assistant would continue in his post for the time being but has the intention to leave in September and this would also leave another gap. It was added that the present employment market was a cause for concern as people were not likely to apply for jobs. It was noted that 5 members of occasional staff needed appointing for Barmouth beach over the summer period and the opportunity was taken to ask for the committee members' understanding and support during the challenging period ahead. The Maritime Manager may be required to assist in Porthmadog and

Barmouth harbours over the period of staff shortages to ensure that arrangements were safe. The Maritime Manager wished to thank members of the Committee for all the support provided to Barmouth harbour staff over the years.

Financial Matters

Information was shared on the budgets and financial position of the harbours and both marinas up to the end of February 2022. The existing budgets as well as the income target it was hoped to reach were mentioned and details were provided on the net expenditure which was the cost to the ratepayers to maintain Barmouth harbour. Reference was made to the underspend and overspend in different categories but generally it was reported that the budget was looking very healthy with £8,000 left over in March. There would be a need to consider staff matters and paying invoices but it was believed that the harbour was in a comfortable financial situation.

Fees and Charges

It was noted that the fees would increase 4% which was less than the inflation rate. It was explained that this recommendation had been approved by the Finance officers and the Portfolio Holder and was waiting for approval from the Council's Chief Officers. It was noted that correspondence had taken place with the customers in order to provide a prior warning of the increase. It was reported that the fee for visiting vessels would be increased 20%. The Members did not have any observations.

(b) The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the Navigational and Operational matters that had arisen between October 2021 and March 2022, including maintenance matters.

Members were guided through the report making reference to the recent strong storms and an appeal was made for members of the Committee to contact the harbours team if they saw anything wrong in the Harbour. The subsidence in the Harbour was mentioned and the present work undertaken with Gwynedd Consultancy to make improvements was reported.

Reference was made to the Pontoon and the recent confusion and misunderstanding on its ownership. It was noted that the Harbour Authority was eager to work with the Town Council and Yacht Club on the use of the Pontoon; it was added that considerable work was needed to ensure its safety and that it was an important resource. It was noted that there was a need to examine the Pontoon's management and avoid having all the costs of maintaining it falling on the Council.

A report was provided on the application received to build a new slipway from Meirionnydd Yacht Club. It was noted that the service had not supported this application and it cannot be funded by revenue. The Maritime Manager would be discussing further with the Yacht Club.

Observations by Committee Members

It was noted that Barmouth Town Council had not taken ownership of the Pontoon yet, this could not happen until the Town Council received the report and investigated whether it was practical in terms of funding to do this. The Maritime Manager noted that someone would have to take responsibility and inspect the Pontoon; for the time being Barmouth harbour staff inspect it regularly.

One of the Committee members added that the Pontoon was an asset and beneficial for Barmouth harbour and that there was a need to ensure it was protected. It was

expressed that the Yacht Club had a grant for the Pontoon but there was concern that there were terms to the grant; it was wished for the maritime team to look into the grant situation. Barmouth Town Council would contact the maritime team when the report had been received and to discuss what developments would derive from this. The Barmouth Viaduct Access Group member noted that all the original documentation and the original application were available to whoever would be taking ownership of the Pontoon.

(c) Dredging Possibility Study

It was noted that everyone should have received a copy of the Dredging Reports and for members to contact the Maritime Manager if they would like a hard copy of the report. It was noted that the report provided information on the expectations if there was a plan to dredge Barmouth harbour. It was added that there was significant cost for this, over £500,000.

A further study would need to be done to comply with Natural Resources Wales requirements and maybe a maritime licence would be needed to undertake the work. It was noted that there was a need to look at the report in detail and decide what path to take and whether it was suitable to look at investing in further studies regarding dredging Barmouth harbour and what benefit would come as a result of this. The Maritime Manager noted he couldn't confirm that there would be money available to invest in further work at present.

Observations by Committee Members

Schemes and projects that were created years ago from Meirionnydd District Council were mentioned and it was questioned if these projects were available anywhere. It was noted that projects dating back to 1994 were available at the Council Offices and the maritime team could find them if needed. It was noted that the intention then was to situate a marina in the Bath House area by dredging and installing a pontoon. Due to long-term costs the committee decided at the time to not move forward with the project. A report was also provided on a scheme that existed to create an island in the middle of the harbour to try and accelerate the water to dredge the harbour faster but this plan had fallen through as it had a negative environmental effect. It was noted that these plans were available.

It was asked what were the next steps and an idea of the cost. It was reported that over the next few months the maritime team would try and frame a programme but that the work was not currently a priority for the service as they needed to concentrate on the staffing situation and running the harbour. It was noted that there would be initial costs, e.g. modelling costs; the Maritime Manager would be holding informal discussions with Natural Resources Wales to try and receive observations and advice on the way forward.

The Cardigan Bay Fisheries Local Action Group representative added that it would be a shame if nothing further happened following receiving the report. He also confirmed that no additional money was available but that the money designated to dredge Barmouth harbour remained available which was a total of £40,000. It was noted that there was a need to apply for that money before September; the fund would close then so the maritime team would need to send invoices as soon as possible.

The opportunity was taken to thank the Cardigan Bay Fisheries Local Action Group representative for the work and the support and that the Maritime Manager would create the invoices to target the money for the work. It was added that he understood the frustration but needed a clear picture of the situation. It was noted that nothing would

take place this year except further consultation with Natural Resources Wales and looking at receiving modelling costs.

A long-term possibility to consider the installation of a dredging pipe under the road was mentioned, similar to what was installed in Pwllheli which was a pipe from the harbour to the North. It was noted that there were a number of possibilities to consider but further discussion with Gwynedd Consultancy had to take place.

Reference was made to the regeneration framework and the work undertaken to see what were the main matters facing areas. The Assistant Head of Economy and Community noted that the report was useful and provided a foundation in terms of what needed doing and the considerations and costs in terms of dredging. It was added that there was a need to manage expectations and that the estimated cost for the work was £820,000. There was a need to look at whether there was an opportunity to intertwine this plan with broader plans in the area. It was noted that there was a basis to complete further work but there was a concern in terms of requesting resources for the next step; it was confirmed that there would be a cost of £150,000 to complete the further studies. It was questioned if there was room for the Welsh Government to look into such matters, as initial costs of £150,000 were unfair on the community and on the Council.

To close, a member of the Committee noted that the report was useful but that the big plan wasn't going to help in the short-term. Concern was expressed that action would be needed soon in order to avoid losing a part of the harbour and the beach. It was believed that there was a need to give full consideration to the above as there had not been significant expenditure on Barmouth beach in years.

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

Ramp in Fairbourne

An application was made from a community group for funding to install a ramp to allow Fairbourne residents and visitors to have access to the beach. It was noted that it was unfair that an entrance did not exist. It was added that the Community Council had sought funding; around £50,000 would be needed to fund the cost.

The Maritime Manager noted that he had had discussions with Arthog Community Council Clerk regarding the ramp. He reported that there would be a need for anything added in Fairbourne to be robust and not affect the coastal flow and that it was important to have the appropriate arrangements and rights in place. It was noted that there would be a need for a maritime licence as it was under the line of mean high water so it was likely that the cost would be much more than £50,000. He added he hoped to meet with Natural Resources Wales after Easter to discuss their requirements on the site.

The Maritime Manager explained that he had submitted an expression of interest in coastal grants but there was no capacity to develop them at present. He noted that he understood the frustration and hoped to have further discussions with the Community Council soon.

Spaces in the compound and managing parking in the compound.

Reference was made to the points raised by Barmouth Town Council's representative in a previous e-mail. The Maritime Manager noted that he did not have a specific answer to the questions on the above. It was added that there would be a delay on the schemes in

place as a new Harbour Master would be appointed and time would need to be allowed for them to settle in the role so there was no specific programme at present.

Minutes

It was asked who received a copy of the minutes of meetings and whether they had further discussions anywhere. It was reported that the minutes were shared with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community. The Committee wished to thank the present Cabinet Member for his support over the years. It was added that there was no further discussion in the Cabinet as a result of the minutes of this Committee but the maritime team would bring important matters before the Leadership Team and the Cabinet if needed.

Barmouth 10K Race

The Three Peaks Race Committee Representative took the opportunity to mention the above event that would be held on 9 July and the continuous work to be able to hold the event. It was noted that this was a big event for Barmouth with preparation work in place for years. He added that there would be a need to ask permission to clear the back wall of the Yacht Club car park as a great deal of sand had piled up there. The Three Peaks Race Committee Representative was thanked for his work and hopes were extended that the day would be a success.

The Chair took advantage of the opportunity to thank members of the Committee, Council staff and the harbour staff for their work and support over the years as this would be his last meeting. He extended his best wishes to everyone for the future. The Maritime Manager wished to thank the Chair for all his work, his friendship and professionalism, recognising the excellent collaboration that took place over the years. This was reiterated by Committee members.

6. NEXT MEETING

8 November 2022.

The meeting commenced at 2:00pm and concluded at 3:15pm.