
PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 7/03/23

PRESENT:

Councillor Gwilym Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd) (Chairman)
Councillor June Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd) (Vice-chair)

Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Llyr Beaumont Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department), Barry Pritchard-Jones (Maritime Service Manager), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Malcolm Humphreys (Porthmadog Harbourmaster) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

OBSERVER: Desmond George (Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee)

Bryn Pritchard-Jones was congratulated on his appointment as the Maritime Service Manager, and he was welcomed to his first meeting in that role.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Llywelyn Rhys (Porthmadog Town Council) and Cricieth RNLI.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 11 October, 2022 as a true record.

5. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The following reports were presented, and members were invited to give feedback on the safety matters and operational matters of the harbour.

- (1) The Senior Harbour Officer's report, giving a brief update to the committee on harbour matters for the year ending March 2023.

Matters were raised under the following headings:-

Porthmadog Moorings and Boat Registration

Further to the contents of the written report, the Senior Harbours Officer noted that the underwater inspection of the moorings in the harbour had been held. It was found

that 20 risers needed replacing and it was hoped that the work would start soon, subject to the moorings contractor's commitments.

Port Marine Safety Code

Further to the contents of the written report, the Senior Harbours Officer noted that the 2023 Merchant Shipping Order (Watercraft) was coming into operation on 31 March, and that it would give more powers to the relevant agencies to prosecute owners and mariners for dangerous misuse of watercraft. He has a meeting with the Police on 17 March to discuss the way forward, and he would be in a situation to report more to the members following that meeting.

The Assistant Head of Economy and Community noted that the lack of management / enforcement over personal watercraft had been quite a cause for concern over the years, and that the change in the legislation was a step in the right direction. The arrangements and the regulations would develop over the next few months and years, and further details could be shared with the members in due course.

The Maritime Service Manager added that the new legislation was an additional tool for the Council if there was an accident or incident in the future. He also emphasised that the Council had an effective registration system in place already, therefore if anyone was seen offending with a powercraft it was important to note the registration numbers in order to ensure it was possible to identify the individual.

Financial Matters

The Maritime Service Manager gave a full explanation of the harbour budget 01/4/22 - 31/3/23, and it was included as an appendix to the report.

It was questioned why the Harbours income was nearly £10,000 less than the target. In response, the Maritime Service Manager noted:-

- That not all moorings had been filled, and that the income was dependent on the busyness during the season.
- That the 2022 season was not as busy as the 2021 season, when there was a restriction on travelling abroad due to Covid.
- Generally, it was foreseen that there would be an overspend of around £6,000, but that there were other significant costs likely to arise during the next month, such as purchasing mooring chains and completing maintenance work on the harbour's boat, therefore the overspend was likely to increase a little by the end of the month.

The Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department added:-

- That it was likely that the budget was based on historical numbers, and a reduction had been seen generally in the number of boats across the county's harbours.
- As well as the Council's moorings, that there were additional resources developed at Porthmadog Harbour over the years, specifically Madog Yacht Club pontoons. Some of the Council's historic customers had moved to the pontoon provision, and by now were customers of the Yacht Club. Therefore, the picture wasn't a full reflection of all vessels in the harbour.

Fees and Charges 2023/24

Further to the content of the written report, the Maritime Service Manager noted:-

- That a report was submitted to the Finance Unit and the mooring and watercraft fees were expected to be confirmed soon.
- That the level of inflation in Porthmadog Harbour was 8.5%, which meant that the income target had also increased 8.5%.
- That it was proposed to raise Porthmadog Harbour fees by 6%, and it was awaited to see if the Cabinet Member would confirm the fees or not. Obviously, if the target for the next financial year was not met, the expenditure would need to be cut.
- Some fees associated with the fees for launching and registering vessels were raised. The fees for registering jet skis and power boats had risen 20%, which was from £50 to £60 for the year, and the annual fee for registering and a launching permit had risen from £150 to £170.
- That it was proposed to keep the launching fee at £20 as the fee was doubled from £10 to £20 around three years ago.
- That an increase in the launching fee for boats smaller than 10hp was proposed from £30 to £35.

It was questioned how the council's fee's compare with the fees of the pontoons, and so forth. In response, the Harbourmaster noted that the fees of the pontoons were around £1,000 higher than the Council's mooring fees. The Senior Harbours Officer noted that he would ask the Yacht Club for the exact figure and would forward this information to the member.

The Assistant Head of Economy and Community noted that it was difficult to compare moorings with pontoons, as they were very different developments, and that the Council welcomed the fact that the Yacht Club had succeeded to develop the pontoons plan to maximise the quality and facilities within the Harbour.

- (2) The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the navigational and operational matters that had arisen between October 2022 and March 2023, including maintenance matters.

Matters were raised under the following headings:-

Operational Matters

Further to the contents of the written report, the Harbourmaster noted that the emergency response exercise to large scale oil pollution in the Harbour hadn't cost anything for the Council. He also noted that the approved providers had learnt a great deal from the exercise as the river flowed quite fast through the Harbour.

An observation was made that it would be beneficial if the local members were informed beforehand of any such events in the Harbour in the future.

Maintenance

Further to the content of the written report, the Maritime Service Manager noted:-

- That a request was received from Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative) to lend a personal watercraft to the Maritime Service over the summer to make it easier to patrol the Harbour channel and the launching area in Morfa Bychan, as the personal watercraft was not dependent on the tide like the Powercat patrol boat.

- That there were some matters to confirm with the Council from the point of view of insurance and so forth, before committing to this, but it was foreseen that the personal watercraft could be a valuable asset to the Service.
- It was not foreseen that this arrangement would be in place before Easter, but it was hoped it would be in place by the end of May.

Morfa Bychan Beach

Further to the content of the written report, the Maritime Service Manager noted that a licence had now been approved for transporting the large transformer to Morfa Bychan beach and forward along the road to Trawsfynydd power station. Also, that an application had been made for Natural Resources Wales to install tracks to transport the transformer across the beach.

The Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department noted, as it was a little early in the season in term of providing detailed information regarding the arrangements for transporting the transformer, that there was an intention to provide a short report for the members in around six weeks providing an update on the situation.

RESOLVED to note and accept the report.

6. ELECTION OF OBSERVERS

The committee was invited to elect an observer to receive information or attend the meetings of the other three harbour committees.

RESOLVED to elect the following to serve as observers on the committees below:-

- a) Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee - Councillor Gwilym Jones**
- b) Barmouth Harbour Consultative Committee - Councillor June Jones**
- c) Pwllheli Harbour Consultative Committee - Councillor Gwilym Jones**

7. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 3 October, 2023.

The Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department noted that there was no need for the members to wait until the October meeting if they have a matter to raise between now and then, and they were welcomed to contact the Harbour Office in the meantime.

A question was asked about whether it was intended to hold the next meeting of the committee on Zoom, or face to face in the Centre in Porthmadog, as it was understood that not all members were comfortable using the technology. In response, the Democracy Services Officer noted that the Council's current policy, in accordance with Part 3 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, was to only hold meetings of the Full Council, the Planning Committee, the Cabinet and scrutiny committees in hybrid form, with every other committee remaining as virtual meetings.

At the end of the meeting, Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative) made reference to the lack of co-opted members on the committee noting he wished to propose Richard Owen's name for one of the vacant seats. It was agreed that the officers would discuss the membership further and see what other gaps needed filling.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 6.10 pm

CHAIRMAN