

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, 08 NOVEMBER 2022

Present:

Members:

Councillor Rob Triggs (Cyngor Gwynedd) (Chair), Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Councillor Robert Williams (Barmouth Town Council), Peter Appleton (Representative for Cardigan Bay Fisheries Local Action Group Committee) and Dr John Smith (Barmouth Viaduct Access Group).

Officers:

Barry Davies (Maritime Service Manager), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Daniel Arthur Cartwright (Barmouth Harbourmaster), Llyr B Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Rob Triggs as Chair of the Committee for the year 2022/23.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chair of the Committee for the year 2022/23.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Louise Hughes (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) as well as Wendy Ponsford (Meirionnydd Yacht Club), Mark James (RNLI) and Ian Sadler (Three Peaks Race Committee).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 22 March, 2022, as a true record.

6. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

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

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

- Members were reminded that the terms of reference of the harbour committees had been created under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Council's Cabinet had confirmed the membership.

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 8/11/22

- It was confirmed that committee members needed to formally note that they cannot continue to attend the committee in order to formally change the membership and to elect new representatives.
- It was explained that the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community would be invited to attend meetings to discuss important matters with members, before reporting back to the Cabinet as required.
- It was stated that there was a reduction in the number of boats on moorings in the harbour. It was confirmed that the numbers had also been reduced in other harbours in the county. By now the number of boats moored in the harbour continued to be high and the number of visitors to the town had increased. It was emphasised that the number of boats registered had remained consistent.
- It was stated that the condition of the moorings was very good and there had been fewer breakages this year.
- It was explained that officers were in the process of drafting a customer satisfaction questionnaire for next year. This will be a digital questionnaire and it was hoped that the initial figures would be available to be shared with the committee at the next meeting.

Port Marine Safety Code

- Details were given that the harbour had received a thorough inspection by the Coastguard and had been given positive feedback. The harbour had received an inspection by an external Designated Person, namely Captain Mark Forbes from Conwy County Borough Council. The Council had released a Statement of Compliance with the Safety Code to the Coastguard Agency as part of the required process.
- It was mentioned that there had been a recent incident where a boat had sunk. The boat was now on the beach and officers had contacted the boat's agent. The owner has 21 days to remove the boat or officers will need to remove it from the site. It was stated that such an incident was difficult to resolve quickly as difficulties arose regarding who was the landowner. Officers could not remove any boat off the land if it is private land or railway land.
 - It was asked who would have to pay for the removal of this boat and the Harbour Manager confirmed that it was the Harbour Authority who would have to pay the cost. A re-payment of these costs could be received from the owner if there was proof that they own the boat.
 - It was explained that Natural Resources Wales had a data base of abandoned boats and this could be useful for officers in the future.
- Concern was expressed regarding the use of personal watercraft (jet skis) in the area, as they could be dangerous to other marine users.
 - Following a recent enquiry it was confirmed that the police cannot currently intervene in this situation. Should it be an incident where individuals had been injured, the police could then investigate.
 - It was acknowledged that watercraft were easier to manage when they were commercial craft, however personal watercraft were very difficult to control as insurance requirements or qualifications were required to navigate this craft.
 - It was noted that the law needed to be amended to ensure the safety of individuals. It was mentioned that it would be useful to write to the government.
 - It was added that new CCTV equipment had recently been installed in the area and this may be of assistance to find the owners of Personal Water Craft.
 - It was explained that the feelings of the committee members reiterated officers' concerns. However, it was emphasised that the Councils of Anglesey, Conwy and Caernarfon harbour had already adopted a registration system that had been used by Gwynedd for years and it was hoped that more areas and other counties would also use this soon.
- Attention was drawn to the pontoon installed in the harbour following the receipt of a grant by the Meirionnydd Yacht Club. The pontoon had been an excellent resource, however unfortunately the maintenance costs had recently increased and it was not possible to look after it sufficiently. By now the pontoon was a safety matter and people

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 8/11/22

had to be reminded that it was for the use of light craft in the short-term or for other boats in an emergency. The Yacht Club was thanked for their web camera in order to be able to keep an eye remotely on the pontoon.

- The idea of introducing a swimming zone in the harbour was discussed. Similar zones had been successful in other harbours. This would enable people to swim safely within the harbour. However, safety was a major issue and it was necessary to think carefully how this would work before introducing the zone in the harbour.
- RNLI officers were praised for holding training recently with beach staff.
- Concern was expressed about sand that was being carried from the seawall.

Staffing Matters

- All the staff were thanked for their commitment to the work of the harbour and nearby beaches over the previous period and it was confirmed that no reduction was anticipated in the number of staff members in the near future.
- It was stated that the beach had had a very busy period over the summer and the wardens had undertaken their work very effectively. Should it be possible, consideration would be given to extending their employment term next season and to look at the facilities to ensure that no one would have to work alone.
- It was stated that beach wardens needed a better cabin than the one currently on the site, as it was not suitable.
 - It was confirmed that this problem was being dealt with under the beach improvement plans if there was sufficient budget. Other developments were also being undertaken on the beach such as improving the public conveniences.
- The continuous problem of sand accumulation that occurred on the beach was discussed. It would be an idea to find a solution regarding how to prevent sand from being blown into the town and across the RNLI slipway. There was concern that the sand left the beach and covered the car park, incurring additional costs to the Council in the next few years if there is no solution.
 - It was recognised that the Conwy area had recently been successful after inserting a pump in their area to assist to prevent this problem.
 - It was emphasised that everyone knew about the seriousness of the situation and several options were being discussed to try and resolve this problem effectively and permanently.
 - It was agreed that a meeting would be held soon with harbour users to discuss this matter further and to share ideas.
- Daniel Cartwright was welcomed as the new Barmouth Harbourmaster and Kane Triggs as Harbour Assistant.
- Arrangements were made to send a thank you to the former Harbourmaster namely Ms Bergitte Evans for her work and to Jordan Hewlett in his post as Harbour Assistant.
- The good joint working that continues between harbour officers and beach officers was praised. This had been very valuable during the recent period and the lack of recruitment. It was hoped that 5 members of staff will be appointed to supervise the beach in 2023.
 - It was noted that when recruiting officers to work on the beach that they needed sufficient first aid training.
 - It was agreed that this training was essential for the post and it was difficult to ensure that everyone had receive it when staff were recruited at different times of the season. It was difficult to finance a number of different training days and to ensure that everyone did not attend on the same day. Discussions were on going to get options to try and resolve this problem.

Financial Matters

- It was reported that there was overspending within the staffing field this year. This was because there were recruitment deficiencies that meant that officers had to work additional hours.

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 8/11/22

- It was elaborated that there had been an underspend in the fields of property, transport, equipment and tools and there was shortfall to meet the income target. Having said this, an investment of £12,000.00 had been made in the harbour boat as well as chains and aids to navigation within this financial year.
- It was confirmed that an underspend of £15,293.00 was anticipated in this financial year.
- The fee rates for the next financial year were considered. These had not currently been submitted to the committee as inflation was increasing following the current financial squeeze. It was hoped to find a way to not increase fees for harbour users too much as this increase would have a major impact on users and increase the risk of reducing the number of future users.
 - It was elaborated that the inflation figure for the harbours for next year was 8.5%.

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

- It was stated that the investment in the aids to navigation had been effective. There had not been many problems with these, however it was noted that one was not currently on station. The Local Notice to Mariners had been issued regarding the relevant buoy, namely the Fairway Buoy.
- It was confirmed that an assessment had been undertaken by Trinity House on the aids to navigation and the assessment had been successful.
- It was noted that work near the railway was continuing into the fourth year to improve the condition of the footpath that runs parallel to the tracks.

RESOLVED

To note and accept the reports.

7. ELECTION OF OBSERVERS

RESOLVED

It was resolved to contact all committee members via e-mail to give all the members an opportunity to put their names forward as observers.

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

None to note

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be on the 28 March, 2023.

The opportunity was taken to thank the Harbour Manager for many years of hard work and his commitment and passion to the county's harbours. He was wished well on his retirement.

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 3.30pm

(Chair)