

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 27/02/24

PRESENT:

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

Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Will Walker-Jones (Cricieth RNLI Representative).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Bryn Pritchard-Jones (Maritime Service Manager), Malcolm Humphreys (Porthmadog Harbourmaster) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

OBSERVER: Desmond George (Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Aled Griffith (Porthmadog Town Council), Llyr Beaumont Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department) and Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer).

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 3 October 2023, 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 harbour operational matters.

- (1) The Senior Harbours Officer's report, giving a brief update to the committee on harbour matters for the period from October 2023 to February 2024.

(Due to the sickness absence of the Senior Harbours Officer, the report was presented by the Maritime Services Manager).

The Senior Harbours Officer was thanked for preparing the written report, and best wishes were extended to him for a speedy recovery.

Math Roberts was congratulated on his appointment to the full-time post of Beaches Officer. In response to a question, it was noted that it was not currently envisaged that the Beaches Officer would need to attend harbour committee meetings as the beaches would be the main focus of his post, however, it was explained that the officer would also assist harbour staff with harbour matters when required.

As part of the report, the Maritime Service Manager gave a short summary of the Harbour's budgets 01/4/23 - 31/3/24 (November 2023 Review), which was included as an appendix to the report. Details were given on following elements of the budget:-

Employees

It was explained that the anticipated overspend under this heading was mainly due to staff overtime costs as they had been called into work during periods of leave / outside normal working hours during the year to deal with incidents, not only in Porthmadog Harbour, but also on other beaches and harbours in Gwynedd.

Staff were thanked, and especially the Harbourmaster and Assistant Harbourmaster, for their commitment to assist with these incidents.

Property

It was explained that additional finance had been included under this heading in case there was a need for significant expenditure on infrastructure, the harbour wall or the land surrounding the harbour. Since there had been no significant costs this season, an underspend was anticipated in the budget.

One-off spending - Funding from the Department's Funds

It was explained:-

- As a result of charging fees, the Maritime Service and Hafan Pwllheli had funds where money had accumulated for years, and there had been a direction to identify schemes across the Service where this money could be used to improve maritime facilities.
- That several projects had been put forward, with some being realised in the current financial year, and others in the next financial year.
- One of the main projects in Porthmadog Harbour was to renew the anchoring chains, and significant finance had been invested in this, as well as maintaining the buoys, installing new ladders on the side of the harbour wall and contractor costs to undertake all the work.
- That approximately £28,000 had been spent thus far, and a further expenditure of between £7,000 and £8,000 was anticipated before the end of March on other sundries, including improving the compound, repositioning slabs in the area behind the harbour building and upgrading the CCTV system.
- That this expenditure would have no impact on the budget as £36,000 had been transferred from the Department's funds to meet the costs.
- There was more money in the budget to make improvements on harbour land, although it was not envisaged that this money would be spent by the end of March.
- It was also intended to use money from these funds for all kinds of improvements in the harbour over the summer and throughout the year.

Income

It was explained that the income was slightly lower than expected due to the bad weather last summer.

In response to a question, it was explained that the costs of all maritime vehicles were centrally funded from the beaches budget.

Then the Maritime Service Manager detailed the 2024/25 fees and charges, stating:-

- That the service intended to adjust the fees for 2024/25 in line with the rate of inflation, which was 7.49% at the time.
 - Although berthing fees had been raised above the level of inflation in some other harbours, an increase in line with inflation had been suggested only at Porthmadog Harbour as mooring fees had historically been higher there than in harbours such as Aberdyfi and Barmouth.
 - That launching and registration fees had been raised just above inflation. As the launch fee had already increased from £10 in 2020 to £22 last year, it was suggested to retain the fee at £22 for 2024/25 with the registration fee rising from £60 to £70 (an increase of nearly 17%), namely registration and the seasonal and launching ticket rising from £170 to £180 (an increase of 6%).
- (2) The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the Navigational and Operational matters that had arisen between October 2023 and February 2024, including maintenance matters.

Before starting to present his report, the Harbourmaster offered condolences to the family of Michael Holt from Porthmadog, who recently died while rowing across the Atlantic Ocean in a bid to raise money for two charities.

Further to the content of the written report, the Harbourmaster noted:-

- That all work on the moorings in the harbour had now been completed.
- That the work of upgrading the CCTV equipment facility in the harbour would be completed in the next three weeks.
- The Council's Highways Department and a local company had been asked for a price for re-positioning the pavement slabs that had been raised by tree roots around the harbour.
- The Parkingeye was now live in the Centre.
- A complaint had been received from a member of the public that defibrillators at Morfa Bychan had been removed from their sites, and this had been done due to the lack of an electricity supply to the boxes that stored them, as there was a risk that the gel pads could freeze and the batteries could become flat and vapour could form as a result of a lack of heat in the box. It was hoped that the defibrillators would be back on their sites next week.
- That two or three responders to a recent questionnaire had questioned whether it was possible to install a web camera in the Harbour, and this was possibly something that Porthmadog Town Council could be asked to consider undertaking in conjunction with the Maritime Service.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

The Service was congratulated on satisfying the inspector from Trinity House that all was in good order and efficient in terms of records of the availability of the local navigational aids under the control of Cyngor Gwynedd and there were no matters arising that required further attention.

In response to a question regarding the cost of handling the Dwyfor boat and the 'Powercat' patrol boat, it was noted that specific funding had been set aside for maintenance work on the Dwyfor boat. It was explained that the Dwyfor boat was running well due to the completion of significant work on it prior to the Covid period, including reconstruction of the engine, but that the regulations regarding boat coding etc. had now changed. It was also noted that there were no significant costs on the 'Powercat' patrol boat.

The Service was thanked for the maintenance work programme for seating benches and stone walls near the pilot's former docking area at Borth y Gest.

The Harbourmaster's words regarding Michael Holt were reiterated and the Harbourmaster was thanked for all his work with the defibrillators at Morfa Bychan. Thanks were also given for the report and for the installation of ladders on the harbour wall, etc., and support was expressed for the idea of having a web camera in the harbour. It was expressed that it was hoped that the Dwyfor boat and the 'Powercat' patrol boat would be back in service by the summer. In response, it was noted that the boats were likely to be back in service before Easter, but that boats from other harbours could also be used in the meantime if a boat was really needed on the water in the harbour. It was further stated:-

- The requirements for this season had been met in terms of the coding regulations.
- That the coding of the Dwyfor boat differed from the Powercats as it raised buoys and there was concern, should the requirements of the Code change, then there was a risk that the Dwyfor could not be used to carry out any work out at sea, and therefore we would be dependent on a contractor, which would increase costs.
- That a specific budget was set aside for the maintenance of the Dwyfor boat, but that the actual cost may be higher than assumed due to the need to carry out additional work that was not anticipated.

The Harbourmaster and staff were thanked for their hard work in trying to keep the Porthmadog Channel clear and marked, and it was noted that a web camera in the harbour would also be of assistance to the RNLI.

It was asked what the cost would be to install a web camera in the harbour. In response, it was noted that the Harbourmaster could make enquiries regarding this, but that it was thought that such a resource would be a very good investment for the harbour. A comment was also made that it was worth investing in a quality web camera.

RESOLVED to note and accept the report.

6. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 1 October 2024 (subject to confirmation by the Full Council on 7 March).

It was noted that the other three harbour committees now met during the day, and it was asked if the members were also interested in holding this committee during working hours.

It was noted that it was usual for this committee to meet at 5.30pm on a Tuesday, and it would not be practical for it to be held earlier in the day due to the other commitments of some members. Therefore, it was agreed to leave the time as it currently was.

The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and concluded at 6.10pm.

CHAIR