

BARMOUTH HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, 24 OCTOBER, 2023

Present:

Members:

Councillor Rob Triggs (Chair), Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Vice-chair), Ashley Field (Three Peaks Yacht Race), Mark James (RNLI) and Councillor Robert C Williams (Barmouth Town Council).

Officers:

Llŷr B Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department), Bryn Pritchard-Jones (Maritime Service Manager), Daniel A Cartwright (Barmouth Harbourmaster), Arthur F Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Einir Rh Davies and Ffion E Evans (Democracy Services Officers) and E Mererid Watt (Translator).

Also in Attendance: Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member - Economy and Community), Councillor June Jones (Observer, Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Rob Triggs as Chair of the Committee for the year 2023/24.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chair of the Committee for the year 2023/24.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Robert Aeron Williams.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received, however for information, the Chair informed the Committee that his son, Kane Triggs, was a Harbour Assistant in Barmouth.

5. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 28 March 2023, as a true record.

6. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Report of the Senior Harbours Officer and the Harbourmaster.

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and the Cabinet Member was also thanked for her presence, the meeting commenced with the Senior Harbours Officer's report.

Barmouth Moorings and Boat Registration

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It was confirmed that 71 boats had been registered in 2023 compared with 64 in 2022, and it was pleasing to report that there had been an increase. It was assumed that it was the lower costs that attracted customers to Barmouth Harbour and hopefully the figure would be even higher next year and the trend would continue. It was reported that the majority had registered online, namely 1,269 powerboats and 1,240 personal watercraft.

Port Marine Safety Code

It was confirmed that Barmouth Harbour complied with the Requirements, and should anyone have any observations about the Code they should inform the Senior Harbours Officer.

Staffing Matters

It was confirmed that there had been no change in staff, however the Harbourmaster and the Assistant Harbourmaster had been helping out in Porthmadog and Aberdyfi Harbours. The opportunity was also taken to thank the seasonal staff for all their work.

Financial matters: Financial Situation of Barmouth Harbour

The Maritime Service Manager reported on the budget giving a summary under the main headings. He reported that the information was based on a meeting with the Finance Officers during August, that demonstrated the actual expenditure for five months and predicted the expenditure for September 2023 to March 2024. He reported that it was very difficult to predict and that matters such as a hard winter would affect the figures.

Employees - £65k - overspend of £800 due to overtime costs as staff had been busy assisting in Porthmadog and Aberdyfi Harbours. This budget did not reflect the costs of seasonal staff.

Property - £12k - overspend of £650 – due to the picnic tables and signage, and it was confirmed that this was to be expected.

Transportation - £1000 – under spend of £700 - this figure included fuel/petrol for the boat (but did not include maintenance costs). It was noted that this was the figure as the boat had been out less frequently due to the poor summer and the new engines had made the work more economical.

Services and Supplies - £11k - over expenditure of £6k - this included the chains, shackles, lights together with the price of the new aid to navigation (over £3k). It was reported that they had to pay contractors to install a buoy as well as costs to service the boat's engines.

In terms of Income, it was noted that it came from the mooring fees, temporary parking fees and the car park and that the target was £38,500, however £40,500 was predicted. Reference was made to the work on the Bridge and the income from Network Rail Company, however there was not much more income to come. It was confirmed that without the income from Network Rail, that the target would not have been met.

In terms of the specific figures, expenditure of £50,924 was noted, with £55,524 predicted and an overspend of £4,601, and the feeling was that this did not cause concern, although it was likely to increase a little.

The Committee noted that it was pleasing to see the figures especially knowing that it had been a difficult season. It was reported that good reports had been given about the staff.

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The Maritime Service Manager noted that the Network Rail invoice had not been presented yet, however it would be received before the end of the year. He reiterated the observations about staff and their good work, and noted that the Harbour was looking good. He noted that it was a difficult time, and praise should be given for attaining the income target.

In terms of the increase of 11% in the number of customers, it was noted that this was perhaps because of the situation in the Harbours of Felinheli and Aberystwyth and that Barmouth Harbour was a little cheaper than many other harbours.

The Cabinet Member also reiterated her gratitude.

THE HARBOURMASTER'S REPORT

Navigation Matters

A newly refurbished 'Fairway' buoy had been installed and a survey of the channel was conducted to monitor the sandbanks. It was reported that a new No. 10 aid to navigation was needed and the monitoring work was continuing.

It was confirmed that the Notice to Mariners for the work on the Bridge continued to be in place for mariners until mid-December.

Buoys No.1 and No.8 now had lights and Porthmadog Harbour was thanked for the loan of the lighting facility.

It was confirmed that all the marks were in place and were working.

Operational Matters

Barmouth Harbourmaster reported that by now visitors could use the harbour wall. Reference was made to the new 'Powercat' patrol vessel that had been well used this season and the advantages of having such a boat, although there had been a cost of £15,000 associated with it. It was confirmed that the work of monitoring and numbering moorings had taken place, together with investment in the service vehicle.

It was noted that a new VHF radio set had been purchased for the office together with hand radios. There was continued maintenance and daily inspection of the bars and slipways.

It was reported that navigation mark No. 2 had been lost during a storm earlier in the season and it had not come ashore, therefore a new one had to be purchased in its place. Additionally, there were costs with mooring chains, and contractor labour costs were involved.

It was reported that several tractor tyres had been given to the Harbour which was helpful due to the number of visiting vessels in the Harbour. It was noted that bollards had also been installed to address the lack of parking for commercial operators.

During a recent survey, it was reported that the barrage sign and sign warning people not to swim had been repaired, while picnic benches, made out of recycled plastic, had also been installed.

Regarding Barmouth Railway Bridge, it was reported that work was in the final stages. It was confirmed that a Mariners' Warning remained in place and that all traffic passing

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under the bridge had been prevented and removed from the old harbour. As a result, it was confirmed that the Harbour compound had been tidied-up and everyone was thanked for their assistance.

It was reported that Orierton Gardens was overgrown and contractors had carried out the clearing work there. As for the shed, it was reported that asbestos had been found on the roof of the shed, but it was hoped that the work would be carried out before Christmas.

Reference was made to the lifeguard jacket lockers provided by the Lifeboat service, and Trevor Lewis was specifically thanked, noting that Barmouth Harbour was the first in Wales to have a facility of this type.

It was reported that there was a great effort to stage good events such as a music festival, the three peaks, a food festival and the motor cross event and it was confirmed that positive feedback had been received. Members were reminded to notify the Harbour Office of any event as soon as possible.

Members were invited to offer observations, and in response the following was noted:

Thanks was given for the report, but concern was noted that there was little information available about the pontoons, and it was asked whether it would be possible to get a report on the situation? The Chair took the opportunity to update the Committee on the situation confirming that the Town Council was seeking to take over the Pontoons, and their wish to leave them on the wall, resting on the seabed. Since there would be a crane in the area next week, the wish to take advantage of this was noted, asking for permission to place the crane on the tarmac at the Dora Building.

Regarding the work on the Bridge, it was reported that track laying would be undertaken following the completion of the Bridge, with further work on the Barmouth Viaduct in 2024, but no confirmation had been received.

The Maritime Services Manager referred to the New Act relating to Jet skis, and in particular the registration system. He reported that some jet skies were launched from the caravan parks and as a result it was very difficult to keep a record of them. He referred to the ongoing investigation in Aberdyfi, stating his pride that there were no serious accidents, possibly due to the proactive approach of staff, and the support from beach staff. In addition, he thanked Barmouth staff, beach staff, Lifeboat Officers and the Coastguard for all their work and the good relationship.

Regarding the events that had taken place, the Chair reported that the Police's only concern was a case of under-age drinking at the Music Festival.

The situation in terms of removing the sand and in particular the impression given that there was a plan to allow sand dunes on the beach was questioned. The concern with this was that mobility scooters would get stuck in the sand. It was noted, for reference, that there were plans to remove the sand.

It was reported that any discussion about sand would affect the whole coast, and as a result this was an item that would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in April.

The Maritime Service Manager confirmed he had not heard any rumours of a scheme to encourage the cultivation of the dunes and questioned where the information had

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come from. He noted that he had met the Harbourmaster the previous week and the bulldozer was removing sand from the wall and had cleared it by the weekend. It was reported that discussions were underway with YGC and it was intended to clear the sand before the end of the year, but the Maritime Service Manager was not aware of the Plan referred to above. It was further reported that part of the Plan was to remove the sand twice, but that it had become clear that this was not enough.

The above was expanded upon, and it was reported that an individual had gone to a meeting with Liz Saville Roberts and Mabon ap Gwynfor, where a map showing the dunes between the lifeboat station and the causeway was shared but no one was sure where the map came from? It was reported that, some years ago now, farmers used to clean afon Sgethin to keep the channel open. Although there had been a discussion with the environment minister, the farmers had warned that there would be issues with the dunes and the impact on Talybont, such as flooding in the caravan park. The dunes were disappearing in Talybont.

The Cabinet Member thanked everyone for their contributions and noted that similar themes were emerging in other Harbour Advisory Committees. It had been suggested that there was an opportunity here to write to Natural Resources Wales. The Assistant Head of Economy and Community took the opportunity to note that there was collaboration between agencies on coastal processes, such as the Aberdyfi and Pwllheli processes.

In light of the above, it was asked whether a meeting of the Barmouth Sand Scheme has been held recently? No one was sure but it was noted that there was no sense in letting the dunes grow, especially around where the Lifeboat station was. It had been suggested that it might be an idea to reconvene the Group. It was confirmed that the Assistant Head of Economy and Community would seek to confirm the position and report back to members of the Advisory Committee, and the Chair would discuss this with Rhidian Morgan, the Welsh Government's Head of Tourism Development, as there were examples of other beaches deteriorating, such as Benar Beach.

A Barmouth Town Council Representative asked about the arrangements for bonfire night, noting that when he received the last update everything was on time with no concerns. The message received confirmed that there would be no scaffolding on the beach in the next 7-10 days.

It was also asked about boards installed along the promenade, and that placing them there was a historical arrangement. The Chair confirmed that he would discuss the matter further.

The opportunity was taken to discuss the graphs that were part of the Economy and Community Performance Management Dashboard and it was confirmed that they were 100% compliant with Trinity House requirements.

Reference was made to the placement of QR codes on signs so that people could share their comments on the customer satisfaction questionnaire. It had been noted that work would eventually be undertaken to go through these to see whether there were any themes, but currently it had been noted that around 30 had been completed for the Harbours, with 89% citing their experience of the harbour as 'very good' or 'good', with many praising staff but stating the need to dredge the Harbour.

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It was noted that there was also an opportunity to give views on beaches, and 350 had completed the questionnaire to date, with 75% stating that the beaches were generally 'very good' or 'good', with comments made about how busy the beaches were.

It was pointed out that 2,500 jet skis were registered in Gwynedd, by comparison with 500 in Anglesey and 300 in Conwy.

Everyone was thanked for their contribution.

RESOLVED

To note and accept the reports.

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

None to note.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 19 March, 2024.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:10 pm

(Chair)