

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 1/10/24

PRESENT:

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

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

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

OBSERVER: Desmond George (Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee).

APOLOGIES: Dr Melfyn Edwards (Representing Porthmadog Town Council) and Robert Owen (Representing Commercial Interests).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Gwilym Jones as chair for 2024/25.

Condolences were extended to the family of Dr John Jones-Morris who had been a faithful member of this committee for many years.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor June Jones as vice-chair for 2024/25.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dr Melfyn Edwards (Representing Porthmadog Town Council) and Robert Owen (Representing Commercial Interests).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 27 February 2024 as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The reports below were submitted, and members were invited to give feedback on 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 March 2024 to October 2024.

Further to the content of the written report, the Senior Harbours Officer noted that he would be retiring in full on 31 March 2025, following a period of flexible retirement. He noted that his job had been advertised and it was hoped that this would be filled before Christmas so that the new post holder could shadow him in the role over the coming months.

In response to questions from members, the Maritime Services Manager stated that the job advertisement had been out for around a week and that two applications had been received to date. He intended to monitor the situation over the coming days, and if very few additional applications would arrive, there would be a need to consider spreading the job advertisement in the press, etc.

The Senior Harbours Officer thanked the Committee for their support over the years.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Senior Harbours Officer for all of his work over the years, and he wished him a happy retirement. The Maritime Service Manager and Harbourmaster also thanked him for his service and noted that he would be missed.

Financial Matters

The Maritime Service Manager provided a brief summary of the Harbour's budgets 01/04/24 - 31/03/25 (August 2024 Review), included as an appendix to the report. The following was specifically noted:–

- That there was an overspend under the Employees heading due to overtime costs. It was noted that harbour staff had been assisting in other harbours and also on Morfa Bychan beach due to staff recruitment difficulties this year. It was also noted that the officers had had to respond to some incidents outside normal working hours.
- That there was a substantial underspend under the Property heading and this money could be used to meet the overspend under other budget headings.
- That the figure of £39 in the 'Projected Spend' column under the 'Transport' heading was wrong, and that the actual figure could not be confirmed at present; it was not anticipated that it would be higher than the sum of £800 earmarked for it in the budget.
- That there was an overspend under the Services and Supplies heading for many reasons, specifically: due to high maintenance costs and boat maintenance and the need to upgrade the Harbour's CCTV system and invest in new safety equipment.
- That £30,000 was earmarked in the Maritime Fund in order to improve the land and compound in Porthmadog Harbour with the work happening over the autumn and winter months. The Committee would be updated on the development of the plan at the next meeting.
- An income deficit of £5,210 was anticipated, mainly due to the poor weather over the summer months and the reduction in the number of registered powerboats.
- In terms of the Net Total, project a deficit of just over £6,000, which is quite good considering the weather. Staff were praised on managing to attract £80,900 income in the current difficult climate.

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 1/10/24

It was asked whether the economy's difficult situation had affected the income. In response, the Maritime Service Manager noted that this was likely to be as a result of a combination of things, including the economy and the weather, etc.

Fees and Charges 2025/26

The Maritime Service Manager noted that it was currently premature to make any decision regarding the fee levels for next season and it was hoped that they would be in a position to propose those fees at the end of the year. The need to be cautious from raising the fees to high in the current financial climate was emphasised.

Economy and Community Performance Management Dashboard

The Maritime Service Manager noted that the number of customers with a mooring contract in our harbours had increased from 250 to 266. It was highlighted that the financial squeeze meant that many customers had been attracted to Gwynedd since, in general, the cost was lower. It was explained that some customers had also returned after the end of Covid restrictions. It was reported that the Service had managed to attract a number of new customers.

Harbours Customer Satisfaction

It was explained that the customer satisfaction questionnaire was on the Council's website since July 2023, and that QR codes had been installed across the Harbour to encourage customers to complete the questionnaire. It was reported that 86% of the responders were of the opinion that their experiences of the harbours were 'Very Good' (81%) or 'Good' (5%) and that nobody had responded by saying that their experience was poor. Positive comments had been received about the professionalism and attitude of our officers, with some expressing that the officers were "knowledgeable" and "had gone out of their way to help". It was also noted that there were constructive comments. It was noted further that the Service was monitoring the responses to the questionnaire and hoped to act on any observations to improve the Service.

Trinity House Inspections

It was noted that the Service complied 100% with the statutory requirements of Trinity House. It was confirmed that the inspectors would be coming over again soon, and it was anticipated that the Service would comply in full once again with the requirements.

Beaches Customer Satisfaction

It was reported that 76% of the questionnaire responders were of the opinion that their experiences of Gwynedd beaches were 'Very Good' (58%) or 'Good' (18%). It was expressed, in general, that the feedback was quite positive.

- (2) The Harbourmaster's report, summarised the Navigational and Operational matters that had been experienced between February 2024 and October 2024, including maintenance matters.

Before submitting his report, the Harbourmaster thanked Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), for his hard work over the last 11 years. He also thanked Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative) for allowing the Service to borrow a jet-ski for a third season.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

An enquiry was made regarding the installation of a plinth of Welsh slate in the form of a dragon under the metal structure. In response, it was noted that the slate was coming from Llechwedd, Blaenau Ffestiniog, and that it matched the stone in the Harbour.

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 1/10/24

A question was asked about whether it was intended to adapt the pay and display machine in the Harbour to enable App payments. In response, it was noted that an internal audit had advised moving away from cash, since there was a lot of work associated with emptying the machine and counting the cash, etc. It was confirmed that the machine in Porthmadog enabled App payments or credit card payments from April next year onwards, and possibly, three solar powered batteries would be needed to charge this.

The Maritime Service Manager noted that a plot had been identified on the grassed area near the compound in order to site another sculpture that was coming to Porthmadog. It was believed that this would be an asset to Porthmadog Harbour and very suitable for the site. It was explained that it would not be funded from the maritime budget.

It was asked whether it was intended to include information on the pay and display machines, to explain that the money went straight to the Maritime Department for the management of the site. It was suggested that such information could encourage people to park in this car park specifically if they knew where the money went. In response, it was noted that there was a specific reference in some sites to the fact that the money went towards the maintenance of the site. It was noted that the point was valid, and something to discuss as part of the preparatory work for the new machines.

RESOLVED To note and accept the report

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 4 March 2025.

The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and concluded at 6.20pm.

(Chair)