

**Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on
15 November 2016 at Neuadd Dyfi, Aberdyfi**

PRESENT

Cllrs. Dewi Owen, Anne Lloyd Jones, Mike Stevens (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. David Richardson (Aberdyfi Community Council), Cllr. Brian Bates (RNLI), Mr W Bracewell (Aberdyfi Partnership), Mr Dave Williams (Aberdyfi Advertising and Improvements Committee), Mr Desmond George (Dyfi Yacht Club), Mr James Bradbury-Willis (Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade) and Mr Neil Storkey (Clerk/Observer on behalf of Aberdyfi Community Council)

Also in attendance:

Officers

Barry Davies - Maritime and Country Parks Officer
William Stockford - Aberdyfi Harbour Master
Glynda O'Brien - Members' Support Officer
Mererid Watt - Translator

Apologies: Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member - Economy), Mr Nick Dawson (Outward Bound), Mr Nigel Willis (Aberdyfi Boat Club), Mr Llŷr B. Jones (Senior Manager - Economy and Community)

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Dewi Owen as Chair of this Committee for 2016/17.

2. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2016/17.

3. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

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

4. **MINUTES**

Submitted: Minutes of a meeting of the Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee that took place on 10 March 2016.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes as a true record.

5.1 Matters arising from the minutes - Item 2.1 (c) Maintenance

Mr Desmond George reported that he was continuing to look into the design of a bespoke winch for use by boats that launch and land near the Yacht Club.

5. THE MARITIME OFFICER'S REPORT

Submitted: The report of the Maritime and Country Parks Officer, Mr Barry Davies, updating the committee on Harbour management matters with specific reference to the following:-

(a) **The Harbour**

- It was noted that it had been a rather mixed summer as regards to the weather, however, the season had an excellent start at Whitsun when the beaches and harbours were extremely busy.
- 24 boats had visited the harbour which was a fairly fixed figure.
- There had been an increase in the number of powerboats and personal watercraft.
- 79 boats had registered on annual moorings and although this was a smaller number than in the past, it was a reflection of the economic position and he noted that there were 110 empty moorings in Hafan Pwllheli.
- However, Aberdyfi had the advantage of being able to attract visitors to the beach and to local activities.
- That cooperation with the local contractor had improved this year and it was trusted that this relationship could be built upon. However, further cooperation was required regarding the relevant mooring certificates.
- In response to a query regarding advertising to attract more visitors, it was explained that there was no budget available and the Maritime Service had invested substantially in the past in magazines such as 'Practical Boat Owner', however, no additional value was seen from this. It was further noted that Gwynedd benefited from the number of powerboats and personal watercraft and Aberdyfi slipway had not been designed for such an increase in the number of boats.
- An assurance was given that no problems had arisen with Personal Watercraft launching from Ynys Las this year and it was confirmed that harbour staff had spent more time out on the water.

(b) **Marine Safety Code**

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he would send an electronic copy to Committee Members, and if Members did not have an email address they should inform him. It was noted that the code was not statutory but was good practice. Inspectors from a Harbour in Northern Ireland would inspect the code and it was trusted that they would talk with the Chair of this Consultative Committee. An appeal was made for Members to state if they had any issues that caused concern.

Regarding the recent allegations regarding the disturbance of dolphins, an assurance was given that the Harbour master had discussed this with the Personal Watercraft owners and at the time they were not aware that they had caused any disturbance or harm.

In response to the Chair's request regarding insurance arrangements for powerboats and Personal Watercraft, it was explained that owners had to present evidence of insurance by submitting the information on registration forms. It was further noted that persons between 16-18 years old could not drive Personal Watercraft, unless they had an appropriate qualification. In terms of Personal Watercraft launching from the Leri, unfortunately Ceredigion had not adopted the same scheme as Gwynedd.

A Member noted that every Personal Watercraft did not cause concern and that the majority adhered to the rules.

During the ensuing discussion regarding concern about beach safety, and a reference was made to the tragedy that occurred in Barmouth during the summer when two youths lost their lives in the sea, the following points were noted:

- That a discussion was taking place with Barmouth Town Council, Dwyfor / Meirionnydd Member of Parliament and representatives of the RNLI to review safety arrangements.
- It was noted that there was no budget available to appoint lifesavers within the Service bearing in mind the financial cuts and the difficult decisions facing elected members.
- Currently, it was noted that a review was proceeding regarding the arrangements within the Maritime Service in order to try and identify possible alternative opportunities to manage and supervise beaches.

In response, the following additional points were noted:

- (a) Mr James Bradbury-Willis offered to place an article in the Aberdyfi pamphlet, in consultation with the Harbour master, to draw attention to the maritime safety campaign and to hazardous swimming locations in Aberdyfi. In addition, he was responsible for the Aberdyfi 'Facebook' page and if more publicity was required he would be more than willing to undertake this.
- (b) The RNLI representative stated that it was possible for them to upgrade the high tide signs as well as other minor issues as they would be failing the community if they did not do this.
- (c) It was suggested that the way forward was to conduct discussions with the Harbour Master / Mr Dave Williams (RNLI), Beach Officer to draft a framework for upgrading the signs in Aberdyfi and Tywyn.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the above.

(b) To approve that discussions take place as outlined in (c) above.

(c) Navigation

It was pleasing to note that there was a consistency in the aids to navigation and that two notices to Mariners were in operation in the harbour, namely no. 1 buoy and a specific navigation buoy were not on station.

Regarding maintenance, an appeal was made to Committee members if they had any concerns that they should inform the Harbour Master without delay.

The Harbour Master presented his work programme for the next few months and these included:

- Constructing new benches for Tywyn promenade
- Collaboration with Outward Bound to renovate the steps to Bryn Llestair (Picnic Island)
- Work on the powerboat
- He had started renewing the boardwalk from Pont y Brics down to the beach
- Tidying up the gardens around the harbour
- Collaboration with the local contractor regarding the moorings
- Work to be undertaken on the wharf
- Work in Tywyn on the bathing waters boat
- Painting the 'No dogs' signs
- Repair the slipway and steps

The Harbour Master and staff were thanked for their praiseworthy work in the harbour.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ch) **Staffing Matters**

A report was given on the changes in staffing in the Harbour. It was noted that the harbour assistant should be praised for his work and in order to ensure support and continuation in the service across the county the employment period of the Aberdyfi and Barmouth Harbour Assistants had been extended until the end of December 2016. The Service was considering the possibility of extending their employment further to the new year to ensure that key work was completed prior to the start of next season. From time to time it would be necessary for staff to assist at Barmouth Harbour.

Councillor David Richardson reiterated that the team work in Aberdyfi had been excellent and they had been proactive rather than reactive. They had been outstanding ambassadors for Aberdyfi and it was trusted that the arrangement would continue.

In response to a comment made by a Member regarding his disappointment that a beach supervisor could not be employed on the beach in Aberdyfi, and as a result a Beach Award could not be received in the future, it was explained that this was due to a cut in the Service budget. In addition, the quality of bathing water in Aberdyfi did not justify the submission of an application for a Blue Flag Beach Award.

A member noted that it was better not to receive an award at all rather than lose it due to water quality and it would be better to contribute the application costs towards public facilities or to make the beach safer. There was a consensus of opinion amongst members that the award would make no difference to how busy Aberdyfi was.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(d) **Other matters**

It was noted that the relationship and the collaboration between the fishermen and the Harbour Master had improved, however the fishermen were required to tidily store their fishing tackle away in order not to cause a risk to harbour users.

Concern was also expressed regarding illegal dumping on land under the Council's responsibility close to the Golf Club. It was noted that there was asbestos to be disposed of and this would be undertaken by a specialist company at a cost of approximately £10k - £15k. It was trusted that a message could be sent via the Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association representative for the fishermen to identify the equipment they were anxious to retain, but naturally it would be necessary to find a space for them as future storage.

The Yacht Club representative noted that they would be willing to contribute towards the cost of getting a skip as they also had equipment they needed to dispose of.

The Chair suggested:

- If it were possible to erect a chain-link fence around the land to prevent persons from dumping illegally once the asbestos had been disposed and it would be possible for local persons to come together to clear the land and perhaps the Town Council might be asked for a contribution towards the costs.

Resolved: (a) To approve that the Harbour Master discusses with the Community Council in order to organise a community group to clear the land.

(b) To request that the Cardigan Bay Fisheries Association representative contacts fishermen warning them that the Council intends to clear the site and any fishing tackle should be put away tidily on the site prior to the commencement of this work.

(dd) In response to an enquiry by a member regarding the maintenance of a Second World War Bunker at Trefeddian, it was suggested that the matter should be discussed further with the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to get the details of CADW who had funded cabins at Friog.

(e) The Quay Wall

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported as follows:

- that plans had been confirmed
- it was anticipated that the work could be commenced in 2018
- that the existing wall had been inspected and had a lifespan of approximately five years left
- that discussions were on-going with the Crown
- that the environmental element still needed to be resolved
- the second phase of the plan was considered namely the Church Bay wall and it was trusted that this work could also be funded
- that the total scheme was approximately £4m with 75% being funded by the Welsh Government
- it was asked if there were other sources available such as the Outward Bound, however, it was understood verbally that there was no contribution available
- it was trusted that there would be more robust information available in March together with the business plan submission

In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that maintenance work would be undertaken between the Harbour Master's office and the Institute as part of the plan of changes.

The Chair reported that he would make more enquiries regarding funding sources, bearing in mind that the money was originally from European structural funds. Whilst 75% of the funding came from the Government sources had to be secured for the remaining 25%.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(f) RNLI Station

An appreciation and thanks was given for the collaboration of the RNLI with the work of extending the station at Aberdyfi that had now been completed together with resurfacing nearby land which was an improvement to the area's image.

Cllr. Dave Williams thanked the community for their support as well as the Yacht Club, Outward Bound and the Council and an official opening would be arranged soon. This would be a huge boost to the area with the new boat arriving on 28 November and would be operational from the 1 December 2016.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ff) In the context of the Coastguard consultation, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that if any Member was anxious to submit observations that the information was available on the website, as outlined in the report.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(g) **Financial Matters**

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer guided Members through the current financial position and noted as follows:

- there was an underspend of £7,448 in staff costs
- there was an underspend of £2,039 in grounds and buildings costs
- there was an underspend of £70 in boat and vehicle costs
- there was an underspend of £2,404 in tools and equipment costs
- the harbour income target was £6,689 short

Mr James Bradbury-Willis noted that he would discuss with the Harbour Master the possibility of advertising moorings in the Aberdyfi pamphlet to try and attract more income.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(ng) **Fees and Charges 2017/18**

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that fees would increase by 2% on average for the 2017/18 financial year to meet with the service's budgetary challenge and income target.

In response to an enquiry, a member noted that 2% was consistent with other fees.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(h) **Events**

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer took the opportunity to thank everyone associated with organising events in Aberdyfi and it was heartening to see so many people attending and enjoying themselves.

The Chair noted that the communities of Aberdyfi and Tywyn were very active and both areas benefited from each other.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Movement of Sand

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer reported that Gwynedd Consultancy were considering the most suitable and appropriate measures that could be taken to try and solve problems that arise when sand is blown during the winter months.

The Chair noted that Gwynedd Consultancy should be pressured to move the sand as it lead to costly problems such as blocking drains and causing flooding to village businesses.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- There was a need to move sand especially if there were western storms
- Could not a flexible budget be set to be used to move sand if required
- That it was important to reinforce the sand dunes as they were vital for the golf club to prevent flooding
- There had been a huge increase in spartina grass east of Afon Cletwr on the Ceredigion side of the estuary and it was spreading, gathering mud and creating mud mounds
- In the meantime, it was possible to construct a sand wall a few metres high to alleviate a little of the problem

In response to the above, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer gave an undertaking that he would contact the relevant officer and would forward any response received and reasons to Members of the Consultative Committee.

Resolved: (a) To ask the Maritime and Country Parks Officer to discuss the proposal with Gwynedd Consultancy and in the meantime that the Harbour Master organises with the local contractor to construct a sand wall.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: It was noted that the next meeting of this Consultative Committee would take place on 28 February 2017.

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 12:30pm.

CHAIRMAN.