
PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 8/03/22

PRESENT:

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths (Gwynedd Council) (Chair)
Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Gwynedd Council) (Vice-chair)

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Gwynedd Council), Councillor Llywelyn Rhys (Porthmadog Town Council Representative) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Llyr Beaumont Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department), Barry Davies (Maritime Manager), Malcolm Humphreys (Porthmadog Harbourmaster) and Eirian Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

A speedy recovery was wished to Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer) following a recent illness.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Clive Moore (Cricieth RNLI Representative), Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) 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 that was held on 5 October, 2021 as a true record.

5. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The following reports were presented, 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 year ending at the end of March 2022.

The Maritime Manager noted:-

- It had been beneficial to have virtual meetings of the committee over the last period, but having the presence of people around the table and the naturally occurring discussions before and after meetings was missed. It was not yet known what the future arrangements would be, but it was noted that the virtual arrangements had worked great, and everyone was thanked for facilitating this.

- The committee wished David Eastwood (Harbour Interests Representative) well as he had recently resigned from the committee. It was noted that he had been a very loyal member of the committee and had supported the staff over the years, and that he would be greatly missed. The Maritime Manager added that he would contact those with commercial interests in the harbour to highlight that a seat was available on the committee.
- He also wished to thank Councillor Selwyn Griffiths on behalf of the Maritime Service for his guidance and support as Chair of this committee, and also as the local member for Porthmadog West. The Chair noted that he was also very grateful to the harbour staff for their work.
- Many elements of the report were currently missing due to sickness absence, but it was intended to circulate information regarding fees and budgets to members following this meeting.
- As a result of contacting all customers in the harbour, a number of mooring applications had been received. It was intended to conduct an underwater inspection of the harbour moorings before Easter, and the importance of carrying out that work was emphasised as weak or defective moorings could cause significant damage. It was added that although the February storms had hit at high tide, not a single boat had broken free, which attested the strength of the moorings to hold all of the weight.
- Due to the success of the online Powerboat and Personal Watercraft registration system last year, it was intended to proceed with the same system for the coming year, and this would re-open on 31 March for the season to come.
- The service regularly monitored and reassessed the Port Marine Safety Code, adding and modifying risk assessments as required. It was also noted that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) had published a complete list in the past two weeks of harbours that complied with the Code, and that Porthmadog Harbour had been included on that list. Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) was the Duty Holder for this, and he was aware that the MCA had approved the Safety Code.
- Marking the navigation channel and maintaining the navigation aids was challenging as the channel was constantly changing. The channel had been shifting towards Cricieth, but in the last two weeks it had moved more towards Harlech. It was further noted that no issues had been raised in regards to the safety of the harbour.
- It was intended to continue with the current staffing levels in the harbour. It was anticipated that it would be a very challenging period for the service over the summer due to staff shortage and the need to assist in Barmouth in May/June due to staff shortage.
- It was anticipated that we would reach our budget at Porthmadog Harbour in the current financial year. The income target for the current year was £65m, but we were able to exceed that target by £2m, resulting in a total income of approximately £67m in 2021/22. In addition, due to a small underspend in the service from the perspective of Porthmadog Harbour, it was anticipated that the budget would exceed the target by £5m, even after funding the underwater inspection of the moorings. The Maritime Officer added that it had been a challenging year, but he was glad to report that the budget had returned to the expected level.
- The increase in inflation rates would have an impact on Harbour costs and costs associated with people using the Harbour itself. It was intended to increase the fees by about 3.5%, in accordance with the Council's inflation levels and targets, but this was still slightly below the increase in some harbours across the country. It was hoped that this increase would not have a detrimental effect on the number of boats in the Harbour this year.

- The boat registration fee would increase to £50. The launch fee would remain the same, with the daily fee remaining at £20 and the annual fee remaining at £150. It was hoped that this would encourage people to sign up for a year, rather than pay per day.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and make observations. The following matters were raised:-

- It was emphasised that Porthmadog Harbour was an integral part of the Slate Wales World Heritage Site, and that any potential opportunities that might arise as a result of this needed to be exploited. In response, the Maritime Manager stated that he would contact Roland Evans, Assistant Head of Culture, who was leading on this in the Council, for further discussion.
- It was asked whether the £5m of additional income would be invested in Porthmadog Harbour, or be dispersed into central budgets. In response, the Maritime Manager noted that every effort would be made to ensure that all other harbours across the county reached the budget, but that the money would be invested back into the Maritime Service. Elements may have to be invested in other more vulnerable locations, but the figures showed that we were investing sensibly in Porthmadog Harbour, and members were asked to inform the Maritime Manager if they wished for the service to invest in specific projects. However, it was acknowledged that the situation would not be as promising next year, with costs rising and the budget already set.

- (2) The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the Navigational and Operational matters that had arisen between October 2021 and March 2022, including maintenance matters.

The Porthmadog Harbourmaster noted:-

- As the navigation channel was moving towards Harlech, permission was sought from Trinity House to move the Fairway buoy.
- Buoy No. 1 had been on Harlech beach since before Christmas as the access to the beach had increased so much that it was impossible to retrieve it by vehicle.
- He had gone down to Morfa Bychan beach earlier in the day to see what needed to be done there before Easter. It was hoped that the cabin would be there during the first week of April and that staff would start working on the weekend before the bank holiday.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and make observations. The following matters were raised:-

- Reference was made to a recent incident when the 10mph signs near the entrance to Morfa Bychan beach had been taken down intentionally, and the Harbourmaster was thanked for going there to re-install them. The Harbourmaster stated that there had also been a problem with the bins at the beach entrance about a month ago, as the bins were constantly being filled with household waste, but that the problem had now been resolved as the bins had been moved. The Maritime Manager noted that it was a shame that these situations had arisen, but that there were very few problems generally, given the number of people who used the beach. The collaboration between the Council and the Police was also praised.
- It was asked whether the bins at the entrance to Morfa Bychan beach from Lôn Gwydryn had been permanently removed, as people had been leaving

litter there. In response, the Maritime Manager explained that the removal of the bins was a temporary measure to try to encourage whoever disposed of household waste in the bins to make alternative arrangements, and that the seasonal beach bins would soon be in place in accordance with the usual arrangements.

- It was noted that litter, which looked like it had come from the sea, had been left for some weeks in a pile at the entrance to Carreg Samson bay at the bottom of the steps on the coastal path, and it was asked who was responsible for collecting it. In response, the Maritime Manager noted that it was great that volunteers cleaned the beach, but that it was important for them to inform the service, so that they could go there to collect the litter. It would be even better if the litter was left as close to the kerbside as possible, so that a vehicle could collect it. It was confirmed that the Harbourmaster would address this before the end of the week.
- It was asked whether the mud under Cei Newydd had increased, and if so, would it cause problems. In response, the Maritime Manager noted that there was an increase in mud in the Harbour as a whole due to the pontoons calming and diverting the water elsewhere. He added that it was intended to get a local contractor to assess the situation to see what was possible.

The Maritime Manager noted that due to the success of transporting a transformer by ship to Morfa Bychan beach and on to Trawsfynydd in 2020, it was intended to hold a similar exercise again next year. Planning was already underway, and further information would be presented to the committee members in the autumn. The importance of ensuring that the felling of trees along the route was undertaken in advance was noted.

Reference was made to various events in the Harbour in the past, and the Maritime Manager noted that it was a pleasure to have the input of members on such matters.

The Chair thanked everyone for their input, and wished all incoming committee members the best following the Elections in May.

RESOLVED to note and accept the report.

6. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 11 October, 2022.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 6.10 pm

CHAIR