

PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 15/03/22

ATTENDANCE:

Gwynedd Council: Councillors Hefin Underwood and Dylan Bullard

Co-opted Members: Stephen Tudor (Representing Pwllheli Sailing Club), Michael Sol Owen (Representing Plas Heli), Wil Partington (Representing Pwllheli Maritime Traders Association), Alwyn Roberts (Representing Pwllheli Lifeboat Institution), Jenny Moss (Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders' Association) and Cllr Mike Parry (Representing Pwllheli Town Council)

Also in attendance: Barry Davies (Maritime Service Manager), William S Williams (Hafan Manager), Llŷr B Jones (Assistant Head of the Economy and Community Department), Einir Rh Davies (Democracy Services) and Elin Wynne (Interpreter)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Ifor Hughes.

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 12 October, 2021 as a true record.

5. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Everyone was welcomed and pride was expressed that so many were able to attend the meeting. It was noted that the arrangement of meeting virtually had worked great, and had been of assistance to those who were not local to be able to attend meetings with greater ease. Despite this, it was confirmed it would be nice to meet face-to-face when this was allowed.

Reference was made to the report created jointly by the Maritime Service Manager and the Hafan Manager, and it was reported as follows:

Port Marine Safety Code

Although Councillor Gareth Thomas was the Safety Code Duty Holder, it was extremely important to receive input from all the Committee Members on the code. It was confirmed that two inspections had been held by the Coastguard Agency, which confirmed full required compliance with the Code. The report on the Accident on the Menai Straights was mentioned as grounds of the importance for everyone to look at their Code and consider the importance of the Code and individuals' responsibilities in order to ensure compliance.

Dredging the Channel

it was confirmed that the work done by the 'Royal Smalls' company had been very successful, with around 20,000 fewer cubes of silt in the inner harbour this year. It was reported that most of the silt had been emptied into the stilling lagoon and now the lagoon was full and there was a need to plan to empty the stilling lagoon soon. It was noted that the next step was dredging the Hafan basin but first the work on testing the silt that had settled at the bottom the marina needed to be completed. Unfortunately, the timetable for 2022 did not allow further dredging work to be done in the basin and therefore it would be programmed for 2023/24. Reference was made to the meeting held with 'Royal Smalls' to discuss the options in terms of what to do with the lagoon, as the original lagoon was full, in considering how, when and what the cost would be to empty the stilling lagoon. The Committee was reminded that in the past, the silt had been transported to Harlech the first time, and left on neighbouring land the second time, but by now levels had reached heights where it was not possible to do this again. It was anticipated that 20,000 cubes needed disposing from the stilling lagoon. Reference was also made to other options such as mixing sand and silt for commercial use, but of course this came with its own challenges. At the meeting with 'Royal Smalls' the option of locating bags on the land, processing it and drying it on the site then disposing of it were also discussed. Further discussions would follow on the matter.

The mouth of the Harbour

The Committee was reminded that the work of dredging the mouth of the Harbour took place every year, around March and April. This year, the Service had decided that May would be a much more effective month to undertake the work. It was confirmed that the work would be done by using machines on- land and storing the sand on the present site. It was noted that it was proposed to invest £60,000 to £70,000 this year.

The size of the sand heap had reduced significantly recently as 20,000 tonnes of sand had been sold for beach replenishment near Hafan y Mor. The Chair confirmed his wish that any money that came back to the Maritime fund through the sale of sand was invested in the Pwllheli Harbour dredging fund, but it was reported by the Maritime Manager that he could not provide assurance of this.

In response to a question on the Strategy, the Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department confirmed that the Dredging Strategy was still alive and ongoing and the need regarding the groyne had been identified as needing consistent and regular attention. It was confirmed that discussions regarding the sediment, and its use, remained in the pipeline. There was further confirmation that the pilot work would start in Pwllheli in terms of the flood prevention work.

In response to an observation regarding the concern that the pontoon was approaching the end of its lifespan, the Maritime Service Manager reported that they had maintained it to a high standard and it was refurbished when needed, and this to the required standard, but further investment would be needed in due course.

In response to an observation regarding dredging, it was noted that not many vessels had been taken out of the harbour in 2021/22 and that the depth of the water in the marina and the navigational channel was looking good. Thanks were expressed for the availability of the results of the survey and the good work done by the Service was acknowledged.

Financial Matters

The Maritime Service Manager referred to the figures that noted comparisons and an overview, but noted he had not gone into detail on the figures that went up to the end of February. Members' attention was drawn to the following, giving an explanation as appropriate:

There was an overspend in terms of Property (£19,261), as it included electricity costs. Transport included vessels, hoist and a tractor. It was noted the use of red diesel in the hoist was not permitted from the 1st of April. This meant that a new diesel tank would need to be installed on the site so it would be possible to store white diesel on the site for the hoist.

It was noted that the situation was sure to change before the end of the financial year.

It was confirmed that Pwllheli Harbour, with a much lower budget than Hafan, showed an improvement of £17,000 better than the budget target.

Additionally, £750,000 profit had been reported for the Hafan, and it was felt that it was important that such money stayed within the Council and was used to benefit Gwynedd residents. He emphasised that a further report would follow once the current financial year had come to an end.

Reference was made to the fees spreadsheet and it was confirmed that the Service was still waiting on confirmation of the fees and awaiting the Statutory Officer's observations before releasing the fees publicly. It was confirmed that the Service did not recommend raising the yearly mooring fees. He took the opportunity to thank loyal customers, and new customers, and even though there was a recommendation to freeze the annual mooring fee, it was not possible to freeze the electricity costs.

As a result of the land provided for the Lifeboat slipway, there was less land to store vessels over the winter. A number of the vessels currently on the land belonged to individuals who were not berth holders. It was noted that the intention was to encourage these boat owners to move them, by informing them that the fee for this service will be increased and that priority would be given to vessels with an annual agreement on the pontoon. It was confirmed that this would be developed further in due course.

The Chair and the Pwllheli Marina Berth Holder's Association Representative expressed their pride that there was an agreement to keep the fees at the same rate. It was questioned why the costs for some visitors were more than others (e.g. the price for a motorboat was higher than a sailing boat). The Maritime Service Manager explained that a number of vessels made use but did not contribute as much, or did not even register with the Council and this created difficulties. As a result, the concept was if they did not come to a long-term agreement, that they would contribute more in visitor fees. The Hafan Manager confirmed that the Council was keeping an eye on other marinas also, confirming that the contribution from motorboats was less.

The parking and launching service was discussed, and a 100% full situation was anticipated for 2022. It was noted that the income from visiting vessels was very low, with some vessels only needing a holding mooring or somewhere to shelter from a storm. The committee felt that the discussion was positive, and noted concern that there were no empty moorings, although there were empty moorings in Plas Heli. It was noted that Pwllheli was an open harbour and could not turn boats away.

One member of the Committee reported his concern that there were no empty spaces, referring to the £1.6 million income in 2021 and a target of £1.4 million, which meant that there was money left over. He noted his strong wish for the money to be invested in expanding or making improvements, such as the quality of the land or even doing something different. He urged members of the Committee to spread the word that there had not been an increase in the fees and noted his hope that the future would be bright.

The Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department welcomed the increase in numbers and noted his wish that the investment plans would be available in due course. He

also noted when the Hafan was successful it showed not only its potential but confirmed it as an important economic asset. Despite this, he noted that he was not sure if it was possible to keep all the profit in Pwllheli, but gave assurance that he would present cases to invest. Another member of the Committee noted that this asset (Hafan) was key and that it needed looking after and that any long-term plan should allow the Council to do other things to improve and develop the site.

Spreadsheet III from the appendices was submitted to the Committee which referred to matters relating to inflation and its side effects. A member of the Committee noted their discontent with receiving the inflation statistics so late in the day, and noted the impact of this was that it did not allow a fair opportunity to consider them. The Chair echoed this observation and noted the importance of receiving the figures in good time, and proceeded to question whether it would be possible to hold a Committee meeting during the summer months?

The Maritime Manager confirmed that calling a meeting in the summer months would be hard as calling a meeting for Pwllheli Harbour would also require asking for a meeting, in terms of consistency, for Porthmadog, Aberdyfi and Barmouth Harbours and this was not practical. The Committee was reminded not to keep matters of concern until the next meeting and members were reminded that it was possible to contact the Officers at any time, for instance reference was made to a recent meeting between the Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders' Association Representative and the Maritime Service Manager where a number of matters that were a cause for concern for the Association had been discussed. There was no need to wait until the Committee to discuss matters or to present matters of concern.

The Hafan Manager reported on the Operational Matters as follows:

He confirmed that all navigation aids were on their appropriate sites and that all the beacons and navigation lights were working. There were no notices for mariners in place in Pwllheli.

Fuel Quay

He confirmed that the fuel pump was ten years old by now, and that a new pump would be installed in its place during May/June 2022. From 1/4/22, every machine or vehicle that operated on the land had to use white diesel. Red diesel would continue to be sold currently for the use of vessels, but there was no assurance how long this would continue. The availability of petrol on the pontoon was questioned, and it was confirmed that a pipe had been squeezed and it was hard to get a mechanic out to pay attention to the matter, but that it had been resolved by now.

In terms of the concern of the foot ramp down to the fuel quay, it was confirmed that a price had been received for a new ramp, and that the work of installing it would take place in the next financial year.

Storage on the Land

The Hafan Manager reported that 25 boats were stored ashore and had been there for a long time and it did not appear that they were going to be launched to the water in the near future. It was noted that the only answer to reduce numbers would be to increase the fee for land storage, in the hope that this would free up these spaces for those with a yearly mooring agreement.

In response to an observation about lack of space, reference was made to the plans in terms of Glan y Don, noting that such special places were so important, and we should be conscious of not losing these.

In terms of car park arrangements, it was questioned whether it would be possible to have a hardstanding to park or would it be possible to share Plas Heli's car park? The Hafan Manager confirmed the proposal to work around what was available and maybe look in more detail at the compound. It was confirmed that Plas Heli car park was available, and that arrangements had been made to put barriers on the entrances. It was suggested that maybe the message had not penetrated that the car park was available for Hafan users, and it was possible that further discussion on the matter between the Maritime Service Manager and Plas Heli Manager was needed.

Harbour Statistics

It was confirmed that 410 boat contracts had been allocated, with 63 on the waiting list, and that it promised to be a successful term in 2022. The Maritime Service Manager reminded of the Committee of the need to register vessels and Personal Watercraft, noting that this also included the vessels without an annual berth/pontoon berth. He reported that there had been a number of cases during 2021 where such boats had not been registered, even though it was mandatory to do so.

It was confirmed that there were registering arrangements in place everywhere else, and the side effect of not registering would be to raise the fee for park and launch companies or to install a barrier to force companies to comply with security issues. It was agreed to make an appeal through Pwllheli Maritime Traders Association Representative regarding the need for boats to be registered online, then choose where they launched from.

The Pwllheli Maritime Traders Association Representative reported that a rise of 5% for the park and launch service was acceptable, and that the four companies in the field would be putting their reputation in the balance if there was no compliance in terms of registering. He confirmed that they were active in informing their customers, including the need for them to have their stickers, and felt there was no more they could do. Reference was made to the problem in terms of lack of sticker availability and it was questioned if other Harbours were being watched as closely as Pwllheli Harbour? In addition, the need to also keep an eye on watercraft that used small slipways nearby was noted. He made reference to the need for a new gate to the pontoon as the current gate was rotting.

Thanks were expressed for the observations and it was noted that the Hafan Manager would look at the matters raised. The Hafan Manager reported, in terms of the concern for watercraft, that two Authorities had banned watercraft from launching, but Gwynedd had not followed this route to date.

The Maritime Service officer thanked the Maritime Traders Association companies for their work, confirming that the above were the Harbour's Regulations, and noted his thanks for all the efforts when complying with the Regulations.

Harbour Review

The Committee was informed of the appointment of Gerwyn Owen as the Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour Commercial Manager and he would commence in post from 1/6/22. It was confirmed that the Hafan/Harbour would be an individual Unit from then on, and there would be changes on the horizon as a result. It was confirmed that the Maritime Service Manager would not be leading on this Committee from the October 2022 meeting onwards.

It was hoped that relationships would be improved especially following the observations of the Pwllheli Maritime Traders Association Representative that they felt alienated, claiming there was no communication regarding the launching problems.

The Chairman thanked the Maritime Service Manager for all his work and support at the meetings.

RESOLVED :

(1) To note and accept the report.

Any Other Business

Pwllheli Sailing Club Representative reported that the RYA British sailing races would be held in the area at the start of April 2022, and this was a very important event, where over 300 competitors were expected. It was noted that there was a lot of planning work in order to ensure it was a successful event, and there was a warm welcome for everyone to attend.

Everyone was thanked for their valuable contributions.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting will take place on 18 October, 2022 at 6.00pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.45pm.

CHAIR