

PWLLHELI HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 10/10/2023

PRESENT:

Cyngor Gwynedd: Councillor Hefin Underwood (Chair), Councillor Elin Hywel and Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member – Economy and Community)

Co-opted Members: Jenny Moss (Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association), Councillor Mike Parry (Representing Pwllheli Town Council), William Partington (Representing Pwllheli Maritime Traders Association) and Stephen Tudor (Pwllheli Sailing Club representative).

Officers: Gerwyn Owen (Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour Commercial Manager), Llŷr B Jones (Assistant Head of the Economy and Community Department), Einir Rh Davies and M Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services) and the Translators

Others Present as Observers: Desmond George (Observer, Aberdyfi Harbour Consultative Committee), Ruth James (Secretary, Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association), Councillor Gwilym Jones (Observer, Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee) and Barry Simonds (Pwllheli Marina Berth Holders Association)

At the start of the meeting the Chair extended condolences to Stephen Tudor following his recent bereavement in losing his mother and the Committee also extended its sympathy.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Hefin Underwood was elected as Chair of the Committee for the period 2023-24.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Elin Hywel was elected as Vice-chair of the Committee for the period 2023-24.

3. APOLOGIES

Councillor Michael Sol Owen (Representing Plas Heli, Pwllheli), Alwyn Roberts and Andy Vowell (Representing the Pwllheli RNLI)

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair took the opportunity to enquire whether it was possible to have a meeting around a table in March 2024? He noted that many members wished to have a face-to-face meeting and several members of the public had enquired why the meeting was not face-to-face? The Chair agreed to write a letter on behalf of the Committee to this end. In addition, it was asked whether it was possible to consider having a meeting during the day rather than in the evening? The Cabinet Member asked whether they had a hybrid meeting in mind, and it was noted that the more people that could be had around the table, the better it would be.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee, held on 14 March 2023, as a true record.

7. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Reference was made to the report produced by the Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and the Harbour, and it was reported as follows:

1.1 Port Marine Safety Code

It was confirmed that it continued to be a priority for the Senior Harbours Officer, together with the new Maritime Service Manager, Bryn Pritchard Jones, to update the Safety Code for each harbour in Gwynedd. Once more, everyone was reminded to contact the service if there were any issues.

1.2 Dredging the Channel

It was reported that dredging the channel remained a challenge although there had been collaboration with YGC to undertake an appraisal. The full option would be to maintain the basin, channel and the Harbour mouth. It was noted that YGC had been unsuccessful in securing their grant this year for the Cerrig y Defaid beach nourishment work.

It was noted that one option was to empty the stilling lagoon, however a cost of £1M had been given via a tender for the work. Discussions were ongoing with the company to see if there was a better solution. It was confirmed that the tender to dredge the marina basin would be out soon, however, the main issue was where to dispose of the sediment. For information, it was reported that the Leader and Cabinet Member had requested a report regarding the situation.

Concern was raised that YGC had failed to secure the grant this year for Cerrig y Defaid beach nourishment work, which meant that the sand in the harbour mouth was to be sold as a whole. It was confirmed that they had been unsuccessful this year and were looking at the long-term Flood Plan, and that emptying the Harbour mouth was an annual matter and currently cost-neutral for the Hafan.

The concern regarding the mouth of the Harbour was further questioned and it was asked whether anyone had looked at the situation creatively? Such as blowing the sand with a pump along a beach e.g., Glandon Beach? The advantage of this would be the cost, as it would only need to be removed once.

The Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour reminded members that Glandon Beach was under the control of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and they had rejected the sand as it was not up to biodiversity standards, and there was already joint-working on the Flood Risk Plan.

The Chair reminded everyone that a meeting had been arranged in the Town Council Chamber with Natural Resources Wales and an invitation was extended to the Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour and any member of the Committee to attend the meeting on 22/11/23.

It was noted that the dredging situation was frustrating, and the basin was in dire need of dredging and it was asked what were the prospects for carrying out the dredging work?

The Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour reported that the Service was working as hard as possible and trying to get work done. He reported that there was a small space in the

lagoons and the intention was to use the lagoons while negotiations were underway.

One Member felt that the success of the Hafan and Harbour depended on the dredging work, with an income of £1.8 million, and in reality, there was no reason not to find the money to undertake the work, and for it to be done urgently. It was questioned whether it would be possible to set a proper programme of work, and for this to be the most important work. In addition, were they not required to complete this work to comply with the 2016 Strategy?

The Cabinet Member confirmed that she had heard the message clearly and realised that it was a very important issue. She thanked the Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour and the Assistant Head of Department for Economy and Community for their work and the partnership with NRW and noted that she would challenge this situation.

The Assistant Head of Department for Economy and Community reported that he shared the frustration regarding the dredging situation and confirmed that the main hurdle was what to do with the sediment. He confirmed that the idea of pumping it into the sea had been rejected and that joint-working with private companies had not come up with a solution. He confirmed that they had also revisited the options. He also confirmed that NRW now led on the flooding work, and it would be necessary to revisit contentious issues in due course.

He confirmed that there was a desire for a solution, and it was not a lack of funds or effort that had put them in the current position.

The Chair noted that there was a need to be firmer with NRW and to be willing to challenge them.

1.3 Financial Matters

The Commercial Manager for Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour confirmed that the profits referred to above had been committed, however there were three funds – dredging, improvements and boats, and sometimes opportunities arose to get new things.

He referred to the PMBHA questionnaire which had highlighted the lack of Wi-Fi connection and car park issues. He confirmed that the Wi-Fi situation was now successful and that the installation of solar panels and electric car charging points was underway – the project was in place, but no time frame.

He noted that the Income Report confirmed that the Hafan and Harbour had reached the target despite it having been a quiet year, with fewer visitors and fewer boats going out. It was reported that this was partly due to the weather and the cost-of-living situation.

It was reported that berth holders were happy with the improvements, and they confirmed now that some of the large boats had moved on the place looked good. It was reported that the most important thing was to know how much the fees will be so that people could budget, and they appealed to be informed of this as soon as possible. Additionally, it was noted that as electricity costs had fallen during the year people were looking to recover somewhat. It was also reported that the cost of fuel was a matter of concern, being around 20p more expensive than local garages, and it was hoped that it would come down in price.

It was reported that visitor numbers had halved, and it was questioned how many boats had been turned away, noting that visitors spent their money in the Town. It was noted that if the piles were good, pontoons would be extremely advantageous, and it was noted that there was a need to look at more pontoons.

The Commercial Manager for Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour confirmed that they had received a reduced number of calls and were not refusing anyone from the sea. He noted that he had seen a

difference this year and accepted the above comments.

Reference has been made to a consultation that was currently on-going, which confirmed that the Council alone would not lead on the Strategy, and that the funds were not available to undertake everything in the Plan.

The sub-letting situation was questioned and it was confirmed that the Council was not looking at sub-letting berths, but if they did look at sub-letting, then annual costs would then rise as a result. It was confirmed that other local marinas do not offer this and that Hafan Pwllheli and the Harbour were currently in a good place, but this could be considered should the situation change.

Reference was made to the previous waiting lists that had risen from 0, to 75 to 222. It was confirmed that a similar situation had existed before and the response had been to raise the fee, but concern was raised that fees could be overcharged. The above was corrected confirming that Plas Heli sublets but this created a great deal of work and the benefits were small.

It was noted that the Hafan and Harbour were full, that the waiting list seemed extensive, but trawling through the waiting lists it had become more apparent that the market was fragile, and this had been identified to the Council as a risk. It was noted that the market was challenging, and there were a lot of enquiries coming in regarding people wanting to sell their boats.

1.4 Fees and Charges 2023/2024

It was confirmed that the Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour and the Assistant Head of the Economy and Community Department were eager to get the fees and charges out as soon as possible. He confirmed that the proposal before Cabinet will be to raise fees in line with inflation. He referred to the challenges that had emerged, such as boats attaching watercraft to them and as a result fees needed to be examined. It was confirmed that the paperwork was in place and Heads of Services were expected to look at this in due course.

Concern was raised that the Council would cut back in this field, questioning was it not prudent to retain the laying goose as this would be best and most important?

The Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour reported that savings and cuts had been made last year by not filling a post, raising a fuel levy and receiving a refund from the Crown Estate. It was confirmed that there were no cuts on the Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour list at this time.

The Chair asked the Cabinet Member to report the above to the Cabinet, and the Cabinet Member confirmed that she had heard the message. The Cabinet Member reported that she would receive a presentation on 11/10/23 on the Council's financial position and that the role of Members would be to pick and choose the way forward. She also confirmed, following a meeting with the Finance Minister, that Gwynedd would not be aware of the settlement until 18/12/23.

It was reported on behalf of the berth holders the pride they felt that they were getting value for money, and in accepting the comments regarding the shortage of visitors, some mariners would like a refund such as for sub-letting, but they clearly understood the logic. Obviously when the berths were full, there was no need to consider this but it was asked that the possibilities be left open.

It was asked when will the on-line system for berths and payments be ready? It was confirmed that the Havenstar system was being discussed with the Finance Department, as the Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour was not involved on the financial side. It was confirmed that the annual agreement would be sent by email to make the process easier and to reduce postage costs.

1.5 Operational Items

Navigation – it was confirmed that there were currently no notices. It was reported that there was currently a patch of seagrass on Abererch and Cerrig y Defaid beaches.

Staffing – it was reported that Andy Green was getting better and stronger and that the Commercial Manager of Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour was in contact with him, and it was hoped that he would be back home soon. It was reported that it had been a challenging situation, as Andy was an integral member of staff to the Hafan's success. The Chair requested that a message be sent to him, on behalf of the Committee, for a full and speedy recovery.

The location of the seagrass was questioned, and it was asked whether there were any berths at this site? It was confirmed that there were block berths in this area, and it was noted that if the seagrass was a barrier weren't temporary berths more important? The Commercial Manager for Hafan Pwllheli and Harbour confirmed that it was nowhere near the main entrance but agreed to check the situation.

Strategic Plan – it was confirmed that an initial meeting had taken place with the Consultants, but they had been very poor over the Summer. It was confirmed that they would return to the area on 12 and 13 of October and that there would be an opportunity for a one-to-one chat or meetings to discuss ideas about the area in question namely North Quay, Hen Ynys, Outer Harbour, Inner Harbour and Cae Ceffyl and it was hoped that the Report would be ready by Christmas 2023.

RESOLVED:

To note and accept the report.

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

For information, the Committee was informed that seven events had taken place already from Plas Heli and a full list of future events had been planned.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting will take place on 5 March 2024 at 6.00pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.10pm.

Everyone was thanked for their valuable contributions.

CHAIR.