

PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 11/03/20

PRESENT: Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Gwynedd Council) (Chair)
Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Gwynedd Council) (Vice-chair)

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths (Gwynedd Council), Councillor Llywelyn Rhys (Porthmadog Town Council Representative), David Eastwood (Harbour Interests Representative), Dr John Jones-Morris (Leisure Interests Representative), Robert Owen (Commercial Interests Representative) and Will Walker Jones (Cricieth RNLI Representative)

OBSERVER: Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member – Economic Development, Gwynedd Council).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), Arthur Francis Jones (Senior Harbours Officer), Malcolm Humphreys (Porthmadog Harbourmaster) and Eirian Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

The Chair referred to the recent death of Brian Rees Jones, who had been prominent in establishing Madoc Yacht Club and played a lead role in securing the purchase of the harbour by the former Dwyfor District Council. It was agreed to send a letter expressing the members' sympathies to his family in their bereavement.

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 9 October 2019 as a true record, subject to correcting the references to '*Porthmadog Sailing Club*' in the English version to read '*Madoc Yacht Club*'.

4. UPDATE ON HARBOUR MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The reports below were presented, and members were invited to give feedback on safety matters and harbour operational matters.

- The Senior Harbour Officer's report, updating the committee on Harbour matters for the period from October 2019 to March 2020.
- The Harbourmaster's report, summarising the navigational and operational matters that had arisen between October 2019 and March 2020, including maintenance matters.

The following were distributed:-

- Details of the fees and charges for Porthmadog Harbour for the period April 2020 to April 2021, and the powerboat and personal watercraft launch fees for the same period.
- Trinity House's letter, dated 10 October 2019, following its annual inspection of navigational aids in the Harbour and the channel between 14 and 16 October 2019. The Maritime and Country Parks Manager noted that the majority of work that had required attention had now been completed, but he asked members to inform them if they noticed that buoys had moved from their correct location.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer referred to the recent inclement weather, and noted that it had been extremely unusual to experience so many storms in such a short period. Fortunately, the direction of the wind had been favourable this time, and no damage had been caused to the harbour, with the exception of some lifted blocks, and some moved buoys. The service's staff had been on call, ensuring that everything was in order, and they were thanked for going the extra mile.

A question was asked about how concerned the service had been during the recent storms. In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the strongest winds coinciding with a high tide had been worrying, but the situation would have been far worse if the wind direction had been less favourable for Porthmadog. It was confirmed that the committee could do nothing specific about the situation, apart from informing the officers if they had any concerns, and it was emphasised that these extreme weather events highlighted the fact that everybody had a duty to protect the environment.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer further reported:-

- That he had held a discussion with Cricieth Town Council about its request for the Council to consider alternative methods of managing power boats following an incident. The Town Council's frustration was understandable, but the Town Council also acknowledged that the Council's powers were extremely limited. It was promised that the service would strengthen its supervision, and try to improve the navigation aids in the bay. It was also accepted that businesses depended upon the boats, and the officer was grateful of the opportunity to discuss the matter with the Town Council.
- No harbour safety matters had been reported by members during the last six months. Members were informed that they could request a copy of the code, and were asked to contact him if they had any matters to raise.
- The budget summary highlighted the impact of the decrease in demand (bringing boats into the harbour / mooring boats) on the income. Of this year's target income of £73,000, only £60,000 had been received to date, and there was little potential to generate further income over the next month. This meant having to find savings of £13,000 to meet the deficit. In order to prevent having to make cuts to factors that affected harbour safety, it was intended to review the whole harbours budget to see whether there were any aspects that were over-performing, or any areas with underspends. It was anticipated that there would be an overspend of approximately £10,000 by the end of the year, compared with the target of £13,000. It would be preferable to reduce the figure to £0, so that the service was self-sufficient. It was also noted that opportunities would be extended to the yachting sector, with others invited to run projects in the harbours.

In response to a question, the Maritime and Country Parks Manager explained that although efforts had been made in the past to support events in the Harbour, such as the Food Festival, commercial event organisers had been warned that the Council would charge a fee this year due to the costs involved with clearing the site etc. Members agreed

that it would be appropriate not to charge fees or to offer reduced fees initially, but the events should be responsible for their costs once they had become established.

A question was asked about whether there was a need to plan ahead for the reduction in the use of sailing yachts and an increase in the use of power boats? In response, the Maritime and Country Parks Service officer noted that this was a national trend. People who sailed tended to be older, and it was difficult to attract the younger generation as there was currently more emphasis on adventure activities. However, the decrease had now stabilised, and there was no further land in Porthmadog for the other services. It was further explained that an increase in the power boat launch fees to £15 had been recommended for the next financial year, although the annual permit fee would not increase.

Reference was made to the National Grid's request to transport a major transformer through Porthmadog Harbour by ship, before transporting it by road to Trawsfynydd Power Station. The Maritime and Country Parks Service officer noted that he had recently held discussions with the National Grid and the Welsh Government Highways Department on alternative methods of bringing the transformer to the shore. Discussions had been held on using Morfa Bychan beach for this purpose. Topographic and hydrographic surveys had shown that a tide measuring a minimum of 4.5 metres would be required, and as the ship would be further out to sea than anticipated, more track would be needed to reach it. It was also noted that a marine licence from Natural Resources Wales would be required in order to install a track and dismantle it, and that it would only be in place for 24 - 48 hours. It appeared that the National Grid was warming to this idea, although it was not currently possible to confirm the exact arrangements. It was hoped that a decision would be reached the following week, and that work with the companies would then begin.

In response to an observation regarding the size of the lorry that would transport the transformer by road, the Maritime and Country Parks Officer explained that the road would need to be closed for a period of time, which would also involve the removal of any obstacles on the roadside. Also, the journey would have to take place during daylight in order to ensure that the workers had adequate visibility of their surroundings.

In response to a question about who was responsible for the cost of the work, the Maritime and Country Parks Service officer noted that he anticipated that the company would shoulder the cost, and that the cost would not fall to Gwynedd Council or the Yacht Club.

In response to a question about the timing of the work, the Maritime and Country Parks Service officer explained that it would take place around the end of April / beginning of May. He confirmed that he would discuss the requirements in relation to road closures etc., in Morfa Bychan, with the local member.

The importance of informing committee members once the date and arrangements for the work had been confirmed was emphasised, together with the need to fully engage with local residents, and to consider access requirements for the emergency services. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer confirmed that he would safeguard the interests of all parties, as local members and committee members.

It was noted that the Highways Department would need to warn people who parked on the side of roads to move their cars beforehand. He also noted that there was a need to consider the residents of east Porthmadog, as people would be affected by the road closure.

As the road closures etc., would happen during a busy period for the town, a question was asked about whether there was an opportunity for organisations within the town to submit bids for funding from the National Grid community benefits fund. It was suggested that a bid

could possibly be made via the Town Council. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that he would raise this to see what was possible.

The Maritime and Country Parks Service officer noted that there had recently been a misconception in the press, and for clarity, he confirmed that the arrival of the transformer was not connected to any plans to establish a small nuclear station in Trawsfynydd.

The local member noted that he was pleased to see the additional safety signs at the approach to the beaches near Borth y Gest, despite some local opposition. The Maritime and Country Parks officer thanked the local member for his support with the signs and the sea wall. He also thanked the committee members for their support and willingness to collaborate.

RESOLVED to note and accept the report.

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 7 October 2020.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 6.35 pm

CHAIRMAN