

Minutes of a Meeting of the ABERAERON Harbour Users Consultative Committee held remotely via video-conference on Thursday, 21 March 2024

Representing Ceredigion County Council: Councillor Keith Henson (Chairman)
Councillors Elizabeth Evans, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Matthew Vaux

Officers in Attendance: Owen Morgan, Katy Spain and Dana Jones

Harbour Users: Chris Seal, Martin Seal, Julian Driver, Owen Stephen Webb, Carl Rich, Jonathan Price Jones, Roger Crouch, Brett Stones

(5.30pm – 6.30pm)

1. **Apologies**

David Nicholson apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

2. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 October 2023**

It was AGREED that minutes of the meeting held on the 19 October 2023 were confirmed as a true record.

Matters Arising

Minute 5(i) Councillor Elizabeth Evans provided a response to her question regarding charging for moorings on the foreshore and harbour that was encompassed in the Crown Estates. She stated the Service had informed her that they were charged as this was a global service and not classed individually.

Minute 5(v) In relation to the collapsing manhole adjacent to the Harbour Manager's officer and slipway this remained unresolved by Dwr Cymru. Councillor Elizabeth Evans requested that this would be pursued urgently, Owen Morgan stated that the matter was not within the remit of Harbour Services to resolve but the matter was being pursued by colleagues in Estates as it is understood that Dwr Cymru were refusing to accept any responsibility for the asset and the issue arising.

3. **Harbour Services Update**

- The Harbour Manager presented those present with a diagrammatical plan of the temporary AtoNs arrangements related to the Aberaeron coastal defence works. It was emphasised that it should not be used for Navigation. A copy of the diagram will be circulated via Local Notice to Mariners in due course. It was suggested that the Yacht Club could also display the diagram and the Harbour Manager extended an offer to the Yacht Club to come and talk to members if they felt that this would be beneficial.
- Signage would be erected to inform the public that Aberaeron was a working harbour with uneven surfaces and other potential hazards.

- The Harbour Manager had reported that Trinity House had audited the Council's processes relating to Aids to Navigation (AtoNs) and found them to be in order.

4. **Mooring Waiting List**

It was agreed to note the mooring waiting list as presented. Officers confirmed that work was being undertaken to amend the list to include further detail related to residency status and boat type and size.

It was also noted that the waiting lists would now be open for new applicants and that the waiting list fees for new entrants would no longer be a credit towards the first year's mooring fees on mooring allocation.

5. **General Maintenance and Cleanliness**

- A programme of inspections had identified some maintenance and repair required to some Harbour assets and these had been compiled and prioritised. Works will be procured and undertaken in line with priority and available budget.
- A procurement exercise had been undertaken to carry out the works required to the ladders, and it is anticipated that this work would take place early in the new financial year.
- An inspection of the harbour wall and slipway fixed mooring rings were due to take place to identify any maintenance work that might be required.
- Concerns were raised about the length of time it was taking to procure some of the works that was being undertaken. It was acknowledged that there were delays due to capacity within the Council's procurement services and that this was also frustration for Officers. It was confirmed that Officers would be engaging with the procurement service with a view to identifying options to improve timelines including potential development of an appropriate framework.
- Officers would also be liaising with procurement to establish whether it might be possible to include the slipway guide pole work as a variation to the specification for the repairs to the ladders (subject to the contractor accepting and them providing a reasonable quote for the additional works).
- The issue of algae growth on the main slipway was raised and a request for action to be taken to remove the material. The Harbour Manager noted that algae growth was prevalent at this time of the year and that unfortunately traditional means of removing the growth using chemicals were no longer acceptable to NRW. Arrangements were in place for Harbour Staff to

undertake some wire brushing of the slipway in coming weeks and further activity would be undertaken during the year as and when required.

6. Issues raised by Harbour Users

- Discussion was had in relation to day launch fees and the belief of some attendees that there were significant numbers of day launches taking place without payment of the appropriate fee. It was also felt by some of these present that the current arrangements for payment through Clic were inadequate. Officers acknowledged that launches could take place when Harbour staff were not in attendance but that there were those who held annual launch permits that allowed them to launch at any of the Council Harbours.

The Harbour Manager advised that the level of day launches noted by the service was historically low and that he would welcome further information in relation to claims that a significant numbers of launches without payment was being made to inform future manning of the offices. The Harbours Service would be investigating with colleagues in Finance whether it may be possible to enhance the payment option currently available with card payment machines at the Harbour Offices.

- An enquiry was made in relation to the staffing of the Harbour offices and whether there would be a presence on weekends. It was confirmed that the intention was for Harbour offices at Aberaeron and New Quay to be manned on weekends following commencement of the Seasonal Harbour Assistants (subject to there being no sickness absence).
- Chris Seal requested a response to the questions he had sent previously which he advised he had not received a response to. The Harbour Manager stated that a response had been sent to him that he would send the response once again.

Chris Seal stated that he was unhappy that the questions he had were not included as formal items for this meeting and proceed to raise them. The following question was read out to all at the meeting:

‘Why was during the recent Online Consultation, why was the HMP not radically changed when 85% of respondents rejected the draft policy. Who made the decision to press-on regardless.’

In response, Officers confirmed that the full details of the responses to the consultation were presented to both Scrutiny and Cabinet. As part of the democratic process, Scrutiny could make recommendations to Cabinet (as was the case in respect of the Harbour Management Policy) and ultimately, decisions in relation to whether to accept these recommendations (as was the case in respect of the recommendations in relation to the Harbour

Management Policy) and, in relation to the contents and implementation of any policy were made by Cabinet.

- Mr Seal also raised the matter of the ability to inherit use of a leisure moorings having been removed from the Harbour Policy and that he did not agree with this change. Officers acknowledged that not all stakeholders may agree with all the changes to the Policy but that the decision had been taken by Cabinet to implement the revised Policy. The rationale for this change, which was that it would improve access to moorings for those on the waiting list, and this had already been outlined in the reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet
- A response to a further question by Chris Seal which had already been responded to outside of the meeting was requested by him as he considered that the response should be heard by all the Committee.

“Exactly what services and functions does the new ‘Mooring Admin Fee’ cover?”

In response, Officers confirmed that this was not a new fee. The fee forms part of the overall charges related to applications for moorings and contributes towards meeting the costs associated with the delivery of the harbours service which includes administrative tasks related to the mooring applications. Ultimately, if this fee was not charged, then the fee per metre would simply be increased to generate the level of income which was currently generated by this element of the charging structure.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans reported that her understanding was that previously following discussion with Harbour Users and Officers (more than 10 years ago she believed) the introduction of a fee was in lieu of a car park pass. Officers acknowledged that some stakeholders would be disappointed that the permits were no longer afforded. It was agreed to note the current position as from 01 April 2024.