

Minutes of a Meeting of the ABERAERON Harbour Users Consultative Committee held remotely via video-conference on Thursday, 16 March 2023

Representing Ceredigion County Council: Councillor Keith Henson (Chairman)
Councillors Elizabeth Evans, Matthew Vaux and Carl Worrall

Representing Aberaeron Town Council:

Representing the Harbour Users:

Officers in Attendance: Gerwyn Jones, Owen Morgan, Katy Spain and Nia Jones (minutes)

Other Harbour Users: Nicholas Allen, Martin Beazer, Nigel Davies, Tim Davies Julian Driver, Alun Evans, Huw Evans, John Evans, Jan Foy, Lindsay Geddes, Lowri Goss, Phil Harries, Tim Jeremy, Anthony Hartwell-Jones, Steve Holt, Elizabeth Jones, Jonathan Price Jones, Martin Wynne Jones, Vernon Jones, Thomas Lawson, Adrian Morris, David Nicholson, Simon Raw Rees, John Reed, Carl Rich, N J Robertson, Nick Sawyer, Chris Seal, Martin Seal, Harry Simpson, Steve Webb, Anthony Taylor, Janet Turner, Martin Vincent, Katy Willett and Richard Whitfield,

(5.30pm – 6.25pm)

1. Apologies

None received

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2022

It was agreed to re-circulate the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12th October 2022, for Members of the Committee to review.

Matters Arising

Phil Davies noted that he asked a question at the previous meeting regarding the commencement date for work at the harbour, which was not included in the previous minutes. It was noted that the information was not available at that time.



3. Harbour Services Update

Owen Morgan, Harbour Manager for Ceredigion noting that the 4th Edition of the 'Calm Waters' Newsletter circulated early today, attached for completeness, contained information relating to the update.

4. Issues Raised by Harbour Users

The following were questions raised prior to the meeting:

	Question	Answer
1	I have a mooring in Aberaeron and have had for over 25 years, in fact the same mooring H1. I would like to move	Individual requests for change of mooring is an operational issue/request/matter and can be

	<p>closer to the front and last year there a few spaces that did not get used at all. My question is can I move mooring please I use my boat regularly through the season and being at the front would give me up to hour extra on a good tide. This is my question for the meeting thank you</p>	<p>considered at any time, in accordance with the Ceredigion Harbour Management Policy, through the usual means of contacting the Harbours team (in person when at the offices, or via Clic). We will liaise directly with the Harbour User on this matter.</p>
2	<p>The harbour renovation may well affect the harbour users whilst it is being undertaken, potential access restrictions both on land and water, particularly in the adjoining areas to the North and South piers, obviously a considerable degree of the working will be during low water periods, but scaffolding and other building components may need to be left in place in the harbour entrance during high waters, which may cause navigational hazards, are there plans to advise harbour users of any, and when potential navigational hazards might be in place.</p> <p>Additional to this are there confirmed dates as to when this much needed work is to begin?</p> <p>Thanking you in advance of including this item in the 16th March Harbour Users Meeting Agenda.</p>	<p>Every effort will be made to minimise and mitigate the impacts of the Flood Alleviation Works at Aberaeron on all stakeholders which includes harbour users. The Harbour Manager is in ongoing contact with officers leading on the project and regular updates will be provided to Harbour Users. This will include Local Notice to Mariners being issued or direct contact where and when appropriate as well as updates in Calm Waters and at the Harbour Users meetings.</p> <p>As well as the formal Harbour Users meetings, which will continue to be arranged on a virtual basis moving forward, stakeholders have a variety of ways of engaging with the Harbours Team which includes face to face at the offices, via Clic and during 2023 the new series of surgeries.</p>
3	<p>Brief description by CCC of the role of the Harbour Assistant. From our point of view it seems to be an office based job with little or no decision making.</p>	<p>Harbour Manager (Full Time – Permanent).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Harbour Works Leader (Full Time – Permanent).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Harbour Assistant x2 (Seasonal: April – September).</p> <p>Advertisements for the Harbours Works</p>

		<p>Leader and a Harbour Assistant vacancy will be posted on the Council's website shortly. Anyone who has an interest in working within the Harbours Service is encouraged to apply. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications attached.</p> <p>The level of decision-making is, and always has been, related to the Grade and responsibilities of the job evaluated posts.</p>
4	<p>Description by CCC of the method for collecting slipway launch fees from those boat owners who do not have a season ticket. authority.</p>	<p>The income generated from daily launch fees at our harbours has historically been very modest which has included when the Harbours team has been fully staffed. Our approach therefore deemed to be proportionate and appropriate in the context of the overall operation and that the harbour office in Aberaeron will be staffed on most days over the main summer season.</p> <p>We can look at the use of card metres but the income potential would need to justify the expenditure.</p>

Supplementary questions were posed during the meeting:

5	<p><i>Supplementary question to question 2 above:</i> Does the Harbour renovation works mean that anyone would need to move mooring?</p>	<p>If this needs to happen, we will ensure that we place people at the most appropriate mooring in order that they are not affected</p>
6	<p><i>Supplementary question to question 4 above:</i> Historically you won't collect much money if the Harbour Authority can't take money, cheques or cards and how will you collect the money if CLC are not working evenings or weekends. The income from day-trippers and visitors could be vastly increased</p>	<p>If it happens on the weekend, we will take the details and follow up during the week. Lots of people will have contacted and paid fees in advance</p>
7	<p>Have insurance been checked for</p>	<p>Yes, this is asked in advance</p>

	visiting vessels?	
8	Is there a record kept of mooring fees charged and could this information be shared with us?	Yes, there is a visitor record log. We cannot share information relating to individuals due to GDPR, however the audited harbour accounts are available in the public domain. This can be added to future agenda items.
9	You say that you examine the insurance for visitors, however you do not look at ours, so how can we be confident that this work is done?	<p>It is a requirement of the Policy to have insurance, and every year mooring holders are required to complete the relevant documents and sign the declaration confirming that you have insurance.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note As has been explained previously the one-off checking of insurance documents on an annual basis was fundamentally flawed as insurance policies lapse or can be terminated at any time. The onus is on the mooring holders to have adequate and current insurance at all time which is a requirement set out in the signed annual Mooring Application Form.</p>
10	Are the chains being maintained?	Chain maintenance will be starting Monday next week (20/03/2023). A contract for the work has been awarded to check and repair where required.
11	<p><i>Questions relating to mooring fees:</i></p> <p>A 45 minute meeting is not enough time and it should be longer to discuss things like why our fees have gone up by 30%. What else has gone up 30%?</p> <p>It would be useful to have a rationale for the increases including the costs of running the harbour</p>	<p>The budget was discussed at Scrutiny as well as Cabinet and the information is available online. Unfortunately, the Welsh Government settlement and increased pressures ensuring social care services etc and the statutory duty to balance the books has meant a significant increase to Council Tax and a need to increase incomes, whilst trying to ensure a fair and equitable</p>

<p>Details of the fee increases should be been circulated to boat owners in advance, it's appalling to bring these out of the blue</p> <p>The higher the mooring fees, the better it looks when you want to give it away to a private company</p> <p>How many of you are boat owners and understand our situation</p> <p>How can you compare the increase in council tax and the increase in mooring fees. I've not seen a running meter charge, but believe it's now £68 plus £37 administration charge. Can you please clarify?</p> <p>Can I go online to see the charges?</p> <p>What other services have gone up by 33%</p> <p>If fees went up by 10% we could swallow, but 33% will mean that people will give it up, and income from harbours will become less</p>	<p>process. The Council Tax increase of 7.3% includes a 1.3% increase to the Fire Service levy, and other authorities have had to increase as well.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note</p> <p>The public sector, and local government especially, has suffered an extended and ongoing period of financial challenges and austerity, and the County Council is, like everyone else, affected by the inflationary situation.</p> <p>The Council is legally required to present a balanced annual budget and there are many considerations and influencing factors relating to this.</p> <p>Proposals relating to service specific fees and charges are subject to the political discussion/scrutiny, overview and approvals processes and the decision was taken this year to limit the increase in Council Tax to 7.3% for 2023/24 which is significantly below the general rate of inflation.</p> <p>On this basis, without significantly reducing services, a number of which are statutory requirements, it is necessary to consider other means of mitigating the deficit. One way of doing this is to look at proportionate increases in fees and charges. The proposals for these will take into a number of considerations which include comparisons with the same or similar offering locally, the baseline fees and charges and elasticity of demand.</p> <p>The Council has an Income Management and Service Cost</p>
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		<p>Recovery Policy.</p> <p>Service users are of course entitled to their opinion as customers of discretionary offerings, and the choices they make with regards whether to make use of these or not is of course one for them to make at their prerogative.</p> <p>The proposals were in the public domain as part of papers presented to the Thriving Communities Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Cabinet and Council. These are available to peruse at: Ceredigion County Council Browse Meetings, 2023</p> <p>The fees and charges are available to view on the Council's website: www.ceredigion.gov.uk</p>
12	<p>We appreciate that these are difficult financial times, but why are harbour users asked to carry a disproportionate part of this. Would you consider establishing a working group to meet regularly to find a mutually agreeable way forward? The pursuit of the present policy is pricing local people out of its use, echoing the current housing crisis</p>	<p>Cllr Elizabeth Evans noted that she liked the idea of a working group to include representatives from the harbour users and the Yacht Club in addition to the surgery style meetings. It was agreed that Cllr Elizabeth Evans would discuss with Cllr Keith Henson and Owen Morgan.</p>
13	<p>No work has been done to the harbour for the past 6 – 7 years. If you carry on, all the local boats will be gone, and you will get people from away staying on boats</p>	<p>The harbour is dredged every year and maintenance work is being carried out next week as well as repointing work carried out in 2021, and the multi-million-pound coastal defence scheme which is due to start.</p> <p>Please let us know if there are any work that hasn't been carried out in order that we can look into this</p>

14	The pole on the slipway is missing, which makes it difficult to know where the edge is. This was raised at the October meeting but it's still not reported	The pole was damaged by a vehicle, and we will look into reinstating this.
15	The harbour is narrowed because mud is dumped on the beach which comes back as soon as there is a flood in the river. I would not call this dredging, it's redistribution and I have photographic evidence that it has been redistributed at both ends. Is it meant to be by the bridge?	If you're asking about the reprofiling of the harbour, we will propose that next year it all goes on South beach.
16	Lots of children go crabbing by Pwll Cam in the Summer, however there's about 4 – 5 feet of mud in there, and I'm concerned that if a child falls in they won't be able to get out again.	<p>The coastal defence scheme will see a lowering of the entrance to this area which should wash out the mud.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note The harbours are what they are and there will be inherent risks present at all harbours will often include obvious hazards such as steep drops and water.</p> <p>There is no practicable means of removing all potential risks and hazards.</p> <p>We have general risk assessments in place for the harbours which are subject to review. Reasonable and practicable mitigating measures and interventions are implemented where possible and appropriate.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note Water injection dredging was undertaken at Pwll Cam during late 2020. The total cost of this work (including assessment and physical works) was in the order of £28,000</p> <p>The work is deemed to have had minimal long-term benefit and on this</p>

		basis will not be revisited.
17	I had an accident on the slipway in July last year, and I sent you an email. However, I haven't had a reply. What provision is there for an Accident Book	<p>I [Owen Morgan] apologise if I haven't responded, I will check my e-mails.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note The Council has a corporate incident reporting system. All incidents, accidents and near misses should be reported, in this instance the Harbours Team, so these can be logged and investigated in accordance with the corporate protocols and system. It would be inappropriate to compromise, duplicate or dilute the system in place with hard copy incident/accident logs at each of the harbours.</p>
18	The door to the Harbour Office is always locked	<p>I [Owen Morgan] will pass this message on to the Assistants asking them to always keep the door open, however if you knock, we will always answer. Cllr Elizabeth Evans recommended that details of the opening hours are posted on the doors.</p> <p>Post Meeting Note We intend to maintain a regular and ongoing presence on most days at all three harbours during the period 01 April-30 September.</p> <p>A reduced but regular presence will be maintained at all three harbours during the period 01 October – 31 March.</p> <p>As usual contact can be maintained with the harbours team at any time via Clic.</p>

Post Meeting Note

The redacted mooring waiting list for each harbour as at March 2023 is attached. The number of each entry reflects when the transaction was made.

The allocation of moorings is as set out and in accordance with the Ceredigion Harbour Management Policy.

The Chairman of the meeting thanked everyone for the comments, noting that there are a number of things for the service to follow-up on.

5. Any other matter which the Chairman decide is for the urgent attention of the Committee

No items were raised.