

CARDIFF BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Remote Annual Meeting held on 10th July, 2024.

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Penarth Town Council); F. Hourahine (Natural Resources Wales), S. Jones (Boatfolk Marinas Ltd.), C. Kingston (Waterfront Partners), C. Michael (RSPB), C. Pooley (Natural Resources Wales), P. Stone (Canoe Wales) and M. Thomas (Clerk – Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, Vale of Glamorgan Council).

Also present: A.M. Ernest (Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association), D. Hall (Cardiff Harbour Authority) and A. Vye-Parminter (Cardiff Harbour Authority).

(a) Appointment of Chair –

Councillor M.R. Wilson was appointed Chair for the current Municipal year.

(b) Appointment of Vice-Chair –

Councillor N.C. Thomas was appointed Vice-Chair for the current Municipal year.

(c) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from A. Michael (Penarth Headland Link Charity).

(d) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28th February, 2024 –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 28th February, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

(e) Timetable of Meetings –

The report was presented to the Committee by the Clerk of the Committee, the purpose of which was to suggest dates for future meetings of the Committee, for the Committee to consider the timetable and to make any amendments as required. Furthermore, Members were asked to consider whether meetings should continue to be a mix of remote and in person.

TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS
Wednesday, 10 th July, 2024 at 4.30 p.m. (Annual Meeting)
Wednesday, 16 th October, 2024 at 5.00 p.m.
Wednesday, 22 nd January, 2025 at 5.00 p.m.
Wednesday, 30 th April, 2025 at 5.00 p.m.

Following the presentation of the report, F. Hourahine, a representative from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) agreed with the proposed dates but due to work commitments and the need to sometimes undertake an immediate or emergency response as part of their work and to be out in the field, the NRW representative(s) preference would be to have primarily full remote meetings. This was due to the fact that it may be challenging for them to attend a physical meeting in Cardiff, but they would have more opportunity to join the meeting remotely should they need to be called out for field work at short notice.

A.M. Ernest (Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association) felt that the meetings should continue to be a mixture of both remote and in person, which he felt was also favoured by several other Committee Members and attendees and cited the benefits of having in person meetings at least every six months.

Councillor Thomas (Representative from Penarth Town Council) referred to a potential clash with another meeting that he and the Chair might have with regards to the proposed dates on 16th October, 2024 and for the January 2025 meeting. The Chair stated he would discuss these dates with the Clerk going forward and that these proposed dates were always flexible and were subject to change due to circumstances requiring rescheduling the meeting, etc. He stated that for the moment those dates should remain within the official timetable but nearer to the date for each of these they could be reviewed in order to accommodate any potential clashes. The Chair also endorsed A.M. Ernest's comments about continuing the mixed format of remote and in person meetings.

It was subsequently

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the timetable of meetings be approved (subject to any further amendment due to Member availability etc).

(2) T H A T it be confirmed that the format of meetings going forward should continue to be a mix of remote and in person.

(f) Navigational Safety – Verbal Update Report from Cardiff Harbour Authority –

The Committee were informed by A. Vye-Parminter representing the Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA) that there were no updates on navigational safety at this time and nothing further to report.

There being no further comments or questions on this item, it was subsequently AGREED – T H A T that this item be noted.

(g) General Progress Report from Cardiff Harbour Authority –

The report was presented by A. Vye-Parminster (with support from D. Hall) the representative from the CHA. He updated the Committee on the following points:

- The annual Lock 3 Fish Pass maintenance had been successfully completed for the year. Due to this, all the necessary actions around the maintenance had been completed successfully and the lock was back in action.
- Four of the sluice stop beams were taken away for full refurbishment a number of months ago and subsequently these had been fully refurbished and successfully placed back in the Sluice Gate 2 creating an effective watertight seal, in order for the CHA team to complete the annual maintenance on Sluice Gate 2. As part of that maintenance two of the hydraulic cylinders had been stripped off and taken away for repair and refurbishment but despite that the sluice maintenance was progressing as planned.
- CHA had identified a failed joint seal in the saltwater extraction pipework. It was explained that this pipe ran from the saltwater bund on the Bay side of the locks, between Locks 1 and 2 and out to the outer harbour which allowed the discharge of any build up of salt water through to the lock. The CHA had subsequently installed blanks into the pipework and a new 1200ml joint and 1200ml valve had been procured. The inspection also identified further valves that required some repair work, namely a 900ml valve, so work had already started on carrying out repairs on that valve on site.
- The Harbour Barrage was currently experiencing low river flows due to extended periods of dry weather and therefore was currently in a water budget situation. As a consequence, the CHA had raised the Bay level marginally in order to provide additional water to assist with normal locking operations as well as helping with salinity control. This tied in with the previous point around the saltwater extraction valve which helped to flush out any salt water that had come in via every lock that the CHA ran and also assisted with the attraction of water for the fish pass as well. Due to this the team were currently working closely with NRW and were believed to be sending weekly updates to them about the current situation.

Following the presentation of the report, S. Jones (Boat Folk Marinas Ltd) asked how the CHA were flushing from depth the salt water when they currently did not have a working saltwater flushing pipe. It was explained that the team had been able to work around this issue and successfully flush out salt water as well as keeping a constant eye on this. In addition, the method believed to be used was through corralling the saltwater through the sluices which had resulted in saltwater levels dropping off. It was explained that this was not an ideal approach but by raising the Bay levels and dropping these back, this was helping to push salt water towards the Estuary with the salinity level dropping off, which would be monitored until full repairs could be completed.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T this item be noted.

(h) Natural Resources Wales Update –

The update was presented to the Committee by F. Hourahine, representative from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), who highlighted the following areas of interest:

- Dissolved oxygen (DO) levels

Overall DO levels within the Bay had remained above the 5 mg/L threshold.

An incident occurred on 8th April when CHA performed the routine tidal lock procedure to prevent sea water from entering the Bay during high Spring tides. During this time all sluice gates and the fish pass were closed before high tide and reopened once the tide started to ebb. In this instance the lower leaf of sluice 4 failed to close and despite efforts from the engineering team it remained open for approximately 1.5 hours. During this time saline water entered the Bay creating a layer of denser saline water that covered the bottom of the entire Bay. For a brief period, elevated salinity levels were recorded at the sensor site on the lower Ely. CHA took all actions possible, including turning on the aeration system on 10th April to help lift and diffuse the saline water. Water quality was monitored closely and salinity levels within the Bay quickly began to decrease. Parameters had returned to normal by 14th April. In a few areas DO levels very briefly dropped to around 6.8 mg/L. CHA provided NRW with regular updates throughout and no impacts to the environment or wildlife were observed.

- Pollution incidents and investigations

C. Pooley (NRW) informed the Committee that as well as the pollution incidents attached on the briefing note the NRW had recently had notification from the Harbour Authority about a pollution incident involving a vessel up in Fisherman's Quay. This was as a result of the owners of the boat cleaning the vessel including sanding, grinding and painting its surface with the excess and waste being released into the water. Due to the number of reports that came through, an NRW officer had attended speaking to two of the workmen on the vessel. They were subsequently issued a caution and charged for the call out of the NRW officer. Due to these actions the issue was quickly resolved.

- Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station

There were no further updates since the last meeting.

- The Barrage fish pass

Following the annual winter maintenance period, the pass was reopened on 3rd April. Plenty of mullet had used it, but to date no salmonids had been recorded passing through.

A problem was identified with the fish inlet gate 1. This was one of three openings at the seaward end of the pass where the water exited and entered the Bristol Channel. A vertical sliding door on each gate formed the ideal sized gap to create a plume of freshwater that helped to attract approaching salmonids. The door kept slipping off its runners and the problem was below the water level, so CHA would have to incorporate stop logs into the seaward side of the gate to create a dry working area. As the fish pass was now up and running this work would need to be carried out during the next winter maintenance period when the pass was closed. Therefore, with NRW's approval, CHA would operate the pass with the gate fully open for the remainder of the year.

Since the opening of the fish pass there had been a large number of mullet that had come through but in terms of salmon only 8 in total had come through including a couple of large salmon fish.

In addition to the above, on the remaining two items on the NRW briefing note, namely Eels and the Blackweir docks feeder canal, these were also outlined to the Committee, with the recent work done on a presentation internally around Eels and the subsequent positive response from representatives of the CHA to this presentation and the work undertaken in this area referred to as well. In terms of the Blackweir docks, the NRW team had been continuing work with Associated British Ports (ABP). It was noted that quite a bit of regulatory work was being done internally at the moment.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T this item be noted.

(i) Any other Business –

A.M. Ernest (Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association) asked whether there had been any update on the Penarth Headland Link. It was explained that no update had been provided as yet and the Clerk would check with A. Michael, the representative for the project, to see if there were any updates which could be shared with Members and other attendees of the Committee prior to the next meeting. If not, an update would be sought at that future meeting.

(j) Date of Next Meeting –

AGREED – T H A T the next meeting would (provisionally) take place on Wednesday, 16th October, 2024 at 5.00 p.m. with the venue and date to be confirmed and finalised.