

CARDIFF BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 8th September, 2021.

Present: A. Parker (Chair), F. Abbott (Natural Resources Wales), Councillor L. Burnett (Vale of Glamorgan Council), Councillor N. Humphrey (Penarth Town Council), S. Jones (Boatfolk Marinas Ltd), Captain R. Lewis (Harbour Master, ABP), C. Michael (RSPB), K. Rogers (Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales), and M. Thomas (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer).

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

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from C. Dimond (Vice-Chair), J. Maidment (Cardiff Harbour Authority), Councillor M. Michael, (Cardiff Cabinet Member for Environment), P. Stone (Canoe Wales) and Councillor C. Wild (Cardiff County Council).

(b) Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd June, 2021 –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 2nd June, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Penarth Headland Link Verbal Update from Mr. Alun Michael, Penarth Headland Link Charity –

Alun Michael (Penarth Headland Link Charity), provided the Committee with a verbal update regarding the work undertaken between the Penarth Headland Link Charity and its partners:

- The project had been running for some time, and with the original idea conceived some 30 year ago. The aim now was to drive through this project to completion within the next few years;
- The infrastructure project provided a relatively low-cost solution to providing access to the Coastal Link and Taff Trail due to the current link over to the Barrage proving difficult for cyclists and tourists. This new link (with clearly demarcated lanes or paths for cyclists and walkers) would help to encourage cycling and walking rather than car use;
- The link would bring clear economic, environmental as well as leisure benefits to the area; at present such benefits, investment and development of nearby areas within Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan such as the Cardiff Barrage could not be fully realised until the link was completed;
- A previous solution which had been designed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council could not proceed due to the costs involved;

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- Subsequently, a group of volunteers had come together 7-8 years ago as part of the Penarth Headland Link Charity to look at providing a lower cost alternative. The design used by them for the link, was based on the model used at Stanley Park in Vancouver. The group had involved highly experienced people from the fields of engineering, law and finance in order to help drive the project on a pro bono basis that would have cost over £250,000 in normal circumstances;
- With regard to land, the Penarth Headland Link Charity had bought a key area of land required for the link at a relatively low cost and obtained a £1 licence on a second piece of land. The rest was owned by the local Councils;
- Through the Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA), a Project Manager for the link had been appointed, with the subsequent report on the link going to the Cabinet of Cardiff Council shortly;
- Discussions with the Welsh Government (WG) were ongoing and with the Secretary of State for Wales concerning the possibility of funding from the UK Government's 'Levelling Up Fund' in order to help with the link, as well as ongoing discussions with the relevant local Councils;
- Discussions had also been held with the Regional Transport Authority and it was clear that the project would make a significant contribution to their plans to develop a link between Newport and Barry for sustainable transport and tourism;

After the update, Councillor Burnett (a Cabinet Member from the Vale of Glamorgan Council) said that Cardiff Council were now implementing an E-bike scheme similar to that undertaken by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Councillor added that they were looking forward to how the Headland Link would develop. The representative from the Penarth Headland Link Charity agreed that E-bikes would help enormously to increase the use of cycling. While the current route was perceived as extremely steep for walking or cycling, the proposed link would help to remove this negative view as well as increasing footfall to Cardiff and the wider Vale area as well to Penarth Town Centre both from the Esplanade and from the Barrage.

Anthony Ernest (Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association) had been pleasantly surprised with the relatively large numbers of people using the existing cycling or pedestrian routes within the Bay area. The proposed Penarth Headland Link would help build upon this and it would be good to keep such cycling and walking routes clearly demarcated and separate.

Kerry Rogers (Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales) asked about the environmental impact of the link. The representative from the Penarth Headland Link Charity replied that he would share the relevant information on such impacts with the Committee. He added that the position of the walkway as part of the proposed link was well away from the cliff, safe from potential rock falls but also away from the estuary so it would not impact the local environment. Expertise from environmental and wildlife charities had been sought in order to limit the link's impact on the area.

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Captain Lewis (Harbour Master, ABP) asked if the Penarth Headland Link would just improve access to Penarth for cyclists and walkers or would it also help improve the wider Cardiff and Vale. The representative from the Penarth Headland Link Charity responded that the link would contribute significantly to the wider travel plans of WG and Cardiff and Vale Local Authorities.

Stuart Jones (Boatfolk Marinas Ltd) commended the project as cyclists would prefer to cycle via the proposed link. It would also benefit the marina economically and would help people to both cycle and walk to Penarth, not just Cardiff as was happening currently. The representative from the Penarth Headland Link Charity agreed, stating that an increase in long distance walking and the attractiveness of the Wales Coast Path would also produce significant health benefits.

The Chair wished to thank the Penarth Headland Link Charity for their efforts, adding that the Committee needed to help with this project in whatever way it could, as a key rationale behind the committee's foundation was to help build such links between Cardiff and the Vale.

There being no further questions, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the above update be noted.

(d) Navigational Safety and Progress Report – Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA) –

Andrew Vye-Parminter representing Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA) provided an update on navigational safety:

Navigation:

Apart from the very busy summer season on both land and water (for example, more pedestrians and cyclists as well as commercial vessels having been very busy conducting boat trips) there was no real significant news from a navigation point of view to pass on.

The CHA was currently undertaking Aeration maintenance within the Bay and Rivers.

The dredging of the outer harbour had also been successful, and buoyage was in the process of being re-instated.

General:

Sluice Maintenance

Sluice 1 was currently undergoing its annual maintenance, with the other 4 Sluices having been completed. Starting week commencing 23rd August two of the four hydraulic cylinders would be removed from Sluice 1 and sent for repair.

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Merchant Seamen's Memorial Plaque

The representative from Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association asked about the removal of the above plaque. David Hall (CHA) explained that the plaque had been removed from its current location which was alongside the South Water Taxi Berth and would be relocated on a new plinth at a more accessible location. The work to remove the plaque was a delicate operation but was successful with no damage caused during removal from the wall it was fixed into.

Bridges 3 and 2

Bridge 3 had been taken out of operation due to a failure of the bolts which hold in the pin for the bay side hydraulic cylinder. Bridge 2 was investigated due to an abnormal noise during operation, with the sea side drive bearing for the bridge showing signs of deterioration. Repairs had now been completed and Bridge 3 is back in operation.

Low River Flows

Despite recent rain the river flows had not increased significantly and as a consequence CHA were still in Water Budget. Hourly locking restrictions were in place during the week in order to conserve water for weekend use.

There being no further questions, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the above report be noted.

(e) Natural Resources Wales Update –

Fiona Abbott, representing Natural Resources Wales (NRW), provided an update to the Committee on the following areas of interest:

Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Levels

There had been a number of notifications from Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA) regarding low DO levels in the Bay over the summer. The first DO non-compliance (i.e. below 5 mg/l) was at Site 10 Bottom on 10 June at 06:30. Since then, there had been 2064 DO readings below the threshold out of a total of 71,386 readings (June to 26 August), equating to 97.11% compliance with the statutory DO standard.

Most non-compliance has been in the River Ely, most likely due to the slow-flowing nature of the river and elevated summer water temperatures which limited the amount of DO that is present in the water. The highest recorded water temperature this year was 26.16°C in the Main Bay on 22 July at 16:45. Despite these elevated water temperatures, no dead fish or fish in distress had been reported.

Pollution Incidents and Investigations

As reported previously, intermittent pollution had been discharging into Cardiff Bay from an outfall located near the Watermark Building, Ferry Road. Analysis of the discharge found that it was leachate, very likely coming from the former Ferry Road landfill.

NRW had now agreed an action plan proposed by Cardiff Council, the owners of the landfill, which summarised the ongoing work and the new deadlines as identified in the draft aftercare plan for the site. This included a programme of intensive monitoring of the levels of leachate across a number of sampling locations. The previously failing pumping station, which removed leachate from the landfill, was now fully automated and being remotely monitored. The site was also being visited daily (Monday to Friday) by a council officer, whose role included ensuring the pumping stations were operational and that leachate was being removed from site. Further work was being undertaken by specialist contractors to inspect, service and undertake preventative maintenance of the leachate extraction / treatment system, as well as a CCTV survey of flow in the network of drainage pipes to identify any full or partial blockages. The Council were also undertaking work to identify, survey and rectify damage to the inspection chambers / monitoring points across the site. This would, in turn, provide further management data for the site.

The Council were also proposing to install a “bung” in the pipe between the landfill site and the outfall into the Bay to remove the potential for any overflow of leachate. Prior to this, investigative work would be done to ensure any stopper does not cause issues elsewhere in the wider drainage system. The Council were currently in discussions with contractors regarding undertaking this work. Further updates on this issue would be provided to the committee at a later date.

NRW had reported previously that there was an ongoing issue of oil entering the River Ely, most likely from the Llandough Trading Estate, and that NRW had appointed a contractor, Draintech, to survey the local drainage network in order to trace the source(s) of the pollutant. In July four NRW Environment Officers completed a comprehensive pollution- prevention campaign at the estate, using the information gathered by Draintech. Officers visited all occupied units within the estate, apart from one where entry was refused (efforts are being made to return to this unit shortly), amounting to 21 inspections, including Smiths Recycling found outside the site. No major issues were found, but advice and guidance were given when needed.

As a result of this campaign NRW now have a record of all the businesses that use each unit and a comprehensive list of which ones store fuel or chemicals on their premises, including their type, volumes and storage arrangements. This can be used to establish a potential source if further pollutions are reported. Following this successful exercise, NRW now intend to carry out a similar campaign in West Point Industrial Estate, slightly further downstream.

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Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station

As highlighted in NRW's online statement, NRW had received a Marine Licence application from EDF in March 2021 for the disposal of sediment at Cardiff Grounds. However, the application has not yet been duly made. All Marine Licence applications submitted to NRW undergo duly making checks to ensure that the application is complete, i.e. it contains all the required information to enable us to commence determination and proceed to consultation. NRW will only consider the application duly made once they were satisfied that there was sufficient information to commence determination of an application. All documents submitted in support of the application would form part of a consultation with technical advisors and the public, and this would provide an opportunity to submit any relevant evidence to help inform NRW's decision-making. The application was, therefore, not currently under determination. If circumstances change, NRW would update their online statement.

The Barrage Fishpass

The Barrage fishpass was closed in early spring for routine annual maintenance, which was carried out by CHA with NRW's agreement. NRW had been monitoring the fishpass since it re-opened in early April. By 22nd August (Week 33), when data was last downloaded, a total of 502 fish, comprising Atlantic salmon, sea trout, mullet and the occasional bass, had been recorded coming through. This included 86 fish longer than 55cm and therefore assumed to be salmonids, i.e. salmon and sea trout. Long-term records had shown that only 3% of these larger fish would be sea trout, so the estimated numbers were likely to be 83 salmon and 3 sea trout. However, these were only "raw" numbers. Once the data had been validated and extrapolation factors were applied (amongst other things to allow for unmonitored fish that had entered the Bay through the sluices and locks etc), the true number was tentatively estimated to be 185 salmon and 6 sea trout to Week 33.

After the update, the Chair asked for additional data comparing recent trout and salmon numbers with those of previous years; the NRW Member stated that she would come back to the Committee with this data. A representative from the CHA explained that the fishpass figures for fish (including salmon and trout) should not be too far off from those of previous years. They were close to general European fish levels, although unfortunately, this meant they were sharing a downward trajectory in numbers.

The Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association representative wanted to confirm that regarding Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station, reports of dredgers based in the Vale area were undertaking dredging operations for the plant in English waters only and that the sediment was also being dumped away from Welsh waters. The NRW Member stated that the dredging was linked to the application based at Portishead; although berthed in Barry, the dredgers were definitely operating outside the area covered by NRW, with their English counterparts (the Environment Agency) having granted such operations within English waters, a similar point also raised by Captain Lewis (Harbour Master, ABP). The Chair

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raised concerns on the dumping of sediment and how this might impact local fish stocks; the NRW Member confirmed that the sediment was not being dumped in Welsh waters, thus leaving local fish stocks unaffected. Also, such dredging operations operated under strict standards in order to avoid such impacts.

The Boatfolk Marinas Ltd Member asked if more fish were going through the Taff river rather than the Bay itself. A representative from CHA replied that this was only a 'best guess' at this time, with NRW now being contracted to monitor this in order to see which fish were going to the spawning grounds. There was some evidence of fish spawning in the Ely as well as the Taff rivers but generally spawning was unsuitable in Cardiff Bay.

There being no further questions, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the above report be noted.

(f) Any Other Business –

Members were reminded if they had any queries or issues that they wished to raise, they should contact the Clerk who would place these on future agendas.

(g) Date of Next Meeting –

It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Wednesday, 1st December, 2021 at 5 p.m.