

CARDIFF BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Remote Annual Meeting held on 6th September, 2023.

Present: Mrs. F. Hourahine (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. S. Jones (Boatfolk Marinas Ltd.), C. Michael (RSPB), Mr. A. Parker, C. Pooley (Natural Resources Wales), Councillor N.C. Thomas (Penarth Town Council), Councillor M.R. Wilson 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), Councillor M. Lewis (Cardiff Council) 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 Councillor J. Burke-Davies (Cardiff Council), Mrs. C. Dimond (Cardiff Flood Action Committee) and Mr. A. Michael (Penarth Headland Link Charity).

(d) Minutes –

There being no comments, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd March, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

(e) Timetable of Meetings –

The purpose of the report was to suggest dates for future meetings of the Committee in line with the decision of the Advisory Committee on 18th November, 2015 to hold four meetings per year. It had also been custom and practice that meetings took place in most instances on a Wednesday.

In January 2020 it was agreed that the meetings would be held at 5.00 p.m. The Committee had also looked at holding meetings both remotely and in person, on an

alternate basis, following the COVID-19 Pandemic (discussed at the meetings held on 4th January, 2023 and 22nd March, 2023).

Members were further requested to consider the timetable below and to make any amendments as required.

DATE	VENUE
Wednesday, 6 th September, 2023 at 5.00 p.m. (Annual Meeting)	Remote meeting (via MS Teams application)
Wednesday, 29 th November, 2023 at 5.00 p.m.	In-person meeting (venue TBC)
Wednesday, 28 th February, 2024 at 5.00 p.m.	Remote meeting (via MS Teams application)
Wednesday, 29 th May, 2024 at 5.00 p.m.	In-person meeting (venue TBC)

Following the presentation of the report, the Committee discussed the rotational nature of meetings going forward with meetings being held either remotely or in person on an alternate basis. The Clerk confirmed that the main in person venue for meetings would be the Cardiff International White Water Centre. If for whatever reason this venue was not available, alternatives would be sought for in person meetings such as at Cardiff Yacht Club, Penarth Sea Cadets, Cardiff International Pool or Ice Hockey Arena.

The Clerk stressed that there would still be flexibility in terms of the dates for future meetings should there be consensus amongst the Committee that an alternative date or dates would be needed. The Vice-Chair also raised the prospect of increased levels of Covid during certain times of the year which may mean that in person meetings could be changed to remote ones.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the timetable of meetings be approved.

(f) Navigational Safety – Cardiff Harbour Authority –

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

A.M. Ernest (Penarth Tourism and Visitor Association) asked about a possible change to the positioning of the buoyage by the Barrage due to dredging operations. It was explained that the buoyage was in its normal place but due to the narrow approach of the channel, and the depth of water, the buoyage can appear in a different place depending on the state of the tide.

Regarding the query from the Chair concerning any incidents around navigational safety, such as the recent incident whereby a boat caught fire, it was explained that the incident referred to was being looked into but no further details could be provided at this time due to a pending insurance investigation in conjunction with the Marina. Booms had been put out to help tackle any follow up pollution but it was stressed

that other than some minor pollution which was broken up by sunlight and UV rays, there were no other serious consequences as a result of this incident i.e. no injuries or fatalities. It was added that the boat had been prevented from sinking and subsequently had been lifted out to the boatyard.

There being no further questions, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the update be noted.

(g) General Progress Report – Cardiff Harbour Authority –

D. Hall, representing Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA), updated the Committee on the general progress report as follows.

Environment

- CHA retained their Green Flags across the 3 sites (Cardiff Barrage, Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve and Flat Holm).
- A new Marine Licence application had been submitted to NRW for dredging the Outer Harbour and approaches.

Barrage

- The Summer Sluice maintenance campaign was continuing. The team identified a sluice roller failure on Sluice 5 which had now been replaced and the Sluice fully commissioned.
- A new lighting scheme had been installed along the Barrage top walkway. This had replaced the old system which had failed and was obsolete, a new lighting scheme was also in place and was due to be commissioned on the Sluice roadway.
- The late Spring dry spell presented significant challenges maintaining bay levels. CHA were able to operate through this period with very little impact on navigation.
- July saw the start of the Electric Vehicle Rally from the Penarth side of the Barrage. The event went without any issues and had no impact on site access.

Following the presentation of the report, the Chair referred to a recent scheme which had involved volunteers dredging the River Ogmore in the Vale of Glamorgan, and whether this type of scheme was utilised around the Bay and Barrage. It was explained that the CHA did not dredge in the Bay, outside the locks, but did address the issue of silting by keeping the navigation into the Bay clear. The Chair also referred to a series of concerts that would be held in the area and it would be interesting to see how these impacted the Bay.

There being no further questions it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the report be noted.

(h) Natural Resources Wales – Update Report –

The update was presented to the Committee by C. Pooley, in conjunction with F. Hourahine, who were representatives from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and who highlighted the following areas of interest:

1. Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Levels

The Cardiff Harbour Authority (CHA) had provided regular updates regarding DO levels, water quality, river flows and Bay levels.

Overall DO levels within the Bay had remained above the 5 mg/L threshold, even during the warm, dry spell in early summer. The few incidents where levels dropped to below this had nearly all occurred at site 17 which was located just downstream of the Grangetown Link bridge, where the A4232 crossed the Ely. This was a notorious spot for low DO levels but there had been few incidents so far this year, so there had been no need to deploy the Oxy Barge. One low DO incident had also been recorded at sites 5 and 10 in the Bay in mid-June and there levels had been satisfactory since.

CHA had also not reported any other issues.

2. Pollution Incidents and Investigations

Since the last meeting the Ferry Road landfill leachate collection system had been operating effectively and there had been no reported incidents of leachate entering the Ely from the outfall next to the Watermark building.

There had been no further reports of oil spilling into the River Ely from the Llandough Trading Estate surface water outfall.

On 22nd June a small oil spill was reported amongst the moored boats in the Penarth Moors area. Approximately one litre of fuel was believed to have entered the Bay via bilge water and was reported to have dissipated quickly. Several days later an oil sheen on the water was reported near to the Marina along with dead fish and birds. This was investigated quickly and no evidence of dead fish or birds was found. The oil had also dissipated. It was believed this was likely to be connected to the spill reported days earlier and there had been no reported incidents in the Bay since. Due to ongoing police investigations it was still not possible to provide an update regarding the pollution incident that had been reported on the lower River Ely in late December 2022.

3. Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station

The marine licence application from EDF NNB GenCo to dispose of dredged sediment from the Hinkley Point C development at Cardiff Grounds was withdrawn by the applicant on 10th May, 2022, which closed NRW's involvement in the case in terms of marine licensing. However, NRW continued to engage in consenting matters relating to the development, providing advice on consultations from the Marine Management Organisation (the licensing authority in England) and the

Environment Agency, and were currently in engagement with EDF relating to a forthcoming application for variation of the Development Consent Order (which was necessary as the work was considered as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project; NSIP).

4. The Barrage Fish Pass

Following annual maintenance work and replacement of fish monitoring equipment, the fish pass was opened on 5th April. This was a week later than planned due to poor weather preventing the crane from being deployed.

The monitoring team installed optical cameras to help validate the data collected. This was a response to a much higher number of non-salmonids (mostly mullet and bass) recorded entering the Bay during 2022 compared to previous years (752% and 2378% increase compared to 2018 and 2019 respectively). This increase was a concern for the monitoring team as it could interfere with the robustness of the data for accurately identifying salmonids. Therefore their aim for 2023 was to re-validate the fish apportionment method using these cameras.

Recent Trends in Salmon Numbers

Data from the fish pass showed a decline in numbers between 2013 and 2018. Increases were then observed in 2019 and 2020 before declining again over the last two years. Unfortunately monitoring during 2020 and 2021 was incomplete due to equipment failure (from September onwards in 2020 and during August for 2021). The total number of recorded salmonids for 2022 was just 85 fish, the lowest number since monitoring began. This also coincided with low numbers of juveniles recorded within the Taff and Ely catchments during last year's surveys. Most fish entered the Bay in late spring and early summer suggesting that they were larger and older Multi Sea Winter (MSW) fish. The run of grilse (One Sea Winter fish) that usually took place later in the year comprised of just three fish.

So far this season an extrapolated run estimate of only 17 salmonids had been recorded entering the Bay through the fish pass. This was extremely low, even compared to last year, which had recorded 81 fish by the end of August.

5. Blackweir Docks Feeder Canal

The dry spell of weather in early summer resulted in very low flows in the rivers Taff and Ely. Under the conditions of the new abstraction licence this triggered a requirement for Associated British Ports (ABP) to restrict the amount of water being removed from the Taff via the feeder canal at Blackweir. Close communications were established between NRW and ABP to ensure that there were no incidents of non-compliance and the abstraction rates were progressively reduced as the flow in the Taff decreased. Eventually the lowest abstraction rate was reached and at this point ABP started to experience challenges maintaining operational levels in the docks. A number of actions were taken to mitigate this but the problem was exacerbated by the fact that the two impound pumps were not functioning. These pumps were used to maintain levels by drawing sea water into the docks during times of high traffic through the locks or insufficient supply via the feeder canal or in

the absence of large spring high tides. Repairs to the pumps were carried out but a delay in obtaining spare parts meant that the pumps were not used. Temporary back-up pumps were deployed but fortunately the arrival of rain in July meant that river flows started to increase again. Feeder abstraction rates were subsequently increased and there had been no need to alter them again since.

The abstraction licence requirements highlighted ABP's rudimentary method of measuring and adjusting the abstraction rates, which could result in low levels of precision when attempting to achieve specific flows. In one instance the abstraction rate was found to be significantly lower than it needed to be. The NRW Hydrometry and Telemetry team had on numerous occasions measured the flow of the feeder to ensure compliance and it was arranged for members of ABP to meet with them and discuss ways of accurately attaining target flows. It was a very productive meeting and resulted in ABP gaining a much better understanding of how to accurately adjust the flows. Another outcome was for NRW to mark on the feeder gauging board the target levels for each of the required abstraction rates. This was a temporary measure until ABP installed equipment to monitor the flows.

Following the presentation of the update, the Vice-Chair queried the dead birds spotted in the Bay, and whether this could be related to avian flu. He also queried the decline in the numbers of salmonids, and whether this could be due to a change in their life cycle etc. A.M. Ernest asked what actions NRW could undertake in order to stop the decline in salmonid populations, and whether this was tied in with river pollution. C. Michael (RSPB) also asked what information there was to compare other rivers in Wales concerning salmonid numbers and whether this was a nationwide issue as well. Due to these queries, it was explained that the decline in salmonid numbers was a national trend and that a recent evidence report commissioned by NRW would be shared with the Committee concerning this. It was added that this trend had also been seen internationally in areas such as Norway and Iceland and it was believed that the issue most likely stemmed from climate change and poor survival at sea. NRW would be adopting new policies in conjunction with colleagues from other bodies nationally and internationally in order to help address this ongoing issue. These would include habitat improvement, ensuring water quality and that access was provided to spawning grounds to salmonid populations. With regard to the query on avian flu, this was being monitored at Cardiff Bay and the wider area. Currently no issues had been experienced around this but if there was such an outbreak then the CHA would act quickly and deal with this issue promptly.

On the Chair's query concerning the impact of rising sea levels on the Bay / Barrage, it was explained that there was no evidence of this impacting or creating pressures on the Barrage at this time.

A.M. Ernest raised concerns on the efforts of ABP as part of the abstraction licence to maintain sufficient water levels in the docks, particularly in light of the failure of two water pumps. He was concerned that this could ultimately impact shipping that was in the docks area. It was explained that this had been picked up already with ABP under the NRW regulatory compliance expectations. It was further explained that this regulatory role was separate to the remit of this Committee and fell under the NRW's jurisdiction. S. Jones (Boatfolk Marinas Ltd) commented by saying that as

long as the water levels were being sufficiently controlled within the Bay, ABP's operational issues would primarily impact them rather than the Bay as a whole.

There being no further questions, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the report be noted and that the further information requested by the Committee concerning the recent evidence report commissioned by NRW on salmonid populations be provided in due course.

(i) Any Other Business –

The Committee were informed that A. Parker, a longstanding member of the Committee, would be retiring and this would be his last meeting with the Committee.

The Chair and the Committee wanted to wish A. Parker best wishes for the future and paid tribute to the enormous contribution he had made to the Committee over some 20 years.

(j) Date of Next Meeting –

AGREED – T H A T the next meeting would take place on Wednesday, 29th November, 2023 at 5.00 p.m. Venue to be confirmed.