

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Harbours Management Board** held in the Chamber, The Court House, High Street, Nairn on Friday 24 April 2015 at 11.00 am.

**Present:**

Mr A Henderson  
Mr K MacLeod  
Mr H Morrison

Mr B Murphy  
Mr G Phillips (in the Chair)

**In attendance:**

Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services  
Mr R Evans, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services  
Mr T Usher, Harbours Manager, Community Services  
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager (Community Services), Finance Service  
Mrs F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

**Mr G Phillips in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr I Cockburn, Mr R Greene, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr H Fraser.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. Minutes**

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, Minutes of Meeting of the Harbours Management Board held on 15 January 2015.

**4. Elgol Jetty Timetable**

There had been circulated Report No HMB 7/15 dated 13 April 2015 by the Director of Community Services providing an update on the tour boat operations at Elgol Harbour for the 2015 season and proposing a revised timetable to accommodate changes.

The Harbours Manager gave a summary of the issues at Elgol and the reasons for the implementation of the timetable. Changes to the boats operating from the jetty had resulted in proposed amendments to the timetable and these were explained to the Board. Responses from one of the operators had been appended to the report and a further email was tabled at the meeting.

During discussion, the Harbours Manager clarified various issues contained in the objection letter and emails. In response to questions, it was pointed out that the income from the jetty did not cover the cost of the seasonal Harbour Master located there and that the time slots on the draft timetable had already been used on publicity

material. Following further consideration of the time slots, Members favoured trialling the timetable, as proposed, for the 2015 season, with a review to be undertaken at the first meeting of the Board in 2016.

The Board **APPROVED** the draft timetable incorporating new vessels all as detailed in Appendix A of the report, with a review to be undertaken at the first meeting of the Board in 2016.

## 5. Town Pier Fort William

There had been circulated Report No HMB 8/15 dated 13 April 2015 by the Director of Community Services advising Members of the deteriorating condition of the Town Pier at Fort William and the costs of remedial works. The report also suggested a possible alternative solution for the long term operation, maintenance and development of the pier by a private tenant.

The Chairman reminded the Board of the strategic review of Loch Linnhe that was being undertaken and likely to be completed, at least in draft, by the end of 2015. The Harbours Manager explained that the stone section of the pier was leased to the owner of the Crannog restaurant, who had expressed concern at the pier's condition. An inspection in 2013 had identified a number of critical repairs which would cost in the region of £200k. Other key users of the pier included the tour boats Souter's Lass and possibly the Clyde Clipper. Visits by larger boats, including the Waverley, had been cancelled for the present, due to concerns over the structural security of the steelwork and wooden fender piles. The current tenant of the pier had indicated a willingness to extend his lease in area and term to include the whole pier to allow him to investigate undertaking the necessary repairs and the possible extension of the pier into deeper water. An agreement in principle for this was being sought to allow the tenant to explore his options.

During discussion, Members commented that the matter had already been discussed at the local Ward Business Meeting with a consensus to support the lease extension, albeit with suitable conditions. It was important that whatever solution was found, future options for the development of the aquatic area of Fort William, including the introduction of cruise liners into Loch Linnhe, was not compromised. It was anticipated that if the Board gave their 'agreement in principle' to the lease extension, the lease holder could make preliminary investigations into the feasibility of undertaking the repairs and extending the pier, by which time the strategic review of Loch Linnhe would have been undertaken, including the implementation of a Harbour Authority. It was hoped that the eventual strategic plan might be a trigger for capital funding to improve access to the loch. However, it was pointed out that an initial estimate for a breakwater with berthing platform was around £12m. Other issues to be taken into consideration included wider public access, including to and from the Camusnagaul ferry.

Members voiced support for the review and extension of the lease but expressed concern about the commitment implied by the use of the wording 'agreement in principle'. The Council's Head of Legal Services would be asked to provide appropriate wording.

Following concern raised by Members about the possibility of large vessels further damaging the pier, the Harbours Managers offered to issue a Notice to Mariners via the Maritime Coastguard Agency stating that the pier was out of bounds to vessels over a certain size.

Subject to receiving a positive recommendation from the Lochaber Area Committee, the Board:-

- i. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Community Services Committee that it agree in principle (or other appropriate wording, this to be obtained from the Head of Legal Services):-
  - a. to extending the leased area to include the berthing structures;
  - b. reviewing the term of the lease; and
- ii. **AGREED** to issue a Notice to Mariners via the Maritime Coastguard Agency stating that Fort William town pier was out of bounds to vessels over a certain size.

## 6. Proposed Maintenance, Repair and Improvement Works for 2015/16

There had been circulated Report No HMB 9/15 dated 13 April 2015 by the Director of Community Services detailing proposed maintenance, repair and improvement works at various Highland Council harbours for financial year 2015/16.

The Harbours Manager gave a brief overview of work undertaken in 2014-15 to the masonry wall and dolos breakwater at Dunbeath, and the old slipway at Thurso, which had been renovated with lottery grant funding.

Projects planned for 2015-16 included the Lochinver Ice Plant, which was currently being designed and costed, and Market Chilling at Kinlochbervie. Both were to be the subject of bids to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which re-opened for applications in June 2015. It was hoped that both projects stood a good chance of success in attracting grant funding given their role in the preservation of fish and the Discard Ban which was due to be implemented in early 2016. The Chairman urged that an early bid be made. In response to a question, it was explained that the current ice supplier at Lochinver had agreed (subject to certain conditions) to extend production until January 2016, after which Harbours staff could cover for a short period. After this, another solution required to be found for continued ice production.

In relation to smaller local projects, the Director suggested applying for ward discretionary budget funding via Ward Business meetings.

The Board **NOTED** the position of the works currently underway and those proposed.

## 7. Harbour Dues for Financial Year 2015/16

There had been circulated Report No HMB 10/15 dated 13 April 2015 by the Director of Community Services inviting Members to recommend approval of the updated Schedule of Rates and Dues for Highland Council Harbours for financial year 2015/16.

Following discussion, the Board **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Community Services Committee:-

- i. a 2% increase in harbour dues and charges for leisure vessels, wharfage and miscellaneous charges; and
- ii. a 5% increase in cruise liner dues.

## 8. Debt Management

There had been circulated Report No HMB 06/15 dated 5 January 2015 by the Director of Community Services providing details of the outstanding debt for piers and harbours as at 31 March 2015.

The Board **NOTED** the current debt position.

The meeting ended at 12.35pm