

DRAFT Notes from the Newport Town Council PUBLIC MEETING held on

16th September 2024 to discuss the future of land at Parrog and the public toilets there

Present: about 100 members of the public with representation from the Boat Club, Moorings Committee, Regatta Committee, Nevern Anglers; Huw Murphy (PCC County Councillor for Newport and Dinas); Tim Thomas Mayor of Newport; Ben Lake (MP for Ceredigion Preseli); Cris Tomos (PLANED); Mike James (PCC County Councillor for St Dogmaels and a Member of the National Park Authority); Katie Daly (PCC Strategic Business Manager); Newport Town Councillors Morgan Lewis (Chairman), Ros McGarry (Vice Chairperson), John Griffiths (Chair of Planning), Paul Harries, Sandra Bayes

Apologies: County Councillor Neil Prior, Cabinet Member for Communities; Sinead Hennehan PCC Community Safety, Poverty and Regeneration Manager; Nia Siggins formerly Newport Town Council Grants Officer

Cllr Morgan Lewis welcomed everyone and explained that the Town Council had worked with Mr Alexander Hawksworth, Lord Marcher, and his Agents, with local concerned groups and businesses, with the County Council and the National Park, for some time about acquisition of Parrog land, including the public toilets, and the time had come to turn to Newport community for their views.

Cllr Paul Harries described what that work had involved:

Cllr Harries had been Chairman in 2022 when the Council first became aware that the Lord Marcher, owner of the Parrog land, wished to sell. Discussions had since then, and until July 2024, been confidential at the owner's behest, but can now be in the public domain. Mr Hawksworth had agreed not to carry out negotiations with other parties.

The Status Quo is not an option as Mr Hawksworth wishes to sell

The land offered consists of 3 areas:-

- 1) The Marsh Path out to mean high tide mark - from Parrog Car Park to the Iron Bridge (which has been offered to the National Park but the Authority is not interested)
- 2) Morawelon up to Cwm
- 3) Parrog Car Park, Parrog shelter, The Lime Kiln, 2 sheds, Traeth Hogan, Promontory by the jetty public toilets and land, and the Green

It is the latter which is of interest to the Town Council

Paul read out a statement written by Cllr Ros McGarry justifying Newport Town Council acquiring Parrog land for the community, including its historic importance, significance to the spirit of Newport, respect, and safeguarding from inappropriate development>

Paul added that this was a project – to keep Parrog in public ownership – personally, close to his heart

The public toilets were due for closure by PCC by the end of this month, but following months of work between the Town Council and County Council, they will remain open till next Spring, by which time the Town Council hopes that the community will have acquired the land on which they stand, and manage the toilets, because the continued existence of the toilets is fundamental to the wellbeing of both residents and visitors.

Constrictions

1. The ownership of the toilets is complicated. A bit of the land on which they stand is owned by Mr Alexander Hawksworth, a bit by PCC, and Dwr Cymru has apparatus in part of the building with the right to continue to do so. The building is leased to PCC by Alexander Hawksworth at £50/yr.

We have to be grateful to Katie Daly and Rhys Synett PCC Cabinet Member for the extension of time for the toilets to be run by PCC

Their running costs, according to PCC, are £13,700/yr, overheads £4K, Water rates £2K

If we charged entry, the doors would need to be replaced at a cost of £16K

Katie Daly added that Newport is not unique with its problems, but the situation is complicated. Conversations with Alexander Hawksworth's Agents appear to show that ownership problems of the toilets can be sorted. It will only take a few years to cover the costs of capital outlay to install mechanisms for charging. Examples are Broadhaven where income is £5K per year, and Whitesands £10K per year. Thenceforth the Town Council will have a funding stream.

2. Currently, The National Park leases the Car Park for £150/yr. A covenant in favour of Alexander Hawksworth restricts the Park from charging for parking.

The Town Council understands that the National Park is willing to give up its lease (on which 50 yrs remains). The Town Council does not want to pay a premium for this to happen. The decision has to go to the National Park Management Committee. The Town Council understand that for this to happen a better Business Management Plan needs to be drawn up. It will also be important to show support from the town.

3. DC/WW has a pumping station just beneath part of the toilets and under land on the south side of the building DC/WW also has a switch room inside the toilet block which takes up quite a lot of space. Discussions are ongoing with the Town Council

Costs The Parrog land is offered in 2 parts (phases) – The Car Park and associated bits for £45K, then the Green for £128K, giving a total of £173K. The Town Council is requesting that the Saltings be included as part of the Green.

The first phase purchase of £45K does not allow for mandatory parking charges

Charging for parking will be possible on purchase of the Green only. The ability to charge will be withdrawn if the Town Council does not purchase the Green within 3 years.

Once the Car park is purchased, the Town Council would ask for voluntary donations for parking. Aberporth has voluntary charging and an income of £38K per year. If voluntary charging doesn't work, the Council may have to consider purchasing the Green

Valuations

Both the Town Council and Mr Hawksworth's agents have commissioned valuations which are roughly the same

Revenue Costs will include

Maintenance of the shelter (urgently required); maintenance of the other buildings which are described in the valuations, grass cutting etc; maintenance of the surface of the car park; marking of parking bays; administration of the voluntary payment scheme; setting up and administering a scheme for charging for parking (if implemented); insurance costs; sea wall maintenance; signage provision; maintenance of toilet facilities (currently £13k approximately); legal and valuation costs; ongoing administrative costs.

Raising the Funding

Newport Town Council already has £15k in capital reserves towards the first £45K

Competitive rates are available to councils from the Public Works Loans Board.

Phasing gives Newport Town Council time to raise the £128K for the Green. Paul favours seeking this funding from Enhancing Pembrokeshire

Cris Tomos

Spoke of experience from 4CG in Cardigan where the low-cost parking offered produces an income of £51k per year, and also the Community Council in Crymych acquiring the toilets from PCC some years ago, converting the building to a unisex facility, and renting out the remaining space created to a local business for an income.

Cris explained that Enhancing Pembrokeshire now offers two levels of funding - £15K for which the process is easier and faster, and up to £100K

Cris agreed with the plan of a loan to raise £45K quickly

A new UK Shared Prosperity Fund for Wales will be announced soon

There are Foundation Funds available such as The Henry Smith Charity; Heritage Funding; Environmental Funding ...

Alun Jones of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) could help.

One Voice Wales can also advise the council.

Cllr Huw Murphy (Newport and Dinas) and PCC Leader of the Opposition in Council, said he had been working to keep public toilets open throughout Pembrokeshire. Huw praised the work of Newport Town Council and its plans

Ben Lake MP said he commended the Town Council and would give support to its applications

Charles Searle, Commodore of Newport Boat Club, commented that Parrog Car Park had been especially busy this year, possibly as a result of parking no longer being allowed on Traethmawr. The Car Park area is used for boats crossing to their moorings. Personally, Charles thoroughly supports the Town Council in acquiring the land in the interest of both residents and visitors. Newport Boat Club would try to make some sort of contribution but that is a members' decision to be made. Acquisition by the commercial sector would not be good for Newport

John Shipton expressed worries about maintenance of the sea wall. Paul accepted that Parrog floods at least twice a year. PCC was going to introduce a flood alleviation scheme some years ago PCC then ran out of funding. A national Shoreline Management Plan is due for renewal in 2025.

Grace Hagan shared John Shipton's concerns about the sea wall and flooding. As a resident of Parrog Road she confirmed how busy parking can be with cars parked up to Matthew Bakers and beyond. Grace reminded the Town Council that Enhancing Pembrokeshire funding is paid retrospectively, requiring the Council to find monies upfront.

Other questions and comments concerned the implications of the Town Council not proceeding on the Parrog land purchase (It could fall into commercial hands without the community's wellbeing in mind) and what will happen to the other stretches of land available. Christine Watts pointed out that Morawelon owns their quay wall, and Nica Prichard that the Crown owned land below median high tide. John Shipton said that whoever might purchase the land, the Coastal Path would continue to exist. The asking prices asked seemed unrealistic.

Those present were asked whether they supported Newport Town Council proceeding with the first stage of Parrog land purchase by show of hands

There was a unanimous show of hands, with no one against and no one abstaining.

SB/PH/18/09/24

