

South Snowdon Wharf January 2018 Update

Communication

As the detail provided in last year's update was so popular we have included as much as possible again to ensure everyone has the same information. If you have questions or comments please phone or email us at info@southsnowdonwharf.co.uk. For maintenance queries please contact John Chirgwin on the estate or us directly by phone or email.

Insurance

As reported last year insurance for the estate is a very complex and changing matter. After careful review with Bayliss and Cooke insurance remains with Allianz, primarily to maintain the advantage of a single insurer in such a complex situation. The cost of insurance has gone up by 5%, 3% of which is index linking the value and 2% for the increase in insurance premium tax. However last year we negotiated a low claims bonus and we hope to receive this again this year.

Roofs and Major Works

This is planned work over several years to maintain the structure of the estate. The breakdown of expenditure for last year is :-

- £6,994 replacing the top layer of slate on the low wall round the dinghy park and then using reclaimed slate to repair the wall overlooking the estuary. This has been well received by residents and cost less than expected.
- £12,809 on replacing several roofs, including internal flat roofs, and we envisage there will be more next year. This total does not include minor roof repairs at 29 properties during the year. A lot of this was replacing slates following several storms, which although individually did not warrant an insurance claim allowing for the policy excess did cause damage.
- £1,092 starting work on slab relaying. Work has started on a large area of slabs between the properties and the access road by the harbour where slabs have been broken by traffic and people parking on the slabs. Another area has been identified by the harbour wall overlooking the railway stations damaged by trees. Could we take this opportunity to remind residents and their guests not to park cars on the slabs but to use the visitor parking by the harbour wall.

Building Materials and Minor Works

This is primarily Travis Perkins invoices and includes lead, guttering, paint, roofing and slabbing materials.

This year 6 properties had new guttering after rerendering and 8 properties had gutters repaired. £720 was spent on repainting the double yellow lines on the entrance road to the estate. All of the ladders except for the one with the gate are owned by the estate to ensure they are covered by the insurance policy. They are monitored regularly for safety and will be removed if they are no longer safe.

Drainage & plumbing

Welsh Water have now clarified that they are responsible for drains from the man hole cover away from the property and will clear blockages for free. They will charge for clearing any blockages from the man hole back to the property even if it has several flats in it as they treat it as one property. In these cases John Chirgwin continues to deal with the drains and has cleared blocks at 17 properties during the year.

Waste Collection

The costs have gone up again because of increased cost per bins and slightly more bins being used. Items that would not fit in normal bins should be taken to the local tip, please do not put them in the large bins or as is more often the case just dumped in the bin store. Please also crush boxes and plastic bottles before putting them in the recycling bins so more can be taken away for free. At many times of the year the bin store is over capacity and it is not obvious where more facilities could be provided.

Equipment hire and contracts

As predicted last year Gwynedd council did catch up with their billing so this year is high as it includes the charge for the 2016 pest control contract.

Accountancy and bank charges

Our local HSBC branch closed earlier this year with the Post Office providing a counter service. Unfortunately they lost a batch of cheques for a while causing significant nuisance to several residents. We therefore moved the service charge bank account to Barclays and you will see new bank details for this years payment. Although we secured 6 months free banking charges have still gone up overall because of the significantly increased charges for cheque receipts. It does save the service charge money paying by BACs or online banking.

Electricity and light

As reported in the June update the aerial was upgraded in the spring. This has improved reception in general but like the rest of Porthmadog there are still problems at some times due to weather conditions. As reported last year the aerial service is showing its age and 8 connection boxes were replaced during the year as part of the service charge responsibility to supply an aerial service. The service charge does not pay for any aerial work beyond the junction box.

Floor lights remained a priority after roofs during the year and although sometimes with interesting timings they have been less of an issue this year. However they are aging so we are taking some time to investigate alternatives for the future. You may have noticed a solar powered light on the corner opposite ballast island, we are trialling both the concept of solar powered and motion sensors.

Gardening

The cost reported is for weedkiller which is used regularly around the estate when weather permits. After consideration we have not employed a gardener contractor, it is more cost effective for John Chirgwin to do it and it also means he is about on the estate to deal with other issues (not to mention the perfect ball shaped shrubs he does so well).

Wifi on The Estate

The three year contract for Wifi maintenance comes to an end in the middle of this year. We are hoping that it will be extended on a rolling basis but if things change we will keep you informed.

Dinghy Park

Although there is at the moment space on the dinghy park it is limited so please do not leave boats or canoes on it without contacting us as we will arrange for the removal of unknown boats.

Future Plans

The following work is either already planned or being considered :-

- Roofs, a couple have already been identified for replacing and we expect there to be more. The roof designs on the estate are poor with a very low pitch which would not be allowed within current standards. Where possible roofs are repaired but sometimes it is necessary to strip the roof, replace battens and felt and relay the roof.
- Slab relaying by the access road and area overlooking the station.
- Rainwater drainage is a problem particularly in the middle of the estate with the soakaways no longer working properly even though they are cleared regularly. Gews pumped and cleared the main rainwater drains on the estate at the end of the summer to try and improve the situation. We will be meeting contractors this year to discuss alternative solutions possibly replacing the soakaways with proper drains to the sea.

Council Tax

Gwynedd Council carried out a survey of properties they believed to be second homes and most people replied using the planning permission information we shared last year claiming exemption for restricted holiday use. Not surprisingly given the amount of money involved they did find the update planning permission in 1968 which removed this restriction. Unfortunately although we agree with the many complaints people have sent us about this surcharge we are not aware of an effective argument against it.

However if you let out your property as a business for more than 10 weeks a year it may be worth investigating converting to business rates which at the moment has small business exemption and costs nothing.

Balcony “Glass”

You may have noticed on the estate several properties have upgraded their balconies. Although it looks like glass where it is using the original metalwork it is actually lighter polycarbonate using clips from Q Railing. Some residents have asked about using glass instead as a more durable solution but the existing railings and potentially balconies are not strong enough to take the weight. We are in contact with a specialist balcony firm to see if a solution can be found that is safe whilst still being in keeping with the others on the estate.

If you are considering upgrading please contact us for up to date information on potential solutions.