

South Snowdon Wharf January 2017 Update

Communication

Following queries during the year it is clear that we have underestimated the unique nature of the estate and some people would like more information on what work is being carried out and future plans. This update therefore includes much more information than in the past and than is normal for a managed estate. We will be putting it on the website www.southsnowdonwharf.co.uk along with previous updates. During the year if there is information between the six monthly letters it will also be posted on the web site.

If you have questions or maintenance issues either contact John Chirgwin on the estate or us directly by phone or email info@southsnowdonwharf.co.uk. We have included a comments section on the payment slip and would welcome your views or suggestions for the future. We always try to spend residents money carefully this means that some jobs take longer than expected, if you have a view on spending priorities please let us know.

Insurance

As usual the major element of the service charge is insurance. Given the location this is a very complex policy covering normal buildings insurance, the wharf itself and also marine insurance required because of the location within the harbour. Following the major floodings in the UK last year insurance companies have reviewed their mapping rules and the number of companies willing to even consider quoting has reduced significantly. Fortunately we have a good claims history with Allianz and they know the estate and its management so they are willing to insure although with an increased flood excess. Bayliss and Cooke have provided details in their letter and they continue to monitor the insurance situation carefully.

Site Supervisor

Last winter John Chirgwin, with agreement from ourselves, reduced his hours significantly to cover the basic essentials, he increased his hours again in the spring and now works about 4 days a week. John Chirgwin is not employed by SSW but is a contractor paid an hourly rate for the work carried out during each month. People may not be fully aware of what this covers thinking it is just the bins, keeping the common parts clear and weekly insurance inspections. It also includes most of the ongoing repairs and maintenance such as roofs, gutters, lights, painting the common parts and gardening. A list of work required is maintained between us, and priorities reviewed regularly, although leaking roofs in properties always take first priority.

Roofs and Major Works

The work carried out in this heading is budgeted and scheduled over the years to avoid any nasty jumps in service charge whilst still carrying out significant and necessary works. An example of this is the wharf wall repair works which started in 2010. The breakdown is as follows :-

- £15,792 completing the grouting to protect the wall on the estuary side overlooking the cob and stabilizing the wall by the dinghy park. This completes the high priority items identified in the structural review and the effectiveness will be monitored before carrying out any further wall work.
- £9,067 slab relaying. The large area where the grouting work had been completed, by the entrance road where vehicles had broken slabs and smaller areas that had sunken slabs. More areas are planned for next year to reduce trip hazards. The gap between the slabs and the wall on both corners of the estate where there are no buried wires were filled with concrete and chippings set in to try and stop the constant problem of chippings being thrown in the water.
- £5,681 roof works. This includes labour charges from external contractors for lead work or replacing timber when properties have been re-rendered.

- £803 stock of second hand slates. Ffestiniog slate supplies are erratic and expensive costing over £12 each new, we therefore maintain a stock of second hand slates for maintenance and repair costing about £4 a slate.
- £969 wall coping stones. The slates on the top of the walls have fallen off in many areas and many different methods have been tried unsuccessfully to refix individual slates. Although we have been in discussion with Rock Engineering about this for some time it took lower priority to the structural wall stabilising work. The quarry where this slate comes from no longer has a proper supply, this combined with the problems of bedding the slates means we have had to look for an alternative solution. Rock Engineering trialled an area by the dinghy park to remove the top layer of slates and replace it with as close a match as possible of coping stones. Some amendments have been agreed and this will be continued around the low wall to the dinghy park in 2017. Slates will be saved and a trial area will be repaired on the estuary side, removing the top layer and replacing with reclaimed slates.
- £0 new fence by the railway car park. This fence is our responsibility and as you may have noticed was in a very poor condition having been pushed over by parking cars. After prolonged discussion the railway replaced it with new red fence in keeping with their other fence at no expense to the estate. We have thanked the railway and hope you agree it looks a lot better.

Building Materials and Minor Works

This is primarily Travis Perkins invoices and includes lead, guttering, paint, cement and roofing materials. The labour element is covered either within major works where it is external contractors or within Site Supervisor time. This year there have been roof repairs on 28 properties and guttering work on 12 properties.

Drainage & plumbing

Welsh Water are responsible for blockages where the drains serve more than one property and they have attended several times during the year. John Chirgwin still checks all the drains and clears blockages outside of the buildings up to the point where drains join the main system, there have been 9 drain blockages cleared this year

Welsh water have also repaired leaking pipes on the estate, unfortunately the quality of the road repairs has not always been satisfactory and they have left a mess. After discussion and a site visit they have agreed to return and mend the roads where necessary and agreed standard for future repairs.

Waste Collection

The costs have gone up slightly as the cost per bin has increased. The council only collect once every three weeks now with Grays under contract to collect the other weeks. They are not as reliable as we would like, requiring regular reminders, this does unfortunately mean bins out waiting for collection longer than planned

We have increased the number of bins for recycling but misuse of the bin store remains a problem. Please put recycling in the bins not left on top or wait until there is space and please do not leave large items in the store, take them home or to the local tip.

We have allowed the SSW parking spaces to be used in the past to share skips between resident building projects to reduce the number of skips on the estate. But this has been abused by contractors so will no longer be allowed in an attempt to keep the length of time skips are onsite down. The skip by the noticeboard was supplied by Porthmadog skip hire who then went bust, significantly delaying its removal.

Equipment hire and contracts

This covers the Gwynedd road sweeper who comes onsite but is charged as the estate is private road. It also covers the pest control contract, however there have been problems with Gwynedd Council invoicing so the figure is unusually low this year and will go up again when they catch up.

Accountancy and bank charges

We have changed our accountant this year to a local firm at the same price.

Electricity and light

The TV aerial system is showing its age and several connector units have had to be replaced on the estate this year. The main street lights have also had to be repaired by a contractor on two occasions.

The floor lights are a constant problem, if water gets into one light or junction a whole run will not work requiring every light to be checked and dried to find the fault. As it is such a time consuming job it was not given priority over roofs and gardening during the summer. In the Autumn a significant amount of time was spent getting the system working again and it will remain a priority to keep them running so we can monitor the costs and possibly consider a replacement solution.

Gardening

Nothing has been spent this year on new plants or weedkiller. The estate is large with a lot of plants and although we have changed the planting, to make it less labour intensive gardening still takes up a lot of John Chirgwin's time. We are considering employing specialist gardeners at certain times of the year dependent on the maintenance needs.

Wifi on The Estate

The upgrades last year have improved the service significantly although there is nothing that can be done to improve the service during the peak holiday period due to the high demand. Wifi is not part of the service charge and any time spent by John Chirgwin working on it is not charged to the residents.

Future Plans

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

- New coping stones on the wall round the dinghy park and a trial repair overlooking the estuary.
- Relaying areas of slabs where they are uneven.
- Roof, one roof is to be stripped and relayed and another requires a cherry picker for repair work. There may be need to be new roofs this year for some properties.
- Soakaways, there are ongoing puddle problems in the parking areas so we will be investigating potential solutions.

Council Tax

You are probably aware that Gwynedd Council recently consulted on raising council tax on second homes, we notified as many people as we could by email. On the 8th December the council agreed to charge a 50% premium commencing in 2018.

However, there is an exemption for properties which are not allowed to be occupied all year. When the estate was built the planning consent we have on file of June 1967 states that the "development shall be used for holiday purposes only and shall not be used for permanent residential use and during the period 15th January to the last day of February each year none of the dwellings shall be occupied unless the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority has been sought and obtained for the occupation of any particular dwelling or flat during that period". The reason stated is that "the proposed dwellings are considered not to conform to standards appropriate for permanent residential use in respect of size and space about i.e. garden and yard space".

We have put a copy of the relevant planning permission on the website for anybody to use if they wish to raise the issue with Gwynedd Council. We cannot do this on behalf of the estate but please let us know how you get on.