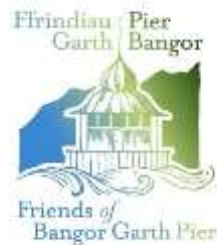


Bangor Garth Pier: 125th year anniversary Digital Programme



Foreword

“I think it is fair to say that our pier is the jewel in the crown of our great city, affording all who venture upon it some of the finest views imaginable. It has stood as an asset to our city for over 125 years, and it has served the people of this city throughout this time. The pier has faced numerous challenges throughout its journey and perhaps none more-so than the recent structural repairs that have seen an incredible investment of over £1m to ensure the survival of this structure for the next 125 years.

With this structural work finished, attention is being turned to further enhancing the aesthetic of its already gorgeous Victorian fittings and to expand its capabilities as an event venue and as a renowned destination both far and wide.

I wish we could have marked this historic day with a grand parade in the spirits of that which opened the pier 125 years prior, yet it is a sign of the times that we are unable to do so. Though I will use this space to extend a thank you for all those who have enjoyed the pier over its history and for all those who have looked after it. We can't turn out as a city today to celebrate its momentous anniversary, but we can, and we will, celebrate the pier in our own way moving forward, be that crabbing off the end with the family, purchasing an Ice Cream here on a first date, having a warming coffee as you watch the ebb and flow of the tide or simply as you stop to take in the views of Snowdonia from this glorious structure. The pier is in the lifeblood of this city, it's part of Bangor's hiraeth and I very much look forward to seeing its history to come” **Cllr Owen Hurcum, Mayor of Bangor**

“As Cllr Owen Hurcum, Mayor of Bangor says, the pier is in the lifeblood of Bangor – loved by locals; by Bangorians who have moved away; by visitors to our city and surrounding areas; and also by our university students and alumni.

The pier was opened when my granddad, who was born and bred in Hiraeth, was one year of age – when Beach Road did not even exist, and Port Penrhyn was a thriving and busy port, and ship building was at its zenith in Bangor.

Ever since it opened, it has enabled so many memories for so many people – I speak to so many people on the pier who have their stories to tell, as Owen says first dates, fishing, crabbing, memories of using the ferry to Glyn Garth and Beaumaris, diving off the pier, volunteering in one of the many kiosks, or simply just strolling along enjoying the tremendous views.

As Chair of Friends of Bangor Garth Pier, I feel a tremendous sense of duty and privilege from being so closely involved with our beautiful pier, knowing that we are helping the City Council to protect it for the future, and helping support and enlarge the pier community – a community of locals, FBGP members and trustees and



Left to right: City Council Director Iwan Williams; Mayor of Bangor Cllr Owen Hurcum; FBGP Chair Avril Wayte

volunteers, Bangor City Council employees and councillors, kiosk holders, local artists whose work will soon to be for sale in the kiosks, and everyone else who loves it.

Soon, our beautiful red (or orange, depending on the light!) and purple kiosks will be open, and selling pier related merchandise created by our local artists, all to raise money for pier restoration, and staffed by our growing army of volunteers. Be sure to come and visit and enjoy everything our fabulous pier has to offer.”

Avril Wayte, Chair, Friends of Bangor Garth Pier

Bangor Garth Pier: Key Facts

- After an 1893 Parliamentary Bill, work on the 1550 foot pier (including a pontoon landing stage) began to the design of J.J.Webster of London. The pier was opened on 14th May 1896 by Lord Penrhyn. It had cost £17,000. Steamers called from Douglas, Liverpool, Blackpool, and elsewhere, and there was Pierrot entertainment.
- In 1914, the Christiana cargo steamer collided with the pier. Repairs were carried out by the Royal Engineers, who built a temporary bridge between the undamaged sections. The 3 foot gauge railway baggage line, which ran the length of the pier, was removed at this time.
- In 1920, the Clio was scrapped. The Clio was a former naval gunship that was moored off the pierhead for a number of years. The wooden vessel was used as a training ship for boys (up to 280) who were orphans or had been in trouble. Some lived onboard the Clio for four or five years.
- The School Ship HMS Conway, moored off the pier from 1941 to 1949, ran aground in 1953 while being towed for repair work. The Conway was immortalised in glass on the pierhead and unveiled in 2017.
- The pier closed for safety reasons at the end of 1971. Ownership passed to Arfon Borough Council in 1974, who decided to demolish the structure. However, the City Council objected and listed building status was obtained for the pier, one of the finest in Britain. Eventually, the City Council took over the pier for a nominal 1p.
- With help from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Welsh Office and the Manpower Services Commission, restoration began in November 1982 and the pier was officially re-opened on 7th May 1988 by the Marquis of Anglesey.
- The National Piers Society was accepted as a member of the [Bangor Pride](#) civic partnership and offered to do all it could to promote and sustain interest in the preservation and continued enjoyment of the Garth Pier.
- However, in November 2011 it was reported that £2m was needed for essential maintenance work to Bangor pier – with claims maintenance had been “ignored” since the 80s. A public meeting also in November heard complaints that not enough was being done to bring visitors to the area. Disputes arose between local people who wanted a greater say in how the pier was managed and the Council’s Town Clerk who felt that the right approach was for people to stand for election as local councillors.
- The Council reported that they had amassed a pool of one million pounds for maintenance but that the actual requirement could be twice this amount because of environmental considerations during pier maintenance operations. By February 2012, it had become clear that the Council’s budget was short by a million pounds and the Council announced they were looking for grant aid to help pay for the pier’s refurbishment.
- In November 2014, it was announced that the City Council had engaged consultants to help build their application for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) to renovate the Grade II listed Garth Pier, add more kiosks and introduce displays to tell the structure and city’s story. The consultants had been asked to draw together the technical and expert input required to evidence the work

which needs to be done to the structure and to provide architectural input into designs to reconstruct new kiosks. The application to HLF for a grant of between £50,000 and £80,000, was submitted in March 2015 and was strongly supported by the local community. However, in June 2015, the bid was rejected by HLF.

- August 2017 saw the commencement of a £1m restoration project aimed at ensuring the future of the pier for many years to come. The project, funded directly by Bangor City Council, involved work to strengthen the structure and also provide new handrails on the pier deck. Significant scaffolding was necessary along the pier sides and the work had to comply with stringent health and safety measures.
- In March 2018, the Bangor Aye reported that the £1m restoration of Bangor's Garth Pier was continuing to progress well. The work, which commenced in August 2017, was expected to take up to four years to complete. In January 2019, it was reported that Phase Three of the pier restoration, the pierhead area, was set to finish ahead of its March 31, 2019 schedule. The work had included major reconstruction of the structural elements of the pier plus improvements to wrought iron, hand railings, buildings, repainting, repair and shot blasting areas of metal fatigue and corrosion.
- In May 2019, more than 2,000 guests attended the Movable Feast event on the pier. A wide selection of food and drink was available including seafood and celebrated lamb and beef dishes and gin and beer from local breweries and distilleries. Live music from local bands and musicians accompanied the event.
- By June 2020, plans were underway to create a Bangor Pier Enterprise Group comprising the Bangor City Council, the private businesses that operate on the pier, and a new community volunteers group - the Bangor Pier Volunteers. This was later restructured and renamed as the Friends of Bangor Garth Pier and in March 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Bangor City Council and Friends of Bangor Garth Pier (FBGP). FBGP took up their new home on the pier (Kiosk No.3) in April 2021, a base to sell pier-related products and to help visitors through their volunteers.
- On May 14th, 125 years to the day after the formal opening of the pier, a commemorative plaque was unveiled by the Mayor of the City in front of a limited number of guests in a small ceremony due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic prohibiting large public gatherings.



Credit: historypoints.org

History of the Pier

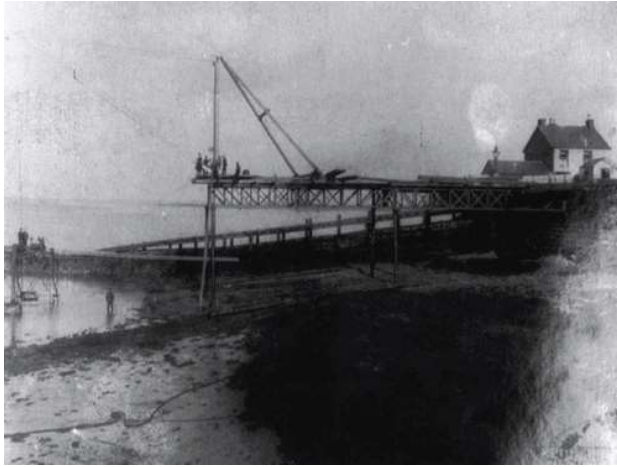
The origin of most of what we now call seaside piers lies in the need for people to be able to embark and disembark safely from passenger ferries. As far back as 1292, according to the Sheriff's accounts of the time, one such ferry was the Porthesgob ferry, operated by the Bishop of Bangor. This had landing places at Gorad y Gyt and Garth Point on the mainland and at Cadnant, Porth Philip Ddu, Borthwen and as far as Gallows Point on the Anglesey side. Getting ashore was likely to have been a somewhat hazardous affair, via primitive jetties subject to the rise and fall of the tides.

The Garth Ferry, operating from the stone jetty adjacent to where the Garth Pier now stands, was the principal crossing point to Anglesey before the construction of the Menai Bridge in 1826, and a ferry continued to operate from this jetty for many years after. Later records describe how, with the rise of steamer traffic between Bangor, Liverpool and other north Wales ports, passengers had to be rowed ashore in small boats, and the loading and unloading of cargo was challenging in the extreme. A better solution to these problems was obviously needed and so in 1885, Bangor City Council began exploring how the existing ferry services could be modernised to take advantage of the growing sea-borne traffic. Discussions with the Morgan family, who had been lessees of the Garth Ferry for almost a hundred years and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who owned the ferry, took place but it wasn't until 1891 that the council acquired the old slate yard at Garth and improved the stone landing jetty, enabling a popular, twice weekly service to Liverpool on the Prince Ja Ja steamer.

This was a period in which piers were beginning to be recognised as valuable attractions to seaside resorts and it was felt that a proper promenade pier at Bangor, with its own landing stage, would offer a unique visitor experience combining pleasure steamer trips, wonderfully diverse natural surroundings, and magnificent views of the mountains of Snowdonia and along and across the beautiful Menai Strait. An initial approach was made to the Mayoh Brothers of Manchester to prepare plans for a pier together with cost estimates to enable the council to obtain permission from the Board of Trade to erect such a structure at Garth. Initial construction estimates of around £14,000 soon escalated to closer to £25,000 to include the purchases of the Garth Ferry, improving the existing landing points and purchase of new ferry boats. These costs were to be covered by a loan which the council would apply for from the Local Government Board.

However, these proposals did not meet with universal approval and strenuous objections were raised to the imposition of such a large expenditure on a council which was already facing serious financial challenges. Nevertheless, following a Local Government Board enquiry in 1893, the loan was approved and the council was free to press on with the construction of a new pier. The council decided not to use the Mayoh Brothers on the project but to ask Mr John James Webster of Westminster to advise them. Mr Webster was a very experienced bridge engineer and also designed the Promenade Pier in Dover which opened in 1893 and was of a similar design to Bangor's pier. Webster assisted in the application for Parliamentary orders to build the pier and Royal Assent was received at the end of August 1894,

following which he was engaged as engineer for the project. The passing of the Bangor Pier Bill was celebrated by a large procession from the town clock to the ferry where a silver key to the ferry gates was presented to the council by Mr Morgan, who had been the lessee of the Garth Ferry.



THE PROPOSED PIER FOR
BANGOR.
ENTHUSIASTIC MEETING IN FAVOUR
OF THE PROJECT.

North Wales Chronicle, 14th October
1893

THE BANGOR PIER.

OPENING CEREMONY TO-DAY.

Bangor is making rapid progress in various directions, while other surrounding towns are content to rest on their oars. The latest addition to its many recent acquisitions is the magnificent pier which is being opened to-day (Thursday) by the Right Hon. Lord Penrhyn. The event will be made the occasion for a demonstration of great magnitude, and the inhabitants are eager and willing to participate in the rejoicings. A portion of the day will be observed as a holiday. Cheap excursions will be run to the town from the surrounding districts, and a large influx of visitors may be expected. The town is gaily decorated, and the weather is all that can be desired.

When the scheme to erect a pier was first mooted strenuous opposition was offered by a section of the ratepayers, and even a poll was demanded, the result of which proved that a great preponderance of the ratepayers was in favour of the scheme. That better landing facilities are necessary goes without saying. The old pier at low water was decidedly objectionable to timid people, who disliked the task of having to walk to the extreme end in order to get to the ferry boat. Another difficulty was experienced when landing passengers from the Liverpool steamers, and had there been better conveniences in the past for this purpose a larger number of visitors would undoubtedly have come to Bangor. Under the new order of things all this will be done away with. The Liverpool steamers will in future be able to land passengers at the pier head, and it may be assumed that steamers from Blackpool, Fleetwood, Southport, and other watering places, will make frequent trips to Bangor during the summer months. Our ancient city will thus come better known, and many who have seen and admired the beauty of the surrounding scenery will not rest content until they have become residents in the neighbourhood.

At ten o'clock this morning, the May-day procession, deferred for the purpose, took place. At two o'clock a procession, consisting of the Mayor and Corporation, Friendly Societies, &c., will be formed in order to escort Lord Penrhyn to the pier at Garth Point. On arrival there his lordship will be presented with a handsome address in album form, together with a gold key with which he will perform the ceremony of opening the pier gates, and formally declare the pier open. Lord Penrhyn, accompanied by the Mayor and Corporation, will then proceed to the pier head, where the Penrhyn Male Voice Choir (consisting of 120 voices), under the conductorship of Dr Roland Rogers, will render a selection of music. The general public during the ceremony will also be admitted on the pier at a charge of 1s each. During the afternoon the band of the 1st Cheshire and Carnarvonshire Artillery Volunteers will also play a selection of music at the pier head. In the evening the Mayor of Bangor entertains Lord Penrhyn, the members of the Council, the mayors of neighbouring towns, and other leading gentlemen of the district, at dinner at the George Hotel. At night there will be a display of fireworks and a procession of boats, illuminated by torches, on the Menai Straits.

HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES AND DES-

1896: Building the Pier

Tenders were invited for the construction of the pier and the contract was eventually awarded to Alfred Thorne of Westminster, who had worked on a number of pier projects both within the UK and overseas. Work began in autumn 1894 and took eighteen months to complete. It was officially opened by Lord Penrhyn on 14



May 1896 following a procession through the town and a crowd of over 5,000 people assembled to watch the opening ceremony. The pier was 1,500 feet long and 24 feet wide along most of its length with a wider section at the pierhead, 59 feet long and 99 feet wide, supporting a covered bandstand and leading to a floating landing stage reached by a girder bridge. Two large ornamental gates, flanked by small pavilions, stood at the entrance to the pier and a series of larger domed pavilions were positioned in recesses at intervals along the deck. Most of the original design still survives and the pier is generally thought to be one of the most elegant in the UK. The pier was a resounding success with regular, frequent steamer services calling at the new landing stage with passenger numbers in the hundreds of thousands using the services up to 1914. The pier was also a popular venue for entertainments providing pierrot shows, brass bands, variety performances, competitions and swimming contests. However, alternative venues for variety shows in the city

caused the performing companies to move from the open sided and weather prone

bandstand on the pier. The sides of the bandstand were eventually boarded in to provide a more comfortable environment.

From its opening in 1896 to March 1914, over 440,000 people paid to use the pier's services plus 296,000 purchasing contract services with roughly the same number attending the pier entertainments.

DAMAGE TO BANGOR PIER
MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

A special meeting of the Bangor City Council was held on Tuesday evening to consider the reports of the Pier and Ferry Committee on the damage to the pier by the steamer "Christiana" during the storm on December 4th.

The committee reported that a meeting was held on Dec. 5th having inspected the damage done to the pier, when it was resolved "that the Town Clerk should inform the Liverpool and Mersey Straits Steamship Co (the owners of the "Christiana") of the accident, and state that the Corporation held them responsible for making good the damage." It was further resolved "that the ferry be worked from the old jetty when the tide and other circumstances permit, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m., and that the surveyor fence off the damaged portion of the Pier."

At a meeting of the committee on December 8th, the Town Clerk and Mr O. R. Hughes were asked to take all the evidence at once while the facts were fresh in mind.

At a meeting of the committee three days later, the Town Clerk read the proofs of the evidence taken, and the Town Clerk suggested that the evidence be submitted to counsel for his advice on the matter. After a long discussion it was resolved that the Town Clerk obtain the evidence of certain other persons mentioned. It was further resolved that notices be fixed at the toll booths to the effect that until the Pier is put into working order, persons using the ferry do so at their own risk.

The committee again met on December 16th, when the question of making temporary arrangement so as to work the ferry continually was considered, and on being put to the vote it was carried that some arrangement be made to maintain the ferry traffic. A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs Caesar, Cool, O. R. Hughes, and John Williams, was appointed to consider the question and report to the next ordinary meeting. The Town Clerk reported that he had now obtained all the evidence so far available, and suggested that the same be submitted to counsel for his opinion. It was decided to leave the matter in the Town Clerk's hands with instructions to engage what assistance he may think necessary.

The Mayor stated that the Council had better discuss the subject in private, and they resolved themselves into committee accordingly.

After a discussion it was decided "that a temporary gangway be constructed to connect the two portions of the pier at an estimated cost of £219, less £110, the estimated value of the timber."

The Town Clerk reported that he had been in correspondence with the owners of the "Christiana," who had referred him to their Protection Society in London.

The Council authorised the Town Clerk to consult Liverpool agents, and obtain any legal advice he might consider necessary.

There was standard entry charge of 2d (approximately 65p in 2019) with an increased charge of 4d to 6d (approximately £1.30 to £1.95 in 2019) for special events. 6d would be around a fourteenth of a skilled tradesman's daily wage.

SS Christiana

Disaster struck in December 1914 when the merchant steamer Christiana collided with the pier during a storm, smashing a 150ft gap through the structure. A temporary walkway was constructed by the Royal Anglesey Engineers but proper repairs were not carried out until 1922, when further serious structural faults were discovered. Additional repair work was put in hand and



improvements to the landing stage were also carried out. But from the mid-1920s, the popularity of the pier began to wane as bus services became available to replace the ferries and larger passenger vessels made Bangor impractical as a landing point. The entertainments available also declined during this period and by the early 1930s, the pier was making heavy losses and questions

began to be raised about the wisdom of retaining the pier and its services within public ownership.

The Pier post-1945

The Second World War caused any ongoing plans to be interrupted and part of the pier's decking was removed to prevent enemy invaders using the pier. When the war ended the pier was in a very sorry state leading to some views that it should be simply demolished or sold. Neither of these happened however and the council made improvements to the pier and encouraged its use for events such as dances. But the pier was entering a phase in which it continued to lose money and deteriorate structurally.



Following a survey in the late 1960s that showed it was suffering from serious decay and had become unsafe, the council had no option but to close the pier in 1971. Complete demolition of the pier by Arfon District Council, who then owned the pier following local government

reorganisation in 1974, was narrowly avoided by just a single vote. Further attempts at demolition were set aside when Bangor City Community Council achieved Grade II* status for the pier. When it was listed that year, the British Listed Buildings inspector considered it to be "the best in Britain of the older type of pier without a large pavilion at the landward end". The Council would later take ownership of the pier in 1978 for just 1p and a promise to restore it. It was estimated that restoration would cost £470,000, a sum well outside the ability of the Community Council to cover, and so intensive fundraising efforts were put in hand.

The first Friends of Bangor Pier Group was formed in Garth in the mid-1970s raising the profile of the pier and a significant amount of money with events such as Buy A Plank, several Raffles, Dances, Bingo, Coffee Mornings and other events to help raise funding for the pier reconstruction work in the 1980s. There have been many different fundraising activities at the pier over the following decades, and events such as Easter Bonnet parades, Birdman Competition, RAF Valley Freedom Ceremonies and vintage cars rally.

In October 1982, financial support from a number of organisations including the Secretary of State for Wales, the Welsh Development Agency, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and the Historic Buildings Council meant that restoration work could begin. A scheme set up by the Manpower Services Commission gave short-term work on the project to local unemployed people. Bad weather caused costs to rise and the additional funding was met by a sponsorship scheme in which various components of the pier could be sponsored for amounts between £5 and £2,500.



Additional sponsorship was also provided for the pierhead building and the ornamental entrance gates. The pier won a Prince of Wales Award in 1983 and a Europa Nostra conservation award in 1988. Finally, in May 1988, at an eventual cost of £3 million, the beautifully restored pier was opened by the Marquess of Anglesey.

The Pier in the 21st century

There followed a fairly uneventful period in which the pier retained its popularity with Bangor's residents and the many visitors to the city, with the Tea Rooms at the pierhead developing a reputation for the excellent quality of its scones. However, the maintenance of the structure was not receiving the attention it deserved and by 2011 it became clear that problems were developing with the pier's sub-structure.



Bangor Garth Pier, North Wales, 2011 from the series Pierdom © Simon Roberts

As previously mentioned, August 2017 saw the commencement of a £1m restoration project aimed at ensuring the future of Bangor Pier for many years to come. The project, funded directly by Bangor City Council, involved work to strengthen the structure and also provide new handrails on the pier deck. Significant scaffolding was necessary along the pier sides and the work had to comply with stringent health and safety measures.



Significant scaffolding was necessary along the pier sides and the work had to comply with stringent health and safety measures.

Credit: Evans Wolfenden Partnership

By June 2020, plans were in place to create a Bangor Pier Enterprise Group comprising Bangor City Council, the private businesses that operate on the pier, and a new community volunteers group – the Bangor Pier Volunteers. In March 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Bangor City Council and Friends of Bangor Garth Pier (FBGP). FBGP took up their new home on the pier (Kiosk No.3)



Credit: SportpicturesCymru

in April 2021, a base to sell pier-related products and to help visitors through their volunteers.

The Future

As you have read the pier has enjoyed a varied 125 year history full of highs and lows, and with the massive restoration work nearing its end expectations are mounting for the next 125 years. There is a hope that a new push for Heritage Lottery Funding will allow yet further developments on the pier to expand its event capabilities and make it a real destination on the north Wales Coast.

Part of a Heritage Fund application could also be sought to bring the landing stage back to life and to once again allow boats to dock off of the pierhead for local excursions, bringing the pier full circle and providing some of the most extraordinary leisure activities available anywhere along the Menai Straights and further afield.

Aside from pushing for further grants to unlock these capabilities for the pier the City Council is keen to continue to celebrate the pier with a series of public events and online contributions over the course of this anniversary year as well as beyond. The future certainly looks bright for Bangor Garth Pier.



Credit: The Bangor Aye; Awyr Las

Further information

[City of Bangor Council - Pier \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Bangor Garth Pier \(bangorpier.org\)](#)

[Bangor Garth – National Piers Society](#)

[Bangor Civic Society: Bangor Garth Pier](#)

[Bangor Civic Society: Bangor Pier Centenary 1896-1996](#)

[Bangor Civic Society: The Re-opening of Bangor Pier 1988](#)

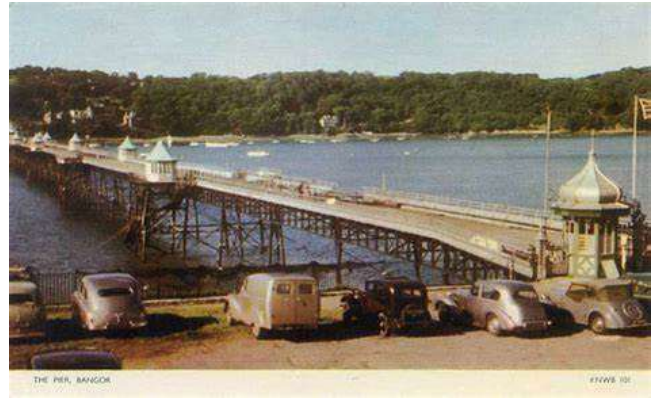
[Piers in Wales - Simplon Postcards \(simplonpc.co.uk\)](#)

[History Points - Garth Pier](#)

[Notes: Bangor Garth Pier - Paintings of Piers](#)

[Bangor Pier - Neolithicsea.co.uk](#)

[Bangor Pier, Bangor, Gwynedd \(britishlistedbuildings.co.uk\)](#)



Extras / News items

[Appeal for memories of HMS Clio school ship in Bangor \(January 2011\)](#)

[Garth Pier: The jewel in Bangor's crown \(September 2011\)](#)

[Bangor pier: potential £1m shortfall for maintenance work \(February 2012\)](#)

[Bangor pier overhaul: concern over potential cash shortfall \(February 2012\)](#)

[Could you be in this film shot 20 years ago on Bangor's Garth Pier? - North Wales Live \(dailypost.co.uk\) \(Feb 2017\)](#)

[HMS Conway immortalised in window on Bangor pier \(May 2017\)](#)

[Bangor's Garth Pier Restoration Fund £600,000 short \(April 2019\)](#)

[The Movable Feast held at Garth Pier attracted a large gathering of food and drink lovers \(May 2019\)](#)

[Swimmers complete Pier to Pier Challenge for #TeamIrfon \(September 2019\)](#)

[Amy officially lights up Bangor Pier for Christmas and the NHS \(December 2020\)](#)

[Bangor Pier to light up yellow as part of National Day of Reflection \(March 2021\)](#)

[Kiosk shop to open on Bangor Pier to mark 125th anniversary of landmark \(April 2021\)](#)