



January 12, 2026

Laura Patrick
Chair, Islands Trust
200 – 1627 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8R 1H8

RE: Islands Trust Policy Statement Feedback

Dear Chair and Members of Islands Trust Council,

I would like to thank the Islands Trust Council and staff for the significant effort that has gone into modernizing the Islands Trust Policy Statement (ITPS). Many on Bowen recognize the importance of updating this foundational document to respond to climate change, reconciliation, and housing pressures across the Trust Area, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback at this stage.

Bowen Island Municipality's formal response – prepared by staff and endorsed by Council – addresses various technical, operational, and policy-specific matters. I am writing separately, in my capacity as Mayor, to highlight several governance-level considerations that I believe warrant explicit attention as the Policy Statement moves toward adoption.

The Importance of Interpretive Clarity in a Statutory Instrument

The Islands Trust Policy Statement is not merely a strategic or aspirational document. It is a statutory instrument under the *Islands Trust Act*, used by the Executive Committee and Trust Council to determine whether official community plans, land use bylaws, and other local actions are “not at variance” under section 15 of the Act.

In that context, the degree of interpretive latitude embedded in the current draft raises concern.

While the Policy Statement distinguishes between Values, Advisory Policies, and Directive Policies, in practice many of these elements employ similar language and are open to wide interpretation. Even within the Directive Policies, terms such as “minimize,” “consider,” “appropriate,” “self-sufficient,” and “cumulative effects” are not defined in a way that provides consistent, measurable guidance.

The result is a framework that could be interpreted very differently by successive Executive Committees or Trust Councils, depending on prevailing philosophies or pressures of the day. I am not seeking certainty of outcome; however, as a statutory

document, the ITPS should provide more stable interpretive guardrails and a clearer “ballpark” for how directive policies are expected to be applied in section 15 determinations.

A statutory policy framework should constrain discretion, not amplify it.

Reliance on a Non-Statutory Implementation Plan

The draft ITPS places considerable weight on a future Implementation Plan to operationalize interpretation, evaluation, and monitoring. While implementation planning is valuable, this raises a structural concern:

- The ITPS itself is statutory.
- The Implementation Plan is not.

Further, the Implementation Plan has not yet been drafted or shared for review. In combination with open-textured directive language, this creates a risk that the ITPS becomes a statutory instrument that provides substantial “direction” but insufficient operational clarity about what that direction means in practice when real decisions are being made under section 15.

Put plainly: where key terms and thresholds remain undefined at this stage, the difficult and necessary work of interpretation and policy-setting has not been resolved within the ITPS itself – it is deferred. That deferred work will inevitably re-emerge later, and likely in higher-stakes circumstances, when the Executive Committee is determining whether bylaws and OCP amendments are “not at variance.” For a statutory instrument intended to guide and constrain decision-making over time, this is a governance risk worth addressing now, before subsequent readings.

The respectful suggestion here is that core evaluative criteria, interpretive guidance, and policy hierarchy be embedded within the ITPS itself, rather than delegated to a future non-statutory implementation document. This would support long-term planning certainty across governance terms and reduce the risk of shifting interpretive standards over time.

Bowen Island’s Distinct Status as a Municipality

Bowen Island Municipality occupies a unique position within the Trust Area. Unlike Local Trust Areas and Committees, Bowen:

- is a fully constituted municipality,
- has statutory responsibilities under the *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act*,
- delivers services, infrastructure, and housing, and
- is directly accountable to residents through municipal governance.

The draft ITPS frequently refers to “local planning areas” or treats Island Municipalities and Local Trust Committees as functionally equivalent. In practice, they are not.

This distinction matters because the scope of the draft ITPS reaches into areas that, in a municipal context, are not merely planning-adjacent but structurally determinative – such as housing delivery, servicing and infrastructure constraints, transportation networks, emergency management and hazard considerations, and ongoing engagement expectations. The cumulative weight of this scope raises a reasonable question as to whether some elements remain fully congruent with the Trust’s Object and land-use planning tools under the Act, particularly where they intersect with legislated municipal governance responsibilities.

The ITPS would benefit from explicitly acknowledging this distinction and clarifying how Directive Policies are intended to apply in an Island Municipality context. Given the Policy Statement is a statutory instrument of the Trust, and given the implications for section 15 determinations, it would also be appropriate for the Trust to lead this work by providing the necessary interpretive guidance and, where required, obtaining the relevant legal clarity – rather than expecting Island Municipalities (and, by extension, Regional Districts) to individually fund and resolve these jurisdictional questions in isolation.

Alignment with the Object of the Trust

Section 3 of the *Islands Trust Act* establishes the Trust’s Object as to “preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and of British Columbia.”

The draft ITPS contains numerous directives that extend into areas traditionally within municipal jurisdiction, including housing delivery, transportation networks, waste and water servicing, economic development, and community services. While these matters may intersect with land use planning, the breadth and prescriptive nature of some directives raise questions about alignment with the Trust’s statutory Object and with municipal authority under the *Local Government Act* and *Community Charter*.

Where Directive Policies are used as a basis for section 15 determinations, clarity regarding the limits of Trust authority becomes especially important. Again, it would also be appropriate for the Trust to lead this work by providing the necessary interpretive and legal clarity to Island Municipalities and Regional Districts within the Trust Area.

Predictability for All Users of the Planning System

The ITPS is relied upon not only by Trust bodies and municipalities, but also by Indigenous Governing Bodies, regional districts, community organizations, conservation

groups, landowners, and proponents. Large initiatives and projects often span multiple elected terms.

A policy framework that is perceived as highly interpretive or indeterminate can create instability across governance cycles – making it difficult for any party to plan responsibly, invest appropriately, or engage meaningfully. Predictability and clarity are not at odds with environmental protection, reconciliation, or the delivery of housing supply; they are prerequisites for durable outcomes.

Defining Success

Finally, I encourage the Trust Council to more clearly articulate within the ITPS itself what success looks like. How will the effectiveness of the Policy Statement be evaluated over time? How will competing objectives – environmental protection, reconciliation, housing, and community viability – be balanced in practice?

Absent clear outcomes and measures, the ITPS risks becoming a document that is symbolically powerful but operationally uncertain.

In closing, I remain supportive of the intent and many of the directions contained within the draft Policy Statement. My request is not for less ambition, but for greater clarity, durability, and governance resilience; so that a well-articulated ITPS can serve the Trust Area across generations of leadership.

These comments are offered in the spirit of cooperation and shared stewardship, and I look forward to continued dialogue as this important work proceeds.

Respectfully,



Andrew Leonard
Mayor, Bowen Island Municipality

Cc: Executive Committee, Islands Trust
Cc: Trust Council, Islands Trust
Cc: Hon. Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
Cc: Will Cole-Hamilton, Chair, Comox Valley Regional District
Cc: Stuart McLean, Chair, Regional District of Nanaimo
Cc: Mike Hurley, Chair, Metro Vancouver Regional District
Cc: Clay Brander, Chair, qathet Regional District
Cc: Cliff McNeil-Smith, Chair, Capital Regional District
Cc: Alton Toth, Chair, Sunshine Coast Regional District
Cc: Jeremy Valeriote, MLA West Vancouver – Sea to Sky
Cc: Council, Bowen Island Municipality