

RESPONSE TO: Lone Oak Legends Clubhouse – Request for a Temporary Use Permit

Islands Trust Hornby Island

July 4, 2025

I write this letter in response to the request by the Lone Oak Legends Clubhouse for a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) at 7250 Central Road, Hornby Island, B.C.

The week of June 25, 2025, an open letter was circulated by post to Hornby residents informing the community of the visions prompting the TUP request, which they state is on the agenda for the next Hornby Island Local Trust Committee meeting, scheduled for July 4, 2025.

After the opening pre-amble of the letter, it states that the property has not been actively farmed for over forty years, although zoned ALR; suggesting that their current activities do not impede on recent agricultural activity. This also suggests that the hay which has been harvested in recent years from that farm is not an agricultural crop.

The fact of the matter is that hay harvested from that and other island fields, feeds cows, horses, other stock, and is used by gardeners for mulching their vegetable gardens.

In recent years, in north/central B.C. many large farms have been purchased by Chinese firms in order to grow hay for markets in China. Thousands of tons annually get exported, leaving long term farmers in the area without a local source of hay for their herds, consequently creating a regional rise in price and the need for long distance transportation. Hay is an important farm crop and it is disappearing in B.C. Not only was the French Farm a producing farm, but the space now being used for rugby and clubhouse, reduces the possible annual harvest.

The Agricultural Land Reserve was introduced into B.C. because of the loss of farmland due to residential or industrial development so as to maintain not only active agricultural use but protection of arable land for future regional/local food production.

The British Columbia/Yukon Pressbooks website has the following article:

Loss and Alienation of Farmland

Conversion of farmland refers to the change of tenure from agriculture to residential, commercial or industrial uses, most often the result of urban expansion into rural areas. This loss of farmland is considered permanent.

It goes on to discuss farm land issues and pressures from surrounding, growing, urban areas, which leads into rural areas, as below:

Outside heavily urbanised areas, farmlands may be compromised by unnecessary subdivision and the introduction of non-farm land uses in agricultural areas. Amenity migration to rural areas is a phenomenon where formerly urban landowners are enticed by promises of the ‘country life’ on smaller lot ranchettes (rural residential estates). Non-farm uses may have several detrimental impacts upon agricultural regions, such as the following:

- allowing potentially productive agriculture lands to go uncultivated;
- introducing urban values and perceptions of land into agricultural communities; and,
- encouraging further subdivision through land value improvements.

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In recent years there has been considerable erosion of land from the ALReserve. It is important that it be conserved for future generations and changing conditions.

It is applaudable that the proponent espouses building a barn and fenced area to support a local beef farmer to actively farm the land. Support of local food production is important, and yet it doesn’t change the fact that there is now less land available for active farming, with the advent of the recent new uses.

In terms of its proposed use for school activities, community use, and other events:

The school has a very good field that is used at far less than capacity. Chess for kids can take place in the school or Room to Grow. As for event venues, there are a number of already established venues, mostly community, non-profit, that rely on rent revenue to cover costs of administration, maintenance, and upkeep. In terms of hosting events such as dances and wedding, music carries from the clubhouse, (already built), impacting not just the local neighbours, but beyond into Sandpiper subdivision, housing many families.

Also, it is applaudable that the proponent intends to promote and support Indigenous rugby. What is not stated in the letter to community was that its, larger, over-arching, intention for use by the national rugby community is, as excerpted below:

From the website of the Canadian Rugby Foundation:

The Lone Oak Legends Fund was established in December, 2024. The Fund is intended to help provide youth rugby experiences and support the growth of junior rugby on Hornby Island, BC by funding from its endowment and is consistent with the broad objectives and purposes of the Lone Oak Legends Rugby Club, Rugby Canada, and the Canadian Rugby Foundation, to develop and grow rugby across Canada while meeting all CRA requirements.

And:

LONE OAK LEGENDS RUGBY CLUB

RUGBY COMES TO HORNBY ISLAND - A DAY FOR THE AGES

September 14, 2024

We've talked about rugby clubs on this site before; their growth and development – Port Alberni Black Sheep, Nanaimo Hornets, Cowichan Piggies, Bayside, Cowra (Aus.) and the Alaskan Mountain Club. Today we bring you the Lone Oak Legends Club.

With a number of ex-UVic ruggers present and a cast of forty plus people last weekend, the goal posts were raised at the Lone Oak field. It was an event reminiscent of 1972 when the UVic Rugby Club raised posts at the then, newly minted Bob Wallace Field. Goody Goodmunseth from the Cowichan RFC had sought four fine firs which he logged and the task of getting posts to Victoria was creatively solved by the club's mentor, Howard Gerwing. He suggested that teams of ruggers relay race two of the posts over the Malahat. Ultimately, UVic's Chancellor, Bob Wallace, a long-time Vikes supporter consecrated the erection by emptying a bottle of Old Style beer into the awaiting abyss and thus, Wallace Field was born.

Lone Oak is a much different proposition and can be attributed to the brainchild of Mike Holmes. Mike's name is synonymous with a number of philanthropical supporters of the game in Canada – Karl Fix, Chris LeFevre, Gren Thomas, and John Lecky, immediately coming to mind. Mike and two partners have invested in eighty acres of prime land with the dream of it becoming one of the province's most unique rugby homes.

A breath-taking "clubhouse" bar, large floor area and state-of-the-art cooking facility, as well as a patio area have been completed and initiated this past weekend. The walls are adorned with caricatures of deceased VIRU rugby legends – players, officials and administrators, all of whom gave much to the game. The artwork is attributed to the talented Paul Shepherd, artist and rugby buff.

This official opening and dedication was in honor of two ex-Viking rugby players, Dave Chambers and Jamie Hawthorne (a four-capped player with the NSMT XVI's and VII's). Both men have been facing major health issues. With the compliments of Chris LeFevre, Jamie, Dave and wife Sandy, and two of Jamie's ex-Vike teammates from Kelowna, arrived on midfield via helicopter from Vancouver. The eighty-foot posts were raised on Saturday and ex-Vike coach, Doug Tate organized some shenanigans and socializing continued until late in the evening. Other components of the day featured a UVic rugby slide show, courtesy of the late Don Lobb. Memorable recollections were the precursor to the wonderful spaghetti meal for all, prepared by Mike's partner, Davine. Copious libations helped the neural traces recall many memories and antics of years ago. The evening had a pleasant background of music and vocals of a mixed genre, befitting the vintage of the assembled group, provided by a local talented soloist. The assembled group represented many post-University club backgrounds; Velox-Valhallians, Abbotsford, James Bay, Cowichan, Kelowna Crows, and UBCOB. It was with some wet eyes as the helicopter returned and loaded our friends and folks slowly broke up, leaving for abodes from Victoria to Calgary.

So, what is the vision for Lone Oak rugby? There may well be myriads. The Vikings have already experienced a pre-season camp. It could be an amazing venue for a Sevens tournament, with a dip in the incomparable, Tribune Bay; camp out and accommodation at the furnished bunkhouse; or a men's or women's Provincial encounter; a getaway for a visiting international team or an alternative for a national team to have a few days away from Shawnigan Lake. It will no doubt be a gathering place for major island events, Folkfests, weddings, school ventures, kid's rugby camps, would all be possibilities. The potential for events is unlimited for this "field of dreams". There is a downside and challenges, hurdles being limitations on the island for accommodation for spectators wishing to attend, and transportation can be far from seamless. This being said, I would not miss the opening event! Mike has paved a path of acceptance of rugby by his fellow islanders.

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The above two articles highlight the intended purposes for the field and clubhouse. As for Rugby use, it goes far beyond the letter's statement of supporting Indigenous rugby. The espoused vision in the articles speaks to regional and national use for this facility as a competition/training centre; not mentioned in the community informational letter.

Helicopters brought in (and out) some of the attendees at the opening celebratory weekend. This is less than desirable in maintaining the quiet atmosphere of the island that we and the other animals living here appreciate.

In closing, I urge the Local Trustees to consider these issues when reviewing the application for the Temporary Use Permit.

Thank you for your attention to this.

Ed Hoepfner
Hornby Island