



# BOWENIAN

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BOWEN ISLAND, B.C.

March 2013

## Plan Q's Flawed Public Process

See drawings of Plan Q on Pages 2-3

Bowen Islanders like to grumble and blame each other for the various ferry marshalling schemes that have been drawn up and discarded over the years. "No one's made a decision in thirty years," as our current mayor is fond of saying. "This Council was elected to make decisions and not to turnaround to the public and say 'What do you guys think?'" "Just make a decision!" others chorus, "Just get it done!"

But, after nine key planning studies and three dozen relevant Council resolutions, isn't it time to acknowledge two basic truths? First, the issue is complicated with significant constraints, and there is no easy solution. Second, the status quo is sufficiently workable that we are not motivated to accept the compromises, suffer the disruption, or pay the costs involved in implementing a new marshalling plan.

### History

Previously, the closest we got to adopting a plan was in late 2011 when JWT Architecture and Planning presented four concepts to Council. Each of them drew on all of the previous work and each of them took into account key constraints and requirements. Rather than attracting intense opposition, JWT's work prompted islanders to claim a favourite, but often to say they could live with any of them. Each



Plan Q, Council's flawed \$5.5 million plan to speed up vehicle loading and unloading offers no real opportunities for public input.

of those four concepts presented a workable solution because they had already achieved broad acceptance with major stakeholders (i.e., Metro Vancouver, BC Ferries, the public) during a public consultation process undertaken by the firm.

### Best Practice

To get a good result with village planning you have to have solid public consultation. You need to consult the major stakeholders and the public *before* you make key goal-setting decisions. A design process that invites public participation throughout stays on track and results in solid traction and public buy-in.

### Today

So how did Plan Q reach such an advanced stage of development when we haven't heard much about it?

In April 2012, Council began by resolving to adopt the Plan Z loop road through Crippen Park, but then retreated. They announced that they would canvas the views of every voter on the island. But in May 2012, Council changed direction again and contracted a Vernon-based engineering firm to draw up Plan Q. This plan was discussed in closed staff workshops and then brought before the public for the first time at the Committee of the Whole meeting on November 13, 2012. At the following meeting, the consultant planner's recommendations were adopted and the implementation phase is now underway.

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## Valuing the Village – can we afford to ignore village planning?

Snug Cove is Bowen Island's most important civic space. It has an impact on many aspects of our lives as islanders, from catching the ferry to shopping for groceries or meeting friends for coffee. Most of our outdoor festivals and celebrations take place or end there. It all happens in the Cove.

For many of us the Cove is where we encounter our friends and neighbours, most often in the lineup itself. Like the railroad stations of the pioneer days and harbours along rivers, the ferry dock is the hub of our island, our commercial and civic centre.

Recently Cove businesses asked themselves whether the ferry lineup mattered to them. The answer was yes in almost every case. The ferry

lineup brings customers to them. In today's economic climate, this is a particularly tough time to run a business on Bowen. If our businesses begin to fail, it will become increasingly difficult, and rather dull, to truly live on the island, rather than being principally dependant on leaving the island for most of our commercial needs. Then our reasons for lingering in the Cove will begin to erode. Like many small communities around the western world, we may face shuttered buildings and more vacant lots. We need to make sure that the ferry lineup stays close to the businesses that depend on it.

But what further can be done to support our businesses and support the Cove? What can Bowen businesses offer that big box and internet stores don't? We can offer the essence of what makes Lonsdale Quay or Granville Island successful and popular haunts: We can develop the experience of being in the community space. We may not be able to impact businesses directly, but through good planning decisions we can develop our public space.

This spirit was reflected in the village designs offered by JWT Architecture and Planning in October 2011 which focused on the civic space of the Cove, creating reasons to linger. Plan A showed a

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The Cenotaph in Snug Cove on Remembrance Day 2012: This is Bowen's largest annual community gathering. Plan Q intends to move the Cenotaph to an undisclosed location.

## Planning for the Future: Plan Q = FAIL

Ferry users are frustrated by rush hour and holiday overloads, and many hope for a larger ferry, since the commuter overloads are frequent and predictable. But in the context of falling vehicle ridership on the ferry, reflecting the rising costs of ferry fares and rising gas prices, BC Ferries say it has no plans to provide us with a larger ferry. In fact, this year they carried out a public consultation to seek out possible schedule cuts. This year vehicle ridership has dropped 3.88% on the previous year, while the number of passengers has only fallen 1.36%. This suggests more of us are finding other means to go about our business using transit, car-pooling or parking in Horseshoe Bay. Since costs are likely to continue to increase as fuel prices rise, it makes sense to plan for a continuation of the trend towards shifting an increasing proportion of foot passengers. However, we also need to ensure that we are planning well for the inevitable increase in island population, slow though that rate of increase may be.

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## Bowen's OCP: Planning for Community

Bowen Island's new Official Community Plan (OCP) is now entering its second year as the law of the land. Having turned back two politically-motivated legal challenges during its formation, the OCP decisively asserts that the community's desire for its own future, as testified through public input from 2009 to 2011, will set the course for development and conservation on the island.

### The OCP and the Law

Under provincial law, both land developers and our elected municipal councillors must adhere to the OCP. The document stands above political disputes as a community "constitution" at the heart of Bowen Island's unique form of government within the Islands Trust. Any important amendments to the OCP must first be approved by island residents through the municipal council and then also by the Islands Trust executive committee. An executive committee decision can be appealed to the central Islands Trust Council, made up of representatives of all the 13 major Trust islands, including Bowen's two elected representatives. And in extreme cases, Bowen's municipal council can also appeal the decision of that body to the provincial government, where the minister can order the use of the dispute resolution procedures that are outlined in Bowen Island's Letters Patent, which established Bowen as the province's only "island municipality".



Internationally renowned urban planner, Dave Witty stated that the public process used during the development of Bowen's OCP is among the best he has ever seen.

The OCP records and reflects the majority of Booodthirstiest thai' strong desire to maintain the community's natural environment and rural community.

### Managing Growth

The OCP provides a forward-looking vision to guide our local government. While municipal councillors are not required to carry out all of the objectives of the document, they cannot do anything that is inconsistent with the OCP. This is because the Local Government Act provides that "all bylaws enacted or works undertaken by a Council"

after the adoption of an OCP "must be consistent with that plan". The OCP provides fundamental direction in many areas of land use planning, for example, on matters of allowable building density on any given parcel of land.

Defining and planning for a specified level of

residential density is crucial to managing population growth and the environmental impact of development. The OCP envisions a total residential density for the island; developing within that limit is an important planning tool to anticipate infrastructure needs. Phased allocation of density rights also allows our municipal council to adjust the form and character of development in response to new social and environmental challenges.

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# Plan Q: Ferry Folly

Although the plan was adopted by Council in November 2012, this may be the first time many Bowen Islanders have had a chance to look at the drawings.

We encourage Bowen Islanders to look closely at this map and our commentary. Keep an eye on the BIM website and the Undercurrent for announcements concerning the time and location of the planned information meetings.

Mt Gardner Road  
Grafton Road

Projected cost \$637,616

Section cost approx. \$1,011,528

On November 28th 2012, Council adopted a \$5.5 million ferry marshalling plan for Snug Cove, euphemistically titled the 'Government Road Corridor Improvements Programme' or GRCIP.

The plan is known by Bowen folk as Plan Q, after Quantum Consulting, the engineering firm based in Vernon, BC who were contracted to draft the plan. The plan is not much more than a set of schematic engineering drawings derived by the engineers themselves, rather than design work by a professional village planner. The drawings in this issue of the *Bowenian* are based Quantum's drawings adopted by Council in November 2012.

Plan Q consists of centre lane ferry marshalling and a large bypass cutting 130 feet into the park almost along the full extent of the road between the library and the old gas station lot. The marshalling area is bookended by two roundabouts,

one at Cardena and one at BICS.

The bulk of the cost for the plan lies in works required for the widening of Government Road to accommodate the central marshalling lane, and a sum of over \$1.3 million is required for the two traffic circles. The cost of the bypass road is not included in the cost estimate, and would require Bowen to acquire 1.3 acres of parkland from Metro Vancouver as well as the cost of the additional road construction, adding about 50% more asphalt to the lower Cove.

Thus far the project seems to have cost at least the \$35,000 extra money allocated for Cove planning from the 2012 budget, plus the \$50-\$75,000

## Centre-lane Marshalling

Cost: \$1,773,660

Necessitates the widening of Government Road with the expense of moving the overhead wires and moving waterlines etc.

### Purpose:

Intended to consolidate the marshalling lane, with no hatched areas and avoiding parked cars being trapped by marshalling traffic.

### Logistics

- Requires eastbound traffic to drive down to Cardena, then up to the school to get into the marshalling lane.
- Prevents off-loading traffic from stopping in the Cove.
- Any gains in parking spaces are lost in making space for bus drop off and losses at the traffic circle area.

### Safety

Not safe for children and adults hurrying back to their cars from shops in Snug Cove, whilst other traffic is rushing to the drop-off area.

### Safety

If a car is stalled, loading traffic *must* drive around it into oncoming traffic.

### Safety

If you want to leave the line up, you *must* u-turn into oncoming traffic.

### Traffic/Pedestrian Barrier

This fence is intended to prevent cars and people moving into eastbound (→) lane. Impossible to navigate with wheel chairs or stroller.

## Bypass or 'Light Loop' Road

Cost: unknown, but in the region of \$840,000 plus 1.3 acres of Crippen Park

### Purpose:

For off-loading traffic to bypass Snug Cove. To alienate Crippen Park land for development on the north side of Government Road.

### Comments

In effect we would lose three quarters of an acre of community land for an unnecessary road in order to sell less than half an acre in the hopes that we'd make a profit, while adding around 50% more asphalt to the Cove into the bargain. Given that there have been empty lots sitting undeveloped on the south side of Government road for some years this idea seems unlikely to work out well.

### Lots More Pavement

Loop Road and widening of Government Road add almost 50% more asphalt to lower Snug Cove.

Plan Q includes an option of widening the Loop Road to 4 lanes nearly doubling asphalt to lower Snug Cove.

### No Free Ride

In order to build the loop road, the municipality must buy Crippen Park lands from Metro Vancouver Parks at current market rates or municipal lands of equivalent value.

### Sensitive Wildlife Habitat

See page 3 for more on the heron colony.

1.3 acres alienated from Crippen Park

### Doing the Math

Of the 1.3 acres removed from Crippen Park 0.71 acres will be covered by asphalt leaving **only 0.59 acres for Cove development.**

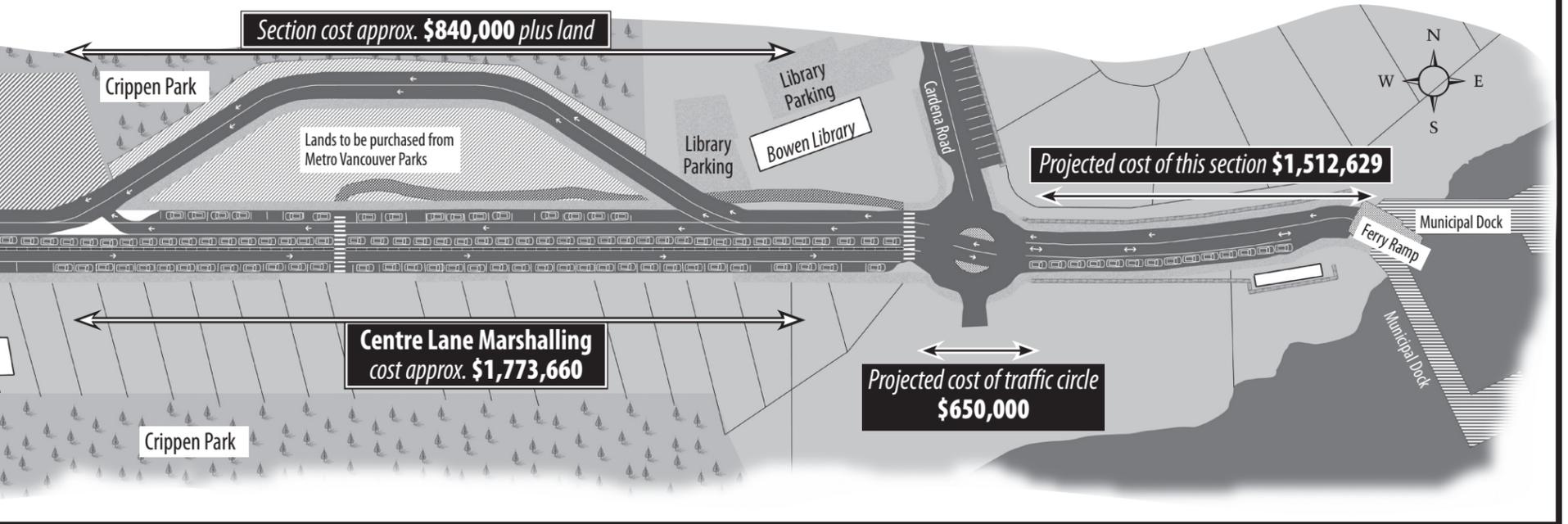
Councilors Rhodes suggests that sale of this land to developers will pay a significant proportion of the project's \$5.5 million price tag. To do this, downtown Snug Cove land prices will need to be similar to those in downtown Vancouver.

adopted in November for further drawings of the Plan. The "information meeting" plan has a rough budget of \$20,000 plus, and these costs don't include staff time spent on the project, nor the full cost of the planning consultants time which are not noted separately in the budgeted costs. This is in stark contrast with the four, workable designs generated by the JWT process for \$35,000.

As noted below the \$650,000 for the Government Road/Cardena Road traffic circle will be paid for through a tax levy over the next two years (equivalent to a tax increase of 9%), as approved by Council at the November 26th meeting.

The source of the rest of the funding is yet to be determined, but at that meeting Council voted to explore a ferry user fee. The finance department suggested a charge of \$0.50 per vehicle

and \$0.20 per passenger would accumulate approximately \$200,000 per year. At that rate we would have raised enough money to begin the last phase in thirty years or so, an interesting alternative approach to 'doing nothing in the Cove.'



### Cardena Traffic Circle

**Cost: \$650,000**

This is to be funded by the 'traffic circle special levy' of approximately \$134 per household for each of two years. Due to appear in a July 2013 tax bill, this is **equivalent to a 9% rise in taxes.**

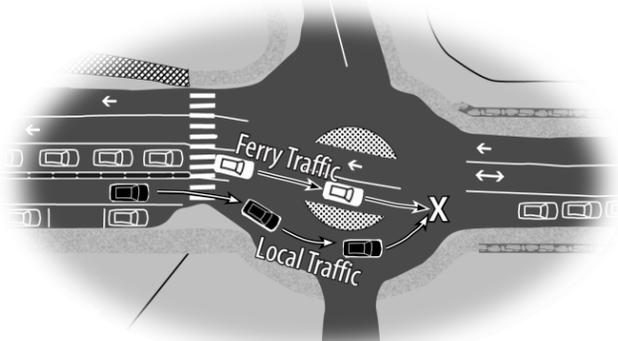
**Purpose:**

Intended to enable turn-arounds and passenger drop-off, at Cardena Road.

**Logistics**

- Necessitates the paving of a large area at the intersection of Government and Cardena Roads.
- Drive-thru configuration confusing for traffic.
- Introduces tight corners for marshalling traffic.
- Will make it difficult for boat trailers attempting to enter the USSC boat ramp area.
- Will absorb 20 parking spaces from the USSC car park

### Right-of-Way Conflict

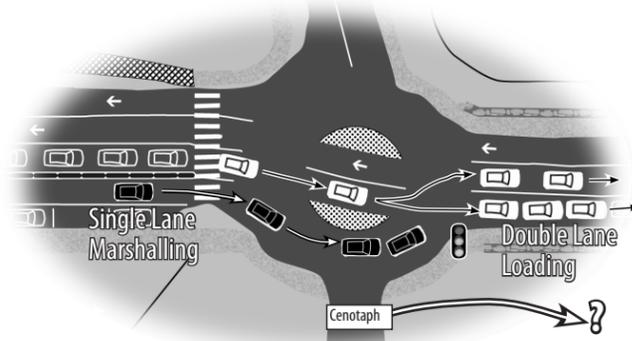


**Safety**

Notice that the traffic circle has a road through the middle. Some lanes go through and some go around. This means that this intersection will not function as a traffic circle, and any driver who treats it as such may cause an accident.

The planning consultant suggested this problem could be resolved by installing traffic signals, but this would cost well over \$100,000.

### Double the Speed



**Safety**

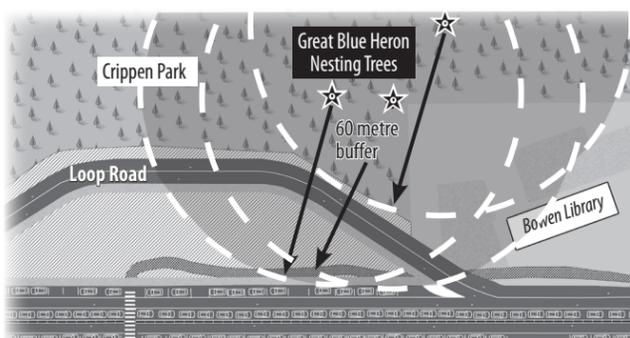
Because marshalling in Snug Cove is one lane only, traffic on Government Road and through the traffic circle would need to be travelling at twice the current speed in order to fill the two loading lanes that begin east of Cardena Road.

### Removal of Centotaph

The plan calls for the removal of the War Memorial Centotaph. Each Remembrance Day, this is the site of Bowen Island's largest community ceremony.

### Snug Cove's Great Blue Heron Nesting Colony Threatened

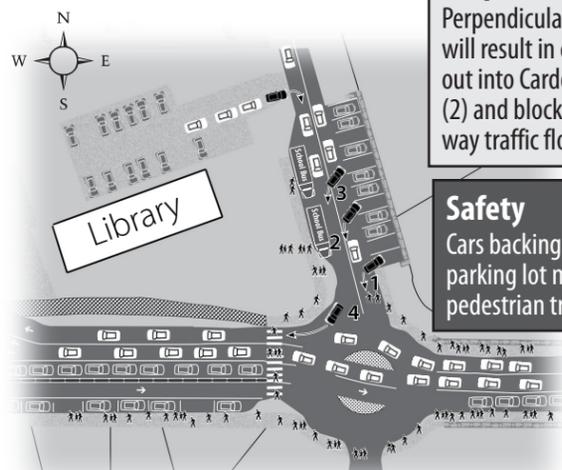
- Plan Q would bring pavement and human activity closer to the nests, risking colony abandonment and fewer herons on Bowen shores.
- Three trees with a total of 4 big nests and 2 small ones await the return of courting herons in Crippen Park across from Snug coffee shop.
- Visitors come thousands of miles to watch herons nesting in Victoria's Beacon Hill Park; Snug Cove's herons could become a tourist attraction.
- Provincial regulations and Metro Parks policies protect this blue-listed species.
- Metro Vancouver recently stated that it will not sell ecologically sensitive parklands.



**60 Metre Buffer Zone**

The Province of BC designates coastal herons as a species at risk and establishes a 60 metre minimum buffer zone around nests. Municipalities are required to maintain provincial protection standards.

### Cardena Congestion



**Proposed Parking**

Perpendicular parking will result in cars backing out into Cardena traffic (2) and blocking two-way traffic flow (3).

**Safety**

Cars backing out of parking lot may enter pedestrian traffic (1).

**Safety**

Drivers on Cardena will still be entering the stream of off-loading ferry traffic (4).

## Plan Q: A Flawed Public Process

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### Public Input Missing

Council now says the municipality will hold several "information" meetings, budgeted to cost around \$20,000. Anyone hoping to provide input or compare options is out of luck. These meetings will focus only on the "refinement and implementation" of the plan already approved by Council. The contract planner confirmed that "the consultation process will not revisit previous plans and options for land use in Snug Cove Village."

### No Dialogue

At the January 28th Council meeting, it was decided that the public should mail in questions beforehand to be vetted by staff. Then staff would discuss approved questions in one-on-one meetings with residents, and that Council need not be present. The process appears to be designed to remove all risk of publicly expressed dissent. There will be no discussion of major issues as a community, hearing what your neighbours think, or listening to councillors' answers.

This prompted one formerly ardent Council supporter to stand up and say to Council that he was "appalled and very disappointed," by the proposal. He said "This is the time when you want to have a public meeting [...] when you listen to what the public has to say and you have to be there to listen to them."

### A Flawed Process

It seems that some view the purpose of public consultation on major issues merely as a process of "informing" the public of what is to happen. But the real trouble with designing a superficial process that avoids any real public engagement is that the resulting decisions are unlikely to be sound or have enough traction to be fully implementable.

Without allowing all the parties to put their heads together and figure out the real constraints and requirements, we are not likely to end up with a plan that meets our needs, or to achieve public buy-in. This exercise will indeed be a waste of time and money; over \$120,000 so far. More than eighteen months after the election, "Just get it done!" does not seem to be getting it done.



## Bowen's OCP: Planning Community

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Investing in proactive planning by managing growth ensures that Bowen Island's special quality of life will continue. However, both the current and past municipal councils have tended to ignore the amount of development that has already been anticipated in the OCP, but not yet built, when they consider new rezoning applications.

A prime example of this failure involves the current public consultation over traffic and ferry marshalling in Snug Cove. The OCP (policy 163) already envisions that the residential areas of Snug Cove in the future will build to a density of up to 17.5 dwelling units per acre. All public consideration of vehicle traffic plans should be informed by the future needs of that significantly more compact Snug Cove village. That anticipated population will have tremendously greater need for greenspace for new residents of all ages. How does this affect the current municipal council's proposal for a loop road that would carve up the entrance to Crippen Park? As well, any plans for new development in neighbourhoods outside of Snug Cove must recognize the full extent of the commercial and residential village that has already been approved, but not yet constructed, at Seymour Bay.

Unfortunately, planners reports to Council invariably address each rezoning application in isolation, neglecting the context of already

## Island of Trails

Imagine an island-wide network of trails; quiet and natural.

Children walk or cycle to school on leafy lanes away from speeding cars and trucks. Cyclists ride to the ferry and fitness-seekers step out on loop trails, energized by the beauty around them. New trails connect neighbourhoods, skirt dangerous sections of road, and swoop up hills in generous easy-breathing switchbacks. Longer routes invite longer hikes to beaches and ocean vistas—or all the way across the island. Trails link heritage features, waterfalls and enormous trees with the odd bench here and there. Horses and riders feature too. Wildflowers bloom, owls hoot, and cars spend more time in driveways.



Year-round, visitors and islanders take to Bowen's trails for exercise and to enjoy the natural environment.

approved development within which new applications should be considered. The OCP commits to creating a density tracking and accounting system (section 11.2.2) and an inventory of vacant lots to better manage the allocation of development rights (policy 110), but this will only happen if municipal council dedicates planning resources to the task.



## Valuing the Village

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pedestrian walkway on the southside, behind the existing buildings that integrated the Cove business area with the heritage cottages and orchard. This plan also allowed infill buildings behind those facing Government Road and removed the onerous parking requirements from Cove property owners, changing a neglected area of the Cove into a village centre.

### A Focus on Cars not People

By contrast, Plan Q makes no effort to improve village planning or positively impact Cove business. It is basically a plan to move vehicle traffic through the Cove, ultimately bypassing the businesses altogether. It does add approximately four north-side lots to the mix. Many islanders support the idea of buildings on both sides of Government Road, but given that at this time we have four empty lots in the Cove, there isn't much evidence of demand for commercial space. So how will we get good value for our money with those lots and how will they affect current businesses in the Cove? Where's the business plan?

With Plan Q adding 50 to 70% more asphalt, this plan is unlikely to attract anyone to the Cove. Also the modest proposals in Plan A, for an art walk, satellite parking, perhaps a pocket park to improve the transition into the orchard area, will most likely be unaffordable if all of our municipal expenditure is tied up in the Plan Q project over the next couple of decades.

Imagine more visitors to the island than today, walking off the ferry. Some will spend time in Snug Cove businesses before dispersing onto forest trails. Bed and breakfast hosts will pick up others and whisk them off to locations across the island, to plan their walks and activities for the next day. Their cars, left behind on the mainland, won't affect ferry line-ups. Careful eco-tourism planning will keep things sustainable while supporting the island economy. Property values will benefit from nearby trails as well.

Happily, Bowen has excellent trails in Crippen Park and on Mt. Gardner that already attract visitors. Old logging roads and other pathways once honeycombed the rest of the island too, but have been disappearing behind locked gates, fences and development.

Since 1989 community volunteers have worked proactively to connect, create, and protect trails for the community; through the Trails Committee, then the Parks and Recreation Commission, and finally the Greenways Advisory Committee. But last spring the current pro-development Council unanimously dismissed this committee as "no longer needed".

At the very same meeting, Council struck a new committee with a similar name but fewer responsibilities. The proactive, island-wide planning and hands-on implementation roles for trails, beaches and parks are gone, as are those long-serving volunteers who knew the trails, land-owners, history and possibilities.

Is this community-minded thinking? In Council's own 2012 householder survey, trails, beaches and parks took the top three ratings of "most important", in that order, among parks, cultural and recreation services. Rather than eliminating certain groups of volunteers and restricting the work of committees, surely we need to focus on solutions—like trails!



## Planning for the Future: Plan Q=FAIL

...continued from page 1

In anticipation of this the OCP calls for the municipality to request that BC Ferries: continue to provide an adequate level of service for the needs of residents; ensure that expansion of ferry service follows, rather than anticipates, demand; facilitate the connecting to the ferries; and develop any ferry terminal use of transportation systems other than private vehicles on, or facilities to harmonize with the land transportation policies of this OCP (Policy 242). In addition to requiring this of BC Ferries, we also need to ensure that municipal planning makes proper provision for foot passengers' comfort, convenience and safety, that transit is well accommodated, and that there is good provision of commuter parking reasonably close to the ferry and along transit routes.

In light of this, Plan Q fails the basic test. It is a dinosaur of a public works project, focusing principally on vehicular needs, not even accommodating the needs of drivers entering and exiting their vehicles. Nor does it provide for significantly increased marshalling capacity or two lane loading, a prerequisite for a larger ferry. But worst of all, because of the exorbitant cost of the project and the strictures of the physical infrastructure, we will be locking ourselves into a scheme that precludes any future planning that more appropriately responds to our changing needs.



As things stand, we could now be eighteen months down the line of owner investment in Cove businesses, eighteen months closer to a beautifully turned-around village. Instead we are warily eyeing a plan that threatens to damage village values while taking up all of our financial stretch that would facilitate a fresher Cove.



## Membership

Become involved with Bowen's oldest community group dedicated to the preservation and protection of Bowen's unique natural and social setting. Membership benefits include informative speakers, opportunities to meet and network with like-minded Bowen Islanders, and a chance to become informed of and active in Bowen's evolving community.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Fee: Single \$10   
Family \$15

Please attach your cheque a return to:  
Bowen Island Eco-Alliance,  
C/O Silberman, 1600 Tunstall Blvd.  
Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G0

1. Are you a new member of the Eco-Alliance?

YES  NO

2. Are you renewing your membership with the Eco-Alliance?

YES  NO

3. Would you like to help with specific projects? Which issues?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make regarding the Eco-Alliance?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## BOWEN ISLAND ECO ALLIANCE

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