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Bylaw enforcement investigations rising

A report on the number of bylaw enforcement investigations underway within the Islands Trust Area indicates that activity is up by nearly 25% since this time last year. Currently, there are 166 investigations underway, compared to 135 active files as of early spring last year. The report was presented to Trust Council at its quarterly meeting on Gabriola Island, March 27–29.

The majority of the bylaw infractions involve land use zoning contraventions, such as operating a business not allowed in a residential area. Other infractions include siting, density, short-term vacation rentals and development permits. The Islands Trust has three bylaw enforcement officers, each working three days per week.

In the past four years the Islands Trust has seen the annual number of active bylaw enforcement cases almost double—growing from 85 files to more than 160 files.

‘Considerable community effort goes into development and adoption of land use bylaws and there is an expectation by communities that those bylaws will be enforced,’ said Kim

Benson, Islands Trust Council chair. ‘Our first priority is to achieve voluntary compliance through consultation with the property owner,’ continued Benson. ‘If that fails, we have our lawyers send a letter regarding the violation of the bylaw and provide a reasonable time to comply. Finally, if that fails, we go to litigation, which is always a last resort given the financial implications.’

Within the Islands Trust Area a bylaw enforcement investigation can be triggered by a written complaint from a member of the public or a bylaw enforcement officer can initiate an investigation if the officer observes a violation associated with a permitting process, such as a development permit, or sees an advertisement for illegal uses.

Individuals who believe there may be a violation can file a complaint, either electronically by going to the Islands Trust web site at www.islandstrust.bc.ca or by letter to the Islands Trust’s offices in Victoria or on Salt Spring and Gabriola Islands. ✉

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