

Answers to Questionnaire from Robin Jenkinson

Questions on Trust-wide issues:

1. The Islands Trust mandate states that “The object of the Trust is 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 generally.”

What do the words “environment” and “unique amenities” mean to you?

As an ecologist with education in fisheries, botany, community-based restoration, and Indigenous co-management of natural resources, I understand “environment” broadly: the interconnected lands, waters, species and ecological processes of the Trust Area. People are part of these ecosystems, and ideally engage in stewardship that is reciprocal and mutually supportive.

I understand “unique amenities” as the distinctive qualities the Province intended the Trust to preserve and protect: our rural and island character, landscapes, cultural and heritage values, access to natural areas, and the ecological qualities that make these islands extraordinary.

My Urban Design certificate from SFU and work in active transportation have also taught me about zoning, community planning and tools such as covenants and easements. We need to protect what is irreplaceable, plan change carefully and use limited development capacity to meet genuine "community" needs.

I am particularly interested in expanding our idea of “community” to include the more-than-human communities with whom we share these islands. In ecology, a community includes the many species living and interacting in a place. I think that perspective can enrich how we understand the Trust mandate: preserving and protecting these islands for future generations also means caring for the living communities that make them what they are.

2. Do you support passing the 2026 draft Trust Policy Statement as it is? Why, or why not?

Not as it currently stands, although I support updating it.

Much has changed since the existing Policy Statement was developed. Climate change, biodiversity loss, long-overdue reconciliation and Indigenous rights, housing insecurity and cumulative ecological impacts all require attention.

The Policy Statement should provide clear direction for carrying out the statutory preserve-and-protect objective. I share concerns that the present draft does not yet accomplish this clearly enough. I want practical direction for sustaining ecosystem integrity and biodiversity, including freshwater and shoreline protection, with measurable objectives that tell us whether we are succeeding. Meaningful engagement with Indigenous Governing Bodies and the respectful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and up-to-date science are also essential.

This is not a choice between environmental protection and community wellbeing. The challenge is to meet legitimate community needs within the Trust’s ecological mandate.

3. Given the legal authority of the Islands Trust Act, what are your thoughts about the

role of elected Trustees?

Trustees are elected by and accountable to their communities. That includes working people, families, elders and others struggling to find secure housing. I want Salt Spring to remain socially and economically diverse, rather than becoming accessible only to the wealthy.

Trustees also serve an institution established for a specific provincial purpose: preserving and protecting the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment. As local trustees, we regulate land use on Salt Spring; as members of Trust Council, we share responsibility for the entire archipelago.

Trustees should understand the Act, the Local Government Act, and the Trust Policy Statement, make decisions using sound ecological and planning information, build respectful relationships with Indigenous Governing Bodies, and consider future generations.

4. How do you feel about the various criticisms that have been leveled against the Islands Trust?

Some criticisms deserve serious attention. Planning can be slow, confusing, expensive and opaque. It is often unclear whether a responsibility belongs to the Islands Trust, CRD or Province. Communication should improve, regulations should be understandable, and enforcement should be fair, consistent and proportionate.

Community education can help. That is one reason I have been sharing [Peter Lamb's Islands Trust Story 2](#) with islanders.

At the same time, disagreement does not mean the Trust has failed. Many qualities people love about these islands persist because previous generations placed limits on development. I would rather improve the Trust than diminish its mandate.

Questions on Salt Spring issues:

5. Specifically, what policies would you propose to better protect the natural environment on Salt Spring?

The Official Community Plan (OCP) and Land Use Bylaw review should ask whether our planning tools reflect current ecological priorities and geographic knowledge. The process should include accessible public engagement, and a concise, plain-language OCP would help more people participate meaningfully.

My priorities include protecting and restoring wetlands, riparian areas, freshwater habitats, sensitive ecosystems and ecological connectivity; improving shoreline and beach protection; incorporating groundwater and watershed capacity into land-use decisions; and protecting mature and old forests where legal authority permits. Our environment requires broad-scale stewardship given past and ongoing damages and changing climate.

As a former Geographic Information System (GIS) technician, I support using current mapping of habitats, topography, infrastructure and other features to identify where development and pathways are, or aren't appropriate. Decisions should reflect the best available science and consider cumulative effects: developments that appear minor individually can have substantial combined impacts.

Protection should not rely on regulation alone. I would work with the Islands Trust Conservancy, First Nations, stewardship organizations and landowners to support restoration, conservation covenants, land acquisition, education and voluntary stewardship, potentially including financial incentives.

6. The current Official Community Plan (OCP) has this policy: “B.2.1.2.1 Zoning changes should be avoided if they would likely result in a larger island population than is expected under the development potential zoned in 2008. Exceptions to this policy are to be few and minor and only to achieve affordable housing* and other objectives of this Plan.”

*As defined by the BC government, the provincial definition of “affordable housing” is housing that costs no more than 30% of household income.

Do you support retaining this policy? If not, what policy would you put in its place?

Yes, I support its basic principle: rezonings should not produce substantially greater development potential than our planning framework anticipates, except where they advance clearly identified community objectives such as affordable housing.

The policy should still be examined through the OCP review rather than treated as untouchable language from 2008. We need current information about population, freshwater, infrastructure and ecological constraints.

Salt Spring must address housing insecurity. We need affordable homes for families, workers, young people and elders, while distinguishing housing that meets demonstrated needs from broadly increasing speculative development potential.

We should explore directing carefully planned density toward permanently affordable, co-operative and non-market housing near villages and services while transferring development potential away from sensitive and unserved areas. Other possibilities include making better use of existing buildings, supporting appropriately located suites and compatible home-sharing, setting reasonable maximum sizes for new homes, and asking the Province to assess whether Salt Spring should be included in the Speculation and Vacancy Tax.

I would support changing the policy only if its replacement provides an equally strong safeguard against unplanned increases in development potential while enabling carefully targeted housing solutions.

General question

7. Is there anything else you would like to add about your position on issues or actions that you, if elected, would propose?

My campaign has four overarching themes: ecological stewardship; thoughtful planning; creative solutions for housing, transportation and other practical community needs; and collaboration across the Islands Trust archipelago and wider Salish Sea.

I see these themes as interconnected: ecological responsibility must be accompanied by a viable year-round community in which workers, families, elders and young people can find homes and livelihoods.

I am running because I genuinely believe in the Islands Trust endeavour. This is a special place, and the Islands Trust is a key part of how it has remained so. The question is, "How can we work with the Islands Trust's preserve-and-protect mandate while helping Salt Spring Island meet the needs of the future?"

I would particularly like to bring my background in biology, ecological restoration, land-use planning, geographic information systems (GIS), and environmental education to Trust-wide work, and I would be very interested in serving on the Islands Trust Conservancy Board.

I don't believe preservation means freezing Salt Spring in time. Change is inevitable and our climate is shifting. Our responsibility is to steward that change wisely. We must protect what is irreplaceable while finding creative ways to meet real community needs. I hope to bring ecological literacy, curiosity and collaboration, a future-oriented perspective, plus archipelago-wide community connections to this work. We have much to learn from successes on other islands, and there are many bright minds and hands here on Salt Spring who are ready to do that work!

I am also excited by the potential for zoning and better mapping to help build safe and connected walking and cycling networks across Salt Spring and, where appropriate, other islands. Land-use planning can help put homes, services and pathways together more thoughtfully, while identifying opportunities for pathway connections as properties are rezoned, subdivided or developed. Active transportation is a practical community need, a climate solution, and a way of helping people experience and care for the places where they live.

Ultimately, I would like us to ask a hopeful, long-term question alongside the difficult decisions immediately before us: what would ecological and community success look and feel like for Salt Spring twenty, fifty, or 100 years from now? Let's imagine, like Ayana Elizabeth Johnson writes, "What if we get it right?". If we can articulate that future together, our OCP, zoning, conservation work and community investments can become tools for moving deliberately toward it.

Sincerely, Robin Jenkinson
Candidate for Salt Spring Island Trustee