



Islands Trust

# Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement

## Best Practices Manual

July 2025

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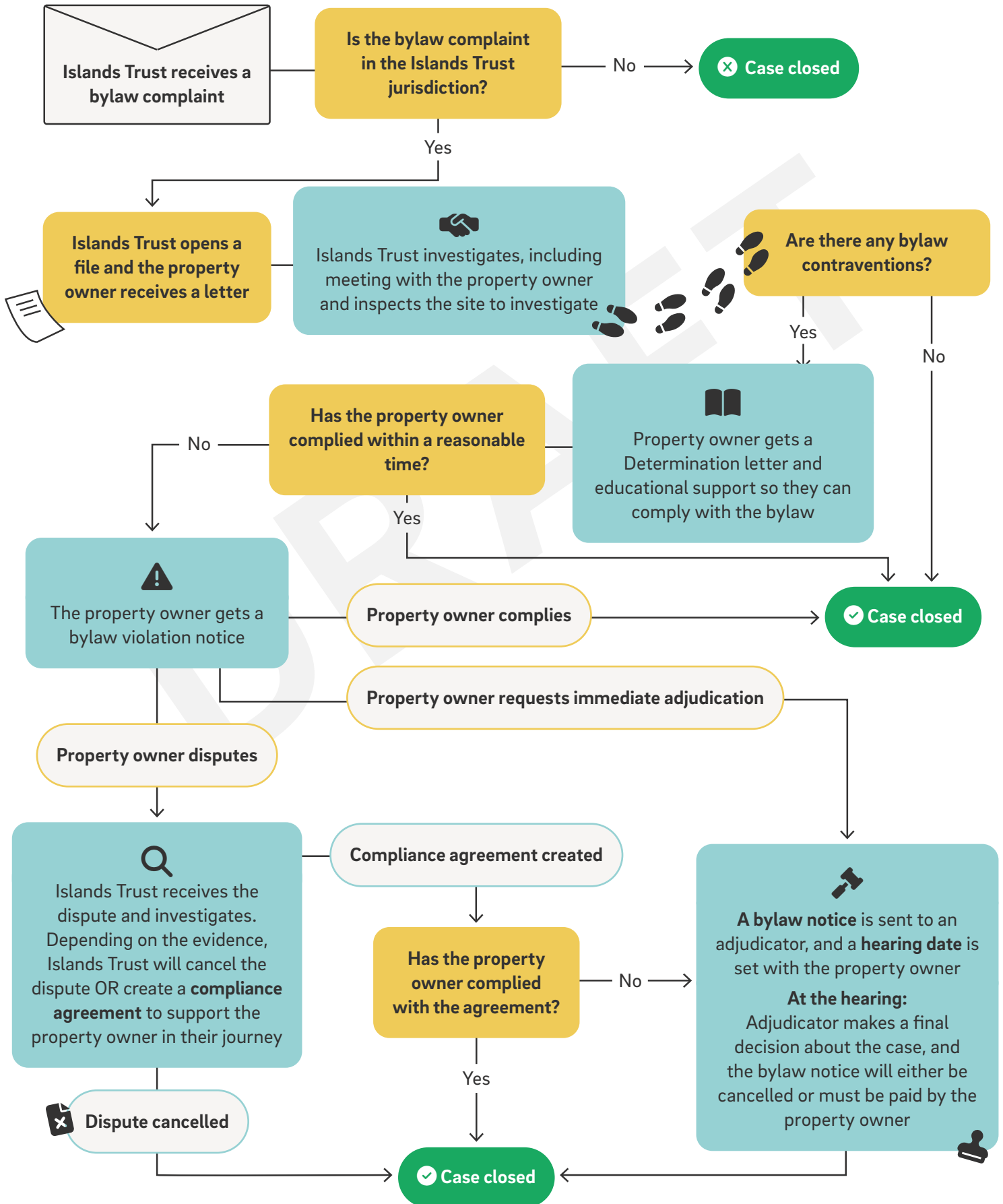
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Islands Trust



# Definitions

**Adjudicator** means an independent party whom the Province of British Columbia appoints to decide if a Bylaw Violation Notice will be upheld or cancelled.

**Bylaw Notice** means a ticket, with penalty, issued under the *Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act*.

**Complaints** a report of an alleged contravention made by any person.

**Complainant** a person who has made an official complaint.

**Disputant** means a respondent who has been given a Bylaw Violation Notice, and disputed it.

**Local government** refers to municipalities and regional districts which provide services to local communities. In this document, the local government referred to is Islands Trust.

**Ombudsperson Office** is an independent, impartial office of the provincial legislature that investigates complaints about unfair administrative actions by public authorities. It is meant to uphold transparency and accountability within public institutions by offering a free, accessible service for individuals who feel they have been treated unjustly by public agencies. The office does not have the power to enforce decisions but can recommend corrective actions.

**Respondent** means those responding to allegations of bylaw contraventions.

**Screening Officer** is an Islands Trust staff member appointed to review a disputed Bylaw Violation Notice.

**Vexatious Complaints** is a complaint made for retaliatory reasons or in bad faith and intended to cause harassment, or otherwise forms part of a pattern of conduct by the Complainant that amounts to an abuse of the complaint process

## What is the purpose of the Islands Trust Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement program?

The Islands Trust works to preserve and protect the special environment and qualities of the Trust Area for the benefit of its residents and the province. The Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement program exists to support this goal and ensure public safety. This guide helps residents understand how the Islands Trust ensures people follow local bylaws. The goal is to encourage voluntary compliance with bylaws through education, mediation, and enforcement when necessary.

The Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement team looks into potential violations of land use rules set by local trust committees. The regulations are found in local trust committees' Land Use Bylaws; in Development Permit Areas within Official Community Plans; and in the Salt Spring Island Soil

Deposit and Removal Bylaw. Islands Trust has the legal authority to enforce these rules under laws like the *Islands Trust Act* and the *Local Government Act of BC*.

The Islands Trust has a policy, [Policy 5.5.1 Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement](#), that guides how bylaw investigations are handled. It explains how complaints are processed, prioritized, and resolved, aiming to do so fairly and effectively. Local trust committees adopt bylaws authorizing enforcement and may adopt bylaw enforcement policies specific to their communities.

The Manager of Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement follows best practices based on principles of fairness, as outlined in the report: [BC Ombudsperson's report "Bylaw Enforcement: Best Practices Guide for Local Governments", March, 2016](#).

## Guiding Principles

- **Fairness and Impartiality:** Apply bylaws consistently, ensuring decisions are unbiased and equitable for diverse island communities.
- **Transparency and Communication:** Provide clear, accessible information about enforcement policies, processes, and outcomes with understandable and meaningful reasons for the decision(s) made throughout the bylaw investigation and enforcement process to foster trust and understanding.
- **Focus on Education and Compliance:** Emphasize public education and voluntary compliance with bylaws.
- **Procedural Fairness:** Ensure timely notification of alleged infractions, offer opportunities to Respondents to be heard throughout the process, and guarantee unbiased decision-making.
- **Proportionality and Discretion:** Tailor enforcement actions to the severity and context of the infraction, with a focus on voluntary compliance.
- **Efficiency:** Prioritize significant violations that impact environmental sustainability or community safety, while streamlining processes for minor cases.
- **Engagement and Inclusivity:** Collaborate with island communities to ensure enforcement practices reflect local values and consider marginalized populations.
- **Accountability and Oversight:** Regularly review enforcement activities and maintain oversight to uphold public confidence and encourage local trust committees to update and align bylaws and to identify opportunities to make bylaws clear and coherent.
- **Respect for Privacy:** Safeguard the confidentiality of Complainants and individuals involved in enforcement actions, in compliance with privacy laws.
- **Administrative Fairness:** Ensure that standards of conduct complaints are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner in accordance with the principles of administrative fairness.
- **Cultural Safety:** Demonstrate a commitment to cultural safety for all those involved in bylaw compliance and enforcement.

# Roles and Responsibilities

Effective bylaw enforcement within Islands Trust requires ongoing communication and cooperation between trustees and staff. While trustees provide the legislative framework and policy direction, staff members carry out these policies through direct enforcement and support roles.

## Trustees

- **Policy Development and Approval:** Trustees are primarily involved in governance, including setting policies that guide bylaw enforcement. Local trust committees approve bylaws that regulate land use and community planning within the Islands Trust Area and are authorized to enforce those bylaws.
- **Strategic Oversight:** Trustees oversee the general strategic direction of Islands Trust, ensuring that bylaw enforcement aligns with the broader goals of conservation and sustainable community development.
- **Community Representation:** Trustees represent the interests and concerns of their constituents in matters related to bylaws and their enforcement, acting as a liaison between the community and enforcement officers.

## Staff

- **Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officers:** These are specialized staff responsible for the practical aspects of enforcing the bylaws approved by trustees. Their duties include investigating complaints, gathering evidence, and ensuring compliance through education and regulation.
- **The Manager of Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement:** leads the overall administration of the bylaw enforcement program, including supervising bylaw compliance and enforcement officers, ensuring adherence to policies and procedures, and providing expertise on complex or sensitive cases. The Manager coordinates with other departments, ensures alignment with legal and regulatory requirements, and reports on enforcement activities to senior management and elected officials.
- **Planning Staff** are not directly involved in enforcement, but play a critical role in interpreting the bylaws and providing recommendations to both the public and enforcement officers. They ensure that the enforcement practices align with the planning objectives set by trustees.
- **Administrative Support:** This includes staff members who assist in the administration of bylaw enforcement, such as processing complaints, maintaining records, and supporting communication between the public, trustees, and enforcement officers.

Are you concerned about something on your property and want to get more information? Your Trustee can be a first point of contact in this conversation, without starting enforcement.

# What initiates a Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement case file?

Like all local governments in British Columbia, Islands Trust uses a complaint-based Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement process. This means that almost all case files result from complaints made by individuals in the community. Anyone can submit a complaint – you don't have to live in the area or be a resident.

As listed in [Trust Council Policy 5.5.1 Section 7](#), this system gives priority to those bylaw infractions of greatest concern to island communities:

1. When directed by a local trust committee
2. Significant health and safety issues
3. Environmental impacts that could cause irreversible harm if not addressed quickly
4. Other contraventions of land use bylaws and other bylaws

Once a complaint has been made, Islands Trust cannot decline to open a case file or decline to conduct an investigation because a complainant has changed their mind. Complainants are not victims of the offence and cannot “withdraw” their complaint.

In some cases, a Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer can start an investigation even without a complaint. This happens when:

- Contraventions may cause significant health or safety risks
- Contraventions occur near water bodies
- Contraventions happen in development permit areas
- Contraventions are found during the building permit process
- Another agency refers a case involving land use issues
- Unlawful uses are advertised
- A local trust committee requests an investigation

## How can complaints be sent to Islands Trust?

Anyone who wants to make a complaint can:

- Fill out the Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement Complaint form on the Islands Trust website: <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/mapping-resources/report-a-concern/>
- Send an email to [bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca)

- Mail or drop off a letter to any Islands Trust office
- Complete a complaint form at any Islands Trust office

Complaints must be in writing, but staff can help by writing down the information for anyone who needs assistance.

### **Confidentiality**

Anyone making a complaint must provide their name to the Islands Trust. Anonymous complaints are not accepted.

Islands Trust will try to keep the complainant's information confidential, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed during legal proceedings or if a Freedom of Information request is made. Islands Trust also receives referrals from other agencies (like regional districts) when they get a complaint that falls under Islands Trust's responsibility.

## **What is not a complaint?**

Sometimes, people reach out to Islands Trust with questions about the Land Use Bylaw or Official Community Plan, not to report illegal activity. They may be planning something on their property and want to know if it is allowed. In these cases, a case file is not opened.

If a complaint is determined to be "vexatious", Islands Trust will send a written notice explaining any limits on communication, why those limits are in place, and when they might be reconsidered. These limits don't stop necessary contact with staff on other unrelated matters.

**Questions regarding bylaw infractions can be sent to [bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca)**

## **When are Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement case files closed?**

Case files are closed if:

- If no contravention exists
- On direction of a local trust committee
- If the Director of Planning Services concurs with the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Manager that the contravention is minor and does not suit the public interest to enforce
- If compliance has been achieved

# How is compliance achieved?

Ideally, bylaw compliance is voluntary, and primarily sought through a combination of education, mediation, and enforcement techniques. If voluntary compliance does not occur, the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer may proceed with a bylaw compliance and enforcement process.

## Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Process

The compliance and enforcement process at Islands Trust has several steps. Staff work with people involved (Respondents) and encourage them to follow the rules before deciding if there is a bylaw contravention. The process starts with discussions and education about the bylaws. If necessary, it moves to a verbal warning, then a written warning, and penalties are only applied if the person still does not comply.

First, staff review the complaint to see if it falls under the local trust area's bylaws. If no contravention is found, the complainant will be asked to provide more information, or informed that no contravention exists.

Some complaints are more urgent than others are, so not all will receive the same level of attention.

If a complaint falls outside of Islands Trust's authority, it may be referred to another agency. The goal is to handle referrals quickly, with a "no wrong door" approach, meaning everyone is here to help, no matter which agency is involved.

If there is a possible contravention, a new case file is opened.

## A New File Has Been Opened

After a new file is opened, both the Complainant and the person involved (Respondent) will be notified in writing. The Respondent will receive a Notice Letter with the contact details of the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer (the Officer) and will be asked to get in touch. The Officer will also follow up with the Complainant to confirm details and ask more questions.

The Officer will then investigate the extent of the apparent or potential contravention and what may be required to achieve compliance with the bylaw. These are the steps the Officer takes when investigating:

1. The Officer will review all relevant compliance and enforcement policies that have been adopted by the local trust committees or Trust Council.
2. Typically, the Officer will conduct a site inspection of the property to meet with the Respondent, and gain an awareness and visual understanding of the property and the neighbourhood.
3. The Officer will gather details and relevant evidence about what has been built or what is happening on the property that might have led to a complaint by asking questions and

investigating. Bylaw Officers have the legal right to inspect, and local trust committees set policies on how much notice must be given to the Respondent before an inspection. The Officer is there to gather information only, not to make a decision, and Respondents will receive a written response regarding the case.

4. Based on evidence collected and a review of the relevant bylaws, the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer will determine if there is, or has been, a contravention. If there is no contravention of the local trust committee bylaws then the Respondent and the Complainant will be notified and the case file will be closed. If a contravention exists, the Respondent will be sent a Determination letter, explaining the contravention and requesting voluntary cessation of the activity, land use, or construction.
5. If a Respondent disagrees with the determination made by the Officer, a review by senior staff can be requested.
6. If a Respondent needs more time to bring the property into compliance, a request can be made for more time to comply. If an administrative application such as a land use permit application has been submitted by the Respondent and there is a reasonable likelihood of success, the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer will refrain from enforcement during the application process.
7. Where voluntary compliance has not been achieved in a reasonable time, the Officer may issue a Bylaw Violation Warning Notice or a Bylaw Violation Notice in local trust areas where a Bylaw Enforcement Notification bylaw has been adopted by the local trust committee. This Notice clearly explains what the contravention is, and the timeline for compliance. The Officer is available to provide more information to the Respondent so they can achieve compliance without penalties.
8. Voluntary compliance is always the goal. The Officer will attempt to support the Respondent to achieve voluntary compliance with educational resources, and negotiations.

Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officers are committed to a professional and respectful approach. Here is what they do:

- Interact with the public in a respectful and non-confrontational way
- Approach investigations with an understanding of the specific circumstances of individuals involved
- Work within their authority; while they cannot issue stop work orders or tell property owners what they can do, they can request a pause on work while they review the regulations and investigate.
- Take time to carefully review all evidence before making a determination. They do not make on-the-spot decisions to ensure fairness and avoid any perception of bias.

Demonstrate cultural humility by reflecting on the cultures of themselves and those they work with in order to create and maintain relationships and trust.

## Site Inspections

For most case files, an Officer will conduct a site inspection as part of an investigation. This is both to gain an understanding of the potential contravention and also to meet and hear from the Respondent. Except in rare and exceptional circumstances laid out in policy, Officers will contact the Respondent to give written notice and proposing timing of the site inspection. Inspections will only occur during reasonable hours, and focus exclusively on the alleged bylaw contravention, unless other observations pose an immediate risk to public health, safety, or the environment. During the inspection, Officers are there to gather evidence, and can answer reasonable questions about the process but are not there to make a final determination.

## Communications with Complainants

When a Complainant completes an [online complaint form](#), they receive an automatic response, which thanks them for their complaint and advises them that they will be contacted shortly with an update.

Once the complaint has been received and reviewed by the Manager, Complainants are advised if a new bylaw file is opened. If a file already exists for the property and contravention, they will be advised that their information has been added to the file. Contact information for the investigating Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer is shared.

If the Complainant has provided an email address, they will be notified of a new file being opened by email. If they have only provided a mailing address, they will be notified by mail.

Complainants can request information about an open bylaw enforcement file at any time. They will be updated by the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer if:

- a. A file is put on hold, along with the reason for this action
- b. A Local Trust Committee makes a decision regarding the file
- c. A file has moved to litigation at which time the identity of the complainant may become public information
- d. A file is closed

## Communications with Respondents

When a file is opened, a **notice letter** will be sent to the Respondent.

Once a Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer has confirmed that a contravention of a bylaw has occurred or is occurring, the Officer will send a **determination letter** to the Respondent. The letter must be clear and easy to read and must include:

- A **reason** the letter is being sent that outline the problem, using a statement of what has been observed

- An **explanation** of how the bylaw has been contravened by quoting the bylaw and the sections that are being violated, and the definitions of words from the bylaw
- Outline of the **solutions** available to comply with the bylaw
- Explanation of the possible **consequences** of not complying
- A reasonable **deadline** that has been negotiated with the Respondent for taking next step or fully complying

## Communications with Trustees

A local trust committee or any individual local trustee will not be involved in any aspect of the investigation of a complaint or the preparation of any Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement report. When a file is opened:

- Local trustees are advised of the general nature of the complaint, the name of the street (not the complete address), and the case file number.
- Local trust committees will only be kept informed about the status of an investigation if updates are requested.
- Local trust committees may request Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement staff report on specific issues. The reports will be presented to the local trust committee at a subsequent meeting

While local trustees can't be involved in any investigations, they are able to file a bylaw contravention complaint just as any member of the public.

## Communications with Potential Property Buyers and Real Estate Agents

Potential property buyers, Real Estate Agents, or the public can contact the Islands Trust Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement office to ask if there are any Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement issues associated with a specific property. Staff can share limited information regarding whether an open bylaw file exists for the subject property.

Islands Trust does not provide information about previous complaints or investigations. That information would require a [Freedom of Information request, which can be made here](#).

## When Compliance is not achieved

If bylaw compliance isn't achieved, the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer will take the appropriate next steps which could include issuing a Bylaw Violation Notice, sending a Notice of Debt letter, sending a demand letter via lawyers, or recommending legal action to the local trust committee.

If legal action is necessary, the Manager of Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement will present a staff report to the local trust committee and Executive Committee, who then decide whether or not legal proceedings should occur.

## Appealing Decisions Made by a Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer

For determination made by a Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer, appeals may be considered by the Director, Planning Services. In considering appeals of interpretation of regulations, the Director may consult with Planners and Regional Planning Managers. Such requests must be made in writing, outlining reasons for the appeal such as error of fact, omissions, or new evidence.

## Reviewing the Conduct of Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officers

Respondents can request a review of the conduct of a Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer by submitting a request in writing to the Director of Planning Services. If the Respondent is not satisfied with the Director's response, a formal [administrative fairness complaint](#) may be submitted.

### WHAT IS BIAS?

Bias in decision making is generally understood as a pre-existing leaning or predisposition toward one side or another or a particular result.

Bias can creep into complaint resolution and investigations when decision makers rely on their personal belief systems, prior knowledge of a person, or personal relationship with a party or service user, rather than focusing exclusively on the information and evidence related to the complaint. It is important that staff who are handling complaints be aware of any personal biases that may be affecting how they respond to concerns from service users, and take steps to address any biases that have an impact upon their decision-making so that decisions are made impartially.

*From the Ombudsperson Complaints Handling Guide*

## Public access to records

As Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement files contain confidential information and pertain to law enforcement, a member of the public is required to submit a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy [request](#) in order to obtain any information from a file.

Freedom of Information requests are an important mechanism of transparency that ensures public access to Islands Trust records. Islands Trust staff will assist members of the public to refine their request and procure relevant documents to their request.

## Exercising discretion

One of the guiding principles of bylaw enforcement in the Trust Area is that enforcement actions should be consistent with the severity and context of the infraction. In law, local trust committees are not obliged to enforce all contraventions. This results in the exercise of discretion in enforcement at several levels by choosing between courses of action. Discretion in enforcement may be exercised by staff during investigations by providing flexibility such as extended timelines or alternative solutions when warranted by individual circumstances. Senior staff may prioritize or defer enforcement of certain types of contraventions based on scarce resources, impacts, or community priorities. Discretion may also be used to close certain files, where staff have determined that the contravention is of a minor nature, impacts are minimal, or it is not in the public interest to enforce. Local trust committees can also exercise discretion by resolution to prioritize enforcement of certain types of contraventions or to close specific files.

## Bylaw Enforcement Notices and Dispute Adjudication System

### Overview of the Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act

In October 2003, the Province of British Columbia enacted legislation providing an alternative approach for processing and resolving minor bylaw contraventions: the [Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act](#). The Act also provides direction, with the [Bylaw Notice Enforcement Regulation](#). Under the Act, local governments may establish a Bylaw Enforcement Notice and Dispute Adjudication system, which replaces the provincial court as the venue for resolving disputes of bylaw contraventions.

This legislation aims to create a straightforward, affordable system to enforce bylaw contraventions. It features a simple ticket process for enforcement and a way for an independent adjudicator to handle ticket disputes.

**EXAMPLE:**

The Galiano Island Local Trust Committee Bylaw Enforcement Notification Bylaw No. 228, 2011.

This bylaw lists the administrative penalties that apply to bylaw contraventions in the Galiano Local Trust Area, as well as policies for disputing Bylaw Violation Notices, Screening Officers, and other features of the adjudication process described below in detail.

## Implementation

When establishing a Bylaw Enforcement Notification Bylaw, local governments, including Islands Trust, should consider the following:

- Appointment of a Screening Officer: Define their powers, duties, and functions.
- Compliance Agreements: Allow the Screening Officer to enter into agreements and reduce penalties if warranted.
- Adjudication Process: Set a fee for filing adjudication requests and establish grounds for canceling penalty notices.
- Response Periods: Determine timelines for responses to Screening Officer decisions.

## Records Management

Islands Trust administers and preserves all records related to the Bylaw Enforcement Notification system in compliance with provincial legislation. These records include:

- Bylaw Violation Notices and Warning Notices.
- Records of paid administrative penalties.
- Adjudicator decisions and documents related to collection efforts for unpaid penalties

### **Islands Trust Areas that have adopted a Bylaw Enforcement Notification Bylaw:**

Ballenas-Winchelsea Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 34 (adopted 2019)

Denman Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 232 (adopted 2019)

Gabriola Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 263 (adopted 2012)

Galiano Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 228 (adopted 2012)

Gambier Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 116 (adopted 2013)

Hornby Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 159 (adopted 2020)

Mayne Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 156 (adopted 2016)

North Pender Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 188 (adopted 2011)

Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 446 (adopted 2012)

South Pender Island Local Trust Area (adopted 2019)

Thetis Island Local Trust Area — Bylaw 90 (adopted 2011)

### **Islands Trust Areas that have not adopted a Bylaw Enforcement Notification Bylaw:**

Lasqueti Island Local Trust Area

Saturna Island Local Trust Area

## Bylaw Violation Notices

### Bylaw Violation Notices

A violation notice is a formal enforcement tool. This type of notice assigns an administrative penalty, the amount of the penalty is listed in the Bylaw Enforcement Notification bylaw of the Local Trust Area.

In local trust areas where Bylaw Enforcement Notification bylaw have been adopted, a Bylaw Violation Notice may be issued after any of the following:

- A verbal warning
- A demand letter
- A warning notice
- Exceptional circumstances as outlined by the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Manager

Notices must include the respondent's name, contravention details, penalty amounts, and dispute options.

The penalty notice may be delivered by personal delivery or by mailing it to the person responsible for the contravention. If mailed, the local government may presume that the person received it on the seventh day after mailing. In the event that the intended recipient claims not to have received the notice, the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer must verify the address and reissue a copy of the Bylaw Violation Notice.

The penalty notice informs the respondent of the bylaw contravention, the penalty for the contravention; and how to pay the penalty or dispute the notice.

A Bylaw Violation Notice must contain the:

- Name of the Respondent
- Specific bylaw contravention alleged to have occurred and the location
- Amount of the penalty
- Amount of a discount for early payment
- Amount of a surcharge for late payment
- Consequences of failing to respond to the notice
- Payment options
- Dispute options

Bylaw Violation Notices must be written within six months of the occurrence of a contravention.

Although the *Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act* requires that the above information is included on a penalty notice, local governments may organize or supplement this information as they see fit. The penalty notice may also be electronically generated or hand written on a pre-printed form.

The following is considered when issuing a Bylaw Violation Notice:

- Will the notice encourage the person to follow the bylaw? The goal is to get compliance. If the officer believes issuing the notice will help, it may be the right step.
- The notice cannot be issued more than six months after the violation is said to have happened.
- The officer should be able to explain why the notice was considered an effective way to enforce the rules in each case.

There are four possible scenarios once a Bylaw Violation Notice has been received::

1. No response: if the Respondent doesn't respond within 28 days, a late fee is added. The total penalty, including the late fee, is due immediately and can be collected by Islands Trust
2. Not received: if, within 21 days, the Respondent claims they have not received the Bylaw Violation Notice, a copy of the original notice will be reissued
3. Payment made: if the penalty is paid within 14 days of receiving the notice, a discount may be applied. After 14 days, the full penalty amount is due. A late fee is added after 28 days. Payment can be made by cash, cheque, or money order to Islands Trust, with instructions provided on the Bylaw Violation Notice
4. Dispute: the Respondent disputes the Bylaw Violation Notice

## Dispute Process for Bylaw Violation Notices

The person named (Disputant) in the notice has 14 days to request a dispute. After 14 days, they can only dispute it if the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Manager grants an exception. The process starts when the Respondent asks to dispute the notice, and the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Manager will then arrange for adjudication. If the due date falls on a weekend or public holiday, it will be extended to the next business day.

The Dispute Adjudication system is used to resolve disputes about whether a bylaw violation occurred as stated in the notice or whether the terms of a compliance agreement were followed. A challenge to the validity of the local government bylaw, or a claim that enforcement of the bylaw infringed on the Charter Rights of the disputant, is not within the jurisdiction of the adjudicator. This must be initiated as a separate matter in the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

More information about detailed information regarding the local government dispute adjudication system can be found in the [Local Government Toolkit for Bylaw Dispute Adjudication](#). The [Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act](#) and the [Bylaw Notice Enforcement Regulation](#) govern this process.

Parties involved in the process of disputing a notice include:

1. **The Disputant:** the individual disputing the notice.
2. **The Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement Officer:** the Islands Trust employee authorized to issue the notice.
3. **The Adjudicator:** the independent adjudicator with authority to determine if the notice is dismissed or upheld.
4. **The Screening Officer:** is an employee of Islands Trust designated as a Screening Officer under the relevant Local Trust Committee's Bylaw Enforcement Notification bylaw. Screening Officers provide a first opportunity to respond to a Bylaw Violation Notice dispute in an informal setting. A Screening Officer may conduct the review based on discussion or correspondence with the disputant, and can explain the process and potential consequences of formal dispute adjudication. Each Local Trust Committee that has adopted a Bylaw Enforcement Notification bylaw has also developed a Screening Officer policy in order to provide guidelines during the Bylaw Violation Notice screening process. Screening Officers are required to provide recipients with a fair opportunity to be heard.

## 1 Step One in the Dispute Procedure

A recipient of a Bylaw Violation Notice notifies Islands Trust in writing that they are disputing the Bylaw Violation Notice by:

- Completing and submitting the Adjudication Request Form that is on the bottom of the Bylaw Violation Notice. Forms can be delivered or mailed to any of the Islands Trust offices on Salt Spring Island, Gabriola Island or Victoria.
- Online at [disputing a bylaw violation notice](#).
- A letter or email indicating that they wish to dispute the Bylaw Violation Notice can be sent to [bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca), or mailed to any Islands Trust office:
  - Victoria Office: 200 – 1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8R 1H8
  - Salt Spring Office: 121 McPhillips Ave, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2T6
  - Northern Office: 700 North Road, Gabriola Island, BC, V0R 1X3

## 2 Step Two in the Dispute Procedure

The Screening Officer will review the Bylaw Violation Notice, including possible discussions with the issuing Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Officer. The Screening Officer will review the dispute request and may:

- **Cancel** the notice; or
- **Confirm** the notice and either:
  - › refer it to an **adjudicator** unless the request for dispute adjudication is withdrawn; or
  - › enter into a [compliance agreement](#) ↓ with the person.

### 3 Step Three in the Dispute Procedure

The Bylaw Violation Notice has now been cancelled or confirmed by the Screening Officer. If the Bylaw Violation Notice is confirmed, Screening Officer will discuss their decision with the disputant by phone, in person, or in writing, and may offer a Compliance Agreement with the recipient to subsequently reduce or cancel the penalty when the terms of the agreement are fulfilled.

### 4 Step Four in the Dispute Procedure

If the Bylaw Violation Notice has been confirmed, and the disputant wants a formal dispute adjudication, the Screening Officer will request an Issuing Officer Report and create a Screening Officer Report. The dispute process will now move to a Formal Dispute Adjudication, where evidence is presented and the adjudicator decides if an offence did or did not occur.

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A Compliance Agreement includes:

- Acknowledgment of the bylaw contravention and acceptance of responsibility
- Remedies or future actions to be taken within a certain timeframe
- A way to verify compliance with the agreement
- Possible penalty reduction or waiver if the terms of the agreement are met
- The duration of the compliance agreement

If a recipient of a Bylaw Violation Notice fulfills all terms of a compliance agreement, their penalty is considered fully paid.

If the Screening Officer believes that the terms have not been fulfilled, they can cancel the compliance agreement and must notify the recipient of that fact by regular mail. The recipient then has 14 days of receiving that notice to either pay the penalty or ask an adjudicator to determine compliance. If neither action is taken within that time, the full penalty plus a late fee is immediately due to Islands Trust.

## Dispute Adjudication

In accordance with local the *Local Government Act*, Islands Trust runs its own Dispute Adjudication System by working with the Ministry of Attorney General, which provides adjudicators experienced in local government land use bylaws. Once a Disputant confirms they want a formal hearing, the Manager will coordinate with all parties to set a date. Islands Trust will submit a package to support its case, which usually includes the Bylaw Violation Notice, the request to dispute, and reports from the Issuing and Screening Officers. This package, along with any evidence from the disputant, must be sent to both the disputant and the adjudicator at least one week before the hearing.

### Adjudicators

The Adjudicator must proceed on the basis that the bylaw is legally valid. The Adjudicator has no discretion to reduce or waive the penalty amount. The Adjudicator also has no jurisdiction to deal

with challenges to the bylaw or claims of infringements of rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

An Adjudicator may not be an employee or an elected official of a municipality and may not hear a matter if they are reasonably thought to have a bias or an interest in relation to the outcome of that matter.

## Adjudication Procedures

Section 18 of the *Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act* provides direction in regards to Adjudication Procedures.

The Adjudicator must provide the parties to the dispute with an opportunity to be heard:

- In person or by an agent
- In writing (including by fax or email)
- By video conference, audio conference, telephone or other electronic means

Section 19 of the *Local Government Bylaw Notice Enforcement Act* states that "Hearings must be open to the public". Islands Trust provides a space for members of the public to watch adjudication proceedings at the Islands Trust Southern Office, 200–1627 Fort St, Victoria. Members of the public can request this information by contacting Islands Trust: [information@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:information@islandstrust.bc.ca).

## Evidence

The technical and legal rules of evidence do not apply and an Adjudicator may accept any evidence they consider credible, trustworthy and relevant to the dispute, including the evidence of any person. The Adjudicator may accept evidence in any manner, such as orally, in writing or electronically.

## Determination

The Adjudicator will determine if:

1. The contravention identified in the Bylaw Violation Notice occurred as alleged, the notice is confirmed, and the penalty set out in the notice is immediately due and payable.
2. The contravention identified in the Bylaw Violation Notice did not occur as alleged, the notice is cancelled.

If the Disputant fails to appear, the Adjudicator must order that the Bylaw Violation Notice be upheld. The penalty is immediately due and payable to the local trust committee. The full amount of the penalty is due, not the reduced amount that would be available to those paying within 14 days of the original bylaw violation notice.

## Notice of Adjudication Outcomes

An Adjudicator resolving a dispute about a Bylaw Violation Notice or a compliance agreement must send their written decision to Islands Trust:

- Within one business day for in-person or telephone hearings.
- Within five business days after receiving the dispute materials for written hearings.

The adjudicator's decision must be in writing and should include:

- The name of the Disputant
- The facts relating to the penalty notice
- A summary of the Screening Officer's decision
- The issues raised by the parties
- A summary of the evidence provided by each party in support of each issue
- The Adjudicator's assessment of each issue
- The Adjudicator's final decision

The decision is sent from the Adjudicator to Islands Trust. The disputant will receive the decision of the Adjudicator when Islands Trust receives it.

### Cost

Islands Trust is responsible for the administrative work and costs of the dispute adjudication system. Islands Trust charges an administrative fee of \$25, payable by a disputant who is unsuccessful in a dispute adjudication. The fee is added to the debt only when and if the disputant is unsuccessful. If the disputant is successful, no fee is charged.

### Judicial Review

The determination of an adjudicator is final and conclusive and is not open to review in a court except on a question of law or lack of jurisdiction. If a failed disputant or the Islands Trust believes that the adjudicator exceeded their authority, or made an error at law, disputant person or Islands Trust may seek relief in the Supreme Court of British Columbia under the *Judicial Review Procedure Act*. An application for judicial review must be made within 30 days of the adjudication decision.

# Referenced Documents & Resources

- [BC Ombudsperson's report "Bylaw Enforcement: Best Practices Guide for Local Governments", March, 2016](#)  
<https://bcombudsperson.ca/guide/bylaw-enforcement-best-practices-guide-for-local-governments/>
- [Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement Complaint form](#)  
<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/mapping-resources/report-a-concern/>
- [Dispute a bylaw violation notice](#)  
<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/island-planning/general-resources/bylaw-compliance-and-enforcement/dispute-adjudication-form/>
- [Policy 5.5.1 Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement](#)  
<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/policy-5-5-1-bylaw-compliance-and-enforcement/>
- [Freedom of Information request](#)  
<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/about-us/accountability/freedom-of-information-requests/>
- [Trust Council Policy 5.5.1 Section 5.1](#)  
<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/policy-5-5-1-bylaw-compliance-and-enforcement/>
- Bylaw Violation Notice can be sent to [bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:bylawenforcement@islandstrust.bc.ca), or mailed to any Islands Trust office:
  - Victoria Office: 200 – 1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8R 1H8
  - Salt Spring Office: 4 – 121 McPhillips Ave, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2T6
  - Northern Office: 700 North Road, Gabriola Island, BC, V0R 1X3