

Issues, Considerations and Options for Ongoing and Affordable Public Access to the New Brighton Dock Facility

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As an Island Trustee I have no authority to make decisions or recommendations on behalf of the local community members that use the New Brighton Dock. I have been an island contact with the Squamish Nation Marine Group for maintenance communications since they first took on management of the facility. As well, I have used the various advocacy opportunities that Trustees use in their ongoing work with other government bodies. It is my goal, as an islander who understands the critical importance of the New Brighton Dock to the community, to ensure that it has a long-term future as an affordable, publicly accessible, transportation hub for the South West Peninsula.

This is a complex scenario as the New Brighton Dock has aspects of responsibility from local users to the federal government; and there are many possible options with varying levels of impacts for it's long-term future as a public port.

This outline is my own understanding of the various responsibilities and concerns from the different levels of community groups and governing bodies.

Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw – current owners

The possibility of selling the New Brighton dock has been discussed in an informal way with members of the Council as well as the Marine Group staff since 2018. The terms of the original agreement between the Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw and the federal government to manage the dock gave full title to dispose of the facility as the Council saw fit after mid 2019. A more formal directive was emailed to me from the SNMG Operations Manager at the time, Doug Conyers.

On June 10th Doug Conyers, acting as a consultant to the Marine Group, called and asked that the local community “make an offer” for the New Brighton Dock. This would then be one of several possible options to be considered by the Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw Council in terms of selling the port facility. There has been no specific amount stated as an appropriate price.

This forum has been called to understand the implications of this request and the overall impact of the New Brighton dock being sold, closed or otherwise made unavailable to the local community.

ISLANDS TRUST

The Gambier Island Local Trust Committee is responsible for land-planning on the island through an Official Community Plan and corresponding Land Use Bylaws.

The Gambier Island OCP speaks to the New Brighton Dock under Water Transportation Advocacy Policy 9.22

Public wharves are an essential service for planning area residents and, as such, the Transport Canada wharf at New Brighton, the Regional District wharves at Gambier Harbour, Port Graves, and Halkett Bay and the West Bay wharf (transfer to Regional District is pending) should be maintained for public access and use. (wharves are identified in Schedule B)

There are also several advocacy policies that speak to community services that lessen the need for private docks, individual vehicle travel etc.

In the Land Use Bylaws the New Brighton Dock is designated as W2

5.1 Marine Transportation (W2) Zone

The purpose of the Marine Transportation Zone is to provide regulations for the use of the foreshore and marine area for public wharves and barge ramps.

Permitted Uses

- (1) The following uses are permitted, subject to the regulations set out in this section and Part 3, and all other uses are prohibited:
 - (a) Temporary mooring use for passenger ferry, charter vessels, water taxis, pleasure craft, fishing boats and sea planes;
 - (b) Non-commercial overnight boat moorage;
 - (c) Vessel and barge loading and unloading;
 - (d) Accessory public service use, including but not limited to the collection of household recyclables and garbage;
 - (e) Commercial overnight boat moorage specifically providing services to Gambier Island in the W2 (a) Zone.

Permitted Buildings, Structures and Density

- (2) Buildings are limited to one shed.
- (3) Structures are limited to:
 - (a) one public wharf including approach, wharfhead, floats, gangway;
 - (b) one crane;
 - (c) one barge ramp.

There are also size limits for floats described in the Bylaws

Links to the OCP and LUB for Gambier Island as well as other Islands Trust resources can be found here <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/islands/local-trust-areas/gambier/bylaws/>

The Islands Trust has no function to own or operate a port facility.

SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT

The SCRD owns and manages 4 other docks on Gambier Island – two of which, West Bay and Gambier Harbour, are located on the South West Peninsula. These are considered seasonal docks as they are exposed to significant weather in the winter months.

In 2013, the SCRD was in the process of negotiating for the divestiture of the New Brighton Dock when the Squamish Nation expressed interest in obtaining the facility.

In 2018, the then Area F Director stated that the SCRD was focused on the long-term plan for the 9 Regional District docks and they were not interested in obtaining the New Brighton Dock.

Would the SCRD consider the New Brighton Dock as part of its overall port review process if an appropriate funding regime could be negotiated?

PROVINCE

BC Ferries has an interest in the New Brighton Dock as it is a terminus for the Route 13 passenger ferry run by Kona Winds. New Brighton has been a docking point for supply ships for more than a century and for the ferry route since the mid-1960's when the BC Ferries created the Howe Sound island service from Langdale.

BC Ferries has never paid docking fees for the use of the New Brighton Dock

In February of this year I had a conversation with Kirk Handrahan, Executive Director with the Ministry of Transportation Marine Branch. He said that if the passenger ferry could no longer dock at New Brighton then it will be routed to Gambier Harbour. This would have a significant and detrimental effect on the community for the following reasons:

- It would almost double the passenger ferry journey to Gambier Island and overlap the Route 3 (Horseshoe Bay/Langdale) ferry lane.
- Gambier Harbour is a seasonal dock exposed to winter weather. Like Eastbourne Dock on Keats Island, sailings could be cancelled more than 35% of the time during the winter months.
- No upland parking space in Gambier Harbour area for 50+ cars that currently use the New Brighton parking lots.
- Infrastructure and community planning has developed over the past century towards New Brighton being the primary ingress/egress point.

Provincial Rural Taxes

The taxes question - because it will always be asked:

The average home on Gambier Island (mine) was charged \$1625 this year in rural property tax this year. If there are 300+ lots on the SW Peninsula, that is almost \$500,000 coming from this part of Gambier alone every year. Rural property tax is divided as follows:

35% -school taxes

12% - rural tax

- 2% -police tax
- 32% - Regional District
- 14% - Islands Trust
- 1% - Assessment
- 2% - Hospital
- 2% - Langdale dock levy

Most other ferry routes terminate at docks owned by the ferry corporation. Would the province consider some form of joint ownership of the New Brighton facility to ensure it remains the Route 13 terminus on Gambier Island?

FEDERAL

The federal government divested the New Brighton dock in 2013 without any consultation with the local community despite the facility being deemed a remote port and essential service in 2001. In 2016 the False Bay Dock on Lasqueti Island was also put up for divestiture *as long as it was maintained as a port*, but no interested party came forward. The dock is still a federally owned facility and it is recognized as a critical access point for the island.

<https://www.bclocalnews.com/news/lasqueti-islands-lifeline-is-in-limbo/>

Letter from former MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones

<C:\Users\gambi\Documents\Gambier\New Brighton Dock\Federal Letter to SN-Islands Trust-re New Brighton Dock.pdf>

Would the federal government consider negotiating with the Squamish Nation for the return of the New Brighton Dock to a federal port facility?

Is there a possibility of the Squamish Nation Marine Group continuing to own and maintain the facility with the right funding agreement?

LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

New Brighton is second only to Bowen Island's Snug Cove port in terms of size and activity for an island marine transport hub in the Howe Sound area. A rough estimate of maintenance/insurance/capitalization costs is approximately \$100,000 + per year

Gambier Island Community Association – **GICA has stated it is not in a position to take on the responsibility of a facility like the New Brighton Dock.** Their mandate is small community projects and yearly events and there is no capacity to take on dock management.

If a separate, not-for-profit organization was to be created specifically for the dock there are several significant challenges/concerns.

- No other community has been asked to ***purchase*** its primary access dock that services schools, medical access and essential supplies. Rather they have negotiated significant support funding from government sources to take over management.
- No other dock that services a BC Ferries route is run by a local community group
- Too few full-time residents that have the time or the skills (ie wharfinger, accountant) to manage a facility of this size and position as an essential transport hub.
- Given the current zoning, bylaw, and crownland lease restrictions, expansion and revenue generation as a marina are not realistic.
- Fee base is too small. This would be a service for landowners on the South West Peninsula only as the other communities around Gambier do not have road access to the New Brighton dock. Individual levies would be prohibitive to many, and determination of who participates would be very fractious and difficult.

Given joint financial support from regional, provincial and federal governments, is there a scenario where the community consider some form of local ownership including a partial levy *with the appropriate consultation*?

Is there a scenario where private ownership could support the community? This is an option that the Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw Council is considering.

I am sure there are many more details to examine but this provides a jumping off point for discussion.