

## **Sheringham Point Lighthouse – Background on the Public Access Issue**

The Sheringham Point Lighthouse Preservation Society was created in 2003 to preserve and protect the lighthouse, the surrounding land and historic access to the lighthouse site, located in Shirley, BC. The Society has gained the support of thousands of British Columbians, local residents and elected officials for its efforts to protect the site.

As part of these protective measures, the Society has petitioned for ownership of the lighthouse site under the provisions of the federal Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act.

A major step in this process was the successful work that the Society's volunteer membership did to fight for and achieve official "Heritage Designation" for the Lighthouse site. This was received in May 2015. The next step is to finalize the purchase and sale agreement from the Federal Government and the transfer of the Lighthouse to the Society. This is now underway, and will be completed soon.

The lighthouse is presently used for navigation and weather monitoring purposes, as it always has. Importantly, it is now also being used as a monitoring station for the resident and transient populations of Orca whales. The Society's plan is to assist this ongoing effort to help with local whale population conservation efforts.

With respect to access issues, the Society negotiated an agreement with the land holder adjacent to the lighthouse property in order to protect the surrounding land, limit tree cutting and provide a buffer for the lighthouse site itself. We also negotiated creation of a trail that would provide views and a walking route from a newly-created parking area down to the lighthouse. This parking area is located at the traditional access point, on Sheringham Point Road. Since the creation of the trail, the Society has taken on responsibility for its maintenance and management, under an agreement with the Capital Regional District, spending considerable resources and providing volunteers to complete the work – always in an exemplary manner. It has always been our intention to continue this responsibility, so that it would not become liability for the local government.

Now a proposal has come forward to eliminate that hard-fought-for public access. Also, our agreement regarding the trail management and maintenance has not been renewed. This proposal would see the access point moved considerably farther away from the lighthouse and trail, making access much more difficult for everyone, and likely impossible for many seniors or others with limited physical capacity. Trail maintenance and management would have to be undertaken by the municipality, even though management of the lighthouse site itself would remain with the Society. None of this makes any sense to us. The parking area and access trails were created to ensure that the public could conveniently and effectively access the lighthouse site and the surrounding area, and could be treated in an integrated and cost-effective manner with the operations of the lighthouse. All of this is now in jeopardy, and for no good reason.

We are calling upon the Board of the Capital Regional District to reject any proposals to change the parking area and trail management, and to enter into a long-term agreement with the Society (a 60-year lease) to maintain, manage and operate the Lighthouse View Trail and parking lot in

conjunction with our management of the Lighthouse site itself. We are also asking local residents, supporters of the Lighthouse and the Society, and others who would like to visit the Lighthouse to sign a petition to the CRD supporting this position.