



Witless Bay – Tourism and Business Renewal and Growth Strategy: 2015-2020

Pat Curran/Independent Consultants
Group

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Cover photo of Witless Bay Ecological Reserve from Gull Island - courtesy of Paul Regular

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MESSAGE FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

At the tail end of the community feedback sessions that informed this document, residents were invited to a special session to prepare a Vision Statement for our town. When the various groups presented their ideas, I was struck by the consensus from each on the key points that such a vision should highlight.

It was inspiring to see such a large group of people with such diverse backgrounds agree so effortlessly on priorities for the town. This impressive consensus was obvious in every step of the development of this Tourism and Business Renewal and Growth Strategy. Throughout the process the same key priorities, the same ideals, and the same aspirations were consistently highlighted, over and over again.

Describing what they wish Witless Bay would be like in the year 2030, residents painted a picture of a town that looks a lot like the place we know and love today. Residents highlighted the importance of preserving our community's rural charm, its rich heritage, its extensive trail systems, and its pristine natural beauty. Residents also identified a number of ways in which our community could be enhanced. Quality indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces, sustainable infrastructure, increased educational and employment opportunities and a more diversified economy were priorities. The town's new Vision Statement reflects these aspirations.

This Strategy will guide Council in the coming years, establishing clear goals and actions for Council to follow. Critical to

our success is the continued engagement of residents, community partners, business and others. Together, we can achieve our vision and continue to make Witless Bay a great place in which to grow and prosper.

Sébastien Després
Mayor, Town of Witless Bay

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PLAN OVERVIEW

SECTION 1

A Vision and Clear Goals - a community that has a vision has a direction to which it is headed. A community that sets goals recognizes the steps required to get there.

SECTION 2

Environmental Scan - understanding the current environment allows communities to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats they face.

SECTION 3

Planning and Accountability - a community that plans knows the way forward. One that is accountable can tell where it has come from, where it is and how far it has left to go.

SECTION 4

Stewardship, Engagement, Partnership - these are principles of leadership that are shared not just by the elected representatives of Council but among community groups, organizations, regional and government partners, industry and most importantly of all, the people.

SECTION 5

Tourism/Business Development - enhanced tourism growth through enhanced visitor experiences. Small business growth with an emphasis on home-based industry and artisanship and industrial growth by capitalizing on the Town's industrial land base and strategic location on the Avalon.

SECTION 1 A SHARED VISION



The vision for the Town of Witless Bay inspires action, grounds development and community activities and sets the direction in which the Town will head. It is shared by residents and other stakeholders and provides the answer to the question “What do you hope for your community?”

Our Vision

The people of Witless Bay stand united as stewards of rich natural, cultural and heritage resources to ensure our beautiful town's continued vitality. We are recognized for an authentic identity and inviting character that makes our community a great place in which to grow and prosper.

Arriving at this vision followed an extensive consultation and research process, engaging many town residents and other interested in the future of Witless Bay. It reflects the consensus arising from community-based consultations and strategic planning sessions held on August 23 and September 2, 2014. In addition, over 15

face to face/telephone interviews were carried out with representatives of groups, business owners and other partners. An extensive review of key documents was conducted to place the Town's priorities in a broader strategic context. Finally a visioning exercise was held on November 4, 2014. The well-attended session represented a diversity of perspectives yet a clear consensus emerged on a vision for the Town. The final version

OVERVIEW OF GOALS



In the simplest terms, our goal is to build a better future for Witless Bay with a focus on our natural environment and unique cultural heritage while growing our existing businesses and other potential industries. Like many communities on the Northeast Avalon, Witless Bay is in a period of transition. We have taken an opportunity to carefully consider the nature and pace of change and through this Strategy, set our own direction.

Planning can often get bogged down in abstract concepts and complex processes around timelines, resources and deliverables. Instead, we have focused on a limited number of very clear goals and actions that we will work on, together,

over the next 5 years – actions that if realized, will help the community meet its vision for the future. We have prioritized these goals under the following three categories:

- ↓ **Planning and Accountability**
- ↓ **Stewardship, Engagement and Partnership**
- ↓ **Tourism and Business Development**

The Town has identified ten (10) goals and over fifty (50) actions to guide our development activities in the coming years. We invite all stakeholders to work with us in achieving these goals and development priorities.

PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY GOALS



GOAL 1 INTEGRATED PLANNING

Develop planning processes, including annual budgeting and multi-year capital works programs, municipal plan and development regulations and other planning processes to support the Town's vision.

GOAL 2 REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN PLANNING

Identify opportunities with other regional partners to enhance delivery and sustainability of programs and services in a cost effective and coordinated manner.

GOAL 3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Be accountable for the roles and responsibilities identified within this Strategy, providing ongoing and regular updates to residents and other stakeholders while facilitating development that is within the Town's long term capacity to develop and sustain.

Clearly define roles and responsibilities within annual business plans adopted by Council and other groups and organizations involved in Strategy implementation.

STEWARDSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP GOALS

GOAL 4 STEWARDSHIP THROUGH MUNICIPAL PLAN and ACTION

Finalize municipal plan and adhere to the municipal plan and relevant legislation and regulations respecting development.

Establish process for, and carry out cost-benefit analysis of, proposed amendments to the municipal plan.

Develop activities that support shared values of stewardship among residents and other community stakeholders.

GOAL 5 ENGAGEMENT

Develop stakeholder engagement strategies to ensure ongoing involvement of residents and other key partners.

Identify communications activities that enable stakeholder engagement in all aspects of Strategy implementation and related Town activities.

GOAL 6 PARTNERSHIP

Develop meaningful partnerships for development among local, regional and other stakeholders.

Define partnership commitments, roles and responsibilities within formal agreements to facilitate understanding and accountability.

TOURISM AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GOALS



GOAL 7 DIVERSIFY TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORTS

Enhance key support infrastructure by building new Visitor Information Center (VIC) on main beach, undertaking community-based trail and interpretation development, exploring feasibility of research/orientation center for Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, improving community-based directional signage and identifying and developing key points of interest in the Town.

Increase number of Witless Bay-based tourism operators by 25% by 2020 with specific emphasis on more diversified dining and interpretive tours.

GOAL 8 COLLABORATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

Establish industry-based advisory committee on tourism development to encourage collaboration and product development initiatives among Witless Bay tourism operators.

Review existing tax structure for seasonal tourism operators.

GOAL 9 HOME-BASED BUSINESSES, ARTISANS AND CRAFTERS

Review existing tax structure for home-based businesses to support creation and attraction of new home-based enterprise.

Assess potential for establishing a shared space for artisans and crafters within the Town and region.

GOAL 10 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Assess potential for establishing industrial park on Witless Bay Line and promote available industrially-zoned space within the Town.



SECTION 2 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Witless Bay's future will be impacted by many factors, some within the Town and others outside. These factors, for example the increasing level of visitation to the province, provide an opportunity for new growth and development in tourism. Other factors, such as our proximity to St. John's, may limit the development of service-based and other commercial activities. One way to consider these various factors is to conduct an environmental scan. In this instance, the Town of Witless Bay's Community Enhancement Committee carried out an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Town. This analysis is known as a SWOT.

SWOT



The SWOT analysis helps organizations assess issues within and outside the organization. The strengths segment of a SWOT analysis provides a list of everything done right as an organization. This section contains both strengths within the organization and external strengths, such as client relationships. The weaknesses segment contains needed improvements within an organization. Analysis in this segment can provide a clear list of areas that need a development plan to remedy the issues identified. Opportunities for improvement exist within all organizations. This makes the opportunities segment of the SWOT analysis important. Within this segment, organizations identify internal and external opportunities. By examining threats, organizations can implement counter measures prior to the threat occurring. To ensure success,

organizations may need to deal with both future and present threats. Table 2.1 below highlights the results of the SWOT analysis.

Table 2.1 SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Great number of volunteers & networks*diversity of talents & abilities*strong Town Plan*reliable, competent & knowledgeable town staff*great regional fire department w/t committed members*tourist chalet equipped with public toilets*beautiful setting (scenic; bird & whale watching; icebergs)* rural character*great trail systems (for both hiking & motorized use) including the world class East Coast Trail*strong and stable tax base*valuable historical resources*unspoiled natural resources*proximity to the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve - home to largest colony of North Atlantic puffins in North America and second largest colony of Leach’s Storm Petrels in the world*the Puffin Patrol*new recreation centre*existing amenities for visitors (B&Bs, an inn, efficiency</p>	<p>Fragmentary regulations & policies*little communication between volunteers, groups & organizations*lack of a coherent vision for future expansion*lack of attention to certain social issues*little industrial tax base*lack of local employment opportunities*no “central theme” uniting the Town*some infrastructure in disrepair (signage, wharves, trails)*unattractive & generic Town Office*escalating land prices*diminishing amount of available land*lack of proper marketing (inadequate signage, maps, Website, tourist info centre)</p>

units, coffee shop, boat tour operator, gas station, restaurant, potter, etc.)

OPPORTUNITIES

Great tourism potential*well situated for industry (Route 10/Witless Bay Line/Bay Bulls Harbour)
*Close to St. John's & other important centres/destinations*unspoiled environment*fantastic place to live and to do business*diversifying land use & tax base (industrial, business, & residential subdivisions)*potential partnerships with neighbouring towns & LSDs*expand housing for seniors*great potential for business (including a bakery, a restaurant, & a craft shop)*Puffin Patrol is a great ongoing media story

THREATS

Water supply & its protection*influence exerted by larger centres could run counter to the Town's interests*potential for negative impact on ecological reserve & endangered species*inadequate planning could cause problems*lack of common vision could make goals difficult to realize*urban sprawl

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSIONS

To further the initial SWOT analysis, the Town of Witless Bay hosted strategic planning sessions on August 23 and September 2, 2014. These sessions were led by Pat Curran who facilitated the discussion, identifying key priorities for development and outlining considerations for a stakeholder engagement plan. Combined, over 40 people attended these two sessions.



Key priorities from the sessions included:

- ‡ Small Business Development
- ‡ Recreation and Tourism Infrastructure
- ‡ Industry
- ‡ Town Look and Feel
- ‡ Tourism Building
- ‡ Stakeholder Engagement/Buy-in

Detailed action plans for each priority were considered and are outlined below in Section 3, 4 and 5. A copy of the summary reports from the sessions are included as Appendices A and B.

CONSULTATION

In consultation with the Town of Witless Bay the consultant developed a notional list of key informants and prepared an interview discussion guide. Initial contact was made with a number of respondents in early August but due to limited response and scheduling during the height of the tourism season, interviews were deferred until September. A total of seventeen (17) face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted through the consultation phase of the project including the following:



- ┆ Armstrong's B&B (Anita Armstrong)
- ┆ Irish Loop Coffee House (Judi Devine)
- ┆ Shamrock Pottery (Peter Sobol)
- ┆ Aylward's Design Plus (Kay Aylward)
- ┆ Needs Convenience
- ┆ Bear's Cove Inn (Clayton Hedderson)
- ┆ Crane's Junction Ltd. (Vince Crane)
- ┆ Witless Bay Suites (Aidan Carey)
- ┆ Mike Shortall (Boat Tour)
- ┆ Diane Greene (Crafter)
- ┆ Heritage Committee (Mary Sobol)
- ┆ CPAWS (Suzanne Dooley)
- ┆ PAND (Sian French/Jeri Graham)

- ┆ TCR (Scott Andrews)
- ┆ IBRD (George Piatt)
- ┆ ACOA (Chad Butt)
- ┆ EDMO (Kathi Stacey)

LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive review of documents was undertaken including Witless Bay development plans and strategies. The work of the Community Enhancement Committee was reviewed along with the Town's updated municipal plan. Regional and provincial tourism development strategies were reviewed. Reference material reviewed included:



- ↓ Minutes - Tourism Development Steering committee, 2005
- ↓ Maintenance agreement for Main Beach interpretation site
- ↓ Engineering assessment of Upper Pond infrastructure requirements, 2009
- ↓ Summary of recommendations/discussion on Town starting with "What Differentiates Witless Bay from other places"
- ↓ Uncommon Potential: Vision 2020 – A Vision for Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism
- ↓ Irish Loop Strategic Economic Plan
- ↓ Town of Witless Bay Community Economic Development Plan
- ↓ Town of Bay Bulls and Witless Bay Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)
- ↓ Witless Bay Municipal Plan, 2014
- ↓ Community Enhancement presence at <https://www.facebook.com/sebastiendespres.page>
- ↓ EDMO Tourism Visitor Experience Plan

KEY FINDINGS

A number of key findings arose from the strategic planning sessions, consultations and literature review. A Key Findings document was prepared and is attached as Appendix C. These findings include:

Need for a Vision

There is a definite need to define a vision for the town – key words around a vision include stewardship, conservation, communication and achieving community buy-in. The strategy must be grounded in a vision for the town that distinguishes Witless Bay as a model of sustainable community economic development.

Emphasis on Ecology, Conservation and Stewardship

The Town of Witless Bay is perceived as having a unique set of features based in great part on its natural and cultural assets - the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve being foremost among these. The Town's branding and strategy should be intricately linked to an ecological, stewardship and conservation theme and development activities must serve to ground and reinforce this message.

Development that Enhances Quality of Life

Developments undertaken through the Strategy must add value not only to the tourism visitor experience and the town's tourism and business operators. They must primarily benefit community residents. Trail development for example should focus not only on tourists but for potential community use. The proposed research/tourism building must be a facility that is configured for community use and offer a series of programming that engages community members.



Business Collaboration

To develop an enhanced visitor experience, the Town must foster collaboration among tourism businesses, collaboration which is not presently taking place at the community or regional level. There is a void in current tourism industry engagement through such agencies as the Southern Avalon Tourism Association that might be met at a community level.

Efficacy of Current Tourism Activities

Both the current Visitor Information Centres at Bay Bulls and Witless Bay are ineffectual in directing visitors to area businesses. There is very

limited understanding of goods, services and activities available. Perceived gaps in tourism offerings include quality and more diversified places to eat, things to do and see, signage, interpretation and very limited shoulder season activities. The Witless Bay Puffin Festival does not represent a tourism attraction but has some potential to do so. The annual Puffin Patrol has potential as a world-class experiential tourism product yet is grounded in a conservation, protection and volunteer ethic that makes such a transition difficult.

The Emerging Tourist

Tourism product development approaches grounded in *Vision 2020*, the province's tourism development strategy and regional initiatives through the eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO or Legendary Coasts) place considerable emphasis on experiential learning and new product development. The

profile of the average visitor is one that is well-travelled, well-educated and well off – visitors that are prepared to pay for quality and unique experiences that enable them to interact with community.

Built Heritage

The Town's well-documented built heritage represents a further potential. The unique salt-box style of home construction for which Witless Bay is known, along with other buildings and local sites of character, has potential for community-based heritage interpretation and might be integrated with trail development and other community enhancement activities.

Eco-Centre and other Municipal Buildings

Considerable emphasis was placed on the development of an eco-centre at Lower Pond to support the learning experience programming and ecology, conservation and stewardship themes highlighted above. In addition, the building must have a community use and as well, not compete with existing tourism businesses in relation to land-based Witless Bay Ecological Reserve Interpretation.

The building must be multi-use and be sustainable, both in its construction and operations. A critical mass of potential tenants has been defined including CPAWS, the Puffin Patrol, PNAD, the Whale Recovery and Release Group along with storage and staging space. The space must be configured to accommodate a potential vendors' outlet for home-based artisans and craftspeople from Witless Bay and area.

The existing Town VIC must be relocated to a more accessible and public local, potentially the main beach near Needs. This will require an agreement between the Town and the property owner, the Southern Shore Tourism Association. The existing VIC at Lower Pond might be reconfigured into a staging area for the Puffin Patrol on an interim basis.



The development of an eco-centre at Lower Pond must follow a feasibility assessment that identifies potential environmental considerations around re-use of an industrial property. While an attractive location, the available space to accommodate both a building and associated parking is limited and the site is situated on a coastal area potentially impacted by coastal erosion and storm surges. At the same time, the Town is considering a re-use plan for the current municipal building to reconfigure the space formerly occupied by the Witless Bay Fire Department. The feasibility assessment of a potential eco-centre at Lower Pond should consider the pros and cons of building new at Lower Pond against reuse of the existing municipal building – that is consistent with the sustainable development, conservation and stewardship ethic highlighted above.

Government Partnership

There is recognition of the key assets of Witless Bay and the under-developed tourism potential in the Town. Opportunities exist to position Witless Bay as a possible model for community-based interpretation, in particular integrating a community-

based interpretive experience with the East Coast Trail. Many activities highlighted above appear eligible from a programming perspective including community-based signage and interpretation, local trail development, feasibility assessment and detailed engineering design and construction. Although the minimum contribution from project proponents for development funding is 10%, the contributions under the ideal financing model would be 40/40/20 with ACOA and IBRD contributing 40% each of project costs with the Town contributing 20%.

Both IBRD and ACOA are prepared to consider any reasonable proposal while both PNAD and TCR are prepared to engage as resources in support of planning.

Industrial/Business Development

There is recognition that the Town needs a diverse commercial and industrial tax base and that these services contribute considerably to the local economy. The Town's new municipal plan does allocate a portion of property for industrial development and a feasibility assessment of this opportunity should be considered. Community initiatives that enhance the exterior look and feel of businesses can be advanced in conjunction with other efforts. The notion of encouraging relocation of existing industries to the industrial area is impractical. The current uses generally conform to municipal regulation and zoning that existed at the time of development. Any effort to impose new conditions on existing uses, i.e. the erection of tree lines, fencing or exterior facades, that were not a condition of earlier development applications will be met with opposition by business owners. A soft-sell approach directed toward existing business focusing on community enhancement with more rigorous requirements for new businesses is the preferred way forward.

From a tourism operator perspective, the adoption of a seasonal tourism operator tax rate would be welcome both to sustain existing business and encourage new growth and investment.

Branding

The Town's brand must be linked to its conservation, stewardship and ecological ethic. The Town's image, the North Atlantic puffin, must be re-styled to accommodate a varied use. The Town brand and all associated collateral material, including the Town's website, must be developed quickly, preferably in readiness for the 2015 tourism season but certainly by the time CBC's Nature of Things airs its special on the North Atlantic puffin, notionally the fall of 2015.

SECTION 3 PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Strategic Planning Cycle



The strategic planning process emphasizes clear goal setting, targets and actions along with an ongoing review and evaluation methodology.

The Strategy must be grounded in the Town's vision and development goals. It must be led by the Town Council, in partnership with other stakeholders, who will embrace the Strategy as their mission.

The Strategy must identify key targets to enable measurement of the success of development efforts and activities over time.

The Strategy must be reviewed and updated over time as conditions change and development objectives are met.

GOAL 1 - INTEGRATED PLANNING



Develop planning processes, including annual budgeting and multi-year capital works programs, to support implementation of the Town's Vision and Strategy.

ACTION 1.1 PRIORITIZING ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

- ‡ The Town Council will prioritize activities within the Strategy to ensure that projects undertaken are within the capacity of the Town to finance, manage and sustain.

ACTION 1.2 BUDGETING FOR DEVELOPMENT

- ‡ The Town Council will identify within its annual and multi-year (2-3 year) budgets the resources required to implement this Strategy using Town resources to leverage additional investment from Federal, Provincial and other

partners wherever possible.

- ‡ The Town Council will identify capital projects in this Strategy within the Town's multi-year capital works program.

GOAL 2 - REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN PLANNING



Identify opportunities with other regional partners to enhance delivery and sustainability of programs and services in a cost effective and coordinated manner.

ACTION 2.1 ENGAGEMENT IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ‡ The Town Council will establish membership in the Irish Loop Tourism Association (ILTA), the Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce (ILCC) and the Eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO).

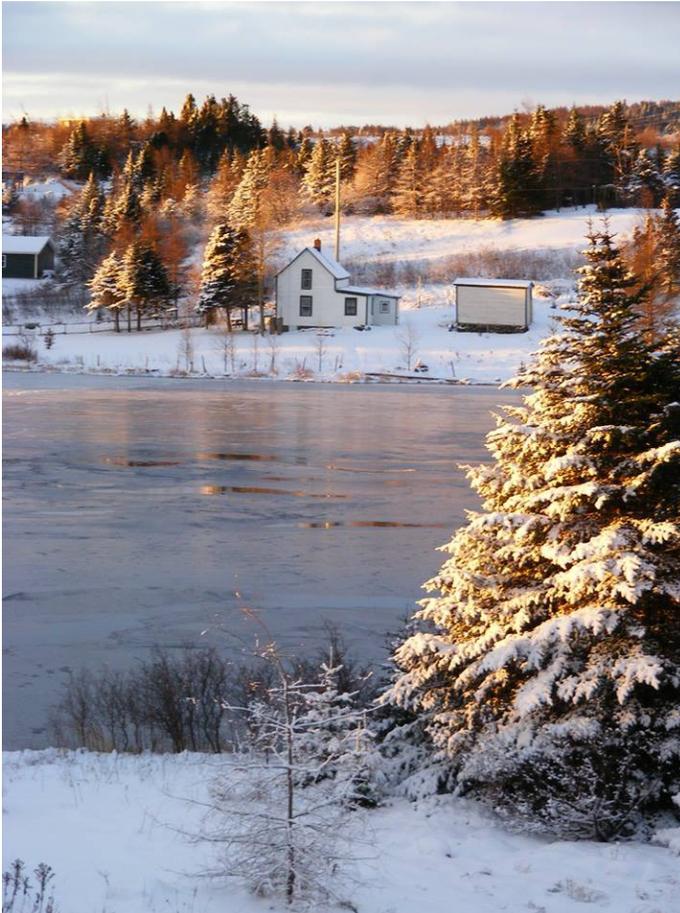
ACTION 2.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER MUNICIPAL PARTNERS IN REGION

- ‡ The Town Council will remain engaged in the Southern Shore Joint Council (SSJC), the Northeast Avalon Joint Council (NEAJC) and the Northeast Avalon Regional Plan Committee.

ACTION 2.3 REGIONAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT

- ‡ The Town Council will explore with other councils in the region opportunities for cooperation in the provision of a development/control officer and as well, an economic development officer.

GOAL 3 - ACCOUNTABILITY



Be accountable for the roles and responsibilities identified within this Strategy, providing ongoing and regular updates to residents and other stakeholders. Clearly define roles and responsibilities within annual business plans adopted by Council and other groups and organizations involved in Strategy implementation.

ACTION 3.1 ANNUAL STRATEGY REVIEW

- 1 The Town Council (and other key stakeholders) will review the Strategy on an annual basis, notionally in October of each year in advance of the Town's budgeting process, to set priorities for the coming year. This might be done in the context of an annual strategic planning session with key stakeholders.

ACTION 3.2 ANNUAL STRATEGY UPDATES

- 1 The Town Council will provide an annual update on implementation of the Strategy through a "Report Card" distributed to all homes and businesses in the Town and through an annual presentation (State of the Town address) at a public meeting of Council on activities undertaken in the previous year and those planned

in the coming year. This update should take place in either December or January of each year and be timed to coincide with the adoption of the Town's annual budget.

SECTION 4 STEWARDSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

There is a desire to foster a stewardship and sustainability ethic within the community, led by the Town Council but engaging residents and other partners. The object is to conserve and promote the Town's key assets including headlands, coast line and other sensitive locations such as Lower Pond while emphasizing the unique cultural aspects of the town, including its build heritage and other features. In turn, these assets are the basis of the Town's overall Strategy, helping to distinguish Witless Bay as a unique destination to visit, work and reside.

GOAL 4 - STEWARDSHIP IN MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND ACTION

Finalize municipal plan and adhere to the municipal plan and relevant legislation and regulations respecting development. Establish process for, and carry out cost-benefit analysis of, proposed amendments to the municipal plan. Develop activities that support shared values of stewardship among residents and other community stakeholders.

ACTION 4.1 ZONING AND LAND USE PLANNING

- 1 The Town Council will identify conservation and other appropriate land use areas and classifications within its updated municipal plan.

ACTION 4.2 REGULATIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

- 1 The Town Council will ensure, following required consultation processes, that relevant regulations, bylaws and necessary amendments to the Town's Municipal Plan required to support Strategy implementation are initiated, enacted and enforced.



*ACTION 4.3
DEVELOPMENT*

GREENSPACE IN SUB-DIVISION

- ‡ The Town Council will require sub-division developers to identify 10% of their proposed development as greenspace/recreation space within development plans for sub-divisions.

ACTION 4.4

RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- ‡ The Town Council will require sub-division developers to identify recreation infrastructure within their proposed developments and encourage utilization of natural products in their construction. The Town Council will also incorporate natural products into their own recreation infrastructure developments.

ACTION 4.5

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN NEW SUB-DIVISION DEVELOPMENT

- ‡ All new proposed sub-division development will follow public input/consultation before being considered for approval by the Town Council and Council will work closely with sub-division developers to ensure that community expectations are met in relation to green space, recreation space and public input.

ACTION 4.6

DEVELOP COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS FOR PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PLAN AMENDMENTS

- ‡ The Town Council will establish a transparent process and criteria for assessing proposed amendments to the municipal plan, including those initiated by the Town Council itself, and apply that process and criteria to all requests for amendments to the municipal plan.

ACTION 4.7 ANNUAL COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP

- ‡ The Town Council will continue to partner with the Kinsmen Club of Witless Bay and others on the annual community clean-up.

ACTION 4.8 TIDY TOWNS

- ‡ The Town Council will continue its involvement in the annual Tidy Towns competition.

ACTION 4.9 A COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS BEAUTIFICATION INITIATIVE

- ‡ The Town Council will develop a community and business beautification initiative to encourage engagement of residents and business owners in enhancing the look of their properties. The initiative will involve a business and residential beautification recognition program and workshops on landscaping.

ACTION 4.10 MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP IN BEAUTIFICATION

- ‡ The Town Council will lead by example in beautification activities, ensuring its own properties and grounds are well maintained. This will include enhancements to existing municipal buildings and grounds, re-use planning for the existing Municipal Building and the establishment of a memory garden.

ACTION 4.11 COMMUNITY SIGNAGE

- ‡ The Town Council will initiate a community signage program that enhances key entry points to the Town and directional signage to key community features and that supports the Town's community-based interpretation plan (see below).

GOAL 5 - ENGAGEMENT



Develop stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure ongoing involvement of residents and other key partners. Identify communications activities that enable stakeholder engagement in all aspects of Strategy implementation and related Town activities. Establish an ecological brand for Witless Bay and utilize an emerging stewardship ethic as a key component of this branding exercise. Promote the Town and its key features to targeted market segments through experiential learning and adventure opportunities. The key messages include:

- ‡ Open and interested in engaging with people
- ‡ Focus on the future with an emphasis on planning
- ‡ Working together toward a vision

ACTION 5.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

- ‡ The Town Council will develop a stakeholder engagement plan that identifies key stakeholders for the town, key messages and communications processes between the Town and stakeholders, that has clear responsibilities for communications and stakeholder engagement and that enables the plan to be evaluated over time. Key stakeholders include:

General public

Business Owners including tourism operators, crafters/artisans, home-based businesses and commercial/industrial business

Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce (ILCC)

Government – federal and provincial

Elected representatives including MHA and MP

Other municipalities/Southern Shore and Northeast Avalon Joint Councils

Environmental groups including CPAWS, ECTA etc.

Education institutions including MUN, MI, CNA and private colleges

Southern Avalon Tourism Association (SATA)

Celtic Business Development Corporation (CBDC)

Non-resident taxpayers

Service groups, i.e. Kinsmen, Knights of Columbus (KoC), Heritage Committee, 50+ Club, Parish Committee, Harbour Authority

Schools through administration and school council

Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association (BBBAA)

Hustle NL

Family Resource Centre

Fire Department

Eastern Waste Management

Multi Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB)

Puffin Patrol

Media

Ex-Pats

Others interested in Witless Bay

A stakeholder engagement plan template is included as Appendix D.



ACTION 5.2 TOWN BRAND AND LOGO

- 1 The Town Council will prepare an updated brand and logo for the Town and reflect this brand/logo on all Town materials including signage, letterhead, forms etc.

ACTION 5.3 WEBSITE

- 1 The Town Council will prepare an updated website for the Town utilizing it as a key element of stakeholder engagement and ongoing public input and information and assign lead roles and resources for maintenance of the site.

ACTION 5.4 SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

- 1 The Town Council will compliment its updated website with a social media strategy utilizing Facebook and Twitter and assign lead roles and resources for maintenance of the site and implementation of the strategy.

GOAL 6 - PARTNERSHIP

Develop meaningful partnerships for development among local, regional and other stakeholders. Define partnership commitments, roles and responsibilities within formal agreements to facilitate understanding and accountability.



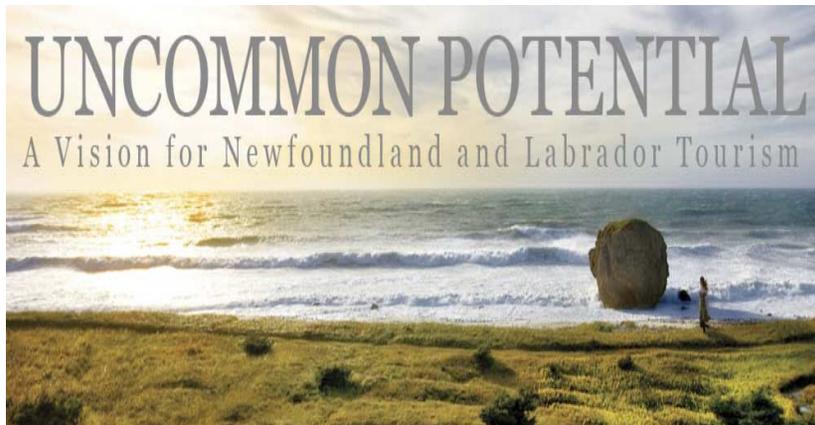
ACTION 6.1 PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- ‡ The Town Council will identify key local, regional and partners required to support implementation of the Strategy.

ACTION 6.2 EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

- ‡ The Town Council and other partners will reflect their engagement within agreed terms of reference and partner commitments.

SECTION 5 TOURISM AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



As goes the vision for provincial and destination tourism development, so goes Witless Bay. Building on its untapped resources, the province has set clear objectives for tourism growth by 2020, fulfilling its uncommon potential as a world class tourism destination. The Eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO) known as the Legendary Coast has also completed a Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Assessment for the Eastern Region.

Witless Bay will play its part in meeting these development objectives, increasing both the number of visitors to the Town and increasing the length of their stay while here. It will do so through developing quality experiences that meet the emerging expectations of visitors. It will do so through facilitating collaborative partnership with tourism operators in building this new tourism product. It will do so by adopting technology that enables visitors to learn more about Witless Bay as a destination. It will do so by developing a unique Witless Bay brand that allows our Town to achieve its place, in collaboration with other partners in the Irish Loop and eastern region, in provincial and international marketing efforts.

THE EMERGING VISITOR

Less likely to have children under 16 living at home.

Often empty nesters.

Highly educated and very well-travelled.

Interested in cultural tourism; they are looking for something different.

Not accidental tourists.

Wealthier than most, and leave much more money behind per tourist.

GOAL 7 - DIVERSIFY TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORTS

Enhance key support infrastructure by building new Visitor Information Center (VIC) on main beach, undertaking community-based trail and interpretation development and developing key points of interest in the Town, explore the feasibility of research/orientation center for Witless Bay Ecological Reserve and improve community-based directional signage.

Visitor Information Services/Centre

The existing VIC at Lower Pond is off the main highway (Route 10) and has no directional signage to indicate its presence to visitors. It is not fulfilling its primary objective in encouraging visitors to explore the Town further, increasing the length of their stay and their patronage of Witless Bay tourism operators and businesses.

ACTION 7.1 Acquire Access to Property on Main Beach

- 1 The Town Council of Witless Bay will initiate discussions with the Southern Avalon Tourism Association (formerly the Irish Loop Tourism Association) for a long term lease or purchase of the property on the Main Beach in Witless Bay.

Action 7.2 Establish new VIC at Main Beach

- 1 The Town Council of Witless Bay will establish a new VIC at the Main Beach, utilizing a traditional saltbox construction style, to serve as the Town's VIC and the focal point for community-based interpretation.



Given the new VIC is intended for seasonal use, the Town Council may wish to limit its construction to a building shell. However the minimum requirements will likely be an electrical service and male and female accessible washrooms, along with adequate display space for interpretive panels and literature. The Town Council should assess the capacity of existing water and sewer infrastructure at the site to accommodate reuse. The Town may also wish to incorporate an artisans' production area and retail outlet within the new VIC or the proposed Eco-Centre (see below).

Community-based Trail Development

The Town of Witless Bay has an extensive road and trail system that provides the basis for community-based walking tours featuring many natural and cultural elements. In addition, enhanced trail development provides an enhanced community benefit for local walkers and other potential trail users including biking, ATVs and snowmobiles. That said, many traditional rights of way are ill-defined and under development pressures, limiting traditional access.

ACTION 7.3 Trail Inventory

- 1 The Town Council of Witless Bay will prepare an inventory of existing trails and traditional rights of way utilizing title searchers, aerial photography and personal interviews to identify and map such trails. The Town will also identify potential routes for new trails to link existing developments and trails within the town.

ACTION 7.4 Trail Protection

- 1 The Town Council will review the legislative environment in relation to trails, rights of way and Crown Land and where possible, designate priority trails as conservation areas within the municipal plan.

ACTION 7.5 Trail Development

- 1 The Town Council will prepare a multi-year trail development plan, identifying priorities for development and resources for plan implementation.

Community-based Interpretation Development

The Town has a number of natural, cultural and heritage features that provide the basis for a community-based, and possibly themed, interpretative experience within the Town. Once developed, the interpretive themes could form a commercial opportunity. The themes also integrate with an enhanced trail network and development plan.

ACTION 7.6 Interpretative Theme Development of Natural, Cultural and Heritage Features

- 1 The Town has an extensive list of natural, cultural and heritage features including:

- East Coast Trail trailheads at Bears Cove and Gallows Cove
- Lower Pond and Perry's Brook eco-system
- Older homes, many with traditional saltbox home construction
- The Ryan/Cahill property including the main house and outbuildings
- The Tolt
- 12 O'clock Hill
- The Old Graveyard
- The Avenue and Church Properties, including graveyards

An active wharf and crab processing facilities
Fall Fair grounds
Upper Pond and associated river system
Ragged Beach
Northside/Southside rivalry
Railway
Swimming Pool, Recreation Building and grounds

These features and other must be further inventoried and prioritized with the objective of developing interpretive themes and story lines. These in turn will be utilized to support community-based interpretation for use at the VIC and with Town or commercial guided tours and for storyboards for signage at key locations in support of the site developments outlined below.

ACTION 7.7 Interpretive Site Development Plan

- 1 The Town Council will prepare a multi-year interpretive site development plan, identifying priority areas for development and resources for plan implementation.

Feasibility Assessment of Research/Eco-Centre



Considerable emphasis has been placed on the development of an eco-centre at Lower Pond. The building must have a community use and not compete with existing tourism businesses in relation to land-based Witless Bay Ecological Reserve Interpretation. The building must be multi-use and be sustainable, both in its construction and operations. Several potential tenants

have been identified and the space might be configured to accommodate a potential vendors' outlet for home-based artisans and craftspeople.

The development of an eco-centre at Lower Pond must follow a feasibility assessment that identifies potential environmental considerations around re-use of an industrial property. While an attractive location, the available space at Lower Pond to accommodate both a building and associated parking is limited and the site is situated on a coastal area potentially impacted by coastal erosion and storm surges. The Town is considering a re-use plan for the current municipal building for the space formerly occupied by the Witless Bay Fire Department. The assessment of a potential eco-centre at Lower Pond should consider the feasibility of building new at Lower Pond against reuse of the existing municipal building – that is consistent with the sustainable development and stewardship ethic highlighted above.

ACTION 7.8 Feasibility Assessment of an Eco-Centre

- 1 The Town Council of Witless Bay will prepare a term of reference (ToR) for a feasibility assessment of the proposed Eco-Centre that incorporates an assessment of the Lower Pond site with that of a potential reuse/reconfiguration of the Town's existing Municipal Building.

ACTION 7.9 Reuse of Existing VIC at Lower Pond

- 1 Following the establishment of a VIC at the Main Beach proposed above and the feasibility assessment of the Eco-Centre, the existing VIC at Lower Pond may be redundant. Its current use should be re-profiled, on an interim basis at least, as a primary staging area for the Puffin Patrol.

Action 7.10 Upper Pond Redevelopment

- 1 In collaboration with Small Craft Harbours and the Witless Bay Harbour Authority, undertake redevelopment of the small boat basin at Upper Pond including dredging, replacement of finger piers/wharves near bridge and marginal wharves inside the Pond.

Community and Directional Signage and Map



There is an acknowledgement that the Town's existing signage is inadequate. The signage at the three entrance points to the Town on Route 10 North, Route 10 South and the Witless Bay Line (Route 13) need considerable enhancement while directional signage is non-existent. The objective of the signage strategy is to provide a welcome to the Town and to encourage visitors to explore the Town further, particularly using the Dean's Road access as an entry point for the older part of town. The signage should be unique, encouraging people to get out of their car for a picture. The signage strategy should be complimented by an up to date community map for both visitors and residents alike.

ACTION 7.11 Community/Directional Signage

- 1 Utilizing the branding/logo development above, the Town Council will develop a community and directional signage plan, focusing initially on entrance ways to the Town along Routes 10 and 13 and incorporating other features to encourage visitors to explore the Town further.

ACTION 7.12 Community Map

- Utilizing the branding/logo development above and potentially incorporating the trail and interpretative features highlighted above, the Town Council will develop an updated community map.

GOAL 8 - COLLABORATION and SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM



Establish tourism-industry based advisory committee on tourism development to encourage collaboration and product development initiatives among Witless Bay tourism operators. Review existing tax structure for seasonal tourism operators.

ACTION 8.1 Tourism Advisory Committee

- The Town Council will facilitate the establishment of an industry-based Tourism Advisory Committee to facilitate stakeholder engagement on proposed activities highlighted above and a collaborative approach to product development.

ACTION 8.2 Membership in key organizations

- The Town Council will maintain membership in key tourism organizations including the Eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO), the Irish Loop Tourism Association (ILTA) and the East Coast Trail Association (ECTA).

ACTION 8.3 Seasonal Tourism Business Tax Rate

- 1 The Town Council will review its current tax structure to determine whether a seasonal tourism operators' tax rate is feasible. It will consider the experience of other towns in determining the cost-benefit of a seasonal tax rate.

GOAL 9 - BUSINESSES, ARTISANS, and CRAFTERS

Review existing tax structure for home-based businesses to support attraction of new home-based enterprise. Support business development, particularly among youth entrepreneurs. Assess potential for establishing a shared space for artisans and crafters within the Town and region.

ACTION 9.1 Home-based Business Tax Rate and other Incentives

- 1 The Town Council will review its current tax structure and policies for home-based businesses to ensure a) home-based commercial activities are encouraged to become formal businesses registered with the Town and b) identify incentives to encourage additional home-based businesses.

ACTION 9.2 Home-based Business Supports

- 1 The Town Council will work with government and other agencies supporting small business development (i.e. Celtic Business Development Corporation (CBDC), Newfoundland and Labrador Organization for Women Entrepreneurs (NLOWE)) to sponsor information sessions on business development programs. The Town Council will also prepare for distribution a small-business information package on various program supports.

ACTION 9.3 Youth Entrepreneurship

- 1 The Town Council will work with the CBDC to promote the annual Youth Ventures Program and will also identify a Youth Entrepreneur tax rate, and associated qualifying criteria, within its tax structure.



ACTION 9.4 Business Signage, Directional Signage and Business Location

- 1 The Town Council will encourage home-based business, crafters and artisans to identify their activities through signage at their place of business. The Town shall also develop specifications for home-based and other business signage. As well, the Town Council will incorporate within its interpretive planning at the Main Beach and other locations and its community mapping (see above) the location of all businesses within the community.

ACTION 9.5 Web-based Business Listings

- 1 The Town Council will encourage businesses to complete a business profile and will include this profile on the Town's updated website free of charge.

ACTION 9.6 Understanding the Needs of Business

- 1 The Town will initiate a consultative process with business owners commencing with an informal breakfast meeting to discuss the needs and issues of business owners in the Town. This might be followed by more detailed surveys and interviews to determine possible action requiring follow-up.

ACTION 9.7 Ongoing Engagement with Business

- 1 The Town Council will hold, in conjunction with other regional business development partners, an annual business event. This might be held as part of annual Small Business Week activities held in October of each year and be done in collaboration with the Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce (ILCC) and other regional business organizations.

ACTION 9.8 Artisans and Crafters Initiative

There are a number of artisans and crafters in Witless Bay providing a very diverse range of locally-produced goods. Many of these crafters are not operating as formal business entities. Collectively, these crafters and artisans represent an underdeveloped opportunity to diversify the local tourism offering while enhancing the Town's commercial tax base.

- 1 The Town Council will facilitate a planning session for Witless Bay-based crafters and artisans to discuss collaborative approaches to marketing, professional development and retail sales. The session will be undertaken in collaboration with the Southern Avalon Artisans' Cooperative.

ACTION 9.9 Shared Space for Artisans and Crafters

- 1 Depending on the interest expressed in 9.8 above, the Town Council will incorporate within its assessment of the proposed new VIC at the Main Beach and the Eco-Centre an analysis of the feasibility of

establishing shared space for artisans and crafters for production and a retail outlet. The assessment will consider other models of shared artisan space currently utilized in other areas including St. John's (the Tickle Trunk), the Niagara region, Ontario and Fredericton, New Brunswick.

GOAL 10 - INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT



Assess potential for establishing industrial park on Witless Bay Line and promote available industrially-zoned space within the Town. Focus on industry.

The Town's new municipal plan allocates a portion of property on the Witless Bay Line for industrial development and there is further commercial/industrial areas located within the Town. The Town must determine the types of industry it wants within the community. Consistent with the Town's emerging stewardship ethic, emphasis might be placed on green businesses.

ACTION 10.1 Industrial Park Investment Prospectus

- 1 The Town Council will assess the existing zoned industrial space on the Witless Bay Line and prepare a preliminary investment prospectus for the site. The prospectus shall be made available on the Town's website and distributed to prospective industrial park developers.

ACTION 10.2 Investment Attraction

↓ As part of the Investment Prospectus above, the Town Council will prepare an investment attraction strategy targeted toward key industrial/commercial opportunities

SECTION 6 IMPLEMENTATION

To be effective, the activities above must be considered as an ongoing action plan. Key stakeholders must be engaged. Leadership on strategic goals and actions must be assigned. Resources must be allocated. Progress must be tracked and reported on. The Strategy must be kept up to date.

To facilitate this effort it is often helpful to translate the goals and activities in a functional work plan that allows for activities to be identified, leadership and other roles to be assigned, resources and other inputs defined and progress to be tracked and reported on.

A detailed work plan template is attached as Appendix F identifying all strategic goals and action items, notional timelines for implementation and lead resources. The Town Council may use this implementation plan for ongoing tracking and reporting of activities over time, updating as necessary and actions are undertaken and completed.

Appendix A – November 4, 2014 Visioning Session: Summary Report

Town of Witless Bay:
Visioning Session - Summary Report
November 4, 2014

1. BACKGROUND

On November 4, 2014 the Town of Witless Bay held an evening session as part of its monthly Community Enhancement Committee (CEC) meeting to prepare a draft vision statement for the Town. The vision statement is intended to guide the Town's development plan. The session was facilitated by Pat Curran, consultant.

2. ATTENDANCE

The Town Council advertised the event to the community and extended an open invitation for residents to attend with a particular focus in attendance was on the Town's Community Enhancement Committee. A total of nineteen (19) participants attended the session and a list of those attending is provided below.

- ‡ Margie Lundrigan
- ‡ Sébastien Després
- ‡ Sheila Carew
- ‡ Suzanne Dooley
- ‡ Dieter Plautz
- ‡ Jerome Harte
- ‡ Ron Harte
- ‡ Tom Crocker
- ‡ Gordon Crocker
- ‡ Bonnie Johnstone
- ‡ Dawn O'Keefe
- ‡ Albert Murphy
- ‡ Robert Keating

- ‡ Donna Keating
- ‡ Geri O’Dea
- ‡ Kevin Smart
- ‡ Peter Sobol
- ‡ Mary Sobol
- ‡ Pat Curran (Facilitator)

3. A VISION FOR 2030

The facilitator invited participants to identify what they hoped Witless Bay would be like in 2030. Responses included:

- ‡ Maintain natural beauty
- ‡ Safe community
- ‡ Respect the past
- ‡ Prosperous
- ‡ Ecological Reserve flourishing
- ‡ Economically viable
- ‡ More peaceful and united
- ‡ Still here
- ‡ Good infrastructure
- ‡ Maintaining culture, traditions and heritage
- ‡ Rivers and streams clear and clean
- ‡ Family-oriented community
- ‡ Clean and accessible beaches and recreation facilities
- ‡ More walkways/boardwalk
- ‡ Don’t have to feel you have to lock your doors

- ↓ Youth programs, especially for teens
- ↓ Witless Bay as a synonym for eco-tourism and recognized as such by visitors/residents
- ↓ Employment for young people in eco-tourism
- ↓ Tonnes of businesses
- ↓ Local employment
- ↓ Industrial park and industry away from residential areas
- ↓ Good stewardship of Town finances
- ↓ Vibrant cultural/artistic activities
- ↓ Traditional music/support
- ↓ Celebrate community identity
- ↓ More beautification activities
- ↓ Strong sea trout run
- ↓ Be authentic
- ↓ Protect heritage buildings and sites
- ↓ Respectful of people's rights

4. DRAFT VISION STATEMENTS

The facilitator then divided the participants into three groups and asked them to prepare a draft vision statement. He distributed a vision statement exercise handout (see attached as Appendix A). The following vision statements arose from the three groups:

Group 1

Witless Bay is a unique, prosperous community

- *we call home*
- *stewardship of cultural/heritage and natural resources*
- *synonymous with eco-tourism*

- *self-sustain*
- *united*

Group 2

Our community stands for the protection and enhancement of our natural resources and is recognized for its strong sense of community which encourages involvement in Witless Bay's natural and historic beauty.

Written by people (residents?) who love this place (and call it home?).

Group 3

Witless Bay is a beautiful, family-oriented and culturally rich community which prides itself on its spectacular natural environment, unique history and long-standing traditions. Celebrating its authentic identity and inviting character, Witless Bay is – and always will be – a great place in which to prosper, grow and enjoy life to its fullest.

5. ANALYSIS

The Consultant committed to summarizing the results and distributing them to participants for review. It was agreed that the Consultant would attempt to review the various vision statements and present a single unified version for the consideration of participants. The following is the analysis of the visions statements prepared and a potential unified draft for review and consideration.

The three statements above are much like each other in their aspirations and vision for the future. All three emphasize natural resources and the natural environment and stewardship and protection. Two of the three extend the stewardship and protection ethic to culture, heritage and traditions. All three identify values around community and home and two of the three reference

prosperity. There are shared values around unity and a strong sense of community. These fundamental elements – stewardship, community, prosperity and unity – must be reflected in the shared vision for the Town.

Draft revised Vision Statement

Witless Bay is a united community where people stand as stewards of our rich natural, cultural and heritage resources and where future prosperity is based on sustaining these strengths, together. We are recognized for our authentic identity and an inviting character that makes our community a great place in which to prosper and grow – our home, Witless Bay.

In addition, the draft visions and other comments identified a series of notional values for the Town. With some modification/addition, these are consistent with the goals identified with the draft development plan. These values might include:

- ‡ Leadership In planning and accountability
- ‡ Stewardship In managing the Town’s natural, cultural and financial resources
- ‡ Partnership In facilitating collaborative relationships
- ‡ Engagement In ensuring ongoing stakeholder and community input
- ‡ Respect In ensuring peoples’ views are considered and the community is respectful of one another

6. CONCLUSION

The acceptance of a draft vision statement by the Town, along with its review and endorsement by the CEC, those participating in the visioning session and the broader community is seen as a necessary step for plan completion.

Appendix A – Visioning Exercise Handout

Vision Statement Exercise Worksheet

The vision statement is an inspirational, compelling answer to the question “What do you hope for your stakeholders?” Ideally, it should be written in a compelling, inspirational fashion. Post your vision statement throughout your organization.

Example: “Every adult in Avalon is fulfilled from employment that contributes to their individual and community development.”

Appendix B – August 23, 2014 Strategic Planning Session: Summary Report

Town of Witless Bay:
Strategic Planning Session - Summary Report
August 23, 2014

1. BACKGROUND

On August 23, 2014 the Town of Witless Bay held a day long strategic planning session at the Town Hall, Witless Bay. The session was held as a consultative component of the Town's business and tourism development strategy and was supported by the Community Capacity Building (CCB) Program of the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development (IBRD). The session was facilitated by Pat Curran, consultant.

2. OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

The agenda was focused on identifying strategic planning priorities for the Town and developing related action plans. The session also considered a stakeholder engagement strategy to support plan development and implementation. A copy of the agenda is attached as Appendix A.

Pat Curran identified his role as a facilitator, indicating his job was to keep the discussion moving forward and on agenda. He acknowledged that if required, participants could shift the focus to ensure a particular area was covered more extensively within the time available. He also acknowledged that while his role was to act as an independent facilitator, his background and interest in Witless Bay might result in him offering this own perspective from time to time over the course of the day. If participants found that helpful, he was prepared to do so but if he was leading participants in a certain direction, he urged participants to raise a concern.

The session began with a review of the agenda and general housekeeping issues followed by introductions. The facilitator then asked participants to identify key priority areas they hoped to discuss. Once these priorities were identified, they were sorted into a series of planning five themes around which detailed action plans would be developed. Participants were divided into breakout groups to consider each priority area and then reported back on their findings to the full group. The session concluded with an identification of key stakeholders for the Town and general messages on stakeholder engagement. There was considerable discussion at the conclusion of the stakeholder engagement session on achieving buy-in from residents and others and how to approach that need.

3. ATTENDANCE

The Town Council advertised the event to the community and extended an open invitation for residents to attend. A particular focus in attendance was on members of Council and the Town's Community Enhancement Committee which has been quite active in recent months in support of the Town's community enhancement and Tidy Towns initiative. A total of twenty seven (27) participants attended the session over the course of the day, many remaining for the full agenda. A list of those attending is provided below.

- ‡ René Estrada (Council)
- ‡ Terri Tobin (Summer student)
- ‡ Jessie Burke (50+; Community Enhancement Committee)
- ‡ Margie Lundrigan (50+; Community Enhancement Committee)
- ‡ Ann Marie Hann (Council; Community Enhancement Committee)
- ‡ Riley Hann (Summer Student; Community Enhancement Committee)
- ‡ Jennelle Dinn (Summer Student)
- ‡ Dena Wiseman (Deputy-Mayor)
- ‡ Jacqueline Mair (Council; Public Works Committee)
- ‡ Sébastien Després (Mayor; Wright Music Studio)
- ‡ Heather Wright (Wright Music Studio)
- ‡ Amélie Després (Youngest participant)
- ‡ Geraldine Caul (Town Clerk-Manager)
- ‡ Ralph Carey (Council; Public Works Committee)
- ‡ Tom Tobin (Resident)
- ‡ Dieter Plautz (Resident)
- ‡ Kevin Smart (Council; Heritage Committee; Conservation Group)
- ‡ Peter Sobol (Business owner)
- ‡ Gordon Harris

- ‡ Noel O’Dea (Target Marketing)
- ‡ Derrick Thompson (Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce/Consultant)
- ‡ Juergen Schau (Puffin Patrol)
- ‡ Elfie Schau (Puffin Patrol)
- ‡ Joan Hutchings (New resident)
- ‡ Frank Hutchings (New Resident)
- ‡ Barb Peach (Visitor)
- ‡ Pat Curran (Facilitator)

4. PRIORITIES FOR DISCUSSION

The facilitator invited participants to identify key priorities they wished to plan toward. The suggestions included:

- ‡ Witless Bay-based recreation planning/recreation building use plan
- ‡ Develop an overall vision for Witless Bay
- ‡ Protect the areas that give our community a sense of vision, i.e. the coastal headlands and Lower Pond
- ‡ Bird Centre at Lower Pond
- ‡ TV cameras on the island with real-time footage of the burrows and the birds at the Ecological Reserve
- ‡ Eco-centre with aquarium and interpretation of brown trout, tidal areas brown
- ‡ Lower Pond eco-centre with an aquarium with brown trout, salmon, etc. This aquarium could raise fish to then release them.
On display at this eco-centre, there could be something to show residents and tourists what there is on the coast here
- ‡ Focus on education at Centre
- ‡ Need buy-in from community to support plans – need a plan to ensure communications and buy-in
- ‡ A boardwalk around Lower Pond, where young and old can enjoy the birds and the sights
- ‡ Benches around the Pond are important
- ‡ A boardwalk along the shoreline at Bears Cove

- ‡ We need to help the community realize what we have here, and how lucky we are to live where we live
- ‡ Focus must be on quality of life
- ‡ Stairs/trail going to the Tolt
- ‡ Focus on other businesses. What businesses do we want here?
- ‡ We need to offer incentives to attract the businesses we want
- ‡ Some businesses are damaging the aesthetics of the town with ugly, unimaginative architecture
- ‡ Certain types of businesses result in infrastructure that residents, along with tourists, can enjoy and use
- ‡ Land development and building development plans to ensure aesthetic standards in construction, landscaping etc.
- ‡ Need for mix of businesses
- ‡ We need to attract locals to our local businesses so that they can survive over the winter
- ‡ Witless Bay Line may be appropriate for a business park. There's lots of room for pipe yards, warehousing, and other such industrial uses. Bay Bulls is the only other deep water port on the Avalon Peninsula which can support the offshore industry
- ‡ The Ragged Beach area should be protected forever
- ‡ A trail leading up to 12 O'clock Hill, where there's a beautiful view
- ‡ A good family restaurant
- ‡ Need to balance subdivision and residential development with the character of the town, i.e. trees, style, etc.
- ‡ We don't have good signage. Our Town signs are terrible. We need something that people will get out of their car to get a selfie with the sign. We need directional signage in Witless Bay. New residents don't know where everything is. Trail heads, entrance ways etc.
- ‡ The passage into and through Witless Bay, along Route 10 is not welcoming
- ‡ Entrance points to Town need to be enhanced
- ‡ Specific discussion on former Parish Hall - trees or shrubbery should be required. A beautification by-law might be necessary
- ‡ What kinds of incentives can be provided to businesses to move into more appropriate locations?
- ‡ The Town Office and Fire Station is ugly
- ‡ Linear commercial development on the main road drives up subdivision development and represents poor planning
- ‡ Wider buffers for waterways
- ‡ The advertising for the province highlights bays with dories anchored and colourful houses

- ‡ A dory in Upper Pond anchored during the entire summer
- ‡ Colourful buildings. Facades on the businesses would create a brand for the town. The iconic saltbox could potentially be replicated
- ‡ Tourists love to see a wide open bay. From an aesthetic point of view, our bay is beautiful
- ‡ “Scenic Route” along Dean’s Road to get tourists into the community
- ‡ Business opportunity for a heritage inn/restaurant
- ‡ Protection of trails and traditional rights of way
- ‡ Improve/replace finger piers/wharves at the Bridge
- ‡ Beach/Upper Pond redevelopment
- ‡ Conference Centre
- ‡ The new “Look” of the Town
- ‡ New Town Logo
- ‡ New signage throughout the town is desperately needed
- ‡ Swimming pool – recreation planning
- ‡ Anti-littering signs
- ‡ Storyboards
- ‡ Town infrastructure: Work already done on the Visitor Information Centre
- ‡ Sidewalks need to be addressed in all future planning
- ‡ Moving the Fire Hall
- ‡ Scenic viewing areas
- ‡ Heritage Committee’s work could potentially overlay much of what we do
- ‡ Crab shell re-use/composting
- ‡ Community Garden
- ‡ Community Garbage Cans
- ‡ Improved Council chambers
- ‡ Focus on home-based businesses

- ‡ Small business signs would create a much different impression of the community, encouraging locals to shop locally
- ‡ Developing a relationship with business owners would be beneficial to them
- ‡ Website needs to be updated to reflect a broader mandate (residents/businesses/tourists)
- ‡ Noise bylaw

5. ACTION PLANNING THEMES

Based on a review of the priorities identified above, a series of planning themes emerged including:

- ‡ Small Business Development
- ‡ Recreation and Tourism Infrastructure
- ‡ Industry
- ‡ Town Look and Feel
- ‡ Tourism Building
- ‡ Stakeholder Engagement/Buy-in

With the exception of Stakeholder Engagement/Buy-in, each of the planning themes were assigned to smaller working groups of 4-5 people to consider and report back on key findings. Each of the themes of Small Business Development and Recreation and Tourism Infrastructure were assigned to two separate two groups and the strategic action plans that follow are a composite of the two reports from each.

The Stakeholder Engagement/Buy-in theme was considered by the full group later in the afternoon (see below).

6. A STRATEGIC VISION FOR WITLESS BAY – A Personal Perspective

Over lunch Noel O’Dea, owner of Target Marketing and a Witless Bay resident, gave an informal presentation on a strategic vision for Witless Bay.

Presentation Summary

Noel began by complimenting the group on their commitment to planning, asking if people were aware of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. After Alice falls down the rabbit hole and arrives at a fork in the road, she asks the Cheshire Cat for directions. He asks her where she wants to go. "I don't rightly know," she explains. So the Cat says, "Well, it doesn't much matter which way you go!" In other words, before we begin acting on ideas, it makes sense to first start by establishing goals.

About the Need for a Healthy Balance

The key reason a Council exists: to provide services to residents. Local governments should be concerned about four things:

People * Culture * Environment * Economy

These four elements are interrelated, but they need to be prioritized and balanced. Growth is a great thing, since it can strengthen a town's economy and increase the number and quality of services a municipality can offer to its residents. However, as we can clearly witness in places such as Fort McMurray, growth can also attract social problems, family problems, substance abuse problems, and the like. This is why the function of the economy must always be to serve the people.

Differentiation & Assets

One of Target Marketing's key taglines in its advertising for the Province:

"This is Newfoundland – not Disneyland."

In its advertising, the Province recognizes that one of the key reasons people come to the Province is the physical environment. The physical environment is also one of the key reasons why some might consider opening a business in Witless Bay.

Differentiation is what makes a brand different from the other brands.

Volvo = Safety

Buick = Big comfort

Witless Bay's key asset – the element which differentiates Witless Bay from other places in the province – is the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve. Accessible whale-watching, bird-watching, and beautiful landscapes are key.

Profile of Tourists to the Province

Over the past 8 years, there has been a steady increase in tourism. The tourists who make their way to the Province are:

- ‡ Less likely to have children under 16 living at home.
- ‡ Often empty nesters.
- ‡ Highly educated and very well-travelled.
- ‡ Have already done the touristy things. They are interested in cultural tourism; they are looking for something different.
- ‡ Very different from those who visit PEI looking for water slides.
- ‡ Not accidental tourists.
- ‡ Wealthier than most, and leave much more money behind per tourist.

What can Witless Bay do to bring them here and keep them here?

- ‡ The Witless Bay Ecological Reserve is already up front and center in the Provincial Department of Tourism's marketing. We need to capitalize on this.
- ‡ Witless Bay's section of the East Coast Trail is very well travelled.
- ‡ A drive-back loop service to hike the trail
- ‡ Huge proportion of salt boxes. Needs to be highlighted.

A Balance

The ocean, marine and coastal resources can be utilized to position Witless Bay for sustainable growth and development through a linkage between the following:

Tourism * Art & Culture * Ocean & Science * Pristine Marine * Commercial Industrial

Noel concluded by wishing participants a successful session and good luck in their planning efforts.

7. STRATEGIC ACTION PLANS

7.1 Small Business Development

Strategic Context:				
There is a need to attract locals to our local businesses so that they can survive over the winter. Small business signs would create a much different impression of the community, encouraging locals to shop locally. Developing a relationship with business owners would be beneficial to them. Town should place emphasis on home-based businesses. Website needs to be updated to reflect a broader mandate, including business. Business opportunities identified included a good family restaurant and a heritage inn/restaurant.				
Strategic Goal:				
Support existing small business and increase the number of small businesses.				
Target	Action	Timeline	Lead	Resources
Promotion	Add business profiles to new Town website and through newsletters	Fall 2014	Town Council	Need company profiles
	Possible development of “Witless Bay Approved” branding/icon for businesses	Fall 2014	Town Council	Comparative approaches from other towns
Tax rates	Revise tax structure	Fall 2014	Town Council	Comparative approaches from other

				towns
Promote supports for business	Presentations by funding partners	Fall 2014	Town Council	CBDC, ACOA, ILCC, IBRD
	Small business information package	Fall 2014	Town Council	Production and distribution
Youth Entrepreneurs	Incentives for youth starting businesses under Youth Ventures	Ongoing	Town Council	Youth Ventures Program
Artisans and Crafters	Breakfast meeting	Fall 2014	Town Council	Southern Shore Artisans Cooperative
Business Opportunity Identification	Invite residents to identify gaps through engagement at future CEC session(s)	Fall 2014	Town Council/CEC	n/a
Industrial Zoning	Town Plan	Ongoing	Town Council	n/a
Small business cluster/incubator	Consider in possible reuse plan for Municipal Building or as a development option of Old Convent	n/a	Town Council	n/a
Signage	Establish standards for signage	n/a	Town Council	Comparative approaches from other towns
Regional collaboration for business development	Engage other regional partners in supporting local businesses	n/a	Town Council	Southern Shore Joint Council, Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce
Understanding needs of businesses	Consult business owners, i.e. meetings, roundtable discussions, surveys	n/a	Town Council	n/a

7.2 Tourism and Recreation Infrastructure

Strategic Context:

Trail development at 12 O'clock Hill and stairs and trail going to the Tolt. A boardwalk around Lower Pond, where young and old

can enjoy the birds and the sights. Benches around the Pond are important. A boardwalk along the shoreline at Bears Cove. Work has already been done on the Visitor Information Centre and the Community Garden.

Swimming Pool and Witless Bay-based recreation planning. Move of the Fire Hall will result in more community space in the Municipal Building.

Strategic Goal:

Build infrastructure that supports the economic, business and community development needs for residents as well as tourists.

Target	Action	Timeline	Lead	Resources
Trail Development Plan for biking, hiking, snowmobiling and ATVs	Identify trails and traditional rights of way – engage seniors and older residents	n/a	Town Council/50+ Association/Heritage Committee	Surveyor/aerial photographs
	Identify land ownership issues of trails identified for development	n/a	Town Council	Title search
	Assess condition of trails to determine capital requirements to ensure accessibility and safety – any construction or development should consider sustainability of trail developed, choice of materials and long-term maintenance costs	n/a	Town Council	Engineer
	Identify key trail development partners to support plan development	n/a	Town Council	ECTA, Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation
Green Space Plan	Utilizing 10% holdback on residential sub-divisions, identify use of green space	n/a	Town Council	Engineer or landscape architect
Recreation Plan	Identify opportunities to utilize	n/a	Town Council	BBBAA

	natural materials			
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There was considerable discussion in the group on the focus of tourism development. One of the objectives would be to encourage overnight tourism, small business/group conferences and excursions in collaboration with existing operators, i.e. accommodations, boat tours etc. There was a need to consult with residents to determine attitudes and also expertise that might be used to support development activities. The need was identified to partner with other stakeholders, i.e. CPAWS, ETCA, tourism association, destination management organizations etc.

Although defined within the strategic context for recreation and tourism infrastructure development, there is a need for more discussion on a detailed recreation plan that focuses on Witless Bay-based programming and potential usage of the new Recreation Building and area.

7.3 Industry

Strategic Context:				
Focus on industry. What businesses do we want here? We need to offer incentives to attract the businesses we want. Emphasis on green businesses. Businesses which help out the Town. Crab shell re-use/composting.				
No more industrial/commercial development on the main drag. Witless Bay Line may be appropriate for a business park. There's lots of room for pipe yards, warehousing, and other such industrial uses. Need a big client to "anchor" the industrial park on Witless Bay Line.				
Target	Action	Timeline	Lead	Resources
Existing business	Promote existing businesses on website	Fall 2014	Town Council	
	Review tax structure	Fall 2014	Town Council	Comparative approaches from other towns
Industrial Park	Promote industrial area with focus on offshore, marine-related industries and education	n/a	Town Council	Designer/promotional materials
	Work with local/other developers to develop park	n/a	Town Council	n/a

Attract New Businesses	Promote Witless Bay as being open for business – opportunities include diner, food truck	n/a	Town Council	n/a
	Include Witless Bay as possible location for HMP replacement	n/a	Town Council	n/a

7.4 Town Look and Feel

Strategic Context:

Protect the coastal headlands and Lower Pond. Some businesses are damaging the aesthetics of the town with ugly, unimaginative architecture. Need to balance subdivision and residential development with the character of the town, i.e. trees, style, or shrubbery etc. A beautification by-law might be necessary. Incentives to businesses to move into more appropriate locations. The Town Office and Fire Station are ugly. Linear commercial development on the main road drives up subdivision development and represents poor planning. Sidewalks need to be addressed in all future planning. Requirement for Noise By-Law.

The passage into Witless Bay, along HWY 10 is not welcoming. Town signage is terrible and new signage throughout the town is desperately needed. Signs should reflect new town logo. We need something that people will get out of their car to get a selfie with the sign. We need directional signage in Witless Bay and “Scenic Route” signs on Dean’s Road to get tourists into the community. New residents/tourists don’t know where everything is, i.e. trail heads, storyboards. Small business signs would create a much different impression of the community, encouraging locals to support local business. Anti-littering signs.

The advertising for the province highlights bays with dories anchored and colourful houses. Tourists love to see a wide open bay. From an aesthetic point of view, our bay is beautiful. A dory in Upper Pond anchored during the entire summer and facades on the businesses would create a brand for the town. The iconic saltbox could potentially be replicated.

Target	Action	Timeline	Lead	Resources
Residential Beautification	Workshops on landscaping with professional hired by Town	n/a	Town Council	
Subdivision Developments	Public consultations/input	n/a	Town Council	
	Work with developers	n/a	Town Council	

Town as Role Model	Enhance municipal building	n/a	Town Council	
	Establish Beach area as Town focal point/erect whale skeleton/relocate tourism chalet	n/a	Town Council	
	Establish memory garden near municipal building	n/a	Town Council	
Signage	Town signage	n/a	Town Council	
Business Beautification	Signage standards	n/a	Town Council	
	Clean and Tidy Awards	n/a	Town Council	
	Discounts at Pat's Plants	n/a	Town Council	

7.5 Tourism Building

Strategic Context:

A large-scale Bird Island Centre at Lower Pond is important. It would give the Town a sense of identity. TV cameras on the island with real-time footage of the burrows and the birds at the Ecological Reserve. A Puffin Museum. A Puffin Launching Station. At Lower Pond, there could be an eco-centre with an aquarium with brown trout, salmon, etc. This aquarium could raise fish to then release them. On display at this eco-centre, there could be something to show residents and tourists what there is on the coast here. Conference Centre. Focus on education.

Target	Action	Timeline	Lead	Resources
Eco-Centre at Lower Pond	Determine size of property	n/a	Town Council	
	Enquire on potential environment risks associated with reuse of former industrial site, i.e. government	n/a	Town Council	
	Seek input from key partners on possible usage of facility to determine sustainability model	n/a	Town Council	CPAWS, Whale Research Group, Parks and natural Areas, MUN, MI

	Apply “green” standards to design and construction including L.E.E.D. and septic etc.	n/a	Town Council	
	Establish program of activities for facility to attract usage	n/a	Town Council	
Interim Portable Structures	Identify possible temporary structures that could be used for commercial and exhibition purposes	Fall 2014	Town Council	

8. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 Stakeholder Identification

Participants were asked to identify key stakeholder within the Town, including those required to advance the strategic priorities and activities above. Stakeholders included:

- ‡ General public
- ‡ Business Owners including tourism operators, crafters/artisans, hoe-based businesses and commercial/industrial business
- ‡ Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce (ILCC)
- ‡ Government – federal and provincial
- ‡ Elected representatives including MHA and MP
- ‡ Other municipalities/Southern Shore and Northeast Avalon Joint Councils
- ‡ Environmental groups including CPAWS, ECTA
- ‡ Education institutions including MUN, MI, CAN and private colleges
- ‡ NAACP?
- ‡ Southern Avalon Tourism Association (SATA)
- ‡ Celtic Business Development Corporation (CBDC)

- ‡ Non-resident taxpayers
- ‡ Service groups in town, i.e. Kinsmen, KOC, Heritage Committee, 50+ Club, Parish Committee, Harbour Authority
- ‡ Schools through administration and school council
- ‡ BBBAA
- ‡ Hustle NL
- ‡ Family Resource Centre
- ‡ Fire Department
- ‡ Eastern Waste Management
- ‡ Multi Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB)
- ‡ Puffin Patrol
- ‡ Ex-Pats
- ‡ Others interested in Witless Bay
- ‡ Media

It was agreed that each of the above stakeholder group required targeted messages to encourage buy-in to the Town's plans. With stakeholders identified, the Town could move ahead with more detailed communications planning and messaging on a general or project by project basis.

8.2 Key Messages

There was discussion on the key messages the Town would like to send – messages that reinforce the new and emerging approach of council. Key messages included:

- ‡ Openness and interested in engaging with people
- ‡ Focus on the future with an emphasis on planning
- ‡ Working toward a vision

The hope is that the Town will move away from the historical negative messaging. Key to achieving that goal is a vision that people can buy in to.

8.3 Achieving Community Buy-In

Need for a Vision

There was considerable discussion on how to achieve community buy-in, raising the question of what are we actually asking people to buy-in to? The activities proposed must be placed in the context of a vision for the Town.

Ongoing Education

It was agreed that buy-in will not come immediately but will require ongoing efforts and quick wins to demonstrate progress and build momentum. Ongoing education and engagement would be needed to engage community.

CFAs and Long Term Residents

It was acknowledged that the perspective of long time residents is different that those who have settled in Witless Bay and that the Town must differentiate between the two. It is also recognized that the perspective of longer term residents who value and hold the traditions, culture and heritage of the Town must be encouraged.

Milestones

There was some discussion on how the Town might demonstrate a quick win or promote success toward goals. The current Council is a new with most members running in September 2013 on a platform featuring a new approach to municipal governance with emphasis on planning and communications. A year later, the Town is in a position to report on progress on its platform of 2013. Ideas included:

- ↓ State of the Town address in January 2015, reporting on what has happened since election and setting out goals for 2015
- ↓ Budget presentation/speech that links Town expenditure, i.e. resources for development planning to key items in the Town's strategic goals

9. CONCLUSION

Value of the Session

The strategic planning session was a good opportunity to engage residents and stakeholders in effective planning for the future. Participants made significant contributions throughout and all were willing to share their perspective on the future development of the Town. These findings were of benefit to the Consultant who will integrate the results into the larger tourism and business development plan currently underway.

Additional Input

After the session, a participant presented a visual representation of a strategic planning process with an emphasis on communications and stakeholder engagement. This process template might be utilized in the development of the Town's strategic plan clearly demonstrating the link between vision and values and activities and milestones. This template will be reviewed at the presentation of the summary report by the consultant and the Community Enhancement Committee (see below). A copy of the template is included as Appendix B.

Next Steps

The Consultant committed to summarizing the results and distributing them to participants for review. It was agreed that the Consultant would review the key findings with the Community Enhancement Committee at its next meeting on September 2, 2014.

Appendix C – September 2, 2014 Strategic Planning Session: Summary Report

Town of Witless Bay:
Strategic Planning Session #2 - Summary Report
September 2, 2014

1. BACKGROUND

On September 2, 2014 the Town of Witless Bay held a strategic planning session as part of its monthly Community Enhancement Committee (CEC) meeting. This was a follow-up to a day- long strategic planning session held on August 23, 2014. The session was held as a further consultative component of the Town's business and tourism development strategy and was supported by the Community Capacity Building (CCB) Program of the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development (IBRD). The session was facilitated by Pat Curran, consultant.

2. OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

The agenda was focused on reviewing the key findings from the initial strategic planning session on August 23, 2014, identifying additional strategic planning priorities and developing related action plans, considering resources in support of strategic plan implementation and confirming key targets for further consultation. A copy of the agenda is attached as Appendix A.

The session began with a review of the agenda and key findings from the earlier session. The facilitator then asked participants to identify additional key priority areas they hoped to discuss. Emphasis was placed on recreation infrastructure and planning, trail development and the significance of the Puffin Patrol in future tourism and promotion. Rather than divide participants into break-out groups to consider priorities in detail, this session featured a plenary-style approach with all participants given an opportunity to be engaged in the discussion on each priority area.

3. ATTENDANCE

- ‡ Riley Hann (Summer Student, Community Enhancement Committee)
- ‡ Dena Wiseman (Deputy Mayor)
- ‡ Sébastien Després (Mayor, Wright Music Studio)

- ↓ Dieter Plautz (Resident)
- ↓ Linda Chafe?
- ↓ Kevin Smart (Council, Heritage Committee, Conservation Group)
- ↓ Peter Sobol (Business owner)
- ↓ Mary Sobol (Heritage Committee)
- ↓ Maureen Walsh (Heritage Committee)
- ↓ Jeri O’Dea

4. DISCUSSION ON PLANNING THEMES

The group identified the following planning themes:

- ↓ Recreation infrastructure and programming
- ↓ Trail development
- ↓ Salt Boxes and Built Heritage
- ↓ Puffin Patrol and integration with tourism promotion and product development

4.1 Recreation Infrastructure and Programming

The recreation infrastructure and programming theme had not been fully considered at the initial planning session on August 23, 2014. The focus of the discussion was on both recreation infrastructure and programming. It was felt that the BBBAA and other groups provide a broad range of programs and services and that there may not be a gap in programming. The emphasis should be on enhancing existing recreational infrastructure.

There was an acknowledgement that the existing grounds around the multi-purpose court and playground need to be finished with additional leveling, landscaping and sod. This would facilitate ongoing maintenance such as moving. The condition of the Pool was discussed and there was recognition that a more lasting repair needed to be undertaken.

In terms of new recreation infrastructure, a rubberized walking tract might be installed around the existing ball field, utilizing a recycled tire material consistent with the Town's eco theme and principles. Similarly, an enhanced ecological/nature playground utilizing recycled/reused materials might be considered. There was discussion on establishing recreation facilities in new sub-divisions utilizing the 10% green space reservation within each development. There was also discussion on winter activities and a hill for sliding.

In relation to recreation programming, there was consensus to continue to work with the BBBAA and to encourage an updated recreation needs assessment for the greater Bay Bulls to Bauline East area.

4.2 Trails

There was additional discussion on the trails theme considered at the August 23, 2014 session. The existing trails and traditional rights of way in Witless Bay need to be identified and protected. New trail development might be undertaken to integrate different neighbourhoods in the town, particularly new sub-divisions off the Gully Road and Track Road. Community-based interpretation might be established at trail heads along with a community trail guide. These Trails in turn could link the north and south portions of the East Coast Trail.

Additional considerations on trail development included cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, along with bicycle and ATV trails.

4.3 Built Heritage

The number of traditional saltbox style of homes in Witless Bay is unique and might represent an under-utilized resource for the town both in terms of community heritage and as an icon and building style that might be replicated in town branding and new building construction. The profile of a saltbox home is unique and instantly recognizable. There are over a dozen such properties in Witless Bay that are well documented in the Town's heritage property inventory and academic research in vernacular architecture of Newfoundland.

4.4 The Puffin Patrol, the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve and Tourism Product Development/Promotion

There was considerable discussion on utilizing the Puffin Patrol in relation to the Town's overall tourism product development and promotion activities. A caution was expressed that conservation and protection, not tourism, was the intent of the Puffin Patrol. Despite this, there are obvious linkages between the Town's emerging ecological image and brand and supporting/enhancing the Puffin Patrol.

The relevance of the Puffin Patrol to an emerging ecological brand is considerable. It is a conservation initiative led by committed volunteers in partnership with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). It engages young and old alike and provides meaningful opportunities for education and active engagement in recovery activities. While the season may be short and the product (birds to recover) cannot be guaranteed, it does represent an overall environmental stewardship ethic that might form the basis of ongoing education and promotion activities on conservation. The Puffin Patrol is an extension of the community's overall role as stewards of the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve and the town's ecological and natural resources.

To support this emerging stewardship and conservation ethic and in turn to link it with to tourism product development and promotion, a number of activities were identified including:

- ‡ Encourage tourism operators to talk about the Puffin Patrol
- ‡ Establish a Puffin Patrol presence on the Town's website
- ‡ Expand annual Puffin Patrol kick-off event
- ‡ Develop an Adopt-a-Puffin Program
- ‡ Nominate the Puffin as Canada's National Bird

With respect to broader programs and facilities the following were identified:

- ‡ Develop a live video feed from the Reserve and set up binoculars to see the Reserve from the main beach

- ‡ Establish linkages with Memorial University and other research institutions to offer a lecture series and other programming
- ‡ Provide space for research equipment so that researchers are attracted to the area
- ‡ Link the Reserve with the Puffin Festival and other Town-organized events & activities and position Witless Bay as “The Gateway to the Ecological Reserve”

Securing access to the main beach interpretive area was identified as a priority and discussions should be undertaken with the Irish Loop Tourism Association in this regard. Potential development in this area might include a new Visitor’s Information Centre (VIC) in a saltbox style, the installation of a whale skeleton and the placement of a set of binoculars for viewing. The existing VIC at Lower Pond might be repurposed as an interim ecological centre and a base for Puffin Patrol activities.

The conservation and stewardship approach appeared to most as a ready fit for potential corporate support, particularly within the offshore oil industry. A caution was expressed that linking oil development with seabird conservation must be approached very carefully. A further caution was expressed on the perception of competitive impact on private operators from shore-based interpretation and program development however it was felt that such activities were complementary.

The recent filming by CBC’s Nature of Things on the puffin will result in a documentary that will focus national and international attention on Witless Bay. This is a unique opportunity with a rather narrow timeline given the fall 2015 notional date for airing. The intervening time must be used by the Town to confirm its stewardship and conservation brand and ethic and prepare its website, promotional and other materials.

4.5 Capacity Building

There was some discussion on enhanced capacity building for town council and committee members through study tours and best practice missions. Bouctouche, New Brunswick was identified as a potential location to visit.

5. NEXT STEPS

The Consultant committed to summarizing the results and distributing them to participants for review. It was agreed that the Consultant would present a summary of key findings to the Town's Planning Committee at its next meeting on September 23, 2014.

Appendix D – Key Findings



Witless Bay – Tourism and Business Renewal and Growth Strategy

INTERIM REPORT OF KEY FINDINGS

Pat Curran/Independent Consultants
Group

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1. Purpose

This report is intended to summarize key findings to date in support of the Town of Witless Bay’s Tourism and Business Renewal growth Strategy. It reflects key findings arising from community-based consultation sessions held on August 23 and September 2, face to face/telephone interviews with key stakeholders and a review of key documents.

2. Methodology

Community-based Consultations

With support from the Community Capacity Building Program of the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, two (2) community-based consultation sessions were held on August 23 and September 2 in a facilitated strategic planning format. The sessions were facilitated by Pat Curran and summary reports of both have been provided to council.

Face to Face/Telephone Interviews

The scope of work identified an initial interview methodology comprising 10-12 interviews. In consultation with the Town of Witless Bay the consultant developed a notional list of key informants and prepared an interview discussion guide. Initial contact was made with a number of respondents in early August but due to limited response and scheduling during the height of the tourism season, interviews were deferred until September. Since that time the consultant has expanded the scope of the interview process to include a broader range of input. The updated interview list is provided below in Table 1.

#	Name
1	A+ Taxi and Tours (Brent Coady)
2	Armstrong’s B&B (Anita Armstrong)
3	Elaine’s B&B/Witless Bay Eco-tours/Gallow’s Cove Cottage (Elaine)
4	Irish Loop Coffee House (Judi Devine)
5	Shamrock Pottery (Peter/Mary Sobol)

6	Aylward's Design Plus (Kay Aylward)
7	Southern Shore Taxi
8	Needs Convenience
9	Bear's Cove Inn (Clayton Hedderson)
10	Crane's Junction Ltd. (Vince Crane)
11	Witless Bay Suites (Aidan Carey)
12	Harrigan's Convenience
13	Valeria Safine
14	Mike Shortall and Heather Jones
15	Diane Greene
16	Kinsmen (Chris Swain)
17	Puffin Patrol (Juergen Schau)
18	CPAWS (Suzanne Dooley)
19	PAND (Sian French/Jeri Graham)
20	TCR (Scott Andrews)
21	IBRD (George Piatt)
22	ACOA (Chad Butt)
23	Harbour Authority (Mike Cahill)
24	EDMO (Kathi Stacey)
25	Heritage Committee (Mary Sobol or Maureen Walsh)
26	50+ (Jessie Burke)
27	Whale Rescue Group (Wayne Ledwell)

Research/Literature Review

An extensive review of documents was undertaken including Witless Bay development plans and strategies. The work of the Community Enhancement Committee was reviewed along with the Town's updated municipal plan. Regional and provincial tourism development strategies were reviewed. Reference material reviewed includes:

- ‡ Minutes of former Tourism Development Steering committee, 2005
- ‡ Maintenance agreement and associated documentation for regional interpretation site near Needs Convenience
- ‡ Engineering assessment of Upper Pond infrastructure requirements, 2009
- ‡ Summary of recommendations/discussion on Town starting with "What Differentiates Witless Bay from other places"

- ↓ Uncommon Potential: Vision 2020 – A Vision for Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism
- ↓ Irish Loop Strategic Economic Plan
- ↓ Town of Witless Bay Community Economic Development Plan
- ↓ Town of Bay Bulls and Witless Bay – ICSP
- ↓ Witless Bay Municipal Plan, 2014
- ↓ Community Enhancement presence at <https://www.facebook.com/sebastiendespres.page>
- ↓ EDMO Tourism Visitor Experience Plan

3. Key Findings to Date

Planning Priorities

Input from the public consultation sessions identified a series of key planning themes or areas on which participants identified a need to plan. These included:

- ↓ Small Business Development
- ↓ Recreation and Tourism Infrastructure
- ↓ Industry
- ↓ Town Look and Feel
- ↓ Tourism Building
- ↓ Stakeholder Engagement/Buy-in

Detailed action plans have been prepared for most of these planning priorities.

Need for a Vision

There is a definite need to define a vision for the town – key words around a vision include stewardship, conservation, communication and achieving community buy-in. The strategy must be grounded in a vision for the town that distinguishes Witless Bay as a model of sustainable community economic development.

Emphasis on Ecology, Conservation and Stewardship

The Town of Witless Bay is perceived as having a unique set of features based in great part on its natural and cultural assets - the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve being foremost among these. The Town's branding and strategy should be intricately linked to an ecological, stewardship and conservation theme and development activities must serve to ground and reinforce this message.

Development that Enhances Quality of Life

Developments undertaken through the plan must add value not only to the visitor experience and the town's tourism and business operators but for community residents as well. Trail development for example must focus not only on tourists but for potential community use. The proposed research/tourism building must be a facility that is configured for community use and offer a series of programming that engages community members.

Collaboration among Business

To develop an enhanced visitor experience, the Town must foster collaboration among tourism businesses, collaboration which is not presently taking place at the community or regional level. There is a void in current tourism industry engagement through such agencies as the Southern Avalon Tourism Association that might be met at a community level.

Efficacy of Current Tourism Activities

Both the current Visitor Information Centres at Bay Bulls and Witless Bay are ineffectual in directing visitors to area businesses. There is very limited understanding of goods, services and activities available. Perceived gaps in tourism offerings include quality and

more diversified places to eat, things to do and see, signage, interpretation and very limited shoulder season activities. The Witless Bay Puffin Festival does not represent a tourism attraction but has some potential to do so. The annual Puffin Patrol has potential as a world-class experiential tourism product yet is grounded in a conservation, protection and volunteer ethic that makes such a transition difficult.

The Emerging Tourist

Tourism product development approaches grounded in *Vision 2020*, the province's tourism development strategy and regional initiatives through the eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO or Legendary Coasts) place considerable emphasis on experiential learning and new product development. The profile of the average visitor is one that is well-travelled, well-educated and well off – visitors that are prepared to pay for quality and unique experiences that enable them to interact with community.

Built Heritage

The Town's well-documented built heritage represents a further potential. The unique salt-box style of home construction for which Witless Bay is known, along with other buildings and local sites of character, has potential for community-based heritage interpretation and might be integrated with trail development and other community enhancement activities.

Eco-Centre and other Municipal Buildings

Considerable emphasis was placed on the development of an eco-centre at Lower Pond to support the learning experience programming and ecology, conservation and stewardship themes highlighted above. In addition, the building must have a community use and as well, not compete with existing tourism businesses in relation to land-based Witless Bay Ecological Reserve Interpretation.

The building must be multi-use and be sustainable, both in its construction and operations. A critical mass of potential tenants has been defined including CPAWS, the Puffin Patrol, PNAD, the Whale Recovery and Release Group at Memorial along with research

space. The space must be configured to accommodate a potential vendors' outlet for home-based artisans and craftspeople from Witless Bay and area.

The existing Town VIC must be relocated to a more accessible and public local, potentially the main beach near Needs. This will require an agreement between the Town and the property owner, the Southern Shore Tourism Association. The existing VIC at Lower Pond might be reconfigured into a staging area for the Puffin Patrol on an interim basis.

The development of an eco-centre at Lower Pond must follow a feasibility assessment that identifies potential environmental considerations around re-use of an industrial property. While an attractive location, the available space to accommodate both a building and associated parking is limited and the site is situated on a coastal area potentially impacted by coastal erosion and storm surges. At the same time, the Town is considering a re-use plan for the current municipal building to reconfigure the space formerly occupied by the Witless Bay Fire Department. The feasibility assessment of a potential eco-centre at Lower Pond should consider the pros and cons of building new at Lower Pond against reuse of the existing municipal building – that is consistent with the sustainable development, conservation and stewardship ethic highlighted above.

Government Partnership

There is recognition of the key assets of Witless Bay and the under-developed tourism potential in the Town. Opportunities exist to position Witless Bay as a possible model for community-based interpretation, in particular integrating a community-based interpretive experience with the East Coast Trail. Many activities highlighted above appear eligible from a programming perspective including community-based signage and interpretation, local trail development, feasibility assessment and detailed engineering design and construction. Although the minimum contribution from project proponents for development funding is 10%, the contributions from the ideal financing model would be 40/40/20 with ACOA and IBRD contributing 40% each of project costs with the Town contributing 20%. Both IBRD and ACOA are prepared to consider any reasonable proposal while both PNAD and TCR are prepared to engage as resources in support of planning.

Industrial/Business Development

There is recognition that the Town needs a diverse commercial and industrial tax base and that these services contribute considerably to the local economy. The Town's new municipal plan does allocate a portion of property for industrial development and a feasibility assessment of this opportunity should be considered. Community initiatives that enhance the exterior look and feel of businesses can be advanced in conjunction with other efforts. The notion of encouraging relocation of existing industries to the industrial area is impractical. The current uses generally conform to municipal regulation and zoning that existed at the time of development. Any effort to impose new conditions on existing uses, i.e. the erection of tree lines, fencing or exterior facades, that were not a condition of earlier development applications will be met with opposition by business owners. A soft-sell approach directed toward existing business focusing on community enhancement with more rigorous requirements for new businesses is the preferred way forward.

From a tourism operator perspective, the adoption of a seasonal tourism operator tax rate would be welcome both to sustain existing business and encourage new growth and investment.

Branding

The Town's brand must be linked to its conservation, stewardship and ecological ethic. The Town's image, the North Atlantic puffin, must be re-styled to accommodate a varied use. The Town brand and all associated collateral material, including the Town's website, must be developed in readiness for the 2015 tourism season.

4. Next Steps

The consultant recommends the following steps in plan development, input and approval:

- ↓ Complete community/stakeholder consultations – by October 3
- ↓ Present revised key findings document to CEC – October 7
- ↓ Prepare draft plan – week of October 6

- ↓ Present draft plan to council – October 14
- ↓ Community consultation/Open House – late October
- ↓ Revised plan to CEC and Council – November 4
- ↓ Present final plan to Council – November 11 Council Meeting (or next meeting of Council if Council is observing Memorial Day) or November 18 Planning Committee meeting of Council

Appendix E – Stakeholder Relations Plan Template

Target Group	Insert Target Stakeholder Group here			
Key Message	Insert Key Message(s) here			
Activities	Action(s)	Status	Lead Staff	Other Resources
Insert Activity Title Here	Insert Action Items here	Update status of activities here	Identify lead roles here	Identify other resources here
Insert additional lines for activities as required	Insert additional lines for actions here			
Evaluation	Consider the effectiveness of the activities here, i.e. how many people showed up to a meeting or made a presentation etc.			

Appendix F – Work Plan Template

Goal 1 – Integrated Planning

Strategic Context - Develop planning processes, including annual budgeting and multi-year capital works programs, to support implementation of the Town's Vision and Strategy.

Action #/Name	Action	Time-line	Lead	Resources	Status/Update
ACTION 1.1 PRIORITIZING ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT	Prioritize activities within the Strategy to ensure that projects undertaken are within the capacity of the Town to finance, manage and sustain.	Winter 2015	Town Council		
ACTION 1.2 BUDGETING FOR DEVELOPMENT	Identify within its annual and multi-year (2-3 year) budgets the resources required to implement this Strategy using Town resources to leverage additional investment from Federal, Provincial and other partners wherever possible.	Winter 2015	Town Council		
	Identify capital projects in this Strategy within the Town's multi-year capital works program.	Winter 2015	Town Council		

Goal 2 – Regional Collaboration in Planning

Strategic Context - Identify opportunities with other regional partners to enhance delivery and sustainability of programs and services in a cost effective and coordinated manner.

ACTION 2.1 ENGAGEMENT IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS	Establish membership in the Irish Loop Tourism Association (ILTA)	Winter 2015	Town Council		
	Establish membership in the Irish Loop Chamber of Commerce (ILCC)	Winter 2015	Town Council		
	Establish membership in the Eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO)	Winter 2015	Town Council		
ACTION 2.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER MUNICIPAL PARTNERS IN REGION	Remain engaged in the Southern Shore Joint Council (SSJC), the Northeast Avalon Joint Council (NEAJC) and the Northeast Avalon Regional Plan Committee.	Ongoing	Town Council		
ACTION 2.3	Explore with other councils in	Winter	Town		