

Mayor Hobbs Speech
Exploits River Development Strategy Announcement
September 10, 2015 @ 10:30 am

Opening Remarks

Welcome everyone. I would like to extend a special welcome to Minister King, MHA Forsey, the Bishop's Falls Council, MP Scott Simms, Scott Dawe, Fred Parsons, Gerald Thompson and my fellow Mayors from neighbouring communities. Projects such as this are rarely completed in isolation, and the partnerships we have forged up to this point, and those that will come, are critical to success.

While somewhat wet today, we felt it was important to announce the Exploits River Development Strategy at this location so everyone can see, first hand, one of the ways you can begin your Exploits adventure.

In November 2014 the Town Council, with the support of ACOA and the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, engaged TRACT Consulting to study the Exploits River from the perspective of enhancing its potential around the recreational salmon fishery. As many know, Bishop's Falls offers some of the best Atlantic salmon fishing in this province – if not the Country – and it's time for the world to know this adventure, along with others, starts here.

Before I begin to outline the strategy and our plans regarding the Exploits River, I want to introduce you to our new logo and brand.

Bishop's Falls – The Exploits Adventure Starts Here!

Our new logo can be found at the top of the banners to my left and right. The mid-section represents a river/road and the start of the Exploits River adventure. The negative space in this mid-section is reminiscent of a railway track. Even though the railway is no longer here, the trails left behind are used all the time and are an important part of Bishop's Falls. The left-hand side (darker green) represents the falls/waves/fishing. The right-hand side (grey) represents the riverfront/nature. The entire symbol itself, if viewed at 90 degrees, is the trestle and its reflection.

In terms of our brand, which is where we are heading as a community and what we want this logo to convey, Bishop's Falls is truly the beginning of the Exploits Adventure. It starts here. The Exploits River has an upper and lower section that is divided by the hydro facility near this Park. The upper section, commonly known as above the dam, will give you river access to Great Rattling Brook, the Rapids, Grand Falls-Windsor, etc. The lower section, or below the dam, will give you access to a wide variety of salmon pools and the Bay of Exploits! The adventures are endless and Bishop's Falls is the beginning! In the near future the Town will work to redesign its website, which is linear and antiquated, to reflect its

brand. As part of this work the Town will also develop and launch a social media presence (i.e. Facebook and Twitter).

The Strategy

The Exploits River Development Strategy focuses on enhancing access to the Exploits River and building on the tourists' experience. In particular, the strategy is tailored to address the needs of the non-resident angler. We know these people spend more on average per party (\$2,430) than the provincial average (\$1,751); we know that 41% report household incomes or more than \$100,000; and, among other things, we know that 27% traveled for overnight stays. We also know that we need to do work to develop demand around the Exploits River, and this entails;

- developing supporting infrastructure, accommodation, and food offerings.
- developing remote site angling options.
- developing guiding services and ensuring training and qualifications.
- developing packaged products.
- developing broad awareness and marketing initiatives.

Today I will highlight the four development concepts emerging from the strategy and I will also speak about the things we will do to improve the experience. For

those who are interested in the details, you will find the strategy on our website at bishopsfalls.ca.

Main Street Viewing Area Concept

Around the gazebo you will find large copies of the four development concepts. The first one we will discuss is the Main Street Viewing Area.

This area is located in the east end of our community, and if you travel through Bishop's Falls during the summer months you may notice it is highly congested with vehicles and spectators. This site offers access to many salmon pools below the dam along with a spectacular view of the river. The strategy will make this an important point for tourism activity and information in town. It will be developed to include a viewing deck and a walkway down to the river (currently this is a rough path), along with signage that outlines things to do in Bishop's Falls and the surrounding areas (including Grand Falls-Windsor and Botwood, among others). When tourists drive through Bishop's Falls they will be attracted to this location and it will immediately set a tone that will reflect the Exploits adventure opportunities. This project is included in phase one of the implementation plan. The Town has already submitted funding applications to ACOA and the

Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development to complete the first phase. If successful on that front, this work will begin in 2016.

Fallsview Park Concept

Everyone recognizes this Park has an exceptional location and beauty, but they also know it requires upgrades. The strategy addresses this and proposes an ambitious plan that will transform the Park into a high-quality tourism asset for the Town. It includes a boat launch, small boat marina, RV site expansions, service upgrades, etc. Although the Park is important, we have not adopted the “build it and they will come” orientation. Rather, our focus in the first phase is to enhance access and the experience. This will, over the long-term, generate additional demand that will make enhancements to the park more economically viable. To this end, the first phase includes the development of a boat launch in the Park. There are many great salmon pools below the dam that can only be accessed by boat. A properly constructed boat launch will make accessing them easier. The other improvements to the Park will be pursued in future phases.

Trestle Bridge Interpretation Park (Riverside Drive)

Again working on access, and also taking advantage of the beauty of the river and some other key tourism assets in Town, the strategy also contemplates the development of the Trestle Bridge Interpretation Park on Riverside Drive. This area is currently used by residents and tourists to access above the dam, but it is not conducive to high traffic volumes or parking. Access above the dam will be relocated to Station Road and I'll discuss this shortly. The Trestle Bridge Interpretation Park will provide a viewing area of the trestle, which is illuminated every night, and a canoe/kayak launch. Our goal is to provide many options for a diversified adventure of the Exploits River, and some tourists may prefer to launch a kayak rather than a boat. We want to provide this option. This project is also included in the first phase.

Heritage Centre Museum and Riverfront Park

The final development concept, which is long-term and will be pursued after the Fallsview Park, is the Heritage Centre Museum and Riverfront Park. As you will see from the drawing, this development includes a small boat marina, events lawn, etc. The development also includes a boat launch/slipway and this, again supporting the access objective, will be included in phase one.

The Experience

As stated earlier, we also want to focus on improving the tourists' experience. Some of the things we will be working on in the near future include rebranding the Fallsview Festival and aligning it more closely with the Exploits adventure brand. We will also work with the private sector and local guides to develop packages for tourists visiting the community and region. We are taking a facilitator approach to economic development, and our sincere goal is that by providing the infrastructure and creating an atmosphere around the Exploits River that is conducive to tourists, the private sector will utilize these assets to package an adventurous experience that starts in Bishop's Falls!

Phase One Summary

With all this said, I believe it is important to summarize our focus for the first phase that spans 2015-2016. It includes the following:

- The Station Road slipway and parking lot.
- The Fallsview Park boat launch.
- The Trestle Bridge Interpretation Park.

- The Main Street Viewing Area.
- Gateway and directional signage. This involves developing a signage system for the town to ensure tourists know what we offer and where things are located.

The total cost of the first phase is approximately \$1.6 million. Funding applications have been submitted to ACOA and the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. Council has its share of the project already in place through existing funding arrangements.

Closing Remarks

I want to thank you all for attending this very important event for our community. We have long desired to develop the Exploits River and to realize the potential that it offers from a tourism and recreation standpoint. The strategy lays the foundation for that work, and we look forward to a continued productive relationship with government to see the good work finished. Before you leave, I encourage you to take time to look at the concept maps and to ask questions. Again, the strategy can be found on our website at bishopsfalls.ca.

Remember, Bishop's Falls – The Exploits Adventure Starts Here!