



33/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong
香港灣仔告士打道 5 號稅務大樓 33 樓

ACE Paper 7/2013
For advice by circulation

**Report on the 122nd
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

PURPOSE

At the meeting on 29 April 2013, the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee (EIASC) considered the EIA report on “Construction of Cycle Tracks and the Associated Supporting Facilities at Nam Sang Wai, Yuen Long” (hereafter known as the Project) submitted by the project proponent (i.e. the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD)) under section 6(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) (ACE-EIA Paper 1/2013 refers).

ADVICE SOUGHT

2. Members are requested to consider the views of EIASC and advise on the EIA report.

BACKGROUND AND NEED OF THE PROJECT

3. The Project is to construct cycle tracks with associated supporting facilities at Nam Sang Wai to connect with the existing cycle tracks in the area. It will provide a direct linkage between Tin Shui Wai and Nam Sang Wai and form an integral part of the cycle track network spanning from Sai Kung in the east to Tuen Mun in the west.

4. The Project is intended primarily for recreational use and promotion of eco-tourism by providing cycle tracks with easy and safe access. The proposed track alignments will route through the scenic areas in Tin Shui Wai and Nam Sang Wai for

cyclists to enjoy scenic views and appreciate natural features along the cycle tracks.

5. CEDD advises that without this Project, the cycle track network will be disconnected in the Tin Shui Wai and Nam Sang Wai sections. Although cyclists can travel through the area on existing cycle tracks in the urban area of Yuen Long Town, these tracks are sub-standard in terms of design, not logically linked and cannot provide a safe and convenient network of dedicated tracks for cyclists around the Nam Sang Wai area. In addition, the existing cycle track facilities may not be able to cater for the growth of recreational cyclists in future. The increasing number of users has already created conflicts between the bicycles and vehicles, particularly at Nam Sang Wai Road and Yau Pok Road. These potential safety concerns will not be resolved unless systematically designed cycle tracks are in place.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

6. The Project comprises three sections, with Section 1 (S1) stretching from Tin Shui Wai to Shan Pui River and a proposed bridge crossing over Shan Pui River; Section 2 (S2) along Nam Sang Wai Road; and Section 3 (S3) along Yau Pok Road (**Figure 1**). The cycle track network is approximately 9.2 km in length with a minimum width of 3.5m. Along the cycle tracks, three resting stations and one public toilet will be provided. Other ancillary provisions include bicycle parking racks, landscape works, education signage/guidance notes, traffic aids installation and street lightings, etc..

7. In meeting the objective of promoting eco-tourism, the cycle tracks and supporting facilities are designed to incorporate eco-tourism elements. The recommended eco-tourism elements include (i) subdued colour and wooden board panel pavements to match with the natural environment; (ii) signage boards to assist visitors to appreciate the natural environment; and (iii) bicycle racks to allow cyclists to park and enjoy the scenery (**Figure 2**).

8. The proposed cycle tracks, primarily for recreation, partly fall within the “Conservation Area” zones and Deep Bay Buffer Zones, and the proposed bridge crossing over Shan Pui River is over 100m in length between abutments. Accordingly, the Project is classified as a designated project by virtue of items A.8, P.1 and Q.1 of schedule 2 of the EIAO.

CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENTS AND OPTIONS

9. In compliance with the Study Brief requirements, alternative cycle track alignments and options have been considered for avoidance/minimization of impacts on the ecologically sensitive areas. The revised cycle track alignments have taken into account environmental consideration, site constraints and comments received during consultation with conservation interest groups, rural committees, the Yuen Long District Council and various stakeholders. Key alternative alignments and options considered are highlighted below.

Avoidance

10. There have been a number of changes made to the original alignments (**Figure 3**) depicted in the Project Profile for application for an EIA Study Brief. The changes made to the cycle track alignments (**Figure 4**) to avoid causing adverse impact on the environmentally sensitive areas include :

- (a) The proposed bridge crossing over Kam Tin River near the confluence with Shan Pui River, which records high usage by waterbirds, has been discarded. The connection of the cycle track network between Nam Sang Wai Road and Pok Wai Road will make use of the existing cycle track at Hung Mo Kiu (Cycle Tracks S2 & S3);
- (b) The proposed cycle track alignment in the southern part of Nam Sang Wai, where marsh area and fishponds prevail, has been removed to avoid wetland loss (Cycle Track S2);
- (c) The western end of the proposed cycle track along Yau Pok Road has been cut short to avoid encroachment on the sensitive habitats within the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site (Cycle Track S3); and
- (d) The proposed bridge crossing over Shan Pui River near the confluence with Kam Tin River is relocated upstream to avoid sensitive habitat of the winter migratory birds (Cycle Tracks S1 & S2).

Minimization

11. In addition to consideration of alternative alignments to avoid environmental impacts, mitigation measures are also recommended to minimize impacts of the Project, which include :

- (a) The water quality impact arising from construction of the bridge over Shan Pui River will be addressed by undertaking the construction works

in phases. Only one-thirds of the channel will be closed at anytime for construction works and watertight cofferdam will be provided to surround the works area to create a dry working environment;

- (b) Construction works at Nam Sang Wai Road, Yau Pok Road and the section near Fung Lok Wai will be suspended during the winter season (i.e. November to March);
- (c) Refined construction programme for the bridge across Shan Pui River to confine pier construction works in a single dry season and the rest of the construction activities in wet season.
- (d) Quieter plant and movable noise barriers will be used during construction;
- (e) Landscape planting and visual screen boards will be provided along the cycle tracks to minimize the potential visual disturbance to the nearby habitats during operation; and
- (f) The cycle tracks are designed to mainly align alongside the existing carriageway to reduce the loss of natural habitat and avoid filling of fishponds. Where the cycle tracks have to route through fishponds, the loss of wetland habitat is minimized by adoption of retaining structures at pond bunds to support the cycle track.

SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS TO HIGHLIGHT

Ecological Impact

12. The Project largely falls within ecologically sensitive areas. The ecological impact of the Project has been avoided as far as practicable by adoption of alternative cycle track alignments and design as well as the recommended mitigation measures.

13. About 0.21 hectare (ha) of wetland (including pond bund area) will be directly affected by the Project. To address the loss of wetland, the EIA report has recommended at least 1.5 ha of wetland enhancement area as compensation.

Landscape Impact

14. As the cycle tracks are mainly aligned along the existing roads, the vegetation located close to the roads will be affected. The affected trees are largely common landscaping species. A total of about 1,066 trees on site will be retained in situ and approximately 101 trees will be transplanted to new planting areas close to

their current locations. The proposal includes felling of 461 trees and compensatory planting to be provided at a ratio of not less than 1:1 in accordance with the guidelines/criteria of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No. 3/2006.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND AUDIT

15. The EIA report includes an Environmental Monitoring and Audit (EM&A) Manual, which recommends an EM&A programme during both the construction and operation phases of the Project. Key recommended EM&A requirements include (i) noise and water quality monitoring during construction; and (ii) waterbirds monitoring during construction, and wetland enhancement area monitoring during construction and operation.

VIEWS OF THE DIRECTOR AND RELEVANT AUTHORITIES

16. The Director of Environmental Protection (DEP), in conjunction with the relevant authorities, considers the EIA report meeting the requirements of the EIA Study Brief and the Technical Memorandum on EIA Process (TM). Comments from the public and ACE will be taken into account by DEP in deciding whether or not to approve the EIA report under the EIAO

VIEWS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

17. Members noted that the public inspection period of the EIA report was from 6 March 2013 to 4 April 2013. As an administrative arrangement, the 20 sets of public comments received by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) had been circulated to Members for reference at the EIASC meeting on 29 April. Written response of CEDD to Members' questions had also been circulated to Members for information before the meeting.

18. A summary of issues discussed at the meeting is at [Annex](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

19. Having regard to the findings and recommendations of the EIA report

and information provided by CEDD and the consultant team at the meeting, EIASC considered that the following outstanding issues had to be addressed and clarified before Members could consider whether to recommend to the full Council endorsement of the EIA report –

- (i) Assessment of the impact of additional visitors to the area, and the mitigation measures to tackle the impact on the increase of human activities on the ecology of the area;
- (ii) Justification on the need of the proposed bridge crossing at Shan Pui River; and if built, whether the design and size of the bridge could be reviewed taking into account the EVA requirement and other regulations for the cycle track network so as to reduce the potential ecological and visual impacts
- (iii) Demonstration that the proposed compensation area for the loss of wetland habitat as a result of the proposed bridge was the appropriate and only location to be designated for compensation and that the area had been properly treated; and
- (iv) Practicability of taking out the cycle track section at Yau Pok Road from the present project, with consideration on further means to resolve the conflicts between vehicles and cyclists so as to reduce the potential ecological impacts.

20. EIASC recommended the full Council to endorse the questions/concerns at paragraph 19 above and forward the list to DEP for decision on whether to exercise her authority under the EIAO to require CEDD to provide further information having regard to comments received from ACE. If DEP requests CEDD to provide further information, CEDD could take as much time as required to provide the information. The further information from CEDD could be presented before EIASC or ACE for consideration before formal submission to EPD. This would allow sufficient time for both CEDD and ACE/EIASC to study and consider the EIA report on the Project.

EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
May 2013