

## **Nature Conservation Subcommittee**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2006  
at 2:15 pm in Conference Room 4609, 46/F., Revenue Tower**

### **Present:**

Prof. WONG Yuk-shan, B.B.S., J.P. (Chairman)

Prof. HO Kin-chung, B.B.S.

Prof. Paul LAM

Ms Goretti LAU

Dr NG Cho-nam, B.B.S.

Ms Iris TAM, J.P.

Mr. Eric CHAN

Mr. C C LAY

Miss Florence CHAN (Secretary)

Mr. Claude WONG

### **Absent with Apologies:**

Mr. Markus SHAW

### **In Attendance for Agenda Item 3:**

Mr. Edmond LAM                      Senior Wetland Park Officer, AFCD

### **In Attendance for Agenda Items 4:**

Dr P M SO                              Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity),  
AFCD

Mr. SHEK Chung-tong              Conservation Officer (Biodiversity), AFCD

### **In Attendance for Agenda Items 5:**

Dr P M SO                              Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity),  
AFCD

Mr. LEE Wai-hung                  Wetland and Fauna Conservation Officer  
(Ornithology), AFCD

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The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Nature Conservation Subcommittee (Subcommittee) in 2006.

**Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation on Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 1 September 2005**

2. The draft minutes were confirmed without amendment.

**Agenda Item 2 : Matters arising**

3. The Chairman informed Members that the agenda and discussion papers of the last meeting had been uploaded to EPD's website.

4. With reference to para. 18 of the minutes of the last meeting, Mr. C C LAY reported that there were four target sites in country parks for wetland restoration. They were two abandoned wet agricultural fields at Shing Mun Country Park and Sai Kung West Country Park as well as two artificial water ponds at Shing Mun Country Park and Lantau Country Park.

5. With reference to para. 20 of the minutes of the last meeting, Mr. Eric CHAN said that the PowerPoint presentation of the Hong Kong Wetland Park had been uploaded on the web.

**Agenda Item 3 : Progress Report of Hong Kong Wetland Park Project (HKWP) (August 2005 to January 2006)** *(Paper 1/06)*

6. The Chairman invited Mr. Edmond LAM to brief Members on the progress of HKWP. A Member asked why no suitable tenderer for the management of HKWP was identified. Mr. LAY replied that the proposed budgets submitted by tenderers were too high and it would be more economical for AFCD to manage the park. As AFCD would take up the management of HKWP in the coming two years, another Member asked if AFCD would provide income-generating services in HKWP. Mr. LAY said that AFCD would encourage the café operator to provide such services. The Member said the business opportunities of HKWP should be fully exploited. A Member supported the idea of organising income-generating activities in HKWP and emphasised the importance of a business plan. Mr. LAY responded that the

marketing manager would formulate a marketing plan for HKWP. Another Member said that HKWP should be able to generate profit and satisfy tourists' needs at the same time. Mr. LAM said that a dedicated staff would be responsible for the business development of HKWP. Mr. LAY added that AFCD also worked closely with the Hong Kong Tourism Board to attract more tourists to visit the park.

7. One Member said HKWP should be different from a commercially operated company. It should put more emphasis on nature conservation and education matters. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr. LAY said that there was no separate advisory body overseeing the development of HKWP. He said that promoting conservation, education and tourism was the primary focus of HKWP. AFCD would rely on this Subcommittee to tender advice in conservation and education matters. The Tourism Steering Group, under the purview of the Economic Development and Labour Bureau, would provide advice from the business and tourism angle. A Member pointed out the importance of obtaining advice from professionals such as financial experts. The Chairman said AFCD should take up the operation in the long run if the initial operation period ran smoothly. Mr. LAY said that the Government would review the operation of HKWP in two years' time and consider the need of outsourcing. A Member said the management and operation of HKWP might be transferred to the private sector gradually.

8. As no tender submission had been received for the operation of the souvenir shop, Mr. LAY said that the proposed venue might be used for displaying exhibition and selling products relating to nature conservation. A Member suggested selling books published by AFCD and another Member suggested selling crocodile toys to attract tourists.

9. One Member urged that interactive devices in the park should be thoroughly tested and maintained. A Member said the design of the interactive devices had take into account heavy usage and undertook to monitor their performance.

10. The Chairman said that a high-profile opening ceremony was essential. Mainland and international wetland experts as well as the mass media should be invited to the opening ceremony. Conference or workshop might also be organised during the opening period to generate a greater PR impact. Mr. CHAN said the Hong

Kong Tourism Board had already launched overseas promotional activities. Mr. LAM said the opening date of HKWP had been tentative scheduled for May 2006 and AFCD planned to organize an international symposium on odonatology following the opening.

11. The Chairman informed Members that the visit to HKWP would be arranged in April 2006. The Subcommittee would issue invitation letters to all ACE Members. AFCD & Secretariat

**Agenda Item 4 : Survey on Bats** (*Paper 2/06*)

12. The Chairman invited Dr P M SO and Mr. C T SHEK to present the paper. A Member suggested AFCD cooperate with Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and their park management teams to conserve roosting trees for Short-nosed Fruit Bat. Mr. SHEK said AFCD would discuss with LCSD to identify any necessary action, bearing in mind that the species could tolerate human disturbance.

13. One Member asked about the management plan to protect bats and how the plan coincided with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. Mr. SHEK replied that AFCD had identified five rare species and would further examine ways to conserve their roosting habitats. Dr SO added that AFCD planned to collect further information on bat migration by tagging studies. The information collected would be made available for consultants conducting EIAs. In response to a Member's concern, Dr SO said that both food and roosting sites were not limiting factors for most bats in Hong Kong. However, education to villagers was needed to conserve the bats found in abandoned village houses.

14. The Chairman asked if SARS virus was found in bats. Dr SO responded that AFCD had been assisting the University of Hong Kong in collecting mouth and anal swab samples for the surveillance for coronaviruses in the bats of Hong Kong. Similarities were found between the bat and human SARS coronaviruses. A Member asked about the use of mist nets in counting the number of bats in specific sites. Dr SO explained it was a standard survey method to compare the relative abundance of different species in specific sites.

**Agenda Item 5 : Control of House Crow Population** (*Paper 3/06*)

15.        The Chairman invited Dr P M SO and Mr. W H LEE to present the paper. The Chairman asked whether AFCD had considered controlling the population of House Crows by shooting. Mr. LEE explained that shooting might not be an appropriate solution as it might disperse the species to other places in Hong Kong. Another concern was the safety of this measure and the public's acceptance. Dr SO added that House Crow, which was an exotic species, so far had limited impact on local biodiversity. AFCD's approach was to control their growth in population and alleviate any nuisance caused to the general public. A Member said the Government should educate the public the problems caused by House Crow. The Chairman urged the Government to take measures to control the population growth of House Crow before the situation worsened.

**Agenda Item 6 : Date of Next Meeting**

16.        The Chairman said that the Secretariat would inform Members the date of next meeting nearer the time.

**Agenda Item 7 : Any Other Business**

***Mikania***

17.        In response to questions from a Member and the Chairman, Mr. LAY said that the spread of Mikania was not serious in Country Parks and Special Areas as AFCD had actively monitored the situation and removed them either manually or by herbicide. Mikania was more commonly found in disturbed sites such as private abandoned farmland. The Chairman noted the situation and added that cold weather might help impede the growth of Mikania.

***Pilot Nature Conservation Projects***

18.        The Chairman informed Members that all three Pilot Management Agreement (MA) projects had been approved by the Environmental and Conservation Fund Committee and commenced in end 2005.

19. In response to a Member's question, Mr. CHAN said that, owing to the complexity involved in the Public-private partnership (PPP) Pilot Scheme, the time required for vetting the proposals was longer than that for the pilot MA project. Upon completion of the vetting process, the Members would be informed of the evaluation results.

***Prevention of Avian Influenza (AI) Pandemic***

20. The Chairman invited Mr. LAY to brief Members on AFCD's measures against AI. Since 2004, AFCD had been testing droppings and carcasses of migratory bird, mainly in Deep Bay, for H5, all samples were tested negative so far. From October 2005 to 4 February 2006, AFCD also tested 2,380 dead birds that had been collected over the whole territory for H5 surveillance test. As of 6 February 2006, H5N1 viruses were identified in four wild birds and one dead chicken. To reduce the risk of outbreak of AI in HK, the Government had amended the relevant legislation to ban backyard poultry-keeping and the ban would be effective on 13 February 2006. The Chairman and Members noted the latest development.

21. The meeting concluded at 5:05 pm.

**Nature Conservation Subcommittee Secretariat  
April 2006**