

**ACE Nature Conservation Subcommittee
Meeting on 30 November 2012 at 4:30pm
At Conference Room 1523, 15/F, East Wing,
Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong.**

Minutes of Meeting

Present

- Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong

Members

- Mr Hans Michael JEBSEN, BBS
- Mr LAU Che-feng, Edwin, MH
- Miss NG Yuen-ting, Yolanda
- Mr TSANG Kam-lam
- Ms Pansy YAU

Absent with Apologies

- Professor FUNG Tung
- Dr Alfred TAM
- Ms HO Siu-fong, Betty
- Mr Simon WONG
- Dr MAN Chi-sum
- Dr YAU Wing-kwong

In attendance

EPD

- Mr Albert LAM – Deputy Director (2)
- Mr Elvis AU – Assistant Director (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning)
- Miss Sian LI – Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation) (Secretary)

AFCD

- Mr YK CHAN – Assistant Director (Conservation)
- Mr Simon CHAN – Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity)

For Agenda Item 3

Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA)

- Dr YAU Wing-kwong – Chief Executive, TPEA
- Ms Colleen CHIU – Project Manager, TPEA
- Mr Nelson SO – Senior Project Officer, TPEA

1. The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting of the Advisory Council on the Environment Nature Conservation Subcommittee (NCSC).

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 18 October 2011

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2011 was confirmed without any amendment.

Agenda Item 2: Matters arising

3. The Chairman reminded that in the last meeting, Members in-principle agreed to support the Management Agreement (MA) proposal in fishponds in Northwest New Territories, but would like the Administration to provide details of the proposal for Members to consider. The Chairman informed members that subsequent to the last meeting, the NCSC paper on “Nature Conservation Management Agreement Proposal – Wetland Management Programme for Fishponds in Northwest New territories” (Committee Paper NCSC 5/2011) was circulated to Members on 28 October 2011. Members approved the paper and this item was taken to be endorsed by the NCSC. This project had been taken in action since January 2012.

Agenda Item 3: Nature Conservation Management Agreement Proposal – Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest in Tai Po, Hong Kong (2013-2016)
(NCSC Paper 1/2012)

4. The Chairman invited Members to declare potential interest before discussing the Agenda Item 3 which concerned the funding application to the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Committee for a MA Proposal at Fung Yuen from the Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA). No declaration was made by Members.
5. The Chairman informed Members that according to Section 2.5 of the

Guide to Application for Nature Conservation Management Agreement Projects, the ACE NCSC will be consulted on the proposal, and its recommendation will then be submitted to the ECF Committee for endorsement.

6. The Chairman invited Mr. Simon Chan to brief Members on the proposal. Mr. Simon Chan highlighted the keys elements of the proposal as follows:-
 - i. The new MA Proposal (2013-2016) proposed by TPEA involved around \$7.8m and the covered area was about 2 ha. Three new elements were included, i.e. (1) extension of habitat management area of 17% in private land; (2) long-term ecological survey with environmental assessment; (3) the applicant included measures to increase the financial sustainability of the project.
 - ii. Based upon the results of all-round evaluation criteria set for the Application, AFCD and EPD considered the proposed application worth supporting for the benefit of biodiversity and promoting nature conservation. Furthermore, it was essential to maintain the momentum of the conservation efforts made in the previous MA projects.
7. The Chairman invited the representatives from TPEA to join the meeting and present their proposal. The Chairman then invited views from Members.
8. A Member expressed his compliment to the success of Fung Yuen MA project. He agreed that a ceiling on the number of visitors should be set. He enquired how this might be done in the absence of fence and gate. Dr. Yau responded that many local tourist groups in Hong Kong visited Fung Yuen. In general, TPEA would charge an entry fee of \$20 per head, except for the elderly and those who visited during Open Days. Stickers were given to registered visitors during their visit to Fung Yuen as recognition. To prevent trespassing, notices were put up to remind visitors that they had to register with TPEA before entering the site. The TPEA staff would also patrol around the site. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Dr Yau advised that the number of visitors was capped at roughly ten thousand per year through registration of visitors and eco-tours. On

the Chairman's further question about visit arrangement, Dr. Yau advised that the breeding season of butterfly was all year round. For crowd control, there were roughly 4 groups of visitors per day and in the largest event, the Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve Festival, the TPEA managed the crowd well by diverting people with fences and road signs.

9. A Member indicated his support to the project. He enquired if there were any collaboration opportunities with other butterfly reserves nearby in South China; the impact of Mikania, and also whether the 2-heactare site area, which was considered not very large for conservation of butterfly, could be expanded in future. He also opined that the scheme proved that nature conservation only worked with proper management, provision of resources and planning etc. In response, Dr. Yau explained that apart from the TPEA staff, volunteers and schools were also invited to help out with the conservation of Fung Yuen. Dr. Yau and Ms Colleen Chiu advised the meeting that as far as they know, there were some conservation areas in China, such as Hainan Island (海南島), but there were no active butterfly reserves. Nonetheless the TPEA was willing to share its experience with butterfly conservation organisations in South-east Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan and China. In fact, a connection network was established within these regions, in which they would be monitoring each other's butterflies in case they were caught. In future, there could be collaborations on butterfly research, such as to study the migratory routes of butterfly. On the question on Mikania, apart from TPEA's daily efforts, there were volunteers to help with the removal of Mikania and other weeds in Fung Yuen. Dr. Yau also informed Members that under the new project, most of the private land in the Fung Yuen would be under management. The TPEA would study other locations in Hong Kong (e.g. Tung Chung, Hoi Ha) as possible sites for building more conservation areas for butterflies.
10. A Member enquired if the nearby construction site, which was going to build high blocks of residential buildings, would bring any negative impact to species and ecosystem of Fung Yuen. He also enquired on the cost and location of the newly rented land. Ms. Colleen Chiu explained that due to the development, some vegetation has been removed, leading to a reduction in the habitat area for butterflies. Thus, the newly rented area would be further up the Fung

Yuen Valley to avoid any potential impacts of the development on the Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve. Dr. Yau supplemented that it would be important for us to safeguard this butterfly haven under the threat of development and human disturbance. The Chairman opined that this would be a good opportunity to study and conduct surveys on the impact of high-rise developments on butterfly and the ecosystem. Survey results could be useful reference to future planning in Hong Kong. A Member concurred and supplemented that the effect on plant growth should also be studied as plants provided food to the butterflies. Dr. Yau informed Members that the TPEA would conduct surveys on sunlight, wind, humidity, as well as night surveys. It would keep monitoring the impact of the residential development on FY Valley. Mr. Elvis Au highlighted to Members that one of the key elements in the current application was to enhance the monitoring programme. Regarding the newly-rented private land, Ms. Colleen Chiu informed Members that it was near an uphill side, but still within the SSSI area. The rent was more or less the same as other land in previous MAs as the landowners would like to conserve the site and to see more butterflies flying around rather than high-rise buildings. The increase of rental cost was mainly caused by the enlarged area of private land to be managed.

11. A Member enquired if there would be any community engagement or education programme targeted for the residents of the residential development in coming years. Dr. Yau responded that the TPEA had previous discussions with the developer and would continue to liaise with them on education programme to residents about conservation of butterfly so as to minimize any environmentally-incompatible behaviours.
12. A Member enquired about whether the TPEA would grow plants outside Fung Yuen Valley so as to attract butterflies. Dr. Yau said that TPEA has done a lot to enlarge plantation area to attract butterflies. For other part of Hong Kong, TPEA would encourage and assist other organisations and schools in conserving butterflies.
13. Upon the Chairman's enquiry on the use of the expanded site area from previous MAs, Dr. Yau responded that TPEA had cooperated with schools and institutes on the management of the expanded area, including the carrying out of fire control measures and weed removal work.

14. The Chairman commented that the heritage of nearby villages and Fung Shui woods should also be preserved and promoted to the public. Dr. Yau welcomed this suggestion and advised the meeting that cultural tours were organised during the Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve Festival.
15. Upon the Chairman's enquiry, Dr. Yau and Miss Colleen Chiu pointed out that TPEA had faced the problem of high turnover rate. The creation of a new post of Assistant Project Manager and enhanced salary would provide promotion opportunities in order to retain talents.
16. Noting that Members did not have further questions, the Chairman invited representatives of the TPEA to leave the meeting.
17. The Chairman concluded that the meeting unanimously gave support to the MA application. The meeting advised TPEA to conduct studies in particular on the potential ecological impacts to Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve due to the nearby high-rise residential development. The meeting also suggested TPEA to consider thinking ahead of ways to engage future residents of the nearby development, with an aim to raise their awareness on the protection of butterflies at Fung Yuen area.
18. The Chairman inquired about the sharing of Fung Yuen's MA experience with other NGOs who might be interested in carrying out MA programmes. Mr. Simon Chan replied that sharing session had been held to promote MA last year. The Chairman suggested the Administration to carry out similar event in the future.

Agenda Item 4: Any Other Business

19. A Member enquired about the possibility of carrying out MA in Sha Lo Tung. Mr. YK Chan and Mr Elvis Au replied that for any MA to be implemented, consent from landowner would be necessary. It was noted that the landowner was pursuing a project under the Public-Private Partnership scheme.

20. The Chairman concluded the meeting by informing Members that the meeting was the last meeting of the current ACE term, and thanking Members for their contributions in the previous two years where various nature conservation matters, including different MA projects, were discussed. .

**Secretariat
Nature Conservation Subcommittee,
Advisory Council on the Environment
November 2012**