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For discussion on 22 September 2017

Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2021)
Community Involvement Programmes

PURPOSE

This paper aims to brief Members and seek their comments on the community involvement programmes to be carried out in 2017/18, under the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) 2016-2021.

BACKGROUND

2. The Government launched the first city-level BSAP for Hong Kong in December 2016. The BSAP set out a strategy and an action plan comprising 67 specific actions to guide biodiversity conservation in Hong Kong for the next five years. One of the action areas of the BSAP is on promoting community involvement (Area 4) so as to create and foster a biodiversity-friendly momentum in the community.

3. The Government recognises that the promotion of community involvement is a long term and collaborative process. In this regard, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will continue to collaborate with various partners including other Government bureaux/departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), tertiary institutes and other stakeholders to deliver programmes and activities that can raise people's awareness about biodiversity and instil a sense of stewardship of biodiversity in the community.

4. AFCD has already kick-started a number of community involvement programmes, including the Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival and the Subventions for Biodiversity Education. In 2016, the Environment Bureau, AFCD and partners from different sectors jointly organised Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival 2016, which offered over 130 biodiversity education programmes to the general public. Meanwhile, the subvention programme supported 20 projects in 2016 and provided over \$1 million funding to local non-profit making organisations, for conducting educational programmes that promoted biodiversity. These programmes spearheaded the community involvement initiative under the BSAP. Building upon these programmes, AFCD will continue to advance community involvement through various programmes in 2017/18 and beyond.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMMES

5. We have planned to conduct a variety of community involvement programmes that aim to connect people with nature, and encourage their involvement in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. An overview of the community involvement programmes planned for 2017/18 is provided below. Details of the programmes are given in **Annex**.

- (a) Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival 2017 – This annual festival will be held from October to December 2017. This year the festival will feature a nature art exhibition and a series of biodiversity education activities to be organised by partner organisations to encourage the general public to explore and learn about biodiversity;
- (b) Biodiversity Education Programmes – AFCD will organise a wide range of publicity events and education programmes on biodiversity, especially marine and wetland biodiversity, in order to raise participants' awareness and knowledge about local biodiversity through hands-on experience;
- (c) Citizen Science Programme at Urban Parks – AFCD will launch a new initiative to promote awareness and community involvement through citizen science programmes. By training members of the public to be citizen scientists, the programmes encourage them to learn more about the rich urban biodiversity around them. The citizen scientists will then assist in collecting biodiversity data at urban parks in Hong Kong;

- (d) Funding Support – The Government will, through providing funding support, encourage NGOs to conduct education and community action programmes that promote biodiversity and enhance the environmental awareness of the general public. Sources of funding include the Environment and Conservation Fund and AFCD’s Subventions for Biodiversity Education; and
- (e) Baseline Knowledge and Awareness Survey – A survey will be conducted by AFCD to obtain baseline information regarding the awareness and knowledge of the general public and relevant stakeholder groups about the biodiversity of Hong Kong. The result obtained will be used to monitor and review the effectiveness of BSAP over the next few years.

ADVICE SOUGHT

6. Members are invited to comment on the community involvement programmes listed above.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
August 2017

Community Involvement Programmes under BSAP

(a) Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival 2017

The Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival, first launched in 2015, is becoming an annual flagship event on biodiversity education. The Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival 2017 will be held from October to December 2017 to encourage the public to explore and learn more about local biodiversity. As in the previous years, AFCD will organise the festival jointly with various partner organisations, including NGOs, tertiary institutes, Government bureaux/departments, and other stakeholder groups. AFCD will create a thematic website as a platform to promote the wide range of education programmes to be offered to the general public by our partner organisations. Programmes including ecotours, workshops, training and ecological surveys will be conducted by the partner organisations.

A highlight of the festival this year is a public exhibition on nature art, to be organised by AFCD in various venues in the city from October to November 2017. Through artistic media including artwork, photos and poems that are inspired by local biodiversity, the exhibition aims to present the beauty of nature and biodiversity in a refreshing way, so as to inspire appreciation by the general public. This exhibition will be installed in a relaxed and inspiring setting that facilitates the appreciation of biodiversity, nurtures spiritual connection with nature, and induces behavioural changes by city dwellers.

(b) Biodiversity Education Programmes

Marine biodiversity education programmes

In order to raise public awareness on local marine biodiversity and conservation, AFCD will be organising a series of publicity and education activities under the “Ting Kok Coastal Conservation Plan” (Ting Kok+) in 2017, including ecotours, clean-up activities, fishermen culture exploration, and teachers’ workshops.

AFCD is also working with the Education University of Hong Kong to train and coordinate young speakers to deliver talks to local schools to promote

marine biodiversity and conservation through a service-based learning programme and a train-the-trainers programme. In addition, AFCD and Hong Kong Underwater Association will co-organise Hong Kong Underwater Photo and Video Competition 2017 to promote the beauty of our underwater world.

In addition, a roving exhibition on “Hong Kong Marine Biodiversity” at shopping malls in Ma On Shan, Sheung Shui, Ap Lei Chau, Tuen Mun and Tseung Kwan O is being organised by AFCD from June to October 2017, to boost public interest towards marine biodiversity. Handicraft workshops and seminars about marine life will be featured at each exhibition venue, followed by a coastal clean-up activity and coastal ecotour after each exhibition.

Biodiversity education programmes at the Hong Kong Wetland Park

Biodiversity education and publicity programmes are essential in raising public awareness and understanding of wetland biodiversity, especially among the youth and families. Therefore, the Hong Kong Wetland Park will partner with different organisations to organise events to showcase wetland biodiversity and encourage learning through participation. Education programmes that allow participants to gain hands-on experience with wetland biodiversity conservation, including the 17th Inter-school Bird Race and Family Farming Experience Programme, will also be arranged.

(c) Citizen Science Programme at Urban Parks

Under the BSAP (Specific Action 20b), the Government will promote awareness and community involvement through citizen science monitoring programmes. A citizen science programme is an effective way of directly involving citizens in conserving local biodiversity. AFCD will commission an NGO to organise a citizen science programme at various urban parks around Hong Kong. The project aims to raise local communities' awareness on the rich urban biodiversity around them, and enhance their knowledge on biodiversity. This programme could help local communities cultivate a sense of appreciation and ownership of their surrounding environment, through participating as citizen scientists, learning about biodiversity in the urban environment and assisting in collecting biodiversity data.

The project consists of three major components. The first part involves recruiting and training leaders who are interested in learning about urban

biodiversity and are passionate about environmental education. The second part involves the leaders training and guiding citizen scientists to conduct biodiversity surveys at urban parks. The surveys will be carried out at different times of the year to capture seasonal biodiversity changes. The last part involves the NGO compiling, analysing and disseminating the biodiversity data collected by citizen scientists. To strengthen community involvement and to nurture local ownership, the NGO is required to collaborate with local community organisations when setting up the project at various urban parks. The NGO is also required to collaborate with experts for the relevant taxa groups, who would assist in the training and verify the data collected.

It is anticipated that the programme would involve around 40-50 leaders and up to 900 citizen scientists, as well as many other people who would attend the various public events under the programme. The programme is expected to be commissioned in late 2017/early 2018, and would last for around 18 months.

(d) Funding Support through Environment and Conservation Fund & Subventions for Biodiversity Education

Under the BSAP (Specific Action 20f), the Government will provide funding support to encourage local non-profit making organisations to organise relevant education and community involvement programmes.

Environmental Education & Community Action (EE&CA) Projects of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF)

The ECF was set up by the Government in 1994 to provide funding support to local non-profit making organisations for projects and activities in relation to environmental and conservation matters, including EE&CA projects. More specifically, the objectives of EE&CA projects are to enhance the environmental awareness and knowledge of the participants, mobilise community actions and induce behavioural changes to address the environmental problems. In 2017, three special themes, namely clean shorelines, climate change, and biodiversity, were introduced for the EE&CA projects. A funding of \$5,000,000 has been set aside exclusively for projects related to biodiversity.

Subventions for Biodiversity Education

The subvention scheme was set up by AFCD in 2016 to encourage NGOs to conduct education programmes that promote biodiversity to the general public, in order to foster a sense of appreciation of nature. In 2017, AFCD will provide funding (of no more than \$150,000 for each organisation) to NGOs for organising biodiversity education programmes during July to December 2017. For the subvention programme in 2017, NGOs were invited to submit proposals on one of the three themes: citizen science, teacher's capacity building and urban biodiversity. Application for subventions opened in April 2017, and subventions were awarded in June 2017 to a total of 14 NGOs which proposed a wide variety of education programmes, including field studies, ecotours, rapid ecological surveys, seminars and development of teaching kits on biodiversity.

(e) Baseline Knowledge and Awareness Survey

As outlined in the BSAP (Specific Action 20d), AFCD will carry out a large-scale baseline survey in 2017, to gauge the level of awareness and knowledge of the general public and relevant stakeholder groups towards biodiversity in Hong Kong. The study would include a telephone survey targeting the general public, an online survey targeting relevant stakeholder groups, as well as focus group discussions to gain in-depth understanding of the perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of target groups on biodiversity. Data collected from the survey will help the Government monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of various BSAP initiatives over the next few years. The results obtained from the baseline survey will also provide useful reference in setting targets and goals, as well as guiding the planning of public awareness and education programmes in the future.