

**Advisory Council on the Environment
Nature Conservation Subcommittee**

Applications under Nature Conservation Management Agreement Scheme

Purpose

Two funding applications were received under the Nature Conservation Management Agreement (MA) Scheme in October 2015. This paper seeks Members' advice on the evaluation of the applications, which was carried out using the marking scheme endorsed by this committee at the meeting on 22 October 2014 (*Committee Paper NCSC 1/2014*).

Background

2. Under the MA scheme, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may apply for funding from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) for entering into management agreements with the landowners or tenants in order to enhance conservation of the priority sites identified for enhanced conservation under the New Nature Conservation Policy, country park enclaves or private land in country parks.

3. The Guide to Application for MA projects (latest version in August 2015) specifies that the MA scheme will be publicised regularly at a fixed time every year through open invitation which will be announced on the ECF website. Also, all applications received will be first evaluated by an Assessment Panel consisting of members from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Environmental Protection Department. The recommendations will then be submitted to the Nature Conservation Subcommittee (NSCS) under the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) for consultation and then forwarded to the ECF Committee for endorsement.

4. This year, the invitation for MA applications was open from 9 September to 20 October 2015. Two MA applications were received by the deadline. One funding application was submitted by the Environmental Association Limited (EA) for butterfly conservation in the Fung Yuen Priority Site while the second one was submitted by the Sai Kung District Community Centre (SKDCC) for rehabilitation of the Sai Wan area. The main features of the MA applications are summarised in paragraphs 6, 9 and 10 below and in **Annex I**. The Assessment Panel held two

meetings on 17 and 26 November 2015 to assess the two applications respectively. The merits of individual applications were assessed in accordance with the endorsed marking scheme. The results of assessment by the Assessment Panel are summarised in paragraphs 7 and 11 below, and detailed in **Annex II**.

Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest in Tai Po, Hong Kong (2016-2019)
[Project duration: 1 February 2016 to 31 January 2019 (36 months)]

5. With the funding support from the ECF, the EA has conducted MA projects in the Fung Yuen Priority Site since late 2005. The current three-year MA project will end on 31 January 2016. The EA submitted an application to seek ECF's support to continue the project (**Annex III**). The applicant was subsequently requested to provide clarification / further information on details of the proposal, and their response was received on 25 November 2015 (**Annex IV**).

6. The proposed project will last for 36 months, from 1 February 2016 to 31 January 2019. The goal of the current application is to maintain the impetus of the previous MA projects and to further enhance the ecological value of the ecologically important private land at Fung Yuen. Under the proposed project, about 1.9 ha of land would be under active management and conservation including site stewardship, planting of butterfly larval food and nectar plants, conducting monitoring and surveys, as well as removal of invasive weeds. Education programmes including various volunteer programmes and workshops on nature conservation, monthly and annual butterfly festivals for the general public, as well as outreach booths for schools, will be carried out. The proposed budget for this project is \$9,077,955.71.

7. In general, the Assessment Panel considered that the application worth supporting, in view of the benefits that the proposed project would bring to the conservation of butterflies and in raising public awareness on nature conservation. The track record of the applicant in managing the previous MA projects was also considered. Marking for individual criterion and specific considerations were detailed in **Annex II**. Upon considering their responses on the proposed project and budget items, the Assessment Panel considered the clarifications mostly satisfactory, with only minor revisions of budget to be recommended to the ECF Committee.

Rehabilitation Project for Sai Wan Area

[Project duration: 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019 (36 months)]

8. The Sai Wan enclave was designated as part of the Sai Kung East Country Park in December 2013 with a view to improving the management of the area, enhancing the overall conservation and landscape value of the area, and increasing its enjoyment and amenity. During the consultation for country park designation, there had already been discussion on seeking funding support from the ECF, for implementing a MA project in Sai Wan in order to effectively manage the private land and help villagers maintain a living, while conserving the historic, cultural and ecological values of Sai Wan. In 2014, the Country Parks Committee of the Country and Marine Parks Board formed the Working Group on Sai Wan Management to advise on matters relating to the management of Sai Wan. The Working Group acknowledged the merit of cooperation between the landowners and relevant NGOs to implement a conservation project, and has taken forward the idea of MA Scheme to promote eco-tourism at Sai Wan through local engagement.

9. In this connection, the SKDCC assisted by the Heung Yee Kuk submitted a MA application titled “Rehabilitation Project for Sai Wan Area” for 36 months from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019 (**Annex V**). The SKDCC was requested to provide clarifications / further information on details of the application and the proposed budget, and their responses were received on 23 November and 3 December 2015 respectively (**Annex VI**).

10. The proposal aims at revitalising Sai Wan through the concerted efforts of relevant stakeholders and the rural community to conserve the ecological habitats, showcase the cultural uniqueness of the area and improve the livelihood of local villagers. An area of abandoned agricultural land (0.46ha) is proposed to be dedicated for organic farming, preservation of seasonal wetland and enhancement of habitats for butterflies. Other active habitat management works will include removal of invasive plant species, planting of mangrove and collection of litter. Education programmes form an important part of the project. Village houses are proposed to be renovated to serve as information centre and workshops. Local villagers will be engaged and take part in workshops and guided tours for students and the public. The proposed budget for this project is \$11,630,780.

11. While statutory control measures will avoid incompatible developments in country park enclaves, there is a need to provide incentive to encourage conservation

of private land in country parks as well as that in country park enclaves. The MA scheme has proven to be a successful modus operandi to bring NGO and landowners together to conserve private land since its operation in 2005. In this regard, the Government proposed in 2011 to extend the current scope of the MA scheme to cover private land in country park enclaves and private land. When ACE-NCSC and the ECF Committee endorsed the proposal for the extension of MA scheme to cover private land in country park enclaves and that in country parks in 2011, it was considered that the proposal would incentivise private land owners of the country parks or country park enclaves to undertake conservation activities that are compatible with the land uses and country park objectives, and conducive to enhancing the overall conservation and scenic values of the country parks (*Committee Paper NCSC Paper 02/2011 and ECF Paper 14/2011-12*). In view of the benefits that the proposal would bring to the enhancement of the overall conservation and scenic values of Sai Wan through cooperation between an NGO and local landowners, the Assessment Panel considered the project worthy of support. The Assessment Panel considered the clarifications on the proposed project and budget satisfactory but it had reservation on the budget as it exceeds the funding cap of \$10 million. Revision to the proposed budget without compromising major elements of the project would be proposed to the ECF Committee.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel, with a view of putting forth the recommended applications to the ECF Committee for consideration on funding support.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Environmental Protection Department

December 2015

Annex I

**Summaries of Applications under
Nature Conservation Management Agreement Scheme**

This year, the invitation for MA applications was open from 9 September to 20 October 2015. Two applications were received and summarised in **Tables 1** and **2** below:

Table 1 Summary of the MA application in Fung Yuen

Project Title	Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Tai Po, Hong Kong (2016-2019)
Site involved	Fung Yuen Priority Site
Size of Proposed Management Areas	About 1.9 ha
Proponent	The Environmental Association Limited (EA)
Project Description	This project aims at conserving and enhancing the natural habitats of butterflies in the Fung Yuen valley SSSI through management agreements with local landowners.
Key Conservation Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To reduce and minimise environmentally incompatible behavior on private land in Fung Yuen;- To enhance and maintain the habitat quality of private land in Fung Yuen;- To provide a refuge area for butterfly foraging, inhabiting, and breeding, so as to conserve and enhance the butterfly diversity;- To train volunteers in conservation programmes;- To provide up-to-date ecological information and formulate strategies for long-term management in the area; and- To promote nature conservation awareness of the general public.
Duration	36 months (from 1 February 2015 – 31 January 2019)
Key Project Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Site safeguard and ecological monitoring programme- Habitat management including removal of invasive weeds

	<p>and planting of butterfly larval food plants and nectar plants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Species conservation programme - Education and publicity programmes including monthly and annual Butterfly Festivals, outreach booths, conservation workshops etc.
Key Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - five half-yearly progress reports and a completion report - three annual bird monitoring reports - one report on butterfly food plant survey - 12 short reports, three interim reports and one final report on environmental monitoring - 36 monthly reports, three interim reports and one final report on the butterfly survey programme - publications: leaflets of Fung Yuen (20,000 copies) and a book on Fung Yuen (2,000 copies)
Amount of Fund applied for	<p>Funding applied: \$9,077,955.71 (\$3,025,985.24 per year)</p> <p>(Note: Expected income generated from daily visitor conservation fee (\$ 150,000) will be ploughed back into the project account and the alternative funding sought (\$250,000) will be defrayed against the actual expenditure before calculating the amount to be reimbursed as the final payment. Hence the expected net funding from the ECF will be \$8,677,955.71)</p>

Table 2 Summary of the MA application in Sai Wan

Project Title	Rehabilitation Project for Sai Wan Area
Site involved	Sai Wan country park enclave
Size of Proposed Management Areas	About 0.46 ha
Proponent	Sai Kung District Community Centre (SKDCC)
Project Description	The project aims to revitalise Sai Wan through the concerted efforts of relevant stakeholders and the rural community to conserve the ecological habitats, showcase the cultural uniqueness of the area and improve the livelihood of the local villagers.

Key Conservation Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To rehabilitate abandoned agricultural land for wildlife use;- To preserve and protect key habitats and associated flora and fauna;- To enhance habitat for butterflies;- To engage local villagers in conservation and site management works; and- To promulgate nature conservation, revitalisation of cultural heritage and eco-tourism
Key Project Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To rehabilitate abandoned agricultural land for organic farming to support wildlife use;- To preserve and manage the existing seasonal wetland;- To enhance habitats specifically for butterflies;- To actively manage key habitats including removal of invasive plant species, planting of mangroves and litter collection;- To renovate a historical well and village houses to serve as information centre and workshops; and- To carry out education programmes including workshops and guided tours targeted to students and general public, as well as other publicity programmes.
Key Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provision of an information centre and two workshops at Sai Wan;- Various workshops and guided tours throughout the year;- Special publicity activities (1-2 times a year for each activity); and- A dedicated homepage for publicity and enrollment.
Duration	36 months from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019
Amount of Fund applied for	Funding applied: \$11,630,780 (Note: Expected income generated from various workshops, guided tours and special publicity activities (\$625,800) will be ploughed back into the project account. Hence the expected net funding from the ECF will be \$11,004,980. However, the proposed budget exceeds the funding cap of \$10 million for each project lasting for a period of three years as specified in the Guide to Application. Revision to the proposed budget without compromising major elements of the project would be

	proposed to the ECF Committee.)
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