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ACE-NC Paper 2/2018
For discussion on 30 April 2018

Overview of Nature Conservation Management Agreement Projects

PURPOSE

This paper provides background information on the Nature Conservation Management Agreement (MA) projects under the New Nature Conservation Policy.

BACKGROUND

2. At its meeting on 15 December 2017, the Nature Conservation Subcommittee of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE-NCSC) was briefed on the establishment of a Countryside Conservation Office (CCO) and consulted on the application for a MA project at Sha Lo Tung. It was agreed at the meeting that the Government would prepare some background information on the MA projects for Members' information.

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT SCHEME

3. The MA Scheme was promulgated under the New Nature Conservation Policy in 2004 to enhance the conservation of ecologically important sites under private ownership, i.e. the 12 priority sites for enhanced conservation. Under the MA scheme, non-governmental organisations may apply for funding from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) to provide landowners or tenants with financial incentives in exchange for management rights over their land or their cooperation in enhancing conservation of the sites concerned.

4. Following the completion of a review in 2011, the scope of the MA Scheme has been expanded to cover country park enclaves and private land within country parks, so as to incentivise the relevant landowners to undertake conservation activities that would be conducive to enhancing the overall conservation and scenic values of the country parks. In addition, in recognition that most of the activities carried out under the MA Scheme are for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural environment rather than generating income, the requirement for the projects to achieve self-sufficiency in the long run has been relaxed. Nonetheless, all applications will still be supported on a time-limited basis (generally not longer than three years), and each application, including one seeking to renew an existing project, has to be assessed on its own merits (**Annex A**).

5. The framework for handling MA applications was enhanced in 2012 to improve the transparency and accountability of the MA vetting mechanism, and additional requirements and parameters were included to enhance the assessment of project effectiveness. Meanwhile, to observe the principle of accountability for the use of public funds, in particular in relation to the potential public interest over projects receiving sizable funding support, a funding cap of \$10 million for each project lasting for a period of not more than three years has since been imposed (**Annex B**).

6. As stated in the ACE-NC Paper 3/2017, a CCO will be established to co-ordinate conservation projects that would promote sustainable development of remote countryside. The CCO may, upon establishment, consider adopting an approach similar to that of the MA scheme for the long-term conservation and revitalisation of certain remote countryside. To facilitate a better overall co-ordination and minimize duplication of resources, the Government will also examine whether or not the MA Scheme (inclusive of some of its funded projects that are ongoing) should be funded by the CCO instead of the ECF in future.

THE CURRENT MA PROJECTS

7. Since the launch of the MA Scheme in 2004, the ECF has approved a total funding of over \$135 million for implementing seven MA projects at seven sites, namely Fung Yuen; Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung; Ramsar Site; Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar Site; Sai Wan; Lai Chi Wo and Sha Lo Tung. The MA projects at Fung Yuen and Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung have been implemented since 2005, whereas those at Ramsar Site and Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar Site have been carried out since 2012. The projects at Sai Wan and Lai Chi Wo were

launched in 2017, and a new project at Sha Lo Tung commenced in April 2018. Details of the approved funding of the projects are provided at **Annex C**.

8. The performance of the MA projects is monitored regularly through their achievements in nature conservation in terms of the diversity and abundance of target species recorded, and achievements in raising public awareness in terms of the number of education programmes organised and participants engaged.

9. Since their implementation, the MA projects have been producing encouraging results in enhancing the biodiversity of the sites concerned. The MA projects also effectively enhanced the public and local community's knowledge and awareness of nature conservation, through organization of various activities including eco-tours, workshops, talks, exhibitions, publicity events and volunteer schemes. Details of the MA projects and their achievements are provided at **Annex D**.

ADVICE SOUGHT

10. Members are invited to note the background information of the MA projects.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Environmental Protection Department
April 2018

Approved Funding of MA Projects

MA Project	Project Period	Funding
Fung Yuen MA Project (by Environmental Association)	1/11/2005 – 31/1/2008	\$1.7M
	1/2/2008 – 31/1/2010	\$2.8M
	1/2/2010 – 31/1/2013	\$5.0M
	1/2/2013 – 31/1/2016	\$7.8M
	1/2/2016 – 31/1/2019	\$8.9M
	Total	\$26.3M
Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung MA Project		
¹ by Conservancy Association	1/11/2005 – 31/3/2008 ¹	\$1.5M
	² by Hong Kong Bird Watching Society)	1/12/2005 – 15/3/2008 ²
1/3/2008 – 28/2/2010 ¹		\$4.0M
1/3/2010 – 29/2/2012 ¹		\$4.6M
1/3/2012 – 28/2/2015 ¹		\$9.8M
1/3/2015 – 31/8/2017 ¹		\$9.7M
	1/9/2017 – 31/8/2019 ¹	\$8.4M
	Total	\$39.3M
Fishpond MA Projects at Ramsar Site and Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar Site (by Hong Kong Bird Watching Society)	1/1/2012 – 28/2/2013	\$5.0M
	1/3/2013 – 28/2/2015	\$4.9M + \$6.6M
	1/3/2015 – 28/2/2017	\$6.6M + \$6.6M
	1/3/2017 – 28/2/2019	\$7.0M + \$7.7M
	Total	\$44.5M
Sai Wan MA Project (by Sai Kung District Community Centre)	15/2/2017 – 14/2/2020	\$9.5M
Lai Chi Wo MA Project (by Hong Kong Countryside Foundation)	1/10/2017 – 30/9/2019	\$7.4M
Sha Lo Tung MA Project (by Green Power)	1/4/2018 – 31/3/2020	\$8.5M

Achievements of MA Projects

	Fung Yuen MA Project	Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung MA Project	Fishpond MA Projects at Ramsar Site and Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar Site	Sai Wan MA Project	Lai Chi Wo MA Project	Sha Lo Tung MA Project
Objective	To conserve and enhance the natural habitat of butterflies through management agreements with landowners of private land that are situated at Fung Yuen Valley.	To conserve and enhance the biodiversity at the Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung Priority Site through management agreements with local farmers and landowners.	To enhance the conservation value of commercial fishponds through a partnership programme with the local fishpond operators.	To conserve the ecological habitats, showcase the cultural uniqueness of the area and enhance the amenity of country park areas through engagement of local villagers and public.	To rehabilitate Lai Chi Wo enclave and enhance its conservation and ecological values through collaboration with the local rural community.	To restore and enhance the ecological value of Sha Lo Tung, through collaboration with the local rural community.
Area of land/ fishpond engaged	Around 1.9 ha	Around 18.3 ha	Around 660 ha of fishponds	Around 0.5 ha	Around 5 ha	Around 11.5 ha

	Fung Yuen MA Project	Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung MA Project	Fishpond MA Projects at Ramsar Site and Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar Site	Sai Wan MA Project	Lai Chi Wo MA Project	Sha Lo Tung MA Project
Achievement in nature conservation	Number of butterfly species recorded increased from 162 in 2005 (i.e. beginning of the first MA project) to 213 in 2017 (c. 30% increase; accounting for over 80% of the local butterfly species).	Number of bird species recorded increased from 221 in 2005 (i.e. beginning of the first MA project) to 310 in 2017 (c. 40% increase; accounting for over 50% of the local bird species). Some threatened bird species such as Yellow-breasted Bunting recorded.	Waterbird abundance in fishponds significantly higher (20-fold on average) as a result of the drain down of fishponds. Some threatened bird species such as Black-faced Spoonbills recorded.	Project just commenced in 2017, and has yet to provide its first report on conservation achievements	Project just commenced in 2017, and has yet to provide its first report on conservation achievements	Project just commenced in April 2018, and has yet to provide its first report on conservation achievements