

**Confirmed Minutes of the 229th Meeting
of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE)
held on 5 February 2018 at 2:30 pm**

Present:

Mr Stanley WONG, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Prof Nora TAM, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Cary CHAN, JP
Dr Billy HAU
Dr HUNG Wing-tat, MH
Ms Julia LAU
Dr Michael LAU
Ir Prof Irene LO, JP
Ir MA Lee-tak, SBS
Prof John NG
Ir Michelle TANG
Mr Simon WONG, JP
Mr Luther WONG, JP
Prof WONG Sze-chun, BBS, JP
Prof Jonathan WONG, MH, JP
Mrs Alice CHEUNG, JP (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Prof LAU Chi-pang, JP
Prof Albert LEE
Mr Andrew LEE
Prof Kenneth LEUNG
Mr Anthony LOCK
Dr Eric TSANG
Ir Conrad WONG, BBS, JP

In Attendance:

Mr Donald TONG, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Environment/Director of Environmental Protection
Ms Lily YAM	Assistant Director of Planning/Technical Services, Planning Department (PlanD)
Mr Simon CHAN	Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Miss Heidi LIU	Principal Information Officer, Environmental Protection Department (EPD)

Ms Becky LAM

Miss Dora CHU

Miss Apple LEUNG

Chief Executive Officer (CBD), EPD

Executive Officer (CBD) 1, EPD

Executive Officer (CBD) 2, EPD

In Attendance for Item 3:

Dr Samuel CHUI

Assistant Director (Nature Conservation & Infrastructure Planning), EPD

Dr Jackie YIP

Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity), AFCD

Dr Flora MOK

Conservation Officer (Biodiversity), AFCD

Action

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting. Apologies of absence had been received from Prof Lau Chi-pang, Prof Albert Lee, Mr Andrew Lee, Prof Kenneth Leung, Mr Anthony Lock, Dr Eric Tsang and Ir Conrad Wong.

Item 1 : Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 228th meeting held on 4 December 2017 (Closed-door session)

2. The draft minutes were confirmed without amendment.

Item 2 : Matters arising (Closed-door session)

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Item 3 : Progress Implementation of Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021

(ACE Papers 1/2018 and 2/2018)

4. The Chairman informed Members that *ACE Paper 1/2018* updated Members on the latest progress of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) 2016-2021, and a background note on the subject matter (i.e. *ACE Paper 2/2018*) prepared by the secretariat had been circulated to Members for reference before the meeting.

5. Upon the invitation of the Chairman, a Member declared that he was the Director, Wetlands Conservation of the World Wide Fund for Nature – Hong Kong which was commissioned to service contracts by the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to enhance the habitat management work in the Mai Po Nature Reserve. The meeting agreed that the Member could continue to

participate in the meeting and the discussion of this item.

[The presentation team joined the meeting at this juncture.]

Presentation cum Question-and-Answer Session (Open session)

6. With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, Dr Jackie Yip updated Members on the major achievements under the four key action areas of BSAP since its launch on 21 December 2016. With reference to the Annex of *ACE Paper 1/2018*, she briefed Members on the progress of implementation of various initiatives by different Government bureaux and departments (B/Ds) and external stakeholders.

Progress update on specific actions under BSAP

7. A Member referred to the Annex of *ACE Paper 1/2018* and suggested that a percentage of the targeted achievement for each specific action should be included. Dr Jackie Yip noted the suggestion and undertook to explore ways to better report the progress of specific actions. She further said that the Inter-departmental Working Group on BSAP (IWGB) would review the progress at its regular meeting to monitor the BSAP implementation programme.

8. In response to a Member's enquiry on the two objection cases received by AFCD against the draft map of the proposed Southwest Lantau Marine Park during the public inspection period under Action 2(a), Dr Jackie Yip explained that the objections were raised by local villagers who were concerned about the potential negative impact of the designation of the new marine park on their fishery activities along the shore. The objections were rejected by the Country and Marine Parks Board after the hearing conducted on 20 October 2017.

9. In response to a Member's enquiry on the target completion year for the provision of sewerage system to unsewered village areas under Action 3(c), Dr Jackie Yip said that the sewerage construction works were completed for 47% of the targeted unsewered villages/areas, and the remaining sewerage construction works were expected to be completed in 2021.

10. In response to a Member's question on the joint enforcement actions organized by the inter-departmental Wildlife Crime Task Force (the Task Force) under Action 5(b), Mr Simon Chan explained that joint operations had been conducted by AFCD and the Customs and Excise Department in combatting smuggling of shark fin's products and ivory, and by AFCD and Hong Kong Police

Force against illegal felling of Incense Trees. The effectiveness of these joint operations would be reviewed and reported regularly at the Task Force meetings and the strategies adopted would be reviewed as appropriate. In addition, the Task Force would meet with wildlife conservation groups to exchange views on matters of mutual concern.

11. In response to a Member's another question on the measures to prevent cormorant predation on commercial pond fish in Deep Bay area under Action 11(d), Dr Jackie Yip explained that the consultancy study on cormorant predation commissioned by the AFCD in 2016-17 recommended the installation of wires over fishponds as one of the effective measures to reduce cormorant predation in Hong Kong. She supplemented that ten fishpond operators at Hoo Hok Wai and Tai Sang Wai had participated in the field trial since October 2017, and AFCD would monitor the progress and evaluate the effectiveness of pond wiring upon completion of the field trial.

12. As the application of pond wiring by fishpond operators might deter other bird species (e.g. egrets and black-faced spoonbills) from foraging at the site especially when the ponds are being drained, a Member considered that any new measures should aim to provide protection to fishermen against cormorant predation and allow other water birds to feed on the remaining trash fish after fish harvest.

Support for biodiversity

13. As regards the support for the establishment of biodiversity centres under Action 23(b), Dr Jackie Yip said that AFCD had provided specimens to and exchanged information on biodiversity conservation with local universities (e.g. the Institute of Bioresource and Agriculture of the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Swire Institute of Marine Science of the University of Hong Kong) to help promote biodiversity.

14. A Member suggested the Government consider providing financial support and collaborating with these educational institutes to organise seminars for secondary school students and/or the public with a view to enhancing community involvement and the mainstreaming of biodiversity.

15. Dr Jackie Yip said that funding support was available under the Environmental Education and Community Action (EE&CA) Projects of the

Environment and Conservation Fund for non-profit making educational institutions and green groups for conducting educational programmes or activities to enhance community awareness on environmental issues. “Biodiversity” had also been selected as a special theme in 2016/17 and 2017/18 EE&CA projects to encourage relevant applications.

16. A Member suggested that funding support should also be made available to student societies at local universities to organize projects and activities in relation to biodiversity, in addition to providing support for the green groups and educational institutions.

17. A Member suggested the Government issue directives, enact legislation and provide incentives to enhance public involvement in the promotion of biodiversity. The Chairman considered that incentives might be more effective than directives in influencing public perception and behaviour.

Involvement of the community

18. Dr Jackie Yip clarified that while many of the 67 specific actions were led by AFCD, support would be rendered by relevant Government B/Ds, stakeholders and community organisations, for example, the community would be heavily involved in Actions under Areas 3 (i.e. improving our knowledge) and 4 (i.e. promoting community involvement).

19. Apart from financial incentives, a Member suggested that stakeholders including property developers should be encouraged to promote biodiversity conservation with a view to improving their corporate image and generating goodwill. She further opined that in addition to raising public awareness, it was important to encourage the public to associate biodiversity with their daily lives. This might be achieved through maintaining the momentum of the implementation programme, such as by reminding the public regularly about the progress and achievements of the BSAP through appropriate publicity channels. She suggested AFCD highlight notable achievements and experiences in the implementation progress of the BSAP for sharing with the public.

20. A Member suggested the Government promote urban greening to achieve better publicity. In order to increase community involvement, he opined that it was important to first help the public appreciate the value of nature conservation.

21. A Member shared her experience of participating in an eco-tour conducted by an Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) to appreciate local wildlife, and considered that such activities might effectively influence people's perceptions and values, helping them associate biodiversity with their daily lives. She suggested the Government engage the retired population in guiding eco-tours such that they might learn more about biodiversity and help spread their knowledge to others.

22. A Member suggested that the network of experts and professionals established during the formulation of the BSAP should be continuously engaged during the implementation stage to provide advice from different perspectives. With the help of these experts and professionals, the network might be further expanded and might serve as an effective channel for better publicity and promotion.

Urban biodiversity

23. In response to a Member's question on whether the concept of biodiversity would be incorporated in the rehabilitation of Kai Tak River under Action 10(f), Dr Jackie Yip said that the Drainage Services Department (DSD) had explored measures to incorporate the concept of biodiversity (e.g. planting nectar plants and building fish ladder) notwithstanding the site constraints in an urban environ. The Member suggested adopting designs that would attract birds especially egrets in the Kai Tak River to further promote biodiversity. Dr Yip undertook to relay the suggestion to DSD for its consideration.

24. A Member appreciated the work of AFCD in promoting urban biodiversity. He suggested incorporating and materialising the concept of biodiversity at the design or inception stages of public housing developments and new development area (NDA) projects such as undertaking studies for the latter by issuing inter-departmental guidelines or circulars and updating the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG). In addition, he suggested issuing technical guidelines for professional bodies and practitioners including landscape architects and engineers, to provide recommendations on incorporating biodiversity into their projects.

25. Dr Jackie Yip said that AFCD would collaborate with relevant Government B/Ds in the IWGB, such as the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) of the Development Bureau (DevB), in the promotion of urban biodiversity. While the GLTMS would provide policy directives in the long-term sustainable urban landscape development including the

issue or amendment of relevant technical circulars and standards, AFCD would provide the technical information in respect of biodiversity as needed. AFCD would continue to collaborate with the DevB to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity to professionals.

26. In reply to a Member's enquiry on whether the Government would consider providing incentives to encourage practitioners to incorporate biodiversity considerations into their development projects, Dr Jackie Yip said that having liaised with the BEAM Society, some parameters relating to biodiversity were incorporated when developing the BEAM Plus Neighbourhood assessment tool. A Member suggested granting of gross floor area concessions for the incorporation of biodiversity features into new building design could be one of the incentives provided to practitioners.

27. As the chapter related to conservation in the HKPSG primarily focused on the conservation of natural landscape and habitat, Ms Lily Yam explained that the Planning Department (PlanD) and AFCD were working together on updating the said chapter in the HKPSG by incorporating biodiversity elements. As regards a Member's suggestion of including biodiversity considerations in undertaking studies for NDA projects, Ms Yam said that biodiversity considerations would be taken into account subject to the nature and applicability of each project, and she undertook to relay the suggestion to the relevant sections in PlanD for further consideration.

28. A Member suggested enhancing ecological connectivity of urban parks and urban green areas to the country parks by establishing wildlife / green corridor using appropriate native plant species in urban landscaping. That would allow more native wildlife to return to urban areas and enrich urban biodiversity. He considered that public involvement would also be enhanced by engaging the community in establishing the wildlife corridor / habitat and in citizen science programmes to monitor the increase in urban biodiversity.

Knowledge building and information sharing

29. A Member opined that the impacts, outcome and lessons learned of the implementation of specific actions under BSAP should be reviewed and the community should be informed in a timely manner. Noting that a web-based information sharing platform would be developed under the BSAP, the Member suggested organising sharing sessions and workshops to further engage the community in addition to professional bodies and green groups.

30. Dr Jackie Yip said that AFCD was reviewing and learning from local and overseas experiences and would further consult relevant experts to explore the potential design and elements of the web-based information hub. It would keep in view and report the progress of BSAP implementation to the ACE next year.

31. A Member opined that publicity was the key factor in maintaining the momentum for biodiversity conservation in the society in the long run, and suggested the Government earmark additional resources in enhancing communication and information sharing with the media and District Councils to achieve better publicity on the matter. The Chairman mentioned that the sharing of successful stories in biodiversity conservation through publicity campaigns would be effective in engaging the community.

Measuring the effectiveness of BSAP implementation

32. In addition to setting deliverables for each of the 67 specific actions, a Member opined that key performance indicators, such as percentage of vegetation cover, forest area and percentage increase in the number of species, should be formulated. He suggested AFCD make reference to overseas experiences when formulating these targets and indicators.

33. Dr Jackie Yip noted from overseas experiences that performance indicators would only be meaningful when they were set up in accordance with the local context. It was therefore important to first establish baseline information on Hong Kong's biodiversity and fill knowledge gaps before establishing indicators. She informed Members that one of the specific actions in BSAP was to update the territorial habitat map to support conservation planning. The AFCD would also keep in view of the practices in other countries and explore their applicability to Hong Kong.

Mainstreaming biodiversity

34. While expressing support towards the BSAP, a Member considered that the Urban Forestry Advisory Panel had been making little progress, and the discussion had largely remained on a conceptual level without concrete plans and measures. He opined that the mainstreaming work within the Government had been taking effect with some Government B/Ds, such as DSD, the Civil Engineering and Development Department and the Water Supplies Department, which had been

proactively exploring the opportunities in biodiversity conservation. To avoid redundant efforts in conducting similar consultancy studies, he suggested AFCD play a facilitator role by looking into the common problems encountered by projects undertaken by various works departments in the Government, such as by providing seedlings of native tree species and promulgating design guidelines. He pointed out that owing to the lack of seedlings of native tree species in commercial nurseries, often a compromise had to be made with seedlings of exotic species planted in works projects. The Member further mentioned that some property developers had expressed interest in incorporating biodiversity conservation in their development projects, and therefore suggested AFCD make available design guidelines for the interested parties. Referring to some prevailing controversial issues, such as the construction of Lung Mei Beach, fly-tipping activities on ecologically valuable sites and mercy release of exotic species into the wild, the Member urged the Government to demonstrate its commitment in biodiversity conservation by looking into these issues.

35. Noting the constraint in the supply of seedlings of native tree species for development projects, Dr Jackie Yip said that AFCD had been discussing with the GLTMS on the matter but had yet to come up with a solution.

36. Two Members concurred with a Member that AFCD should consider devising technical guidelines and/or circulars to assist works departments in the Government in integrating the concept of biodiversity into their plans and projects. A Member said that some environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports had revealed that some Government B/Ds had not given biodiversity sufficient consideration. He urged the Government to speed up the review of the Guidance Notes issued under the EIA Ordinance.

37. A Member recalled that the relevant Government B/Ds had targeted to complete the review of the Guidance Notes for ecological assessment before the end of 2018 and would consult the EIA Subcommittee on the initial findings. The EIA Subcommittee would follow up with the subject team on the progress at its next meeting.

[Post-meeting notes: The relevant extract of the draft minutes of the meeting regarding the review of the Guidance Notes for ecological assessment was passed to AFCD and EPD on 12 February 2018 for their necessary follow-up.]

Conclusion

38. A Member suggested and the Chairman agreed that the Government should keep the ACE informed of any anticipated challenges in respect of BSAP implementation in the coming year so that Members might offer advice and support as appropriate.

39. The Chairman thanked the representatives of AFCD for their presentation. He summarized the views of Members and welcomed the subject team to share progress again with ACE in future meetings.

[The presentation team left the meeting at this juncture.]

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door session)

40. A Member considered that the EIA report on “Kai Tak Multi-purpose Sports Complex” had demonstrated some discrepancies between expectations of EIA Subcommittee Members and the commitment of the project proponent on the application of urban ecology. Another Member said that this might reflect a lack of technical information by the project proponents and concurred with the Member that AFCD and EPD should approach the relevant Government B/Ds to offer their expert advice.

41. Mr Simon Chan said that AFCD could reach out to different Government B/Ds, with priority given to those whose businesses would be more closely related to biodiversity.

42. A Member expressed concern on the adequacy of resources to sustain the implementation of the BSAP. Mr Simon Chan advised that manpower in AFCD had been strengthened through the creation of some permanent establishments as well as non-civil service contract positions. With limited resources, priority had been given to conducting mainstreaming work and collaborating with Government B/Ds and organisations with businesses of greater relevancy to the biodiversity at the moment. He shared that achievements had been made with some Government B/Ds which had proactively incorporated biodiversity considerations in their projects, citing the establishment of a river park under the “Tung Chung New Town Extension” project as an example. The project proponents also displayed a higher awareness in biodiversity conservation in their EIA reports. Mr Chan explained that the BSAP would not solely be implemented by AFCD, but also through other

Government B/Ds, and would be supported by NGOs, tertiary institutions and private sectors. AFCD would continue to collaborate with various Government B/Ds to enhance guidelines and technical notes for specific projects/works.

43. With a huge budget surplus anticipated for the coming financial year, a Member suggested the Government inject additional resources into the implementation of the BSAP and consider the need for establishing a dedicated office to undertake the relevant work.

44. A Member noted that \$150 million was earmarked for AFCD to implement the action plans under the BSAP in the first three years, and asked whether there would be adequate resources to sustain the BSAP beyond 2019. He also supported a Member's suggestion that AFCD should re-establish the nurseries for providing seedlings of native tree species to meet the needs of the Government projects.

45. Mr Donald Tong thanked Members for their support towards the BSAP. He explained that in accordance with the existing mechanism for resource allocation, AFCD and relevant Government B/Ds would review and bid for additional resources as necessary to sustain the implementation of the BSAP. He added that apart from co-ordinating the work among Government B/Ds and monitor progress, the IWGB had provided an important platform to facilitate these B/Ds to share their experiences of incorporating biodiversity considerations under their purview, as well as inspiring other B/Ds to identify similar opportunities to incorporate biodiversity considerations into their business/projects.

46. The Chairman invited AFCD to note the concerns and consider the suggestions offered by Members during the discussion.

Item 4 : Any other business (Closed-door session)

47. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

Item 5 : Date of next meeting (Closed-door session)

48. The next ACE meeting was scheduled for 5 March 2018 (Monday). Members would be advised on the agenda in due course.

49. The Chairman also took the opportunity to extend an early greeting to

Members for a happy and prosperous Year of the Dog.

ACE Secretariat

March 2018