

**Public Consultation
on the Review of the Nature Conservation Policy**

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the review of the nature conservation policy, the findings of which are set out in the consultation document circulated to Members in mid-July when the public consultation exercise was launched.

Background

2. Despite its rapid urban development and dense population, Hong Kong owns a beautiful natural environment that provides home for a variety of wild animals and plants. This natural asset of ours generates significant benefits to the community through offering them venues for recreation, nature education and eco-tourism. To protect this valuable heritage, the Government has been implementing a nature conservation policy and protecting sites of high ecological importance mainly through designation of country parks, special areas and conservation zonings on town plans. Conservation plans are also implemented to protect important habitats and species. Moreover, public education and publicity are carried out to enhance public awareness of our valuable natural environment and the importance of protecting it.

3. In recent years, there are debates from time to time on whether a particular site really deserves conservation and if so, the conservation measures needed and its priority for action. There are also criticisms about the limitations of the existing nature conservation policy and measures in conserving ecologically important sites that fall under private ownership. The Government has therefore conducted a review of the existing nature conservation policy and measures, and has drawn up improvement proposals for public consultation. The findings of the review, including the effectiveness of the existing policy and measures, and the improvement proposals are set out in the consultation document.

Public Consultation

4. The public consultation exercise started on 17 July and will last for three months. The consultation document has been distributed to all key stakeholders including environmental groups, relevant advisory bodies, District Councils etc. It is also available in the district offices and can be downloaded from the webpage of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau. We have been arranging a number of consultation sessions with major stakeholders including environmental groups, academics, professional bodies, District Councilors, Heung Yee Kuk, and relevant advisory bodies, and organizing roving exhibitions during the public consultation period. All members of the public are welcome to send in their views by e-mail, fax or post. We will carefully consider all the views received in determining the way forward.

Advice Sought

5. Members are invited to provide your views on the policy review, in particular the improvement proposals set out below -

- (a) the introduction of the proposed scoring system for assessing, in a more objective and systematic manner, the relative ecological importance of sites with the objective of reaching a consensus within the community on the priority sites for enhanced conservation; and
- (b) practicable ways to better conserve ecologically important sites that are under private ownership within limited resources.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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