

Nature Conservation Subcommittee

**Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2005
at 2:30 pm in Conference Room, 33/F , Revenue Tower**

Present:

Prof. WONG Yuk-shan, B.B.S., J.P. (Chairman)

Prof. HO Kin-chung, B.B.S.

Ms Goretti LAU

Dr NG Cho-nam, B.B.S.

Mr. Markus SHAW

Ms Iris TAM, J.P.

Mr. Roy TANG

Mr. Eric CHAN

Mr. C C LAY

Dr P M SO

Miss Florence CHAN (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Prof. Paul LAM

In Attendance for Agenda Item 2 :

Dr TSIM Siu-tai	Conservation Specialist (Tai Po Environmental Association) (TPEA)
Dr CHEUNG Ho-fai	Chairman (Hong Kong Bird Watching Association) (HKBWS)
Mr. Mike KILBURN	Vice-chairman (HKBWS)
Mr. LO Wai-yan	Project and Communication Manager (HKBWS)
Dr HUNG Wing-tat	Director (Conservancy Association) (CA)
Ms Lister CHEUNG	Chief Executive (CA)
Ms LI Siu-hoi	Deputy Chief Executive (CA)
Dr Lew YOUNG	Mai Po Reserve Manager (World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong) (WWF)
Mr. Tobi LAU	Mai Po Reserve Officer (WWF)

In Attendance for Agenda Item 3 :

Dr Winnie KWOK

Wetland and Fauna Conservation Officer (Wise Use) (AFCD)

In Attendance for Agenda Items 4 & 5 :

Mr. Edmond LAM

Senior Wetland Officer (AFCD)

Miss Sunny CHOW

Wetland Park Officer (AFCD)

Action

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Nature Conservation Subcommittee (Subcommittee).

Agenda Item 1 : Matters arising

2. The Chairman drew Members' attention to the "Terms of Reference" of the Subcommittee and the "Guideline on Declaration of Interest". The Guideline set out the declaration system which required Members to declare interest as and when a need arose. Depending on the merits of each case, the Chairman would decide whether the Members concerned could continue to participate in discussion or attend the meeting.

Agenda Item 2 : Pilot Conservation Management Agreement Proposals (NCSC Paper 1/05)

3. A Member declared interest for his position as the Chairman of WWF. Another Member declared interest because he was the Director of CA and the vice-Chairman of HKBWS. The Member would also join the teams of CA and HKBWS to present their applications to the Subcommittee. All the aforementioned organizations (WWF, CA and HKBWS) had submitted applications under the Pilot Scheme for Management Agreement (MA) to enhance the ecological values of priority sites. The Chairman proposed and Members agreed that the concerned Members could stay at the meeting. However, they should not make any comments on the applications which they had interest.

4. Dr P M SO introduced the paper to Members.

Presentation by TPEA

5. The Chairman invited Dr TSIM Siu-tai to present TPEA's proposal. A Member declared her interest as she had involvement in a development project in the Fung Yuen Comprehensive Development Area. Another Member declared his interest for his position as the President of Green Power, which would provide assistance to TPEA in implementing the education programme of the proposal. The Chairman suggested and Members agreed that the concerned Members could stay at the meeting.

6. A Member welcomed the proposal as it helped the conservation of butterflies. One Member enquired about the management structure of the project. Dr TSIM said that he would be the project manager and three more workers would be employed to implement the project. The project staff would be supervised by the Chairman of TPEA and an advisory committee would be set up to monitor the progress of the project. A Member asked if TPEA could obtain enough support from volunteers. Dr TSIM said he was confident that sufficient volunteers would be available and some would be recruited from uniform groups like the Boys' Brigade. Another Member asked Dr TSIM to elaborate the meaning of "minimum effective area". Dr TSIM explained that it referred to the area in which butterflies would be benefited from the MA project and was estimated by the flying distance of butterflies from the areas receiving active conservation management under the MA project. The Chairman asked if TPEA had identified alternative source of funding for this meaningful project in the long run. Dr TSIM said the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) would be the major source of funding in the first two years and TPEA would identify other sources of funding like sponsorship from private companies in future.

7. A Member noted that the total amount of funding requested for the four projects was \$5,443,750, which exceeded the \$5 million allocated by the ECF for the implementation of the Pilot Scheme. Mr. Eric CHAN said that the four applications would be submitted to the ECF Committee for formal funding approval shortly. The ECF Committee would examine the proposed budgets of the projects in detail and consider whether additional funds should be allocated to meet the full amount applied by the four project proponents.

Presentation by HKBWS

(Dr NG Cho-nam joined the presentation team of HKBWS at this juncture)

8. The representatives of HKBWS presented their proposal. A Member noted that the site in Long Valley selected by HKBWS was different from that chosen by CA. He asked how the area was selected. Mr. Mike KILBURN said that they had exchanged information with CA and the site was selected in consultation with local farmers and landowners. One Member asked how the project would be evaluated after its completion. Mr. KILBURN said HKBWS would collect data through a scientific bird monitoring scheme. Interim and final reports would also be submitted to the Government. In response to a Member's enquiry, Dr NG said that few farmers practised organic farming at the moment and the project would encourage the planting of different types of crops that would enhance the ecological values of the site. The Member suggested that farmers joining this project could sell their crops as “bird-friendly” crops in the market for a higher price.

Presentation by CA

(Dr NG joined the presentation team of CA at this juncture)

9. The representatives of CA presented their proposal. Noting that applications from HKBWS and CA both proposed to enter into MA with landowners inside Long Valley, the Chairman asked if the proponent has considered submitting a joint project with HKBWS. Dr NG said that two proposals were complimentary to each other. HKBWS's proposal focused more on the enhancement of habitats for birds, while CA's proposal put emphasis on formulating a sustainable habitat management strategy for the local community in Long Valley. Ms Lister CHEUNG added that CA has been working with the local community in Long Valley for many years. To optimise the use of resource, A Member considered that CA and HKBWS should enhance their cooperation. Dr NG said that he had invited representative of CA to join the advisory committee of HKBWS's project. After some discussion, the Chairman urged the two organisations to closely collaborate with each other.

10. A Member asked whether “environmental-friendly” crops would be planted. Ms CHEUNG said that no new species would be planted, but CA would encourage organic farming. Another Member asked about the willingness of farmers to join the project. Dr HUNG

said that some farmers had already indicated interest to join.

Presentation by WWF

11. Dr Lew YOUNG presented WWF's proposal. A Member considered that the name "foster parents" was inappropriate and suggested WWF consider a different name. The Chairman commented that the project provided a valuable opportunity to educate the public about conservation. He said that individuals, schools, companies and other NGOs should be encouraged to join the project. Another Member agreed with the Chairman. Dr YOUNG said that a hut near the fish pond would be renovated and used for educational purpose to demonstrate to the public the traditional life of fish pond farmers. A Member supported the proposal and suggested fish pond farmers joining this project could market their fish as "environmental-friendly" fish for a higher price.

Concluding discussion

12. A Member said that all proposals were worth supporting and opined that CA and HKBWS should consider combining the two projects. One Member shared his concern on the CA and HKBWS projects. However, he considered it difficult for the two organisations to submit a joint proposal. Instead, they should be asked to work towards the goal of amalgamating the two projects in future. He also added that CA might hire a marketing professional to develop a marketing package to sell crops planted in Long Valley.

13. A Member noted that the size of the management area of WWF's proposal was 100 hectares, much larger than those of the other three projects from TPEA, HKBWS and CA (about 2 hectares each). She asked the reason of the different budgets required in managing these four sites. Dr SO responded that management works in butterfly habitat in Fung Yuen and farmland in Long Valley were labour intensive and required more resources. AFCD had examined the proposed budgets of four projects in detail and found them reasonable. One Member asked how the projects proponents would sustain the projects after completion of the pilot scheme. Mr. CHAN said that all four project proponents would make use of the ECF fundings in the first two years to properly start up these projects and they expected that the cost of active management of the concerned sites would be lower in future. As for WWF's proposal, a business plan for the long-term operation of the

project had been formulated. Other project proponents would also try to generate revenue by selling products or identifying alternative sources of fundings. The results of these pilot projects would be evaluated in two years' time.

14. A Member emphasised the importance of monitoring the progress of these projects by the Government. Mr. C C LAY confirmed that AFCD would sit in the advisory committee of the projects and take up an active monitoring role. He suggested inviting the project proponents to report progress to this subcommittee regularly. In response to one Member's enquiry, Mr. CHAN said that funds from ECF would be disbursed in phases in accordance with approved payment schedules and subject to satisfactory progress of the project.

Secretariat

15. The Chairman concluded that Members were supportive of all four applications and made the following comments -

- (i) the project proponents should start early to identify alternative sources of funding;
- (ii) AFCD should actively monitor the implementation of all the approved projects;
- (iii) HKBWS and CA should closely collaborate with each other and share their experience and information where appropriate.

Agenda Item 3 : Wetland Restoration in Country Parks

16. The Chairman invited Dr SO and Dr Winnie KWOK to brief Members on the progress of wetland restoration in Lions Nature Education Centre, Shing Mun Country Park and Tai Lam Country Park.

17. In response to a Member's question, Dr SO said that the wetlands were supported by natural supply of water and some areas might need active management to ensure continuous water supply. Another Member commented that wetland restoration was a valuable project and asked if AFCD had any future plan. As most of the potential sites were not of enormous scale, Dr SO said that AFCD could continue to identify appropriate sites for wetland restoration by utilizing AFCD's in-house resources. In response to the Chairman's question, Mr LAY said that there were no major constraints in implementing the projects and AFCD would continue to restore wetlands to enhance the biodiversity of Hong Kong.

18. A Member proposed AFCD to enhance the boundary of reservoirs. He also considered that some of the potential sites could be used for off-site mitigation of some designated projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance. Another Member requested AFCD to provide a list of potential sites for wetland restoration. With such information, the Government might be able to attract private funding for wetland restoration projects and enhance the public awareness on wetland conservation. Mr. LAY agreed to present a list of target sites for wetland restoration at the next meeting.

AFCD

Agenda Item 4 : Progress Report of the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP)

19. The Chairman invited Mr. Edmond LAM to present the progress of HKWP. The Chairman congratulated for the delivery of a world class project. A Member said she was impressed by the presentation slide, in which the HKWP and high-rise building coexisted in Tin Shui Wai. One Member said that the Government should draw media attention to HKWP. Another Member asked whether the implementation of the project was on schedule. Mr. LAM assured Members that the target opening date of HKWP remained the same, i.e. early 2006. Mr. LAY said the Government was now considering the tender submissions for the management of HKWP. The Member suggested that the adjacent land to HKWP should only allow developments which were compatible with HKWP. Mr. LAM said that any development would be subject to compliance with the Town Planning Ordinance.

20. The Chairman proposed to arrange a visit to HKWP for ACE Members. He also suggested uploading the PowerPoint presentation on the web. Mr LAY said that AFCD would be happy to organize a visit for ACE Members in late November or December.

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Agenda Item 5 : Public Awareness and Education Programme on Wetland Conservation

21. The Chairman invited Miss Sunny CHOW to update Members on the Programme. The Chairman asked if the education programmes relating to HKWP would be carried out by private contractors in future. Mr. LAM said that some of the programmes would be carried out by contractors and monitored by AFCD's staff. A

Member appreciated the efforts of the Government in promoting wetland conservation and suggested involving pop singers in the promotion activities. Another Member added that the Tin Shui Wai residents might be invited to join the programme.

Agenda Item 6 : Any other business

22. Mr. CHAN suggested and Members agreed that the Subcommittee would follow the practice of the ACE by uploading the discussion papers and confirmed minutes of the meeting on the web.

23. The meeting concluded at 6:10 pm.

Nature Conservation Subcommittee Secretariat
September 2005