

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

**Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2007
at 9:45 am in Conference Room, 33/F, Revenue Tower**

Present:

Professor WONG Yuk-shan, B.B.S., J.P. (Chairman)
Ms HO Siu-fong, Betty
Professor LAM Kwan-sing, Paul
Ms LAU Wai-kuen, Goretti
Dr MAN Chi-sum, J.P.
Dr NG Cho-nam, B.B.S.
Mr. Markus J. SHAW
Dr YAU Wing-kwong
Miss Florence CHAN (Secretary)

In Attendance :

Mr. Eric CHAN	Assistant Director (Conservation), Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Mr.C C LAY	Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Dr P M SO	Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity), AFCD
Mr. Claude WONG	Executive Assistant (CVD), EPD

In Attendance for Agenda Item 3 :

Dr YAU Wing-kwong	Chairman, Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA)
Mr. Raymond WONG	Education Manager (TPEA)
Miss LI See-wai	Project Officer (TPEA)
Dr CHEUNG Ho-fai	Chairman, Hong Kong Bird Watching Association (HKBWS)
Mr. LO Wai-yan	Project Manager (HKBWS)
Miss Vicky YEUNG	Project Officer (HKBWS)
Dr HUNG Wing-tat	Director, Conservancy Association (CA)
Ms Lister CHEUNG	Chief Executive (CA)
Ms Katie CHICK	Assistant Conservation Manager (CA)

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

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation on Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 18 December 2006

2. The draft minutes were confirmed without any amendments.

Agenda Item 2: Matters arising

3. The Chairman drew Members' attention to the "Terms of Reference" of the Subcommittee and the "Guideline on Declaration of Interest".

4. Noting that a Member was the director of Conservancy Association and the vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, another Member was the chairman of the Tai Po Environmental Association and a third Member was the chairman of the Conservancy Association, the Chairman suggested and Members agreed that the concerned Members could continue to attend the meeting but refrain from discussion when discussing the relevant project. However, they could clarify factual information whenever necessary.

Agenda Item 3: Review on Pilot Conservation Management Agreement (MA) Projects (NCSC Paper 1/07)

5. Dr PM SO brought Members through the paper.

Presentation by TPEA

6. The Chairman welcomed and invited the representatives of TPEA to present the progress of the project to Members. The Chairman congratulated TPEA for the successful implementation of the project. A member asked about the disturbance caused by the

massive group of visitors. Dr YAU Wing-kwong said that on one occasion, there were 700 visitors outside Fung Yuen without any advance booking. Even though they were not allowed to enter into the Fung Yuen MA site, the large group of visitors caused damages to plants nearby. TPEA had written to school headmasters and alerted them of the malpractice of some travel agents.

7. A Member appreciated the implementation of the project in enhancing biodiversity and raising public awareness on nature conservation. He was concerned about the financial sustainability of the project. Dr YAU said that they intended to manage the project in a sustainable manner in future. A \$20 day pass for visiting Fung Yuen was charged to cover the operational cost of managing the private land.

8. A Member opined that crowd control by charging entrance fee was useful. Another Member shared the same view and opined that free visit to a site managed by NGOs through Government funding was a wrong concept. Another Member said that entrance fee could help make the project sustainable. Another Member asked if advance booking was needed for visiting Fung Yuen. Dr YAU replied that booking was only required for group visitors with more than 50 persons.

9. As to the transportation problem shown in the powerpoint presentation, a Member opined that a 15-minute walk to the site was acceptable and should not be regarded as a challenge. Another Member also agreed with the Member that TPEA should let the visitors walk to the site, instead of providing public transportation.

Presentation by HKBWS

10. The Chairman welcomed and invited the representatives of HKBWS to present the progress of the project to Members. A Member enquired if bird-catching incident was found in Long Valley. Dr CHEUNG Ho-fai said that they were not aware of the problem. A Member asked about the crowd control arrangement in Long

Valley. Dr CHEUNG responded that Long Valley was a large area and there were no over-crowding problems. A Member suggested that designated route could be designed to control visitors movements.

11. The Chairman enquired about the synergistic effect and problems faced when HKBWS cooperated with CA. Dr CHEUNG expressed that they might have different views on the approach in conservation, but the overall cooperation between HKBWS and CA was satisfactory.

Presentation by CA

12. The Chairman welcomed and invited the representatives of CA to brief Members on the progress of the project. A Member asked that if semi-abandoned wetland was more bird-friendly than organic farm. Dr HUNG Wing-tat said there was no conclusive evidence yet. The Member asked if all the farmlands in Long Valley should be converted to organic farmland. Ms Lister CHEUNG said that it was impossible to do so, given the large area of Long Valley. They also did not intend to do so because the aim of the project was to create diversified habitats for different species and organic farming was only a means to increase the farmers' profit.

13. A Member opined that different types of farmlands served different purposes and a mosaic of habitats was desirable. The Chairman asked about the cooperation between HKBWS and CA. Ms CHEUNG said that they worked very closely and the benefits from the cooperation were certain.

Concluding discussion

14. Mr. Eric CHAN commented that after implementing for one and a half year, the three pilot projects had achieved the targets originally set. Their effect on enhancing conservation and raising community awareness was promising. He proposed that the MA scheme should be continued. Subject to Members' views, EPD

would seek funding support from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF). These three organisations might submit applications to continue their projects. Submission of new application for the twelve priority sites would also be encouraged. In vetting the applications, the Government would also consider if the project was cost-effective.

15. A Member was concerned if sufficient funding could be obtained from the ECF. Mr. CHAN responded that ECF's current uncommitted balance was about \$46 million, while the total injection from the Government had been \$236 million since its inception. Subject to member's views, the Administration would seek funding from the ECF to continue the MA Scheme. Besides Government support, NGOs also needed to explore other sources of financial support.

16. The Chairman said that these three projects were well received by the public. It was worth supporting for their continuation. But he emphasised that cooperation between NGOs were important if there were more than one NGO working on the same site. A Member also supported the continuation of MA and asked if the Subcommittee could request HKBWS and CA to submit a joint proposal.

17. The Chairman suggested the Government to further discuss with HKBWS and CA in preparing their new applications. Mr. CHAN said that AFCD had been working closely with the two NGOs and AFCD would relay the Subcommittee's views to them.

AFCD

18. After some discussion, members supported the continuation of the MA Scheme and the Administration's plan to seek funding from the ECF.

19. The meeting concluded at 11:55 am.

Secretariat, Nature Conservation Subcommittee
August 2007