

Confirmed Minutes
35th Nature Conservation Subcommittee Meeting
held on Tuesday, 15 June 2021 at 2:30 p.m.

Present:

Prof Kenneth LEUNG, JP (Chairman)
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Prof LAU Chi-pang, BBS, JP
Ms Julia LAU
Dr Winnie LAW
Mr Andrew LEE
Dr MA Kwan-ki
Dr SUNG Yik-hei
Prof Nora TAM, BBS, JP
Ms Becky LAM (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Ms Carmen CHAN, BBS, JP
Dr WONG Kwok-yan

In Attendance:

Environmental Protection Department (EPD)

Mr Raymond WU	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Ms Bella MUI	Assistant Director (Nature Conservation)
Dr Rex SHIH	Forestry Officer (Nature Conservation)
Miss Sally SHEK	Executive Officer (CBD) 1

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Mr Simon CHAN	Assistant Director (Conservation)
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In Attendance for Item 2:

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Mr Eric LIU	Senior Conservation Officer (Technical Services)
Dr Ryan TSANG	Conservation Officer (Technical Services)

In Attendance for Item 3:

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Ms Aidia CHAN

Senior Nature Park Officer

Dr Kevin HO

Nature Park Officer (Management)

Action

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and informed that apologies of absence had been received from Ms Carmen Chan and Dr Wong Kwok-yan.

Item 1 : Matters arising

2. The Chairman advised that the minutes of the last meeting held on 28 October 2020 were circulated and confirmed on 30 December 2020 with proposed amendments from a Member incorporated.

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

Item 2 : Implementation of the Incense Tree Species Action Plan *(ACE-NC Paper 1/2021)*

[Mr Eric Liu and Dr Ryan Tsang of AFCD joined the meeting at this juncture.]

4. The Chairman said that the paper briefed and updated Members on the current situation of Incense Trees in Hong Kong and the implementation progress of the Incense Tree Species Action Plan 2018-2022 (SAP) by the AFCD to conserve Incense Trees in Hong Kong.

5. There was no declaration of interest by Members.

6. Mr Simon Chan made opening remarks and Mr Eric Liu, with the aid a PowerPoint presentation, briefed Members on the implementation progress of the nine actions specified to enhance the protection for the Incense Tree under the SAP.

Illegal Felling of Incense Trees

7. In response to a Member's question on the process of illegal felling activities with respect to Incense Trees, Mr Eric Liu said that poachers would create multiple wounds on the trunk of the Incense Tree and come back to collect the agarwood by felling and chopping the trees into sections. To combat the illegal activities, Infrared Sensor Camera Traps (IRSCTs) were installed by the AFCD to monitor Incense Trees at strategic locations.

8. Responding to a Member's question on whether most illegal felling activities occurred in locations with dense Incense Tree population, Mr Eric Liu said that most of the criminal cases involving illegal felling of Incense Tree were recorded in Sai Kung, Lantau Island and North District where large and mature Incense Trees were located. He advised that the AFCD would enhance the conservation of the trees in these areas by the installation of IRSCTs and tree guards. Pointing out that the number of persons arrested for illegal felling of Incense Trees was on the low side, the Member further suggested enhancing patrolling and enforcement actions at these popular black spots.

9. Two Members would like to know the number of Incense Trees felled and cases of illegal felling of Incense Trees. Mr Eric Liu advised that the figures in Annex 1 of ACE-NC Paper 1/2021 indicated illegal felling cases reported by concerned groups, members of the public as well as those found by the AFCD. Another Member questioned if the decline in illegal felling activities was due to the lack of large and mature Incense Trees in Hong Kong in recent years. Mr Eric Liu confirmed that there were still a number of mature Incense Trees in Hong Kong. He considered that the enhanced protection measures since 2016 and the measures under the SAP might be effective in reducing the number of illegal felling of Incense Trees from 134 cases in 2014 to 13 cases in 2020. He also concurred with the Member that the increase in number of hikers under the COVID-19 pandemic might have a deterrent effect on illegal felling activities. He further added that the pandemic also restricted the poachers travelled to and from Hong Kong, thereby reducing their poaching activities in 2020.

10. In reply to a Member's question on the appropriate actions in dealing with suspected illegal felling activities, Mr Eric Liu advised that members of the public should report any suspicious illegal activities to the Police for their timely action.

11. A Member suggested that the Government should display notice boards near Incense Trees for reporting any suspected illegal felling activities. However, Mr Eric Liu advised that it might not be desirable to draw attention to the locations of the Incense Trees which might attract poachers. He supplemented that the public should report any suspected cases to the Police for their timely action. Another Member concurred with Mr Liu and suggested that the signages on wildlife conservation displayed in the country parks might draw people's attention to the special species in the area and should be removed. Mr Liu thanked the Member for his suggestions and would take them into consideration where appropriate.

Risk-based Patrol

12. A Member enquired which concern groups had participated in the joint patrols against illegal felling of Incense Trees. Mr Eric Liu said that the AFCD had maintained close collaboration with various local concern groups and villagers living near Incense

Tree for intelligence gathering and reporting of any illegal felling activities.

13. Addressing a Member's concern of the comprehensiveness of the risk-based patrols, Mr Eric Liu said that the Incense Tree Patrol Team regularly carried out in-depth and extensive patrols with the assistance of Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS). In addition to patrols, he added that the installation of tree guards and IRSCTs were found effective in enhancing the conservation of large and mature Incense Trees.

Enforcement Actions

14. A Member enquired about the AFCD's experiences gathered in taking enforcement actions on illegal felling. Mr Eric Liu advised that the AFCD maintained close contacts with the enforcement authorities like the Police and Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) in conducting joint patrols as well as devising operational protocol to take swift enforcement actions. Regular seminar and training were provided to the Police and C&ED officers to enhance their knowledge on Incense Trees. The AFCD would also provide expert advice on incense trees in prosecution procedures and serve as expert witness for identifying the agarwood in court proceedings.

15. With regards to the statistics on illegal felling of Incense Trees as well as illegal imports and exports of agarwood, a Member remarked and echoed by two Members that the number of prosecutions seemed to be on the low side when compared with the number of reported cases and the persons arrested. Mr Eric Liu explained that in some cases there were practical difficulties in substantiating the prosecution with sufficient crime evidence in the Court. Mr Simon Chan added that risk-based patrol as well as the installation of tree guards and IRSCTs would facilitate swift enforcement actions and collection of crime evidences against illegal felling of Incense Trees in the future.

16. Addressing a Member's question on the prosecution of illegal felling of Incense Trees in comparison with other tree species, Mr Eric Liu explained that offenders of illegal felling of Incense Trees were usually prosecuted under the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210), which imposed a heavier penalty with a stronger deterrent effect whereas offenders of illegal felling of other tree species were usually prosecuted under the Forests and Countryside Ordinance (Cap. 96).

Collaboration with Mainland Authorities

17. A Member enquired and Mr Eric Liu replied that some of the poachers caught were illegal immigrants and holders of Two-way Permit from the Mainland. Mr Liu advised that the AFCD would maintain close collaboration with Mainland authorities to combat the illegal activities. He added that the AFCD would maintain close liaison with

concern groups and volunteers for intelligence gathering and reporting of any suspected illegal felling activities.

Sale of Agarwood

18. To reduce the demand at source, a Member suggested that the Government should ban the local sale of agarwood products. Mr Eric Liu advised that given the agarwood harvested from Incense Trees was mainly used as sculpting materials and perfume ingredient in the Mainland, banning the local sale of agarwood-related products might not be effective in protecting Incense Trees in Hong Kong. He assured that the Government would spare no efforts on surveillance and enforcement actions to combat illegal felling of Incense Trees and illegal imports and exports of agarwood.

Tree Guards

19. In response to two Members' question on the effectiveness of the tree guards installed, Mr Eric Liu advised that Bamboo Mesh Fence was the first generation of tree guards but being phased out as it was less durable and ineffective in protecting the trees. He said that the newly adopted tree guard, i.e. Metallic Tree Protective Device (MTPD), was robust and tolerant to mechanical damage.

Artificial Propagation and Replanting

20. In response to two Members' questions about the life cycle of Incense Tree and the plan for artificial replanting, Mr Simon Chan advised that it generally took over 20 years for seedlings to develop into mature Incense Trees. He explained that about 10 000 seedlings of Incense Tree were planted in country parks every year since 2009 with a view to replenishing the loss in Incense Trees due to various reasons such as illegal felling, hill fire or habitat damage.

21. A Member went on asking about the follow-up survey on the seedlings planted. Mr Eric Liu explained that the territory-wide survey conducted by the AFCD mainly focused on the mature Incense Trees outside the Country Parks but seedlings were also recorded. The Member suggested that the AFCD should monitor the growth and conditions of the Incense Tree seedlings planted with the assistance of GIS. Given that the seedlings of Incense Trees were commonly found in the countryside, Mr Simon Chan explained that the AFCD would set priority on the conservation of the large and mature Incense Trees which were the targets of poachers.

Survey and Scientific Studies

22. A Member highlighted the importance of conducting comprehensive study or survey on the ecological aspect and habitat management of the Incense Trees, such as

their propagation, growth, health condition and pest control issues, with a view to conserving Incense Trees. Mr Eric Liu advised that the Government would continue to support research institutes to conduct scientific studies for Incense Tree. He supplemented that the AFCD was planning to commission a study on the ecological impact of an insect pest on Incense Tree.

23. Responding to a Member's question about the details of the territory-wide survey on Incense Trees, Mr Eric Liu advised that tree survey would be systematically carried out across the territory, with particular focus on locations where Incense Trees had been reported by AFCD colleagues or members of the public. He added that information such as the size of the trees and health conditions would also be recorded. The Member further suggested that the AFCD should collate information from tree surveys of works projects or EIA projects conducted by other works departments, which might help to expand the coverage of the survey.

Conclusion

24. The Chairman summarised that Members were in general appreciative of the actions taken under the SAP in the conservation of Incense Trees. He concluded the discussion and thanked the representatives of the AFCD for their presentation and detailed explanations.

[Mr Eric Liu and Dr Ryan Tsang of AFCD left the meeting. Ms Aidia Chan and Dr Kevin Ho of AFCD joined the meeting at this juncture.]

Item 3 : Establishment of the Long Valley Nature Park ***(ACE-NC Paper 2/2021)***

25. The Chairman said that the paper briefed Members on the progress of the establishment of the Long Valley Nature Park (LVNP) and its management plan in future.

26. The Chairman declared that one of the officers in the presentation team, i.e. Dr Kevin Ho, was his former PhD student. A Member declared that she was the Vice Chairman of the Conservancy Association, which was an ecological advisor for the development of the LVNP. She added that her husband and son had been compensated for the resumption of their lands in Long Valley, which had been settled already. Another Member was a Member of the Bird Ringing Committee under the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. The meeting agreed that they could all stay on and continue participating in the discussion.

27. By way of a PowerPoint presentation, Ms Aidia Chan gave an overview of the development and future management plan of the LVNP.

Design of the LVNP

28. A Member showed her concern on the need for a large amount of storage sheds and water wells in the Biodiversity Zone which might bring human disturbances to the wildlife. Ms Aidia Chan explained that most of the water wells in the Biodiversity Zone were existing wells being preserved, which provided water supply for wetland habitats. She added that the storage sheds would facilitate farmers to store their small farming equipment and materials. To minimise potential human disturbances in the Biodiversity Zone, the Member suggested that the number and size of storage sheds should be reduced. Ms Aidia Chan thanked the Member for her suggestions and would take them into considerations where appropriate.

29. Ms Aidia Chan went on to explain that the construction of a water treatment wetland in the Visitor Zone would enhance the quality of water, which was originated from Sheung Yue River, before distributing for uses in farming and provision of water to manage the wetlands.

30. A Member suggested that considerations should be given in designing a mosaic pattern of habitats with a view to supporting the high diversity of species with different habitat preferences. Ms Aidia Chan responded that the management of the LVNP would adopt an adaptive approach to allow a high degree of flexibility catering for its complex mosaic of habitats. The Member stressed the importance of drawing up a mosaic pattern of habitats in the design stage to enhance connectivity across the LVNP. Ms Aidia Chan thanked the Member for her suggestions and would take them into considerations where appropriate.

Habitat Management

31. A Member went on to enquire on the plans devised for providing sufficient freshwater supply to maintain the ratio of wetland habitats to dry habitats at 70:30. Ms Aidia Chan advised that according to the water balance analysis conducted by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), the freshwater supply for the LVNP should be sufficient in both wet and dry seasons. She added that the wells serve as an additional source of freshwater supply to the LVNP.

32. Responding to two Members' questions about the management mode and supervision of the farmers, Ms Aidia Chan advised that the farming workers of the Biodiversity Zone would be hired by a management party engaged by the Government through a service tender. Hence, farming workers of the Biodiversity Zone would be required to comply with the requirement on farming practices under their contract with the management party. For Agriculture Zone, the farmlands would be rented to the farm

operators with tenancy agreements setting out relevant rules with a view to maintaining open field commercial farming in an eco-friendly manner. She supplemented that the AFCD would maintain close communications with the management party as well as farm operators in practicing eco-friendly farming in the Agriculture Zone and in maintaining the mosaic wetland habitats in the Biodiversity Zone respectively.

33. In response to a Member's questions about the criteria and considerations in allotting farmlands to farm operators, Ms Aidia Chan advised that priority would be accorded to the former Long Valley farmers who wished to farm in the LVNP. To ensure that all the registered Long Valley farmers who wished to farm in the LVNP could be accommodated on an equal basis, Ms Chan advised that there would be a limit on the size of the farmland allotted to each farm operator.

34. In reply to a Member's enquiry about the restrictions of leisure/hobby farming in the Agriculture Zone, Ms Aidia Chan explained that the farmland's tenancy agreement would devise detailed rules on farming in the Agriculture Zone to minimise potential human disturbances to the habitats and wildlife, and to avoid abandonment of farmland.

35. Pointing out that the Chinese Banyan would be the only plant species in the LVNP being monitored monthly under the ecological monitoring programme, a Member sought details of the monitoring programme for other plant species in the LVNP. Ms Aidia Chan replied that the purpose of the ecological surveys was to monitor the wildlife and biodiversity in the LVNP which would contribute to the adaptive management of the LVNP. She supplemented that the frequent monitoring of the Chinese Banyan, which was an iconic tree at the centre of the Farmers' Forum of the Visitor Zone, was in response to the recent outbreak of *Phaуда flammans* that had infested Chinese Banyans in the North District. She further supplemented that all other plant species would be monitored twice a year.

36. Ms Aidia Chan went on to explain that weeds would be removed from the farmland bunds in the Agriculture Zone to minimise adverse impact on the crops. Pointing out that the seeds of weeds might spread across the zones should there be no regular weeding in the Biodiversity Zone, a Member suggested that the AFCD should devise appropriate planting plans such as growing nectar plants at field bunds to prevent the spreading of weeds and attract different wildlife.

37. A Member enquired about the management of habitats in the vicinity of the LVNP and mitigation measures for the contaminated discharge. Ms Aidia Chan responded that relevant departments had been looking into the issue of the contaminated discharge flowing into the LVNP. As regard the information on the mitigating actions

taken by the relevant departments on the contaminated discharge from neighbouring area into the LVNP, the information would be provided after the meeting.

[Post-meeting note: Members were informed of the following information after the meeting on 25 October 2021: The relevant departments, including the AFCD, CEDD, Drainage Services Department and EPD, conducted a joint site meeting with a number of concerned green groups on 30 July 2021, to look into the issue of the contaminated discharge flowing into the LVNP. The meeting agreed that the identified contaminated discharge would be collected by dry weather flow interceptors and conveyed via public sewer for proper treatment at the government sewage treatment works.]

38. A Member enquired and another Member suggested that the Government should enhance the habitat management in the vicinity of the LVNP with a view to generating a synergistic effect and further enhancing the habitat connectivity outside the LVNP. Ms Aidia Chan advised that the farmlands in the vicinity of the LVNP and the ongoing conservation project under the Nature Conservation Management Agreement Scheme (MA) in Ho Sheung Heung would give a synergistic effect with the LVNP and in enhancing connectivity with habitats in the vicinity. The Chairman suggested that the AFCD should work closely with green groups to draw references from their valuable experiences in the previous relevant MA projects.

Visitor Management

39. In response to a Member's question about the operator of the Visitor Zone and the visitor centre, Ms Aidia Chan replied that the AFCD would take up the management of the Visitor Zone and visitor centre after the completion of construction works. Another Member was concerned about the potential disturbances from the visitors. Ms Aidia Chan replied that soft management approach would be adopted to manage visitors by reducing the number of access points with the use of soft landscape features and visitor walkways to guide the circulation of visitors within the Visitor Zone. Additional manpower would be deployed to assist in visitor management during peak season where necessary.

40. In reply to a Member's enquiry about any regulations for controlling improper behaviour causing damages or disturbances to the habitats in the LVNP, Ms Aidia Chan replied that the AFCD would take up the management role of the LVNP mainly by deploying appropriate management measures. Relevant legislation, including the Forests and Countryside Ordinance (Cap. 96) and Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170), would be enforced in the LVNP where necessary.

41. Pointing out that the large number of coaches dropping off travellers in Ho Sheung Heung during the weekends might bring disturbances to the habitats of the

LVNP, a Member suggested and echoed by another Member that the AFCD should devise a detailed visitor management plan with a view to minimising the potential disturbances to the habitats while offering public enjoyment.

42. A Member was concerned that cycling in the LVNP might cause damages and disturbances to the habitats and wildlife. While cycling would not be encouraged in the LVNP in principle, Ms Aidia Chan pointed out that some farmers and villagers nearby relied on cycling in their daily commutes in the neighbourhood. She advised that the AFCD would closely monitor the situation and take appropriate management measures with a view to conserving the habitats and reducing the disturbances to wildlife. Ms Chan went on to explain that while it might not be feasible to ban all commercial activities in the LVNP, the AFCD would strive to manage visitor activities with appropriate management measures.

Accessibility to LVNP

43. The Chairman asked on behalf of a Member who was unable to attend the meeting on the accessibility of the LVNP for villagers nearby in the future. Ms Aidia Chan advised that the LVNP would allow open access to the public to respect the needs of farmers and nearby villagers for daily commutes.

44. A Member was concerned that the locations of the Visitor Zone, Agriculture Zone and Biodiversity Zone might not complement the transportation and access points of the LVNP. Ms Aidia Chan advised that it was designed for the visitors to start their journey with the Visitor Centre and then make a round-trip in the Visitor Zone following the visitor walkway. She added that the cycle track near the Visitor Centre would also facilitate visitors to access to the LVNP.

45. The Chairman suggested that the AFCD should liaise with relevant departments on diverting public transportation towards the main entrance of the LVNP to complement the overall zoning and design of the LVNP. A Member further suggested extending the visitor walkway to provide entrances and exits for visitors coming from different directions. Ms Aidia Chan thanked the Chairman and the Member for their suggestions and would take them into considerations as appropriate.

Education

46. To enhance public education and academic research, a Member suggested that the AFCD should publish the findings gathered from the ecological surveys in the LVNP. Another Member further suggested that the AFCD should encourage the participation of different green groups in organising education activities in the LVNP. Ms Aidia Chan said that the AFCD would welcome collaboration with green groups in

organising education activities in the LVNP as appropriate. They would also publish the findings from the ecological surveys in appropriate platforms.

47. A Member went on to suggest that considerations should be given in the design of the walkway to facilitate visitors to have a close contact with the farmlands. Ms Aidia Chan advised that the walkway was designed to provide safe and accessible routes for all visitors including the elderly and children. She added that the AFCD would welcome suggestions for organising more in-depth education activities for visitors as appropriate.

Advisory Group

48. The Chairman asked on behalf of a Member about the composition of the LVNP Advisory Group and whether village representatives could participate in the Advisory Group. Ms Aidia Chan replied that the LVNP Advisory Group would include academia, conservation groups, agriculture sector, education and publicity sector and locals. She added that the AFCD would maintain close communication with the village representatives and engage them in the Advisory Group in the future as appropriate.

Construction Progress

49. A Member enquired whether the Government would monitor and ensure that the construction works would follow the plan devised in the approved Environmental Impact Assessment Report. Ms Aidia Chan explained that there had not been any significant adverse impact on the biodiversity of Long Valley according to the regular ecological monitoring. Furthermore, breeding of bird species of conservation importance was recorded in the Long Valley during construction in the current breeding season, which was an encouraging finding on the conservation in the LVNP.

50. The Chairman asked on behalf of a Member on the progress of compensation for the landlords of the Long Valley and whether the progress of the construction would be deferred. Ms Aidia Chan responded that, to her understanding, the compensation issue had largely been settled and it was expected that the construction of the LVNP would be completed on schedule.

Resources for Operation

51. Considering that the LVNP would be open to the public with no entry fee, a Member remarked that substantial financial and human resources might be required to manage and sustain the LVNP and suggested that the AFCD should devise plans on the necessary resources to ensure the sustainable development and quality management of the LVNP.

Evaluation of the Impact

52. Two Members enquired about parameters for evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement works in the Long Valley on biodiversity and conservation of wildlife species. Ms Aidia Chan advised that there were a number of monitoring parameters as set out in the Habitat Creation and Management Plan of the LVNP in evaluating the effectiveness of the management measures, e.g. number of bird species of conservation importance recorded.

53. In reply to a Member's question on the impact of the LVNP in decarbonisation having regard to Government's policy for decarbonisation before 2050, Ms Aidia Chan replied that the Visitor Centre of the LVNP had obtained the Provisional Platinum BEAM Plus rating of the Hong Kong Green Building Council. She also aspired that the use of eco-friendly farming practices and the enhanced habitats might contribute to decarbonisation to a certain extent.

Succession Planning for Farmers

54. As most of the local farmers were elderly, the Chairman stressed the importance of supporting the sustainable development of agriculture through improving the career prospect for farming to attract new blood into the industry. A Member concurred with the Chairman and supplemented that the AFCD should consider grooming "career farmers" through recruiting farmers and providing them with stable income and better career prospect.

Conclusion

55. The Chairman summarised the views of Members and thanked the AFCD representatives for the presentation and detailed explanation to address the questions and concerns raised by Members. Mr Simon Chan thanked Members for their valuable comments and suggestions and advised that the AFCD would take them into consideration in devising the future management plan as appropriate.

[Ms Aidia Chan and Dr Kevin Ho of AFCD left the meeting at this juncture.]

Item 4 : Any Other Business

(i) Discussion on Firefly Conservation

56. The Chairman informed that two Members proposed to discuss the firefly conservation issue in Hong Kong. A news article shared by the two Members on this

subject had been circulated to Members before the meeting to facilitate the discussion.

57. On the invitation of the Chairman, the two Members briefed the meeting on the news article regarding the threat to the population of fireflies due to the newly installed street lamps which might affect the breeding of the fireflies, particularly in Tei Tong Tsai of Lantau and Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve.

58. A Member was concerned about the justifications for installing additional street lamps in Tei Tong Tsai and the remedial actions taken in response to the threat to fireflies. Mr Simon Chan advised that the Highways Department applied for four additional street lamps on the village roads to enhance the safety for villagers. Ecological survey had been conducted and found that fireflies could be found in the area. As remedial action, the Highways Department would install light shield to the street lamps to reduce the brightness to minimise the potential impact on the fireflies.

59. In response to a Member's enquiry about the conservation measures of fireflies in hotspots such as Tei Tong Tsai and Tai Po, Mr Simon Chan advised that the AFCDD had reminded relevant organisations of the guidelines on fireflies observation before the peak season. To educate the public on the proper behaviour when observing fireflies, information boards had been displayed and front-line staff of the AFCDD would be deployed to provide assistance during peak season at the hotspots such as Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve.

60. In reply to a Member's question about survey on the distribution of fireflies in Hong Kong, Mr Simon Chan informed that ecological survey had been carried out by the AFCDD to gather information on the distribution of fireflies in Hong Kong since 2009, which would serve as references in assessing the impacts of development projects.

61. Responding to the Chairman's question about follow-up survey on the fireflies to evaluate the effectiveness of the remedial actions, Mr Simon Chan advised that ecological survey had been conducted from time to time and would be continued to monitor the overall status of firefly conservation.

62. Responding to a Member's suggestion for organisations to obtain prior approval from the AFCDD on conducting fireflies observation tours in the Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, Mr Simon Chan considered that emphasis should be placed on strengthening public education on the proper behaviours to observe fireflies instead of imposing restrictions.

63. As regards a Member's suggestion to include fireflies in the conservation action plans and to conduct species assessment, Mr Simon Chan advised that fireflies

were conserved through the protection of their habitats currently. Priority was accorded on the conservation of species such as Chinese Pangolin and Big-headed Turtle under the conservation action plans set out in the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021. He supplemented that the AFCD would closely monitor the conservation status of fireflies and review the need to devise additional conservation plans accordingly.

(ii) *Discussion on the Findings of the Study entitled “Ecological correlates of 20-year population trends of wintering waterbirds in Deep Bay, South China”*

64. The Chairman shared that the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society published the findings of the study entitled “Ecological correlates of 20-year population trends of wintering waterbirds in Deep Bay, South China” which provided valuable information on wetland conservation. In view of the time required for the discussion, the Chairman proposed to invite representatives of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to present the findings under AOB in the next NCSC meeting.

(iii) *Discussion on Pest Problem of *Phaуда flammans**

65. The Chairman informed that a Member proposed to discuss the pest problem of the moth *Phaуда flammans*. A news article shared by the Member on this subject had been circulated to Members before the meeting to facilitate the discussion.

66. On the invitation of the Chairman, the Member briefed the meeting about the reports of the surge in *Phaуда flammans* which consumed most of the leaves of Ficus trees. She enquired about the mitigating measures for controlling the pest problem. Mr Simon Chan advised that while the larvae of *Phaуда flammans* feeding on the leaves of Ficus trees was a natural phenomenon, the situation had become more severe due to the persistent high temperature in summer which accelerated the growth of the moth. In most cases, the leaves of Ficus trees would grow back and the infestation would not have a serious impact on the overall health and structural conditions of the infested trees. To prevent the spread of the infestation, Mr Chan advised that relevant departments would enhance the frequency of regular inspection to closely monitor the affected trees. Relevant departments had also adopted preventive maintenance work including spraying soap water on affected tree crown or insecticide on tree trunk and wrapping the tree trunk with straw bags to trap the larvae. New control measures such as soil injection for the trees to absorb insecticide from the roots up to the leaves for killing the larvae would be adopted as appropriate.

67. In response to a Member's question about the natural predators of *Phaуда flammans* which might be deployed to mitigate the pest problem, Mr Simon Chan informed that natural enemy such as birds or wasps might not be able to curb the pest

problem given the large number of the larvae of *Phaуда flammans*. Another Member shared that global warming contributed to the pest problem and researchers around the world were still looking for solutions.

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

Item 5 : Date of next meeting

69. The Chairman said that Members would be advised on the date of the next meeting and the agenda in due course.

**Nature Conservation Subcommittee Secretariat
August 2021**