

**Advisory Council on the Environment  
Nature Conservation Subcommittee  
Meeting on 10 December 2015 at 4:00 p.m.  
In Room 1523, 15/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices, Tamar**

**Confirmed Minutes of Meeting**

**Present**

- Prof. CHAU Kwai-cheong (Chairman)
- Ir. CHAN Wing-hong, Cary
- Prof. FUNG Tung
- Dr. HAU Chi-hang, Billy
- Dr. LAU Wai-neng, Michael
- Prof. Albert LEE
- Prof. NG Cheuk-yee, John
- Prof. TAM Fung-yee, Nora
- Ir. WONG Tin-cheung, Conrad
- Mr. WONG Yuen-fai, Stanley
- Ms. YAU Lai-ping, Pansy

**Absent with Apologies**

- Dr. TSANG Po-keung, Eric

**In Attendance**

*Environmental Protection Department (EPD)*

- Mr. CHAN Wai-kee, Howard – Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
- Mr. AU Wai-kwong, Elvis – Assistant Director (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning)
- Ms. CHAN Wai-yan, Vivian – Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation) (Secretary)
- Ms. CHAN Sin-wai, Aida – Forestry Officer (Nature Conservation)
- Ms. CHAN Yuk-ying, Daisy – Executive Assistant (Nature Conservation)

*Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)*

- Mr. CHAN Kin-fung, Simon – Assistant Director (Conservation) (Acting)

- Dr. YIP yin, Jackie - Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity)
- Mr. WONG Kwong-chiu, Alfred – Senior Country Parks Officer (Ranger Services) (Acting)

### **In Attendance for Agenda Item 3**

#### **Environmental Association Limited (EA)**

- Dr. YAU Wing-kwong – Chief Executive Officer
- Ms. Colleen CHIU – Project Manager (Nature Conservation)
- Mr. Nelson SO – Assistant Project Manager (Nature Conservation)

#### **Sai Kung District Community Centre (SKDCC)**

- Ms. Angie CHAN – Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. William CHAN – Business Director (SE)

### **Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 16 June 2015**

1. The Chairman welcomed Ms. Vivian CHAN as the new secretary of the Advisory Council on the Environment Nature Conservation Subcommittee (NCSC) and welcomed Members to the meeting. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 16 June 2015 had been circulated to Members. Proposed amendments in paragraphs 5 and 24 had been received via email. The Chairman asked Members if there was any further comment to the draft minutes. Members had no further comment and the minutes were confirmed.

### **Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising**

2. The Chairman invited Ms. Vivian CHAN to update members on the follow-up of the approval conditions by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) on the two Fish Pond MA projects, i.e. ‘Hong Kong Got Fishpond – Eco-fishpond Management Agreement Scheme 2015-17’ and ‘Fishpond Conservation Scheme in Ramsar Site 2015-17’. Among others, three sets of questionnaires (i.e. for fishpond operators, eco-tour participants and volunteers) had been prepared in consultation with Dr. TSANG Po-keung, Eric for both projects. Besides, the HKBWS would conduct an oral history project on traditional pond fish farming of

the North-west New Territories to fill the information gap on that aspect. They would also explore the possibility of listing the farming practice as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

### **Agenda Item 3: Applications under Nature Conservation Management Agreement Scheme**

3. The Chairman reminded Members that to avoid conflict of interests, those who were directly or indirectly related to Management Agreement (MA) projects should declare conflict of interests before the discussion of the two applications. Applicants of the two MA applications were the Environmental Association Limited (EA) and Sai Kung District Community Centre (SKDCC).
4. A Member declared that he was the honourable advisor of the Tai Po Environmental Association (now called the Environmental Association) but had no direct participation in the project. After consulting Members, the Chairman ruled that the Member could participate in the discussion as the latter did not directly participate in the project nor had any conflict of interest.
5. The Chairman informed Members that the two applications had been considered by the Assessment Panel which comprised members from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The Assessment Panel would first present the assessment results of the Fung Yuen application. The representatives of the application would then be invited to join and present their application and answer questions from Members. After that, the representatives would leave the meeting and Members would consider the application. The above procedure would be repeated for the Sai Wan application.

Session 1 - Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest

in Tai Po, Hong Kong

6. The Chairman invited Dr. Jackie YIP to brief Members on the Fung Yuen application. Dr. Jackie YIP informed Members that the applicant had conducted MA projects at Fung Yuen since late 2005. The goal of the current application is to maintain the impetus of the previous MA projects and to further enhance the ecological value of the ecologically important private lands at Fung Yuen. In general, the Assessment Panel considered the application worth supporting, in view of the benefits that the project would bring to the conservation of butterflies and in raising public awareness on nature conservation.
7. After Dr. Jackie YIP's introduction, the Chairman invited representatives from the EA to join the meeting. Ms. Colleen CHIU presented the project:
  - The project aimed at conserving and enhancing the natural habitats of butterflies in the Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) through management agreements with local landowners;
  - the project had three major programmes: (1) site safeguard and ecological monitoring programme involving ecological surveys mainly on butterflies and birds; (2) habitat management programme involving removal of invasive weeds and habitat management workshops for volunteers; and (3) species conservation programme involving running of plant nursery and butterfly nursery facilities;
  - the project would be reinforced with a number of supporting programmes: (1) consultation programme; (2) community development programme; and (3) conservation training, education and publicity programme.
8. A Member enquired how Fung Yuen could accommodate the large number of visitors without affecting the ecosystem there. He also asked about the possibility of using mobile apps to help the public to identify butterfly species.

9. Dr. YAU Wing-kwong responded that there were normally two tour groups per day, with hundreds of visitors in weekends. They adopted crowd control measures in weekends when there were large numbers of visitors. To overcome the space limitation problem at Fung Yuen, EA carried out outreaching programmes to promote butterfly conservation in the community. For instance, they had assisted 15 schools to set up their own butterfly gardens. There were also regular workshops for secondary and tertiary students to enhance their awareness on butterfly conservation. Regarding the idea of mobile apps, the EA had already developed one to assist the public to identify butterflies in a laymen-friendly way.
10. A Member asked if there was any new element in the current application. He also suggested the EA to share their knowledge with other sectors through developing guidelines on setting up butterfly gardens.
11. Dr. YAU Wing-kwong replied that they had published books to share their experience in setting up butterfly gardens. The books included the technical consideration for setting up butterfly gardens, as well as selecting suitable host plants and nectar plants.
12. A Member asked if logistic arrangement could be explored to facilitate kindergarten to visit Fung Yuen. Dr. YAU Wing-kwong responded that they received kindergarten students at Fung Yuen from time to time. The activities provided valuable experience to the young children and encouraged them to get in touch with nature. He concurred that it was important to start educating children about nature conservation at a young age.
13. A Member raised the following questions: (1) what was the focus of the project; (2) whether the database would be shared with the public; (3) what had the applicant done with respect to the residential development nearby; and (4) what had EA done to promote the New Nature Conservation Policy (NNCP) and minimise irregularities.

14. Mr. Nelson SO replied that EA had set up a butterfly database through some survey programmes involving secondary students. However, the data were very preliminary and was intended for internal reference only.
15. In response to the third question, Ms. Colleen CHIU indicated that they had been working closely with the estate management company of the nearby housing estate. For instance, they organised eco-tours for the residents to visit Fung Yuen and invited the residents to join the Butterfly Festival. The EA would be invited to attend the residents meeting when more residents moved in. After establishing relationships with the residents, they would invite them to be volunteers for deeper involvement in butterfly conservation.
16. In response to the final question, Dr. YAU Wing-kwong explained that information on the NNCP and the operation of the MA scheme was included in the briefing and debriefing sessions of their eco-tours. They also introduced the NNCP and MA scheme in detail particularly to university students and Mainland officials who visited Fung Yuen. On minimising irregularities, he expressed that irregularities had been minimised as they had rented majority of the private lands at Fung Yuen and had established positive relationships with the landowners and residents there.
17. A Member suggested that the collected data could be shared with the participating schools / students or the public, which would serve to raise public awareness. She also suggested the EA to share relevant data with the developer of the nearby housing estate so that they would know the impact of the development to the butterflies. The developer could then take appropriate measures to minimise the ecological impacts. Dr. YAU Wing-kwong welcomed the suggestion.
18. A Member considered it was important to understand the impact of the nearby housing estate on the butterflies at Fung Yuen, not only at the Fung Yuen SSSI but also the surrounding area. He suggested the EA to

conduct a comprehensive and systematic survey and analysis to understand the possible impact. A Member supplemented that the use of aerial photos over time would provide useful information. Two Members expressed that it was important to understand the interaction between human activities and biodiversity, with a view to striking a balance between their co-existence.

19. Dr. YAU Wing-kwong concurred that it would be useful to understand the possible impact, but explained that such work required considerable manpower which the EA did not have.
20. Mr. Howard CHAN suggested that the EA could consider collaborating with suitable tertiary institutions and applying for funding from the ECF as a separate project if it was justified to do so.

*(Representatives of the EA left at this juncture.)*

21. Members generally supported the application with the following conditions:
  - i. Questionnaires - to better understand the awareness and behavioural change of the local community, volunteers and visitors towards biodiversity conservation, the EA should prepare and conduct questionnaires to understand the conceptual change of the local community and behavioural change of volunteers and visitors in the project;
  - ii. Reporting – the EA was suggested to include in the reports observation on implementation of the project and management of the Fung Yuen area from a holistic / strategic angle;
  - iii. Interface with nearby residential development – the nearby residential development and Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve was considered a good example in demonstrating the interface between development and biodiversity conservation. The EA was suggested to provide relevant data in the reports; and
  - iv. Focal Activities / Programmes – to make effective use of resources, the EA was advised to review and prioritise its work

plan / programmes, and identify focal activities / programmes for the project.

*(End of Session 1)*

*(A Member left at this juncture)*

## Session 2 - Rehabilitation Project for Sai Wan Area

22. The Chairman invited Mr. Alfred WONG to brief Members on the Rehabilitation Project for Sai Wan Area. Mr. Alfred WONG introduced that it was the first MA application at country park enclaves. The Sai Wan enclave had been designated as part of the Sai Kung East Country Park in December 2013 with a view to improving the management of the area, enhancing the overall conservation and landscape value of the area, and increasing visitors' enjoyment of the amenity. During the consultation for country park designation, there had already been discussion on seeking funding support from the ECF, for implementing a MA project in Sai Wan in order to effectively manage the private land and help villagers maintain a living, while conserving the historic, cultural and ecological values of Sai Wan. The aim of the application was to revitalise Sai Wan through the concerted efforts of relevant stakeholders and the rural community to conserve the ecological habitats, showcase the cultural uniqueness of the area and improve the livelihood of local villagers. In general, the Assessment Panel considered the application worth supporting, in view of the benefits that the project would bring to the enhancement of the overall conservation and scenic values of Sai Wan through cooperation between a non-governmental organisation and local landowners.

*(A Member left at this juncture)*

23. The Chairman invited representatives from the SKDCC to join the meeting. Ms. Angie CHAN introduced that the project would include the



following activities:-

- rehabilitation of the abandoned agricultural land for organic farming;
- preservation and management of the existing seasonal wetland;
- enhancement of habitats for butterflies;
- active management of key habitats including removal of invasive species, planting of mangroves and litter collection;
- renovation of a historic well and three village houses to serve as information centre and workshops; and
- carrying out education programmes including workshops and guided tours, as well as other publicity programmes.

24. A Member proposed to link up the activities with a theme for a more coherent presentation. He also expressed that it was important to monitor the impacts, be it positive or negative, of their work to the environment / biodiversity at Sai Wan. The Chairman, on behalf of a Member, commented that the conservation works proposed were relatively simple and suggested the SKDCC to conduct a systematic ecological baseline survey at Sai Wan to obtain information on the ecological value of the site and the information could provide a basis for subsequent monitoring. Mr. William CHAN responded that as the SKDCC did not have the relevant expertise, they would explore the possibility of inviting a suitable party, e.g. a tertiary institution, to undertake the baseline survey and monitoring.

25. A Member expressed that, firstly, it was important to engage local villagers and asked what the SKDCC had done to engage local villagers. Secondly, she considered that the expected number of visitors was on the low side and suggested the SKDCC to put more effort in promotion to boost up the number of visitors. It was also important to monitor the effectiveness of the activities in raising the participants' knowledge on the culture and history of Sai Wan, as well as their awareness on nature conservation. Thirdly, she was of the view that tree tour would be a more appropriate activity than tree climbing.

26. Mr. William CHAN explained that local villagers would be engaged as

tour guides and workshop instructors, besides their involvement in the rehabilitation of the historic well and village houses. He added that questionnaires could be distributed to participants in order to evaluate any positive impact on their knowledge and attitude after the activities. He also agreed that tree climbing activities could be changed to tree tours. Ms. Angie CHAN supplemented that they would promote the activities through the website to be developed by SKDCC as well as through SKDCC's network. The expected number of visitors was on the conservative side considering that the first six months would be for preparation and Sai Wan was relatively remote.

27. A Member suggested engaging young farmers to carry out organic farming. Ms. Angie CHAN responded that she also wished to engage young farmers but it might not be easy in view of the job nature and the inconvenient location of Sai Wan.
28. A Member inquired what the biggest challenge of the project would be. He also commented that some activities, such as sand sculpture activity, did not match with the theme of the project. He worried that the beach environment might become very messy after the activity. Mr. William CHAN replied that the biggest challenge would be remoteness and inaccessibility of Sai Wan. For the sand sculpture activity, beach cleaning would be organised afterwards to tidy up the place.

*(A Member left at this juncture)*

29. The Chairman, on behalf of a Member, commented that it would be desirable if more historic buildings could be renovated. Ms. Angie CHAN replied that they only managed to renovate three village houses due to limited resources. Besides, many of the historic buildings at Sai Wan, e.g. the Catholic Church and Tin Hau Temple, had already collapsed. On the other hand, she proposed that the genealogy record of Sai Wan village and some old farming tools could be displayed in the visitor centre to showcase the cultural uniqueness of the village.
30. The Chairman considered that it was necessary to form a steering

committee to oversee the project. Besides, he was concerned about the possible impact on the environment of Sai Wan by the large number of visitors attracted by the project. He suggested the SKDCC prepare a site management plan to delineate different usage zones at Sai Wan. He also proposed the SKDCC to develop a long-term and sustainable volunteer programme to further raise the awareness of the public on biodiversity conservation. Ms. Angie CHAN agreed to these suggestions.

31. Mr. Howard CHAN asked whether the SKDCC had obtained support from local villagers on the project. Ms. Angie CHAN confirmed that all relevant stakeholders were involved and they were supportive of the project.

*(Representatives of the SKDCC left at this juncture.)*

*(A Member left at this juncture)*

32. Members generally supported the application with the following conditions:
- i. Steering Committee – The SKDCC should set up a steering committee to oversee and provide steer to the project. The steering committee should comprise relevant stakeholders and experts / practitioners / academics in the relevant field;
  - ii. Management Plan – In view of the possible user impact to Sai Wan from increased visitors as a result of the project, the SKDCC should prepare a site management plan for the Sai Wan area (e.g. core zone for areas susceptible to increased visitors, activity zone for high intensity use, etc.);
  - iii. Baseline Ecological Monitoring – to better understand the baseline ecological condition of Sai Wan, and its possible changes before and after the project, the SKDCC was advised to carry out regular ecological monitoring at Sai Wan;
  - iv. Questionnaires - to better understand the awareness and behavioural change of villagers, volunteers and visitors towards biodiversity conservation, the SKDCC should prepare and conduct

questionnaires to understand the conceptual change of villagers and behavioural change of volunteers and visitors in the project; and

- v. Volunteer Programme – the SKDCC was suggested to develop a long-term and sustainable volunteer programme with a view to raising the awareness of the public in biodiversity conservation.

*(End of Session 2)*

### **Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business**

- 32. Regarding the recent excavation and vegetation clearance at Sha Lo Tung, a Member hoped that the Government would follow up the case to avoid any further damage to the site.
- 33. Mr. Simon CHAN responded that the excavation and vegetation clearance took place at private lots. The Planning Department had issued a notice under Section 23 of the Town Planning Ordinance to the concerned lot owners. The District Lands Office/Tai Po had also erected warning signs on government land. The AFCD had stepped up monitoring of the Sha Lo Tung SSSI and would assist the work of other relevant government departments where necessary.

**Secretariat**

**Nature Conservation Subcommittee**

**Advisory Council on the Environment**

**April 2016**