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**Extension of Sham Wan Restricted Area and
Deletion of Yim Tso Ha Egrettry Restricted Area**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs members on the proposed plan of the extension of Sham Wan Restricted Area and deletion of Yim Tso Ha Egrettry Restricted Area, and invites members' view on the proposal.

SHAM WAN RESTRICTED AREA

2. Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is an endangered sea turtle species under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, and is protected in Hong Kong under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (the Ordinance) (Cap. 170). Green Turtle is the only sea turtle that regularly nests locally. Every few years, mature Green Turtles travel a long distance from their foraging grounds to breeding areas. Mating takes place in the waters near the nesting beach and female Green Turtles will come ashore at night to lay one clutch of eggs at a time. Each clutch comprises about 100 eggs. Female Green Turtles lay three to seven clutches of eggs at an interval of 12 to 14 days during the nesting season. The hatchlings have low survival rate in the wild, and it generally takes a Green Turtle over 20 years to reach sexual maturity.

3. Sham Wan Beach (the Beach) on Lamma Island is the only site in Hong Kong in which Green Turtles are seen nesting regularly. In order to minimise disturbance to Green Turtles as well as their nests and eggs during the nesting seasons, the sandy beach of Sham Wan was designated in 1999 as a Restricted Area under the Ordinance. The annual restricted period is from 1 June to 31 October every year to cover the nesting period of Green Turtles.

4. Green Turtles are very sensitive to human disturbance during the nesting seasons. Since breeding Green Turtles stay in waters adjacent to their nesting sites, both the Beach and the bay at Sham Wan (the Bay) are important habitats for breeding Green Turtles. At present, the Bay is a popular destination for boating activities and supports some fishing activities. These human activities may cause disturbance (e.g. noise and light) and pose dangers (e.g. boat collision and entanglement with fishing nets) to Green Turtles in Sham Wan. There is a genuine need to control the access of the public to the Bay for enhanced protection of Green Turtles.

5. Access control is widely recognised as an effective measure to minimise human disturbance to sensitive habitats such as nesting sites of sea turtles. This measure has been adopted in the Guangdong Huidong Gangkou Sea Turtle National Nature Reserve (廣東惠東港口海龜國家級自然保護區) to restrict human access to the nesting beach and the adjacent waters¹. To strengthen the protection of nesting Green Turtles in Sham Wan, the Government committed in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Agenda to expand the Sham Wan Restricted Area to cover Green Turtles' breeding grounds in the adjacent waters. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is consulting stakeholders on the expansion of the Sham Wan Restricted Area.

6. At present, the restriction period of the Sham Wan Restricted Area covers only the nesting period of the Green Turtles (i.e. June to October). With a view to minimising, as far as practicable, human-induced disturbance or dangers to breeding Green Turtles in waters adjacent to the nesting site before the onset of the nesting period, we also propose to extend the restriction period to the full year to strengthen the control on access. The proposal to extend the restricted period and expand the Sham Wan Restricted Area will allow more comprehensive protection of Green Turtles and their breeding grounds.

YIM TSO HA EGRETRY RESTRICTED AREA

7. Yim Tso Ha Egretry Restricted Area is located at the fung shui wood behind the village of Yim Tso Ha in Starling Inlet of north-eastern New Territories. It was once the largest egretry for nesting egrets and herons in Hong Kong during the 1970s and 80s, with up to 526 breeding pairs recorded in 1971. The area was

¹ According to「廣東省惠東海龜國家級自然保護區管理辦法」, access to the protected area in particular its core area is prohibited at all times, except when approval is granted by the relevant authority.

designated as a Restricted Area in 1971 with an annual restriction period from 1 April to 30 September. It was also listed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1975.

8. The population of nesting egrets and herons at the site greatly declined in the 1990s and the egretty has been abandoned since 1994. In view of this, the Yim Tso Ha Egretty SSSI was de-listed from the SSSI Register in 2016. The proposed deletion of Yim Tso Ha Egretty Restricted Area is a logical follow-up action to reflect its latest status.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

9. With regard to the Sham Wan Restricted Area, further restriction of access to the Beach and the Bay would unavoidably affect stakeholders such as boaters, fishermen and residents of the Lamma Island. The Government will liaise with various stakeholders in 2019 to seek their views on the proposal. Consultation with the relevant stakeholders will also be carried out for the proposed delisting of Yim Tso Ha Egretty Restricted Area. We will then make preparation for the relevant legislative procedures for expanding the Sham Wan Restricted Area and extending its restriction period, as well as deleting Yim Tso Ha Egretty Restricted Area from the Ordinance.

ADVICE SOUGHT

10. Members are invited to give their views on the proposals on the expansion of the Sham Wan Restricted Area and extension of its restriction period, as well as the deletion of Yim Tso Ha Egretty Restricted Area.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Environmental Protection Department
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