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***For discussion on 19 December 2019***

**Public Education Programmes on Marine Biodiversity**

**PURPOSE**

This paper brief Members on the public education programmes on marine biodiversity organised by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD).

**BACKGROUND**

2. Hong Kong has its unique geographic and hydrographic features. The territory is encompassed by a complex coastline and over 200 islands, which offers a great variety of habitats for a high diversity of marine organisms to live in. Despite its small size, Hong Kong's marine environment is home to over 5 700 marine species, including some iconic flagship species like Chinese white dolphins, corals, green turtles and horseshoe crabs.

3. In order to engage more people of different backgrounds and interests in actions for conservation, AFCD builds on the existing network of community partners in promoting biodiversity to the public, and expands the partnership throughout the term of the first Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). To promote the beauty of marine life and habitats in Hong Kong and enhance the public awareness of the importance of marine biodiversity and conservation, AFCD organises a variety of public education activities on marine biodiversity and conservation for students, teachers, recreational divers and the public. These education activities include volunteering programmes, workshops, guided tours, lectures, contests and other thematic events. Through citizen science programmes,

citizens are directly involved to assist in data collection for projects supporting the protection of the environment. Key public education programmes on marine biodiversity are elaborated as follows.

## **KEY PROGRAMMES**

### Hong Kong Marine Biodiversity Roving Exhibition

4. The roving exhibition on Hong Kong Marine Biodiversity has been held since 2017 to enrich public's understanding on the rich marine biodiversity of Hong Kong and to promote marine conservation messages. The exhibitions included marine-themed information panels, interactive games, marine life gallery, photo-taking booths, and specimen display. In addition to fun facts of some iconic local species, various conservation measures implemented by AFCD were also introduced on the exhibition. A video with local scientists introducing the marine biodiversity in Hong Kong was produced to allow the public to understand more on our marine lives and habitats.

5. The exhibitions were held in five shopping malls in different districts each year to reach out to wider public audience. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, over 44 800, 36 000 and 30 000 members of the public visited the exhibitions respectively in a six-month period.

### Hong Kong Underwater Photo and Video Competition

6. With Hong Kong Underwater Association as the co-organiser, the Hong Kong Underwater Photo and Video Competition has been organised since 2012 and has become one of the major events for local diving communities. It aims to promote the beauty of underwater marine life and habitats in Hong Kong as well as to raise public awareness of the importance in conserving our marine environment. Seminars and workshops on underwater photography and videography were conducted to equip the participants with the responsible diving Dos and Don'ts. Necessary knowledge and skills for taking underwater photos and videos were also shared with the participants.

7. Winning entries of the competition were exhibited in four shopping malls and Dive & Resort Travel Expo in Hong Kong, as well as displayed in AFCD's social media platforms to promote marine conservation messages to the public. Over 700 entries were received in the competition in 2019.

### Hong Kong Marine Classroom

8. Launched in June 2019, the Hong Kong Marine Classroom is an interactive website administrated by AFCD to engage both primary and secondary school students and teachers to participate in various marine conservation activities organised by the department. Activities including school talks, eco-tours and coastal clean-ups are arranged for students to learn about marine parks and local marine biodiversity including reef fishes, corals, Chinese white dolphins and coastal ecology of Ting Kok. Exhibition panels on marine parks, Chinese white dolphins and horseshoe crabs are also available for lending out for display in schools. Information such as volunteer programmes and competitions are available on the website and students may register for various activities online. Educational information and programmes have been disseminated through various social media platforms. Thematic pamphlets have also been distributed to about 1 200 local secondary and primary schools.

9. In the summer of 2018 and 2019, a course on marine ecology and conservation was organised at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to about 40 Form 4 and Form 5 students. The course aims to equip students with in depth knowledge, arouse their interest in marine research and conservation, as well as to encourage them to pursuit further study in marine conservation in future. School talks on marine biodiversity and coral conservation were held in local secondary schools by the Education University of Hong Kong under a train-the-trainer programme.

### Ting Kok Coastal Conservation Plan

10. In view of the rich marine resources and scenic value of Ting Kok, Shuen Wan Hoi as well as Tolo Harbour and Channel, the Government initiated the Ting Kok Coastal Conservation Plan in 2012. The Plan serves to enhance the ecological conservation work at the Ting Kok Site of Special Scientific Interest and Ting Kok East and to raise public awareness of the value of coastal ecology. The plan also reviews the education value of the area and how it can be used appropriately by the public, students and researchers.

11. A series of education and publicity activities have been organised by the AFCD, including “Tolo Appreciation” thematic activities, “Light of Tolo and Plover Cove” Photography Competition, Ambassador Scheme and Natural History Course. Regular eco-tours and clean-ups are organised from time to time. AFCD also

launched a new initiative to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based information and education tools for marine biodiversity in Tolo Harbour and Channel. Over 320 activities have been conducted with over 53 000 participants so far.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

12. Members are invited to note the public education programmes on marine biodiversity.

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department**  
**Environmental Protection Department**  
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