

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services

The International Wetland Park at Tin Shui Wai

Purpose

This paper presents for Members' information the background to the International Wetland Park (IWP) project at Tin Shui Wai and the progress with regard to the construction of the Park.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services held on 16 October 2000, Members raised in the context of the IWP, an initiative under the Policy Objective Booklet on Tourism of the Economic Services Bureau, the co-ordination among different bureaux and departments of different policy objectives.

The International Wetland Park and Visitor Centre

Tin Shui Wai New Town Development

3. As part of the new town development at Tin Shui Wai, the Territory Development Department was tasked to construct a 64-hectare ecological mitigation area (EMA) at north-east Tin Shui Wai to compensate for the loss of natural habitats due to urban development and to serve as a buffer between the densely populated Tin Shui Wai New Town and the internationally important Ramsar site, especially Mai Po Marches.

4. The Mai Po Marshes are located in the core area of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar site, entry to which is restricted under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance. At present, the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong organises guided tours for local students and the general public under permits issued by Agriculture, Fisheries and

Conservation Department. Owing to the ecological sensitivity of the Mai Po Marshes, the number of visitors has been restricted to some 40 000 a year to reduce the possibility of adverse environmental impacts. Most tours are fully booked months in advance.

The Project

5. The Government decided in 1999 to make use of the EMA for the development of the IWP, with a visitor centre. A location plan is at the Annex. The IWP located close to the Mai Po Marshes, presents an opportunity to provide a complementary facility which can meet the unsatisfied demand for visits to Hong Kong's wetlands, while at the same time reducing the impact of increased human presence on the ecologically sensitive areas. It will also help publicize the richness and diversity of Hong Kong's wetland ecosystems and highlight the need to conserve them, thus demonstrating the commitment of Hong Kong to conservation and sustainable development. The project also presents an opportunity to provide an education and recreation facility for use by local residents and overseas visitors. The project is intended to raise public awareness and increase knowledge and understanding of the major ecological values and benefits of wetland.

6. While this facility will be the first major eco-tourism initiative to diversify the range of tourist attractions in Hong Kong and enhance its attractiveness as a tourist destination, environmental concern will remain the key priority. The design of the project will take account of prevailing environmental factors to ensure the ecological mitigation function of the subject site will not be compromised and will further enhance and increase the conservation value of the EMA. In short, the proposed IWP and visitor centre will primarily be a conservation and education facility but will also serve recreation and tourism promotion purposes. In view of its multi-functional significance, the facility has been designated as one of the capital works projects in the Administration's Millennium Celebrations Programme.

7. The total estimated project cost is about \$500 million at December 1998 prices. Construction of the project is being taken forward in two phases. Phase 1, with an exhibition pavilion, is now

under construction and is scheduled for completion before the end of the year. This will enable the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to make use of the facilities for conservation education programmes while construction of the EMA by the Territory Development Department and design of Phase 2 of the IWP proceed in parallel. Phase 2 of the Park will comprise a visitor centre with a gross floor area of about 6 000 square metres accommodating facilities for display of permanent and temporary theme exhibits, audio-visual shows, meetings and activities, retail and dining, and also other facilities, like exhibition ponds, external displays, footpaths, footbridges, workshops, planting, plant nursery, etc.

8. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved on 12 November 1999 a sum of \$56.7 million for the construction of the Phase 1 facilities, and pre-contract consultancy for the Phase 2 works and the detailed design. We plan to submit detailed proposals to the Legislative Council for funding the construction of Phase 2 in 2002. The target is to complete construction of the whole park by the end of 2004.

Consultation

9. In conceiving the proposal for developing the IWP, we had consulted the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong, the Conservancy Association, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Friends of the Earth and the Kadaorie Farm and Botanic Garden to solicit their views on the proposed works. We also consulted the Wetland Advisory Committee, and the Town Planning and Development Committee of the then Yuen Long Provisional District Board.

Conclusion

10. Members are invited to note this paper.

Tourism Commission
Economic Services Bureau
15 November 2000

說明
LEGEND

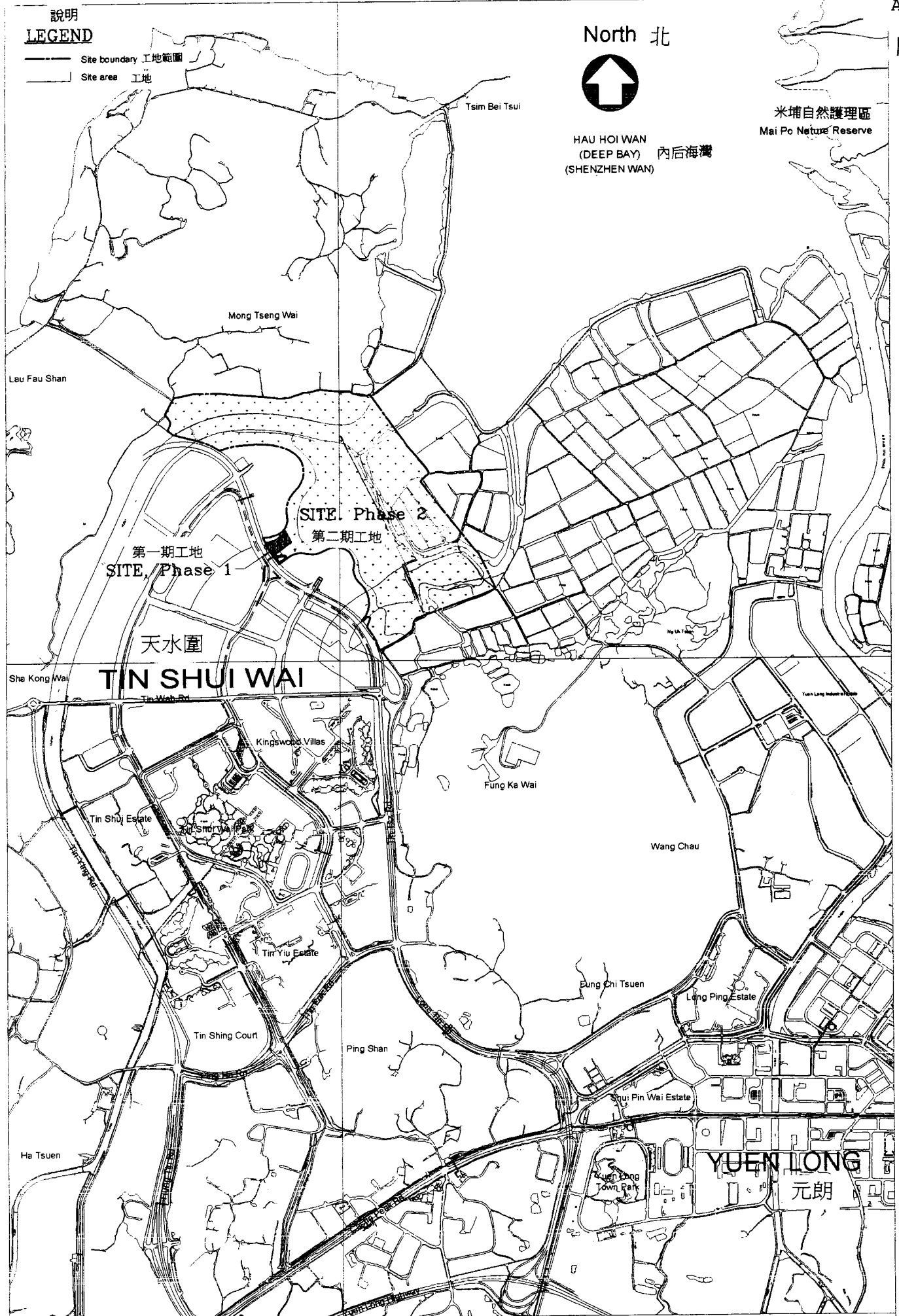
- Site boundary 工地範圍
- Site area 工地

North 北



米埔自然護理區
Mai Po Nature Reserve

HAU HOI WAN
(DEEP BAY) 內后海灣
(SHENZHEN WAN)



313RO/314RO INTERNATIONAL WETLAND PARK AND VISITOR CENTRE AT TIN SHUI WAI - LOCATION PLAN

天水圍國際濕地公園及訪客中心 - 位置圖