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To sjyuen@legco.gov.hk
cc
bcc

Subject Planning Lands and Works Panel - Lantau

To: Ms Odelia Leung, Clerk to the Planning Lands and Works Panel

Dear Ms Leung,

I understand that the Planning Lands and Works Panel will discuss the 'Lantau Concept Plan' at a meeting to be held within the near future.

On behalf of the members of "The 'ark~eden' Project" I request that I be present at this meeting in order to explain our proposals for 'ark~eden' for Lantau. This proposal has already been submitted to the Lantau Development Task Force within the consultation period. I am attaching a copy of our submission and covering letter herewith for your information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Neil McLaughlin

船園

ark ~ eden

The 'ark~eden' Project



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28 February 2005

Lantau Development Task Force
Lantau and Islands District Planning Office
Planning Department
15/F, Sha Tin Government Offices
1 Sheung Wo Che Road
Sha Tin, New Territories

Dear Sirs,

Re: Concept Plan for Lantau

This letter with its enclosure is in response to the proposals set out by the Lantau Development Task Force in the 'Concept Plan for Lantau' (the Concept Plan). The enclosure, '**ark~eden**', has been prepared by myself and two other long term residents of Lantau, Ms. Jenny Quinton and Mr. Paul Melsom. We are passionate about preserving Lantau's unique ecology and environment for this and future generations.

Government's stated policy is that Lantau be kept for conservation and recreation. Recent planning studies including the publicly debated 2001 South West New Territories Development Strategy Review and the current 2030 consultations have affirmed this conservation value and the need to protect Lantau's natural assets. The offshore islands - the Sokos, Shek Kwu Chau, Hei Ling Chau and Sunshine Island were also earmarked for conservation in the 2001 SWNT DSR, the Sokos being earmarked as an intended marine park. A Conservation Strategy for Lantau was jointly published in 1998 by Green Lantau Association, The Conservancy Association, Friends of the Earth, Green Power, HK Marine Conservation Society and World Wide Fund for Nature HK.

We believe Conservation should be the government's PRIMARY FOCUS for Lantau, yet the Concept Plan provides no tangible proposal or strategy for conservation, suggesting only a piecemeal approach and being primarily focused instead on development proposals.

Lantau and it's islands are serene sub-tropical wonders, characterised by sweeping vistas of blue and green. These must be preserved for future generations by means of a clear conservation policy that balances such wonders against the pressures of inappropriate development. We consider Lantau to be a Chinese National Treasure, a natural asset that should be both recognised and available to all. Lantau has immeasurable value in terms of collective culture, heritage, ecology, ecosystem, biodiversity - it's very 'existence value' makes it attractive purely as it exists, in particular for tourism as a natural haven full of natural life. Yet notable by it's absence from the Concept Plan is any reference to the science of 'existence value' – we believe it is crucial this must be fully assessed, embraced and applied in it's entirety to any conservation policy for the environment of Lantau.

The enclosed document '**ark~eden**' is a suggestion for a coordinated, comprehensive holistic conservation strategy for Lantau, amalgamating conservation, sustainable development and enhanced environmental education with tourism. It looks beyond the physical environment to address perceived shortcomings in our educational system, offers a pro-active approach to conservation and sustainable development and in the process provides a vehicle for promoting the local economy of Lantau through community based tourism and ecotourism.

We consider the widespread lack of understanding of, and respect for, nature in Hong Kong derives from inadequacies in the educational system. '**ark~eden**' directly addresses this aspect, packaging Lantau's ecology in a way that will substantially boost the quality of environmental education for our children.

'**ark~eden**' is a means to enhance and protect, not erode, the local community's inheritance, to provide an economic base for sustaining their lifestyle and the means by which our future generations will inherit their rightful heritage.

We believe '**ark~eden**' provides the Lantau Development Task Force with one possible solution for conservation and sustainable development, which would in addition put Hong Kong on the world map as a must-see eco-tourist destination in much the same way as the 'Eden Project' has done in the United Kingdom. We consider it a powerful vehicle on the road towards a comprehensive environmental policy for saving some of Hong Kong's extraordinary natural assets. We also believe adopting such a holistic approach to the preservation of Lantau's unique environment, culture and heritage will bring accolades upon Hong Kong.

'**ark~eden**' will require funding, but it is an attractive proposition for a willing sponsor. In fact we believe it will bring monetary return and promote the message that conservation and sustainable development can be a profitable partnership for our local communities.

We hope you find our proposal of interest. We would be pleased to have the opportunity to expand further upon our ideas, for which we are at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,

Neil McLaughlin

Encl.

*“Hong Kong urgently needs comprehensive environmental policies to prevent further senseless destruction of its extraordinary natural assets”. “Hong Kong’s rich and diverse natural environment is really its greatest natural asset”.
(Lazell, US Conservation Agency).*



船園

ark ~ eden

“a refuge for a place of great happiness”

“It seems to me as though Hong Kong in a way presents a graphic microcosm of the choices we face for the future: on the one hand rampant capitalism, with its inequitable concentrations of wealth, polluted air and concomitant ecological destruction, and on the other the rapidly-awakening consciousness within businesses, schoolchildren and all sorts of people of the need for a radically different lifestyle, to create a truly sustainable future for humans and all other life on the planet”.

(Alan Watson Featherstone, ‘Trees for Life’)

ark~eden

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ark ~ eden

1.0 Executive Overview

1.1 'ark~eden'

ark~eden is a many faceted destination tourist attraction showcasing 'The Natural World of Hong Kong'. It is, for Hong Kong, a hugely significant project that will foster a greater understanding of Hong Kong's ecology and environment. It is proposed that it be established on Lantau Island, regarded as a Chinese National Environmental Treasure.

ark~eden will comprise: Phase One - a central facility, Phase Two - satellite facilities, and, in the medium term, Phase Three - special exhibits. Overall, it is not a small project. Neither is it a collection of parts, but an accumulating whole that may in places need 3-5 yrs to become established.

ark~eden is presented as a focus for the preservation and conservation of Lantau as a living, world-class natural environmental wonder within China and Asia. It offers a comprehensive approach to showcasing and preserving Lantau's heritage. This project blends conservation, education, eco-tourism and sustainable development in a way that will have multiple benefits not only for Hong Kong but also within the international community.

- **ark~eden** provides a vessel for a holistic conservation strategy for Lantau
- **ark~eden** espouses concern for the environment and for a sustainable future
- **ark~eden** will provide a model resource for sustainable development in Hong Kong
- **ark~eden** will be a unique educational facility for adults, children, residents and tourists, providing a centre for learning about nature, our environment and natural world

ark~eden is low-impact, in tune with the pulse and pace of Lantau. It is about relaxation, a means to get away from the pressures of daily work, a place to enjoy and celebrate life, a provider of the bigger picture of man as a part of nature

ark~eden will require funding, but it is an attractive proposition for a willing sponsor. In fact we believe it will bring accolades along with significant monetary return and promote the message that sustainable development can in the end be profitable.

1.2 ark~eden's Purpose

To raise awareness of the 'Existence Value' of Hong Kong's unique ecology, environment and living heritage, particularly as found on Lantau Island.

To demonstrate how Lantau's unique ecology is worthy of being labelled a 'destination attraction' in its own right. This proposal suggests how we may capitalise on this fantastic natural asset for the greater good of Hong Kong and our environment and in the process raise awareness of environmental matters and improve the lives of residents.

To address 'ecological' voids in Hong Kong's educational system and provide for an enjoyable, 'hands-on' experience in learning all about Hong Kong's natural world.

To juxtapose our concrete city with a rural showcase for the natural environment of Hong Kong, to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship of man with nature and the essential relationship between man and the ecosystem.

To foster community based tourism and ecotourism for the benefit of the local populace.

To revitalise Lantau as one of Hong Kong's last remaining wild places. Through implementation, to preserve our culture and heritage. It is an opportunity that must not be wasted or squandered, for the sake of our children's children.

1.3 ark~eden's Benefits

Hong Kong desperately needs a new clean and green image. The world is seeing a badly polluted city and tourists are staying away. If the concept of '**ark~eden**' is adopted NOW the potential for protection of some of Hong Kong's last wild places will be welcomed on a global scale. The indigenous community will be able to retain, and benefit from, their land and heritage and achieve employment income in the related tourism and recreation venues. A greater awareness of the crucial importance of Hong Kong's ecology will lead to safeguarding Hong Kong's greatest natural assets – its extraordinary environment and wonderful natural heritage - for future generations, and act as an example to the rest of the world. By working to project such a 'clean and green' image at home and abroad Hong Kong will place itself at the forefront of the global push for 'sustainable development'.

ark~eden provides the Hong Kong government with a significant vehicle by which it may be SEEN to promote conservation and protection of the natural environment of Hong Kong.

ark~eden will : -

Improve quality of life for Hong Kong people

Promote 'green pride' in Hong Kong's population

Protect our irreplaceable natural environment and heritage

Open the floodgates to the massive global demand for ecotourism

Give opportunities to Hong Kong people to understand and help protect their countryside

ark~eden has the potential to make Hong Kong a world leader and front runner in sustainable living, and bring her accolades in return. Hong Kong will be seen as a true World City for environmental protection and conservation. World experts will gather here. Asia will be knocking on our door for guidance. Most of all, our children will be ecologically educated and, even more, their future heritage will be protected and they could be teachers of the world.



2.0 ark~eden's Mission

To promote the doctrine 'Man is an indivisible part of Nature'.

To champion a sustainable future for Lantau and Hong Kong, to promote conservation and enhancement of the existing ecology, landscape, flora, fauna and forest areas in a truly natural state for the benefit of future generations.

To promote Lantau's living curriculum as resource for learning. To open up the minds of young and old to Hong Kong's ecology. To facilitate appreciation for and protection of our natural environment, including its priceless ecosystems, geographical, historical and cultural heritages, to preserve them for future generations. To educate and communicate, and thus be a catalyst for positive change.

To promote awareness of and responsible management for Hong Kong's natural resources. To assist in developing a dynamic model for the sustainable development of Lantau, focused on balancing major environmental issues with commercial pressures. To reach out into the wider international community to share knowledge and expertise gained in the process.



3.0 Hong Kong Environmental Overview

3.1 Situation

Located on the southern coast of China at the mouth of the Pearl River. A small region of China 65 km wide and 40 km north to south. Population 6.87 million.

Land Area 1,098 sq km comprising the Island of Hong Kong (80 sq km), Peninsula Kowloon (47 sq km) and the New Territories (746 sq km). Hong Kong has dozens of offshore islands (totalling 224 sq km) of which Lantau is by far the largest (144 sq km).

Topography characterised by steep granite and volcanic mountains. No lowland rivers of significant size, few natural permanent water bodies. Many peaks in excess of 500 metres. Four peaks on Lantau Island exceed 750 metres. Urban development accounts for only 16% of land use whilst 70% is open countryside.

3.2 Climate

Hong Kong's climate is sub-tropical monsoonal with mean temperatures rising to 29 deg C in July. However due to the influence of Continental Asia, the winters are cool with temperatures occasionally dropping below 10 deg C in January. Rainfall averages 2 – 2.5 metres per annum. There is a pronounced dry season October – April which has only 20% of overall rainfall.

3.3 Ecosystem

Despite its small area and one of the highest population densities in the World, Hong Kong has incredibly rich and surprisingly diverse flora and fauna. It is located at the northern limit of the distribution of tropical Asian flora and is the only region in the World where tropical and temperate species merge without some form of natural barrier such as ocean, mountain or desert separating them. These are extremely important habitats of great scientific significance.

Hong Kong has 21 Country Parks and 3 Special Areas covering 41,320 hectares or 40% of Hong Kong's total land area. It is in these Country Parks that many small hill streams can be found draining steep ravines rich in low trees and flowering shrubs. This natural landscape fascinates visitors, as for example Hong Kong has: -

400 known native species of Trees versus 33 in the UK
 2,124 known native species of Flora versus 30,000 in all China and 240,000 in whole world
 Hong Kong Island alone has more plant species than the United Kingdom
 226 native species of Butterflies versus 55 in the UK and 17 in New Zealand
 2,200 species of Moths, equalling 2,200 in the United Kingdom and 12,000 in all China
 110 native species of Dragonflies versus 40 in the UK, 145 in Taiwan and 251 in all China
 458 species of resident and natural migratory birds, 124 of which breed in Hong Kong,
 102 species of amphibians and reptiles

To put these comparisons in context, Hong Kong's land area is 3.4% of Taiwan, 0.45% of UK, 0.012% of China and 0.41% of New Zealand.

3.4 Environmental Awareness

Hong Kong largely under utilises its fantastic natural assets. The Hong Kong public, their children, tourists and many government officials seem largely unaware of the rich plant biodiversity all around them. This is due in the main part to a history of poor education and inadequate dissemination of information from the few existing scattered facilities to schools, the general public and tourists.

The apparent void in the curriculum of schools to take on this very profound aspect of local environmental awareness is astonishing. Our children have little contact with nature and the environment through an education system that is woefully inadequate in teaching environmental awareness and harmony with nature. The vast majority of Hong Kong children cannot readily identify the trees and plants they see, and appear to have little interest in learning about them. Nature has never been considered an important part of their curriculum. But their senses are reawakened once they are put in touch with nature

Hong Kong has such rich biodiversity all around, interaction with which can improve the quality of many peoples lives immeasurably. So many people in Hong Kong live in high rise flats detached from nature. They are simply not experiencing nature first hand. They are not given enough experiences in the countryside when they are learning at school and thus never shown the very beautiful range of trees, flowering plants and scented flowers Hong Kong has to offer. 'What you don't see you don't know'.

Even in the midst of the 2003 SARS scare, when many Hong Kong residents ventured into the great outdoors, it is estimated there were only 12 million park visits. Allowing for a core of regular visitors, it appears few Hongkongers or tourists ever set foot in a Country Park from one year to the next, let alone learn much about the rich bio-diversity of the local ecosystem. This is despite the fact that many Country Parks are easily accessible to urban dwellers, generally with only 30 minutes travelling time.

The natural environment and heritage of Hong Kong is sadly being eroded and destroyed in the face of 'progress' such as commercial development with supporting infrastructure, which is manifested in the accelerating loss of countryside and shorelines. It is evident the widespread ignorance of the 'existence value' of the natural environment creates a vacuum of understanding of, and respect for, nature. Little thought is being given to the shadow of an inheritance that will be left for future generations. It is a very sad situation.

Hong Kong must take conservation more seriously if there is to be sincerity in developing sustainable environmental policies. It is crucial that the true meaning of conservation and sustainable development be understood and something positive be done to ensure that sound environmental and eco-tourism policies are developed without further delay.



4.0 Lantau and Islands

Hong Kong's land mass was formed in the early Jurassic period, much earlier than some neighbouring regions on Mainland China. After Hainan, Lantau is China's second-oldest island - some 250 million years old. Lantau is one of the great islands of China and a rare jewel for Hong Kong. It is to be valued as a timeless Chinese National Treasure.

Lantau has a rich historical and cultural background. Positioned at the mouth of China's Pearl River it was at the junction of important trade routes. Some of the region's most significant artefacts have been found on Lantau.

Lantau and its Islands have a rich ecology unique to the whole of South China. Lantau is also widely regarded as Hong Kong's 'western green lung'. It is largely undeveloped and contains our second and third highest mountains, untouched streams and wooded upland valleys containing a considerable bio-diversity, a rugged and beautiful coastline, and some of our best and most natural beaches. Outside of Tung Chung and Discovery Bay, population density is small, comprising some 11,000 in total, most accommodated in small houses not exceeding 3 storeys in height. The overall impression is an area where human habitation sits lightly on the natural setting.

In conservation terms, Lantau is highly rated. It exhibits a coherent natural landscape which is unique in Hong Kong. The biodiversity is very high. South Lantau has magnificent beaches complemented by the mountain backdrop of Lantau and Sunset Peaks. Wetlands exist at Mui Wo although these are being eroded due to lack of zoning protection.

Lantau and its satellite islands have much to offer, both to the scientific community and all nature lovers. In particular the small islands off the south of Lantau – Hei Ling Chau, Sunshine Island, Shek Kwu Chau and the Soko Islands, have incredibly rich flora and fauna. There are unique species on these islands, such as the bizarre Bogadek's worm lizard, and more are being discovered – two previously unknown species of snake on Shek Kwu Chau, which is also home to one third of Hong Kong's incredibly diverse butterfly species. The Soko Islands have the potential to be one of the finest eco-tourism sites in the region, with the added benefit of natural harbours, and a superb marine habitat with living coral.

Much of Lantau (144 sq km) is unspoilt and uninhabited and, to protect it from development, over half of the island has been designated as Country Park for nature conservation and recreational pursuits such as camping and hiking. Lantau's Country Parks are equal in area to the whole of Hong Kong Island. There are numerous walking trails including the renowned 70 km long Lantau Trail. Lantau is a dramatic Island with majestic peaks, steep green and wooded hillsides sweeping down to the sea, sandy bays and long sandy beaches. The main village settlements are along the coastline, including traditional fishing villages. Tidal mudflats are home to mangroves while the offshore waters are home to Hong Kong's population of indo-pacific hump-back dolphins. Lantau is also home to Water Buffalo, Cattle and Muntjac Deer.

Lantau has an impressive range of flora and fauna. There are hundreds of species of resident and migratory birds plus resident colonies of bats. 70% of all locally recorded amphibians and reptiles can be found on Lantau including the Short-legged Toad and Roamer's Tree Frog, which are only found in Hong Kong. Lantau has over 60, nearly 60%, of the total of 110 Dragonfly species found in Hong Kong - this compares to 40 for the whole of the UK. Lantau also has more than 120 recorded species of Butterflies, some 55% of all the Hong Kong species. There are also several areas of unique ecological value. These include wetlands, coastline, and natural streams. These all need to be protected to prevent destruction such as occurred in the infamous Tung Chung River boulders incident.

Lantau has some extremely rare species of Flowering Plants and Shrubs, some are only found in Hong Kong and others only in Hong Kong plus neighbouring provinces of China. These include rare plants, herbs and fungi used in Chinese traditional herbal medicine together with orchids, poisonous plants, pitcher plants and bamboos. Lantau's vegetable crop includes ginger, carrot, sweet potatoes, luffa, mustard, turnip, taro, cabbage and bak choy. The fruit crop includes banana, pineapple, papaya, melon, loquats, pomelo, longan jackfruit, lychee, dragonfruit and wampi, plus the pungent but delicious durian.



5.0 ark~eden's Blueprint

It is proposed that **ark~eden** be located on Lantau Island.

5.1 Phase One - Primary Hub - 'The Natural World of Hong Kong'

We suggest this may be positioned in Mui Wo, to benefit from ferry passengers going to and from South Lantau, Tai O, Po Lin Monastery and the Big Buddha, this would also provide a much needed opportunity to greatly enhance Mui Wo itself. Comprising: -

- A visitor centre acting as a base for satellite facilities.
- A living showcase for Hong Kong's ecology and environment.
- A resource centre for study, education and understanding of the Hong Kong regional ecosystem.
- An indoor / outdoor showcase of Hong Kong's sub-tropical flora and fauna, putting Hong Kong in the context of Mainland China and Asia with regard to biodiversity, habitat, wildlife and environment
- An indoor / outdoor facility for interactive group learning, discussion and debate, for all ages and abilities in a fun atmosphere.
- A place to bring together the many individuals and groups in Hong Kong and China who are concerned about the natural world.

- A centre for local expeditions to experience first hand the living wonders of Lantau and Hong Kong, and impart knowledge through contact and observation.
- A centre of excellence in research, teaching and communications for a better tomorrow.
- To act as a focal point and venue for various organisations concerned about the future well being of our planet's environment.
- To pool resources and interests for the purpose of education.
- To create exchange programmes with other similar institutions around Asia and develop partnerships with ethically driven Asian research institutes and educational facilities.

INTERNALLY: Information resource. Exhibition areas. Reference Library. Seminar facilities, IT Research facility. Resident Experts. Theatre. Shop. Restaurant.

EXTERNALLY: Landscaped gardens and pathways with native and ornamental flora, descriptive tree walks, a free-to-air bird park, a natural butterfly garden. Overall, a living garden destination attraction that will invigorate Mui Wo and place it firmly on the tourist map as a world class living destination attraction.

Showcasing: -

- Diversity of: Trees / Plants / Flowers of Hong Kong / China / Asia and how they affect man
- Diversity of: Birds / Butterflies / Dragonflies / Insects and their relationship to Plants
- Plants as: Food / Clothing / Shelter / Fuel / Medicine / Spices / Incense / Transport
- Climates of: Hong Kong and South East Asia and relationship to the ecosystem
- History of landscape. (where have all the squirrels gone?)
- History of Hong Kong's forests
- Identification of trees, their importance for local biodiversity
- Identification of plants, learning about Hong Kong plants
- History of gardening in Hong Kong
- Medicinal uses of some plants
- Threats to ecology of Hong Kong (development, Hill fires, Herb collectors, non-native tree planting)
- Involvement with children in tree planting projects. Practical leaf rubbing,
- Involvement in garden projects. Planting, photo garden diary/ presentation projects.
- Visiting the native arboretums, plant gardens, butterfly gardens etc - there will always be flowering plants or seasonal changes with berries etc.
- Subjects like Seed dispersal can be demonstrated and taught very easily
- These very real experiences move on from the very boring classroom indoctrination of the flower and seed structure. Many children leave school having this impaled in their brains adding to the phobia of plants and the idea that they are boring.
- Education for schools, the public, tourists in particular from local Chinese provinces and Taiwan (where some of the flora is the same). These are very popular pastimes in U.K. Europe, U.SA , Australia etc.

It is strange that there are so few specially landscaped gardens in Hong Kong, with its favourable climate for growing plants and being on the doorstep of 1/8 of the world species of plants. To compound the issue, much of the present landscaping of Hong Kong comprises non-native species. The growth in the number of shops in Flower Market Road, Prince Edward, does indicate an increasing popularity in gardening amongst Hong Kong people. In **ark~eden**, there is fantastic potential for presenting educational and reference landscape designs and intermixing of colourful foliage plants and flowering plants, with the opportunity to differentiate between native and non-native species and enrich local flora and fauna biodiversity through increased planting of native flora species.

5.2 Phase Two – Satellite Facilities throughout Lantau

Each Satellite Facility is intended to be different reflecting its site location in terms of its historical, geographical, ecological and cultural significance. Noted is the potential for usage of abandoned rural buildings, to give 'A New Life' to old educational and heritage buildings,

Each Facility would serve to conserve the environment and strengthen the community's heritage by educating groups through education and example, with permanent or temporary historical and cultural exhibits, giving of talks, tours and workshops.

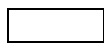
There are vast areas of government land and Country park land available on Lantau and suitable for such facilities e.g.: -

- Valleys at back of Mui Wo behind Tai Tei Tong, Wang Tong Valley
- Luk Tei Tong Wetlands (potential Butterfly and Dragonfly gardens)
- Tai O's Mangrove areas (could and should be enhanced)
- The Lantau Trail and existing country park trails could be used for tree walks:- Trails with 50 or more different tree species – plant and label these. Similarly for trails featuring scented shrubs and seasonal flowers.

Sample sites identified, with their potential focus:

- Mui Wo (mountains, rivers, agriculture),
- Cheung Sha (shoreline/marine)
- Tai O (historical/wetlands/marine)
- Pak Mong and Tai Ho SSSI (historical/wetland/estuary)
- Pui O (bio-diversity/coastland)
- Lai Chi Yuen Tsuen (organic farming)
- Tung Chung (historical/settlement)
- Shui Hau (historical/mudflats)
- Ma Wan (historical/settlement)
- Cheung Chau (historical/settlement)
- Peng Chau (historical)
- Sunshine Island (historical/biodiversity/environmental education)
- Sha Kau Chau (biodiversity/geology)
- Soko Islands (eco-tourism/land-use/re-establishment/marine)
- Brothers Islands (land-use/re-establishment/marine)

5.2.1 Potential Satellite Facilities throughout Lantau



Native Plant Gardens

Native trees, ferns, climbers, shrubs, herbs, to increase species in selected areas.

Butterfly Gardens

One main area and several other areas for educational purposes with sign boards

Using existing areas where butterflies are plentiful and plant more larval food plants and more butterfly attracting flowers. Have both native and non-native example gardens.



South China Garden.

Reference garden for South China flora

New Landscaped Arboretum of Hong Native Tree and Shrub Species

Two or three arboretums.

Comprising 50, 100, or more different tree species.

Similarly, comprising a wide variety of scented shrubs.

Native Plant Nursery

To provide propagated plants from native plant species of herbs, climbers, shrubs trees etc for native botanic garden or gardens. To protect and increase rare species.

Native Tree Nursery for Tree Planting

To propagate native tree species, to increase numbers of native tree production
Provides alternative to non-native species being used in tree planting programmes
To enhance the plant diversity of Lantau.
Beautify the landscape by providing more colourful flowering native tree species.
Increase overall biodiversity of Lantau by reintroducing native flora and fauna species to burnt and eroded slopes
Eventually export localised native tree species to the Guangdong.

Garden of Chinese and Asian Medicinal Herbal Plants

Coupled with a learning centre for Chinese herbal medicine

Centre for Organic Farming

Man 'in harmony with nature'. A place not only for nurturing crops but an educational facility showcasing Lantau's deep rooted agricultural heritage. There is the opportunity for folk to be involved in the organic farming process, which can be both fun and of a therapeutic value.

Erosion of Slopes – Demonstration Facility

Erosion of slopes leads to loss of topsoil, degraded soils, clogging and flooding of rivers and streams and landslips, unsightly scarred slopes, loss of biodiversity on such slopes.



Too many non-native trees are being planted because of the unavailability of native species of trees. Non-native trees = silent forests = reduces biodiversity dramatically.

Demonstrations of selective clearing and planting. Landscaping with nature.
Identification of common plants, pioneer species, alien weeds and planted non-native tree species.

Cultural and Heritage Exhibits

Exhibition of re-energised old traditions with dance and music.

Inclusion of Heritage Sites to create a heritage trail in the landscape

- Mui Wo - silvermine cave
- Mui Wo - old watch towers
- Fan Lau – fort
- Tung Chung - fort
- Tai O - old police station
- Feng Shui woods
- Lung Tsai Ng Yuen (potential guest house on nature trail)



5.3 Phase Three – Special Exhibits

Traditional Agriculture in Village Context

Exhibition Farms of traditional farming methods, using original techniques and machinery and possibly featuring Lantau's resident water buffalo and cows.

Old Chinese style buildings with traditional roofs - blending into landscape

Display of traditional Chinese farming artefacts

Exhibition of salt harvesting methods

'A Window on China'

A large scale indoor Temperate environment replicating one of Mainland China's many diverse habitats.

'Wallace's Line'

A large scale indoor Tropical exhibit replicating the diversity of flora and fauna in tropical regions south of Hong Kong and either side of Wallace's Line.

Curiosities

Chinese Junks in Mui Wo River Silver
Fishing Boat and Dragon Boat Museum
Old Pagodas transplanted (reconstructed)
Old Ornate lamp posts and lamps on bridges..
Old Chinese bridge designs e.g. at Mui Wo & Tai O

6.0 Lantau Logistics

Lantau is very accessible, both to Hong Kong residents, visitors from Mainland China and tourists from overseas. Hong Kong's international airport, next to Tung Chung on the northern coast of Lantau, is well served by all forms of transportation and is some 30 minutes journey, or less, from most areas of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. By road, no part of Lantau is more than a 30 minute drive from this transportation hub. In addition, Mui Wo in eastern Lantau is a fast 30 minute ferry journey from Hong Kong Island.

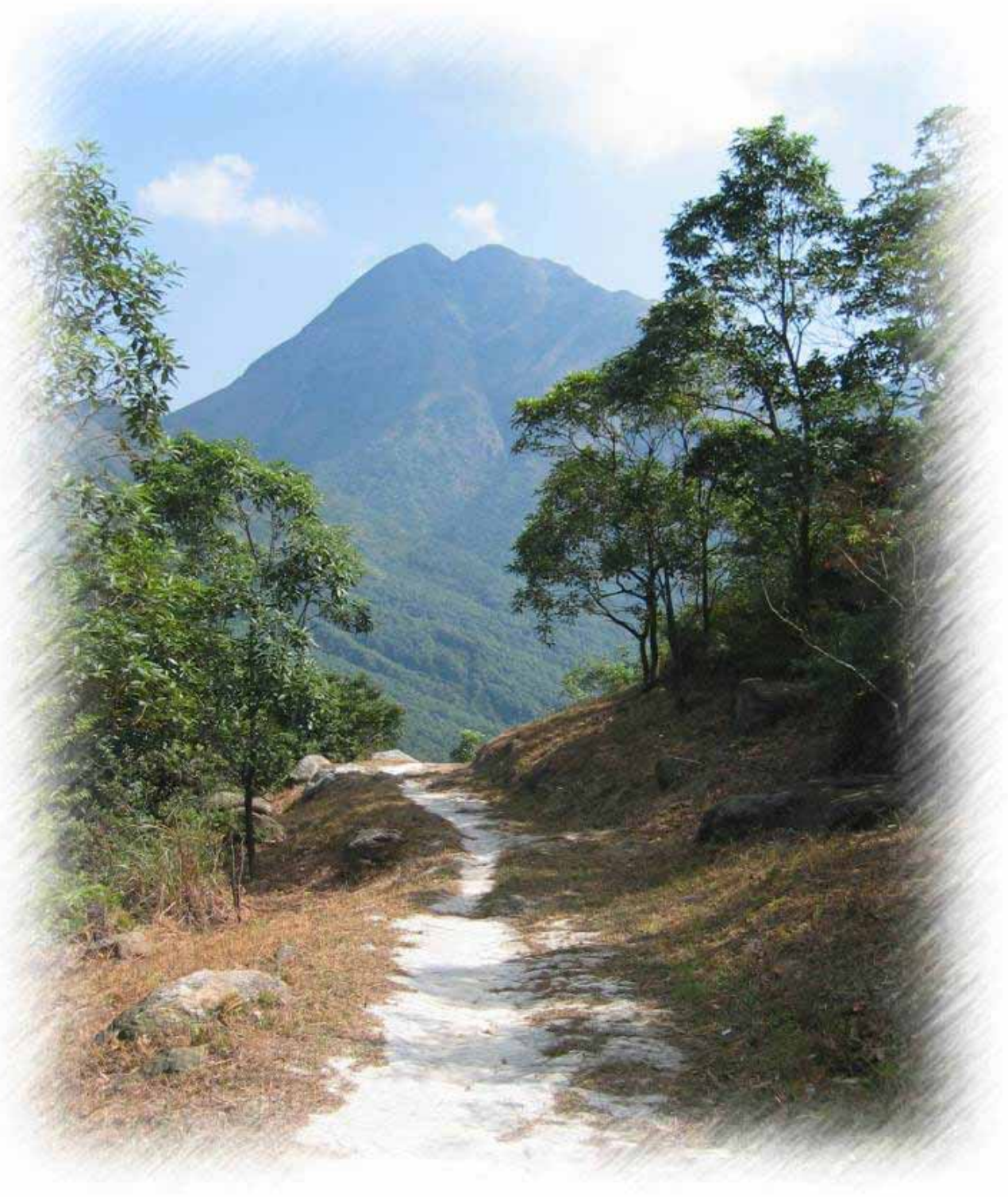
South Lantau is accessible via Mui Wo and a bus network there from. Access from the north of the island is by the Tung Chung Rd, which is currently being upgraded to permit two way traffic throughout.

Lantau is home to world class tourist attractions such as the Big Buddha at Po Lin Monastery with it's future cable car from Tung Chung, which is in turn accessible from the main highway and Mass Transit Railway.

Current recreation activities comprise guided tour services (usually by bus), government or NGO sponsored hill walks, tree-planting and nature study activities organised by private operators, dining at beach restaurants at Cheung Sha and Pui O. There are several mountain bike trails, notably around the wooded Chi Ma Wan peninsular inside the Lantau South Country Park. There are at present no organised water sports centres other than a canoe club operator at Cheung Sha on the south coast.

Ample holiday accommodation is available in the form of the Mui Wo Silvermine Beach Hotel, two smaller beach hotels at Mui Wo, furnished holidays homes and apartments along the whole coastal area, a youth hostel at Mong Tung Wan, and tented campsites at Pui O and Shui Hau.

Placing **ark~eden** on Lantau will capitalise on this ease of accessibility to the natural wonders of Lantau.



7.0 Benefits for the Local Community – Community Based Tourism

Community-based tourism is broadly described as – “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people”. It requires that activities are primarily developed and operated by the local community and that revenue remains within the community. Respect for local culture, heritage and traditions is imperative. Most important of all, such tourism is sustainable.

7.1 Economic Potential for the Local Community

The present economic activities on South Lantau comprise local service industry, simple tourism activities in renting holiday flats and providing tour bus services, and to a minor extent, market gardening.

Tourism is the main activity which includes providing access to Po Lin Monastery and the Big Buddha at Ngong Ping. Several outdoor social and recreational activities take place including the Action-Asia Challenge, hiking festivals along the numerous and spectacular trails, mountain bike riding and swimming outings to the beaches.

Overseas tourists visit Lantau primarily to see the Big Buddha and Tai O village. A stop at one of the stunning South Lantau beaches is often included.

If the wider ecological values of Lantau are appreciated and wisely used through the medium of community based tourism this could significantly raise the level of local and overseas tourism for Lantau and thus income of the indigenous / resident population, for example: -

- Local guest accommodations could be more fully utilised
- Increased local sales for retailers
- More tourists would visit local shops and use local restaurants and ferries
- More tourists means more café and craft shops to boost the local economy
- Increased revenue for local services such as bicycle hire, taxis, private transport etc
- More tourists would stay longer, both on Lantau and in Hong Kong

Medium and long term economic gains can be expected by developing tourism which caters to those travellers interested in the natural outdoor experience. Guided walks, hill climbing, nature tours and adventure racing are but some of the options, which could generate additional employment within the local community.

Specifically, employment and training opportunities at **ark-eden** facilities would be generated in the local community and could include:-

- Administrative Staff (graduate)
- Full or part-time teaching staff (research student)
- Local guest speakers / resident experts
- Eco-guides
- Caretakers and cleaning staff

7.2 Potential for Involvement with the Local Community

- Increased interaction with local communities
- Raising awareness of eco-tourism potential in local areas
- Local Community needs could be ascertained from Rural Committees and local bodies– some examples might include
 - River cleaning
 - Weeding and gardening
 - Tree-planting and maintenance
 - Beach cleaning, clearance of black spots

- Setting up permanent or temporary historical and cultural exhibits
- Training of eco-tourist staff for each location
- Utilisation and enhancement of valuable local knowledge through talks and workshops, for a better future for Lantau
- Slowing migration of younger generation from Lantau
- Recruitment for government bodies, NGO's and outside agencies
Participating groups might include hiking, environmental, history, scientific, elderly and youth groups.

8.0 Educational Programmes

A cornerstone of **ark~eden's** mission is education. Each **ark~eden** facility would serve students of different age groups in local and international institutions. It would deliver a dual programme: -

- **A spiraling, interactive Humanities programme.**

Each particular centre in its unique location would target a selection of units of work in Science (Natural Processes), Geography (Physical), History (Local) and Environmental Education.

- **A Life-skills programme.**

Students would benefit from the experience of traveling to different locations on Lantau and becoming familiar with and more appreciative of the natural environment. Territory-wide, students would participate in programmes ideally once per term or at least annually. In addition to curriculum input, important emphasis would be placed on enhancement of life-skills through Outdoor Recreation, Team Building, Youth Leadership Training and Communication Knowledge. Certain aspects of the programme would be open to the interaction of differing age groups and collaboration between local and international schools.



Local Schools

Curriculum delivery could be in Chinese or English. If requested, participating institutions could facilitate English Language acquisition by differentiating students into English Language ability groups who would then receive English instruction in accordance with their linguistic ability. Bilingual and native-speaking English instructors could deliver a Humanities programme to enable students to use a high frequency of Oral English in a practical and meaningful way. All sessions would emphasise student participation and group discussion and aim to facilitate the sharing of ideas.

International Schools

ESF schools operating under the British National Curriculum could have the option of whole or partial QCA Science, Geography and History curriculum components met through the programme. The needs of other international schools with individual curriculum requirements could also be supplied.

Educational Goals: -

To broaden the education of every child in Hong Kong on ecology and sustainable development. Children need to understand and get back to nature for the world to survive. For example involvement in tree planting/reforesting eroded hills with native trees and shrubs, nature walks and environmental projects would be a major step in this direction and would enhance the school curriculum with such additional useful life skills

9.0 Environmental Programme

Rationale

To create awareness and familiarise students and other parties with the value of the natural environment. To enjoy being outdoors in pursuit of learning. To offload curriculum pressure in educational institutions, to provide facilities for conducting those parts of the curriculum that lend themselves to outdoors. To create practical opportunities for learning and using English. To provide employment opportunities for all involved.

Run by: Staff at the Centers
Government Departments
NGO's
Outside Agencies



10.0 Financial

It is intended that 'ark~eden' be ultimately self-supporting financially. This could be achieved by calling upon financial benefactors in the first instance for construction of the primary and satellite facilities. Visitor receipts would then fund operating costs, recurring expenditure and capital expansion programmes.

ark~eden is presently seeking a Sponsor for preparation of a financial planning model. Thereafter we will be seeking capital to create the primary Phase One Visitor Centre and in due course the satellite facilities and the further options listed.

The target markets would be local and international tour groups, school parties, businesses and individuals. Costs are to be determined as part of the financial planning model but will vary depending on components of visits and extent of services provided.

X REFERENCE

XI Eco-tourism elsewhere

250,000 people attended Hampton court palace flower show in London in just one week.

Cost £22 pounds per day = gross £5.5million pounds (HK\$77 million/week)

1.6 million people per year visit the Eden Project in Cornwall, England.

Cost £12 pounds per ticket = gross £19.2 million pounds (HK\$268 million/year)

More than 50 per cent of people who visit the Eden Project say they consider it a destination attraction. Many stay overnight in the surrounding areas.

XII Some information on the flora of Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Herbarium website

Kadoorie Farm entertains many school groups

AFCD has a comprehensive range of books on the flora and fauna of Hong Kong

XIII Photographs

Page 1	Lantau landscape	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 5	Fragrant Litsea (Litsea cubeba)	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 6	Gordonia Axillaris flower	copyright Paul Malsom
Page 8	Pui O village and beach	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 10	Wild climbing native Clematis	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 13	Butterfly taking nectar from Chinese Privet	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 14	School group planting native trees	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 15	Lung Tsai Ng Yuen	copyright Neil McLaughlin
Page 17	Lantau Peak from Lantau Trail	copyright Neil McLaughlin
Page 19	School group hiking on Lantau	copyright Paul Melsom
Page 20	Birdwoods Mucuna (Mucuna birdwoodiana)	copyright Paul Melsom

XIV Press Articles

Overleaf – Article from 'The Sunday Morning Post', 20 February 2005

Press Article: 'Sunday Morning Post' 20 February 2005

'Holistic strategy' envisages Lantau as a world wonder

Ravina Shamdasani

A "holistic conservation strategy" has been developed for Lantau by three long-term residents to preserve what they describe as the island's world-class environmental wonder.

Architect Neil McLaughlin, horticulturalist Paul Melsom and teacher Jenny Quinton have put together a proposal they have called "ark-eden" for Lantau, blending conservation, education, eco-tourism and sustainable development into "a model resource for sustainable development in Hong Kong".

"Lantau is a dramatic island with majestic peaks, steep green and wooded hillsides sweeping down to the sea, sandy bays and long sandy beaches," the proposal remarks, citing the impressive range of flora, fauna, birds and animals found on the island.

"Lantau has 63 - nearly 60 per cent - of the total of 110 dragonfly species found in Hong Kong. This compares to 40 for the whole of the UK."

Called ark-eden, with biblical roots of the name indicating "a refuge for a place of great happiness", it involves three phases.

Phase one would create visitor centres, exhibition areas and resource centres at Mui Wo, facilities for interactive group learning and a "living showcase" of the area's biodiversity, habitat and wildlife.

"It can be a place to bring together people and groups in Hong Kong, China and the region who

TAPPING INTO AN ISLAND PARADISE

The ark-eden dream envisages three phases:

1 An environmental centre at Mui Wo, including:

- Visitor and exhibition centres
- Study and resource centre
- Displays of Hong Kong's plants and wildlife
- Venue to be a focal point for environmental interest groups

2 Satellite facilities at a range of sites on Lantau or nearby islands for tailored historical, geographical, ecological or cultural exhibitions and study.

- Facilities might include:
- Gardens for native plants, butterflies, medicinal plants and South China plants
 - Arboretum for native trees and shrubs

- Native plant and tree nurseries

- Garden of Chinese and Asian herbal plants
- Centre for organic farming, slope erosion learning centre
- Heritage trail

3 Special exhibits:

- Traditional working village with exhibition farms, old-style Chinese buildings and artefacts and salt-harvesting exhibition
- Curiosities such as Chinese junks, a museum for fishing and dragon boats, old pagodas, lamps, lamp posts and bridge designs
- Indoor environment replicating a mainland habitat
- Indoor tropical exhibit for flora and fauna from Asiatic and Oceanic regions

are concerned about the natural world," said Mr McLaughlin, who has lived on Lantau since 1983.

"Planted gardens, descriptive tree walks, a bird park and a butterfly garden would showcase the rich biodiversity of Lantau, attract tourists and make nature fun for school children. The vast majority of Hong Kong children cannot readily identify the trees and plants they see - this is a void in the education system we must fill."

The proposal also calls for a centre for excellence in research, teaching and communications, as

well as exchange programmes with similar centres around Asia.

Phase two would create centre at significant sites across the island to complement the centres at Mui Wo and hold exhibitions, talks, tours and workshops.

Tai O, for example, would be a site with historical, wetland and marine attractions, while the Soko islands could showcase biodiversity.

A final phase would be the creation of special exhibits and centres. Ideas include an indoor tropical exhibit replicating the flora and

fauna in tropical regions south of Hong Kong.

The three were prompted to draft the ark-eden plan after the launch of the Lantau Development Taskforce consultation last October. The government "concept plan" aims to turn the island into a leisure and tourist venue with facilities including a golf course, a theme park, a holiday resort and an 11km bicycle path, all with sustainable development in mind. Consultations end next Monday.

The plan has run into fierce opposition from green groups, which have dubbed it the "Lantau Concrete Plan" and indigenous villagers who oppose a proposed country park extension under the plan, fearing it could cut into potential profits from developing their land.

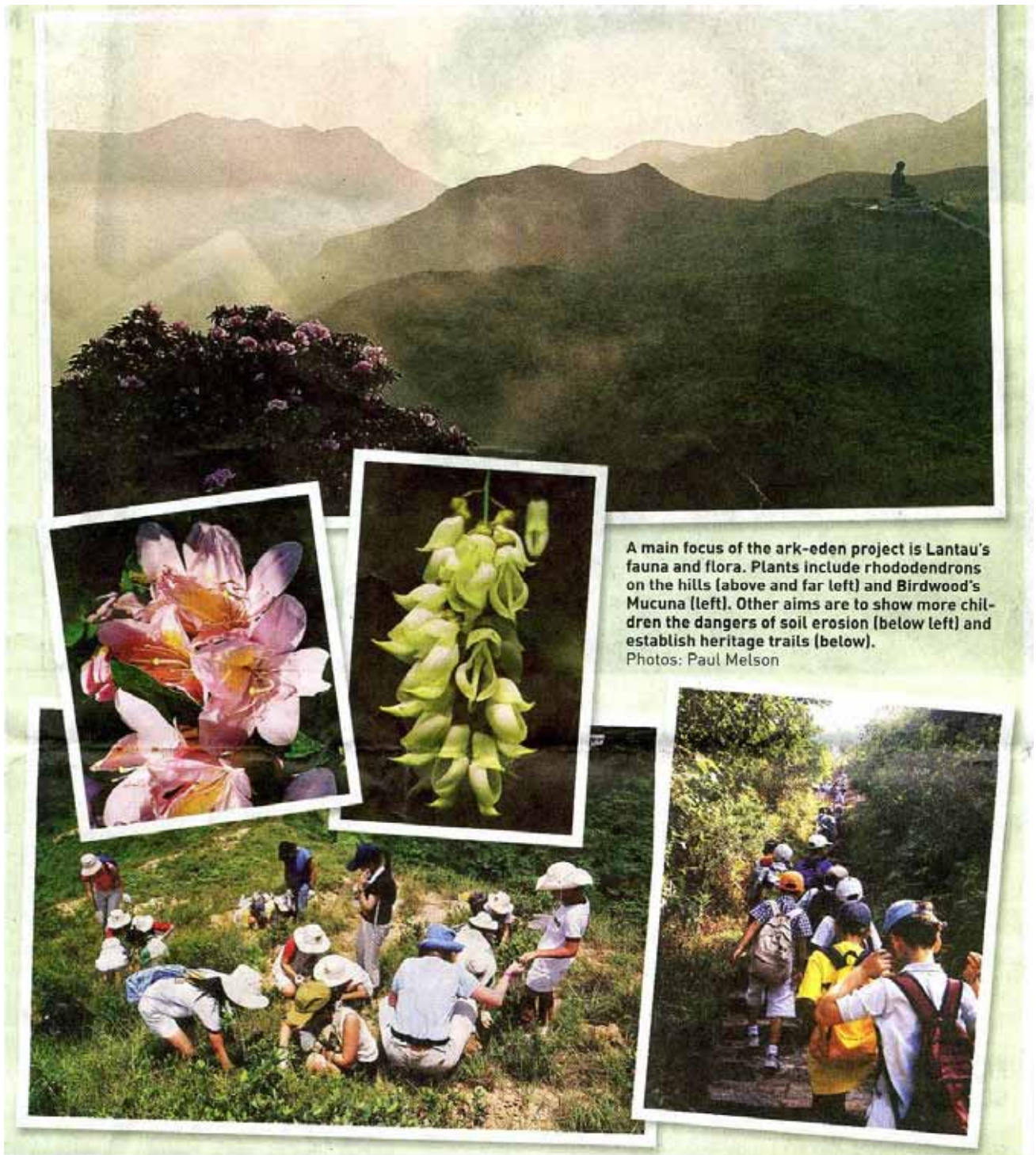
Mr McLaughlin said their proposal was intended to provide tangible projects to preserve the natural beauty and promote eco-tourism, education and the message that conservation and sustainable development could be profitable partnership.

"The intention is to draw to various bodies' attention that Lantau is a remarkable jewel we need to protect and preserve," he said. "We see Lantau as being many different things which could be brought together and ark-eden is the glue that does that."

Mr McLaughlin said the group intended to submit the proposal to lawmaker Howard Young of the tourism functional constituency and other legislators.

/CONT >

Press Article: 'Sunday Morning Post' 20 February 2005



A main focus of the ark-eden project is Lantau's fauna and flora. Plants include rhododendrons on the hills (above and far left) and Birdwood's Mucuna (left). Other aims are to show more children the dangers of soil erosion (below left) and establish heritage trails (below).
Photos: Paul Melson