

For discussion on
24 October 2005

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs

Pilot Scheme for Management Agreements under the New Nature Conservation Policy

PURPOSE

Pursuant to the announcement of the New Nature Conservation Policy in November 2004, four applications have been received under the Pilot Scheme for Management Agreements (MA) to enhance the ecological values of the 12 priority conservation sites. This paper informs Members on the pilot projects approved by the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Committee.

BACKGROUND

2. The Government announced a new nature conservation policy in November 2004 to better achieve the nature conservation objectives, in particular to enhance the conservation of ecologically important sites which are in private ownership. Under the new policy, 12 priority sites have been identified for enhanced protection and the Administration undertook to implement a Pilot MA Scheme as one of the measures to enhance the ecological value of these sites. Under this Pilot Scheme, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may apply for funding from the Government for entering into MA with the landowners. The NGOs will provide the landowners with financial incentives in exchange for management rights over their land and their co-operation in enhancing conservation of the sites concerned. The ECF Committee has earlier approved an allocation of \$5 million for the implementation of the Pilot Scheme.

APPLICATIONS

3. Upon closing of the six-month application period on 31 May 2005, four applications were received but one of the applicants has subsequently decided to withdraw their application. The remaining three applications involving land located at Fung Yuen and Long Valley. A summary of the three

projects is at **Annex A**.

4. The applications were examined by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) in accordance with the following evaluation criteria:

- (a) the benefits that the proposed project will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective;
- (b) the sustainability of the proposed project including its resources implications, participation of the landowner and local community, the nature and enforceability of the management agreement;
- (c) whether the proposed budget is reasonable and realistic, and whether the project is cost effective; and
- (d) the technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. In this regard, NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary.

Our assessments on these applications are set out at **Annex B**. We consider that all three applications will be beneficial to the ecological environment of the concerned sites and are worth supporting.

CONSULTATION

5. We have consulted the ACE in September 2005 and the ACE supported the three applications. On 6 October 2005, the ECF Committee approved an allocation of \$4.62 million for the implementation of the three pilot MA projects.

WAY FORWARD

6. Members are invited to note the approval of the three pilot projects by the ECF Committee.

Environmental Protection Department
October 2005

Summary of applications received under Pilot Scheme for Management Agreements

Project Title	A Pilot Scheme of Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley in Tai Po, Hong Kong	Birds and Humans in Harmony – A Sustainable Management Scheme in Long Valley	Sustainable Habitat Management in Long Valley
Site involved	Fung Yuen	Long Valley	Long Valley
Proponent	Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA)	Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS)	Conservancy Association (CA)
Project description	Land in Fung Yuen will receive proactive management for butterfly conservation. TPEA will also cooperate with landowners or land operators to apply “Good Practices for Butterfly Conservation” in all private lots in the Fung Yuen Valley.	HKBWS will form partnership with farmers to maintain and increase the biodiversity of Long Valley, especially for avifauna. The project involves creation or maintenance of shallow water habitat, wet agricultural land, fallow dry agricultural land as well as farmland margin vegetation.	CA will cooperate with local farmers to manage their farmlands through Habitat Deterioration Prevention Agreement or Habitat Diversity Enhancement Agreement. Active conservation works will be carried out to enhance the heterogeneity within the habitat of abandoned agricultural lands. Food web study will be conducted to provide important ecological information of the Long Valley.

Key conservation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To reduce environmentally incompatible behaviour on the private land in the Fung Yuen Valley. - To enhance the habitat and butterfly species diversity. - To promote public awareness on conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To coordinate appropriate farming and conservation activities to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the habitat. - To improve the sustainability of the agricultural activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To find out viable options for farmers to maintain active agricultural areas, particularly the wet farmlands, in order to enhance the local biodiversity. - To formulate effective agricultural and conservation management strategy for the Long Valley.
Duration of the proposed project	24 months	24 months	24 months
Amount of fund approved	\$1,743,630	\$1,362,560	\$1,514,160

**Evaluation of Applications Received under
Pilot Scheme for Management Agreements**

The Environmental Protection Department and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) have examined the three applications and our assessments are set out below -

I. A Pilot Scheme of Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley in Tai Po, Hong Kong
(submitted by Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA))

Evaluation Criteria	Assessments
Benefits that will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective	<p>The project will benefit the conservation of Fung Yung by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reducing and minimizing the incidence of any irregularity and environmentally incompatible behavior on the private land;• enhancing and maintaining the habitat quality of private land as an important site to butterflies;• enhancing and maintaining the diversity of butterfly species; and• providing a refuge area for foraging, inhabiting and breeding butterflies. <p>It will also promote the new nature conservation policy and the importance of conservation to local community and the general public.</p>
Sustainability including its resources implications, participation of the landowner and local community, the nature and enforceability of the management agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The pilot scheme will provide TPEA with seed money to initiate management agreements with landowners at Fung Yuen, encourage public participation, and promote the project. In the long run, TPEA plans to operate and maintain the site with income from fund raising programmes, sponsorships, conservation education programmes and

	<p>product sales, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPEA has already secured the in-principle agreement of landowners to sign management agreements with the Association.
Whether the budget is reasonable and realistic, and whether the project is cost effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will involve the management of about 174,000 square feet of private land at Fung Yuen. • The budget seems reasonable. The Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Committee has approved \$1,743,630 for the implementation of the project.
Technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPEA is experienced in implementing environmental projects, including projects funded by the Environmental Campaign Committee and ECF. • The project will be supported by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, and Green Power.

II. Birds and Humans in Harmony – A Sustainable Management Scheme in Long Valley (submitted by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS))

Criteria	Assessments
Benefits that will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective	<p>The project will benefit the conservation of Long Valley by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrating that specific management practices on conventional farming operations will be beneficial to wildlife through a partnership programme with the local farming community; • providing baseline information for the enhancement and creation of different habitats in Long Valley that are favourable to the targeted species;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping the local farming community to realize that a win-win situation for human and birds is possible; and • increasing public understanding of the importance of conserving Long Valley.
Sustainability including its resources implications, participation of the landowner and local community, the nature and enforceability of the management agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will focus on the management of several different habitats, including active wet agricultural lands, fallow wet agricultural land and fallow dry agriculture land. Experience from this project will help to determine which management scheme is most effective and appropriate to bird conservation in Long Valley. • HKBWS has already gained support from local farmers, landowners and indigenous leaders. • Income to be generated from organizing eco-tours will be used to extend the coverage of farming area of the project.
Whether the budget is reasonable and realistic, and whether the project is cost effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will involve the management of about 250,000 square feet of land in Long Valley. • The budget seems reasonable. The ECF Committee has approved \$1,362,560 for the implementation of the project.
Technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HKBWS has extensive knowledge on birds in Hong Kong and a lot of experience in implementing environmental projects, including projects funded by AFCD and ECF. • The project will be supported by the New Territories Conservation Association, Conservancy Association, and Produce Green Foundation.

III. Sustainable Habitat Management in Long Valley (submitted by the Conservancy Association (CA))

Evaluation criteria	Assessments
Benefits that will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective	<p>The project will benefit the conservation of Long Valley by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventing further deterioration of the freshwater habitats through management agreements; • enhancing habitat diversity by sustaining wet agriculture and modifying conventional farming practices; • identifying food webs in the wetland habitats so as to improve the habitat management measures for nature conservation; • identifying potential threats to the sustainability of the major habitats and formulate a sustainable habitat management strategy through a study of the farming practices and related financial situations; and • engaging local farmers and landowners into dialogues on the potential for long-term cooperation for managing their land to achieve sustainable agriculture and nature conservation in Long Valley.
Sustainability including its resources implications, participation of the landowner and local community, the nature and enforceability of the management agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will develop a sustainable habitat management strategy for Long Valley. • CA will also promote eco-tourism to enrich the economy of Long Valley. Income to be generated from organizing eco-tours will be used to extend the coverage of farming area of the project.
Whether the budget is reasonable and realistic,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will involve the management of about 238,000 square feet of land in Long Valley.

and whether the project is cost effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget seems reasonable. The ECF Committee has approved \$1,514,160 for the implementation of the project.
Technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CA is one of the major NGOs in Hong Kong. It has extensive experience in nature conservation and in implementing environmental projects, including projects funded by AFCD and ECF. • The project will be supported by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, New Territories Conservation Association, Produces Green Foundation and Hong Kong Organic Resources Centre.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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