

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT AND DEMIGODS SET TO TRANSFORM LANTAU

A Submission to the Legislative Council's Panel on Planning, Lands and Works and Panel on Environmental Affairs

Dr Martin Williams, Director, Hong Kong Outdoors

Introduction: a Juggernaut of Development

First, I would like to thank the Panels for giving me the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of Hong Kong Outdoors, a website with over 100 members and attracting several thousand visitors each month.

That said, I really wonder whether this submission can make an iota of difference. My impression is that the government plans for Lantau stem from a philosophy that development is synonymous with big projects that involve pouring in substantial funds and concrete. And so-called "development" projects don't have to be financially viable, or meet the hype that surrounded them during planning stages – Cyberport being a classic recent example.

As you likely know, the *Financial Times* recently asserted that, "Only in Hong Kong does authority bow before property developers as demigods, deferring to their wisdom on civic issues." Is the government likewise bowing to such demigods regarding Lantau? I wonder.

Of course, the fact I am making this submission suggests I have slightly optimistic that it's just possible to make a difference. But as yet, there are few indications that it's possible to halt or change the course of the juggernaut of development threatening to roll over north Lantau.

A Faulty Process

I believe others will make submissions with strong coverage of the process of devising the Lantau plans. Here, then, is a brief sketch of my impressions.

Lantau – and especially north Lantau – was almost untouched until the advent of the airport scheme. With this scheme came several plans and ideas, some of which came to fruition, some of which were badly spoiled. The airport was built much as planned. Yet Tung Chung – initially envisaged as a pleasant suburban town – became much like any of the newer satellite towns in Hong Kong, with buildings but little regard for the people who would live in them. Elsewhere, plans for an industrial centre were shelved; indeed, there was a suggestion northeast Lantau could become a tourist paradise – quite how was not explained.

Then, rather abruptly, came the Lantau Development Taskforce, brought together with a remit for making plans for Lantau. Working behind closed doors and refusing input from the Lantau community, the taskforce produced the Concept Plan for Lantau. Hong Kong had three months to respond to the concept plan – which allowed for suggestions so plans could be “fine-tuned”.

Fine-tuned! How arrogant! – as if the plan would be so near perfect that it might only need minor changes.

As you know, this was by no means the accepted view, as the concept plan came in for a host of criticisms. The three months proved elastic; and now there is a second round of consultations.

There should also be a revised Concept Plan by now – yet I have not had chance to see it, so this submission concerns the original Concept Plan. I consider this further support for my belief that the taskforce has little interest in views from outside government (and the companies of demigods).

Concept Plan Woeful in Many Respects

I submitted a response to the Concept Plan for Lantau, making several critical remarks.

Some of the criticisms concerned the overall plan. For instance, this failed to explain why focus on Lantau for the development plans. There were serious omissions, such as a possible LPG facility on the Sokos, plans for a container terminal off northwest Lantau. Explanations for these omissions seemed weak; the container terminal would seem dependent on the Zhuhai-Macau-Hong Kong Bridge.

The plan asserts that the aim is “to balance development and conservation needs”. This is clearly nonsense: The plan calls for significant environmental destruction - including on land and destruction of shallow coastal areas. Yet no creation of habitats is planned in mitigation. Hence, the plan is not balanced, but heavily weighted towards environmental destruction.

This means that, contrary to a key assertion, the concept plan is unsustainable. It doesn't mention future generations.

The plan gives no choices – just one potential project per site. And it appears to have been drafted by a team with little knowledge of Lantau: how many project sites were chosen simply by looking at a map?

There were other criticisms, but rather than list them here I attach the Response to the Concept Plan as an appendix.

Views of Hong Kong Outdoors' Members and Visitors

I should note that I am not merely giving my own views here; I am supported by Hong Kong Outdoors' members and visitors. I requested comments on the concept plan; here is an edited selection:

How can people be so crazy as to want to destroy the natural beauty of Lantau Island? ... Places like Lantau should be preserved as treasures for the future.

Maire McDermid, Tuen Mun

Of all the cities in Asia, only Hong Kong has such easily accessible and beautiful outdoor areas for hiking and other recreation. ... Let's keep Lantau natural for the highest value that cannot be replaced.

Angela Spaxman, Tsim Sha Tsui

Can't the gov't be smarter instead of only following nearby cities ... Wake up!

Jazz Wong, east Hong Kong

Forget such unnecessary projects! Preserve, promote and educate! Don't destroy!

Teressa Siu, Causeway Bay

There are plenty more comments; attached here as an appendix.

Oh, and I've also received this comment:

It is a superb alternative to the current government plan, which I believe calls for unsustainable, ecologically destructive development.

This is from Dr James Lazell, director of the US based Conservation Agency – and he is referring to an alternative plan for Lantau I have drafted.

A Sustainable Development Plan for Lantau and Neighbouring Islands

After criticising the Concept Plan for Lantau, I later drafted a Sustainable Development Plan for Lantau and Neighbouring Islands, and submitted this to the Lantau Taskforce.

As this plan shows, I am not – as Selina Chow remarked to me – against all development simply because I am a “greenie”. Instead, I support development that will actually be sustainable, safeguarding and even enhancing the environment whilst delivering economic gains. There is strong emphasis on ecotourism; and the plan draws on other proposals, including ark~eden, and was drafted with help from several experts on Lantau.

I attach the plan as an appendix.

As Financial Secretary Henry Tang has said, “Lantau is Hong Kong’s biggest and most beautiful island”. It is surely among the loveliest islands in China; yet now, Lantau’s future is uncertain.

Hong Kong has made both sound environmental judgements – such as establishing the outstanding country parks system – and environmental blunders: like allowing much of the northwest New Territories to become a chaotic jumble of scrapyards, container parks and clusters of soul-destroying high-rises.

With Lantau, there is surely no real need to rush development – even though the Zhuhai-Macau-Hong Kong bridge is evidently being pushed through with unseemly haste.

Instead, it should be possible to ensure we get the planning process right, so options can be properly suggested and discussed, and a strategic vision developed that ensures truly sustainable development

– so that whilst Hong Kong continues to prosper, we ensure that for both current and future generations, we keep Lantau beautiful.

Thank you.

Dr Martin Williams
Director, Hong Kong Outdoors

[written on 15 November 2005]

COMMENTS ON THE CONCEPT PLAN FOR LANTAU: CONSULTATION DIGEST

Dr Martin Williams, Director, Hong Kong Outdoors

Overall comments

Why Lantau?

The Concept Plan (CP) gives no justification for focusing solely on development of Lantau Island. This is surely a major omission.

A true “sustainable development” plan would include broader issues, spanning Hong Kong as well as neighbouring areas.

Woefully inadequate public consultation

- Given that several projects are large-scale, with major implications for Lantau and Hong Kong, the consultation digest is remarkably flimsy.
- The consultation period is inadequate: just three months, spanning three major public holidays.
- Information disseminated to the public is likewise inadequate; most people surely remain unaware of the scope of the “plan”, and planned projects.
- It appears the public consultation was never envisaged as a serious discussion that could really change the “plan” – indeed, the “plan” begins by saying, “the proposals would be reviewed and *fine-tuned* [my emphasis], taking into account the views of the community.”

Serious omissions: major projects

- The “plan” has serious omissions – most notably, the proposed container terminal, which may be built on an island to be created off the northwest coast of Lantau. Reasons for not including such schemes seem weak; arguments given apply also to several of the projects within the plan.
- Consultations including the container terminal also finish on 28 February (as per the Concept Plan): is this really just coincidence?

Not a concept, nor a plan

- The “Concept Plan” is neither a concept nor a plan. It appears planning is well advanced for several of the projects – ie they are not merely conceptual. Instead

of being a plan, this is a hotchpotch of assorted projects, with little regard to how they might combine.

- As evidence of this not being a plan: no overarching environmental assessment will be conducted.

Not balanced

The plan asserts that the aim is “to balance development and conservation needs”. This is clearly nonsense:

The plan calls for significant environmental destruction - including on land and destruction of shallow coastal areas. Yet no creation of habitats is planned in mitigation.

Not sustainable

- The plan asserts that it is “in accordance with sustainable development needs”. No justifications are given for this; instead, the evidence is to the contrary.
- As mentioned above, the plan includes projects that will cause major destruction to expanses of land and sea; yet without creation of habitats in mitigation. Projects such as the road bridge from Zhuhai and the logistics centre will inevitably lead to increased air pollution along a coastline that already suffers from severe smog: no mitigation is proposed, and the “plan” utterly fails to answer questions such as: “What is a sustainable level of smog for Tung Chung?”
- The Hong Kong Government’s definition of sustainable development places strong emphasis on “future generations”. Yet future generations are not mentioned in the plan; nor is there an indication of what is “sustainable” for their health and other needs (such as quality of life).
- Instead, the plan seems to equate “sustainable development” with “development”. The tough issues surrounding what “sustainable” actually means are simply omitted or glossed over.

Not laissez faire

Hong Kong was known as a place thriving on laissez-faire principles. Though this is not fully true, the Hong Kong Government to a fair extent facilitated development, and businessmen got on with doing business. This “concept plan” seems to arise from a different philosophy, with government conceiving projects large and small.

No choices

For all that it is a hotchpotch collection, the “Concept Plan” gives the Hong Kong public no real choices. No alternative overall approaches to developing Lantau are given; there are no alternatives for the specific projects.

Not informed

The “concept plan” gives no indication that members of the Lantau Development Task Force have a thorough knowledge of Lantau. Indeed, it appears that projects have been sited according to what seem convenient locations on maps. Omissions concerning, for instance, tourism, indicate a worrisome lack of appreciation of Lantau’s existing character and appeal.

Lantau today

Yes, there are existing and ongoing developments on Lantau.

However, Lantau remains a special island, for aspects including ecology, culture, and scenery – and as a place for people to live and visit for recreation: special within Hong Kong, within the Pearl River, and special within Greater China.

The plan makes some reference to this special nature, yet places massive emphasis on concrete-based development projects, which will change Lantau forever.

Planned projects

Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macau Bridge (HKZM Bridge)

It appears the “concept plan” takes the HKZM Bridge as a given, accepting that this will be road only.

This is deeply troubling, for a plan boasting that it focuses on “sustainable development”.

- Why is the bridge not discussed, together with its environmental implications?
- Why are alternatives not covered? Should the bridge be rail-only? Is there really a need for the bridge to land on Lantau – and if not, what then for the rest of the “concept plan”?
- Plainly, given the bridge is currently planned to carry substantial container traffic, it will have major adverse impact on Lantau’s air quality. Were the “concept plan” to live up to its claims to aim for balanced development, the plan would call for the bridge to be scrapped, or rail-only, or might propose highly innovative mitigation measures.

Cross Boundary Transport Hub at Siu Ho Wan

Why must this be in Hong Kong?

If the bridge must be built, why not ensure this is rail-only, and build park and ride facilities at terminuses in Zhuhai and elsewhere? Were such options even considered?

Lantau Logistics Park

This is one of the main projects in the “plan” – with a special working group to take it forward “as soon as possible”, yet only a trivial amount of information is given for the “consultation” process.

- What are the justifications for this park?
The logistics park will replicate several of the operations that are already conducted at the airport, and the container port. Are the airport and the container port performing very badly? – if so, this has not been made public; indeed, the container port is among the world’s busiest.
- Who are the driving forces behind this logistics park?
- Does this logistics park really make economic sense?
This logistics park will be expensive to build, requiring a major reclamation – five times West Kowloon cultural district! – and will result in significant air pollution.
- The logistics park seems, on current evidence, to be just a grandiose concreting scheme, which might seem a good idea to a very few people, yet could become an economic white elephant to eclipse even Cyberport.

Motor Racing Circuit

A motor racing circuit has been suggested, and might be built on land created by destroying yet more of Lantau’s coast. This seems a crazy idea – making no apparent economic sense, and diametrically opposed to principles of sustainable development.

Leisure and Entertainment Node at Sunny Bay

The government earlier planned a “tourist paradise” for northeast Lantau. Read tourist brochures from around the world, and nowhere will you find a “tourist paradise” that includes a logistics centre bursting with container traffic, a transport interchange, and a building complex dubbed a “node”.

- Why build such a “node”, here or anywhere? Is this designed to siphon income from existing businesses in Tsim Sha Tsui and elsewhere – and/or to ensure that visitors never even venture to such places?
- Why does the government believe it can create successful tourism infrastructure – especially when it will compete with existing facilities?
- How can a “plan” espousing “sustainable development” even contemplate an “indoor man made beach”?

Possible theme park at Tung Chung

Disneyland is not yet open; has not proven a success, and especially has not provided evidence it can ensure long-term success that truly justifies the expenditure by Hong Kong in terms of land, money, and environmental damage. Until such time as Disneyland does (perhaps) prove a long-term success, building a second theme park anywhere in Hong Kong is premature – especially given such parks can be hit or miss ventures;

mainland China has plenty of theme parks that have failed (even if an initial burst of interest). Theme park construction is surely not government's job.

Golf Course cum Resort

Have task force members walked around or even seen the area where an “upland golf course” is planned? It has steep hills, very different to the pretty pictures in the plan. Why devastate a “secluded location overlooking the Lantau Link and Kap Shui Mun Channel” in order to create a golf course?

Resort Facilities in South Lantau

Resorts “compatible with the natural environment” are proposed. However, no consideration is given to their impact on the natural environment – they will decrease the very beauty that led to them being sited in the first place – and on whether alternatives are possible that might protect the environment whilst bringing more, long-term income for residents (which would be “sustainable” in a true sense).

It appears the resort planners are oblivious to the local climate. In winter, Hong Kong can be cool, and most of the time it is too cool to swim. In summer, Hong Kong is invariably hot and humid – too hot to enjoy outdoors locations for great lengths of time; added to which, there are spells of intense rainstorms. Added to which, the southwest monsoon of early summer can cause rough seas along Lantau's south coast.

Given these climatic factors, Lantau's beaches are better suited to visitors who spend only part of a day there, with ready access to other places (such as in the city): ie better suiting day-trippers.

Theme attractions

These are smaller projects, not always wise but at least less devastating in scope, so briefly here:

- **Museum of Lantau and Eco-Tour Centre** Maybe a good idea; though would be ironic having eco-tour centre if much of north Lantau is destroyed – eco-tourists aren't idiots, and dislike massive over-developments, and air pollution etc. (You cannot simply parcel land into places where you have development here, eco-tourism there, and hope people won't notice.)
- **Facelift of Mui Wo** Could be good idea; Mui Wo is not nice near the ferry pier. There's also a plan from Lantau residents. Resist concrete; Mui Wo could be a superb “green” gateway to Lantau for residents and visitors arriving by ferry, and a better place to live.
- **Heritage trail and cycle track** Seems a good idea for Mui Wo.
- **Preservation of Tai O** Yes, but with care that not a lot more housing – especially lookalike, characterless Spanish style “villas”. Kept well, and promoted, Tai O surely has potential to attract increased numbers of tourists.
- **Cycle track** Ostensibly a good idea, but avoid significant environmental destruction to create it. Could, say, use the catchwater road.

- **Watersports centres and boardwalks** Hmm, not sure about these centres. Low impact watersports, maybe.
Boardwalks seem ridiculous – why spoil a lovely stretch of foreshore? This is a wonderful beach for strolling along the sand, not in need of much “development” other than some promotion.

Meeting nature conservation needs

The plan is weak and feeble here; regurgitates information on existing protection, suggests a little more protection, yet there are no plans for habitat creation or improvement – nothing whatsoever to “balance” all the destruction the plan aims to wreak on Lantau.

A marine park is proposed for southwest Lantau, apparently oblivious to the fact there’s a proposal for building a container terminal on an artificial island just north of this – and the reclamation work for this, especially, will have a massive impact on the “park”.

No mention is made of proposed marine park for the Sokos.

Overall, then, the “concept plan” is ill-considered, and the consultation digest is threadbare. Far more consultations and meaningful discussions are clearly needed if a plan is to be devised that will ensure economic development that is truly sustainable: development that can benefit Hong Kong people today, as well as future generations, whilst ensuring we keep Lantau beautiful.

Appendix B

Comments of Hong Kong Outdoors' members and visitors regarding the Concept Plan for Lantau

- 1 Martin Williams Cheung Chau As I write this, there's a message on the radio about HK Govt promoting "People Based Governance". Here's a chance for you to have a say, about what you think regarding plans that look set to transform Lantau, and nearby islands/waters. (I can email link to this petition to parties inc the Lantau Development Taskforce.) Projects being considered - some of them perhaps finalised - include a road-only bridge from Zhuhai; a logistics centre; a tourism node with an indoor, man-made beach; a motor racing circuit; a gas storage facility (on the Sokos); and a container terminal on a new island off northwest Lantau. What do you think about all these plans? "Why Lantau?" some people are asking; are they right to question the plans and the choice of Lantau for these schemes? Does Lantau deserve better? (In my view, expressed elsewhere on this site, Lantau does not deserve such an onslaught of development. This seems to be "sustainable development" in name only, with little regard for the environmental consequences - or for future generations.)
- 2 Paul Etherington Sai Kung Well-done Martin! Great to get this on. My pennies worth - CLK sealed Lantau I am afraid. Lantau is now going to get all and everything, as its well away from the main residential areas of Kowloon and the Island, therefore easier to develop. I still don't agree with the diversity of the projects and the beauty of Lantau must be treasured. Unfortunately development is the main drive in HK. We joked 27 years ago that HK would be nice when its finished! Well as we all know there is no intention of that. Budgets are big and get bigger each year. There may be views stating that development of projects should be spread over HK. Thank goodness there is a God out there! As the airport could have been built down the Tolo Channel and Disney could have been in Sai Kung. Suggest all industrial developments stick together and all Mickey Mouse ones too. Now is the time to seal all areas, which are parks, and to make areas, which are not into parks. We cannot just move to another pristine area once HK is totally spoiled. Keep Hong Kong beautiful !
- 3 James Lazell Rhode Island & Shui Hau Thanks Martin, Hong Kong is clearly unsustainably overdeveloped already. Tha Sokos would make a wonderful ecotourism development site. Lantau needs to remain as is.
- 4 Christian Masset HongKong Lantau gives the HK Government the opportunity to show it is serious about sustainability and non-collusion with the private sector - proper public information and consultation will determine whether the public wants more development or keep it as it presently is: the last part of HK free from nuisances and a beautiful natural heritage to be passed on to the next generation - as well as a peaceful sancturay away from the city - something truly unique in the Pearl River Delta, to make HK proud. Not a nimby dream but a collective heritage.
- 5 andycuhk :) I agree. There are penlty of place available for development. The government bear responsibilites to protect the natural resources rather

- than short sight in short-term economic benefits.
- 6 Maire McDermid Tuen Mun How can people be so crazy as to want to destroy the natural beauty of Lantau Island? Hong Kong is already so developed! Places like Lantau should be preserved as treasures for the future.
- 7 nick lantau most of these projects are not really required. All that lantau needs is a bit of repair to its trail paths
- 8 pauladev Lagos, Algarve In the 24 years I was in HK (sadly, not since 1997) I saw a vast improvement in the Country Parks, creation, maintenance and encouragement to the population to enjoy the green spaces. The mainland and HKI have been enormously eroded and to rape the countryside in Lantau would be to deny Hong Kongers a facility that could never be replaced.
- 9 O-the-cat-lady Island South I think we have enough damages to the nature already... I would rather see the natural environment and no more development please... :sigh
- 10 Angela Spaxman Tsimshatsui Of all the cities in Asia, only Hong Kong has such easily accessible and beautiful outdoor areas for hiking and other recreation. For me, it is one of Hong Kong's greatest attractions. I can live in a dynamic, international city and also refresh myself easily in the outdoors. These natural areas let me rejuvenate my creative energies, keep me healthy and balanced. Since SARS, more and more Hong Kongers are realizing the value of a day outdoors for health and well-being. On Sundays, the parks are packed with day trippers. Let's keep Lantau natural for the highest value that cannot be replaced.
- 11 bennieto Hong Kong Island Life comes from the sea, there is nothing sustainable by pouring concrete into the sea! We don't want any more destruction to the natural coastline of Lantau or any where else, we want conservation before it's too late. Can some Hong Kong people, particularly those taking big salaries at the Government and the big developers stop being so arrogant and stupid? Is there anything they can build/develop to beat the beauty of nature and can enrich poor souls like us better than nature? They think they're superior than the divine power of the universe? A waterway is like a blood stream of the earth, pouring in concrete and narrowing it is killing ourselves; continue to doing this, one day this part of the world will die of bad feng shui and bad karma! Respect nature, stop killing Hong Kong!
- 12 Kwongkwong Hong Kong Human beings are part of the nature. Destroying the nature is destroying ourselves. It's like biting out flesh from our own hands to feed our stomach.
- 13 Charlie Moores Wiltshire, UK I'm fortunate to get to visit Hong Kong fairly frequently. While I can't wait to escape the increasingly tacky and gaudy HK Island, I've always been amazed and delighted by how much natural habitat remains. It is very sad to learn of the short-sighted plans for Lantau. I've read the plans, and like Dr Martin Williams can't possibly see how the claims that any developments will be made with the environment in mind can be upheld. Once Lantau has been destroyed by these developments it can not be reverted to its present glory, and I would urge anyone who cares about Asia's threatened environment to sign this petition.
- 14 Jazz Wong East HK Can't the gov't be smarter instead of only following nearby cities of

- their succeeded items? They worked as they've put effort to creat, not as they follow anyone. Wake up! :sigh
- 15 Winnie Wong Hong Kong HK Government should be more alert of the long term adverse effect brought by the development of Lantau Island instead of the short term economic return.
- 16 Jo Hanlon UK New is not necessarily better. Manmade is rarely better than nature. Irreversible damage can never be 'A Good Thing'. Why wait for hindsight?
- 17 Donald Latter Mui Wo HK The development that has already taken place on the northern side of Lantau (Tung Chung and the airport), and the now defunct proposals to build a super-prison on the south, show what complete indifference the government has towards protecting the environment or undertaking real sustainable development. Once again, with these new plans, it seems that the only consideration is to find a way to line the pockets of their developer chums with even more of their ill-gotten gains. The plans stink and should be fought against every step of the way.
- 18 Klaus Krueger Hong Kong A bunch of old men always comes up with the same old ideas. Has this government still not realized that since 1997 people start to take an interest in the development of Hong Kong, rather than using it as a springboard to go the West? It is really time for a change in approach in developing Hong Kong.
- 19 Robin Hughes Dubai I agree with most of the sentiments on this petition and would add that HK Government has little knowledge of what makes Hong Kong special to the rest of the world... i.e. HK's "competitive advantages" as a tourist destination. One major advantage over the rest of South China is the proximity of prime country park areas and adjacent rural areas to densely populated urban areas, so visitors to HK can see both in the space of a long weekend. HK Government should analyse where HK wants to be in the long run: do you wish to retain this remarkable environmental diversity or just follow Shenzhen and develop, develop, develop? Lantau is uniquely beautiful and should be retained primarily for recreational purposes, as per previous Government studies. Part of the problem is that the HK Civil Service is too big and now simply too expensive to run.. lots of civil servants in departments like CED feel they have to maintain the momentum of prestigious infrastructure projects in order to justify their existence (and fat monthly pay cheque). The problems of over-development are thus linked to the problems of civil service over-staffing and we won't see improvements in the planning process until the civil service has been reformed and made more cost-effective. Having worked on the Hong Kong New International Airport for almost 5 years I saw this syndrome from the Government side; salaries were astronomical for Government engineers and they have remained high after the handover, despite the economic downturn. Conservation work in HK really requires an understanding of the way different Govt departments interact, and the manner in which single departments (or indeed the Chief Executive) may try to "shortcut" the planning process to promote pet projects. Fortunately groups like LIM and Green Lantau haev a good knowledge of govt processes and are

- becoming very effective lobbyists... so there's hope yet!
- At this stage we should consider what the intentions of the Lantau Development Task Force really are; the group responsible for these unnecessary projects. Do you they have any interest in the long term ecological value of Lantau? Is this Task Force trying to convince itself of its existence. Do any of the Task Force members intend to live in Hong Kong after they leave their concrete signature as part of their legacy, or will they move onto greener pastures with their government retirement fund. All of us need to support the groups and petitions involved in quashing this plan and making the Task Force change their mind about the overall concept of what Lantau really is - part of our home.
- 20 Charlie F Sai Kung
- 24 Angus Hong Kong Keep Lantau a peaceful and beautiful and last virgin land of HONG KONG! Stop development!! :cry
- 25 Kim Leischner Lantau "Only after the last tree has been cut down Only after the last river has been poisoned Only after the last fish has been caught Then will you find that money cannot be eaten." -Cree Prophecy
- 26 Nick Cheung Chau There is a lot of apathy around. It seems that we get so many hare-brained schemes from our government that there's a resigned feeling of "what now?" Nonetheless, it's still important that we all voice our feelings before it's too late for Lantau, which is now on the radar for every developer, having been overlooked until the 90s. There are so many opportunities for wise land use. Perhaps we can take the initiative and suggest to the government what these might be.
- 27 Catherine discovery bay, Lantau Giving away Lantau for short-term mass tourism development is criminal. Government and developers continue to "eat up" the territory, unpunished, with the same constant disregard of the people's will and actual benefits, (and the same constant lack of taste in their developments...). Lantau inhabitants will get NO BENEFITS whatsoever of letting the island get invaded by millions of tourists. Natural resources, quietness and an unstressed way of life will be gone in a year time, just to fill the pockets of tycoons/government officials/ developers (one big family running the country!). On the negative list as well: security will vanish, for humans and wildlife alike, as traffic will boom (if I understand correctly from the huge parking place that's been built at the cable car arrival up the Big Buddha: lots of tourist busses and private cars will be spreading everywhere around the island). A point that could maybe be used in a talk with government: ask them to stop despising the customers they want to lure on Lantau: the rich Mainlanders. These people may have more taste than developers think they have (more taste than developers themselves), and, in a very short time, look down on the concrete developments and lack of environment preservation in Hong Kong. They may even prefer just go to Hainan!
- 22 lapcheung Hello everybody! It is a fact that we don't need to sit back and comment and criticize the government and blame them of everything. The public itself is to blame as well because of their political apathy. Political and conservational awareness is what we need among the public. There are many environmentally conscious people, also locals

living on Lantau Island that care about it. It's a misunderstanding the locals don't care. Also developers such as HKR have also be looked at, that they are just encroach their territory and all those Westerners living in f.e. Discovery Bay are most glad with the place they're living in. Have you heard them about the concrete there? It's a fact that different regions of Lantau have different interests. LIM & GLA are commenting the LCP is a sham, but are not putting forward any ideas or plans how to improve the local ailing economy, even though we can build up an environmental-friendly economy. Instead they're stressing nature conservation which is also important, but that's not how you win the game of lobbying. They come with a face-lift of Mui Wo, but you cannot put plastic surgery on an old woman, thinking to make her beautiful without paying any attention also to her personal character. Besides a comment from their own spokesman is that they're tired of fighting against the government in the superjail case, so I wouldn't be so sure about them in the case of Lantau plan: Lantau is too big for them. Hopefully the political apathy comes to an end as far as South Lantau & Mui Wo is concerned because a South Lantau Liaison Workgroup is to be set up by South Lantau Residents. Meeting for discussions about the Lantau Concept Plan (South & Mui Wo development) are being set up on Tuesday afternoon Feb 1 (Rural Cte) and Tuesday evening Feb 1 (Island Courier & District Councillor). More information below in link.

<http://www.dachshundworld.com/islandcourier/postereng.htm> Please email if constructive comments or suggestions for South Lantau & Mui Wo. Best regards, Esta Overmars Publisher Island Courier
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- The Government is not doing anything to preserve the green environment for our future generation. The Government is only thinking the present, very short sighted, very disappointing! Our future generation and the tourists are losing Hong Kong's unique Lantau and natural habitat. The Government is to blame! :cry
- 23 Teresa Chan Hong Kong
- 28 Karin Smedjeback a Cheung Chau The southern part of Lantau is unique and should be preseverd and not developed. Please keep it that way! HK people need it.
- 29 Bjorn Adahl Cheung Chau If you want to develop, do it on north Lantau. Leave the south as is.
- 30 Sylvie LE RENARD Stanley Hong Kong So the long term perspective for Hong Kong and its islands is to become a shopping/casino destination? that's it? I think that this huge amount of money should be used to develop sound business and infrastructure to keep Hong Kong the financial hub of Asia rather than destroying what it has left of natural beauties.
- 31 teressa siu Clear Water Bay Forget such unnessary projects! Preserve, promote and educate! Don't destroy!
- 32 Rob Parks Clearwater Bay I am never surprised when visitors to HK, first discover the hills, coastline and trails that exist here, so close to the "civilised", polluted,

concrete urban environment. They get it straight away: "What a unique city you have here!" and "How amazing is this to be able to escape the polluted streets so quickly, and to be immersed in such beautiful, invigorating surroundings and scenery after just a short time?!" Hong Kong: City Of... Life? Yes, but only if we stop the concrete encroachment on the life giving (physically and mentally!) blues and greens of our amazing, natural, countryside.

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|------------------|--|
| 33 | Warren Warner | Clearwater Bay | Keep it clean and green! |
| 34 | Brenda | Clear Water bay | Enough is enough. The focus from this point forth should be to preserve Lantau's beauty as naturally as possible. |
| 35 | Celia | Fareham, UK | Since my last visit to HK, IN 1998, there seems to have been massive over-development. Beautiful Lantau island (what remains of it) should be left. The so-called 'plans' for it sound like Hades. |
| 36 | Kerstin Hennecke | Bonn, Germany | I was amazed from the beauty of Lantau Island when I visited it in 2000. Your pictures of it are absolutely beautiful and this unique spot in the world should be protected. Thanks Paul Etherington for sending me the link. Kerstin |
| 37 | Fenella Hood | Toronto, Canada | Since I left Lantau 7 years ago, rarely a day goes by that I don't think of being there again. I look so forward to going back someday, but dread how different it will be. There are few things I would like more than for Lantau to stay the same as when I was lucky enough to live there. |
| 38 | Kerry Sherred | Sydney Australia | The developments on the north of Lantau have seen an obliteration of unique habitat and typical Asian lifestyles. To extend the developments further would change the character of the island and lose out as my holiday destination. The islands as they are offer a wonderful retreat for both Hong Kong citizens and overseas visitors.
Hong Kong peoples live in a very high density environment and have high levels of stress. The British Medical Association recognizes that about 80% of all illnesses including heart disease and cancer are caused by psychological and emotional states of mind. Has any study been carry out into the effect on Hong Kong peoples illness and decrease life expectancy due to the plan destruction of green passive recreational area of Lantau? If not, why not? How about the detrimental effects on our economy due to increase level of sickness and ill health? |
| 39 | Ian Robertson | Hong Kong | A city as a whole, should comprise of a balanced land use pattern. Government should take a whole view on Hong Kong land use. An isolated undeveloped region is very important as it form the nature portion of such a densed city. There are two clear borders for Hong Kong's natural environment: East/West Saikung and North/South Lantau. Once any kind of development started in those region. The chance for whole development will be higher since the conservation value of the land is already lowered. Finally, no natural silent undisturbed place in HK could be found. Conservation is a clear-cut affair, developer will only ask for more in the future. If the HK government doesn't have a clear stand on the Nature Border in HK, everything will finally be given up. |
| 40 | Rex Cheung | Hong Kong | |

- Both me and my family and many of my friends live on Lantau Is.. Ever since we moved here in 1989, it has been our first home and will be as long as we live in HKG. I am still and have been deeply & repetitively have been disappointed- year after year by the HK-Gov'n.'s lack of support in preserving this precious HK land and the lack of respect for the minimal nature and the abundance of interesting "wildlife" (as should be- kept wild and not behind fences or taken away by a lorry or killed by the spreading of chemicals/property developers!) that is needed for the children of HK and HK's future!!! Please hear our voices or at least do something right for a change!
- Please HK government planners and engineers realise that the value of preserving the what is left of the wilderness in Lantau is priceless. Nature feeds our soul and Lantau should be preserved not only as one of HK's lungs but also as a sanctuary for urban dwellers to reconnect with nature and themselves.
- Hong Kong still has a lot of beautiful, relatively untouched areas. Most more economically developed nations consider this to be important, and understand the views of the people (Canada, the US, Europe). Hong Kong is one of the world's top cities and our people are supposed to be the best of the best. We should know better than to destroy areas that contain species found nowhere else in the world. One of those species could ensure the survival of our own species one day.
- I first arrived in Hong Kong in 1972 and enjoyed the undeveloped areas in the NT's such as Sha Tin and Tai Po which are now horrific concrete jungles. Enough is enough - the government should be doing everything in its power to protect Sth. Lantau from development - not the opposite! Look at the Disney project as a tourism pull for HK - environmental nightmare - why would people come to SE Asia to be treated to an American Theme Park full of all the cheesy thrills that come with it - cant we leave that to the States. Can the government please stop pouring concrete on our national parks, otherwise it will be time to move on from this once beautiful place.
- :roll I went for a gorge running trip back in 1996 any further developmenbt would destroy what is not discovered yet. Keep the peaks and and grass and let peace reign
- I always like going to Lantau, beautiful land, hills and beaches. It's ridiculous they now want 'artificial' things here. Maybe should ask those architects to build this stuff on Mars. :upset
- Yes, Indeed.
- Enough is enough. I vote for a halt to development on South Lantau.
- I think the charm of Lantau is that it provides a wonderful contrast to Hong Kong. Visting rustic villages where time seems to move at a slower more normal pace and beautiful unspoilt nature sites helps to recharge the spirit. I think careful consideration should be given to the impact on these irreplaceable treasures before they are carried out. And of course all stake holders, both those that can vote and those that can't, should be considered.
- | | | | |
|----|----------------|---------------|--|
| 41 | J.yang | Lantau Is. | |
| 42 | Peter Lloyd | Lamma Island | |
| 43 | Jai Khilnani | HK | |
| 44 | Jason Orange | Central | |
| 45 | William Moss | UK | |
| 46 | Maya Williams | Cheung Chau | |
| 47 | Bill Byrne | | |
| 48 | Kevin Sinclair | Sai Kung | |
| 49 | kam | Discovery Bay | |

- 50 Hong Kong Dolphinwat TST & North Lantau too much unnecessary destruction, too little conservation and they are too superficial
- Why does the Government feel that they need to develop on land just because it's beautiful...where is the logic? They tried to do exactly the same thing at TAI LONG WAN, (which happens to be one of 'THE' most picturesque locations in Hong Kong,) if it's beautiful then it needs to be seen, however, they seem to neglect the destruction of the site and the scenery. I believe the problem of commercial vs environmental will cease to end, unless they can work in harmony together. The Government needs to recognise that the environment plays a VERY important part in Hong Kong's marketable impression to the rest of the world. If the Government continues to demolish old relics and build on the land the of Hong Kong, Hong Kong will have nothing that defines itself as an International Caring City with culture and understanding, which is what could set it apart from other cities...therefore making it more enticing to investors. Futhermore, if the proposed concepts are developed, they will remove an incentives for new visitors to enter Hong Kong. Is this what the Government wants? To move the growth economy to Lantau? Away from Hong Kong Island? Away from the places like Sai Kung? I though they wanted to promote healthy living and Hong Kong's pristine countryside??? I trust that the Government will think carefully about changing the look of Lantau's sea-front, and possibly think about investing the money back into some of the areas in Hong Kong which need serious attention. Sincerely, Rose Torrance :sigh :?
- 51 Rosemary Torrance Sai Kung
- 52 Kirsty Hong Kong
- What is the obsession with concrete with this government? Don't they understand that a good clean unpolluted environment = more tourists, less healthcare bills = more money in their pockets? Protecting the natural beauty of Hong Kong is one of the best ways of strengthening the economy here - are these people too stupid to work out simple environmental economics?
- 53 Marc Robson
- Why ruin a beautiful location such as this. Its not like Hong Kong as a great many natural locations left for people to visit and enjoy the natural landscape.
- I would say leave it alone, but CLEAN it up! Yes we have beautiful unspoiled beaches and gorgeous countryside. Unfortunately one has to pass through filthy grubby villages, strewn with car bodies, tyres and old appliances. A new addition to this visual pollution of late, containers sprouting up. It is always an embarassment to have to bring visitors through these villages. As much as I would love to crow about the natural beauty of Cheung Sha Beach, passing through Tong Fuk and Pui O fill me with horror. Mui Wo is a disaster - what are we preserving there? The best part of the waterfront is assigned to goods vehicles and the loading of goods. That certainly needs a facelift. Most of the buildings in Mui Wo need a coat of paint or clean to say the least. I won't even mention Tai O stilt houses... Personally I would applaude anything that would get these areas cleaned up. "The rural character" of Lantau should not be vegetable fields strewn with old mattresses, bedding and dumped furniture (nightsoil too!) We should
- 55 Colleen

not have open festering drains running through the village and into the rivers. Perhaps the tax payers hard earned dollars could be better spent. Perhaps the people who live on Lantau should be made more environmentally aware and made accountable for their environment. Why do we continue to tolerate this filth? I have never seen a petition about the trash heap in front of the Pui O pumping station. If development achieves a general clean up and pride among the residents then perhaps it won't be a bad thing. If it is done with sensitivity and thought - not a not a cemented cycle track illuminated by high wattage lighting (Cheung Sha BBQ pits!), then perhaps it will be acceptable.

- 56 Wolfgang
57 Sandra
58 Jim & Renata Harkins Italy
59 Al Howard Central
60 Phillipe Dubrulle Vancouver, Canada
61 Marija Hong Kong
- What for a plan is this. They predicted a natural growth of 100 % of the local population in Lantau. Yesterday Donald Tsang said that actually Hong Kong's population declines. Is Lantau population a complete opposite of Hong Kong's. I think we got fed with wrong figures and facts, that they can push actually their real plan through. More concrete is the last thing we need in Hong Kong - clean up Lantau but leave it green!
- As occasional visitors to HK we have appreciated the contrast Lantau offers to the city. Its unique character should only be surrendered to 'development' as a last resort.
- With mounting pollution, traffic congestion and often unwarranted & unnecessary construction why is the Government continuing with flawed policy? Once these issues have a clear and comprehensible remedy then the Government can consider further projects. However there seems to be a fascination for development for developments sake. People travel to and live on Lantau to get away from the dirty humdrum of life in the city amidst a haven of natural beauty. Once this is taken away it can never be recovered. The island needs to be cleaned up first and foremost with the rubbish dumps and filth strewn villages (often deserted) tackled; Only then should anyone consider further options. But in the end why cannot an area of outstanding natural beauty be appreciated for what it is and enjoyed by so many? I have worked in the outdoor education field on Lantau as well as lived on the island for over a year. Upon my initial arrival I was amazed that a natural setting such as this existed in Hong Kong. A 20 minute ferry ride and you can put yourself in an environment that can be considered by most as an escape from the hustle and bustle of the stresses of the ever growing demands of a busy urban lifestyle. Lantau should be not only be recognized by the government, but protected for its obvious educational, aesthetic, and its tourism value. All of the latter points, if handled in a well managed and sustainable manner, will add to the cities international appeal by demonstrating the well balanced planning between its urban and natural features. The government needs to balance the short term benefits of rapid development versus the sustainable planning of Lantau that, in the end, if properly handled will generate long term economical benefit while not upsetting the delicate natural splendour of Lantau.
- Having participated in the Phoenix Walk-a-thon back in November

A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR LANTAU AND NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS (DRAFT: 29 AUGUST 2005)

Introduction



Lantau is the largest of Hong Kong's islands, and for the most part is relatively undeveloped (the main exceptions being Tung Chung and the airport on the north coast, and Discovery Bay and Hong Kong Disneyland on the east coast). However, following the publication of a *Concept Plan for Lantau* by the Lantau Development Taskforce established by the Hong Kong Government, this situation could greatly change.

The Concept Plan, which should be read in conjunction with this document, outlines a raft of potential developments that would significantly transform Lantau: ranging from the Zhuhai-Macau-Hong Kong Bridge landing on the north coast, through a Logistics Park and indoor, man-made beach, to spa resorts and boardwalks. Some other potential projects were omitted from the Concept Plan, notably a container terminal off northwest Lantau, and a liquefied petroleum gas storage facility on the Soko Islands.

The Concept Plan has received criticism from several quarters, including as several projects threaten to radically transform Lantau, especially along the north shore; also as the plan does not present a clear vision for Lantau.

This Alternative Concept Plan therefore includes suggestions for development projects on Lantau. These projects are within the framework of views of Keep Lantau Beautiful, an alliance of groups concerned about the future of Lantau. Further, much as the Concept Plan espouses sustainable development, the projects outlined here are aimed at achieving sustainable development. "Sustainable development" was not defined in the Concept Plan, and some critics have charged that the Concept Plan took it to mean ongoing development. For the purposes of the current document, sustainable development is defined as:

"Sustainable Development in Hong Kong balances social, economic and environmental needs, both for present and future generations,

simultaneously achieving a vibrant economy, social progress and better environmental quality, locally, nationally and internationally, through the efforts of the community and the Government.”

HKSAR Study on Sustainable Development for the 21st Century (SUSDEV 21)

In this alternative plan, following the views of the Keep Lantau Beautiful alliance, there is strong emphasis on environmental needs (views include: “The basic premise must therefore be conservation”). If these needs are met, together with social and economic needs, then the developments will indeed benefit both present and future generations.

Here, sustainable tourism is proposed as an important means of enabling sustainable development. The World Travel Organisation defines sustainable tourism as:

“Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

UNEP Tourism Programme, <http://www.unep.org/pc/tourism/sust-tourism/home.htm>

This document does not give exhaustive coverage of potential projects; it makes brief mention of a potential project for the nearby Soko Islands, but other neighbouring islands should also be included in any considerations for Lantau. Nor are projects fixed; the intention is to encourage discussion, as part of a process aimed at discovering how the community and Government can work together to both protect and sustainably develop Lantau and neighbouring islands for present and future generations.

Lantau: beautiful and unique



Lantau is among the loveliest islands in China, and is, “Hong Kong’s biggest and most beautiful island” (Henry Tang, Financial Secretary). It was once known as the Island of Prayer, with 135 monasteries in the 1970s. There are many working monasteries today, many of them still tranquil.

Lantau retains small rural communities, offering insight into South China village life – with both farming and fishing communities.

With its convoluted coastline and soaring mountains cut by fast-flowing streams, Lantau has tremendous scenery. The wetlands, woodlands and montane scrubland are home to rich flora and fauna, with several species that are rare worldwide.

Planning Considerations

The Concept Plan proposes a wide array of projects, some of which are apparently strongly conflicting – such as intense urbanisation including new town expansion and logistics development near tourism projects (on a stretch of coast once earmarked to become a “tourist paradise”; Northshore Lantau Development Feasibility Study).

Doubts expressed in *A Conservation Strategy for Lantau* regarding threats from [urban] development on Lantau remain valid; such development is more suited to other parts of Hong Kong, especially the Kowloon Peninsula. As yet, no case has been made to show that such development on Lantau would indeed be sustainable.

Therefore, this Alternative Concept Plan covers projects that are complementary and coherent, with a goal of achieving sustainable development whilst ensuring we keep Lantau beautiful. There is strong emphasis on tourism:

1. Tourism – involving both overseas visitors, and Hong Kong people – is already important on Lantau, and set to become far more significant with the opening of Ngong Ping 360 and Hong Kong Disneyland.
2. As tourism need not require major urbanization developments – indeed, these can deter many tourists – it could be key to achieving sustainable development on the island. Providing, that is, the environment is not harmed, and there is real benefit for local communities – ie there is sustainable tourism in a broad sense, with real benefits for local communities.
3. Lantau offers a slew of possibilities for sustainable tourism, including cultural, hiking and outdoor sports, nature tourism, and even beach recreation. All are offered to some extent; all could be greatly developed, with strong, well-considered planning and management to safeguard the environment.
4. Tourism elsewhere in Hong Kong will benefit from sustainable development of Lantau. This is partly as Lantau is a gateway to Hong Kong – and a green, beautiful Lantau will boost visitors’ impressions; further, the promotion of additional attractions on Lantau will make Hong Kong a more enticing place to visit.
5. Effective sustainable tourism will benefit local communities on Lantau, helping reverse economic declines in places such as Mui Wo.
6. A well-protected Lantau, with strong sustainable tourism, will also benefit Hong Kong people, offering a ready retreat from city life. Especially in the wake of

SARS, outdoor recreation has become more popular for Hong Kong people, with several key destinations on Lantau.

7. Lantau could likewise offer a retreat for people from elsewhere in the Pearl River Delta, which in several places is suffering from rushed, ill-considered, highly unsustainable development.
8. In tandem with tourism, other sustainable developments will be possible, including organic farming, producing and exhibiting arts and crafts, cultural performances, and sports development.
9. Other benefits will include greatly improved facilities for educating Hong Kong people – especially schoolchildren – about their cultural heritage and local natural history.

Potential Projects

The following gives examples of projects that could help ensure sustainable development on Lantau. It includes suggestions from sources such as the Concept Plan for Lantau, Ark~eden, a submission from legislator Albert Chan, and other groups and individuals.

The overall aim is to show that Lantau can be protected, and indeed enhanced, whilst becoming a multi-faceted destination for Hong Kong and overseas visitors. A destination with something to offer whether visitors want the excitement of outdoor sports or the tranquillity of hillside temples, or want to explore natural and cultural history, or simply enjoy a casual stroll, a day at the beach, a meal at a rural restaurant. The aim, too, is to ensure Lantau remains a great place to live, and a place Hong Kong can be proud of.

Conservation area at Tai Ho Wan

The Tai Ho Stream boasts high diversity of freshwater fish, and the stream and vicinity hold a good variety of wildlife. In environmental terms, it is the second-highest rated privately owned land in Hong Kong, and one of the 12 Crown Jewel sites. This would make an excellent reserve, with effective management for conservation and education purposes.

Plans for reclamation work off the mouth of the stream should be curtailed or abandoned, to safeguard biodiversity in the stream and inshore waters.

Tourism Node at Sunny Bay

Sunny Bay will be an important node for tourists travelling to and from Hong Kong Disneyland. Here, the node can be a transport hub (not indoor complex), where visitors wanting to enjoy indoor entertainment, dining, fashionable stores, theme attractions and indoor leisure and sports facilities can readily take transport to urban areas such as nearby Kowloon, which has excellent facilities; perhaps also to Tung Chung.

Further, information in this tourism node can also highlight the potential to enjoy outdoor pursuits in Hong Kong, especially on Lantau.

Nearby Yam O and headland are very attractive, making good places to for visitors to stroll, especially if they have no time to visit other Lantau destinations (besides Disneyland). There may be potential for building one or two small, rural style restaurants overlooking the bay.

Tung Chung

Tung Chung can be enhanced, to have facilities and attractions for tourists – including those using Skyrail, as well as for local residents, whilst also expanding employment opportunities. In the main, urban area, this can include restaurants, bars, and shops. New housing developments should be kept to a minimum, with ample green spaces to somewhat guard against concentrations of air pollutants.

Historic attractions in the Tung Chung area include Tung Chung Fort and Tung Chung Battery. These lead to the possibility of a museum – even coupled with historical re-enactments, such as between imperial forces and pirate ships.

As the fleet of infamous pirate Cheung Po-tsai was defeated off Chek Lap Kok, there is great potential for a museum – ideally, a “living museum”, with real people dressed and acting as sometimes wicked characters – at Tung Chung. (Chow Yun-fat will play Cheung Po-tsai in the next *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and though far from any historical accuracy [publicity bills him as 15th century, not 19th], this will help make Cheung better known.)

Also of historic interest is the Hau Wong temple, which marks a time when the Song imperial court fled Mongol forces to the Hong Kong area, including Lantau. Here, too, there is opportunity for re-enactments, for bringing to life some of the great drama in the history of Hong Kong and Lantau.

Close to the temple is San Tau, which is an SSSI and one of few local breeding sites for horseshoe crabs. Together with Hau Wong, the Tung Chung stream and old rice fields, this creates potential for making the area west of Tung Chung – including Tung Chung Bay, which should not be reclaimed – into an attractive area for visitors and locals. This will also be make for good initial views for people riding the Skyrail from Tung Chung. Proper management will be required to safeguard San Tau’s value for biodiversity.

Tourist Accommodation on South Lantau

There is already a range of accommodation available in village housing scattered across Lantau, including at coastal areas such as Cheung Sha. Such accommodation can be improved, and more perhaps added, without need for environmentally harmful developments.

Importantly, although their total potential may be substantial, each of the village apartment complexes is small, so perhaps finds promotion difficult. They can be assisted with promoting their accommodation to visitors from Hong Kong and overseas (see later, suggestion for Lantau Tourism Promotion Association).

(See later, re Infrastructure.)

Lantau Museum and Garden

A Lantau Museum and Garden could become a very popular destination for visitors to Lantau. Exhibits can cover Lantau's cultural and natural history – from the island's formation, to the arrival of humans who left artefacts discovered by archaeologists, to the present day, coupled with an overview of changes in the flora and fauna. [Though this outline has similarities to the Museum of History in Tsim Sha Tsui, the Lantau Museum can differ, with more focus on natural and cultural history, and on activities for visitors.]

Here, too, there is potential for highlighting the range of potential activities on Lantau, so this centre acts as a springboard for exploring the island.

Possible locations include Tung Chung (away from the Fort, which is an attraction in its own right); or Mui Wo; or Ngong Ping (assuming the Skyrail is successful).

The centre could include landscaped gardens, with plants and trees that are native to Lantau. These will in turn attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

Potentially, this could be expanded to showcase biodiversity from elsewhere in the region, such as from south China and southeast Asia.

Lantau Tour Centres

Visitor information centres can be established at major entry points for Lantau, such as Mui Wo and Tung Chung. These need not be grandiose; at Mui Wo, for instance, there is potential for – initially at least – simply enhancing the AFCD information kiosk.

Mui Wo

Facelift Mui Wo is in slow decline; but this could be reversed if it becomes attractive for tourists. Already, Mui Wo has much to offer – it's in a splendid setting, with rural character and an attractive beach.

In places, however, Mui Wo appears rundown, with excessive grey concrete: this is especially true near the ferry pier, presenting an unlovely impression to people arriving by ferry. There is great scope for improvements, which could include replacing expanses of concrete with trees and flowerbeds. Plus signage highlighting things to see and do.



Heritage and Scenery There are almost ruined, old watchtowers at Mui Wo, which could be renovated. There are already trails through the area, but with better signage these can guide visitors past these buildings, as well as past orchards, through fields and hamlets, and to the Silvermine Waterfall – which is impressive and easily reached, yet not promoted. Historic trails, suitable for people on foot and on cycles, can be created.

It may be possible to open the silver mine for (guided) visits; if so, an exhibit could cover the history of mining here and elsewhere in Hong Kong.

Other possibilities include a water sports centre, perhaps including accommodation. These sports could include dragon boat racing – giving visitors a chance to try paddling in and drumming for a dragon boat.

Mui Wo Wetland Reserve The marsh and fishponds at Mui Wo are sadly neglected, impacted by drainage works and by slow reclamation. Yet they still attract wildlife, with birds including egrets. This area could readily be transformed into a small wetland reserve, with visitor facilities such as hides (blinds) and a short trail system. Here, people can easily see large waterbirds such as the egrets, as well as herons. Rarer species would also occur. This, too, would add to the visitor attractions on Lantau.

Ngong Ping: native woodland and tea plantation

With the advent of the Ngong Ping 360 tourist attraction, Ngong Ping is set to become an even more important area for visitors.

Ngong Ping is in a magnificent setting, and already features a tea plantation, woodland and a tree walk. More native trees could be planted here, creating sub-tropical woodland similar to the forests that once clothed Lantau and much of Hong Kong. With better woodland and wildlife, there will be opportunities for highlighting the reverence for nature that permeates Buddhism; also the aim for balance with nature in Taoism.

The tea plantation has become somewhat neglected in recent years. Some assistance can be given to help restore parts of the plantation – as well as selling locally made tea. Mountain Begonia, once a famous product of this area, can be cultivated.

Tai O

Fishing village Tai O is already a tourist attraction. With more promotion, and benefiting partly through the visitors drawn to Ngong Ping, overall visitor numbers could be significantly increased – but ensuring a balance, so that at no time do visitors overwhelm

the village (peak numbers during weekends and public holidays may already be at or close to capacity; whilst there is perhaps scope for more visitors on weekdays). There may be ways of reducing congestion, such as extended routes for visitors, with signage etc so most visitors walk in one direction, such as making a clockwise circuit.

While infrastructure may need improving, assistance should also be given to locals wishing to open or enhance restaurants, cafes, shops, and small heritage museum – so the community benefits from tourism, yet Tai O retains the ambience that draws visitors.

Wetlands Beside Tai O are mangroves and small marshes, and former salt fields. These receive some protection, and additional mangrove planting work is underway; ongoing active management could further improve these wetlands.

Especially if wetland reserve is established at Mui Wo and proves successful, the Tai O wetland can be enhanced, also with some visitor facilities such as hides.

Folk Museum There is potential for a folk museum focusing on traditional Tai O lifestyles, including fishing and salt extraction methods. This could be at least partly a living museum – for instance, with people selling dried fish as locals have done for generations. [This could be developed from an existing, small museum; perhaps simply by giving financial assistance to the current museum owner.]

Ng Yuen



Ng Yuen is unique in Hong Kong – and probably, worldwide. It's arguably Hong Kong's only folly: a Chinese landscaped garden, with carp pond, built away from roads (but beside a major hiking trail), and is a superb place to visit with majestic surroundings.

The buildings are somewhat dilapidated, but with assistance, these can be renovated. There is considerable opportunity for making this more attractive for visitors, with possibilities including a café – maybe in the style of a Chinese tea house, perhaps accommodation, and improved gardens that could focus on the flora of Lantau and south China. Such developments should be small scale; with safeguards to ensure the environment is not damaged (including by ensuring there is no pollution of the stream).

Fan Lau; nearby Tai Long Wan

The Fan Lau hamlet is almost deserted. Yet it is in a wonderful part of Hong Kong, with an old fort and mysterious stone circle close by, accessed by walking or by boat. Here, there are possibilities for enhanced attractions for visitors, perhaps including comfortable

accommodation for small numbers of people who wish to spend the night in a tranquil place, seemingly far from the city.

Cycle tracks

Lantau offers scope for creating an excellent cycling network; indeed, there are already mountain bike trails. New trails could be established – but with minimal environmental damage. Existing routes can be promoted, particularly the South Lantau Water Catchment, which offers easy riding, and can be a fine family cycling trail. It may, however, be difficult to create new mountain biking trails without introducing conflicts with hikers (hiking should have priority over biking).

Action Sports

As well as having excellent potential for cycle trails, Lantau could become Hong Kong's main centre for action sports. Mountain biking trails, adventure racing courses, climbing routes, and destinations for watersports such as kayaking are all possible. These can suit people with abilities ranging from beginner to expert, affording training facilities for athletes who can represent Hong Kong at an international level.

A Lantau Action Sports Centre would be the focus for these activities. This may offer accommodation for local and overseas contestants, static work out areas, a gym, rock walls, training pool, workshops to repair gear, parasailing stores, canteen, sports shop and so on. Possible locations include the South Lantau Hospital site at Cheung Sha, and Shap Long.

Cheung Sha

Cheung Sha is one of Hong Kong's most beautiful beaches – which is all the more remarkable given that it is right beside a main road. However, it is relatively under-utilised, perhaps because it is almost a secret.

Cheung Sha can be promoted, with roadside signage helping visitors who arrive by buses.

The western stretch of Cheung Sha should be kept as is, allowing people to stroll along the sand, with natural vegetation above the tideline.



The eastern stretch of Cheung Sha already has visitor facilities including restaurants in village houses, and a watersports centre with visitor accommodation. With greater promotion of the area, these could attract more people on weekdays (when they are currently relatively quiet); perhaps more visitor houses could be converted to non-intrusive visitor facilities – focused on enjoying the beach and South China Sea views, and on watersports.

Pui O Buffalo Fields

The marshy, abandoned fields at Pui O are home to feral water buffalo. Coupled with the scenery, beach, and rural character, these could help make Pui O a significant tourist attraction.

The buffalo and “their” fields should be protected; with an improved method for controlling buffalo numbers if needed. With community help, the area can be improved, with some rather despoiled areas enhanced by greenery.



As with much of Lantau, promotion is needed: it's currently easy to pass through Pui O village by bus, without realising there is anything of interest. There is scope for a Buffalo Trail, including a loop from the main road, through fields to the beach, and back to the road. With more visitors, there will be opportunities for more small shops and cafes, plus accommodation (avoiding new buildings in the coastal protection zone).

Proposed Lantau North (Extension) Country Park

This country park extension should not really appear in this plan; the extension has been long planned – it was gazetted in 2001, and should by now be a reality.

There seems no excuse for further delaying the country park extension. Once established, the new area of country park can be a focus for creating new hiking (and mountain biking) trails, as well as for conservation activities.

Protection for Other Important Natural Areas

Formal zoning protection should be afforded to other valuable areas such as coastlines, mountain streams, wetlands and *fung shui* woods.

Soko Islands

A marine park has been proposed for the Soko Islands; this can make a significant contribution to coastal protection around Lantau.

The Sokos have potential as an ecotourism destination, with coral communities, as well as regenerating woodland and old farmland, and small beaches. Visitors may arrive on day trips; accommodation could be built allowing small numbers of people to stay overnight.

Infrastructure

Ensuring Lantau developments are indeed sustainable will be challenging. A host of problems may well arise; however, some problems can be anticipated, and alleviated or solved in advance:

1. Carrying capacities for individual sites. Assessing carrying capacities is difficult, and somewhat subjective. However, care should be taken to ensure visitor numbers do not overwhelm sites, destroying the natural beauty that attracts visitors in the first place. This is especially important for sensitive sites, such as proposed nature reserves, and Ng Yuen; for such places, ticket systems may be required.
2. Sewage treatment and sewerage facilities must be adequate.
3. Transportation needs considering. The emphasis should be on using the minimum transport required to meet the needs of visitors and locals. Ferries could play useful roles. They offer a convenient, and highly scenic alternative to vehicles; small piers at coastal villages would bring visitors to revitalize these communities. Better and more buses (perhaps of the tourist minibus style) are preferable to more taxis.
4. Accommodation in rural areas should be small, in keeping with the environment, and ensuring people staying can truly enjoy a rural atmosphere – cf small island resorts in places such as Thailand, though on Lantau buildings can have a local character. It may be possible to use some local materials such as bamboo to help build accommodation.

Promotion Crucial for Success



As this – by no means exhaustive – document makes clear, Lantau already has many existing and potential visitor attractions, with great possibilities for improving these and creating new attractions.

However, most of these attractions receive little or no promotion – many are little known even to Hong Kong people. There is, therefore, considerable scope for enhanced promotion of Lantau's many and varied attractions. It may be advisable to establish a Lantau Tourism Promotion Association – or Islands Tourism Promotion Association; this could also help businesses with improving services for visitors (such as even small restaurants having menus with English as well as Chinese, ensuring minimum standards for hostels), as well as promoting attractions, including through the Internet.

Acknowledgements

Sources used in preparing this plan included:

Concept Plan for Lantau: Consultation Digest Lantau Development Task Force
ark~eden – a vision for sustainable development on Lantau

A Conservation Strategy for Lantau Green Lantau Association, The Conservancy Association, Friends of the Earth, Green Power, Hong Kong Marine Conservation Society, World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong
Keep Lantau Beautiful Groups including Green Lantau Association, Clear the Air, Save Our Shorelines

Several individuals – including from some non-governmental organisations – commented on the first draft of this plan. However, names are not published here, as at least two were concerned that some people would take “commented on” to mean “fully support/endorse”. Despite this, their contributions helped strengthen this plan; their contributions are greatly appreciated.

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Letter from James Lazell, Director of the Conservation Agency, to the *South China Morning Post*:

I have recently been able to review the plan for conservation and ecotourism development drawn up by Dr. Martin Williams for Lantau. It is a superb alternative to the current government plan, which I believe calls for unsustainable, ecologically destructive development.

As a conservation biologist, I have been visiting Lantau and surrounding islands annually since 1979. I typically bring groups of other professional biologists, graduate and undergraduate students, and amateur naturalists to these islands. We have discovered new species of reptiles and insects and documented new localities and habitats for many rare species of wildlife. We work with colleagues at local universities, AFCD, WWF, Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, and other Hong Kong institutions. We know Lantau and the surrounding islands, like Peng Chau, Hei Ling Chau, Chau Kung To, Shek Kwu Chau, and the Sokos, are treasure troves of natural biodiversity. But over the years we have lost a lot.

The consumptive destruction of most of Chek Lap Kok, the urbanization of the Tung Chung region, the Disneyfication of Chok Ko Wan (Penny's Bay), and continued housing development along Lantau's south coast have all destroyed significant natural areas and habitat. The demise of agriculture, too, has resulted in paddies reverting to shrubland. This has decreased habitat for many species specialized for marsh and paddy life. Buffalos and cattle are our

allies in helping maintain these open ecosystems, but active agriculture is needed too.

All of these factors are considered in the alternative plan. I urge Lantau residents and all concerned citizens to study it and, I hope, assist us in bringing it to reality.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Lazell

Shui Hau, Lantau

www.theconservationagency.org