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CB(1)577/06-07(03)

22 November 2006

The Hon Miriam Lau
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

The Hon. Lau,

Meeting between the Legislative Council and
Heung Yee Kuk (HYK) on 31 October 2006

New Nature Conservation Policy

Thank you for your letter of 7 November to the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works. I am authorized to reply on her behalf.

We would like to express our gratitude to HYK for their interest in the New Nature Conservation Policy. We have been keeping close contact with HYK on this issue. For example, the Environmental Protection Department representatives attended the HYK Liaison Committee Meeting in August this year to brief HYK Members on the progress of the Policy.

As regards the Pilot Scheme for Public-private partnership (PPP), the Government has set up an Inter-departmental Task Force, comprising representatives from departments responsible for conservation, planning, environmental and works, to examine the applications. Having regard to a number of factors including site constraints, transport arrangements, ecological conditions, land use compatibility, infrastructure capacity, financial viability of the management plan, monitoring arrangements, etc, the Task Force will consider the proposals on a case-by-case basis. Development proposals involving non in-situ land exchange would only be considered with full justifications. Owing to the complexity and variables involved in the Pilot PPP Scheme, the time required for vetting the PPP proposals is longer than expected.

HYK Members also proposed that the Government should set up a nature conservation trust. Establishment of a nature conservation trust can facilitate

pooling of funds from all sectors of the community for protection and conservation of the natural heritage of Hong Kong. It will provide an alternative source of funding to sustain nature conservation efforts. Some applications received under the PPP also propose the establishment of site-specific trust, in order to finance the long-term conservation of the concerned site. We are examining the feasibility of the suggestion, in particular the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the trust. We will make reference to the experience of the PPP Pilot Scheme and explore the possibility of establishing a nature conservation trust in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,



(Eric Chan)

for Director of Environmental Protection

c.c. Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
Administrative Assistant to Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works