

**For discussion
on 28 June 2010**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Designation of Special Areas for the Hong Kong National Geopark

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposed designation of Double Haven Special Area, High Island Special Area, Sharp Island Special Area, Ung Kong Group Special Area and Ninepin Group Special Area ("the five proposed special areas") for protecting the geological resources within the Hong Kong National Geopark.

Background

2. The Hong Kong National Geopark is made up of eight Geo-Areas distributed across the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region and North East New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region, covering a total area of about 5,000 hectares (ha). It was established in 2009 with a view to protecting areas of geological importance in Hong Kong, as well as promoting geo-conservation, popularisation of geo-science, public education and sustainable development of geological resources. In November 2009, the Hong Kong Geopark obtained national geopark status, awarded by the Ministry of Land and Resources, and became the Hong Kong National Geopark. Through the national geopark network, Hong Kong could gain more experience on the preservation of valuable geological and topographical resources, and broaden its base and connection for developing eco-tourism. Since its opening, the Hong Kong National Geopark has received over 1.2 million local and overseas visitors.

The Proposal

3. Both country parks and special areas are designated under the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208) (the Ordinance), and are subject to the same statutory protection and control. Country parks, however, usually cover larger areas. They are designated and managed for recreational, educational and nature conservation purposes, and are provided with facilities, such as hiking trails, barbecue and camping sites. On the other

hand, special areas are of smaller sizes and higher ecological value, and are usually managed for nature conservation and educational uses only. Under section 24(1) of the Ordinance, the Chief Executive may, by order in the Gazette, designate any area of the government land outside a country park as a special area.

4. The majority of the land areas covered by the Hong Kong National Geopark are already within the existing country parks designated under the Ordinance. However, there are still some areas of the Geopark which fall outside the country parks' boundaries but are of high ecological significance. In order to better preserve these areas, we propose to designate them as "special areas" under the Ordinance. These proposed special areas are all on government land, covering a total of about 235 ha. The location of these five proposed special areas are shown at **Annex**.

<u>Special Area</u>	<u>Special Geological Interest</u>	<u>Area</u>
Double Haven Special Area	Ap Chau and Ap Lo Chun in Double Haven display sedimentary rocks of the Kat O Formation which offer excellent venues for studying breccia in the field. Yan Chau and Pak Ka Chau are components of the renowned 'six treasures' of Double Haven and geologically they are of interest as supratidal platform.	0.8 ha
High Island Special Area	This proposed special area covers a diverse range of coastal features such as sea arches, sea caves and sea stacks which can be found at Po Pin Chau of High Island. Moreover, it possesses a vast number of spectacular acidic volcanic rock columns, which are of high geological value.	3.9 ha
Sharp Island Special Area	This proposed special area consists of diverse geological features that reveal the history of the Sai Kung Caldera.	0.06 ha
Ung Kong Group Special Area	This proposed special area boasts the world rare acidic volcanic columns. Moreover, it has covered a wide range of coastal features such as sea arches, sea caves and sea stacks which can be found abundantly at Basalt	176.8 ha

<u>Special Area</u>	<u>Special Geological Interest</u>	<u>Area</u>
	Island, Bluff Island, Wang Cha and Kam Chung Ngam.	
Ninepin Group Special Area	Same as Ung Kong Group, this proposed special area contains the world rare acidic volcanic columns. It also has a wide range of coastal features such as sea arches, sea caves and sea stacks which can be abundantly found at North Ninepin Island, South Ninepin Island and East Ninepin Island.	53.1 ha

5. After designation, the five proposed special areas will be under the control and management of the Country and Marine Parks Authority, who is the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, and be regulated by the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A).

Consultation

6. This proposal was supported by the Country and Marine Parks Board. Furthermore, we had consulted the relevant District Councils, namely the North District Council and Sai Kung District Council in February 2010 and March 2010 respectively which have indicated their full support for the proposed designation.

Way Forward

7. Subject to Members' views, we will take forward the designation process with a view to effecting the designation by the end of this year.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to give advice on the proposed designation.

**Environmental Protection Department
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
June 2010**

