

**立法會**  
***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2324/09-10(04)

Ref. : CB1/PL/EA

**Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Meeting on 28 June 2010**

**Background brief on the geopark in Hong Kong  
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

**Purpose**

This paper sets out the background to the setting up of a geopark in Hong Kong, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Environmental Affairs (the Panel).

**Background**

2. Geopark refers to geological site of special scientific significance, rarity or beauty; together with geological significance. These sites must also have high archaeological, ecological, historical or cultural value. The Geopark programme was initiated and launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1999 and 2004 respectively. Geoparks meeting prescribed conditions may be listed as national and global. At present, China has 182 national geoparks, with 22 designated as global, out of 64 global geoparks in the world.

**Setting up of a Geopark in Hong Kong**

3. Hong Kong boasts rich geological resources of high academic research, tourism and scenic value. As part of Government's effort to enhance the quality of life, the Chief Executive announced in the 2008-09 Policy Address the setting up of a geopark under the framework of the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208) and Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476), with a view to better conserving the geological landscapes as well as promoting geoeducation and geoscience popularization.

4. In 2008, the Administration commissioned a study to assess the feasibility of establishing a geopark in Hong Kong. Two regions, namely the northeastern New Territories and Sai Kung, are identified with world class and unique and representative in terms of geodiversity, planning and management, ecology, science popularization potential and cultural interests. Taking on board the findings of the study, the Administration decided to set up a geopark in Hong Kong covering these areas for better protection and integrated management of the geological attractions and promotion of geodiversity. The Administration also prepared a submission to the Ministry of Land and Resources for the listing of the geopark as a national geopark.

5. On 3 November 2009, Hong Kong first national geopark was opened. It covers an area of 50 square kilometres across parts of the Northeastern New Territories and Sai Kung. It is divided into the Northeast New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region and the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region, with each region featuring four Geo-Areas, or eight in total. The former region includes Double Haven, Tolo Channel, Tung Ping Chau and Port Island, whereas the latter one includes Sharp Island, High Island, Ninepin Island and Ung Kong Group. Most of these areas fall within the boundary of the existing country or marine parks. As to areas that fall outside protected areas, the Administration will designate them as special areas or marine parks under the Country Parks Ordinance and Marine Parks Ordinance for comprehensive protection.

### **Deliberations by the Panel**

6. The Panel generally supported the proposal to set up a geopark which was discussed at the meeting on 23 February 2009. To help visitors to better appreciate the geological landscapes, some members suggested that geo-walks should be developed, and that organized tours should be conducted since some of the areas in geopark were not easily accessible. Sufficient toilets facilities should also be provided for use by visitors. Other members however expressed reservation at promoting tourism at all the eight geosites since natural conservation and tourism were contradictory to each other. They were worried that the increase in number of visitors to these sites would bring irreparable damages to the geosites. Hence, a comprehensive plan, including the need to impose restrictions on the number of visitors, should be worked out to better conserve and manage the natural landscapes of the geosites.

7. On the future development of geopark, some members enquired whether more areas would be included in the proposed geopark, particularly after it had acquired the national geopark status. They were concerned that the setting up of geopark would affect the rights of owners of private land situated within geoparks.

### **Latest development**

8. The Administration proposes to brief members on the designation of Special Areas for the Hong Kong National Geopark at the Panel meeting on 28 June 2010.

### **Relevant papers**

Information paper provided by the Administration for the EA Panel meeting on 23 February 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0223cb1-807-4-e.pdf>

Minutes of the EA Panel meeting on 23 February 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20090223.pdf>

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
23 June 2010