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世界自然基金會
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Submission to Panel on Development

Special Meeting on 16 April 2016

Proposed Development Strategy for Lantau

WWF would like to express our view and grave concern on the “Proposed Development Strategy for Lantau” with the focus on the conservation of South Lantau and the marine ecology

1. Not in line with the planning vision

WWF opine that the Proposed Development Strategy for Lantau is not in line with the planning vision. According to the “Lantau Development Public Engagement Digest – Space For All” published in January 2016 by the Development Bureau and the Lantau Development Advisory Committee, the planning vision is to “*balancing and enhancing development and conservation.*”¹ However, we found that most of the recommendations in the consultation document stressed on the development while there is no additional active conservation measure to conserve the unique ecology and natural landscape of Lantau. We view that the government should take active measures to conserve the biodiversity of Lantau in order to achieve sustainable development. One of the priority conservation actions will be designating the offshore water of Tai O and Yi O as Western Lantau Marine Park in order to provide a bigger sanctuary to the declining Chinese white dolphin. This offshore design would leave water space to the local communities and fishermen for their daily use.

2. Formulate comprehensive transport and traffic strategy for Lantau

WWF is of grave concern that the proposed Strategic Traffic and Transport Infrastructure Concept Plan and the relaxation of traffic restriction on closed roads will increase the development pressure at ecologically sensitive areas, especially those without statutory protection or Development Permission Area (DPA) Plan. Indeed, unenforceable eco-vandalism cases have already been happening at private lands without DPA Plans, such

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as on-going dumping activities at the ecologically important wetlands at Pui O (Fig. 1). We worry that the proposed traffic arrangement will make landowners think there are many development opportunities and result in further destruction of unprotected sites of ecological importance. Therefore, we urge the government to formulate comprehensive transport and traffic strategy and maintain the traffic restriction in order to reduce the incentive of eco-vandalism at ecologically sensitive areas. The government should encourage and enhance environment-friendly public transport to cope with the transport needs on Lantau.

3. Cover DPA Plan at ecologically sensitive areas without statutory protection

As mentioned in the previous section, some ecologically sensitive areas on Lantau do not receive any statutory protection which leads to uncontrollable eco-vandalism. For example, no enforcement action could be taken by the planning authority on C&D waste dumping at private lands in Pui O wetlands since the entire South Lantau area is not covered by any DPA Plan. If the government does not fix this planning loophole in South Lantau as well as other unprotected ecological important sites on the island, any development proposals, even for green and eco-tourism, will spur landowners to destroy the valuable ecological areas and affect the overall landscape in the hope of developing their land. Therefore, we urge the government to cover areas without statutory protection by DPA Plan such as South Lantau and Wong Lung Hang immediately to prevent ecological destruction caused by development pressure arose from the Lantau Development Plan.

4. East Lantau Metropolis and Spa Resort at Soko Islands should be objected

WWF objects to the proposed East Lantau Metropolis development and the associated transport facilities because the need for such a large scale development has never been justified. Moreover, there is lack of updated information on the marine ecology and fishery resources in the Central Waters, we are of grave concern that the proposed reclamation will cause adverse impacts on potential areas of important marine ecology and fishery resources. Also, the proposed spa resort at Soko Islands will impose threats to water quality inside the future Marine Park and affect Chinese White Dolphin and Finless Porpoise in the vicinity. The increase in vessel traffic brought by the two projects will also threaten fisheries resources and cetaceans in the surrounding waters during both construction and operation period.

¹ P. 3 of the “Lantau Development Public Engagement Digest – Space For All”

5. Carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment for Lantau development

WWF considers that any development plans on Lantau should be included in the on-going “Hong Kong 2030+: Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030” study which will provide a rigorous, updated spatial planning framework and board direction of land use and infrastructure planning of Hong Kong beyond 2030. The government should carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment for all the proposed and planned development on Lantau, including but not limited to ecological baseline surveys, assessment environmental carrying capacity, cumulative ecological and environmental impact assessment, at the early planning stage to identify “NO-GO” areas to avoid adverse impacts on areas and species of conservation importance, and to identify conservation measures to enhance the ecological value of Lantau.

Fig. 1 Uncontrollable dumping of C&D waste at ecologically important Pui O wetlands

