

(Submission provided by Ms Kathryn DAVIES)

Written comments to Additional special meeting on 27 April 2019 on "Studies related to artificial islands in the central waters"

I would like to express my strong objection to land reclamation in central waters, or otherwise known as the East Lantau Metropolis. I work in Hong Kong as an English teacher and linguist, and I speak as a layperson with a sincere passion for our environment, particularly biodiversity, and our future wellbeing.

I've resided in Mui Wo for over three years, and I have been an avid hiker on Lantau island for nearly 7 years. In my time here, I have witnessed barking deer, pink dolphins, lantern bugs, cobras and Chinese mountain snakes, common and brown breasted kingfishers, egrets and herons, countless butterflies and insects, and this is not to mention the numerous varieties of trees and shrubs that play a key role in our ecosystem. While as humans we have evolved to have language, we have sadly taken our ability to mean an absolute powder over the homes and habitats of these other living species. These, and thousands of others, do not have a language or a voice with which they can participate in today's meeting and the general discussion about reclamation.

Our dialogue regarding the reclamation is purely human-centred – our own needs are put in the forefront (and one can argue it's the "needs" of a few powerful), as if our own existence is not dependent on the immense biodiversity and environment that surrounds us. We are facing an unprecedented time of climate change, in which in the last decades, for example, the diversity of species worldwide has dropped alarmingly. Hong Kong, as a biodiversity hot spot, with vast country parks, has a unique opportunity to act as caretaker and protector for biodiversity. Our urgent focus should not be on our own housing development (if that is indeed the true motivation of this project), but rather on sustaining our existing environment that will support us in the future.

Reclaiming land around Ka Yi Chau and other islands mentioned as possible phase 2, would be tapping into one of the world's special, untouched places. Moreover, I am particularly concerned about the likely future transportation infrastructure brought to Lantau and in particular Mui Wo or Discovery Bay, which have areas largely untouched by man and which currently are the living home of many of the aforementioned species. Reclamation, particularly in such an unspoilt environment, is the worst option for protecting our environment, and at the same time, reclamation is a poor choice for mitigating the environmental impact development has.

I'd like to make another point, as an English teacher of secondary and university students in Hong Kong. I read countless student essays about the hopelessness students feel, not because of their future housing situation, but rather their lack of say and power in shaping their own future city. Students see the future reserves of their city being squandered to continue the economic game that benefits the richest and most powerful, not them or their future (and the way in which the likes of Our Hong Kong Foundation touts this project brings home this point). I urge you to consider ways in which you can consult and incorporate views of young people in Hong Kong before you drastically alter their city.

I want to quote a part of a story from L. M. Montgomery, as a character, Captain Jim, looks out at the sea and says: "Isn't that a view worth looking at?... Nice and far from the market-place, ain't it? No buying and selling and getting gain. You don't have to pay anything---all that sea and sky free---'without money and without price."

You know as well as the Hong Kong public that there are other more efficient and immediate options (e.g. Sunny Bay and Disneyland) to ease the housing costs and issues in Hong Kong. But the problem is that the sea is in fact free. Free for you to rob and take, without paying a price to the birds, mammals, insects and countless species as well as Hong Kong's youth to which it *does* belong.

Whatever face you would lose for pulling out of this catastrophic plan, would be a price well worth paying for Hong Kong and the world's future.