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**Chairman and Members of Finance Committee, Legislative Council**

(% Clerk to Finance Committee)

Legislative Council Complex,  
1 Legislative Council Road, Central, Hong Kong

30 November 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Finance Committee Meeting on 27 November 2020, agenda item #I “768CL Studies related to artificial islands in the Central Waters”**

The Hong Kong Green Schools Alliance (HKGSA) is a student-led organization composed of students, teachers, and parents who are concerned about Hong Kong’s environmental future and its impact on society and future generations.

We oppose the studies and the artificial islands in the Central Waters as the proposed Lantau Tomorrow Vision does not align with a sustainable future vision of Hong Kong, nor is it suitable for our next generation who will have to live with the threat of environmental collapse due to global warming and the extinction crisis.

We envision Hong Kong to be a flourishing garden city surrounded by clean air, water, lush forests, and thriving wildlife. However, the reclamation in the Central Waters will diminish its natural capital and the value for creating new jobs in conservation, eco-practices, eco-tourism, and eco-education which will be essential growth industries in the future.

The HKGSA presents an alternative Lantau Tomorrow Vision called “A Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision” that can make the best use of Hong Kong’s true wealth -- its natural green and blue assets. This plan would benefit society and future generations which shows that the wonderful city of Hong Kong can lead the rest of the world in a paradigm shift towards a transformation to an ecological and regenerative civilization.

We ask you to please read and reflect on the attached document.

We urge the government to seriously weigh in all the factors and their respective impact on the environment, finances, and the public for the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. If the study and the reclamation were to begin, there is no reverse button that can undo the detrimental impact on Hong Kong’s future.

Yours faithfully,  
Tiffany Wong

Co-leader of the Hong Kong Green Schools Alliance (HKGSA)

Taylor Chung

Co-leader of the Hong Kong Green Schools Alliance (HKGSA)

C.c.

Secretary for the Environment, Wong Kam Sing, GBS, JP

Secretary for Development, Wong Wai Lun, Michael, JP

# A Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision: Outline

By

The Hong Kong Green Schools Alliance



# Our Vision

Our vision is for Hong Kong to become part of the global solution for Climate Change and the Extinction Crisis by repositioning Hong Kong within the Greater Bay Area (GBA) as a 'green service provider', utilizing and developing its most productive natural assets for the benefit of the region making Hong Kong and the GBA the fore-runner of the world as an ecological civilization

*The HK Green Schools Alliance is a network of ecologically aware students, teachers and parents, connected through education to the world-wide Green Schools Alliance organisation. It has quietly and informally existed for many years, making a difference within schools and involving sustainability champions of all ages and a myriad of small projects.*

*Recently, the massive climate change crisis, threat to biodiversity and controversial projects like the Lantau Tomorrow Vision have driven this voice to be heard outside of their schools and into the wider community. We want to positively change the world through education.*

*The HK Green Schools Alliance envisions a world where every person is aware of, and accountable for, the impact they have in creating an environmentally, economically and equitably sustainable future.*

# Part 1

## The Biological Treasure Chest that is Hong Kong



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Nestled in the delta of China's Pearl River, for millions of years Hong Kong has boasted the perfect conditions for life to flourish in all its diverse wonder. It is only within the last slow blink of evolution's eyelid that the fertile cradle of these few islands has given rise to one of the world's great financial cities.

Human society keeps on at a pace unmatched by the biology that sustains us, and in hindsight perhaps it was inevitable that these two sides of our nature would, left unchecked, come into conflict.

Millions of modern humans jostle for position in the delicate ecosystem the world took so long to create.

[The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund recognises Hong Kong as part of the Indo-Burma hotspot and "one of the most biologically important regions of the planet".](#)

Our geo-positioning has awarded us this magical gift as Hong Kong is located at the northern limit of the distribution of tropical Asian flora and is the only region in the world where tropical and temperate species merge without some form of natural barrier such as ocean, mountain, or desert separating them. This has created important habitats of great scientific significance.

For the most recent part of the human history of the land, Lantau Island has been the jewel in the rapidly tarnishing crown of Hong Kong's biodiversity - 144 square kilometres, much of it uninhabited, and [over half designated for protection as country parks](#). Wetlands, mountains and forests all over Lantau teem with life, from the smallest beetle to the largest water buffalo, and the surrounding islands also boast unique and strange life forms, divergent paths of evolution taken when the seas swept in and isolated their ecosystems. Even the last few Chinese White Dolphins cling to life with an essential wildness that is perhaps alien to the sterilised city livers a few scant miles away.

Perhaps it is the sterilised life of the city that has given rise to a political class that, concerned with realpolitik, election cycles, and the metrics by which they can measure progress, has been frighteningly dismissive of the Earth that we all ultimately spring from.

The HongKong 2030+ development plan followed by the 'Lantau Tomorrow Vision' was touted by politicians and developers as a beacon of a forward movement that will propel the city to further success on the world stage, but behind all the glossy advertising lies a darker side. By proposing to reclaim the land around Hei Ling Chau and Kau Yi Chau to build the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, including a third Core Business District (CBD3), the executive is revealing a shortsighted ideology that focuses on infrastructure and finance to the exclusion of all else.

The biological treasure chest of Hong Kong is not solely a resource for those of us that live here - it is a national and global asset, one replicated in very few other places around the world and one that, it cannot be stressed enough, is irreplaceable. It took the natural world millions of years to grow and develop this naturally balanced, delicate ecosystem, and it will take us just a few decades more to destroy it forever.

## Part 2

### Why Not the Proposed ‘Lantau Tomorrow Vision’?

The CEO of the World Bank said that [‘we are the last generation that can stop climate change.’](#)

“Up to 1 million of the estimated 8 million plant and animal species on Earth are at risk of extinction — many of them within decades” a [UN report](#) announced in May 2019.

In October 2018, The International Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#))’s Special Report warned there was only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C and in May 2019 the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)) Global Assessment warned that immediate transformative action is needed to stop environmental collapse.

The world is in crisis right now, standing on the precipice of change, and if we in Hong Kong do not change our way of doing things, the change will be forced upon us.

The vision for the Lantau Tomorrow Vision is ironically short-sighted. Nobody involved seems to be considering what the future will actually look like or considering the changing needs of the generation that will inherit a used-up planet, divided and hopeless, as our legacy.

While the government would say the Lantau Tomorrow Vision is “to preserve the needs of the next generation”, we would say that the Lantau Tomorrow Vision puts our future needs in peril.

The LTV represents the old way of doing things at a time when the old way needs to be shelved. It sucks in resources and innovators which stands in the way of true progress towards a system that is balanced with both the natural world and the people within it.

Following is a partial bullet-point summary of our objections to the present proposal for the LTV:

- It relies on outdated thinking that is not environmentally enlightened.
- It would be ruinously expensive. Hong Kong people will end up paying at least [\\$83,750](#) each for the project and it would deplete our fiscal reserves which are urgently needed to attend to the social needs of the people.
- It does not meet our urgent housing needs. Social workers are united in saying that we need solutions now, we have the money now and the current vision is unconvincing at best.
- Hong Kong has land that can be used for housing: Military sites, brownfields, abandoned, and hoarded land. Just 3 developers, (Henderson Land, Sun Hung, and New World) are sitting on 859 hectares of prime housing land in the New Territories.
- Hong Kong has 2.827 million flats and 2.579 million households according to government figures. The slanted economy benefits landlords and the wealthy.
- Greenpeace estimates you could buy [800 hectares](#) of brownfield for 1/10 of the 'guesstimated' price of the artificial islands.

Professor [Mee Kam Ng](#), Director of the Urban Studies Programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong has said that Hong Kong is not facing the problem of land shortage.

- Work is becoming increasingly decentralized. Even before the recent outbreak of COVID-19 forced people to a remote set up, working from home and other spaces was already gaining substantial traction. Many organisations are now successfully embedded into a remote way of working and embracing its advantages such as economic,



environmentally friendly and work-life balance. We no longer rely on the concept of Central Business Districts and would dispute the need for cities to build more CBDs.

Hong Kong has [0.03% of China's marine area](#) but 25% of its species. Every tiny bit of HK is precious.

- The present project proposed would significantly impact fish and corals as a precious resource and decrease HK's ecosystem services.
- Since the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge in 2009, [the Chinese white dolphin populations have dropped more than 70%](#). The massive disturbance from pollution, increased traffic and noise of building the gigantic LTV project might wipe out the small remaining population.
- [57 black finless porpoises](#) have been found dead in the last eighteen months alone, from a population of only 200.
- Hong Kong has over 1000 marine fish species and over 80 hard coral species, [more than the Caribbean Sea](#) or the Baltic Sea (200 times larger) and these would be impacted.
- According to a 2016 study conducted by The Swire Institute of Marine Science and School of Biological Sciences, the University of Hong Kong, estimated that there are [~6,500 marine species that have yet to be discovered](#).
- Land reclamation is considered obsolete by many countries as it is not sustainable or restorative and does not align with modern building practices of the global community.

- [The world is running out of sand](#) for reclamation - sand prices have doubled since the construction of the third runway at the airport. If started, there is plausible doubt as to whether this project could be completed.
- Reclamation devastates the area that sand is taken from, a huge carbon footprint to transport, and destroys the marine environment it is dumped in. It amounts to triple unhappiness and is an urgent global concern.
- The Lantau Tomorrow Vision plans to use 20% of land for cars and road infrastructure - an ecologically damaging strategy that provides only for the richest 10% who own cars.
- As the West Kowloon High Speed Rail and Zhuhai-Macao bridge prove, there are already good links to the Greater Bay Area. Transport infrastructure doesn't need huge artificial islands.
- The arguments to reduce congestion are unconvincing; the money and intellectual effort would be better invested in designing a truly smart, 21st Century transport system for HK.

# Part 3

## Our Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision

Author and Harvard Professor [David Korten](#) writes

*“Humanity has arrived at a defining choice point. It is now within our human means to achieve—in co-productive balance with Earth—the long denied human dream of a world of peace, beauty, creativity, material sufficiency, and spiritual abundance for all”*

And these are the opening words of [the Earth Charter](#).

*“We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future”.*

The Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision represents a wonderful opportunity to choose another better future and to lead the world in a transformation to regenerative growth.

Author and filmmaker, Joanna Macy has termed the shift that she sees humanity making, from destruction to sustainability, ‘[The Great Turning](#)’. The concept has also been termed ‘transformation to [Ecological Civilisation](#)’, Deep Ecology, Regenerative Civilisation, and many others.

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s called for an “ecological civilization” that ensures “harmony between human and nature” during the [October 2017 Communist Party Congress in Beijing](#).

The speech turned some heads at the time, with its call for a “legal and policy framework” that “facilitates green, low-carbon, and circular development,” promotes afforestation and wetland conservation and restoration, and takes “tough steps to stop and punish all activities” that damage the environment. “What we are doing today” Xi concluded, is “to build an ecological civilization that will benefit generations to come.”

Here we will expand upon what we would call our regional vision – repositioning Lantau and Hong Kong as the Green-Blue Jewel in the Greater Bay Area as a showcase for the world.

## A. Ecological Civilisation



- Our vision is for Hong Kong to become part of the global solution for global warming and the extinction crisis.
- Clean air, clean water, green jobs, housing, education, entrepreneurial opportunities, and happiness are necessary to follow the 13th Five Year Plan, the Greater Bay Area Plan, the Hong Kong 2030+ Plan, and the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals.

## B. Green-Blue Jewel



- The Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision reoriented towards regenerative growth can catalyse transformation to ecological civilisation for the GBA and further afield. It is now the era of regenerative development. Reorienting to regenerative growth can yield rapid results if the seeds are planted now. In reality, there is little real choice but to invest in “to adapt now” and be a leading showcase for the world or pay the cost “to adapt later”.
- To achieve this, Lantau can be made into a unique and ambitious South China National Park and internationally recognised City Level United Nations Biosphere Reserve supporting sustainable, low impact, high tech industry. A Biosphere Reserve is a framework with exclusion zones for conservation, but also includes zones permitting recreational/economic use of the protected area

as a pilot for sustainable development of high tech, creative/knowledge worker industry. Hong Kong was actually the first city studied as a pilot by UNESCO Man and Biosphere programme, Biosphere Reserves back in the 1970s. In this way, Hong Kong can showcase a big city with nature.

- Lantau Island and a greener Hong Kong has huge value as a carbon sink for the GBA with its green wilderness, country parks, and marine wilderness including the endangered Chinese White Dolphin and Finless Porpoise, which are iconic symbols of the Pearl River.
- We can achieve the pre-eminent example of Green-Blue Urban Development by creating a cluster of 'green-blue jewels' throughout the region that supports the work of government, education, conservation NGOs, and local community groups that share the mission of creating or improving 'land and sea biodiversity' and enhancing them as areas of land-sea protection and regeneration.
- Overall, we should reverse the pollution of the Pearl River Estuary and regenerate the Greater Bay Area as a 'Green-Blue Jewel', with Hong Kong at the centre as a shining example of 21st Century engineering expertise and cultural wisdom. As part of this, all of Hong Kong waters can be managed as a marine protected area and a world-class marine eco-tourist destination. This great achievement in itself will create a transformational mind-shift globally in regards to what can be achieved and will be a fore-runner in the transformation to global ecological civilization.
- Investment should be diverted to upgrading Hong Kong's urban areas and other cities in the GBA for low carbon development given the new IPCC targets, as well as aggressive new national targets on emissions, and national recognition of the need for high-quality growth and a new kind of urbanisation.

## C. Education 2030 and Eco-Literacy



- There can be no transformation to an ecological civilization without a massive scale-up of eco-education and nature education as an inner transformation is necessary in the minds of people.
- It is estimated that a total of 25 years is needed to achieve this transformation in its entirety but much can be achieved rapidly through a massive scale-up in environmental education to achieve widespread eco-literacy. This education needs to be for all – from very young children to the elderly and the elderly themselves engaged as mentors and educators.
- Eco-literacy must not only be deeply embedded in our school curriculum but a much greater percentage must take place outside in nature. A Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision can fully support future schools nature education and

outdoor learning, environmental camps, and [forest school](#) education.

- The older generation needs up-skilling and some 'back to school' training while the elderly can share their knowledge, wisdom, and skills.
- It supports award winning green schools.
- It supports a Lantau University that is the world leader in the practical application of biodiversity, conservation, and restoration. It would offer green learning throughout the GBA and globally. It would be a world leader in remote learning similar to [OpenU](#) which is the largest in the UK with 170K students. Most popular Massive Open Online Courses ([MOOC](#)) have had 500K to 1 million students, combining tech, innovation, green, and health/wellness. It would offer cutting edge eco-education for all ages.
- Preservation and regeneration of Lantau's natural environment and endangered species would serve as a forerunner in conducting scientific and economic studies and appraisals of ecosystem and cultural services that could be applied by other countries and territories.
- Hong Kong and China can lead the way in the great work that will be the job of our generation - namely restoration, regeneration, rewilding and reintroduction of species. The Lantau University can reintroduce species such as incense trees and the highly endangered Chinese Pangolin.
- The university itself should be state-of-the-art eco and a massive carbon sink in terms of actual campus, and its activities. Its infrastructural sites would be cutting edge architecture that stipulates buildings must substantially increase ecology. Buildings would be dispersed and be non-impact. It can for instance use geometric domes like [the Eden Project](#) in Cornwall, England, and re-use old village schools and buildings.



## D. Working 2030



- Our generation has the view that how we work in the future will be quite different from how we conventionally work now or have worked in the past.
- There is huge potential for creating new green jobs in conservation, eco-practices, eco-tourism, and eco-education - these are the growth industries of the future.
- When ecological values of HK are appreciated and wisely used, the medium of community-based tourism could significantly raise the level of cutting edge ecological and recreational local and overseas tourism. Examples could be sub-tropical forest guided walks, hill climbing, nature tours, wellness retreats, mountain biking, environmental history tours, citizen science biodiversity mapping, medicinal forests, native reforestation, elderly, and youth groups. The elderly can play a significant part in providing specialised local knowledge and traditional skills workshops.
- Our future green economy is a circular economy that draws on the lessons learned from cyclical nature. Hong Kong could be an exemplar of a circular, zero-waste economy.

## E. Wellbeing and Happiness



- Wellbeing and happiness may not feature largely in many adults' future 'vision' but it plays a major role in ours.
- There have been vital components missing from our education and upbringing. We wish for our children to have a richer inner world and be offered wellness, personal development, and peace-education so they can resolve conflict, develop better personal relationships, and live co-creatively with nature.
- In our vision of the future, the people are healthy, happy, and fulfilled. They are able to explore their creativity and grow into their unique potential. They are encouraged to develop in harmony with their communities and with the natural world in all its life, colour, and intrinsic value.
- Right now our generation is miserable. We are locked into an aggressive education system and set on a course of fierce competition, fighting tooth and nail for a higher place in an exploitative system.
- There is a mental health crisis of young people that has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The [alarming rise in mental health in Hong Kong](#) needs to be addressed.

- Progressive countries have moved away from the miserable confines of measuring success with GDP. This cannot continue on a planet with finite resources. We would adhere to GNH – Gross National Happiness as our measure of success. We believe we must change the paradigm to measure success, and what ‘wealth’ truly means. Hong Kong should make the best use of its true wealth – its natural green and blue assets – its life, energy, biodiversity, food, and forests. The Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision can pave the way for this paradigm shift.

## Summary



Our vision is for Hong Kong to become part of the global solution for climate change and the extinction crisis.

A Green-Blue Lantau Tomorrow Vision represents a wonderful opportunity to choose a much better future for Hong Kong people with shared regional aspirations and to lead the world in a transformation to regenerative growth.

By repositioning Lantau and Hong Kong as the green provider in the GBA, Hong Kong would become a shining example of 21st Century ecological expertise and cultural

wisdom. This great achievement in itself will create a transformational mind-shift globally in regards to what is able to be achieved and will be a fore-runner in the transformation to global ecological civilization.