



**The Chairman of the
Panel on Planning Lands & Works**
Legislative Council
Central

RE : The Lantau Concept Plan – Request for appearing before the panel

Tuesday, 19th April 2005

Dear Sir,

As a charity dedicated to the improvement of urban air quality, Clear The Air is asking the permission to appear before the Panel on Planning Lands and Works, in regards to the Lantau Concept Plan and its potential impact on the overall quality of Life for the people of Hong-Kong.

Clear The Air is a Hong-Kong registered charity – its members are all volunteers. Although our mission is to improve urban air quality, our members have argued that the Lantau Concept Plan if carried out in its present form will have a potentially high impact not only on the quality of life of the local islanders but also on most HongKong residents, since :

- Lantau being in a large part a healthy recreational area for all Hong Kongers its disappearance for giving way to development projects will adversely affect HongKong's general quality of life without any possibility of alternative – (no theme parks ever have the capability to replace a natural landscape, and the large majority of Hong-Kong people do not own property overseas).
- the North of Lantau concerned by the Plan will suffer a worsening of its already bad air quality if the logistics park and container terminal are built as a result of the landing of the Macau-Zhuhai bridge.

As a whole, we believe that Lantau is a unique natural asset, and a national treasure well documented in research papers we have at your disposal, if you wish. It should therefore be preserved for this and future generations, with the introduction of a comprehensive Conservation Plan. Such plan can make of Lantau a rare curiosity to visit in a matter of five to ten years time, since none exist to the same extent at present in Southern China. However such Conservation has to be dealt with in a comprehensive manner that isn't displayed in the present Concept Plan.

We have studied the Concept Plan in details, and we are generally disappointed with its content and the process used. Our members are concerned that the proposals appear set in stone and leave little in terms of negotiation and constructive discussion. The Plan remains about short term and piecemeal economic development, little of which will benefit the island community.

All our members being people involved in businesses, we strongly believe in economic development, however we believe that the job-creation that results from destruction of natural heritage is neither viable for sustaining our own life nor fair to our



children who risk ignoring at the present rate, what wild trees, flowers, animals, and even clean air mean in ten years time.

We have also made some recommendations which we believe would restore the situation, and achieve community consensus on the future of Lantau.

The submission of Clear The Air is attached.

Yours Sincerely,

Christian Masset
for Clear The Air

LANTAU CONCEPT PLAN

Submission by Clear The Air

Summary of views :

1- Current Position of Lantau as a unique natural area :

There is no point denying Lantau is unique. Unique by its size, its extreme bio-diversity, and its present character, largely unspoilt by economic activity on over 80% of its mass (the airport zone excluded). It is precisely this unique character that makes HongKong different from other places in the Pearl River Delta, and exceptional to the eyes not only of its residents but also to the visitors coming to the SAR on regular business trips. Lantau is the opposite side of the coin – it is the opposite of the hyper-city we all know well. Aiming at changing this unique setting and starting to “develop” this island by implanting, a casino, a logistics park, a second theme park, a race course, a spa, wooden foot paths on beaches... will undoubtedly start to wreck the uniqueness of the place and trigger degradation beyond control, in the span of less than a decade. Lantau is in its present state a unique island in the whole of the Pearl River Delta and probably in the entire South China.

Why threatening this unique jewel already attracting visitors to HongKong ? and making HongKong different.

2 - Land use need :

- The Port facilities and related areas

The Consultation Digest mentions : “..North Lantau would be important in strengthening the main economic pillars of tourism and logistics developments...”



Built when HongKong had a manufacturing industry and China ports were undeveloped, the HongKong port had a unique role to play. However these days are past. **Manufacturing has largely gone to the Pearl River delta (PRD)** and the port facilities in the PRD are now almost equal to HK in service standards and capacity. It seems now clear that the HongKong port is now in the wrong place for the current and future demand. **Therefore questions must be asked on how to reduce the decline in container throughput in improving the efficiency of existing facilities** instead of pushing through massive investments in a move reminiscent of a dangerous gamble.

Using the present forecast as a basis for postulating new port facilities is wildly optimistic in our view. Therefore, we oppose the construction of the NorthWest Lantau Port on over-riding environmental grounds, and in the absence of substantiated information justifying large scale public funds spending on infrastructure likely to benefits mostly private sector stakeholders, instead of the whole community.

3 - Planning consideration : as mentioned in the Consultation Digest

taken from : <http://www.info.gov.hk/planning/lantau/en/digest/considerations.html>

(a) the need for conserving high-quality natural landscape, ecological environment and cultural heritage sites : No site is mentioned and no specific references are made on how to conserve these high-quality natural landscapes.

(b) the capacity of external and internal transport links :

No clear indication are provided on these transport links, going where to where.

(c) the airport height restrictions which constrain building heights and developable area : There again no clear definition - which height will remain permissible ? how many meters ? on which site ?

(d) the aircraft noise which prohibits the development of noise sensitive uses in certain areas : Of what noise level are we talking about ? how many dB ? on which site ?

(e) development restrictions to protect Hong Kong Disneyland from visual intrusion and incompatible uses :

What are the specifics ? what are we talking about ? how, and where ?

(f) consultation zones of potentially hazardous installations which are not suitable for high-intensity uses and visitor attractions :

What kind of hazardous installations ? where ?

(g) the limit of reclamation imposed by shipping channels and water quality and hydrological considerations :

What specifications will be retained and where ?

(h) topographical and other technical constraints :

Where are these ? of what kind ?

All these remarks lead to one conclusion :

A proper Conservation Plan for the entire zone of Lantau is nowhere to be found in the Concept Plan. Only piecemeal and disorderly quotes leaving no guarantees, appear in



this Digest. It leaves the clear impression a different agenda seems at work. A clear and comprehensive plan guaranteeing a protection of the integrity of Lantau isn't part yet of the Government approach to dealing with Lantau as a whole.

4 - Overall planning :

In spite of the Digest' s claim to promote sustainability, it states :”the concept is to focus major economic infrastructure and urban development in North Lantau... while protecting the other parts of Lantau...” **without mentioning which areas and how to protect them.** The planned population growth for Tung Chung to be multiplied by 3.5 in an unspecified time span is another point of divergence, given Tung Chung already record breaking air pollution – does the “Concept Plan” take into consideration the motivations behind multiplying by 3.5 time the population of the district affected with the worst level of air pollution of the whole SAR ?

All the references made about increased infrastructure and additional roads are subject to long paragraphs, while considerations for the island preservation are extremely short and devoid of precisions, as to what, where, and how.

This overall planning is in essence, more about favouring infrastructure than a balanced development with a genuine preservation strategy..

5 - Development themes and proposals :

There are projects, of a transport hub, a golf course, a theme park, residential areas, board walkways, “high quality camping sites”, even an “indoor beach”...

Although mentioning sustainability, we regret to observe none of the proposals take into account the protection of the natural site of Lantau. **All the proposals focus on using Lantau's benefits, without carefully defining a plan to protect the island fauna, flore, and scenic qualities, now unique in the whole Pearl River Delta.**

Towards sustainable developments :

The Consultation Digest, shows in its integrality, an intention to use Lantau as the next big opportunity to provide work and infrastructure development on one of the most unique natural setting South China still possesses. Being part of Hong-Kong, Lantau has been preserved to a rare degree of integrity until this very day.

The intention to turn the island into the same of what already exists elsewhere in China, if carried out, will be an unfortunate mistake causing the irremediable loss of the place. We feel Lantau is not any piece of land, it is to the image of what sofar has defined Hong-Kong compared to the rest of China – a different place. Lantau has largely managed to remain intact, quiet, and properly unique.

Introducing mass entertainment, residential areas, more roads, a logistics park which hasn't proved its economic viability for the longer term, will ruin, the last remaining Hong-Kong's identity to turn the SAR into just another ordinary city.

We firmly believe, that any plan to introduce balanced amenities into Lantau should come second after gazetting a valid Conservation Plan for the long tem and for the whole island, while involving the whole community to come to a coherent and truly sustainable model preserving Lantau's unique character, while bringing in sensitive and sustainable tourism. We and all our members believe, the way forward is to balance an hectic urban surrounding and showing the world a unique natural and preserved island highlighting Hong-Kong's difference and vision in adopting modern technologies while wisely preserving natural assets, for recreation and education as other enlightened administrations have done elsewhere in the world.