

**For discussion on
22 May 2006**

**Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services
Update on the Hong Kong Wetland Park Project**

Purpose

This paper seeks to update Members on the progress of the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP) project.

Background

2. Located at the northern part of Tin Shui Wai, HKWP is our first major green tourism facility aimed to promote green tourism and education on environmental protection as well as wetland conservation. The site was originally intended for compensating the wetlands lost due to the development of Tin Shui Wai New Town. The HKWP project has enhanced the 60-hectare ecological mitigation area to a world-class conservation, education and tourism facility. The layout of the park is carefully designed by the Architectural Services Department to ensure harmony with the surrounding environment with no disturbance to the wildlife and the building materials are used in an environmentally friendly way. Its design has recently been awarded the Medal of the Year of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects.

3. The HKWP project is divided into two phases. Phase 1 (includes mainly an exhibition pavilion and an outdoor landscaped garden) was opened to the public in December 2000. It served as a venue to promote wetland conservation and helped to publicise the whole HKWP project. It was managed by the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and attracted more than 100,000 visitors per year after its opening. The exhibition pavilion of Phase 1 was closed in May 2005 and has been turned into the ticketing office of the park.

Progress of the HKWP Project

4. HKWP will be opened to the public on 20 May 2006. Testing and commissioning of the exhibits, computer systems, interactive games and the ticketing system have been completed.

Facilities

5. HKWP will have a 10,000 square metre visitor centre, the Wetland Interactive World, and an over-60 hectare Wetland Reserve. HKWP is the first of its kind in Asia. The Wetland Interactive World will have three major exhibition galleries, a theatre, a resource centre and other supporting facilities.

6. The respective themes of the three exhibition galleries are biodiversity, human culture and conservation, as follows –

- (a) Living Wetlands: This gallery reveals wetlands through three totally different environments – Frozen North, Tropical Swamp and Hong Kong Wetlands. It also introduces some key scientific concepts such as biodiversity, energy recycling and conversion. AFCD has recently imported four False Gharials from Thailand which will live in the Tropical Swamp area;
- (b) Human Culture: This gallery introduces the relationship between human and wetlands through audio-visual shows and pictures. The exhibition focuses on four aspects of human activities – Necessities, Civilisations, Leisure and Inspiration; and
- (c) Wetland Challenge: Through this gallery, visitors are taken on a tour along a 'river', discovering the threats against wetlands due to human activities. The interactive games show us how our lifestyles can help save wetlands and their wildlife. A major attraction of the gallery is Wetland Television, a make-believe television centre that allows visitors to explore issues on wetland conservation.

7. All the exhibits and interactive games in the Wetland Interactive World will include descriptions in traditional and simplified Chinese characters, English and Japanese. Cantonese, Putonghua, English and Japanese audio guides are available.

8. The Wetland Reserve outside the Wetland Interactive World includes constructed wetlands and re-created habitats for waterfowls, consisting of diverse wetland habitats of freshwater marsh, ponds, reedbed, mudflat, mangroves, grassland and woodland. A Wetland Discovery Centre located in the Wetland Reserve provides visitors more hands-on experience on local wetlands. Other facilities include Stream Walk, Succession Walk, Mangrove Boardwalk and three Bird Hides. These outdoor wetland facilities would enable visitors to understand the

unique wetland environment and animals living in wetlands. For instance, there are unique animals living in mangroves including mudskippers and fiddler crabs. Besides, the Salt Water Crocodile "Pui Pui" which was found at Shan Pui River in November 2003 will be moved into the Hong Kong Wetland Park from the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden shortly.

Staffing and Operation

9. AFCD will take up the management and operation of HKWP. The management of HKWP requires expertise in different areas including exhibit planning and management, facilities management and day-to-day operation, habitat and wildlife management, marketing and education. AFCD will manage the park through internal deployment of resources, employment of contract staff and engaging service contractors. It is estimated that over 100 staff members will be required. These include 80 recruited by AFCD and more than 30 hired by the contractors. Training for staff covering the operation of HKWP, hospitality and contingency arrangements has been conducted in stages.

10. AFCD has set up a "Wetland Park Volunteer Scheme" since 2002 to promote the awareness of wetland protection through direct participation in voluntary services. The scheme has been warmly received since its inception. At present, over 1,300 members of the public and 70 schools have registered as volunteers for HKWP. AFCD has already completed its volunteer training programme. Amongst the volunteers, 60 have completed their docent training and are ready to provide docent services for visitors.

Admission fees

11. The admission fee for HKWP is \$30 for each adult and \$15 for each child, full-time student and senior citizen. There are discounts for group and family visitors. The public can obtain more details from HKWP's website at <http://www.wetlandpark.com>. Groups can also book their tickets on-line. Other than the group tickets, HKWP will also reserve tickets for gate sale.

Complementary facilities

12. Together with relevant departments, the Tourism Commission has been developing complementary facilities for HKWP to ensure its smooth opening. These include more directional signs and road signage for the convenience of visitors and drivers, greening of nearby areas, beautification of pedestrian passage and installation of feature lamp posts

etc. The Transport Department (TD) has also been working closely with public transport services operators to enhance public transport services, e.g. there are three bus routes stopping at HKWP. Information on public transport services is set out at Annex.

Marketing and Trade Familiarization

13. We are working jointly with Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), Yuen Long District Council and other organizations to promote HKWP. We are also considering other marketing initiatives such as promoting HKWP as an ideal venue for organizing meetings, conferences, exhibitions, and wedding functions. Workshops, briefings and familiarization visits have been organized for members of the travel trade to facilitate them in planning new itineraries and organizing tours to HKWP.

Publicity

14. HKWP is an important, new tourism infrastructure in Hong Kong. HKTB has been promoting the park through its world-wide “Discover Hong Kong Year 2006” campaign. For example, HKTB intends to invite overseas tourism trade executives attending “Hong Kong Salutes the World” in end June 2006 to visit HKWP. We shall continue to work together with the tourism trade to further promote this new attraction.

15. Around the opening of HKWP, we will display publicity materials in border control points, local tourist spots, Yuen Long and relevant West Rail and Light Rail stations. We will also introduce HKWP to the public through TV and radio APIs.

16. The Tourism Commission has been working with AFCD, the Yuen Long District Office, and HKTB to leverage on the opening of HKWP to promote attractions in Yuen Long. We will group Yuen Long’s attractions under two themes – “cultural tourism” and “gourmet” in order to create synergy. The Yuen Long District Council has all along been providing us with constructive ideas regarding packaging and promoting Yuen Long attractions. We will promote these attractions in the leaflets of HKWP. The leaflets will be distributed at HKWP as well as the airport, border control points and HKTB’s tourist service centres together with its “Hong Kong Visitor’s Kit”. The idea is to encourage tourists to visit other attractions in Yuen Long after visiting HKWP. In addition, AFCD has agreed to place one of Yuen Long District Office’s computerised travel information booths in the ticketing office of HKWP to facilitate tourists to get more information on Yuen Long.

17. The HKTB is compiling two handbooks entitled “Railway Sightseeing Guide” and “Green Guide” to help tourists to visit, amongst others, attractions in Yuen Long and HKWP.

Soft opening

18. Before opening to the public, we have conducted a series of soft opening activities for HKWP since 11 May. The participants include Members of the Legislative Council, Members of the Yuen Long District Council, relevant advisory committees, local organisations and disadvantaged groups in Yuen Long, the travel trade, green groups and volunteers. They have offered useful suggestions to help AFCD fine-tune the operation of HKWP.

19. HKWP is working with the Police and TD to finalise the crowd control and transport management plans. HKWP will finalise its avian flu contingency plan before the opening. HKWP has also recruited staff who have professional knowledge in handling suspected cases of avian flu.

20. During the initial opening period, the Tourism Commission and AFCD will closely monitor the operation of HKWP in order to provide the best experience to visitors.

Looking ahead

21. HKWP will enrich the diversity of our tourism products. It will provide tourists with a unique experience in a natural environment and information on conservation. It has the potential of becoming one of the most popular tourist attractions in Hong Kong. Findings from a consultancy study commissioned by AFCD in 2002 indicate that HKWP could receive over 500,000 visitors per year, of whom about 30% would be tourists. We can leverage on this world-class facility to promote Hong Kong’s green tourism and the attractiveness of our countryside. As HKWP is an edutainment facility suitable for all ages, it will help develop the market segment of family visitors. We shall continue to work with the travel trade to promote HKWP and other new tourism attractions in order to reinforce our position as the premier destination for tourists in the region.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau
15 May 2006

Public Transport Services for the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP)

West Rail interchange with Light Rail

- Visitors can drop off at the Mei Foo or Nam Cheong MTR stations and take West Rail to Tin Shui Wai station, then interchange with Light Rail route no. 705 or 706 Circular Line and get off at Wetland Park Station. The total journey time is about 35 minutes.

Bus (stopping at HKWP)

- Bus route 276B (departing at Sheung Shui Tai Ping Estate)
- Bus route 264M (departing at Airport Express Tsing Yi Station Bus Terminus)
- Bus route 967 (departing at Admiralty (West) Bus Terminus)

Others

- Take bus route E34 from the Hong Kong International Airport to Tin Shui Wai town centre and interchange with Light Rail.
- Take any bus route that goes to Tai Lam Tunnel and interchange with Routes 265B or 265M to Tin Heng Estate. HKWP is within 10-minute walking distance from Ting Heng Estate.