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Panel on Economic Services

Background brief on the Hong Kong Wetland Park Project

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP) and summarizes members' concerns raised at previous meetings of the Panel on Economic Services (the ES Panel) and other committees.

Background

2. The HKWP is developed on an ecological mitigation area which was originally intended to compensate for the wetlands lost due to Tin Shui Wai New Town development. The HKWP project has upgraded the 60 hectares ecological mitigation area to a conservation, education and tourism facility.

Phase 1 development

3. The HKWP project comprises two phases. In November 1999, the Finance Committee (FC) approved a sum of \$56.7 million for the Phase 1 construction works of the HKWP project and pre-contract consultancy for phase 2 works. Phase 1 of the HKWP project includes mainly an exhibition pavilion and an outdoor landscaped garden. It has been opened to the public in December 2000. It serves as a venue to promote wetland conservation and help publicize the whole HKWP project. It is managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and attracts more than 100,000 visitors per year after its opening.

Phase 2 development

4. In April 2002, FC approved another sum of \$461.5 million for the Phase 2 construction works of the HKWP project. Phase 2 of the HKWP project includes a visitor centre of about 10,000 square metres with three major exhibition galleries, fabrication of exhibition items and an outdoor park of 60 hectares of habitats for wildlife. It would open to the public on 20 May 2006. A summary of the major visitor facilities of Phase 2 of the HKWP project is at **Annex 1**.

Legal framework for the protection and management of the HKWP

5. In view of the importance of the HKWP, the Administration considered it necessary to provide a proper legal framework for the Authority, i.e. the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, to protect and manage the HKWP to achieve the conservation, education, and tourism objectives and up to the desired standards of other ecological facilities, e.g. Mai Po Nature Reserve. For this purpose, the Administration introduced two pieces of subsidiary legislation under the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208), i.e. the Hong Kong Wetland Park (Special Area) Order 2005 (the Order) and the Country Parks and Special Areas (Amendment) Regulation 2005 (the Regulation). The two pieces of subsidiary legislation sought to

- (a) designate the HKWP as a special area for the purposes of the Country Parks Ordinance; and
- (b) empower the Authority to determine the opening hours of the park and to restrict unauthorized persons and those without paying admission fees to enter the HKWP, and prescribe the fees for entering the park and for parking a vehicle there. The proposed fees and charges schedule for the HKWP is in **Annex 2**.

6. The Order and the Regulation were tabled at the Legislative Council meeting on 11 May 2005. No amendment was proposed for the two pieces of subsidiary legislation and they came into operation on 1 October 2005.

Members' concerns and the Administration's response

Environmental impact

7. The ES Panel has all along been concerned about the development of the HKWP, particularly the conflicting policy objectives of promoting eco-tourism vis-à-vis enhancing the conservation value of the HKWP. Members were also

concerned about the developments in the vicinity of the HKWP and reminded the Administration to ensure that such developments should not be incompatible with the ecological mitigation area which was constructed to serve the ecological mitigation function.

8. The Administration pointed out that the design of the project had already taken account of prevailing environmental factors to ensure that the ecological mitigation function of the ecological mitigation area would not be compromised. The HKWP is primarily a conservation and education facility but also serves recreation and tourism promotion purposes. The maximum capacity of the HKWP would be 4 000 and there would be control over the visitor number. The visitors to the bird hides would be guided by the HKWP's sight-seeing tours and appropriate measures would be implemented to reduce disturbance to birds and other wildlife in the Park.

9. Regarding the future developments at the two Comprehensive Development Area sites next to the HKWP and whether they would be incompatible with the ecological mitigation function of the ecological mitigation area, the Administration advised that planning controls on future developments at the two sites would ensure there would be no adverse visual or ecological impact on the surrounding areas, including the conservation areas and the HKWP. The layout of the park was also carefully designed to ensure that it was in harmony with the surrounding environment and wildlife would not be disturbed.

Facilities and operation of the HKWP

10. On the design of the HKWP, members also saw the need for providing visitors with interactive, educational and inspirational experience to appreciate the importance of wetland ecosystems. Outdoor facilities should be designed to enrich visitors' experience through exploring wetlands and observing associated wild life within the environmental constraints.

11. In reviewing the proposed admission fees for the HKWP, members called on the Administration to provide concessionary packages to attract tour groups and students to visit HKWP during weekdays. There was also a need to provide adequate parking spaces for bus or light bus carrying visitors to the HKWP. The Administration pointed out that the admission fees at \$30 per adult and \$15 per child/student/senior citizen were appropriate having regard to visitors' affordability, traveling cost to the park, attractiveness of the park and admission fees of other similar facilities. On the provision of parking spaces, about 15 coach parking spaces and 45 car parking spaces would be provided. Additional parking spaces for 12 coaches would be made available in the plant nursery area to cater for the needs on peak days, where required.

12. On members' concern about the way the conservation value of the HKWP could be preserved through proper management, the Administration advised that it intended to appoint a single contractor, through public tender, to take up the full range of required services (including exhibit planning and management, facilities management and day-to-day operation, habitat and wildlife management, marketing and education). The Administration was of the view that this arrangement would enhance effectiveness and efficiency in management and allow for better utilization of resources. Adequate measures would be put in place to ensure performance of the contractor. Service requirements had been laid down in the service contract. As an incentive for the contractor, a performance bonus would be given to the contractor if it could satisfy certain specified performance standards.

Traffic and transport arrangement

13. On members' concern about the traffic and transport arrangements upon the opening of the HKWP, the Administration advised that convenient public transport links would be made available to serve the needs of visitors to the HKPW, including Light Rail Transit and other shuttle bus services from Tin Shui Wai. The Administration would also consider additional coach-parking spaces within the site boundary of the Park, if necessary.

Latest developments

14. The ES Panel paid a site visit to the HKWP on 13 May 2006. It will discuss further with the Administration on the related issues at the meeting on 22 May 2006.

15. A list of relevant papers is in **Annex III**.

Major visitor facilities of phase 2 of the Park

(a) Indoor visitor centre

Visitor facility	Size in gross floor area (m ²)	Visitor capacity (no. of persons)	Functions
Atrium	1 080	500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway to the three galleries • Give a spectacular view of the exterior wetlands
Three exhibition galleries	800 1 200 900	500 each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themed-exhibition galleries on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * human culture and wetlands * relationship between human and wetlands * world wetlands (with both permanent and temporary exhibits)
Audio-visual theatre	340	250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue for film shows on world wetlands or art performance, seminar and conference
Souvenir shop	320	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail of souvenir
Cafe	580	250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering Service
Meeting room	60	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue for seminar and lecture
Activity room	70	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide hands-on experience on wetland experiments
Resource centre	95	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on wetland conservation

(b) Outdoor park

Visitor facility	Size in gross floor area (m²)	Visitor capacity (no. of persons)	Functions
Footpaths and footbridges	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A network of walkways connecting the visitor centre with the outdoor area
Bird hides	220	240	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For bird-watching
Exhibition ponds	21 000	200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide real wetland exploration experience with field researches, demonstrations, and displays
External display area	9 000	200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display exhibits of stream course habitat and crops with on site interpretation service
Workshops	240	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back-up workshop for repair, maintenance and temporary storage of exhibits
Planting	600 000	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructed wetland with a variety of plant species
Plant nursery	3 700	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For nursery of terrestrial and aquatic plants

The Proposed Fees and Charges Schedule for the Hong Kong Wetland Park

Admission fees		Fee Level (HK\$)
(a) Single entry		
● Adult		\$30
● Child (3 to less than 18)/Students/Senior		\$15
● Child (Below 3)		Free
● Group	- 50 persons and above* - 30 – 49 persons* - 20 – 29 persons* - 10 – 19 persons* < * counting fee-paying visitor only >	70 % of listed price 80% of listed price 85% of listed price 90% of listed price
(b) Annual Pass		
● Adult (Full year/half year)		\$100/\$50
● Family (maximum 4 persons)		\$200
● Child/Student/Senior (Full year/half year)		\$50/\$25
Parking fees		
● Private Car		\$8 per hour
● Bus or Light Bus (for the carriage of passengers to the Hong Kong Wetland Park)		free

The Hong Kong Wetland Park

List of relevant papers

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
Public Works Subcommittee	20 October 1999	Administration's paper on the International Wetland Park and Visitor Centre at Tin Shui Wai (PWSC(1999-2000)61) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/english/fc/pwsc/papers/p99-62e.pdf Minutes of the meeting (LC Paper No. PWSC19/99-00) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/english/fc/pwsc/minutes/pw201099.htm
Panel on Economic Services	16 October 2000	Administration's paper on the International Wetland Park at Tin Shui Wai (CB(1)197/00-01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr00-01/english/panels/es/papers/a197e01.pdf
Panel on Economic Services	25 February 2002	Administration's paper on Hong Kong Wetland Park at Tin Shui Wai – phase 2 works (CB(1)1094/01-02(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/panels/es/papers/es0225cb1-1094-4e.pdf

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
		<p>Minutes of the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1380/01-02)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/panels/es/minutes/es020225.pdf</p>
Public Works Subcommittee	3 April 2002	<p>Administration's paper on the International Wetland Park and visitor centre in Tin Shui Wai (PWSC(2002-03)1)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/fc/pwsc/papers/p02-1e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting (LC Paper No. PWSC103/01-02)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/fc/pwsc/minutes/pw020403.pdf</p> <p>Administration's supplementary information note on the International Wetland Park and visitor centre in Tin Shui Wai – phase 2 works</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/fc/pwsc/papers/pwsci0403cb1-2-e.pdf</p>
Panel on Economic Services	28 February 2005	<p>Administration's paper on the progress of the Hong Kong Wetland Park Project and amendments to Subsidiary Legislation under the Country Parks Ordinance</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/es0228cb1-966-3e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1226/04-05)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/es050228.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
Council	11 May 2005	Legislative Council Brief on Hong Kong Wetland Park (Special Area) Order 2005 and Country Parks and Special Areas (Amendment) Regulation 2005 (File Ref: EDB 22/25/9) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/subleg/brief/63_64brf.pdf
House Committee	13 May 2005	Legal Service Division report on subsidiary legislation gazetted on 6 May 2005 (LC Paper No. LS64/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/hc/papers/hc0513ls-64e.pdf

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