

Response to Consultation on the Development of Lantau

by the Association for Tai O Environment and Development

Indiscriminate Imitation In Respect Of The Development of Lantau Not A Wise Move

The development of Lantau should be viewed from the perspective of the overall development of Hong Kong. Indiscriminate economic development would change Hong Kong from a well-preserved green island to a refuse collection point or container terminal, destroying the beautiful natural landscape. Many visitors from abroad would introduce to their fellow countrymen the natural beauty of Lantau subsequent to their visit to Lantau. The scenic spots in Lantau include the wetland of Tai O, Lung Tsai Ng Yuen, Luk Wu, the Phoenix Trail and Cheung Sha Beach – places renowned for their beautiful faces dating back a century. In view of this, the emphasis on the development of Lantau should focus on the preservation of its natural beauty and its cultural features. In other words, the emphasis should be on its role as an ecosystem showcase and area of traditions. Let Hong Kong people and people around the world share the resources of this green island. Being one of the pearls on the crown of Hong Kong, it should be ranked along the other well-known tourist attractions like the “Women’s Street” and night scenes on the Peak.

Reduction of artificialities and human spoils – Lantau has a lot of long-existing and historical relics in disrepair such as Lung Chai Ng Yuen. It is a model of Chinese gardens. For those local and foreign visitors who have seen the place would be fascinated by its natural yet aggrieved by its present dilapidation. There is also Luk Wu which is a well-known attraction of Buddhist background.; the Tai O water world; and Silver Mine Cave in Mui Wo. All of them are examples witnessing the richness of local culture. As regards ecosystem, we should commit to preserve the beautiful coastline of South West Lantau and the marine ecosystem, including the coastline along Tai O and Yi O to Fan Lau and Shek Pik, a trail especially loved by hikers. I have met many of the foreign hikers there. They cannot but praise the scenery there. Lantau is a good place for hiking but not for cross-country cycling. These two kinds of sport involve different people. Cross-country cycling would cause destruction and disturbance to the hills. It will not be in harmony with the treks in Lantau.

For ensuring sustainable development and achieving the purpose of multi-species, the following things should be done: reducing contamination caused by local and foreign visitors so as to prevent unavoidable harms to the natural environment; committing

more efforts to the preservation of rare species and of the ecosystem of Tai Ho River; nurturing the Chinese White Dolphins; and preserving the Tung Chung River Course. All of these places can be used for eco-tourism as attractions.

Lantau is a centre of local Buddhist and Taoist cultures. The government should concentrate on re-building desolate scenic spots like Luk Wu, Lung Tsai Ng Yuen and Silver Mine Cave. These are local attractions. Otherwise, it would be like dressing up Chinese beauties with Western-style clothing in order to enhance these beautiful figures yet what foreigners most admire is the figures of Chinese women in Qipao, the traditional Chinese dress. We have seen the municipal authorities in the West Lake of Hang Zhou spending tens of billions of dollars on removing and demolishing artificial decorations and over-commercialized structures and dredging the waterways for reviving the past beauty of West Lake. It looked dumb but was in fact wise. Today tourists are attracted to West Lake again. The money spent has already been recompensed. On the contrary, our government is taking a regressive step. It is planning to build wooden corridors and cross-country cycling treks in the natural landscape ignoring the attraction to foreign tourist lies in the natural beauty of Lantau. It should feel ashamed of itself before the former colonial government who were committed to preserve the natural landscape. Moreover, there is danger we would use up the resources that belong to the next generation. The Hang Zhou government could correct their faults before it was too late. I see no reason for our government to follow a measure which the other has dumped.

Finally, I would like to give some interest group this advice: Lantau is not a chip for politicians. It is a valuable resource for all Hong Kong citizens and our next generation. Hong Kong is an international financial centre and its citizens crave for improvement on living standards but not otherwise. Indiscriminate development would only worsen air pollution and quicken the disappearance of natural garden. In fact, if we take a look at the number of local and foreign visitors to Lantau, we would have observed that at present it has reached the saturation point. What we have to pay attention to right now is how to preserve a green island under a filthy sky. If we do not make the better use of our strengths to make up for our weaknesses but explore it indiscriminately, we would be taking the already corrected wrong step of Pattaya and Hang Zhou in respect of tourism. We all know that out of self-interest the indigenous residents look for development. But this is a total disregard of what all Hong Kong people want for Lantau. They must rethink.