

Comments to Special Meeting in Legco Panel on Environmental Affairs regarding BSAP

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I became involved in discussions regarding BSAP soon after plans on this were made public.

Initially, it seemed well worth spending time on.

There were some great people involved; many I had not met before - despite being long involved in conservation and natural history in Hong Kong. There was energy, a drive to do something.

Rhetoric from the government side seemed good: there would be public engagement; seemed a chance to really boost the importance of protecting biodiversity - our life support system.

At a large meeting I was, however, highly concerned by a presentation from a senior person in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department: made it seem as if Hong Kong was a paradise for nature, so no real need for conservation measures.

Also, I was highly sceptical about the involvement of Elvis Au from the Environmental Protection Department; I knew him as a strong advocate of the Shek Kwu Chau incinerator plan, which threatens environmental damage including destruction of a key habitat for the globally endangered Finless Porpoise - threats that seemed to not concern Mr Au in the slightest.

I went to meetings, mainly organised through Civic Exchange; I talked of trying to engage the public, of how "Bee-Sap" is an appalling name for anything to promote amongst the public; discussed more, and heard more.

But over time, I realised I was involved in talk but not action.

As someone said in the first meeting I went to, we know what's needed for protecting biodiversity: save habitats, including threatened lowland sites. No need for long studies and lots of talking and talking; we need the "Action" supposedly in BSAP.

But the talking dragged on, there was no engagement for me with anyone at decision making levels, and there was only pathetic and feeble involvement of the public at large [how many regular people are at all aware of BSAP?]

So I decided to stop wasting my time, gave up on meetings.

With release of recent government document, I feel sadly justified.

Seems nothing has changed at higher echelons of government; still wanting to portray Hong Kong as some kind of paradise for plants and animals, with wonderful set of laws for protection; evidently no need to take any Action, nor really adopt any new Strategy.

Deeply sad, pathetic even; I hope this does not reflect the views of the majority of the people working in the AFCD and EPD - but seems it sits well with the image the management teams want to portray.

Well, not unexpected in Hong Kong, where "sustainable development" seems so readily abused as a term meaning simply concreting development for profit.

But there's this, too. The South China Morning Post had an article mentioning HK\$150 million had been allocated for BSAP.

With nothing of substance achieved, and the most meaningful parts being surely by people volunteering time and effort, I hope Legco members will ask: where has this money gone???

- and, maybe, worry about the future of our biodiversity in the hands of the AFCD and EPD management teams. [Oh how great if could swap out all members of these teams, and replace with people who actually cared about our plants and animals, our environment, our life support system.]