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By Email

31 July 2018

Panel on Development,
Legislative Council,
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong
(Attention: Ms. Doris LO)

Dear Ms. LO,

**Hong Kong Housing Society's study on
ecological values and development potential of two sites
on the periphery of country parks**

I refer to your email dated 17 July 2018. Upon consulting the Environmental Protection Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS), we provide below a consolidated reply to Hon CHU Hoi-dick's letter on the captioned.

In paragraph 117 of the Policy Address in January 2017, the then Chief Executive stated that while increasing the total area of ecological conservation sites and country parks and enhancing their recreational and educational values, the community should also consider allocating a small proportion of land on the periphery of country parks with relatively low ecological and public enjoyment value for purposes other than real estate development, such as public housing and non-profit-making elderly homes.

To follow up on this suggestion, the last-term Government invited HKHS in May 2017 to undertake the ecological and technical studies on land on the periphery of country parks. The studies are undertaken by HKHS at its own costs, with an aim to provide objective analyses and enable rational deliberations by the community. The studies cover two areas in Tai Lam and Shui Chuen O which fall within or lie close to Tai Lam Country Park and Ma On Shan Country Park respectively. As the studies are carried out by HKHS with its own resources, the Government is not involved in the preparation and conduct of the studies.

The HKHS's studies mainly look into the two areas' ecological, landscape and aesthetic values; recreational and development potentials; and major technical factors and practical constraints of developing public housing and other public facilities thereon. According to HKHS, a consultant was appointed by HKHS in April 2018 to carry out these ecological and technical studies. The consultant is currently preparing an inception report to define the study approaches, the study methodology and the public engagement strategy and plan. The studies will be carried out in two phases. The first phase, which is a baseline study to commence upon confirmation of the inception report, covers ecological evaluation (covering both wet and dry seasons), environmental impact assessment, as well as assessment on public enjoyment value and development feasibility of the sites. This baseline study is expected to take about 14 months to complete. If the results of the baseline study reveal favorable conditions of the site(s) for housing development, the detailed study will then follow and take another 12 months to complete.

As regards Hon CHU's questions on the conservation of land with high ecological value in his letter, in accordance with the revised principles and criteria for designation of country parks endorsed by the Country and Marine Parks Board in May 2011 (including conservation value, landscape and aesthetic value, recreation potential, size, proximity to existing country parks, land status and land use compatibility of the area, as well as other relevant considerations), AFCD confirmed in 2016 that Robin's Nest is suitable for designation as a country park. In addition, it is considered that the Robin's Nest area has good potential to become an ecological corridor between Pat Sin Leng Country Park of Hong Kong and Wutongshan National Forest Park in Shenzhen. AFCD then consulted the Country Parks Committee on the designation proposal, which was generally supported by the Members. The Government also announced, in the Policy Address in 2017, that an area of approximately 500 hectares of government land at Robin's Nest would be designated as a country park for conservation and recreation purposes. AFCD is undertaking the preparation work for

designation of the Robin's Nest Country Park, including the long-term planning on conservation management and recreation development of the new country park, public consultation and statutory designation procedure etc. It is expected that the statutory procedure to designate the Robin's Nest country park will be completed by 2020 the earliest.



(Donald LAM)
for Secretary for Development

cc.

Director of Environmental Protection (Attn: Ms. Vivian CHAN)

Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Attn: Mr Patrick LAI)

Hong Kong Housing Society (Attn: Mr Eric Yeung)