

Student Joint Statement Urging the Chief Executive Mrs. Carrie Lam to discontinue the Proposal to Build an East Lantau Metropolis now called 'Lantau Tomorrow Vision'

Dear Mrs. Carrie Lam

**On behalf of the students and youth of Hong Kong, we urge the Chief Executive to discontinue the proposal to build an East Lantau Metropolis (ELM) now called 'Lantau Tomorrow Vision'. We understand that you view this project as safeguarding our future but we wish you to know that we view this project as detrimental to our future and we do not want it.**

We object to it on the following points

1. Firstly the 'vision' is out-dated. We feel it is completely inappropriate to build excessive development as a 'vision' for the future. Nobody involved seems to be considering what the future will look like, or considering the changing needs of the generation that will inherit a used up planet as our legacy. It is not a vision if the government continues with its "business as usual" approach, perpetuating the outmoded model of development that is destroying the planet. The 'brown economy', based on the cruel algebra of short term gain, is quickly running out of the borrowed time it has left - time which has been lent to your generation by ours. Alternatively we need to seek a much more visionary approach to the future. The world is in crisis right now, standing on the precipice of change, and if we in Hong Kong do not change our way of doing things, change will be forced upon us. The Lantau Tomorrow Vision represents the old way of doing things at a time when the old way needs to be shelved. It sucks in resources and innovators, and stands in the way of true progress towards a system which is balanced with both the natural world and the people within it. Our progressive education is at last moving us into being able to actualize sustainable solutions for the future and it is essential we move in this direction now in order for future generations to thrive.
2. Secondly it does not help avoid future chaotic scenarios -We are trying to avoid chaotic future scenarios like rising sea levels due to global warming. These may be inconsequential to your time-line and way of thinking but they are vitally important in ours. If governments all over the world keep pursuing these outdated models of development then it stands to reason that we are helping to create these detrimental future scenarios. If this metropolis were to be built in the middle of the sea you need to seriously consider that this might endanger the lives of people living there. Representatives of the HKSAR stood up in December 2015 in Paris and committed to creating a world which would at least still be livable when handed down to future generations - words which we admire you for, but unfortunately your actions now speak louder. The Lantau Tomorrow plan epitomizes all that is wrong with your approach, with the promise of short term gain seemingly eclipsing any thought of long term consequence. Our climate targets will not be met if this project goes ahead. A vibrant and thriving ecosystem represents the best, most reliable and cheapest Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology we have available - and if this project goes ahead we will not be able to ever get it back
3. Thirdly, the 'vision' endangers the environment and eco-services of Hong Kong - Hong Kong has extremely rich biodiversity and eco-systems. Geographically it has the salty Pacific Ocean to its east side and the fresh waters of the Pearl River Delta to its west side. If we mess up this system this will have far-reaching consequences on not just the special species that live in this region but the whole eco-system balance – not to mention ourselves. This complex and thriving ecosystem provides environmental services which our technology and finances cannot match, including carbon sequestration and scrubbing the air of pollutants. Reclamation is extremely damaging to the environment as we know for many reasons. Not only irreversible damage to the seabed, sea-life and loss of resilience and food-

stock but also damage to the eco-systems and nature areas that the sand and other 'resources' are taken from. Most progressive countries regard reclamation as obsolete. Also the sand is now a depleted natural resource. And in regards to the land, we believe that the rich eco-systems of Lantau Island must be preserved. Wild forest sequesters three times as much carbon as forest managed for lumber. At a time when air pollution is responsible for one quarter of all global deaths in children under five, to endanger any of our cleaning forests and wild spaces with a pollution-causing urban development is reckless endangerment of our future generations. We also remain deeply upset that on top of our chronic air pollution problem and despite much controversy, the 'mega-incinerator and its severe endangerment to our health, goes ahead unabated.

4. Fourthly the plan lacks protection for endangered species. You may not consider looking after all the animals a high priority but our generation does. We deeply care about our few remaining Chinese White Dolphins all the magnificent creatures and plants that make Hong Kong such a beautiful place. The islands where you have planned to build the mega incinerator are the main breeding ground of the incredibly endangered Black Finless Porpoise and the islands that you plan to concrete around are where extremely rare species of flora and fauna can be found. Hei Ling Chau and Kau Yi Chau and Sunshine Island have unique species **found nowhere else in the world** such as the bizarre Bogadek's worm lizard and two previously unknown species of snake, not to mention one third of Hong Kong's incredibly diverse butterfly species. However the government would attempt to 'green' this development plan, we simply need to put the needs of our greater Earth community high higher on our agenda. Our generation feels gone is the age when we can still entomb the wetlands and agricultural fields and seas in concrete to make more land sales.
5. Fifthly – we need to preserve our precious ecology and wild places for the health and well-being of the people of Hong Kong and especially the youth. Our generation is suffering from a crisis of wellbeing due to the pressures of modern day living with 1 in 3 young people suffering from mental health issues and a high rate of suicide. Our generation is under severe stress. In a recent report 6.6% children aged 6 – 12 years old have severe anxiety. While it is imperative that we address the root causes of these problems we would urge our government not to compound the problem by making us more anxious about our future and more depressed about the continuous threats to the natural environment we care about. From our side we view the adult world as simply not caring and this makes us very sad. More than ever we need nature and our wild places to also provide a means to escape city life and to convene with the greater Earth community. This is important to us.
6. We don't need this development. The government claims that it is urgently needed to solve our housing crisis but most people think this is not true. The current housing plan, along with effective utilization of brownfield sites will meet Hong Kong's housing targets. There are 120,000 people who urgently need adequate housing. These people need to be put to the top of the list and cared for as top priority. And the 'crisis' needs to be re-examined as anyone over 18 can apply for subsidized housing so as a consequence over half the list is for single occupancy under 25 years of age. We think it would be better if you changed the housing policy and rethink immigration and population planning policies. A huge project like this could never remedy any situation in a timely manner. All over the world cities are looking at 'retro-fitting' as the more environmental solution. Also with the potential of five CBDs being in place by the time The Lantau Tomorrow Vision is built, there is simply no need to develop Central Waters as a CBD.
7. Our seventh objection and most people's primary objection is it is ridiculously expensive. It is estimated to cost at least \$624 billion in today's money – but estimates are more like a trillion. This is more than the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge, the Hong Kong-Guangzhou high speed train, and the third runway combined making it the most expensive infrastructure project in Hong Kong's history. Apart from the fact that we have a lot better things we could be spending our money on –It is not ethical that you bankrupt your future

generations. We foresee a lot of money being needed in the future for contingency plans to safeguard the future lives of HK people so we need to guard our reserves

Standing with Hong Kong's young people, we urge the Chief Executive, Mrs. Carrie Lam and the legislative council to **discontinue the proposal to build the 'Lantau Tomorrow Vision'**.

Sincerely,

Hong Kong Green Schools Alliance