

(Revised)

LC Paper No. CB(1)328/19-20(05)

To: panel_dev <panel_dev@legco.gov.hk>

From: Martin Williams <[REDACTED]>

Date: 14/01/2020 05:28PM

Subject: Re: [Un]Sustainable Lantau Office, for 20 Jan meeting

Dear members of the Panel on Development:

I note that on 20 January, you will discuss the "work progress of the Sustainable Lantau Office".

On 8 January, I wrote the following email to members. Here, I have amended it a little, following a meeting I attended on 10 January, between members of green groups and the Sustainable Development Office and other government departments [the meeting covered Environmental Vandalism in South Lantau].

I hope Panel members have been to places such as Shui Hau, Shap Long and Pui O, both recently and in previous years.

If so, you will be keenly aware that the office has achieved zero apparent progress towards sustainability.

Instead, since the office has been established, the destruction and degradation of these key areas on Lantau has continued, even accelerated.

Former wetlands have been destroyed by "reclamations" involving dumping of rubble and refuse; one of these was for "farming" supposedly, yet no farming can be seen even years later.

Paths have been blocked.

Metal fencing has been erected around plots of land, excluding water buffalo and other wildlife. [During the meeting, the SLO members noted the amount of fencing has jumped in the past couple of months. My suspicion: may include people aiming to demonstrate farming, maybe hoping for compensation etc from government]

Wetlands have also become dried out, partly due to drainage channels being dug.

All in supposed "Coastal Protection Area".

For many years - well before the Office was established, indeed since 1990 we learned in the meeting - it was known that this “protection area” had little value, as no legal backing, no real government support.

I know you’re in the “Panel on Development”; and development often means concreting.

But for a higher quality of life for all Hong Kong people, surely also need “development” that includes protecting and enhancing our natural areas, including in the lowlands, which are home to rich biodiversity along with unique landscapes, plus rural heritage.

I know too there are government plans for protecting such areas on Lantau.

As a reminder of the island’s beauty, I’ve made this short film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVnZYnDQLew>

Well, I hope you can encourage action from the Sustainable Lantau Office.

And, as the 10 January meeting made clear, also from other departments:
- including the Environmental Protection Department [curiously, no one from EPD who could tell if there are real efforts to stop dumping on land - on Lantau and across Hong Kong - was in the meeting];
- and including the Town Planning Board [in the 10 January meeting, it seemed there was no one from the board, though we heard of the mess of red tape that is slowing legislation regarding zoning etc, which should eventually mean there is a legal basis for the Coastal Protection Area, not little more than wishful thinking as at present; though by then the damage could be even more catastrophic].

You Panel members will also have a role to play, in helping guide and perhaps try to facilitate legislation on zoning etc.

However, zoning in itself is not enough for good rural planning; and this to me is a failing of the present system across Hong Kong.

We need more by way of “vision”, too; such as what should “sustainable” Lantau look like?

In the 8 January email, I wrote that without action from the Sustainable Lantau Office, it should be disbanded; and the resources used for actually benefitting Lantau.

Following the 10 January meeting, I instead believe the SLO currently needs more support regarding south Lantau, such as with the legislative processes and developing a “vision”; and panel members can help too.

Best regards,

Dr Martin Williams

Founder, Hong Kong Outdoors

Dr Martin Williams. Writing. Photography. Multimedia.
Cheung Chau, Hong Kong; tel [REDACTED]

[DocMartin](#) - Passion for the Wild

[Hong Kong Outdoors](#) - Wild About Hong Kong