

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

**HEAD 152 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT :
COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU (COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND TOURISM
BRANCH)**

Subhead 700 General non-recurrent

New Item “Upgrading of Facilities of the Hong Kong Wetland Park”

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$135 million under Head 152 Government Secretariat: Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (Commerce, Industry and Tourism Branch) Subhead 700 General non-recurrent for upgrading the facilities of the Hong Kong Wetland Park.

PROBLEM

We need to upgrade the facilities of the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP) to enhance its appeal as an eco-tourism attraction.

PROPOSAL

2. We propose to create a new commitment of \$135 million for upgrading the facilities of HKWP.

JUSTIFICATIONS

3. The mission of HKWP is to foster visitors’ understanding of wetlands and seek their support for and engagement in wetland conservation. The permanent exhibition and visitor facilities (including the interpretation panels of exhibits, orientation maps and signages, etc.) of HKWP have been used for 15 years. Quite a number of them are either aged and cannot be restored due to

/non-availability

non-availability of spare parts in the market, or unable to meet the prevailing technological standards. Moreover, the lack of linkage between the themed exhibition galleries and the outdoor Wetland Reserve has failed to integrate an immersive environment with simulated visual features for interactions with visitors, thus limiting visitors' experience.

4. Against this background and as proposed in the "2018 Policy Agenda", we will enhance the appeal of HKWP as an eco-tourism attraction by upgrading its exhibition and visitor facilities through adopting modern technology to offer better visitors' experience of wetland wildlife and habitats.

5. To take forward the project, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) conducted a study and collected views from the public. On the basis of the study findings, AFCD devised a proposal to upgrade the exhibition and visitor facilities, and leverage HKWP's distinctive market position to strengthen its role as an important gateway to nature education and as a Hong Kong's major eco and green tourism attraction with a view to meeting the expectations of stakeholders and encouraging repeated visits.

6. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, we anticipate that green travel will become more popular among local and overseas visitors. Eco and green tourism attractions, especially those with visitor-friendly facilities, good accessibility and hygienic conditions will be more competitive. Therefore, we have to upgrade the exhibition and visitor facilities of HKWP timely so as to prepare for the recovery of tourism in Hong Kong and provide local and overseas visitors with a better experience.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

7. We plan to launch a three-year programme to renew the exhibitions and upgrade the visitor facilities of HKWP gradually by making reference to prevailing standards and modes of international museums –

- (a) We will ***update the design and content of the permanent exhibition of the themed exhibition galleries***, which include enhancing the quality of screen display of exhibits by using the latest technology; replacing aged exhibits or those beyond repair; providing an immersive environment with simulated visual features; and making the exhibition more unique by showing the connection between nature and local culture, so as to bring visitors a more interesting and interactive visiting experience.

/(b)

- (b) We will *improve visitor facilities*, which include re-designing the installations at the Entry Plaza; re-designing and renewing exhibit interpretation panels; providing new interactive visit-planning kiosks with the function of searching routes and designing visits of different lengths; renewal of orientation signages and location of exhibits to guide visitors to tour around the themed exhibition galleries and the Wetland Reserve so as to improve visitor circulation and connection between the Visitor Centre and the Wetland Reserve; and improving accessibility of exhibition venues and exhibits by adopting barrier-free designs with assistance of an audio system and an induction loop system so as to accommodate the needs of various visitor groups, including different age groups and persons with disabilities.

8. The following areas of HKWP will be enhanced –

- (a) Entry Plaza: Unlike the previous design with physical sculptures, the park entrance will feature freshwater wetland organisms and their underwater habitat, and will provide visitor-oriented facilities such as shade shelters. Visitors can experience the environment under the freshwater wetlands through augmented reality (AR) technology. Clear signages will also be installed;
- (b) Atrium: In addition to the traditional orientation points, interactive visit-planning kiosks, booths to collect commemorative stamps and seating area will be added;
- (c) “What are Wetlands?” and “Living Wetlands” Galleries: The two galleries will be combined and renamed as “Living Wetlands” Gallery. Different from the previous exhibition set up with models, taxidermies and physical components, the new gallery will showcase a complete local wetland environment^{Note}. Exhibition facilities will include interactive games, models, as well as wetland animals and plants, with highlights including a large-scale eco pond for dragonflies, and an interactive game demonstrating rainfall and water cycles;
- (d) “Wetland Challenge” Gallery: Different from the traditional one-way presentation of images, video shows and robot interpretation, the gallery will be divided into the “Wetland Explorer” Gallery (Ground floor) and “Amazing Journeys” Gallery (First floor). The two themed

/exhibition

^{Note} A complete local wetland environment stretches from the mudflats, mangroves and brackish water habitat of Deep Bay, to the lowland freshwater ecosystems, and upstream into the woodland streams in forested hill.

exhibition galleries will be connected. Exhibition facilities will combine games and artwork presentation elements on natural science and digital art museum, so as to educate visitors about wetland animals and plants;

- (e) “Human Culture” Gallery: Different from the traditional one-way presentation video shows on worldwide wetlands, the gallery will be renamed as the “Wetlands and Us” Gallery. Through interactive presentation, the gallery will showcase the cultural heritage of the wetland in Hong Kong from the past to the present, how the wetland ecosystem has been contributed to food provision and water supplies, etc.. Visitors can enjoy an immersive art experience by exploring with other visitors how to operate a fishpond, so as to rethink how to cherish our wetland and water resources;
- (f) Viewing Gallery: In addition to providing telescopes, the gallery will provide a creative space for games and workshops, as well as a temporary exhibition space for use by green groups or other communities; and
- (g) Indoor Play Area: The area will be converted into a themed indoor play area for children and toddlers, namely the “Mangrove Adventure”. Facilities will include a rope course at mezzanine-level imitating high-tide, elevated slides to mudflat, and a play area with games.

Encls. 1, 2
& 3

9. The map of the HKWP, the list of existing exhibition areas and the preliminary conceptual design of the proposal are at Enclosure 1, Enclosure 2 and Enclosure 3 respectively.

10. We will start developing and designing new educational activities and teaching resources to tie in with the new exhibition themes and visitor facilities. We will consult stakeholders so as to organise diversified educational activities for quality eco and green tourism. We will also provide training for schools, the tourism sector, etc., to foster deeper visitors’ understanding of the wetlands and cultural inheritance effectively through HKWP. The interactive elements as well as immersive environment with simulated visual effects of the new exhibits will further strengthen the educational effect and visitors’ experience on wetland and biodiversity conservation, thereby enhancing HKWP's attractiveness as an important gateway to nature education, and positioning as an eco and green tourism facility. Besides, the new exhibits are updatable. Upon completion of the upgrading, we will continue to update or renew the exhibits by incorporating seasonal elements so as to maintain visitors’ interest and competitiveness of HKWP as appropriate.

11. We will also introduce online ticketing to enable visitors, schools, organisations and the tourism sector to purchase admission tickets in advance. Apart from the interactive visit-planning kiosks in the proposal, we will explore the introduction of a visitor flow control system for the exhibition galleries so that visitors can pick the best time to visit the galleries with better itinerary arrangement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. We estimate that the implementation of the proposal will incur a non-recurrent cost of \$135 million. We shall engage contractors through open tendering for the renewal and upgrading of the exhibits and visitor facilities. The cost breakdown is as follows –

	Total \$ million
(a) Detailed design for exhibits and visitor facilities	6
(b) Integrated exhibit prototype development and testing	18
(c) Exhibit development, production, fit-out and installation	98.9
(d) Defect liability, warranty and contingency	12.1
Total	135

13. It is anticipated that the estimated cash flow requirements from 2021-22 to 2024-25 are as follows –

<u>Year</u>	\$ million
2021-22	10.5
2022-23	26.7
2023-24	85.7
2024-25	12.1
Total	135

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND WAY FORWARD

14. Subject to the funding approval of the Finance Committee (FC), we plan to start the upgrading work in the fourth quarter of 2021 for completion in phases from the third quarter of 2022 to the fourth quarter of 2024. During the upgrading of facilities, HKWP will remain open with partial closure of the exhibition galleries for replacing exhibits and visitor facilities.

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION

15. AFCD gauged public views on HKWP in general and their visiting experience by means of focus group workshops, questionnaires, interviews, etc. in 2019. The respondents included local visitors, overseas tourists, green groups, the education sector, the tourism trade, etc.. Most respondents considered that HKWP should update its exhibit content, explanatory information and visitor facilities.

16. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development on the proposal on 26 April 2021. Members supported the project and agreed that the funding proposal should be submitted to FC for consideration. In response to Panel members' comments, we submitted supplementary information to the Panel on 11 May 2021 (LC Paper No. CB(4)976/20-21(01)).

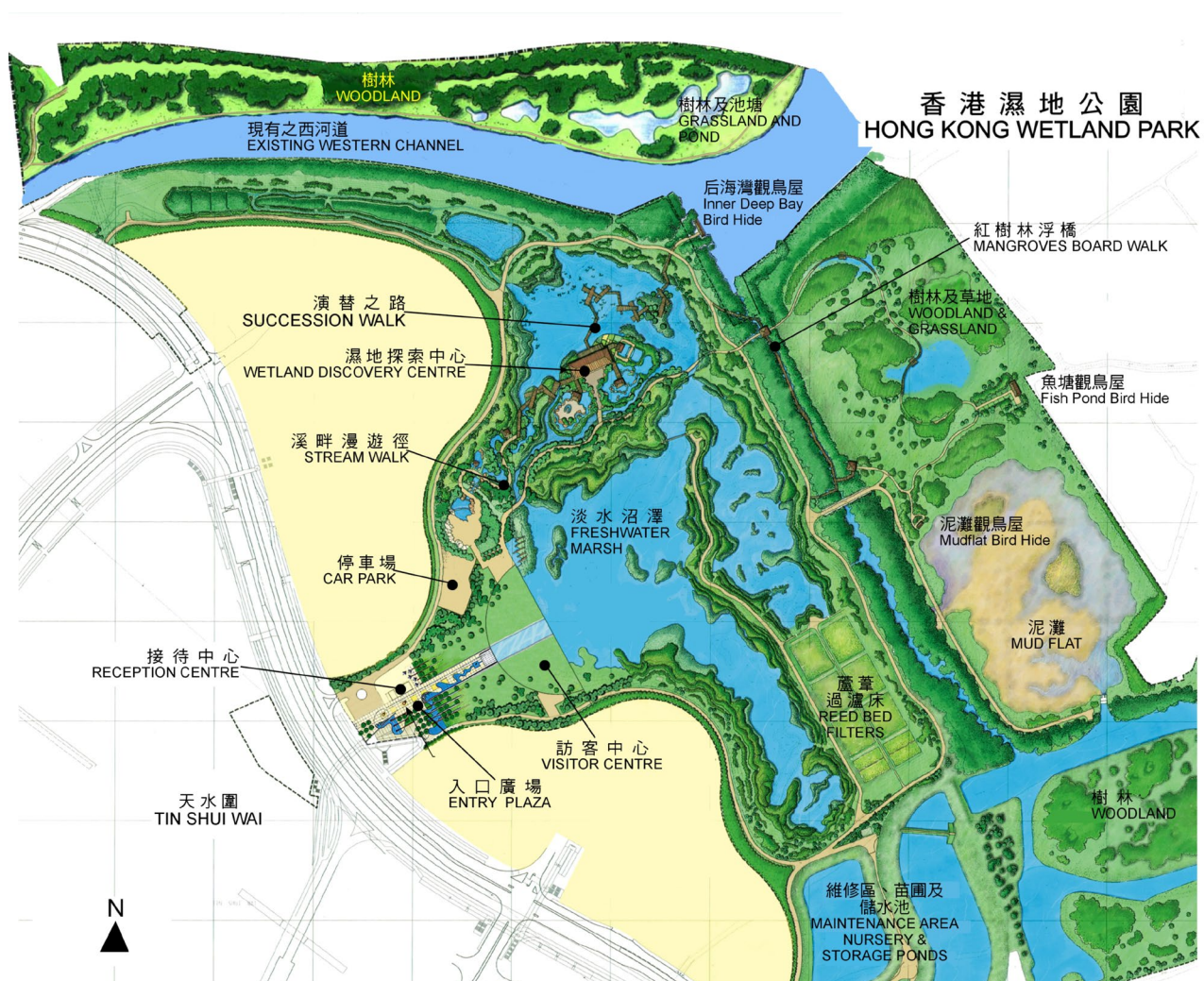
BACKGROUND

17. HKWP is located at the northern part of Tin Shui Wai. It comprises a 10 000m² Visitor Centre and a 60-hectare Wetland Reserve. The Visitor Centre has themed exhibition galleries, a theatre, a souvenir shop, a cafeteria and an indoor play area. The themed exhibition galleries showcase the importance of wetland on biodiversity, civilisation and conservation. HKWP has attracted over 7.3 million visitors as at April 2021 since its opening in 2006. It is a world-class eco-tourism attraction and has obtained various architectural and landscaping awards from local and overseas professional groups. HKWP is also an important wetland ecological education and green tourism facility in the territory. A total of 8 000 educational and promotional activities were held in 2019.

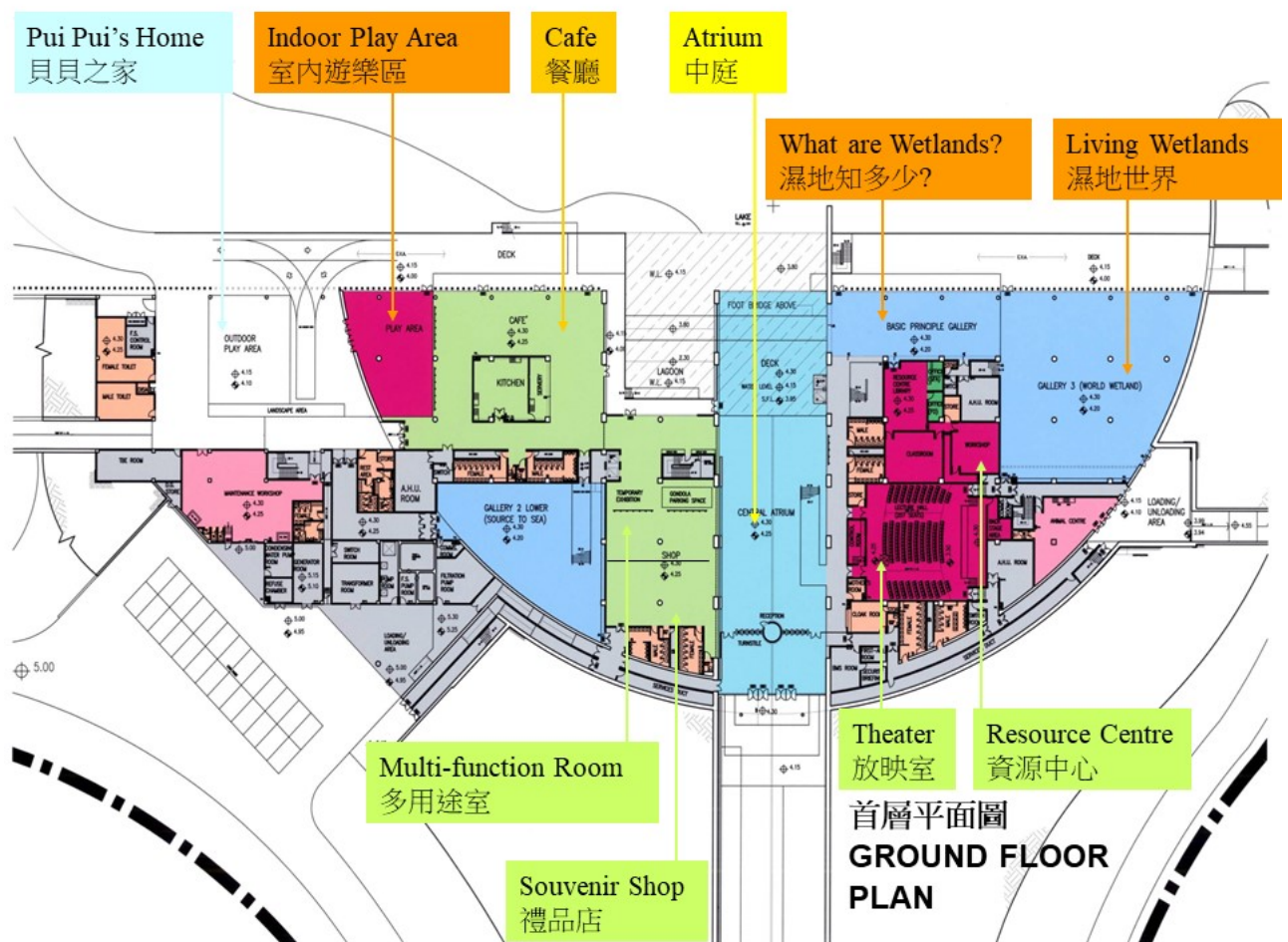
18. Located next to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site and being a member of the Wetland Links International (Asia), HKWP presents a beautiful wetland landscape, which is home to more than 270 species of birds, 58 species of dragonflies, 10 species of amphibians, 33 species of reptiles, 18 species of crabs, 27 species of fishes and 181 species of butterflies. HKWP is special in the way that the wetland is surrounded by urban areas. Its proximity to the downtown areas in the northwest of the New Territories and Shenzhen makes it easily accessible by railway or other public transportation, making it an ideal eco and green tourism destination for local visitors, tour groups and overseas tourists.

Map of the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP)

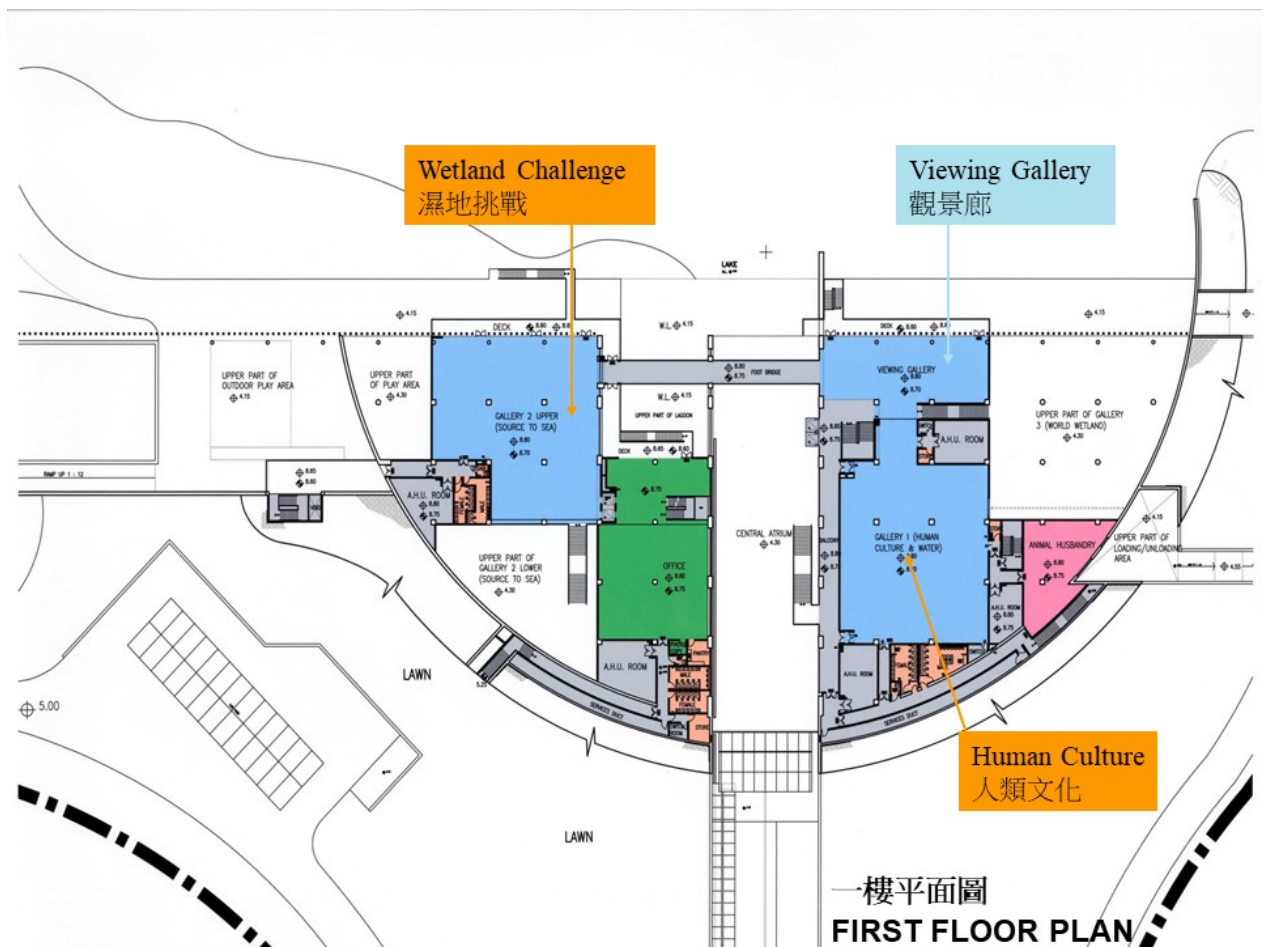
1. HKWP Wetland Reserve



2. HKWP Visitor Centre (Ground floor) floorplan



3. HKWP Visitor Centre (First floor) floorplan



**List of Existing Exhibition Areas
in the Hong Kong Wetland Park**

Exhibition Area	Year of Usage	No. of Exhibits
Entry Plaza	15	97
Atrium		2
“What are Wetlands?” Gallery		100
“Living Wetlands” Gallery		163
“Wetland Challenge” Gallery		297
“Human Culture” Gallery		65
Viewing Gallery		23
Indoor Play Area		45
	Total	792

Conceptual Design of the Upgrading Plan of the Hong Kong Wetland Park

1. Entry Plaza (入口廣場)

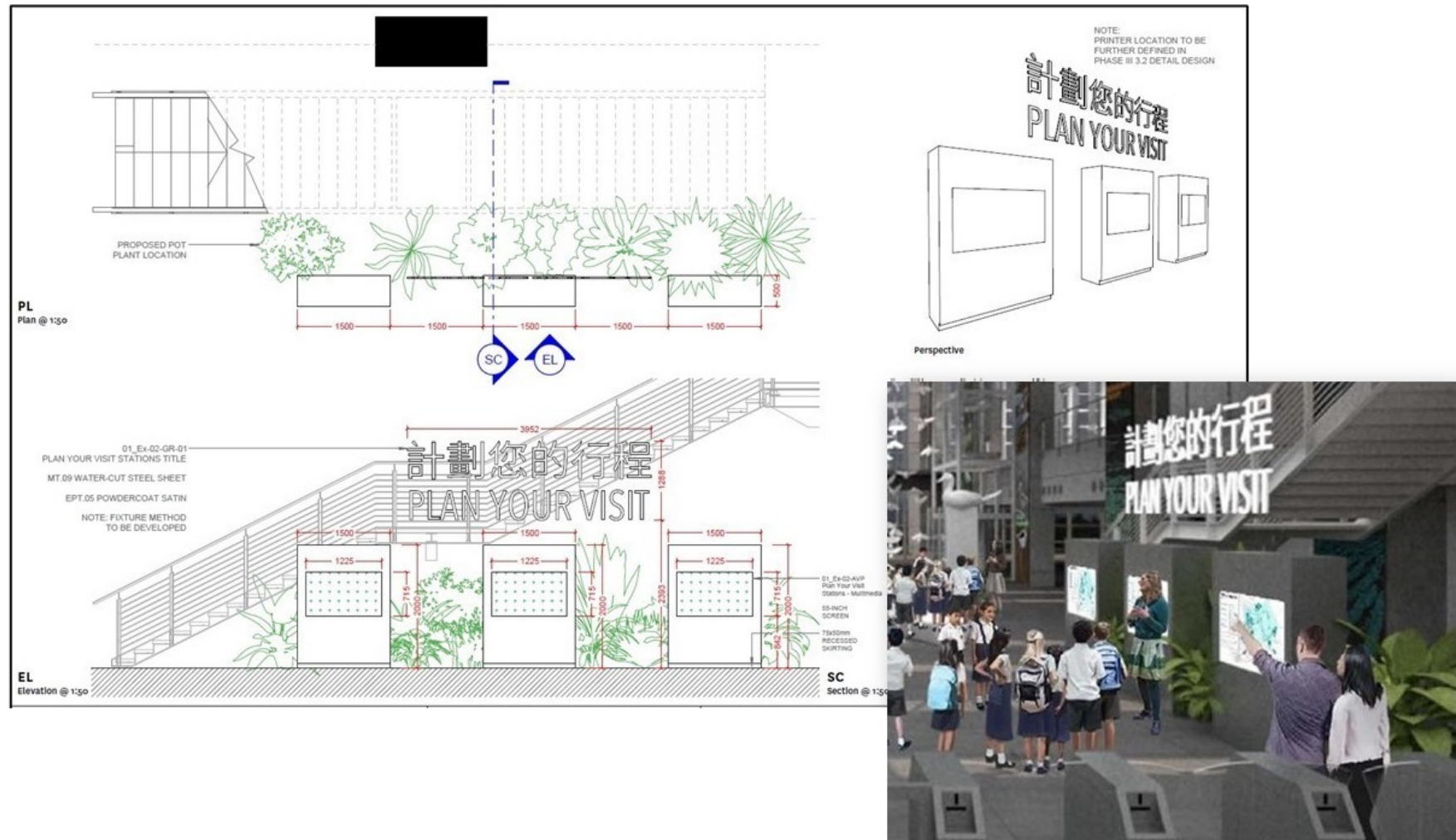
It is proposed to renew the visitor facilities at “Entry Plaza” by featuring freshwater wetland organisms and their underwater habitat, and will provide visitor-oriented facilities such as shade shelters. Visitors can experience the environment under the freshwater wetlands through augmented reality (AR) technology. Clear signages will also be installed.





2. Atrium (中庭)

It is proposed to add interactive visit-planning kiosks, booths to collect commemorative stamps and seating area.



3. “What are Wetlands?” and “Living Wetlands” Galleries (「濕地知多少?」及「濕地世界」展覽廊)

The two galleries will be combined and renamed as “Living Wetlands” Gallery. The new gallery will showcase a complete local wetland environment^{Note}. Exhibition facilities will include interactive games, models, as well as wetland animals and plants, with highlights including a large-scale eco pond for dragonflies, and an interactive game demonstrating rainfall and water cycles.



^{Note} A complete local wetland environment stretches from the mudflats, mangroves and brackish water habitat of Deep Bay area, to the lowland freshwater ecosystems, and upstream into the woodland streams in forested hill.

4. “Wetland Challenge” Gallery (「濕地挑戰」展覽廊)

It is proposed to divide the gallery into the “Wetland Explorer (探索濕地)” Gallery (Ground floor) and “Amazing Journeys (奇妙旅程)” Gallery (First floor). The two themed exhibition galleries will be connected. Exhibition facilities will combine games and artwork presentation elements on natural science and digital art museum, so as to educate visitors about wetland animals and plants.





5. “Human Culture” Gallery (「人類文化」展覽廊)

It is proposed to rename the Gallery as the “Wetlands and Us (濕地與我)” Gallery. Through interactive presentation, the gallery will showcase the cultural heritage (e.g. *Gei wai*, fishpond, oyster and rice farming) of wetland in Hong Kong from the past to the present, how the wetland ecosystem has been contributed to food provision and water supplies, etc. Visitors can enjoy an immersive art experience by exploring with other visitors how to operate a fishpond, so as to rethink how to cherish our wetland and water resources.



6. Viewing Gallery (觀景廊)

In addition to providing telescopes, the gallery will provide a creative space for games and workshops, as well as a temporary exhibition space for use by green groups or other communities.



7. Indoor Play Area (室內遊樂區)

It is proposed to convert the area into a themed indoor play area for children and toddlers, namely the “Mangrove Adventure (紅樹林歷奇)”. Facilities will include a rope course at mezzanine-level imitating high-tide, elevated slides to the mudflat, and a play area with games.



8. Wetland Reserve (濕地保護區)

It is proposed to renovate the signage and way finding systems, including orientation map and directional totem, to guide visitors through the Wetland Reserve.

