

**For discussion
on 28 May 2024**

Legislative Council Panel on Development

Study Recommendations for South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor

PURPOSE

This paper aims to brief Members on the study recommendations for formulating an eco-recreation corridor in South Lantau. The new facilities recommended in this paper are of proposed nature only. We will consult Members, stakeholders and the public during the public engagement exercise, and will optimise and refine the proposals and implementation mode based on the views collected.

BACKGROUND

2. Based on the overarching principle of “Development in the North, Conservation for the South” embraced in the Sustainable Lantau Blueprint, the Sustainable Lantau Office (SLO) of the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) formulated the “Lantau Conservation and Recreation Masterplan”¹ (the Masterplan) in 2020. The Masterplan recommended to formulate the “South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor” (the Corridor) with a view to further enhancing the eco-recreation potential of the coastal areas of South Lantau for public enjoyment and experience. To take forward the recommendations, the SLO conducted two studies² (the Studies) to explore and propose to make good use of the natural and historical cultural resources in the South Lantau (i.e. four areas namely Cheung Sha, Shui Hau, Shek Pik and Pui O) for eco-tourism and sustainable recreational purposes.

¹ The “Lantau Conservation and Recreation Masterplan” recommended using trails, a bike network and road/water transport to link various attractions, activities, and event sites on Lantau, thus creating five themed clusters. Among these, the theme for the coastal area of South Lantau (covering Chi Ma Wan Peninsula, Cheung Sha, Shek Pik, Shui Hau and Pui O) is the “South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor”.

² The two studies of the “South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor” include (1) “Sustainable Leisure and Recreation Initiatives in Shek Pik and Adjoining Areas – Investigation” and (2) “Initiatives for South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor – Investigation”. They cover the areas to the north and south of South Lantau Road in South Lantau respectively, including a 300-hectare “Green Belt” zone. As the SLO has already implemented the mountain bike trails in Chi Ma Wan, Chi Ma Wan Peninsula was not included in these two studies.

3. The Studies reviewed and consolidated information related to the ecological and natural resources, leisure and recreation, transport, infrastructure and other relevant information of South Lantau. Having considered the ecological value, geographical conditions, natural or historical and cultural resources, recreational features, development constraints of individual locations, as well as the examples in other cities³, the Studies recommended developing ecologically and naturally based sustainable leisure and recreational facilities, together with ancillary facilities such as transport and accommodation, etc. Preliminary technical assessments on ecology, environment, traffic and infrastructure were carried out to confirm that the recommendations will not have adverse impacts on South Lantau in the various above-mentioned aspects.

4. It is proposed to develop the Corridor into a popular vacation designation in Hong Kong through the provision of leisure and recreational facilities, which not only blend in with the local characteristics, but are also suitably for use and enjoyment in all seasons. Visitors can wander through the Corridor for one to a few days according to their preferences. Through participation in ecology-based sustainable recreational and educational programmes/activities/facilities, visitors can experience the nature and distinguishing features of different attractions, enjoy a diverse range of leisure and recreational experiences, enhance their understanding on the natural resources and historical culture of South Lantau. At the same time, public awareness on conservation can be raised and the local economy can be boosted.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

5. Following the overarching planning of “Conservation for the South”, the Studies adopted the following principles when formulating the recommendations for the Corridor:

- (a) protect natural ecological resources;
- (b) enhance the existing local characteristics and development potential;
- (c) introduce sustainable, ecologically and naturally based recreational facilities that are in harmony with the local environment and suitable for both local and foreign visitors; and
- (d) optimise the layout and improve the accessibility and connectivity of the attractions.

³ Reference locations include Great Wall National Park in Beijing, Phillip Island Nature Parks in Melbourne, Australia, Skyline in New Zealand and Setonaikai National Park in Japan, etc.

PROPOSALS

6. It is recommended introducing leisure and recreational activities in Cheung Sha and Shek Pik, with the more dynamic activities in Cheung Sha and those more sedentary in Shek Pik. In view of their high ecological value, the focus of Shui Hau and Pui O will be on providing nature education activities. The key recommendations for these four areas (see **Figures 1 and 2**), together with their positioning, target visitors and characteristics, are as follows:

Cheung Sha – Recreation Hub

7. Cheung Sha is near Tung Chung Road and has a strategic geographical position, currently serving as the land transport entry point to South Lantau. Cheung Sha also has a two kilometres long beach, which is the longest in Hong Kong. Visitors can overlook the extensive beach landscape from the east side of the beach and the north side of the hill. There are also emerald green mountains to the north of South Lantau Road. The whole area possesses vast potential for developing leisure and recreational activities. However, due to the sparse provision of ancillary facilities and poor accessibility between Upper and Lower Cheung Sha⁴, most beach activities are concentrated in the Lower Cheung Sha area.

8. It is proposed to shape Cheung Sha into a recreation hub, providing facilities for both dynamic and sedentary activities for families and visitors of all ages. These activities range from thrilling adventures and surfing to leisure beach strolls, parent-child swimming, and sightseeing, etc. Detailed proposed projects include:

Lower Cheung Sha Visitor Centre: Gathering Point

- (a) It is proposed to provide a landmark visitor centre, with an integration of the local environment, near South Lantau Road in Lower Cheung Sha to impress visitors and serve as the entry point to other attractions in South Lantau. The visitor centre will provide a full range of ancillary facilities, including catering, retail, and sight-seeing, as well as indoor and outdoor venues for hosting various events throughout the year (such as markets). The centre will also provide information about the eco-tourism and regional cultural history of South Lantau;
- (b) Provide transport ancillary facilities next to the visitor centre, including a

⁴ The existing stream divides Cheung Sha Beach into two parts during the rainy season.

barrier-free access to Upper and Lower Cheung Sha Beach, a new pier⁵ at Cheung Sha with sightseeing function, and parking spaces for private cars and coaches;

Cheung Sha Beach: A New Diversified Beach Experience

- (c) It is proposed to enhance the existing beach facilities at Lower Cheung Sha Beach, such as providing more catering and water sports rental facilities with a view to offering more choices to visitors and enhancing the attractiveness of the area;
- (d) It is proposed to provide a barrier-free beach walkway to connect Upper and Lower Cheung Sha Beaches to facilitate visitors to enjoy the scenery and use the beach facilities;
- (e) It is proposed to provide a diverse range of water-based leisure and recreational activities and ancillary facilities at Upper Cheung Sha Beach, allowing visitors to participate in dynamic activities, such as surfing and kayaking, or passive activities such as beach strolls, etc., according to their preferences in different seasons. The proposed facilities will include a new water sports and recreation centre (with catering, storage, and rental services)⁶, leisure and adventure water sports zones, a leisure pier⁷, a beach campsite, a parent-child beach playground, a uniquely designed sitting-out area, and a versatile beach event venue for accommodating various types of activities, etc.; and

Upper Cheung Sha Hillside: Fun Adventure Experience

- (f) It is proposed to make good use of hillside on the green belt areas to the north of South Lantau Road in Upper Cheung Sha by planning an adventure vacation area, with adventure facilities of different levels of excitement (such as rope adventures), uphill chairlifts, and quality holiday accommodations, etc. This will allow visitors of different ages to engage more with the nature while appreciating the beautiful scenery of South Lantau.

⁵ In addition to providing berthing for boats, the new pier will also offer visitors a place to enjoy the scenic views of sunrise and sunset.

⁶ A new water sports and recreation centre will be provided in the central area of Upper Cheung Sha, replacing the existing facilities of the LCSD at the western end.

⁷ The leisure pier, designed mainly for scenic viewing, will be located in the central position of the leisure and adventure water sports zones.

Shek Pik – Leisure and Recreation

9. Shek Pik Reservoir is the third largest reservoir in Hong Kong with beautiful scenery surrounded by mountains on three sides. From the northern side of the water dam along Keung Shan Road, there is majestic mountain ranges of Lantau Peak and the Big Buddha in Ngong Ping, while the southern side offers views of the tranquil seascapes of Tung Wan and Tai Long Wan. The area also has rich historical resources, including Shek Pik Rock Carving, the ruins of Hung Shing Temple and the former Shek Pik Village, etc. It is connected to hiking trails leading to areas such as Ngong Ping and Fan Lau, as well as the catchwater channel to Pui O or Kau Ling Chung.

10. It is proposed to provide facilities in Shek Pik for the visitors whose enjoy leisure, tranquillity, cultural history, and photography. The proposals include:

- (a) To provide a heritage trail along the reservoir with the design concept of an open-air museum in mind. The planned trail will showcase the precious history of relocating Shek Pik Village to construct the reservoir and will connect to nearby monuments such as Shek Pik Rock Carving, allowing visitors to enhance their understanding of the history of the Shek Pik area while enjoying the scenery of the reservoir, and promoting the preservation of history and culture;
- (b) To construct a pedestrian path along the carriageway of the dam of the reservoir with good use of its open view, allowing visitors safely enjoy the scenery of the reservoir and its vicinity;
- (c) To widen and enhance the existing catchwater channel at the eastern side of the reservoir with a view to creating diversified recreational spaces. Through various cultural and artistic installations with different themes blending in with the environment, visitors whose enjoy tranquillity can appreciate and learn more about the significance of conserving natural resources; and
- (d) To provide ancillary facilities such as sanitary facilities and portable water points at appropriate locations for convenience of visitors.

Shui Hau – Nature Education

11. Shui Hau is famous for its rich natural resources with high ecological value. The area is suitable for promoting nature education and attractive to visitors who love natural ecology.

12. Shui Hau has a rich biodiversity, and in particular a very unique and intact sandflat⁸. Currently many visitors visit the sandflat at Shui Hau Wan to enjoy the picturesque scenery. It is proposed to construct facilities for visitors who love to explore nature in Shui Hau, include:

- (a) To provide an education centre along South Lantau Road in Shui Hau for promoting conservation work. The centre will serve as a conservation/education base introducing the ecology of the sandflat and horseshoe crabs, etc., which are of conservation value, as well as the local traditional village culture and customs. By hosting activities based on natural ecology and rural culture and inviting local villagers to act as guides to introduce the traditional customs and traditions of the area, visitors can understand more about the natural environment and raise their awareness of conservation through direct experience; and
- (b) To provide a walkway along the shore of the sandflat allowing visitors to appreciate the scenery of Shui Hau avoiding stepping onto the sandflat.

Pui O – Nature Education

13. Pui O is another area in South Lantau with significant ecological values⁹. In order to protect the ecological environment and enable the public and visitors to better appreciate and experience the nature, it is recommended to:

- (a) Provide a walkway¹⁰ on the western side of Pui O Bay: starting from Pui O Beach via the hiking trails, and then connecting to the catchwater channel¹¹ on the hillside, with a treetop walkway. The walkway also serves as an outdoor classroom to introduce the ecology of local habitats and species (e.g. wetlands). Visitors will be able to have a close-up view of the forest ecology as well as a distant view of Pui O Bay and Chi Ma Wan; and

⁸ According to the SLO's ecological study, Shui Hau has a variety of habitats of high ecological value, including sandflat, wetland, woodland, and stream, which support a rich biodiversity. The Shui Hau sandflat is a very unique habitat in Hong Kong, preserving the integrity of the natural habitats and the natural landscape of the land-to-marine transition, which is now very rare in Hong Kong. Shui Hau is an important breeding and nursery ground for the endangered Chinese Horseshoe Crab, while other intertidal organisms are very rich in variety and abundance. Shui Hau may also be a stopover site for migratory birds and is an important breeding and nursery ground for amphibians and odonates.

⁹ According to the SLO's ecological study, Pui O has a variety of habitats of high ecological value, including wetland, stream and woodland, which support a rich biodiversity. The area also provides roosting sites for Short-nosed Fruit Bat, Eastern Cattle Egret, and wintering sites for Danaid butterflies.

¹⁰ This includes a beach walkway, hiking trails and a treetop walkway.

¹¹ The catchwater channel also serves as a mountain bike trail (Pui O to Kau Ling Chung section).

- (b) Develop glamping sites on the hillside to introduce biodiversity and provide outdoor activities. Visitors thus can learn about the natural ecology through experience education, and those who like to explore the nature in depth can have diversified experiences.

Visitor Reception Capacity

14. A baseline survey conducted in 2022 revealed that an average of around 2 700 people visited Cheung Sha, Shek Pik, Shui Hau and Pui O each day during holidays. It is estimated that there will be an addition of about 4 000 to 6 000 visitors per day during holidays upon completion of the construction of the proposed facilities. Thus, it is recommended to enhance the transport infrastructure and accommodation facilities in these areas to cope with the increased demands.

Land Transport Amenities

15. Provision of the additional facilities mentioned above will attract more local and foreign visitors, leading to an increase in transport demand. Taking into account the planning intention of South Lantau as a nature conservation site, it is recommended that visitors should mainly use public transport facilities to go to South Lantau. In addition, it is recommended to strengthen the public transport connections and ancillary facilities to various attractions in South Lantau, including the provision of bus services between the attractions, additional parking spaces for private cars and coaches with ancillary facilities (e.g. charging facilities for electric vehicles), and improvement of the trails connecting South Lantau Road to the catchwater channel on the hill, etc.

Water Transport Amenities

16. In addition to land transport, it is recommended to introduce water transportation facilities. A pier is proposed at Cheung Sha enabling visitors to travel by ferry from the urban areas, outlying islands, and other attractions on Lantau Island. Visitors can enjoy the coastal scenery during the trip. At the same time, the new pier can serve as the base for development of island popping tourism, such as tours to Shek Kwu Chau on the southern side of Lantau Island.

Accommodation Facilities

17. To facilitate visitors who enjoy in-depth exploration of attractions to stay in Lantau for more days, it is proposed to provide additional accommodation facilities¹² at Cheung Sha Beach, Cheung Sha and Pui O hillside, for examples, beach campsite, quality holiday accommodation, and glamping site. Being in line with the themes of the areas, these accommodation services will focus on allowing visitors to blend into nature, promoting sustainability and compatibility with the local environment. Through outdoor experiences and activities such as guided eco or cultural tours, visitors can appreciate the natural and cultural resources of South Lantau, and raise their awareness and support of conservation. In addition, it can create job opportunities for the community.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

18. We have preliminarily explored various implementation approaches for the aforementioned recommendations, including assessing the feasibility of inviting private developers/investors to participate in the projects. This will not only introduce market creativity and resources, but also reduce the Government's financial burden. Some private developers/investors with relevant operational experience expressed interest in implementing some of the projects following our initial contacts. The SLO will continue to liaise with the potential private developers/investors and further consider different approaches and their financial viability with a view to formulating suitable implementation plans for the proposals.

WAY FORWARD

19. As mentioned in paragraph 3 of this Paper, preliminary technical assessments on ecology, environment, traffic and infrastructure were carried out to confirm that the proposals will not have adverse impacts on South Lantau. When taking forward individual projects in the next stage, we will conduct detailed technical assessments on the ecological, environmental (including water bodies) and traffic impacts, etc. We will also timely review the scale of the relevant facilities (including infrastructure) and the receiving capacity of the Corridor, so as to appropriately refine the implementation plan of the proposals (e.g. parking and accommodation facilities) while taking forward

¹² Currently, there are private and group-operated accommodation facilities (including holiday flats and holiday camps) and campsites operated by the Government in country parks and beaches in South Lantau. It is recommended to provide new accommodation facilities in Cheung Sha and Pui O.

the Corridor. The SLO will explore in-depth the measures required for controlling the number of visitors, including online reservations or the provision of real-time information on traffic and visitor flow, etc., to ensure that the visitors can have a good travelling experience. The aim is to meet the needs for leisure, recreation, and eco-tourism, without damaging the ecological environment of South Lantau. Prior to getting to the next stage work, we will assess and consider the financial impacts and economic / social benefits of the Corridor, and hence to determine the financial arrangements for implementing the proposals.

20. We will launch a two-month public engagement starting on 28 May 2024 to seek views on the recommendations from the relevant stakeholders, including the Islands District Council and the South Lantau Rural Committee. We will set up street booths at the Tung Chung Bus Terminus and various locations in South Lantau to collect feedback from residents and visitors of South Lantau. We will also establish a thematic webpage featuring videos and a Geographic Information System to introduce the details of the proposals for the four areas of the Corridor (i.e. Cheung Sha, Shek Pik, Shui Hau and Pui O).

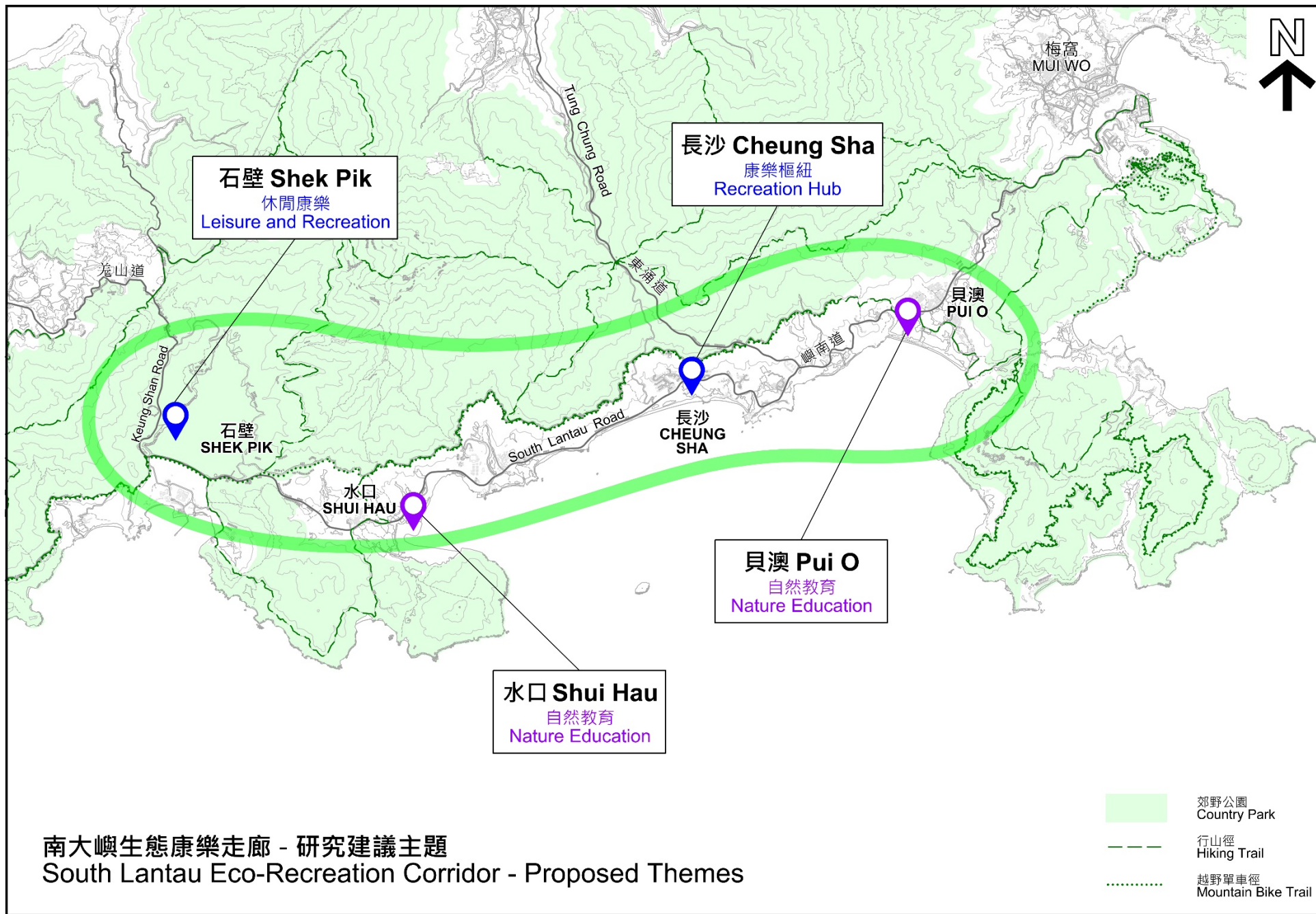
21. Afterwards, we will optimise and refine the details of the proposals with due consideration of the views collected during the public engagement.

ADVICE SOUGHT

22. We welcome comments from Members on the proposals for the South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor.

Development Bureau
Civil Engineering and Development Department
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Figure 1



Study Recommendations for South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor

Figure 2

