

**Confirmed Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Committee
held on 6 October 2005 at 9:30 a.m.**

Present

Prof. LUNG Ping-ye, David, S.B.S., J.P. (Chairman)

The Hon CHOY So-yuk, J.P.

Mr. Joseph LEE, B.B.S., J.P.

Ms LAU Ka-shi

Mr. MAN Mo-leung

Dr. TSO WONG Man-yin, B.B.S.

Mr. Eric CHAN

AD(CV), EPD

Mr. Anthony POON

PEO(CD), EMB

Mr. CHAN Ping-kwong, Richard

Sr Nature Conservation Officer, AFCD

Miss Christina CHONG

SAO(CVD)2, EPD, (Member/Secretary)

Ms Winifred CHAN

SEO(CVD), EPD (Assistant Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Prof. CHAN Chi-ming

Mr. LAU Chi-kit, Edwin

In Attendance for Agenda Item 3

Mr. Roy TANG

DDEP(3), EPD

Mr. CC LAY

AD(Conservation), AFCD

Dr. PM SO

Sr Conservation Officer (Biodiversity), AFCD

Miss Florence CHAN

SAO(CVD)1, EPD

Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the fourth meeting. He introduced Mr. Roy TANG, Deputy Director of EPD; Mr. CC LAY, Assistant Director of AFCD; Dr. PM SO, Senior Conservation Officer of AFCD and Miss Florence CHAN, Senior Administrative Officer of EPD who attended the meeting on the application of funding to support pilot conservation management agreement projects.

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8 July 2005

2. The revised draft minutes of the last meeting held on 8 July 2005 were sent to members on 27 September 2005. The meeting confirmed the revised minutes without further amendment.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

Para. 4 Nature Conservation Policy Review – Pilot Conservation Management Agreement Projects

3. Miss Christina CHONG reported that a total of three applications would be discussed under Agenda Item 3.

Para. 5 Financial Position of the ECF

4. Miss Christina CHONG reported that as at 30 September 2005, the uncommitted fund balance was \$31.6 million.

Agenda Item 3: Pilot Conservation Management Agreement Projects (ECF Paper 18/2005)

5. Dr. PM SO informed Members that the corrigendum for ECF Paper 18/2005 was tabled for Members' consideration. During the application period, a total of four applications were received from the Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA), the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS), the Conservancy Association (CA) and the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong (WWF). WWF had recently withdrawn the application as it had found other sources for funding. AFCD and EPD had vetted the application details in accordance to the Guide to Application (Annex C of the ECF Paper 18/2005) and the recommendations were summarized at Annex D. The three proposals were discussed and supported by the Nature Conservation Subcommittee of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) and the ACE in September 2005. The ACE recommended a total funding of \$4,620,350.00 to support the three applications.

6. Two Members declared interests as they were members of the CA, one of the applicant organizations. Another Member also declared interest as he is familiar to members of the TPEA, one of the applicant organizations. Having considered the general membership held by members in various green groups and

local organizations, Mr. Roy TANG suggested and the meeting agreed that all Members could stay at the meeting.

TPEA's Proposal: A Pilot Scheme of Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley in Tai Po

7. Two representatives of TPEA presented their proposed conservation programme of butterflies at Fung Yuen.

8. In reply to the questions from two Members, the representatives stated that voluntary workers would be recruited to clear Mikania (薇甘菊) on the conservation site. No pesticide would be used so as to protect the butterflies, their eggs and larvae at Fung Yuen. Visitors would be educated on species conservation and habitat management through various workshops and would be prohibited from catching butterflies or collecting larvae. In the long run, TPEA targeted to operate and maintain the conservation site by self-funding activities like educational workshops and sale of souvenirs and products.

9. In response to a Member's concern on the ecological balance, the representatives stated that the proposed independent bird survey programme could provide information for monitoring the overall quality of habitat of Fung Yuen. Such information would help check whether the proactive habitat and species conservation programmes to be implemented specifically for butterflies would cause negative impact on the ecology of the site.

10. Two Members stated that education programmes to stakeholders and landowners would be essential to ensure the sustainability of the programme. Members were pleased to note that the project was supported by local resident representatives.

11. After discussion, the two representatives of TPEA left the conference room.

12. Members expressed concern on the development plan of the area around Fung Yuen which had been zoned as "Comprehensive Development Area" on the relevant Outline Zoning Plan. The Chairman suggested that we should draw the Town Planning Board's attention on the possible ecological impacts of the "Comprehensive Development Area" on the Fung Yuen Valley.

HKBWS's Proposal: Birds and Humans in Harmony – A Sustainable Management

Scheme in Long Valley

13. Three representatives of HKBWS presented their proposed conservation programme of birds at Long Valley.

14. In response to the concern of two Members, the representatives of HKBWS explained that the New Territories Conservation Association (NTCA) would help establishing operational network among local farming community at Long Valley. Participating landowners and farmers in Long Valley would be urged to adopt a bird-friendly mode in their farming practices. Farmers in wet agricultural land would ensure their continuity of the current management practices while abandoned agricultural land would be reactivated and inundated by water. During the migratory seasons of birds, use of pesticide and herbicide would be minimized. In order to meet the needs of target species of birds, different crop species like Water Chestnut (馬蹄), Fox Nut (茨實) and Chinese Arrow-head (慈菇) would be planted. Farmers would also be encouraged to market these products at the co-opt run by the CA.

15. Another two Members enquired about the recurrent operational cost and effectiveness of introducing various management practices within the conservation site. The representatives of HKBWS stated that the experience of this pilot proposal would provide some indication on the future cost of habitat management for the most crucial/critical area for conservation with limited resources. The proposal of cultivating crops or planting different vegetation would enhance the habitats for birds. The effectiveness of different management practices would be evaluated in two years time.

16. Another Member proposed HKBWS to consider inviting dietitians to promote the nutritional value of the proposed crop species so as to increase their market value. Mr. Anthony POON enquired that the proposal seemed to be against the tradition of scaring birds away from farmlands using, for example, scarecrows. The representatives of HKBWS stressed that only the core area for birds would be protected to provide an oasis for the birds. As migratory birds would normally stay in Long Valley for three months every year, farmers would be urged to adopt the bird-friendly mode farming practices during that period.

17. After discussion, the three representatives of HKBWS left the venue.

CA's Proposal: Sustainable Habitat Management in Long Valley

18. Three representatives of CA presented their proposed conservation programme of habitat management at Long Valley.

19. In reply to the question from a Member on the possible duplication of work with HKBWS, the representatives of CA explained that the area to be covered by the two proposals would not overlap and the focus of management differs from each other. CA's proposal put emphasis on formulating a sustainable habitat management strategy for the local community in the Long Valley while HKBWS's proposal focused on enhancement of habitats for birds.

20. Two Members were concerned about the long term sustainability of the project. The representatives stated that CA would assist the local farmers to adopt organic farming practices by organizing various training workshops and visits. CA would also assist the application of the required certification as well as brand-building of quality products to help generating additional revenue from organic farming practices in the long run. In addition to the establishment of the co-opt to market the organic products, CA would also explore more tourists attractions such as traditional food and crafts in the villages so to create job opportunities for local residents.

21. Members noted that the CA and HKBWS should share their experience and information so as to ensure that resources would be used effectively. After discussion, the three representatives of CA left the venue.

Budget

22. Mr. Eric CHAN summarised the comments from AFCD and EPD in assessing the applications from the three organizations. The amount of fund applied by TPEA was \$1,743,630.00. The budget was considered reasonable, hence it was recommended to fund the project in full. The amount of fund applied by HKBWS was \$1,365,060.00. Among the total sum applied, \$3,000 was requested by the project proponent for the purchase of stationery. However, the "Guide to Application" stipulated that the funding for stationery should not exceed \$500. It was thus recommended to cut the proposed budget by \$2,500 so that the approved funding would be \$1,362,560.00 for HKBWS. The amount of fund applied by CA was \$1,536,160.00, among which \$50,000.00 was proposed for the item "minor equipment: camera, DV, printer, etc" and \$18,000.00 was proposed for the purchase of notebook computer with software. Since the "Guide to Application" stipulated that the funding for minor equipment or tools should not exceed \$50,000.00, it was proposed to cut the proposed funding by \$18,000.00 and grant \$50,000.00 only for the purchase of minor equipment. Moreover, \$4,000.00 was proposed for mobile phone communication which was not considered as an essential item and was not normally granted by ECF. Upon further reduction of \$4,000.00, a grant of \$1,514,160.00 was recommended for the project.

23. The Chairman concluded that the proposals were worthy of support and a sum of \$4,620,350.00 was approved for the three proposals as follows:

- TPEA's proposal in Fung Yuen: \$1,743,630.00;
- HKBWS's proposal in Long Valley: \$1,362,560.00; and
- CA's proposal in Long Valley: \$1,514,160.00.

24. The Chairman informed Members that a press conference would be held on 14 October 2005 at 3:00 pm in the Conference Room of EPD on 33/F of Revenue Tower to introduce the three newly approved management agreement proposals. Members might wish to join the press conference as appropriate.

Agenda Item 4: New Application Recommended by the RPVSC

Project 23/2004 Towards developing an engineering strategy to reduce tire-pavement noise
(ECF paper 19/2005)

25. Miss Christina CHONG briefed Members on the ECF Paper 19/2005. The objective of the proposal was to design and fabricate a trailer-based device employing the Close Proximity Method to measure the tire-pavement noise. The RPVSC considered the application at its meetings on 25 May and 7 September 2005 and recommended the ECF Committee to support the proposal with a sum of \$351,000.00 after deducting an amount of \$52,650 for the overhead administrative cost in accordance with the Guide to Application. The meeting approved the grant of \$351,000.00 to the project.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

26. Miss Christina CHONG reported that the Trustee Report for the Environment and Conservation Fund for 2004-05 would be tabled to the Legislative Council on 19 October 2005. It was an annual practice following the requirement of the Environment and Conservation Fund Ordinance (Cap. 450). The Trustee Report summarized that in 2004-05, a total of 118 projects were approved with a total funding of \$15.28 million. These 118 projects included the following –

- 12 research projects;
- 77 environmental education and community action projects;
- 18 community waste recovery projects; and
- 11 large scale projects carried out by the Environmental Campaign Committee.

27. Miss Christina CHONG informed that the ECF Paper 20/2005 was tabled for Members' consideration. At the last meeting held on 8 July 2005, Members approved an allocation of \$5 million for the scheme on "Source Separation of Domestic Waste in Residential Buildings" and a 3-month application period commenced on 1 August 2005. By early October 2005, a total of 11 applications were received towards the new scheme. The Waste Recovery Projects Vetting Subcommittee proposed that the application period should be extended perpetually until the \$5 million would be used up, so that more residents could be benefited from the funding scheme. It was because potential applicants required additional time to consult resident organizations and to work out the waste separation mode. EPD would conduct a review one year after the launch of the funding scheme to examine its effectiveness in enhancing territory-wide source separation of domestic waste. The meeting approved the extension of the project period.

Agenda Item 6: Date of Next Meeting

28. Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held in January 2006. The Secretariat would check the availability of Members and confirm the meeting date nearer the time.

29. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Secretariat, ECF Committee
December 2005