

Environment and Conservation Fund

Nature Conservation Management Agreement Proposals

Purpose

This paper invites Members' advice on two funding applications received under nature conservation management agreement (MA) scheme. The two applications are submitted by the Conservancy Association (**Attachment I**) and the Tai Po Environmental Association (**Attachment II**).

Background

2. The Government announced a new nature conservation policy to better achieve the nature conservation objectives, in particular, to enhance the conservation of ecologically important sites which are in private ownership. Under the new policy, 12 priority sites have been identified for enhanced protection and the Administration undertook to implement a Pilot Scheme for management agreement as one of the measures to enhance the ecological value of these sites.

3. Three MA pilot projects have been implemented since 2005. At the ECF meeting held on 13 June 2007, we briefed Members on the progress of these three projects. Recognizing the merits of MA scheme in conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the ecologically important sites, Members supported the continuation of the scheme. A new round of application for MA was invited from July 2007. Since then, we received two applications from the Conservancy Association and Tai Po Environmental Association, involving land located at Long Valley and Fung Yuen respectively. The summary of the applications is at **Annex A**.

Assessment

4. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Environmental Protection Department have examined these two applications in accordance with the following major evaluation criteria –

- (a) the benefits that the proposed project will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective;

- (b) the sustainability of the proposed project including its resources implications, participation of the landowner(s) and local community, the nature and enforceability of the management agreement;
- (c) whether the proposed budget is reasonable and realistic, and whether the project is cost effective; and
- (d) the technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. In this regard, NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary.

5. In general, we consider that the proposed projects will be beneficial to the ecology of the concerned sites and are worth supporting. It is also worthwhile to maintain the momentum of the conservation works implemented by the pilot MA projects in Long Valley and Fung Yuen. Our detailed assessments are at **Annex B** for Members' reference.

6. At the meeting of 3 December 2007, the Nature Conservation Subcommittee under the Advisory Council on the Environment (the Subcommittee) reviewed the two applications and recommended support for both projects with the following amount of funding -

- (i) the Conservancy Association's application: \$4,292,884
- (ii) the Tai Po Environmental Association's application : \$2,849,990

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to advise whether the two nature conservation management agreement projects should be approved with the proposed amount as set out in para. 6.

*Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Environmental Protection Department
December 2007*

**Summary of applications for
nature conservation management agreement projects**

Project Title	Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 塋原自然保育管理計劃	Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest in Tai Po, Hong Kong. 以管理協議方式保育鳳園谷具特殊科學價值地點內具高生態價值的私人土地
Site involved	Long Valley	Fung Yuen
Size of proposed management area	about 1,300,000 sq. ft.	about 200,000 sq. ft.
Proponent	Conservancy Association (CA)	Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA)
Key partner in project implementation	Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS)	N/A
Project description	This is a joint project to conserve and enhance the biodiversity particularly the avifauna and freshwater wetland dependent species in the Long Valley through management agreement with local farmers and landowners.	This is a nature conservation project for the conservation of the natural habitat of butterflies through management agreement with landowners of private land that are situated in the SSSI at Fung Yuen Valley.
Key conservation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To enhance nature conservation in Long Valley, particularly avifauna and other freshwater dependent species; - to conserve agricultural freshwater habitats in Long Valley; - to establish close partnership with farmers and landowners in management agreement and small projects; - to monitor habitats and biodiversity with a view to developing effective and efficient habitat management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To reduce and minimize environmentally incompatible behavior on private land in Fung Yuen; - to enhance and maintain the habitat quality of private land in Fung Yuen; - to provide a refuge area for butterfly's foraging, inhabiting, and breeding, so as to help increase the diversity of butterfly species; - to train volunteers in conservation programme; and

	measures for long term ecological conservation; and - to promote nature conservation awareness.	- to promote nature conservation awareness.
Duration	24 months	24 months
Amount of fund applied for	\$4,292,884	\$2,849,990

**Evaluation of Applications for
Nature Conservation Management Agreement Projects**

Our views on the applications received are set out below -

I. Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley (submitted by the Conservancy Association (CA) in cooperation with the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS))

Evaluation criteria	Comments
Benefits that will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective	<p>CA and Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) have gained experience and knowledge about different conservation measures undertaken in Long Valley in the two-year pilot project. They now join hands to undertake the proposed project to achieve synergy in conserving Long Valley. The project is expected to benefit the conservation of Long Valley by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reducing and minimising the incidence of any irregularities and environmentally incompatible activities on the private land;• enhancing biodiversity of the agricultural freshwater wetland, Fung Shui Woods and fish ponds in Long Valley;• enhancing conservation of the Greater Painted-snipe;• enriching our knowledge on effective and efficient habitat management measures to facilitate the long-term conservation and management of Long Valley;• building communication channels with landowners and local villagers, and gaining their support in nature conservation; and• demonstrating how stakeholders cooperate in biodiversity conservation to the general public.
Sustainability including its resources implications, participation of the landowners and local community, the nature and enforceability of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposal will assess the effectiveness of different management measures for conservation management of Long Valley. Experience gained will help to determine which management scheme is most effective and appropriate for the long-term conservation of Long Valley.

<p>the management agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CA and HKBWS have already entered into agreements with some 20 landowners during the pilot project stage. It is anticipated that 8 new local stakeholders will sign agreements with CA and/or HKBWS for the new project. • The experience in implementing pilot projects shows that income generated from eco-tour, membership fee, product sales, etc is limited. Financial support from the Government is still required.
<p>Whether the budget is reasonable and realistic, and whether the project is cost effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the proposed area to be managed in the project (1,270,800 sq.ft.) exceeds the total area of the two pilot projects (996,160 sq.ft.) by 28%, the proposed budget (\$4,292,884) has increased by 49% when compared with the total funding of the two pilot projects (\$2,876,720). • Compared to the pilot projects, the proposed increase in budget is mainly due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management of a larger area and new habitat types including water flea ponds (\$61,440), fish ponds (\$213,024) and Fung Shui Woods (\$70,000), and extending bird monitoring to cover this larger area / new habitat types (budget increased from \$104,000 to \$232,000), - additional “seasonal habitat and vegetation monitoring” (\$40,000), “biodiversity surveys for amphibians, reptiles and mammals” (\$69,000) and “management measures effectiveness monitoring” (\$72,000) - conservation management of Greater Painted-snipe (\$58,000) - establishment of a “Conservation Corner” (\$63,200) with facilities to minimise human disturbance for sensitive birds - higher staff cost (budget increased from \$720,000 to \$1,442,100) due to heavier involvement of project management staff and higher salaries • We welcome the proposal to manage a larger area and new habitat types. The extended bird monitoring programme, conservation management of Greater Painted-snipe and “Conservation Corner” are well justified.

<p>Technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both CA and HKBWS are experienced in implementing environmental projects including projects funded by the ECF and Sustainable Development Fund. • The two full-time staff members from CA and HKBWS have been actively engaged in the pilot projects and are experienced in managing the management agreements and liaising with various stakeholders. • The project is supported by the North District Councillor Mr. Hau Kam Lam and the New Territories Conservation Association.
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II. Management Agreement on the Private Land with High Conservation Value at Fung Yuen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest in Tai Po, Hong Kong (submitted by Tai Po Environmental Association (TPEA))

Evaluation Criteria	Comments
<p>Benefits that will bring to the efforts in enhancing the conservation of the site concerned and in better achieving the nature conservation objective</p>	<p>The project will continue the measures being carried out by TPEA under the two-year pilot project and, similar to the pilot project, will benefit the conservation of Fung Yuen by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing and minimising the incidence of any irregularities and environmentally incompatible behaviours on the private land; • enhancing and maintaining the habitat quality of private land as an important site to butterflies; • enhancing and maintaining the diversity of butterfly species; and • providing a refuge area for foraging, inhabiting and breeding butterflies. <p>It will also promote the importance of conservation to local community and the general public.</p>

<p>Sustainability including its resources implications, participation of the landowners and local community, the nature and enforceability of the management agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will provide TPEA with the funding to enhance the infrastructure of the butterfly reserve (i.e. an irrigation system and footpath paving). This would reduce maintenance and staff costs in the long-run and facilitate fund raising, sponsorship and conservation education programmes and product sales, etc. • TPEA has already entered into agreements with landowners during the pilot project stage. It is expected that these agreements will be extended to the current project. • The experience in implementing the pilot project shows that income generated from eco-tours, membership fee, product sales, etc is limited. Financial support from the Government is still required.
<p>Whether the budget is reasonable and realistic, and whether the project is cost effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the area to be managed under the proposed project (about 200,000 ft²) exceeds the pilot project (i.e. 174,000 ft²) by 15%, the proposed budget has increased by 64% to \$2,849,990, compared to \$1,743,630 granted for the pilot project. • Compared to the pilot project, the increase in budget is mainly due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the provision of an irrigation system (\$50,000) for enhancing the infrastructure of Fung Yuen, - footpath paving (\$120,000) for enhancing the safety of visitors, - increase in rentals (\$72,000 to \$504,000) of two village houses with open space which will be used as exhibition centre, visitors' centre, lecture room and office. - increase in salary of project manager due to changing his term of employment from part time to full time (from \$420,000 to \$682,800). <p>The proposed capital works for footpath and irrigation are justified. The rental of two bigger houses with open space immediately</p>

	<p>outside can help enhance visitor services. The venue will be used as exhibition centre and lecture room for educating the public on nature conservation. As for the employment of project manager, TPEA has not yet identified a suitable candidate for the post. If the project is approved, TPEA would identify a person with comparable qualifications of a “senior research assistant” as set out in ECF research project guidelines to fill the post. Should the post not be filled or filled by person with less experience or lower qualification, the funding should be adjusted downward by ECF.</p>
<p>Technical and project management capability, and track record of the applicant. NGOs may seek assistance or support from other relevant professional bodies where necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPEA is experienced in implementing environmental projects including projects funded by the Environmental Campaign Committee and ECF. • The project will be supported by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society and the Hong Kong Lepidopterists’ Society. • We understand that TPEA is trying to recruit a qualified person to be the Project Manager.

*Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Environmental Protection Department
December 2007*