

Environment and Conservation Fund

Application under Nature Conservation Management Agreement Scheme

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the evaluation of the application received under the Nature Conservation Management Agreement (MA) scheme in November 2017.

Background

2. Under the MA scheme, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may apply for funding from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) for entering into management agreements with the landowners or tenants in order to enhance conservation of the priority sites identified under the New Nature Conservation Policy, country park enclaves or private land in country parks.

3. The Guide to Application for MA projects (latest version issued in September 2017) specifies that all applications received will first be evaluated by an Assessment Panel consisting of members from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The recommendations will then be submitted to the Nature Conservation Subcommittee (NCSC) under the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) for consultation and then forwarded to the ECF Committee for endorsement.

4. This year, the invitation for MA applications was opened from 25 September to 6 November 2017, with one MA application received. The application was submitted by Green Power Limited (GP) for habitat and biodiversity conservation in Sha Lo Tung. The main features of the application are summarised in **Annex A**. The project application and supplementary information are provided in **Annex B**.

5. The Assessment Panel meeting was held on 28 November 2017 to evaluate the application. The results of the Panel's assessment are summarised in the following paragraphs, and detailed in **Annex C**. The NCSC was consulted on the application on 15 December 2017. Members supported the project and their recommendations are detailed in **Annex D**.

Habitat and Biodiversity Conservation Scheme in Sha Lo Tung 2018-2020 [Project Duration: 1 February 2018 to 31 January 2020]

6. Sha Lo Tung ranks No. 2 out of the 12 priority sites for enhanced conservation identified under the New Nature Conservation Policy. It is well recognised for its very high ecological significance. The site houses diverse habitat

types including Fung Shui woodland, secondary woodland, abandoned agricultural land, grassland, shrubland, marsh and streams. It is an important breeding ground for dragonflies, and supports a multitude of wildlife taxa including freshwater fish, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, fireflies and birds by virtue of its rich vegetation as well as the relatively unpolluted and diverse habitats. For long-term conservation of Sha Lo Tung, the Chief Executive in Council has given in-principle agreement in June 2017 to pursue a non-in-situ land exchange with the land owner for the surrender of his private land with high ecological importance in Sha Lo Tung to the Government in exchange for a piece of government land at the Shuen Wan Restored Landfill.

7. However, there has been some environmental degradation of the private land earmarked for non-in-situ land exchange at Sha Lo Tung owing to human disturbance and the lack of active habitat management. An MA application submitted by GP aims to prevent further degradation of the private land concerned at Sha Lo Tung, and embark on active conservation management in Sha Lo Tung while the land exchange is in progress. The MA focusses on baseline ecological surveys, restoration and enhancement of habitats, vandalism control and public experiential education, through collaboration with local villagers.

8. The current application requests a funding support of \$8,667,404 for the management of about 11.45 ha of private land at Sha Lo Tung for a period of two years, from 1 February 2018 to 31 January 2020. A range of habitats including rehabilitated wet farmland, artificial marshes and pond, woodland fringe, streams and abandoned agricultural land will be managed under the proposed project, which would in turn enhance the habitats for various wildlife taxa including dragonflies, aquatic fauna and butterflies. Educational activities including school talks, volunteer training, guided tours and night tours, and a large-scale community event are proposed. GP expects that these, together with multimedia publicity and education, could reach and benefit 100,000 members of a wide spectrum of the community.

9. Overall speaking, the Assessment Panel considered the project worthy of support in view of the benefits the proposal would bring to the enhancement of the ecological value of Sha Lo Tung through active conservation management measures and prevention of incompatible activities. Marks given to the application on individual criterion and specific considerations are detailed in **Annex C**. The Assessment Panel has proposed minor revisions to the proposed budget for the ECF Committee's endorsement of the exact amount of funding (**Annex E**).

Recommendations from the NCSC

10. At the meeting on 15 December 2017, the NCSC was consulted on the MA application together with the evaluation by the Assessment Panel. Members supported the proposal and recommended submitting the application to the ECF Committee for endorsement. NCSC's recommendations on the project are at **Annex D** for Members' consideration.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel and the NCSC, and advise whether the MA application should be approved and, if so, the exact amount of funds to be granted.

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Environmental Protection Department
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