

Pilot Conservation Management Agreement Projects

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' advice on funding the three applications received under the Pilot Scheme for Management Agreement (MA) to enhance the ecological values of the priority conservation sites. The three applications were submitted by Tai Po Environmental Association (**Annex A1**), the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (**Annex A2**) and the Conservancy Association (**Annex A3**).

Background

2. The Government announced a new nature conservation policy in November 2004 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 MA as one of the measures to enhance the ecological value of these sites. Under this Pilot Scheme, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may apply for funding from the Government for entering into MA with the landowners. The NGOs will provide the landowners with financial incentives in exchange for management rights over their land and their co-operation in enhancing conservation of the sites concerned. In October 2004, the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Committee approved an allocation of \$5 million for the implementation of the Pilot Scheme.

3. Upon closing of the six-month application period on 31 May 2005, four applications were received involving land located at Ramsar Site, Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar site, Fung Yuen and Long Valley. However, the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong recently informed us that they would like to withdraw their application in respect of land located at Ramsar Site and Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar site as they found it feasible to seek their own funding for the project. A summary of the remaining three applications is at **Annex B**.

The Administration's Assessment

4. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) have vetted the three applications in accordance with the "Guide to Application" (**Annex C**). AFCD and EPD consider that all three applications will be beneficial to the ecological environment of the concerned sites and are worth supporting. The Administration's detailed assessments on the applications

(including comments on certain budget items) are set out at **Annex D**.

5. As explained in **Annex D**, we recommend ECF Committee to grant the following amount of funding to the three projects –

- (i) Tai Po Environmental Association's proposal: \$1,743,630
- (ii) The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society's proposal: \$1,362,560
- (iii) The Conservancy Association's application: \$1,514,160

6. The total amount of the recommended funding for all three projects is \$4,620,350, which is within the \$5 million allocated by the ECF for the implementation of the Pilot Scheme. When the projects are completed in two years' time, we will conduct a review on the implementation of the Pilot Scheme.

Views of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE)

7. At the meeting of 1 September 2005, the Nature Conservation Subcommittee (Subcommittee) under the ACE reviewed the applications and recommended support for the three applications. On 12 September 2005, the ACE endorsed the Subcommittee's recommendation in supporting the three applications and made the following suggestions –

- (a) Project proponents should start early in the identification of alternative sources of funding with a view to achieving sustainability of the projects;
- (b) AFCD should actively monitor the implementation of all the approved projects; and
- (c) The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society and the Conservancy Association (both proposing to enter into management agreements with landowners inside the Long Valley) were advised to closely collaborate with each other and share experience and information to ensure that resources would be effectively used.

Advice sought

8. Members are invited to advise whether the three applications received under the Pilot Scheme for MA should be approved with a grant of \$4,611,350 from ECF.

**Environmental Protection Department
September 2005**