

Project 14/2004 – Digital green-space and its environmental, social and economic values in Hong Kong

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' advice in funding the captioned application for ECF made by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Background

2. The funding requested by this project is \$532,000.00 for the expenses on employing one Research Associate, one Research Assistant, one Consultant and one local tree/vegetation expert (\$486,000.00), equipment and capital items (\$31,000.00), software license (\$5,000.00) and publication and web-page development (\$10,000.00). The project is expected to last for 2 years.

3. The project aims to raise public awareness and understanding of the short- and long-term environmental, social and economic benefits that green space (trees and grass) provides in urban and rural areas of Hong Kong by providing Hong Kong's general public, for the first time, an accurate and spatially detailed digital database of green space (trees, grass and other major land cover/use types), and the quantitative information on social, economic and environmental values that green space offers.

4. The main project deliverables include:

- A baseline digital green space and major land cover/use type of Hong Kong
- An integrated method and system suitable for urban green vegetation monitoring
- An integrated system/tool for quantitative impact assessment of green space
- A Web-enabled GIS system for data management and delivering
- Final report of the project and associated publications/presentations

5. The proposal was examined by AFCD, EPD, Planning Department and Sustainable Development Unit (SDU). SDU advised the Secretariat that one of the deliverables, the baseline digital green space and major land cover/use type of Hong Kong is similar to one of the deliverables from a contract service of "2004 Update of Terrestrial Habitat Mapping and Ranking

based on Conservation Value”, of which the PI is the Team Leader for the remote sensing/GIS and field survey part of the project started in October 2004. Apart from this specific project, SDU remarked that the PI’s suggestion of “an integrated system/tool for quantitative impact assessment of green space” also share a similar objective as their Computer-aided Sustainability Evaluation Tool (CASET). In the light of the duplication with SDU’s work, both AFCD and EPD expressed reservation in supporting the proposal.

6. The proposal was also examined by two external expert assessors. Assessor 1 considered the proposal not worthy of support and expressed doubts on the feasibility of the project arising from the vagueness of the methodology for classifying the land cover and green space as described in the proposal. Assessor 1 pointed out that if the database was to be released to the public, 90% accuracy should be necessary but that would not be achievable with the proposed methods and budget. On the other hand, Assessor 2 considered the project worthy of support and believed that the production of an accurate and spatially detailed digital database of green space should be beneficial.

Advice sought

7. Members are invited to advise whether the application for ECF should be supported as detailed in paragraphs 2 to 4 above.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
January 2005