

For discussion
on 28 February 2005

Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services

Progress of the Hong Kong Wetland Park Project and Amendments to Subsidiary Legislation under the Country Parks Ordinance

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP) Project and the proposed amendments to subsidiary legislation under the Country Parks Ordinance.

Background

2. The HKWP is developed on an ecological mitigation area which was originally intended to compensate for the wetlands lost due to Tin Shui Wai New Town development. The Project would upgrade the 60 hectares ecological mitigation area to a world-class conservation, education and tourism facility. The Project was designated as one of the capital works projects to celebrate the new millennium.

3. The Project comprises two phases. Phase 1 of the HKWP, which includes mainly an exhibition pavilion and an outdoor landscaped garden, has been completed and opened to the public in December 2000. It serves as a venue to promote wetland conservation and help to publicize the whole HKWP Project. It is managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and attracts more than 100,000 visitors per year after its opening.

Progress of the HKWP Project

Phase 2 Construction Works

4. On 26 April 2002, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a sum of \$461.5 million for the Phase 2 construction works of the HKWP Project. Phase 2 of the Project includes the construction of a visitor centre with three major exhibition galleries, fabrication of exhibition items and an outdoor park. Works are in good progress. The whole project is expected to complete by early 2006.

Marketing Study

5. AFCD has commissioned a marketing consultant to carry out a marketing study (the marketing study) on the HKWP Project in 2002. The key findings are:

- over 500,000 visitors are expected for the first year of the operation of the HKWP, comprising about 30% tourists (including Mainland visitors) and 70% local residents (of which about 43% is expected to be students);
- the HKWP will be particularly attractive to family visitors and school groups;
- tailor-made programmes should be developed to cater for different tour groups; and
- in view of the remote location of the HKWP, it is essential to set attractive admission fees for maintaining the competitiveness of the park.

Fees and Charges of the HKWP

6. The HKWP will be a world-class eco-tourism facility. The marketing study suggested that an appropriate level of admission fees should be HK\$30 per adult and HK\$15 per child/ student/ senior citizen. Concessionary packages should also be provided to attract tour groups

and family visitors. When drawing up the proposed fees, the marketing study has taken into account visitors' affordability, traveling cost to the park, attractiveness of the park and admission fees of other similar facilities. The car-parking fee for private cars is proposed to be \$8 per hour. Parking fee for bus or light bus carrying visitors to the HKWP will be waived so as to encourage group visitors to visit the HKWP. Taking into account the findings of the marketing study, the proposed admission fees are at Annex.

Outsourcing of the Operation and Management of HKWP

7. The Government has invited tender submission for the future operation, management and promotion of the HKWP. The tender exercise will close on 11 March 2005. The Government intends to appoint a single contractor to take up the full range of required services (including exhibit planning and management, facilities management and day-to-day operation, habitat and wildlife management, marketing and education). This will enhance effectiveness and efficiency in management and allow for better utilization of resources. It is envisaged that the contractor will be appointed in mid 2005 allowing about 6 months for the contractor to prepare for the full operation of HKWP in early 2006.

Pre-opening Marketing and Publicity

8. We will launch a series of marketing and promotion events in early 2005, and will step up the publicity in the run-up to the opening of the HKWP in early 2006. Our current plan is as follows:

- (a) **Initial stage** (early 2005) to arouse the attention of local and overseas visitors of the opening of HKWP through roving exhibitions;
- (b) **Enhancement stage** (June 2005) to provide further information to the mass media and the tourism industry through special briefings and site visits;
- (c) **Soft-opening stage** (December 2005) to organize special visits for particular groups to HKWP; and
- (d) **Official launching** (early 2006) to organize events such as grand opening ceremony.

9. The Tourism Commission will continue to work with the relevant parties in preparing for the opening of the HKWP and the relevant supporting facilities.

Amendments to Subsidiary Legislation

Designation of the HKWP as “Special Area”

10. In order to provide a proper legal framework for the Country and Marine Parks Authority [i.e the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (DAFC)] (the Authority) to manage and control the HKWP, we need to designate the HKWP as a “Special Area” under the Country Parks Ordinance. This will empower the DAFC to manage the HKWP and to charge admission fees to the HKWP.

Proposed Legislative Amendments

11. We need to amend two pieces of subsidiary legislation under the Country Parks Ordinance, i.e. the Special Areas (Designation) (Consolidation) Order (the Order) and the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (the Regulations). The amendments are technical in nature and include the addition of a clause under the Schedule of the Order to specify the HKWP as a “Special Area”, amendment to the Regulations to empower the Authority to determine the opening hours for the park and to restrict unauthorized persons and those without paying admission fees to enter the park, and addition of a Fee Schedule under the Regulations to prescribe admission fees and car-parking fees. We are preparing for the relevant subsidiary legislation to amend the above Order and Regulations. Subject to the approval by the Chief Executive in Council, we intend to submit the subsidiary legislation to the Legislative Council in the second quarter of 2005 to tie in with the operation of the HKWP in early 2006.

Consultation

12. The Country and Marine Parks Board, the Wetland Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on the Environment, the Ping Shan Rural Committee and the Yuen Long District Council were consulted and have no objection to the proposed designation of the HKWP as “Special Area” and the proposed admission fees.

Views Sought

13. Members are invited to note the progress of the HKWP Project and give their views and support to the proposed legislative amendments.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau
21 February 2005

Annex

The Proposed Fees and Charges Schedule for the Hong Kong Wetland Park

Admission fees		Fee Level (HK\$)
(a) Single entry		
● Adult		\$30
● Child (3 to less than 18)/Students/Senior		\$15
● Child (Below 3)		Free
● Group	- 50 persons and above* - 30 – 49 persons* - 20 – 29 persons* - 10 – 19 persons* <* counting fee-paying visitor only>	70 % of listed price 80% of listed price 85% of listed price 90% of listed price
(b) Annual Pass		
● Adult (Full year/half year)		\$100/\$50
● Family (maximum 4 persons)		\$200
● Child/Student/Senior (Full year/half year)		\$50/\$25
Parking fees		
● Private Car		\$8 per hour
● Bus or Light Bus (with permission from HKWP)		free