

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

**Progress Report on
the Hong Kong Biodiversity Education Centre at the Woodside**

1. Purpose

This paper aims to report to Members the latest progress on renovation works of the Woodside building and the planning and development of Woodside into the Hong Kong Biodiversity Education Centre (HKBEC).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Woodside building is built at 50, Mount Parker Road, in 1922 by Butterfield and Swire Co. Ltd., to serve as quarters for the senior staff of the Taikoo Sugar Refinery. It is a red brick two-storey building with a basement. In 1976, Woodside became Government property and managed by the Government Property Agency. From 1985 to 2002, Government leased the property to the International Cultural Association.
- 2.2 In 1998, the Government listed the site of Woodside as Green Belt under the Quarry Bay Outline Zoning Plan (No. S/H21/28). At the same time, the Antiquities Advisory Board assessed the Woodside building as a Grade 2 Historic Building. The ex-Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau and the Environmental Protection Department then initiated the discussion on the long term use of the Woodside.
- 2.3 In April 1999, the Eastern District Council (EDC) discussed the proposal to convert Woodside into a Country Park Visitor and Education Centre with the aim to facilitate wise use of the facility and promote public education on environmental protection and nature conservation. The EDC supported the proposal and invited the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to take up the project. After duly considered the community need reflected by the EDC, AFCD accepted the invitation.
- 2.4 AFCD on 4 February 2002 took over the site of Woodside. The Architectural Services Department (ArchSD), being the project agent of the Woodside project, had then conducted a feasibility study on the project and the required renovation works.

3. Renovation works of Woodside

3.1 Subsequently it was decided that the renovation works on the Woodside building would include the following:

- a. Conduct a heritage survey on the Woodside building and identify the need to repair the heritage elements;
- b. Demolish all unauthorized structures and restore them to their original state, i.e. re-open and restore all corridors to their original style;
- c. Recover original architectural features of the heritage building;
- d. Provide “barrier-free” channel to all visitors to Woodside, i.e. lift;
- e. Add environmentally-friendly architecture features, i.e. sky-light corridor;
- f. Provide necessary facilities, i.e. E & M, air-conditioning, lighting, public announcement system, CCTV, Fire Services system, etc. for the long-term use of the Woodside building; and
- g. To landscape the external area and turn it as a green open space for visitors.

3.2 All renovation works for the Woodside building has been completed in December 2011 and the building has been handed over to AFCD for fitting out of displays and long term maintenance.

3.3 The slope of Woodside is undergoing a slope stabilization works. The works commenced in September 2011 and is scheduled to complete in June 2012.

4. Planning and Development of the HKBEC

4.1 AFCD will revitalize Woodside and turn it into the HKBEC featuring the valuable natural resources and biodiversity in Hong Kong. It will be a major conservation education venue for biodiversity education to local primary and secondary schools as well as a focus for biodiversity and environmental-related studies. The HKBEC will also be a venue for public education and publicity on habitat and species conservation through collaboration with non-Governmental organizations, EDC and local community.

4.2 The HKBEC will have three exhibition galleries on the ground floor to showcase the beauty of the natural environment and wildlife in Hong Kong. A conference/seminar room and two activity rooms on the first floor will be used for education programmes to students, community groups and the general public. A nature trail will be developed at the outdoor area of the Woodside to showcase diversified native tree species. A seating-out area will also be provided at its outdoor part of the compound.

- 4.3 The exhibit fabrication works of the HKBEC is in progress. It is envisaged that the installation of the exhibits will be completed in March 2012. After the proper testing and commissioning, the HKBEC will be ready for opening to the public in late April or early May 2012.
- 4.4 It is estimated that the HKBEC will attract some 75 000 visitors upon its full operation in late 2012.

5. Management of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Education Centre

- 5.1 AFCD will be responsible for the management and operation of the HKBEC. AFCD plans to collaborate with NGOs, local community and EDC, to carry out promotion and education activities to boost understanding of local students and residents on Hong Kong's biodiversity.
- 5.2 AFCD will outsource some operational tasks, such as security, cleansing and education programmes to experienced operators and be responsible for the overall management of the outsourcing contracts.
- 5.3 AFCD will devise and implement education programmes for local schools and the general public.
- 5.4 Existing resources will absorb the additional requirement for management and operation of the HKBEC.

6. Opening Hours and Admission Fees

- 6.1 AFCD proposes the opening hours of the HKBEC as below:

	Venue	Opening Schedule
(a)	Exhibition Galleries Building	Monday, Wednesday to Sunday, and public holidays (except the first two days of the Chinese New Year) from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm; Closed on Tuesdays (except public holidays) and on the first two days of the Chinese New Year.
(b)	Other Outdoor Area	All days from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm.

- 6.2 No admission fees to the proposed HKBEC.

7. Way Forward

In order to empower AFCD with suitable statutory authority for better management and protection of the site of Woodside, AFCD will review the feasibility to designate the site of Woodside as a Special Area.

8. Advice Sought

Members are invited to comment on this progress report regarding renovation works of the Woodside building and the planning and development of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Education Centre there.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Country and Marine Parks Authority
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