

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Preparation for the Revalidation of Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to inform Members about the ongoing preparation work for the revalidation of Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark (HKUGGp).

2. Background and Revalidation of HKUGGp

2.1 Hong Kong Geopark became a National Geopark in 2009, and was then accepted by the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) to become a Global Geopark in 2011. Following the formalisation of the UNESCO Global Geopark (UGGp) label in 2015, Hong Kong Geopark was renamed Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark.

2.2 A revalidation is carried out for all UGGp normally every 4 years. The previous revalidation of HKUGGp was performed in 2017, when the UGGp Council decided to renew the status of HKUGGp as a UGGp for four more years. The UGGp Council also gave several recommendations, which have been the focus of HKUGGp's work in preparation for the upcoming revalidation.

2.3 The upcoming revalidation of HKUGGp, originally scheduled in 2021, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The UGGp Secretariat would notify HKUGGp of the arrangement of revalidation in due course.

3. Progress to Address Recommendations from 2017 Revalidation

3.1 In the last few years, HKUGGp had made great efforts in addressing the recommendations made by the UGGp Council following the 2017 revalidation. The

corresponding actions/improvements undertaken by HKUGGp are summarised below.

3.2 Recommendation 1: Improve the Kat O Geoheritage Centre and the Lai Chi Wo Geoheritage Centre with more professional, innovative and higher-quality exhibits.

3.2.1 Both centres have undergone replacement or renovation after previous revalidation. The Kat O Geoheritage Centre was replaced by the Kat O Story Room in October 2019, while the Lai Chi Wo Geoheritage Centre was replaced by the Lai Chi Wo Story Room in December 2021. In addition, a new story room (i.e. Siu Ying Story Room) was opened at Lai Chi Wo in February 2021. These story rooms are new type of visitor centres set up with the local communities under the “Same Roots, Same Origins” (SRSO) project. They contain valuable historical information and materials gathered from the villagers, including first-hand account of village life through interviews, old photographs and items, which are blended into high quality exhibits to illustrate the lifestyle and culture of these rural communities.

3.3 Recommendation 2: Improve the promotion of and update information about UNESCO Global Geoparks around the world and the Regional Networks (APGN, LACGN and EGN) in all visitor centres and geoheritage centres.

3.3.1 Exhibition panels dedicated to the information and promotion of UGGp, GGN and Regional Geopark Networks have been installed in all visitor centres, geoheritage centres and story rooms.

3.4 Recommendation 3: Improve research activities through collaboration and partnerships with universities and scientific institutions at the regional and international levels.

3.4.1 HKUGGp has been collaborating with the China University of Geosciences (Beijing) on the research and management of paleontological resources in the Northeast New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region since 2018. HKUGGp also facilitated research by postgraduate students from the China University of Geosciences (Beijing), who have published two papers on the geological features of Port Island and Tung Ping Chau in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Regarding cultural research, HKUGGp has commissioned the South China Research Center of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to record the decennial Da Jiu Festival of the Hing Chun Alliance and also conduct a comprehensive study on the culture, heritage and festivities of the local communities in HKUGGp.

3.5 Recommendation 4: Continue to strengthen collaboration and partnerships with local

communities and stakeholders to develop capacity building and partnership projects.

3.5.1 Initiated under the SRSO project, HKUGGp has set up five story rooms since 2017 in collaboration with four local communities and other stakeholders such as Lions Nature Education Foundation, Fung Ying Seen Koon and Chinachem Group. The Tai Po Geoheritage Centre and Volcano Discovery Centre were also managed by the Environmental Association and Sam Mun Tsai village as well as the Sai Kung District Community Centre respectively. In addition to the story rooms, the SRSO project led to the publication of two books on Ap Chau and Kat O. Partnerships and collaborations had also been established with a wide range of organisations including: 1) Geopark Hotels; 2) Hong Kong Science Museum to establish the Earth Science Gallery and the Palaeontology Gallery; 3) Hong Kong Monetary Authority to display the hexagonal rock columns of HKUGGp in the new \$500 banknotes issued in 2018.

3.6 Recommendation 5: Continue the active involvement in the activities of the Global Geoparks Network and the Asian Pacific Geoparks Network, promoting the international value of the territory through the partnerships.

3.6.1 HKUGGp actively participated in the GGN Conferences and APGN Symposiums held every two years, as well as the annual International Training Course on UGGp Management and Development held in Beijing. In 2017 and 2018, HKUGGp hosted capacity building workshops for the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, which was participated by many APGN Geoparks. HKUGGp also proactively took up the role of APGN social media coordinator in 2019 (manages Twitter and Instagram accounts for APGN), and initiated monthly or bi-monthly online meetings among APGN Geoparks during the pandemic.

4. Progress in Key Areas of Work

4.1 Besides the recommendations made by the UGGp Council, HKUGGp also worked specifically on four main focus areas required under the UGGp criteria, namely education, geotourism, sustainable development and local engagement, as well as networking.

4.2 Education

4.2.1 HKUGGp continued to work with various partners including sister geoparks, schools and universities, NGOs and government departments to provide education programmes. Rock Classroom and talks are open for all schools, while more in-depth activities, such as workshops

and field trips, are provided under the Geopark School Programme. Under the Geopark School programme, six exchange visits to overseas geoparks were organised from 2017 to 2019, while exchange had been held in the form of five online exchange sessions in 2021 and 2022 under the epidemic. HKUGGp partnered with Hong Kong Science Museum to co-host public workshops and fun booths in their annual Science Festival, and conducted a monthly public workshop named “Nice to meet you, Mr. Rock” at the Science Museum since 2021. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of HKUGGp, a number of public education activities including public talks, roving exhibitions and community fairs were also organised in 2021.

4.3 Geotourism

4.3.1 Accessibility to some remote geosites have been improved, including: 1) the provision of new minibus service to High Island Reservoir East Dam since 2018, and subsequent service extensions; 2) the provision of new ferry service to Kat O and Ap Chau since 2018; and 3) the extension of ferry service to Lai Chi Wo in 2020. Since 2017, HKUGGp also made significant progress in creating new visitor facilities and repackaging existing tour routes, including five story rooms, High Island Geo Trail Biu Tsim Kok Section and Kat O Heritage Trail. Regarding the Recommended Geopark Guide System, HKUGGp continued to support and provide regular training to enhance the quality of the Geopark Guides. To promote green tourism, HKUGGp participated in the International Travel Expo 2018, and worked with Hong Kong Tourism Board to package HKUGGp as part of the “Great Outdoors Hong Kong” campaign.

4.4 Sustainable Development and Local Engagement

4.4.1 The SRSO project, which covered Ap Chau, Kat O, Kau Sai Village and the seven villages of Hing Chun Alliance, played a major part in deepening the engagement of HKUGGp with local communities. Besides promoting their history, culture and heritage through story rooms and publications, close communications were maintained with these local communities to better understand their needs and to offer help as far as practicable. For example, HKUGGp had provided assistance to these communities after strong typhoon and during the COVID-19 epidemic. HKUGGp also organised the “respect the rural communities” promotion campaign.

4.5 Networking

4.5.1 Understanding the importance of networking among geoparks and geopark networks, HKUGGp took every opportunity to participate as well as to coordinate and organise networking activities, as mentioned in para. 3.6.1 above.

5. Major projects

5.1 We will continue to maintain high-quality management and geopark services on the main focus areas as highlighted in Part 4 above. Significant projects and actions under planning or implementation include:

- (a) Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival: HKUGGp is supporting the Tourism Commission to promote green tourism at Sharp Island and the local communities of Sai Kung, including Yim Tin Tsai, Kau Sai Village and Leung Shuen Wan, under the 3-year project from 2022 to 2024;
- (b) Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail: as an initiative under the SRSO project and drawing from the experience of the Kat O Heritage Trail, HKUGGp will continue to promote the Hing Chun Alliance through setting up a heritage trail connecting Lai Chi Wo to Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong in 2023, and later to the remaining villages of Hing Chun Alliance;
- (c) Enhancement of accessibility: HKUGGp will coordinate with relevant departments to enhance accessibility to geosites in remote locations, in order to support local sustainable development and green tourism ; and
- (d) Promotion of the scientific value of Hong Kong Geopark to students and the general public, in particular the rhyolitic columnar rock formation which has been selected as one of the First 100 International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) Geological Heritage Sites.

6. Advice Sought

6.1 Members are invited to note the progress of HKUGGp and to give their views on the planning and on-going work of HKUGGp as stated above.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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