

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Summary Report of the Marine Parks Committee

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to inform members of the major issues discussed at the Marine Parks Committee (MPC) meeting held on 9 December 2022.

2. Brief Report on the Widespread Coral Bleaching in Hong Kong during Summer 2022

2.1 The AFCD reported on the monitoring results of the widespread coral bleaching in Hong Kong during summer of 2022. To collect field data on bleaching percentage and monitor recovery in bleached coral communities, the Department formed an ad-hoc study team with coral experts from the Hong Kong Baptist University and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and conducted joint surveys at 19 sites. The AFCD presented preliminary findings of the surveys at the meeting. Progressive recovery was observed for most bleached species and at most sites when seawater temperature started to drop. The AFCD remarked that continuous monitoring at major hotspots (e.g. Sharp Island) would be conducted in future.

2.2 Members appreciated the AFCD's quick response to protect the local coral communities. Some members further enquired about the reasons for coral bleaching and recovery, and AFCD said it required analysis of multiple datasets such as human activity records and water temperature. The AFCD has educated the public through social media on how the public could help conserve the coral communities. A member suggested the AFCD formulate coral conservation and restoration strategies for the damaged coral communities in the long run. The AFCD noted the suggestion.

3. Hong Kong Reef Check 2022

3.1 The AFCD had collaborated with the Reef Check Foundation since 2000 to organise the annual reef check in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Reef Check 2022 took

place from June to October, with a total of 108 diving teams and over 800 volunteers participating. The major findings concerning coral cover, species diversity and the condition of corals in the 33 sites surveyed in 2022 were presented in the meeting.

3.2 Members enquired if the indicator species would be reviewed after being used for 20 years, and AFCD replied that the indicator species would be reviewed from time to time. Monitoring of non-native species would also be performed as required. In response to a member's enquiry, the organiser admitted that there had been a shortfall of team scientists in recent years. He explained that the limitation of team size to eight persons under the social-distancing restrictions had led to a surge in the number of teams. The AFCD and Reef Check Foundation would continue to recruit marine biologists to serve as team scientists, and train experienced divers to lead their own teams.

4. Study on Visitors Management for Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park – Progress Report

4.1 The AFCD commissioned The Education University of Hong Kong (the Consultant) to conduct a visitor management study for Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park (HHWMP) to better understand visitors' behaviour, preference and expectations, with a view to formulate practical measures to enhance visitor management. Data collection was carried out from December 2021 to August 2022 in 20 field days. Visitors' activity patterns and perceptions were investigated by quantitative and qualitative approaches, including questionnaires, visitor counting and in-depth interviews. The key findings and recommendations were presented in the meeting.

4.2 During the discussion session, the Consultant and the AFCD answered members' questions concerning the technical aspects of the surveys and the management zones at HHWMP. Members were pleased to note that the surveys reflected generally positive overall experience and revisit intention for visitors to Hoi Ha. To address the conflict between kayaking and snorkelling activities at certain hotspots, the AFCD would work on diverting the kayakers and divers to different routes and promoting a code of practice. On the way forward, the consultant would finalise implementation strategy for the recommended measures and arrange workshops or visitors and stakeholders to promote understanding and facilitate collaboration.

5. Hoi Ha Festival 2023

5.1 The AFCD reported that the second Hoi Ha Festival would tentatively be held between March and April of 2023. It aimed at promoting marine conservation, green living and introducing fishermen culture and tradition to members of the public. The collaborating partners in 2023 would include not only the local community but also the fisheries sector, in view of feedback received from members.

6. Presentation

6.1 This paper is prepared for Members' information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority

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