

## COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

### Proposal to Designate the Sharp Island Marine Park

#### 1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to provide a brief to and seek views from Members on the proposal to designate the Sharp Island Marine Park.

#### 2. Background

2.1 Sharp Island is famous for its unique geology, including the iconic “Pineapple Bun Rocks” and a tidal tombolo, alongside its significant coral communities, which boast high coral coverage and diverse marine life, making it a local marine biodiversity hotspot and key part of the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark. Apart from sightseeing around the tombolo and swimming at Hap Mun Bay, Sharp Island is popular for marine-based recreational activities, such as snorkelling, diving and kayaking.

2.2 Sharp Island has high marine ecological value and is characterised by its extensive coral communities at western (around 50 000 m<sup>2</sup>) and eastern parts (around 30 000 m<sup>2</sup>) of the island, with a coral coverage of more than 70% at certain areas. There are extensive *Pavona* coral beds, which are home to many reef fish, as well as a high population of *Acropora* colonies, which are locally uncommon. Coral diversity is medium to high, and is dominated by different coral growth forms, including massive *Platygyra* and *Porites*, branching *Acropora*, upward-plating *Pavona* and plating to foliaceous *Montipora*, and encrusting to submassive *Dipsastrea* and *Favites*. The diverse coral growth forms contribute to habitat complexity and support a diverse array of marine life. It is home to over 300 reef fish species, including IUCN threatened reef fish species such as longtooth grouper and threadfin porgy, as well as two species of seahorses.

2.3 The recent surge of visitors to Sharp Island and some visitors’ improper marine-based recreational activities pose a threat to the coral ecosystems in the area. Unregulated visitor activities, particularly in shallow waters near the tombolo, may increase physical

damage to coral from trampling, anchoring and contact in any form. Additionally, recreational take and habitat disturbance along the coast may harm the marine ecosystems.

2.4 To address these issues, effective management measures, including the designation of a marine park under the legal framework, are necessary to protect the fragile marine habitats in the area while allowing recreational activities that align with the purpose of the park.

### **3. Preliminary Boundary**

3.1 To protect and manage the island's sensitive marine habitats, it is recommended that the coral areas on the western and eastern sides of Sharp Island, including the tombolo, be designated as a marine park. The unnamed beach next to the tombolo and its adjacent sea area will be incorporated within the proposed marine park boundaries for better management and as a site for promoting responsible marine-based recreational practices. A preliminary boundary of the proposed Sharp Island Marine Park with approximately 63 hectares (Sharp Island west ~ 540 000 m<sup>2</sup>; Sharp Island east ~ 90 000 m<sup>2</sup>) is provided in **Annex 1**.

3.2 The designation of Sharp Island as a marine park will strengthen the protection of coral ecosystems and other marine life by implementing specific prohibitions within the area. The Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476) and its subsidiary legislation empower the Country and Marine Parks Authority (Authority) to prohibit harmful activities such as fishing, hunting, injuring, removing or taking away any animal and plant in or from a marine park, ensuring the conservation of marine life and protection of delicate ecosystems within the area. Furthermore, the power of the Authority to prevent damage to shoreline features, such as beaches, mudflats, cliffs and seabeds as well as control barbecuing and camping in a marine park underscores a comprehensive approach to safeguarding ecological integrity from both marine-based and nearshore land-based activities within the area.

3.3 In addition, the power of the Authority to implement closures or partial closures of marine parks serves as a critical tool for immediate intervention in response to ecological stressors. For instance, if coral populations are having severe health problems in specific areas, the Authority can quickly enact closures to allow these ecosystems to recover free from human interference. The integration of legal protections with the capacity to enact closure as required is expected to safeguard the coral ecosystem at Sharp Island effectively.

#### **4. Proposed Management Plan**

4.1 The goal is to protect sensitive marine ecosystems while allowing sustainable and enjoyable public use. A management post will be established on the island as the primary contact point for visitors, providing safety briefings and water activity guide maps. The guide map and on-site interpretive signage will show managed snorkel zones with recommended routes, kayak launch and parking at the unnamed beach, and no entry or exit zones from the shore. The land patrol team will monitor activities, enforce laws, manage snorkeller flow, and redirect visitors to less crowded locations to reduce congestion and trampling. Short orientation briefings can be provided during peak water activity seasons. Sea patrol vessels will be deployed as needed.

4.2 The proposed Sharp Island Marine Park will implement a zoning management system to designate mooring sites and protect fragile coral communities from anchor damage. Recreational activities, such as diving and snorkelling, as well as other activities such as boating, will still be permitted.

4.3 In 2017, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) commissioned a consultancy study to review the existing fisheries management system in marine parks and explore enhancement measures to conserve marine parks and promote the sustainable development of fisheries more effectively. The study employed an ecosystem model to examine the effects of different levels of fisheries management regulations on the fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters, as well as their potential impacts on marine mammals and coral communities. The findings of the study indicated that fishing activities have a relatively significant impact on coral communities. Therefore, we recommend prohibiting fishing activities within the proposed Sharp Island Marine Park. The proposed Sharp Island Marine Park covers an area of approximately 63 hectares. According to the Port Survey 2021 Report, the fisheries resources within the proposed Sharp Island Marine Park area are at a low level. According to the AFCD fishing activity surveys from 2015 to 2024, there is not much fishing activity within the proposed Sharp Island Marine Park; only a small amount of fishing activities using gill nets, cage traps, and handline fishing are recorded. The proposed Sharp Island Marine Park boundary is expected to have only a slight impact on these fishermen. In the long term, marine parks enhance overall fisheries resources by conserving coral habitats, maintaining biodiversity, and protecting nursery grounds for juvenile fish.

## **5. Way Forward**

5.1 The Government aims to proceed with the designation expeditiously in order to enhance coral conservation and support sustainable recreational use. The public engagement period commenced in May 2026. The stakeholders to be engaged are listed in **Annex 2**.

5.2 We will also seek comments from other relevant government bureaux/departments on the preliminary proposal with a map, then revise the draft map and management plans for the proposed Sharp Island Marine Park, taking into account the views and comments from the public engagement and consult the Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB) before the draft map is gazetted for public inspection. If there is any objection to the draft map, the CMPB will conduct hearings. Afterwards, the Authority will submit the draft map together with the objections to the Chief Executive in Council for consideration with an aim to completing the statutory procedures for the designation by mid-2027.

## **6. Advice Sought**

6.1 Members are invited to offer their views and comments on the proposal to designate the Sharp Island Marine Park.

**Country and Marine Parks Authority**  
**Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department**  
**June 2026**

Preliminary Boundary of the Proposed Sharp Island Marine Park



M\_MP\_2026\_002

### List of Stakeholders to be Consulted

Group	Parties to be Consulted
Marine Operators	Local Vessels Advisory Committee Pilotage Advisory Committee High Speed Craft Consultative Committee Port Operations Committee
District Councils and Rural Committees	Sai Kung District Council Sai Kung Rural Committee Hang Hau Rural Committee
Advisory/Statutory Committees	Marine Parks Committee under the Country and Marine Parks Board Fisheries Subcommittee under the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Fisheries	Major fishermen's organisations
Others	Green groups and academics Eco-tour operators Sai Kung kaito / ferry operators Diving organisations Kayaking organisations Recreational fishing organisations Yacht Clubs