

Country and Marine Parks Board
Summary Report of the Marine Parks Committee

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper informs members of issues discussed at the Marine Parks Committee meeting held on 17 March 2015. Major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below.

2. The Proposed Brothers Marine Park

2.1 Members were briefed by the representatives from the Highways Department (HyD) and its consultants on the views, received during the Stage 1 public consultation, on the proposed location and boundary, management plan and marine ecological enhancement measures of the proposed Brothers Marine Park (BMP) as well as the revised boundary and management plan of the marine park.

2.2 Members generally supported the proposed BMP.

2.3 Members were concerned about the boundary of the core area of the BMP. A member said that fishermen wished that the core area be minimised while another member was of the view that it should be maximised so that fisheries resources at the BMP could be rehabilitated sooner. Members were informed that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), having consolidating views from different parties, proposed to designate the Hong Kong International Airport Approach Area (HKIAAA) No. 4 and No. 6 as the core area in order to maximise the existing restricted area and avoid further affecting the fishing area of the fishermen. In addition, the proposed core area, which covered the important habitat of the China White Dolphins (CWD) around the BMP waters, had comparatively abundant fisheries resources.

2.4 A member enquired about the possible relocation of Sham Shui Kok Anchorages (SSKAs) No. 1 and 2 in the future. Members were informed that the HyD and the consultant had explored with the Marine Department the possible relocation of SSKAs No. 1 and 2 to the western waters of Lantau Island in the long run. However, no suitable site could be identified as the western waters of Lantau

Island was in close proximity to Urmston Road. Also, the SSKAs had been co-existing with CWD for many years and CWD mostly appeared at the waters of Tsz Kan Chau, Sham Shui Kok and the Brothers near the anchoring area. Furthermore, the CWD habitat rating of SSKAs No. 1 and 2 was 32, which was the highest rating among the areas around the Brothers. This showed that the operations at the anchoring area were unlikely to have much significant impact on CWD. In addition, with the setting up of the BMP, vessels anchored within SSKAs No. 1 and 2 were required to comply with the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation, such as no person was allowed to carry out any commercial activities (including mid-stream loading and unloading operations) within a marine park, except for commercial activities which were issued a permit by the AFCD. Therefore, the AFCD could manage the loading and unloading activities and time of operation of vessels in the anchorage area through the issue of permits for regulating commercial activities. Furthermore, activities of the vessels should not cause any pollution to the water quality of the marine park within the BMP waters.

2.5 A member was concerned about the effectiveness of deployment of artificial reefs and restocking of fish fry/juvenile fish. Members were informed that the AFCD, during the consultation process, appreciated that fishermen groups and green groups had some reservations on the effectiveness of the above measures. Therefore, the consultant would further explore suitable design of artificial reefs and ways of restocking fish fry/juvenile fish. The consultant would also consult academics, fishermen groups and green groups on the design of artificial reefs and consult fishermen groups on the species of fish fry/juvenile fish to be restocked.

3. Proposed Revision of Marine Park Fishing Permit System

3.1 Members were briefed on the proposed revision of marine park fishing permit system in terms of its background, current arrangements of succession to and transfer of existing fishing permits and the proposed revision of succession and transfer arrangements.

3.2 Members noted that the AFCD had proposed to relax as appropriate the requirements for the succession to marine park fishing permits for fishermen. In the event that a permit holder was unable to continue fishing on reasonable grounds (e.g. death, poor health or old age), an applicant was eligible to apply for succession to the fishing permit concerned if he/she was an “immediate family member” (that is, the permit holder’s parents, children, spouse or siblings) of the permit holder and would

make a living primarily by fishing in the future. Under the newly proposed system, the applicant did not have to be an authorised person of the fishing permit or to have assisted the permit holder in fishing in the marine park for a long period of time in the past. The AFCD also proposed that restricted transfers of marine park fishing permits for fishermen be allowed, subject to the condition that a permit holder could only transfer his/her permit to authorised persons of other fishing permits for fishermen in the same marine park.

3.3 Members generally supported the proposed revised arrangements.

3.4 A member said that the proposed revision of succession and transfer arrangements could provide an opportunity for fishermen's young children to join the fisheries industry.

3.5 A member proposed that the AFCD should consider further relaxing the requirements concerned so as to allow permit holders to freely transfer their permits to authorised persons of other fishing permits for fishermen of different marine parks in the waters throughout the territory. In addition, subject to a sustainable level of fishing efforts in marine parks, new entrants should be allowed to carry out fishing activities in marine parks under appropriate arrangements. But a member had reservation on further relaxation of the requirements (as it might increase the number of fishing permits) and permitting new entrants to join the sector.

3.6 A member suggested the AFCD review the revised arrangements on a regular basis and consider again the feasibility of further enhancing the arrangements, having regard to actual circumstances and needs.

3.7 Members noted that the revised arrangements as proposed by the AFCD would not increase the number of marine park fishing permits. Regarding the number of fishing permits of newly designated marine parks, it would be referred to the Working Group on Fishing Permits for consideration. In addition, for maintaining the fishing efforts in marine parks and the number of marine park fishing permits, the AFCD would not consider permit holders' application for splitting the fishing permits for entering more than one marine park into several fishing permits. Neither would the AFCD allow fishermen with fishing permits of a specific marine park to apply again for fishing permits of marine parks previously set up as the deadline for application had already expired.

4. Any Other Business

4.1 Members noted the Country and Marine Parks Authority Progress Report for the period from 1 September to 31 December 2014.

4.2 A member shared, under the Proposed Construction of Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park Visitor Centre in Matters Arising from the Last Minutes, case studies of green features of Fraser Island in Australia and the Singapore Botanic Gardens Heritage Museum CDL Green Gallery as well as the guidelines on the design of the proposed Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park Visitor Centre.

5. Presentation

5.1 This paper is prepared for members' information.

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