

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Consultancy Study on Enhancement of the Recreation and Education Potential of Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park – Major Findings and Recommendations

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the major findings and recommendations of the consultancy study on enhancement of the recreation and education potential of Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park (the Study).

2. Background

2.1 The Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park (HHWMP) has been designated since July 1996. The marine park supports rich and diverse marine lives. There are 64 species of hard corals, over 120 species of reef fishes as well as diverse marine life found there. It also provides a great venue for promoting conservation education and outdoor recreational activities, such as scuba diving, snorkelling, underwater photography, kayaking and ecotourism. The opening of the first Marine Park Visitor Centre at Hoi Ha (HHVC) provides a good opportunity for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation department (AFCD) to re-examine and enhance the visitors' services at HHWMP.

2.2 The AFCD commissioned Mott MacDonald Hong Kong Limited (the Consultant) in August 2019 to explore and identify the recreation and education potential of HHWMP and the surrounding environment, with an aim of enhancing the visitors experience in nature appreciation and outdoor recreation, while promoting public participation and understanding of marine conservation at HHWMP and mainstreaming biodiversity and environmental sustainability in the community. Study area is shown in **Figure 1**.

3. Study Approach and Major Findings

3.1 The Study includes the formulation of strategic actions and recommendation of proposals for enhancing outdoor recreational and educational services in HHWMP without compromising its conservation objectives. The key tasks of the Study include:

- (a) Baseline review;
- (b) Formulation of enhancement strategy to integrate visitors' services with the new HHVC;
- (c) Optimising the potential of the existing resources of the HHWMP in enhancing its attractiveness for outdoor education and recreation;
- (d) Strengthening and extending the functions of HHWMP for outdoor education in marine conservation and environmental sustainability;

- (e) Broadening the range of visitor facilities and services provided in HHWMP; and
- (f) Engaging the local community and non-government organisations (NGOs) in conducting the recreational and educational activities.

3.2 The baseline review covered the marine ecological resources in HHWMP and its surrounding areas, their potential values for appreciation, accessibility and sensitivity and international case studies which are relevant to HHWMP. Various stakeholders have been engaged at the initial stage of the Study through questionnaire survey, in-person or online meetings and interviews. Taking into account the views and comments gathered from stakeholders at the initial stage of the Study, thirteen potential longlisting proposals to enhance the recreation and education potential of HHWMP were formulated (see **Annex 1**).

3.3 A stakeholder engagement workshop was held on 23 June 2020, to provide a platform for deliberating the longlisting proposals. The stakeholders group included the Hoi Ha community, local store and kayak operators, green groups, academia, education sector, water sports associations, diving operators, ecotourism operators and members of the Marine Parks Committee (MPC).

3.4 The major views collected from stakeholders were generally supportive of the proposals for enhancing both educational and recreational services. Stakeholders generally agreed that conservation element should be duly considered in developing the enhancement options. The constraints on the existing capacity and possible improvement measures have also been discussed. In particular, visitors of HHWMP should be well managed and suitably dispersed to avoid adverse impact on the marine park. The Wi-fi and mobile network connection services should also be enhanced to cater for emergency situations and facilitate other functions, such as weather update, visitor monitoring and provision of information to visitors. The enhancement of information display and provision of signages indicating the directions and approximate time required for coastal walks will be useful for directing visitors to other scenic spots. Eco-tours and field studies for school groups will be scheduled on weekdays to disperse visitors services required. Eco-awareness and safety of water sports activities in HHWMP should be enhanced.

3.5 On 14 July 2020, AFCD and the Consultant briefed the MPC and discussed the potential longlisting proposals for the Study. Committee expressed support of the Study and suggested further engagement with stakeholders for developing of shortlisted proposals. Other key suggestions included visitors' management, as well as liaison with relevant authorities on potential improvement of transport, telecommunication and waste collection services. Improving accessibility of the footpath and engagement of fishermen to provide cultural eco-tours were also suggested.

3.6 After the MPC meeting, further engagement with key stakeholders were made for planning and assessing the feasibility of various enhancement options. Matters discussed included:

- (a) Potential collaboration in organising events under the shortlisted proposals;
- (b) Potential enhancement of existing trails to improve inter-connectivity with neighbouring tourist attractions;
- (c) Seeking views on studies on visitors management;

- (d) Liaison with relevant departments on potential enhancement of services to meet the needs arising from possible increase in number of visitors due to the enhancements in HHWMP;
- (e) Potential of engaging fishermen in promoting marine-based ecotourism activities relating to fishermen culture.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Taking into consideration the outcome of stakeholder engagement, the Study has formulated the following strategic directions for developing a roadmap for action:

- Community Engagement;
- Education Services;
- Recreation Services; and
- Inter-connectivity.

4.2 The potential longlisting proposals were evaluated against a set of criteria including environmental acceptability, public perceptions, sustainability, financial viability and overall operation. Based on technical assessment and views gathered from key stakeholders, the Consultant has prioritised the potential longlisting proposals and recommended a phased implementation plan consisting of a one-year site trial that will inform the strategy for long-term actions (**Annex 1**). The one-year programme consists of the following four shortlisted proposals:

- Organise Hoi Ha Festival with local community, academia, schools, green groups and volunteers with an aim to promoting public understanding on marine conservation and functions of marine parks;
- Develop a citizen science programme at HHWMP, with formulation of survey protocol and field guides, as well as preliminary on-site trials focusing on fish count and coastal ecological surveys;
- Promote eco-awareness and safety at sea, by organising train-the-trainers seminars/workshops for diving and kayaking instructors and operators, and deploying rescue canoes to patrol HHWMP in peak times and provide assistance when needed; and
- Develop self-guided maps for trails connecting Hoi Ha and neighbouring sites.

4.3 In addition to the above shortlisted proposals, the programme will include auxiliary supporting services, such as additional temporary toilets if required and special transport arrangement during specific events.

4.4 Mobile network coverage was one of the key concerns expressed by Hoi Ha stakeholders. We have liaised with the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) and learnt that Project 2 of the Government's subsidy scheme to extend fibre-based networks to villages in remote areas¹ was awarded to Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited through a tender exercise. Fibre-based network is expected to be extended to Hoi Ha in the fourth quarter of 2021. This enhancement

¹ Please refer to OFCA's website for details:
https://www.ofca.gov.hk/en/industry_focus/telecommunications/subsidy_scheme_to_extend_fibre_based_networks/index.html

would not only improve the broadband services at Hoi Ha village, but also provide the infrastructure necessary for the deployment of other types of telecommunications services, such as 5G mobile and Wi-Fi, benefiting villagers and visitors to Hoi Ha.

4.5 In addition, a mobile network operator had obtained approval for setting up a new radio base station at a public toilet in the vicinity of Hoi Ha village, and the installation was expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2021. The mobile coverage in Hoi Ha will be improved when the new radio base station comes into service.

4.6 The enhancement of communication network around Hoi Ha would provide an opportunity for adopting technology-based services that would be beneficial to visitors and the management of HHWMP, such as installation of electronic people-counting sensors; electronic information stations with QR codes for dissemination of maps and relevant information; as well as installation of video-analytics system for real-time monitoring.

5. Way forward

5.1 The implementation of the one-year site trial is expected to commence in the second half of 2021. It will last for one year, after which it will be reviewed for determining the strategy for long-term implementation.

5.2 In parallel to the one-year site trial, AFCD will explore further opportunities for engaging stakeholders to take forward other enhancement proposals as recommended in the Study, including commissioning a study on visitors management, implementation of education elements and field study in HHWMP to meet the requirements of primary and secondary education, and exploring possible marine-based ecotour routes with themes on marine conservation and fishermen culture.

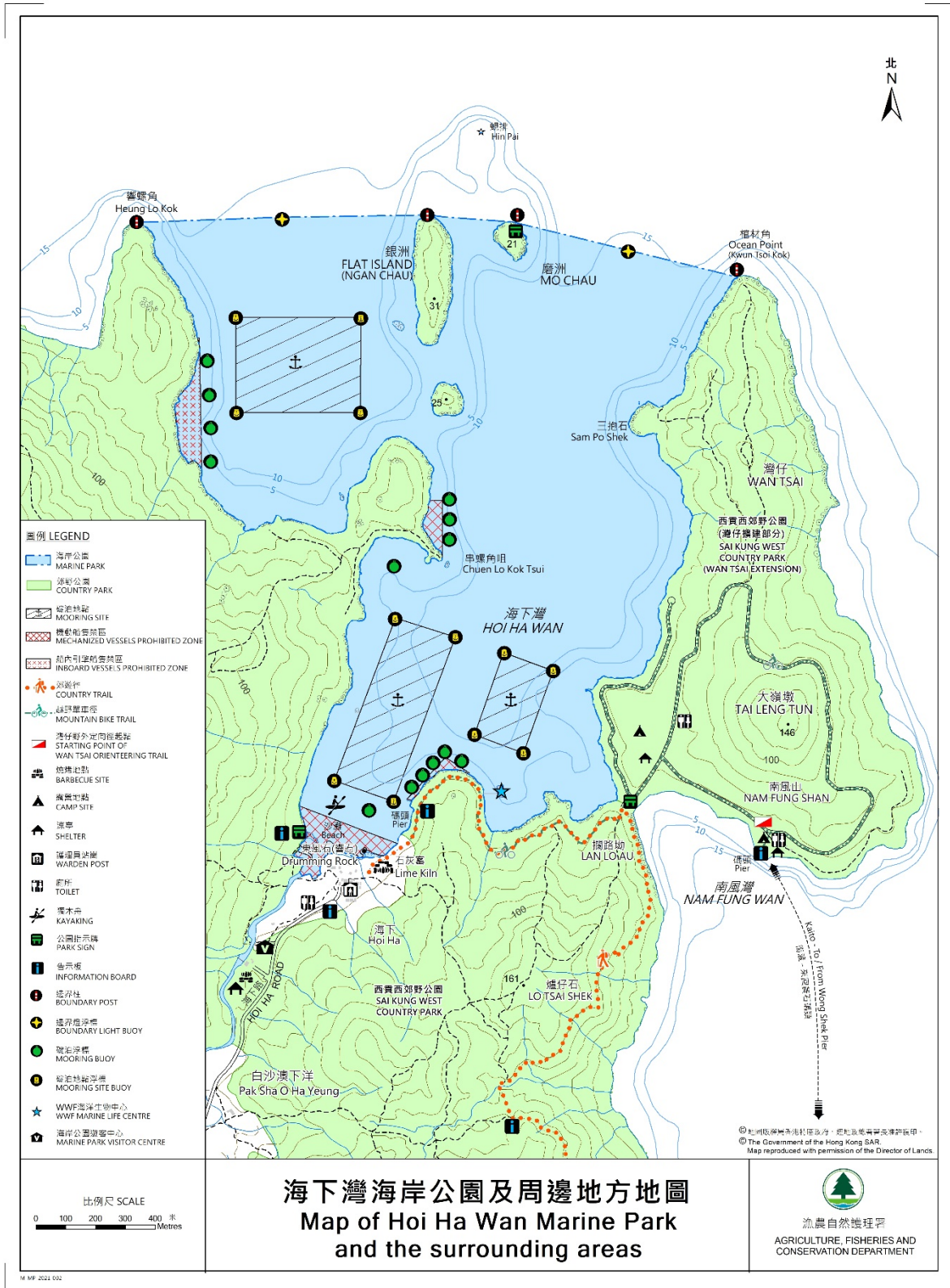
5.3 We will keep the Country and Marine Parks Board and the MPC informed of the outcome of the one-year site trial and way forward for the medium to long term implementation of enhancement proposals within HHWMP.

6. Advice sought

6.1 Members are invited to offer views on the major findings and recommendations of the Study, in particular the implementation of the recommended proposals.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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Figure 1



Annex 1

Proposal*	Strategic Direction	Priority	Implementation
Hoi Ha Festival	Community engagement	High	Short
Citizen science programme	Education services	High	Short to medium
Promotion of sustainable water sports and safety	Recreation services	High	Short to medium
Enhancing Inter-connectivity with Neighboring Sites and Visitors Management	Inter-connectivity	High	Short
Volunteer and community engagement programme	Community engagement	High	Short to medium
Provide interactive displays, games and activities for children	Education services	High	On-going, to be provided in HHVC
Research-based studies for tertiary institutions	Education services	High	On-going
Kayaking Trails	Recreation services	High	Short to medium
Virtual diving experience	Recreation services	High	On-going, to be provided in HHVC
Guided tours (Land-based)	Recreation services	High	On-going, to be provided in HHVC
Guided tours (Marine-based)	Recreation services	Medium	Medium
Set up vantage points for photoshoot	Inter-connectivity	Medium	Medium
Dive Trails	Recreation services	Low	Medium to long
Floating Pontoon for kayakers and snorkelers	Recreation services	Low	Subject to further investigation

* Proposals recommended for the one-year implementation programme are in **bold**.