

Country and Marine Parks Board

Preliminary boundaries and management plans of the Proposed Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands Marine Parks

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to brief and seek members' views on our proposal on the preliminary boundaries and management plans of the proposed Southwest Lantau Marine Park and Soko Islands Marine Park.

2. Background

2.1 The Government announced in 2000 a plan to designate the waters of Southwest Lantau (SWLMP) and Soko Islands (SIMP) as marine parks for the protection of Chinese White Dolphins and the long-term conservation of the local marine environment. To take forward the proposed designation, extensive consultation exercises were conducted between 2000 and 2002 covering a diverse group of stakeholders. However, the parties consulted, in particular fishermen, relevant Rural Committees and District Councils, had reservation over the proposed designation of these two marine parks. To follow up, AFCD had consulted the stakeholders again on the proposal in 2009; however, the relevant fishermen organizations, the Tai O Rural Committee and South Lantau Rural Committee still expressed reservations over the management measures to be implemented for the two proposed marine parks and worried that the designation of new marine parks would further reduce the fishing grounds in Hong Kong waters, and therefore did not support the proposed designations.

2.2 In response to the public concern about protection for Chinese White Dolphins, the Government made an announcement in early September 2014 to re-affirm its commitment to the designation of the SWLMP and SIMP. The Government aims to proceed with the designation expeditiously in order to enhance and support the Chinese White Dolphin Conservation Programme administered by the AFCD. The overall long-term goal of the programme is to enable the Chinese White Dolphins to continue to use waters of Hong Kong as a part of their population range and to enhance the continued survival of this

dolphin population inhabiting the Pearl River Estuary.

2.3 The Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB) was briefed on the proposal to designate the SWLMP and SIMP in its meeting on October 2014 and members in principle supported the proposal. AFCD has also been undertaking a detailed study for the design, public consultation and implementation of SWLMP and SIMP since late 2014. Initial findings from the detailed study have been considered for preparing the proposed preliminary boundaries and management plans of the two marine parks.

3. Preliminary Boundaries and Management Plans

3.1 As a first step to designate the SWLMP and SIMP, the Country and Marine Parks Authority, i.e. the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, obtained the direction of the Chief Executive in Council in April 2002 to prepare draft maps of the two proposed marine parks in accordance with section 7 of the *Marine Parks Ordinance*. The boundaries of the proposed marine parks drawn up at that time are shown in **Figure 1**. The proposed marine parks at Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands cover about 660 and 1,270 hectares of waters respectively.

3.2 A desktop review supplemented with fish and recreational fisher surveys was completed in early 2015 to update the environmental, ecological and fisheries profiles of the SWLMP and SIMP and their vicinity. The up-to-date information confirms that the waters of Southwest Lantau remains as key habitats for Chinese White Dolphins and dolphins are frequently found in the vicinity of SWLMP all seasons. The waters of Soko Islands is a unique location where both the Chinese White Dolphins and Finless Porpoises are regularly sighted.

3.3 The Dolphin Habitat Index methodology that was used in the design of the planned The Brothers Marine Park (BMP) has been adopted to evaluate the importance of west and southwest Lantau waters to Chinese White Dolphin and Finless Porpoise. Dolphin Habitat Index and Porpoise Habitat Index have been prepared with sighting data between 2005 and 2014 (**Figure 2**). A majority of waters of west Lantau is regarded as important habitats for Chinese White Dolphin, while certain areas of Soko Islands are above average Finless Porpoise Habitats.

3.4 Amphioxus (*Branchiostoma belcheri*), a Class II protected species in

Mainland China and an important fishery resource in China, were recorded in Tung Wan of Tai A Chau. In Hong Kong, it is considered as a species of conservation interest with a restricted distribution. In addition, a locally rare coral, false pillow coral (*Pseudosiderastrea tayami*), was also reported in subtidal habitats of Tai A Chau. To-date, this species was only recorded at Tai A Chau and Lamma Island, and globally it is also an uncommon and cryptic species in terms of its abundance.

3.5 Information from AFCD Port Survey 2006 indicates that the estimated value of fisheries production (adult and fish fry) was moderate in southwest Lantau and high in Soko Islands (**Figure 3**), confirming the fisheries importance of these waters. Also, the Southern Lantau waters were identified as spawning and nursery grounds for commercial fisheries resources and this corroborates the importance of Soko Islands as fisheries habitats.

3.6 To follow up on comments from the fishing communities, a recreational fisher survey was conducted in early 2015. Whilst half of the respondents believed recreational fishing in the broad southwest Lantau waters would not be affected by the marine parks designation, 80% of the respondents would hope that the new MPs could allow recreational fishing.

3.7 Overall, initial findings of the detailed study affirm that southwest Lantau and Soko Islands are suitable locations for marine park development. The Dolphin Habitat Index and Porpoise Habitat Index identify opportunities to refine the previously proposed boundaries of SWLMP and SIMP for the conservation and protection of Chinese White Dolphin and Finless Porpoise. A number of existing and planned marine facilities and usages, in particular the Lantau Channel Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) south of Lantau and in Lantau Channel (**Figure 4**), are however present, which must be considered carefully for marine park development. Comments and concerns from the fishing communities and local communities of Tai O and Fan Lau have also been reviewed. Considering up-to-date scientific data and views gathered from relevant stakeholders so far, the proposed preliminary boundaries of SWLMP and SIMP are depicted in **Figure 5**.

3.8 For the SWLMP, the proposed preliminary boundaries encompass the three grids of the critical Chinese White Dolphin habitats as identified by the Dolphin Habitat Index. Sufficient separation distances from the Lantau Channel TSS and marine vessel fairway are maintained. Attempt has been made to address the concerns from local communities by providing a small

stripe of water near the coastline as a corridor for vessel transit and also areas for recreational fishing. Key dolphin habitats have been included where possible taking into account concerns and suggestions from the fishing communities. For SIMP, the proposed preliminary boundaries cover important habitats of amphioxus and false pillow coral and area of high fisheries importance. Sufficient separation distances from the marine TSS are also maintained. The areas of SWLMP and SIMP are maintained at about 660 ha and 1,270 ha respectively (**Figure 6**).

3.9 The two proposed marine parks will be managed and controlled in a similar manner as the existing marine parks in accordance with the *Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation* for conservation, recreation, education and scientific research purposes. Activities such as boating (within the 10 knots vessel speed restriction) and dolphin watching will be allowed in the proposed marine parks. Bona-fide and eligible fishermen will be allowed to continue fishing in the marine parks in a non-destructive manner subject to a permit system, which would be similar to the management control in existing marine parks. For the conservation of habitats of high fisheries importance in the SIMP, a core area is proposed in which fishing will be prohibited. Implementation of the proposed core area is not expected to have a significant impact on fishermen's livelihood since they can continue to operate in other areas, and in the long run, the core area would contribute to the conservation and enhancement of fish stocks that would benefit the fishermen. We will continue to discuss with the fishing communities on the location, extent and implementation of the proposed core area. The preliminary management plans of the two marine parks are illustrated in **Figures 7 and 8**.

4. Current Progress and Way Forward

4.1 Following the consultations with CMPB and relevant government bureaux/ departments on these preliminary boundaries and management plans, we will prepare draft maps and preliminary management plans for launching a fresh round of public engagement in the third quarter of 2015. We will then revise the draft maps and management plans for the two proposed marine parks taking into account the views and comments from the public engagement and consult CMPB again before the draft maps are gazetted for public inspection. If there is any objection to the draft maps, the CMPB would conduct hearings. Afterwards, the Authority would submit the draft maps together with the objections to the Chief Executive in Council for consideration with an aim to completing the statutory procedures for the designation by early 2017.

5. Advice sought

5.1 Members are invited to comment and advise on the proposal set out in this paper.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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Figure 1

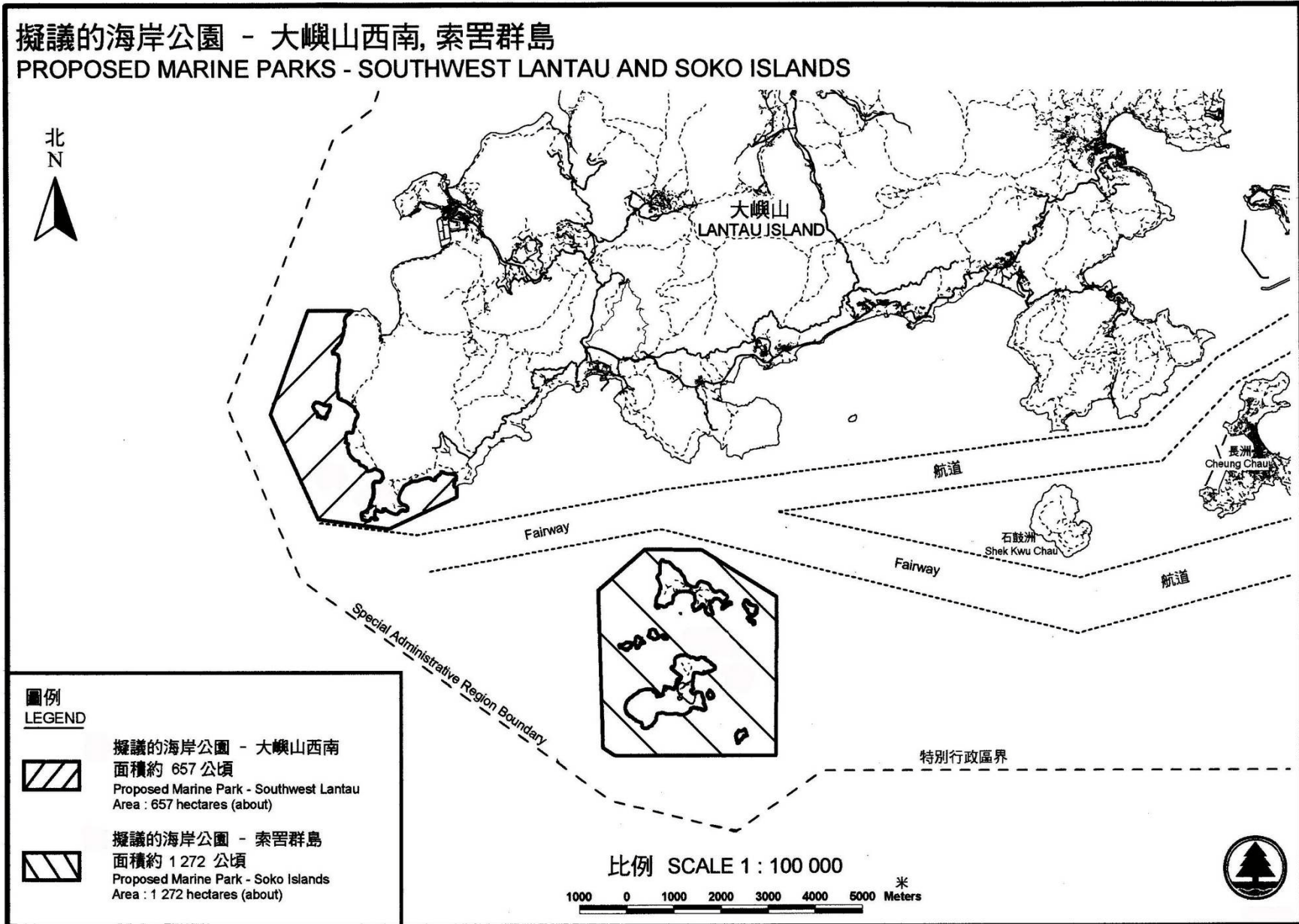
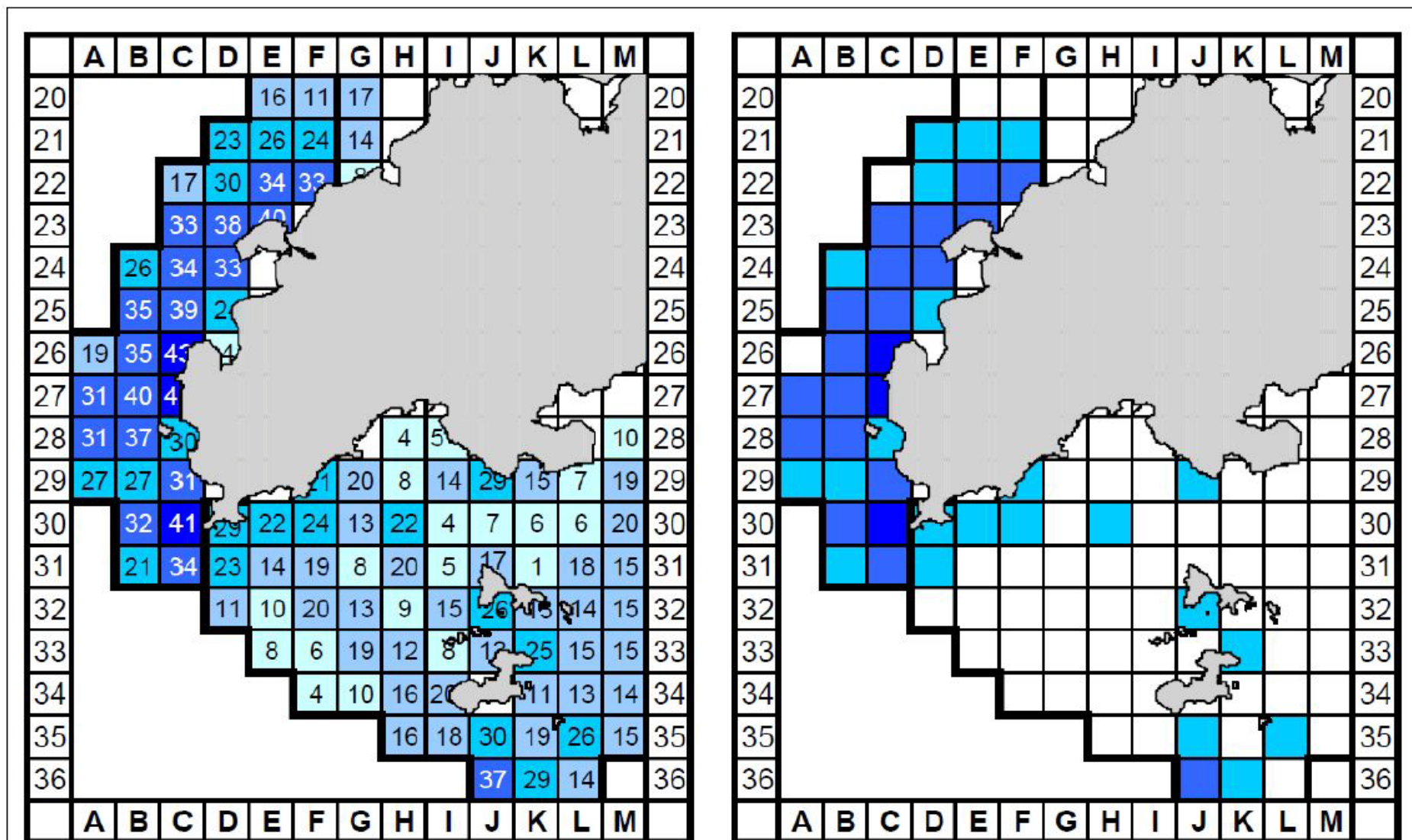


Figure 2



(left) Combined habitat ratings of dolphins and porpoises using quantitative habitat use information collected during 2005-14 (no. within grids represents the sum of scores totaled from 18 selection criteria); and (right) Grids rated as above average, important and critical marine mammal habitats.

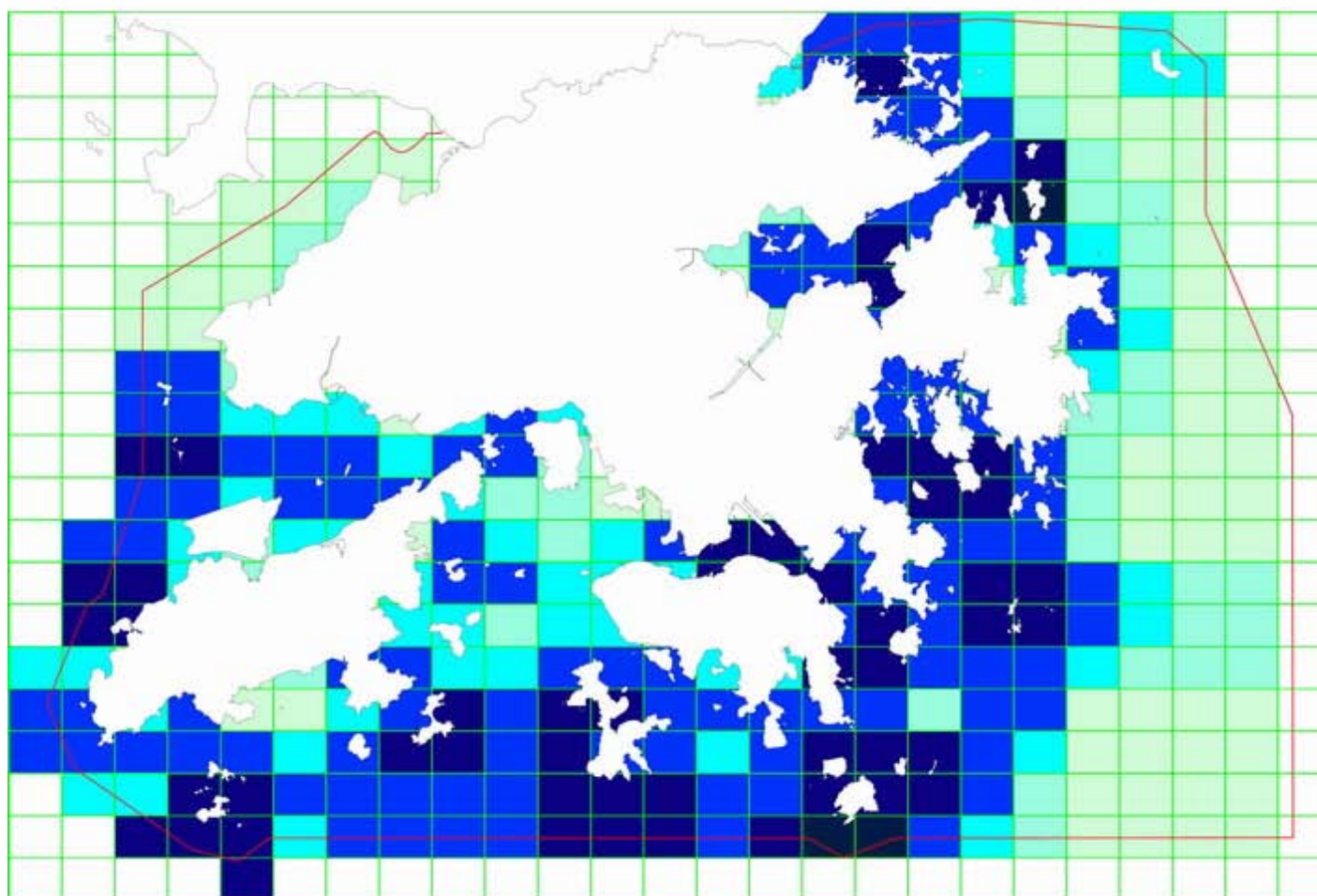
(左) 採用量化的棲息地使用率而得出的合併海豚及江豚棲息地指標(網格的數字代表18個評估標準的總分數); 及(右) 被評為高於平均、重要及要緊的海洋哺乳動物棲息地的網格。

Figure 3

Port Survey 2006
 Distribution of fisheries production (adult fish & fish fry)
 Overall

捕魚作業及生產訪問調查 2006
 漁產分布 (成魚及魚苗)
 總計

捕鱼作业及生产访问调查 2006
 渔产分布 (成鱼及鱼苗)
 总计



Production by vessel type
 漁產與作業形式比例
 渔产与作业形式比例



Vessel type:
 作業形式:
 作业形式:

PAT	Pair Trawler	雙拖	双拖
STT	Stern Trawler	單拖	单拖
SHT	Shrimp Trawler	蝦拖	虾拖
HAT	Hang Trawler	摻摻	掺摻
GN	Gill Netter	刺網	刺网
LL	Long Liner	延繩釣	延绳钓
HL	Hand Liner	手釣	手钓
PS	Purse Seiner	圍網	围网
MSC	Misc. Craft	雜項船	杂项船
P4	Sampan	舢舨	舢舨

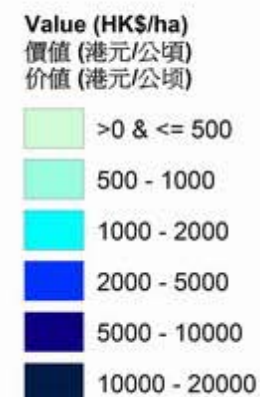


Figure 4

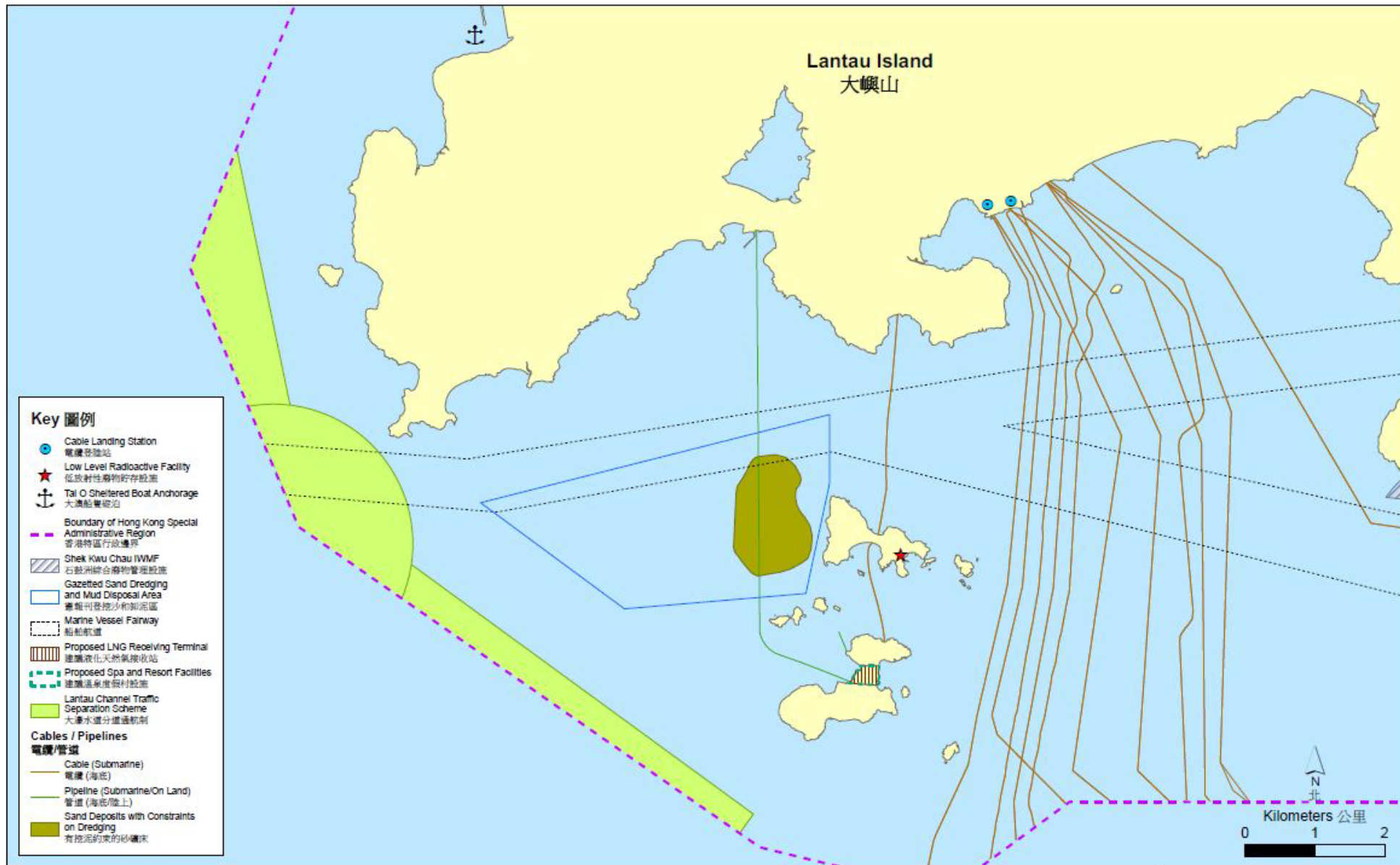


Figure 5

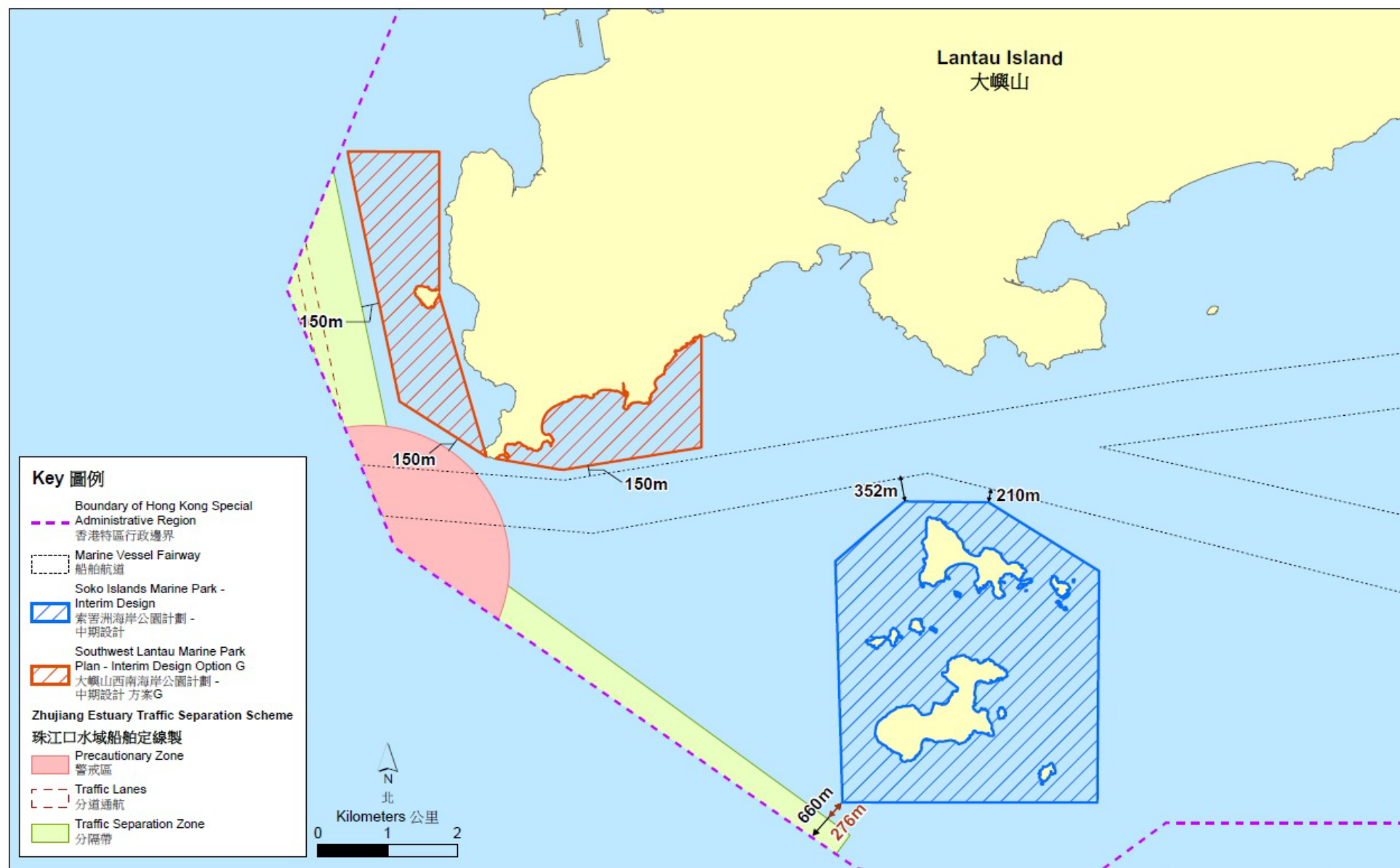
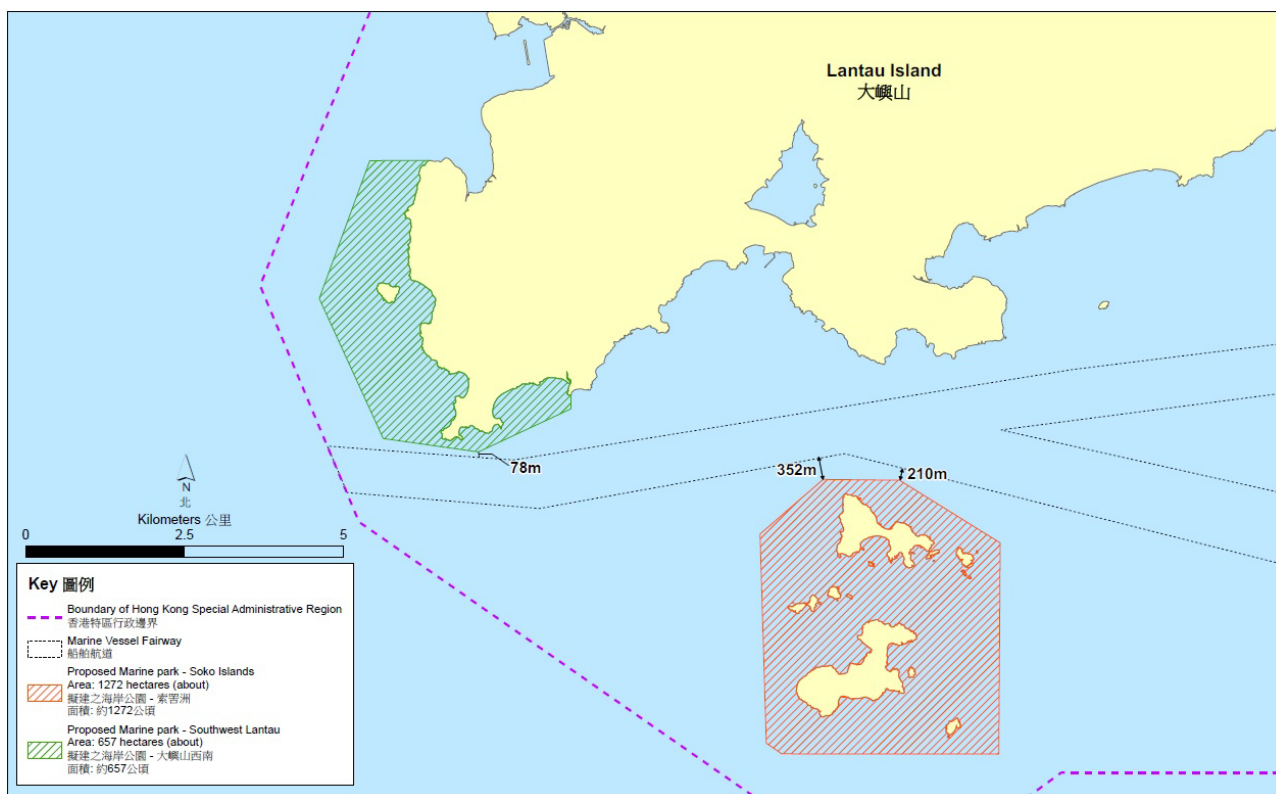


Figure 6

2002



2015

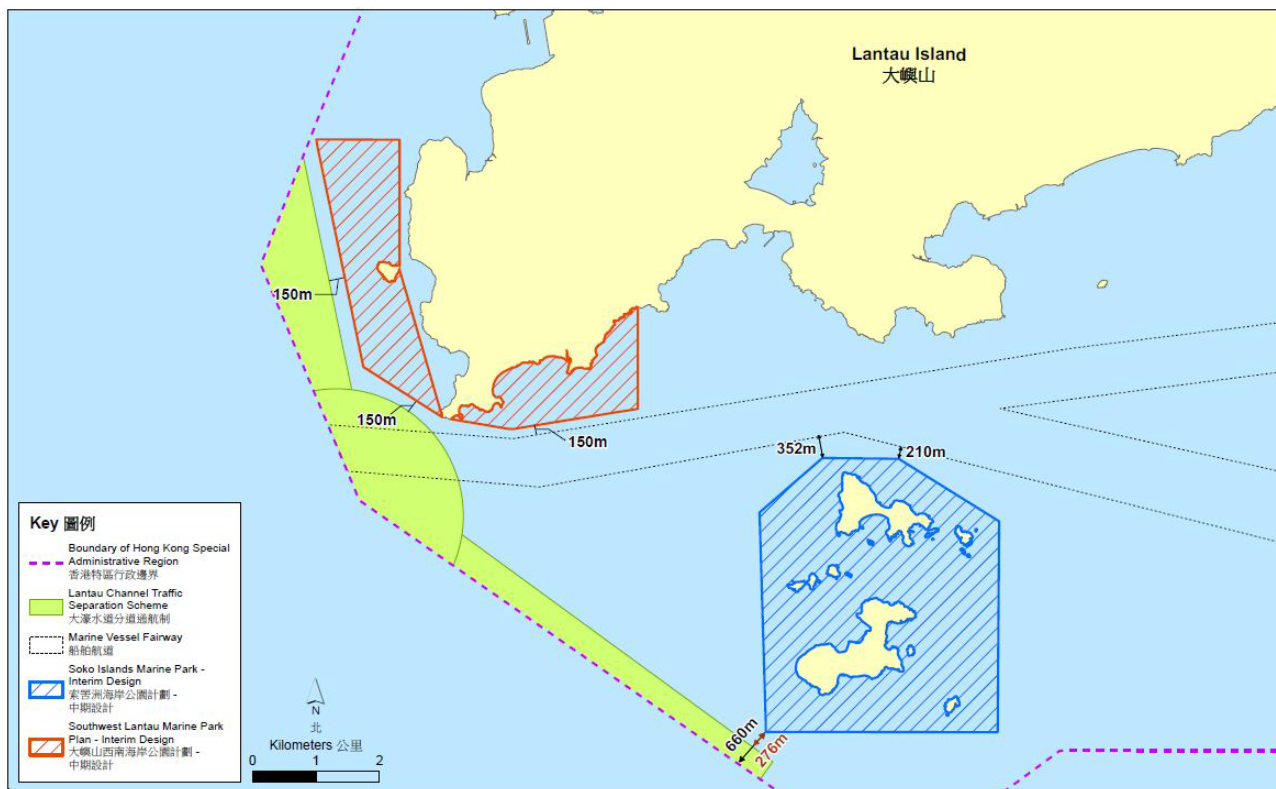
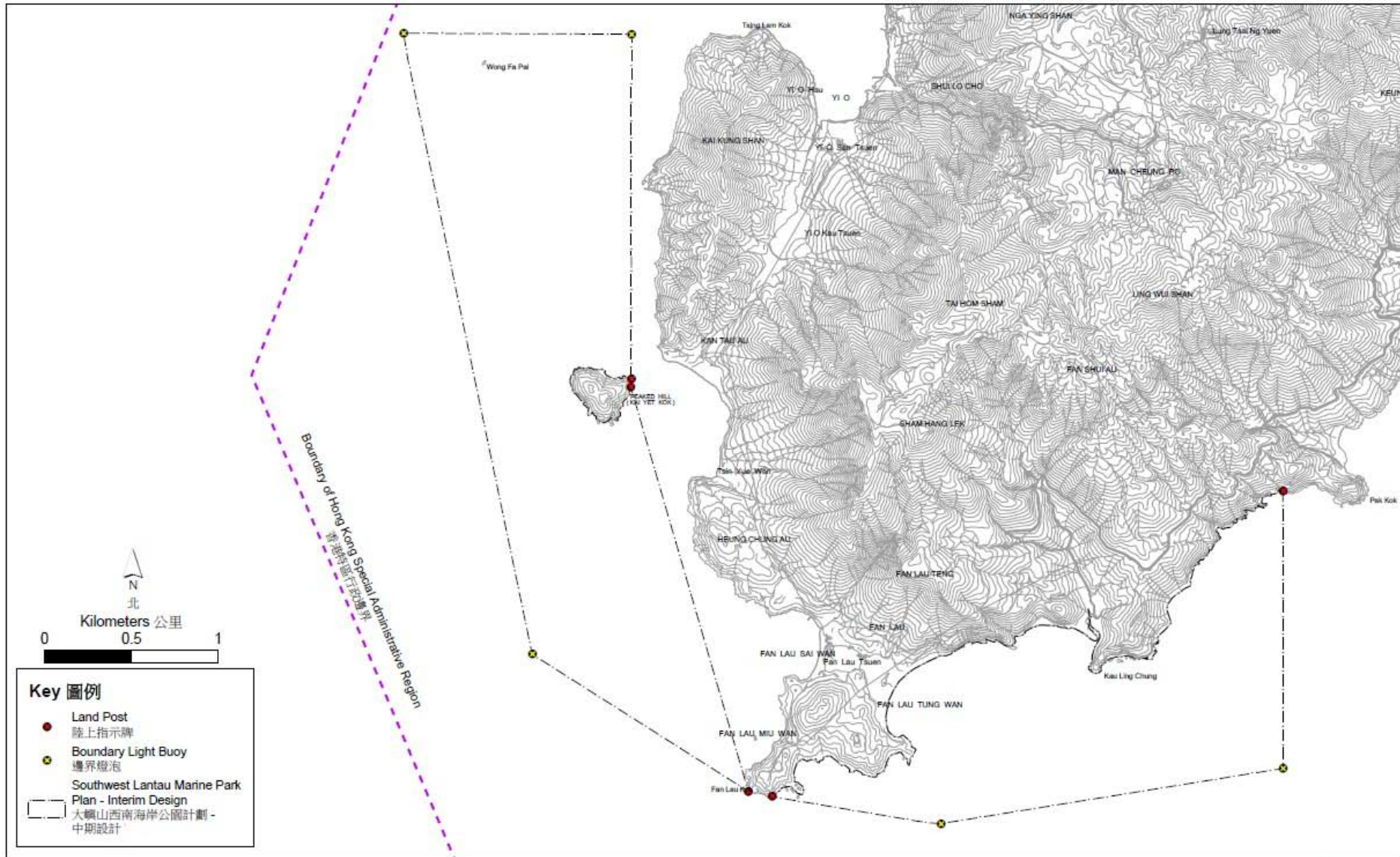


Figure 7



Southwest Lantau Marine Park Plan - Interim Design
大嶼山西南海岸公園計劃 - 中期設計

Environmental
Resources
Management



Figure 8

