

## **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 meeting held on 3 June 2019.

#### **2. Consultancy Study on Coral Bleaching and Bioerosion in Hong Kong– Results and Conclusion**

2.1 The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) commissioned a team of scientists in 2017 to conduct an 18-month consultancy study (the Study) to look at the status of coral bleaching, bioerosion and other deterioration/adverse conditions on coral communities in Hong Kong, with a view to drawing up appropriate management measures and a long-term monitoring plan. Having finished a comprehensive literature review and underwater surveys at 33 sites, the team briefed members on the findings and recommendations of the Study.

2.2 Members were pleased to know that coral bleaching and bioerosion were not severe during the study period. Only 6 sites were detected with coral bleaching and that over 96% of the bleached corals had fully recovered in a short period. They encouraged AFCD to disseminate such positive findings to the public at suitable junctures. Regarding the recommendations of the Study, members agreed that setting up a reporting system would be useful for monitoring the health condition of coral communities through engaging citizen scientists. They also agreed with the recommendation of having more frequent monitoring of major water quality parameters at coral sites, to observe abnormality in the marine environment and determine whether there were correlations between these parameters and coral bleaching and bioerosion. They suggested that apart from water temperature, salinity and dissolved oxygen, nutrient level should also be included in the long-term monitoring. AFCD responded positively to these suggestions.

### **3. Proposed Revision of Fees under the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation, Cap. 476A**

3.1 AFCD sought members' views on the on the proposed revision of fees prescribed in Schedule 4 to the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation, Cap. 476A (the Regulation).

3.2 Members understood that the fee adjustments were calculated by standard government procedures and based on the "full cost recovery" and "user pays" principles, and that no objection to the fee increase was received during the stakeholder consultation. Hence, they supported the proposed fee revisions but the timetable for the fee increase was not fixed.

### **4. Any Other Business**

#### Exhibition of the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park Visitor Centre

4.1 In response to the comments given by members of Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB) in the meeting held on 30 April 2019, AFCD proposed some improvements on the design and operation of the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park Visitor Centre (the VC). In gist, to lower the risk of nuisance caused by wild animals to visitors, it was proposed to consider installing appropriate fence for the VC and reinstate a picnic site instead of a barbecue site as originally planned. In addition, animal-proof rubbish bins would be installed to help prevent disturbance from wild animals. Regarding the operation of the VC, it would open six days a week for walk-in visits. With advance booking, guided group visits could be arranged for schools/registered charitable institutions on weekdays and for members of the public on weekends and public holidays.

4.2 Members had no objection to the above plans. Some members suggested AFCD to design a self-visit route for walk-in visitors, and some advised AFCD to consider a safe location for visitors to alight from minibus to visit the Centre.

#### Progress of the proposed Holistic Fisheries Management Strategy in Marine Parks

4.3 AFCD updated members on the progress of the proposed holistic fisheries management strategy in marine parks (the proposed strategy). Further to the discussion in CMPB meeting on 13 April 2018, AFCD proposed to ban commercial fishing in the three existing marine parks in the eastern waters as well as the Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park in the western waters (hereinafter referred to as “four specified marine parks”) while AFCD would continue the issuance of fishing permits in The Brothers Marine Park and other new marine parks in the western waters. A two-year transitional period would also be allowed for the fishing activities by existing permit holders in the four specified marine parks. To gather the views of the affected permit holders of the fishermen on the above proposed arrangement, 11 consultation forums were held in May 2019.

4.4 Members generally supported the proposed strategy and hoped that it could help improve the marine resources in the entire Hong Kong waters in the long run. To further protect the marine environment, the Chairman advised AFCD to consider restricting the use of certain fishing gears which are considered to be detrimental to marine ecology and fisheries resources by imposing condition(s) on the new commercial fishing permits.

## **5. Advice sought**

5.1 This paper is prepared for members’ information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority  
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