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For discussion on 4 March 2019

Progress of Implementation of Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the latest progress of implementation of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) 2016-2021.

PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

2. Since the launch of the BSAP on 21 December 2016, all relevant Government bureaux and departments (B/Ds) and other external stakeholders have been taking forward the implementation of initiatives under their respective purviews. The progress was generally in line with the timeframes set out in the BSAP. Highlights of major achievements made so far under the four key action areas are set out in the ensuing paragraphs. Detailed descriptions of the actions, expected deliverables and progress to date are provided at **Annex**.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Area 1 – Enhancing conservation measures

3. Many of the studies and enhancement projects commissioned or managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) for maintaining and enhancing the management of protected areas, including country parks, marine parks, Hong Kong Wetland Park and Mai Po Nature Reserve, are progressing on track.

4. The Environmental Protection Department set up the Countryside Conservation Office in end July 2018, with a view to promoting sustainable development of remote countryside. The Government has earmarked \$1 billion to support relevant conservation and revitalisation efforts, as well as to implement minor improvement works in remote countryside. The Government has also been supporting education and community projects via funding allocation from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF).

5. AFCD has standardised the mechanism for formulating Species Action Plans and published relevant technical guidelines to enhance protection of priority species. In view of the threat imposed by illegal harvesting, AFCD has prepared the Incense Tree Species Action Plan to provide a pragmatic framework of conservation measures for implementation among various parties, thereby achieving long-term sustainability of local Incense Tree populations.

6. The Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 (Amendment Ordinance) came into effect in May 2018, to effect a three-step plan to phase out local ivory trade. Steps 1 and 2 of the three-step plan, as well as the introduction of indictable offence and an increase of maximum penalties on smuggling and illegal trade of endangered species under the Amendment Ordinance, have already commenced.

Area 2 – Mainstreaming biodiversity

7. The Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) of the Development Bureau has formulated a five-pronged Urban Forestry Management Strategy, which has been adopted by the Government for managing the urban forest in Hong Kong from a holistic approach. In the meantime, the GLTMS has also completed a Street Ecology Study and released the Street Tree Selection Guide for improving the resilience of Hong Kong's urban forest.

8. Several river revitalisation or river park projects adopting the concept of “blue-green infrastructure” are in progress. The Drainage Services Department (DSD) has been revitalising urban nullahs into green river corridors. The reconstruction and rehabilitation of Kai Tak nullah is underway and the revitalisation of Tsui Ping River has reached the detailed design stage. The Civil Engineering and Development Department, in consultation with DSD, has completed the preliminary design of Tung Chung River Park and is now carrying out the detailed design of the Park.

9. The Government has updated the biodiversity parameters for incorporation into the Computer-aided Sustainability Evaluation Tool (CASET) since December 2018 with a view to better supporting biodiversity considerations in the formulation process of major policies and plans of the Government. The CASET is part of the sustainability assessment system, through which Government B/Ds have to assess the potential environmental, social and economic impact of their new strategic initiatives or major programmes at the project planning stage.

10. AFCD has completed studies on local fisheries resources to assess the effectiveness of existing fisheries management measures, including the trawling ban introduced in end 2012, in the recovery of fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters. AFCD has also commissioned a consultancy study to identify suitable quality agricultural land for possible designation of Agricultural Priority Areas, with a view to contributing to the modernisation and sustainable development of local agriculture.

Area 3 – Improving our knowledge

11. AFCD has reviewed the survey programme for major groups of terrestrial species and is updating the species checklists. Meanwhile, baseline monitoring surveys for various priority marine habitats and species are underway.

12. Experts within and outside the Government have been appointed to contribute to the compilation of a list of threatened species for Hong Kong. AFCD has developed the framework for assessment and arranged training for relevant personnel. Assessment of the identified priority groups is being prepared.

13. Following the endorsement of funding approach for supporting biodiversity research in September 2017¹, biodiversity conservation continues to be one of the priority research themes under the funding scheme of Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Projects under the ECF. AFCD has also supported a number of relevant research project applications for other funding sources on a meritorious basis.

¹ The approach to coordinate funding for supporting biodiversity research, through mobilising relevant existing funding sources, such as the ECF, the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund and the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund, was endorsed by the Nature Conservation Subcommittee under the Advisory Council on the Environment in September 2017.

Area 4 – Promoting community involvement

14. The fourth annual Hong Kong Biodiversity Festival was held from October to December 2018. The three-month Festival has engaged 50 partners, including Government B/Ds, NGOs, tertiary institutions as well as public and private organisations, and offered over 120 activities in total. Under the theme “City within Nature”, partners have collaborated to showcase Governmental facilities that are sustainably designed or operated and have successfully contributed to the conservation of local biodiversity. Meanwhile, a series of publicity and social media campaigns have been rolled out to disseminate the message to the general public.

15. The Sustainable Development Fund and ECF’s Environmental Education and Community Action Projects have set “sustainable consumption of biological resources” as a priority area or special theme to encourage the organisation of relevant projects and activities. Six projects have been approved so far. It was also included as one of the assessment aspects of the Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence applicable to several sectors.

16. AFCD has enhanced the resources for early childhood education on nature conservation by developing a series of learning and teaching packages for kindergarten students’ activity-based learning at Hong Kong Wetland Park and Lions Nature Education Centre.

17. Out of the several educational resource centres and exhibition venues being revamped or set up by the Government and/or other organisations under the BSAP, the Learning Centre on Biological Resources and Sustainable Living (the Learning Centre) was opened in November 2018. The Learning Centre is set up under the Institute of Bioresource and Agriculture of Hong Kong Baptist University, with the support of several organisations including AFCD.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON BSAP

18. The Inter-departmental Working Group on BSAP (IWGB), chaired by the Secretary for the Environment, has met regularly since 2017 to discuss the progress of implementation, and will continue to meet regularly to facilitate timely monitoring of the implementation programme. The views and feedback received from the Advisory Council on the Environment and its Nature Conservation Subcommittee related to BSAP implementation have also been conveyed to the IWGB.

ADVICE SOUGHT

19. Members are invited to note and comment on the progress of implementation of the BSAP.

Environment Bureau

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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