

To The Hon. Mr Lee Ka-chiu, HKSAR Chief Executive

From: Hong Kong Countryside Foundation

Date: 15 September 2024

Inputs for the Policy Address:

Building Sustainable City and Quality Living Space

1. The Hong Kong Countryside Foundation is highly supportive of the vision of the **Northern Metropolis Development Strategy** (“NMDS”) as announced and spelt out in 2021, to create, for the first time in Hong Kong, a unique metropolitan landscape aiming for the co-existence of Development and Conservation. HKCF is pleased to note that that vision is fully in line with the principle of building an ecological civilization, which is enshrined in the National Constitution. However, we are disturbed to see certain government actions in subsequent years, which apparently deviated from that vision as well as from policies and plans publicly announced in the 2021 NMDS.
2. We advocate that the Government adhere to the **2021 NMDS** and those Key Action Items that would lead to the creation of more environmental capacity, cross-boundary ecological corridors and resumption of land for conservation.
3. We applaud the signing of the Cooperative Framework Agreement for the Enhancement of Wutong Mountain (Shenzhen) - Robin's Nest (Hong Kong) Ecological Corridor on 15 August 2024 and look forward to the active contributions made by the Hong Kong side towards the implementation of this Agreement.
4. Specific recommendations are:
 - a. **Provide ample resources to the Agriculture Fisheries and Conservation Department, to support its work in establishing and strengthening the Wutong Mountain/ Robin's Nest Ecological Corridor**, in collaboration with the Shenzhen authorities.
 - b. **Study the further expansion of the Robin's Nest Country Park**, potentially up to 1120 hectares, 95% of which is government land, in order to support and sustain the optimal functioning of the Corridor.
 - c. Proceed swiftly to **resume the land designated for the named wetland conservation parks (“WCP”)** as set out in the 2021 NMDC.

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- d. In parallel, plan and establish an **Hong Kong Wetland Trust with sustainable financial resources**, to assure the proper long-term professional management of all the WCP's, drawing on the experience gained by WWF at Mai Po.
 - e. **Take urgent actions to protect fishponds designated for inclusion in the Sam Po Shue wetland conservation park**, since this habitat accommodates more than 1% of the global population of the endangered species viz. Black-faced Spoonbill, which qualifies it as a **Ramsar wetland site of international importance**.
 - f. Work towards the establishment of a **Greater Bay Area National Wetland Reserve** that encompasses all wetland habitats in the Deep Bay on both sides of the border, in collaboration with the Shenzhen authorities and in alignment with the 14th Five-year Plan (2021-2025).
 - g. Accord further protection to both the proposed Greater Bay Area National Wetland Reserve and the Wutong Mountain/ Robin's Nest/ Pat Sin Leng Ecological Corridor by adopting **the Ecological Red Line concept under the national Ecological Civilisation framework**.
 - h. The **delineation and zoning of development areas in the Northern Metropolis** must avoid disrupting the Comprehensive Ecological Habitat Network and the Urban-Rural Greenway specified in the 2021 NMDC.
 - i. Specifically, **remove wetlands from the San Tin Technopolis** since it would be a serious contravention of the national priority to expand the area of protected wetlands under the 14th Five-year Plan (2021-2025) which makes specific reference to wetlands in the Greater Bay Area.
 - j. Active consider **re-provisioning the Innovation & Technology Park of the San Tin Technopolis to Tit Hang and Tse Koo Hang**, south-east of the Loop and where more than 200 hectares of government land is immediately available.
 - k. Additional existing, good quality agricultural land should be suitably identified, zoned as **Agricultural Priority Areas** and included in the Comprehensive Ecological Habitat Network.
 - l. **The Fanling Golf Course** should be retained in its entirety for eventual conversion into a multi-purpose **Central Park of the Northern Metropolis**, enabling international standard golf, recreation and conservation of its natural and cultural landscape of great value,

thereby fulfilling Planning Principle 3 of the NMDS by providing a ready-made "High-Quality Outdoor Eco-recreation/tourism Outlet". Specifically, parts of the Central Park should be designated as **Conservation Areas** for species of key concern

- m. **Urgently implement a comprehensive conservation plan with assured financial resources for the Sha Lo Tung Valley**, to conserve its high natural and heritage values especially in view of its strategic location at the heart of Pat Sin Leng Country Park.
- n. **Positively avoid excessive development in South Lantau**, such as those projects proposed under the "South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor", since the established policy is to conserve nature here to balance "development" elsewhere on and around Lantau (see HKCF submission dated 26 July 2024).
- o. **Large-scale land resumption** should be undertaken to solve the land supply problem while planning should proceed expeditiously to enable timely re-provisioning of land for brownfield operators in the appropriate trades.
- p. Since Biodiversity bears directly on the value of the natural and cultural assets of Hong Kong, HKCF supports the government's sustained effort in reviewing and strengthening the **Biodiversity Action and Strategic Plan**, and recommends the expansion of targets, indicators and public participation.

By Order of the Board



Lam Chiu Ying
Chairman

cc Mr Chan Kwok Ki, Chief Secretary for Administration
Mr Chan Mo Po, Financial Secretary
Mr Cheuk Wing Hing, Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration
Mr Wong Wai Lun, Deputy Financial Secretary
Ms Linn Hon Ho, Secretary for Development
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