

Advisory Committee on Countryside Conservation approves new Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme projects

The Secretariat of the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme (CCFS) announced today (November 3) that the Advisory Committee on Countryside Conservation (ACCC) has approved new CCFS projects involving a total grant of around \$27 million.

The newly approved projects are the Nature Conservation Management Agreement (MA) project in Ho Sheung Heung (HSH) and the Proactive Conservation (PC) project in Sha Lo Tung (SLT). The MA project aims at sustaining the conservation outcome accumulated, and continuing the enhanced collaboration with local farmers in agricultural activities, in order to maintain the freshwater wetland of HSH as a favourable ecological habitat for the stopover and perching of birds, amphibians and freshwater fishes. The PC project, initiated by the Countryside Conservation Office (CCO) in collaboration with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, targets to conserve the biodiversity of SLT through proactive conservation work and pave the way for the implementation of the long-term conservation strategy of SLT. The PC project will be conducted by a local non-profit-making organisation (NPO) to be engaged through the established procurement and tendering procedures of the Government. Tendering details will be announced separately.

To enhance the transparency of the CCFS and the outcome of the conservation projects, the ACCC has also agreed to refine the guide to the application of the CCFS to clearly stipulate the responsibilities and funding limit of the project organisation. The amendments cover, amongst others, the requirement on dissemination of project information and the outcome for public sharing, the accumulated funding limit for any single project organisation at the same time and the introduction of an e-form to facilitate application.

To help revitalise countryside villages and support eco-tourism, the review of the refinement of the licensing regime for guesthouses and food businesses in the countryside, conducted by the Government's interdepartmental task force, is close to completion. The CCO will summarise the facilitation measures and prepare the relevant licensing requirements and procedural guidelines with a view to facilitating licensing applications for countryside areas. The guidelines are expected to be completed and promulgated in 2023/24.

So far, a total of 45 projects involving a total amount of around \$236 million have been approved under the eight rounds of CCFS applications conducted, supporting local NPOs' work in promoting conservation and revitalisation in different aspects, such as natural environment/habitats,

non-graded built heritage, cultural and historic assets. All CCFS applications are examined and considered by the ACCC, which is chaired by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology. Details of the approved projects are available on the CCFS webpage (www.eeb.gov.hk/en/conservation/ccfs/ccfs_approved_projects.html).