

Advisory Council on the Environment's statement on Bryde's whale incident

The following press release is issued on behalf of the Advisory Council on the Environment:

The Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) is saddened by the recent discovery of the carcass of a young Bryde's whale in the waters near Port Shelter in Sai Kung.

The ACE noted that the Secretary for the Environment and Ecology and the relevant departments have spoken and issued press releases on the subject matter. The ACE is also aware of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)'s and the relevant experts' efforts in monitoring and striving to tackle the issue through stepping up patrols, publicity, public education, etc, since the report of the sighting of the Bryde's whale. There were also attempts to explore ways to help the whale leave the shallow waters of Hong Kong in consultation with the experts. The ACE is in support of the four tasks announced by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology aiming to prevent recurrence of similar events in the future, which included strengthening public education, formulating a set of protocols to handle similar situations, learning from the experience of other places and reviewing and modifying the law. While understanding that law amendments will take time, the ACE hopes that the relevant departments will endeavour to implement some short-term solutions and feasible measures for handling different species that may enter the Hong Kong waters.

The ACE spokesman said, "Some people were excited about the sighting of the Bryde's whale and might have sailed the sea to watch the whale out of curiosity, posing pressure and threats to the young Bryde's whale. This unfortunate incident has taught us a valuable lesson with which the general public would resonate, that is, understanding human beings should abide by the laws of nature. After this incident, we should strengthen our understanding and conservation of the nature, learn to be members who respect and live harmoniously with the nature, and give all fauna and flora species the space they need to grow in a natural way based on the principles of understanding and mutual respect. Apart from the above, we should also enhance our learning through different channels, such as by participating in the Orienteering into the Country Parks, public guided tours and public workshops organised by the AFCD, or browsing its Hong Kong Biodiversity Online; understand more about and cherish the natural treasures of Hong Kong; and strengthen the protection and conservation of biodiversity."