

EIA report for San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node approved with conditions (with video)

Regarding the application submitted by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO), the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) today (May 17) approved the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report for San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node (ST/LMC DN) with conditions.

The CEDD has exhibited the EIA report for public inspection from February 2 to March 2, 2024, in accordance with the EIAO. During the public inspection period, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) received a total of 50 public comments. The EIA Subcommittee of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) discussed in detail the EIA report and public comments at its meeting on March 18, 2024. Since the commencement of the public inspection of the EIA report, the CEDD has been liaising with green groups closely. The EPD has also participated in four meetings held by the CEDD with green groups, and gathered views from the green groups on the EIA report and proposals on enhancing the mitigation measures and compensation. Subsequently, the ACE endorsed unanimously the EIA report with conditions and recommendations at its meeting on April 22, 2024.

At a press conference today, the Director of Environmental Protection, Dr Samuel Chui, said, "The EPD has studied and reviewed in detail the EIA report for ST/LMC DN, and agreed with the proposed mitigation of the ecological and fisheries impacts arising from the development through avoiding impacts on the Ramsar Site, Mai Po Lung Village Egrettry and the Mai Po Village Egrettry; as well as creation of environmental capacity through reprofiling pond banks, pond drain-down, and when necessary, trash-fish stocking, with a view to achieving no-net-loss in ecological function and capacity of the wetlands concerned. In addition, other mitigation measures proposed in the EIA report, such as preservation of a 300-metre-wide east-west birds' flight corridor near the Lok Ma Chau Boundary Control Point and a 70m-wide major bird flight path of the Mai Po Lung Village Egrettry, establishment of a 35m-wide non-building area in the form of an eco-interface along the Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park (SPS WCP), adoption of stepped building height descending towards the SPS WCP, and establishment of wildlife corridors for facilitating and supporting movement of Eurasian otters across Lok Ma Chau, Sam Po Shue and the Inner Deep Bay area, can achieve effective mitigation of the ecological impacts arising from the ST/LMC DN on egrettries, birds' flight corridors and paths, and Eurasian otters, etc. The EPD has also thoroughly and carefully considered the requirements of the EIA Study Brief (SB) and the Technical Memorandum on Environmental Impact Assessment Process (TM), comments on the environment raised by the public during the public inspection period of the EIA report, suggestions and data from green groups in respect of the EIA report,

supplementary information submitted by the CEDD upon request of the EIA Subcommittee of the ACE, as well as conditions and recommendations raised by the ACE, and decided to approve the EIA report with conditions."

"The purposes of ecological surveys are to fill in the information gaps in existing available data, and to confirm and evaluate the ecological value of the habitats and species thereon. A large number of continuous ecological surveys data within the study area are already available. These include data collected by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society since January 2012 under a nature conservation agreement funded by the Environment and Conservation Fund; as well as a number of environmental impact assessment studies and environmental monitoring and audit reports. The ecological impact assessment in the EIA report for ST/LMC DN has considered all relevant literature review, research information/data and ecological survey records. Hence, the EIA study is scientific, professional and comprehensive," Dr Chui added.

The approval conditions mainly include requiring the CEDD (i) to submit various detailed designs and implementation plans (such as the Habitat Creation and Management Plan, the Detailed Design Plan for Establishment of Wildlife Corridors, the Implementation Plan for Wetland Enhancement Measures at Mai Po, the Interim Wetland Enhancement Plan, the Bird-friendly Design Guideline, etc) to implement the recommended ecological mitigation/enhancement measures; (ii) not to commence pond-filling works of the ST/LMC DN prior to commencement of construction of the ecologically enhanced fish ponds at the SPS WCP; and (iii) to set up an environmental committee comprising representatives of relevant government departments as well as green groups and academics for providing advice on the preparation of various implementation plans and monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of the proposed ecological mitigation/enhancement measures of the Project set out in the EIA report and the approved implementation plans.

In addition, the CEDD shall report regularly to the ACE on the progress of the implementation of various plans, the environmental monitoring results and effectiveness of ecological mitigation/enhancement measures, and set up a working group with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to co-ordinate the progress of the ST/LMC DN and the implementation of the SPS WCP. The EPD will closely liaise with relevant government departments for following up on the abovementioned approval conditions.

Dr Chui stressed that the EIA process in Hong Kong is a professional, objective and open system. The TM and EIA SB have laid down objective and clear principles, procedures, guidelines, requirements and criteria for various EIA matters. The statutory EIA process aims at assessing the environmental impacts of the project, and recommending appropriate mitigation measures. The project proponent had to comply with relevant legislation and procedural requirements before the project could proceed.

The approved EIA report and the approval conditions have been uploaded to the EPD's EIAO website (www.epd.gov.hk/eia/). Members of the public may also visit the EIAO Register Office at 27th floor, Southorn Centre, Wan Chai, to inspect these documents.