

# LCQ15: Proposed Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

In January this year, the Government briefed the Subcommittee on Matters relating to the Development of the Northern Metropolis of this Council on the preliminary recommendations of the Strategic Feasibility Study on the Development of Wetland Conservation Parks System under the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy (the Feasibility Study). The Feasibility Study recommended that the area of the proposed Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park (the Nature Park) be incorporated into that of the proposed Hoo Hok Wai Wetland Conservation Park for planning and management. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the official definition of "wetland conservation park" and "nature park"; the respective laws governing the establishment of these two types of parks and the development within their areas;

(2) of the justifications for establishing the Nature Park according to the Feasibility Study, and its ecological conservation value;

(3) whether the land on which the Nature Park will be situated is wholly owned by the Government; if not, of the composition of land ownership, and whether land resumption is involved in the establishment of the Nature Park;

(4) as the land on which the Nature Park will be situated not only adjoins a piece of land at Sandy Ridge that will be used for innovation and technology and related uses, but also lies within the Boundary Commerce and Industry Zone in the Northern Metropolis, whether the Government has, in conducting the Feasibility Study, examined the suitability of the site for the Nature Park in conjunction with the Development Bureau and the Northern Metropolis Co-ordination Office; and

(5) whether it has formulated a mechanism to deal with conflicts arising from the planning and development of the Nature Park and the Boundary Commerce and Industry Zone?

Reply:

President,

"The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address" proposed to implement a "New Proactive Conservation Policy" to gradually resume private wetland and fish

ponds with ecological value and develop a Wetland Conservation Parks (WCPs) System, with a view to increasing the environmental capacity for the development of the Northern Metropolis. The proposal on the WCPs system originated in the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy (the Strategy) released in 2021, which proposed that the WCPs System would comprise existing conservation areas and parks proposed to be established, including the proposed Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park, Nam Sang Wai Wetland Conservation Park, Hoo Hok Wai Wetland Conservation Park, Hong Kong Wetland Park Expansion Area and Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is currently conducting a Strategic Feasibility Study (Feasibility Study) on the directional proposals on the WCPs system as set out in the Strategy, in order to confirm the feasibility of the proposal, and formulate recommendations on the location/boundary, functions, positioning and management mode, etc., of each of the proposed parks.

Having consulted the Development Bureau, Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, the AFCD and Environmental Protection Department, our replies to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming are as follows:

(1) The names and concept of "Wetland Conservation Park" and "Nature Park" under the WCPs System originated in the Strategy. While the two have no statutory definition, their main objectives are to conserve ecology and foster harmonious co-existence between humans and nature, only that different names are adopted due to different locations. There is currently no specific legislation governing the designation/establishment, jurisdiction and management of Nature Parks. However, the development process of the parks, including planning and construction, is regulated by relevant legislations, such as the Town Planning Ordinance (Chapter 131), Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Chapter 499), Noise Control Ordinance (Chapter 400), Air Pollution Control Ordinance (Chapter 311) and Waste Disposal Ordinance (Chapter 354), etc. We will further explore the positioning, functions and management of the proposed Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park at a later stage.

(2) The proposed Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park is part of the proposed WCPs System, which aims to achieve conservation, eco-education, eco-recreation, sustainable development of aquaculture, as well as creating environmental capacity for the development of the Northern Metropolis. The Strategy proposed the establishment of the Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park in view that it is situated between the Hoo Hok Wai Wetland Conservation Park and the recently established Robin's Nest Country Park, serving as an eco-node where the entire wetlands system in the western and central parts of the Northern Metropolis transits to the woodland ecosystem in the east. The preliminary findings of the Feasibility Study showed that the Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park mainly comprised ecological compensation wetlands, marshes and reeds restored from abandoned fishponds, with some birds, mammals, amphibians and freshwater fishes of conservation interest recorded in the area, indicating a medium ecological value. The Feasibility Study preliminarily recommended that the proposed Hoo Hok Wai Wetland Conservation Park together with the part of Sha Ling/Nam Hang could be positioned as a "rural retreat" to make good use

of the local habitat resources to provide rural experiences/activities, while achieving the multi-functions of ecological conservation, sustainable development of aquaculture and eco-tourism.

(3) The area of the proposed Sha Ling/Nam Hang Nature Park is about four hectares. Around 90 per cent of the area is existing compensatory wetlands recommended for implementation in the statutory Environmental Impact Assessment Report of the Shenzhen River Regulation Project to mitigate the ecological impacts caused by the project, which belong to Government land and are currently managed by the AFCD. The remaining small portion of land in the area is private land. The Feasibility Study will provide recommendations on the modes of future management and protection of the land within the park area for each of the proposed parks. The Government will explore the most suitable arrangements for private land acquisition during the development stage of the proposed parks in future.

(4) and (5) The AFCD and the consultant of the Feasibility Study have consulted the relevant bureaux/departments, including the Northern Metropolis Co-ordination Office/Development Bureau and Planning Department, on the preliminary recommendations for the WCPs system under the Feasibility Study, including the site selection and positioning of each proposed park. The general public and stakeholders were also consulted through the part 2 public engagement exercise. The consultant of the Feasibility Study will submit the final recommendations to the Government in the first half of 2024 after considering the views collected.

The Northern Metropolis has rich and diverse habitats, and ecological conservation is one of its main development objectives. The planning of the Northern Metropolis includes both urban developments as well as ecological and environmental conservation projects. The coexistence of the two not only achieves "co-existence of development and conservation", but also creates a unique urban and rural landscape for the Northern Metropolis. When planning the land use of the boundary commerce and industry zone, the Government will suitably consider the proposed Hoo Hok Wai Wetland Conservation Park (including the part of Sha Ling/Nam Hang) nearby, with a view to ensuring compatibility and coordination in respect of planning.