



Mrs. Lam Cheng Yuet Ngor, Carrie, JP
Secretary for Development
Development Bureau, HKSAR
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Town Planning Board
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(by e-mail only)
15 March 2012

Dear Mrs Lam,

Joint Letter on the Conservation of Po Toi Island

We refer to the recent rural devastation in Po Toi Island and would like to express our appreciation towards the concerned departments including the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Lands Department which had carried out investigations and actions promptly after receiving reports of unauthorized development on Po Toi Island. We are also pleased to note that the Planning Department has prepared and gazetted the Draft Po Toi Islands Development Permission Area (DPA) Plan on 2 March 2012. Po Toi is of high conservation value, being one of the four islands supporting the protected Romer's Tree Frog and has an exceptional diversity of migratory land birds. We are pleased that the Planning Department has recognized the conservation value of Po Toi in the notes of the DPA plan¹.

While we, the undersigned groups, are glad that the Government has carried out prompt remedial action to stall the unauthorized developments on Po Toi, we would like to point out that such destructive activities is actually facilitated by a lack of development control and foresight in planning of the rural areas of Hong Kong. Similar to the country park enclaves, illegal or destructive activities on outlying islands such as Yeung Chau, Sai Kung² and Shek Mun Kap, Lantau³ indicates that planning and development control is necessary to protect these sites from unfavorable activities.

We urge the concerned departments to perform necessary follow-up actions as soon as possible. The landowner should be required to re-instate the affected site on Po Toi, before the start of wet season to prevent further degradation of the site. We are concerned that rainfall during the wet season may lead to soil erosion and landslides which are detrimental to the landscape and ecological value of the affected area.

We also urge the Government to extend statutory protection to all sites of high ecological, landscape, geological and geomorphological value in the New Territories and outlying islands (in particular those with private land ownership) before further environmental destruction occurs.

¹ Explanatory Statement of Draft Po Toi Islands Development Permission Area Plan No. DPA/I-PTI/1

² http://the-sun.on.cc/cnt/news/20111209/00407_064.html

³ Reported by the HKBWS and various green groups in June 2011

Yours sincerely,

Mike Kilburn
Vice Chairman
Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

On behalf of:
Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong
Association for Tai O Environment and Development
Conservancy Association
Designing Hong Kong
Green Power
Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
WWF-HK