



世界自然基金會
香港分會

WWF-Hong Kong

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26 July 2017

Dear Chuan,

Project Profile of Mai Po Infrastructure Upgrade Project (ESB-301/2017)

Thank you for Hong Kong Bird Watching Society's comments dated 21 July 2017 and the discussion meeting on 25th July 2017.

WWF supports a transparent consultation on the project profile components and we are happy to receive views from HKBWS and other stakeholders, which we will consider as we proceed with this infrastructure upgrade project, particularly in those areas where we are still evaluating design options based on various geotechnical and other studies on most appropriate build methods. We expect to have more sharing of information, as the detailed design schemes become available from our architect and consultants.

We are in full agreement that the project components should be implemented with appropriate care, attention and consideration to protect the biodiversity of the area. WWF places great importance on active management to assure the ecological and environmental uniqueness of the Mai Po SSSI and related areas, with the provision of services for the responsible access for purposes of education, birdwatching, research into biodiversity and its appreciation.

We are proposing updated, universal accessible facilities and I am pleased to note that in the schematic design planning process we have insisted on a number of improvements to assure the siting of facilities and footpath widening does not cause negative impact on existing trees and other flora and fauna.

I hope our meeting and the feedback provided here can help you and your members best understand the project and the detailed preparations now being undertaken.

The project outline

This project aims to upgrade the infrastructure in Mai Po so we can provide better facilities and experience for the current and future users (including students, members of public, bird watchers,

together possible™

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photographers, reserve staff/officials trained at Mai Po in support of the East Asian Australasian Flyway and researchers) for educational, scientific and training purposes. The visits and tours organized by WWF-HK will be guided by nature interpreters and reserve staff and all new facilities in the reserve itself will be screened, as in our existing practice, to keep human disturbance to a minimal level being acceptable to the wildlife. The visitors to Mai Po will continue closely controlled by the permits issued by AFCD and the Hong Kong Police (for the floating boardwalk and bird hides in the FCA) and we have no intention to ask for any additional permits or other new arrangements.

New Peter Scott Field Studies Centre

The demolition and construction of a new Peter Scott Field Studies Centre is being carried with the same consideration to ensure the infrastructure upgrade will not have adverse impacts. The impact assessment will be captured as part of the cumulative impact in the final EIA report, as the Peter Scott Field Studies Centre is in a related area, within the Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site.

Project scale and timeline

Since the project is moving through the schematic to detailed design stage we are not able to say for certain which components will be constructed concurrently and exactly when. We will however adopt appropriate avoid/reduce/mitigate impact measures to assure we operate at an acceptable level at appropriate times. Once the ground investigation results and other key information are available in coming weeks, then we would be able to decide on detailed build approaches and confirm a timeline. We will share our findings with HKBWS and other stakeholders in a timely manner. The overview of a timeline is for some work starting sometime between April - August 2018 at the earliest and then work in phases up to 2020/21.

Widening of the existing access and new access footpaths

The AFCD post to Education centre footpath will be widened for universal accessibility but have no vehicular access. The design of the existing footpath widening has been modified a number of times during the schematic design stage so we can avoid any tree felling or impact. Hence, the width of the future footpath will range from 1.65m to 3.3m with passing bays and learning areas. The new footpaths will rest on the existing pond bunds and there will be no encroachment into water areas. The construction method we are looking for is one most compatible with the environment. The proposed Circular Route footpath will enable screened access to Tower 1E and will be a boardwalk design for the main section across the Gei Wais. The section on the existing pond bund would require a supporting base of compacted soil/rock fill as well as path structure and suitable finish material to be decided in detailed design.

Tower hides

The ground investigation and ecological survey results can allow us to determine the best build option of either extending Tower Hide 1 or building a new Tower Hide 1E and siting of Tower Hide 2, with access only on foot. We are hopeful we can minimise impact to any existing users of Tower Hide 1 and leverage a partial pre-fabricated build so assuring all tower hide construction in the non- bird season for the two new hides.

Tower Hide 2 will be facing Gei Wai 20 and the structure will give a good vantage point overlooking the southern side of the reserve. We aim to reduce disturbance in the southern part of the reserve as a new hide will allow observation of two eagle species and wildlife in winter months in the freshwater habitats, without the need to go to the southern end of the reserve. Access to the hide is available from the existing footpath between Gei Wai 18 and 19, then along a new footpath on existing pond bunds to the hide with screening and access ramp to the tower hide.

Egretry and breeding ardeids

The egretry in Mai Po Gei Wai is under routine monitoring by WWF staff so we are aware of changes of egretry or the establishment of new egretry in the study area, all of which will be properly considered in the EIA report. We of course welcome collaboration and information from HKBWS and AFCD and we will come up with and implement measures should there be any changes in the egretry status after the completion of the EIA.

The project profile signals the start of the statutory processes. The planning application which will be submitted soon will include more information on the project, the measures to be undertaken to address and minimize impact. We look forward to an EIA report being completed in early 2018 and this will not only contain information gathered by the consultants since late 2016, but also the data gathered by WWF, HKBWS and others. WWF professional staff, like HKBWS, cares a lot about Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay and we have shared aspiration to make this project a success.

Our stakeholders engagement will continue throughout the project and beyond and as always we are happy to share information and exchange views with you and your members.

Best regards,



Michael LAU
Director, Wetlands Conservation