

Green Groups Joint Statement in Response to Draft Tung Chung Valley Development Permission Area Plan

Green Groups call for extension of the Tung Chung Valley DPA and the creation of a River Nature Park

Green groups jointly welcome the draft Tung Chung Valley Development Permission Area (DPA) Plan gazetted on 21 August 2015. This DPA will introduce statutory land use control in Tung Chung West and help protect the rich and diverse ecology against incompatible developments, environmental vandalism and degradation. The groups propose that the DPA will be extended to include Tin Sam and Wong Lung Hang. Finally they propose that lower parts of the Tung Chung River and estuary will be designated as a Nature River Park.

The Planning Department (PlanD) and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) have jointly commissioned the Tung Chung New Town Extension Study (the Study) in January 2012. The study which covered Tung Chung River Valley, Tung Chung Bay and coastal area recognized the outstanding biodiversity of the area.

Tung Chung River is one of the few remaining major streams in Hong Kong which has not been overly affected by channelization or water pollution. The Tung Chung River largely retains its natural state throughout from headwater to estuary. The Tung Chung River system is unique in the local context. Its headwaters flow from Hong Kong's second and third highest peaks, all the way to the shallow Tung Chung Bay without interruptions. The high connectivity and continuity of the river system from the montane area to the estuary make it exceptionally rich in its aquatic and coastal biodiversity, including many rare and endangered species, e.g. Philippine Neon Goby (*Stiphodon atropurpureum*) 紫身枝牙鰕虎魚, Beijiang Thick-lipped Barb (*Acrossocheilus beijiangensis*) 北江光唇魚, Chinese Horseshoe Crab (*Tachypleus tridentatus*) 中國鬚, Seaweed Pipefish (*Syngnathus schlegeli*) 舒氏海龍, Swinhoe's Egret (*Egretta eulophotes*) 黃嘴白鷺. Diverse types of habitats are also found in the surrounding land area also contains diverse habitat types, supporting many ecologically important animal and plant species in Hong Kong, including Common Birdwing (*Troides helena*) 裳鳳蝶 and Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) 鵞鴞.

Over the past two decades green groups observed however a proliferation of incompatible developments and vandalism in Tung Chung Valley. The ecologically degraded land areas increased from 4.8% in 2007 to approximately 13% in 2015. However, enforcement powers and protection was lacking due to the absence of a statutory land-use plan.

To address these problems, Green Groups have regularly requested the Secretary for Development and Director of Planning for the publication of a DPA for the Tung Chung River Valley and Coast including in letters dated 3 May 2012 and 15 September 2014

- (a) to ensure the Recommended Outline Development Plan (RODP) and proposed land uses in the Study can be implemented;
- (b) to ensure control over incompatible and/or unauthorized developments,
- (c) to terminate existing vandalism and to stem potential vandalism in Tung Chung Valley and Coast; and
- (d) to protect the ecology, hydrology and water quality of Tung Chung River and Bay, a major planning intention of the RODP.

Although the signatory green groups welcome the draft Tung Chung Valley DPA, they urge government to extend the DPA to cover Tin Sam and Wong Lung Hang Stream which otherwise will remain as enclaves without effective land use control. Both areas require the preservation of local habitats.

Finally, the green groups urge the Government to seriously consider the resumption of all private land lots in the Tung Chung River Valley and to establish a River Nature Park. The resumption of land and the management as a park will make it possible to better conserve and enhance the ecological value and functions of the area. The park will provide a high quality nature experience for residents, improved flood control, and better conservation of the rich habitat of the river valley and estuary.

Both proposals will help achieve a more sustainable plan for Tung Chung West. Whereas the residential and road development identified in the RODP will impose adverse and irreversible impacts on the ecology of Tung Chung River Valley and Bay, the proactive land use management possible by establishing a River Nature Park will help preserve natural resources for community use and enjoyment, habitat protection and fisheries intended under the RODP and draft Tung Chung Valley DPA.

Signatories:

Designing Hong Kong

Eco-Education & Resources Centre

Green Power

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Hong Kong Outdoors

Lantau Buffalo Association

The Conservancy Association

World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong