

Green Groups Joint Statement: in response to the Government's invitation to Hong Kong Housing Society to study housing development in Country Parks

- No progress on the broad consensus of "brownfield first"
 - Taking country parks is against public will
 - The study is not neutral but with assumptions
- Stop the study immediately to avoid unnecessary conflict

(19 May 2017) There were great objections from green groups and the public back in January 2017 when the chief executive CY Leung said he already directed government departments to investigate the development of country parks. It is now even confirmed that the Hong Kong Housing Society will study two potential sites in the country park for public housing and elderly home development. Green groups criticise the government for ignoring opposition voices in society and other feasible counter proposals. This study is clearly against the public will.

A broad consensus was reached in using New Territories brownfields (estimated to be about 1,200 hectares in area), abandoned urban barracks and golf courses first for our developments, yet the Government has been reluctant to review and develop these lands. Obviously, there are areas more suitable for development, but elders and people queuing for public housings were instead "taken hostage" by the Government for the commission of the so-called feasibility study which in fact is the destruction of country parks. This is completely unacceptable.

Moreover, the two potential sites with exact locations (i.e. next to Tai Lam tunnel and Shui Chuen O Estate) and areas (each of around 20 hectares) indicate that in-depth discussions were already held within the Government, while this so-called "feasibility study" is just a cover up. The "study" is actually to promote the idea of development of country parks, thus it is not neutral but with assumptions and hidden agenda.

The purpose of country parks is to prevent over-urbanization of the city and to protect the natural environment. Large areas of country parks is an important highlight of Hong Kong. Every one of them has their own unique location, landscape, environment and ecology, and also has social functions in tourism, urban planning and well-being of society. "Low ecological value" is inadequate to determine if country parks can be developed or not, whereas "the development potential of land" should not be used as an excuse for the development of country parks.

The planning objective is wrong to propose country park development when existing formed land such as brownfields and barracks are not fully utilized. Land supply without limits to meet

the never ending demand cannot solve our housing problem. There is a need for an appropriate and comprehensive population policy and housing demand management policy. Destroyed habitats cannot be restored and country parks, which Hong Kong people are proud of, should not be sacrificed in this way. We urge the Government to stop the study immediately to avoid further tearing of society.

Co-sign Parties (Alphabetical Order)

Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong

Designing Hong Kong

Environmental Life Science Society, SS, HKUSU

Friends of the Earth (HK)

Friends of Hoi Ha

Friends of Tai Long Wan

Green Lantau Association

Green Peace East Asia

Green Power

Green Sense

Greeners Action

HK350

hkwildlife.net

Lantau Buffalo Association

Living Islands Movement

Save Lantau Alliance

The Conservancy Association

The Green Earth

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Trailwatch