

Pui O Wetland Judicial Review on Tuesday from 10am Joint Group Statement

On Tuesday 27 September at 10am, the High Court will hear what could be a ground-breaking Judicial Review probing the Government's obligation to prevent the destruction of beautiful wetland habitat from the dumping of construction rubble by private landowners.

In this instance local people living close to the Pui O wetlands on Lantau Island have brought the action to try and prevent the destruction of precious wetland habitat, home to rare and semi-rare wetland plants, amphibians, butterflies, migratory birds and Hong Kong's last feral herd of water buffalo.

Local people first noticed the construction of illegal vehicle access ramps, built from construction rubble, nearly 2 years ago. Next followed 20 tonne trucks that brought load after load of concrete, brick, tiles, containing amongst other things, corroded batteries, solvents and paints, and proceeded to dump them right in the middle of pristine wetland meadow, which hitherto, had been untouched for 40 years.

Both local people and visitors alike were incredulous and immediately called the Government hotline to report the dumping, fully expecting the relevant departments to react by removing the rubble and prosecuting those responsible.

Alas, it wasn't to be. The Lands Department eventually removed the illegal vehicle access ramps, after continuing pressure from local concern groups but the Environmental Protection Department said that the dumping of rubble in the wetland meadows was legal. Even worse, the Director of Environmental Protection had been informed about it in advance and had given tacit permission through something called an 'acknowledgement' system, introduced as part of the amended Waste Disposal Ordinance in 2014. When pushed on this point the current Director of Environmental Protection said that he has absolutely no discretion to stop such dumping no matter how ecologically important the land is.

This appears to be yet another example of the Government giving precedence to the special interests of rural kingpins over the needs of all other Hong

Kongers.

If the court upholds the Government's position then it spells potential disaster for any piece of ecologically important land which is in private hands.

Green groups across the territory anxiously await the outcome of the case, heard before judge Thomas Au.

Signed by (in alphabetical order)

- Ark Eden
- Designing Hong Kong
- Friends of Hoi Ha
- Friends of the Earth (HK)
- Green Lantau Association
- Green Power
- Greeners Action
- Hong Kong Outdoors
- Lantau Buffalo Association
- Living Islands Movement
- Living Lamma
- Plastic Free Seas
- Protection of Animals Lantau South (P.A.L.S.)
- Society of Hong Kong Nature Explorers
- Tai O Community Cattle Group
- The Conservancy Association
- The Green Earth
- The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
- WWF-Hong Kong

---- Press Release Ends ----

Further information on the 4 points of law that the Pui O Wetlands JR will challenge the Government on can be found at

<http://www.livingislands.org.hk/2016/08/09/pui-owetlands-jr-will-challenge-the-government-on-four-points-of-law/>