



Green our City for People

Introduction

While most developed cities are heading towards a low-carbon economy with a focus on utilizing natural resources effectively as a way to improve quality of life, the planning mindset of Hong Kong is still driven by infrastructural and property development and ignoring the environmental carrying capacity thus resulting in the deterioration of our quality of life.

Hong Kong must reform its social development strategy to improve the quality of life and to use our resources wisely.

We would like to recommend three policy agendas to the Chief Executive candidates:

- 1) Planning for the People
- 2) Development of Local Green Economy
- 3) Conserving Ecology. Wise Use of Resources

1) Planning for the People

In recent years, “land use planning” is on everyone’s lips and there are on-going heated discussions with topics ranging from brownfield sprawl, country park protection, to reclamation. The outdated transportation planning and urban design result from existing development mindset has been deteriorating the quality of life in Hong Kong. We hope that land use conflict in Hong Kong can be resolved by adopting a people-oriented land planning approach which takes account of environmental carrying capacity and promotes urban-rural-countryside integration.

- Protect Countryside and Green Areas

Countryside and green areas are important place for biodiversity, and the public to learn more about nature. We oppose to develop sites of ecological importance, such as Country Park, SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), Conservation Area, Green Belt, and so on. More sites of ecological significance should be designated as statutory protected area.

Regarding agricultural land, we suggest amending Waste Disposal Ordinance to prevent dumping of construction and demolition wastes on private lands. Town Planning Ordinance should also be amended with a more explicit definition on “agricultural use” to prevent agricultural land from being used for non-agricultural purposes, and any agricultural practices causing environmental damages due to agricultural rehabilitation. For leisure farming which highlights leisure more than farming, the government should set standards and codes of practice for farm such as its zoning, use, facilities, and so on.

- Prioritize the Use of Brownfield Land

The land use issue in Hong Kong is a matter of ineffectiveness rather than shortage of land. Liber Research Community estimates that there are 1,192 hectares of brownfield land in Hong Kong. We advocate for a holistic planning of brownfield land to solve the problem of brownfield sprawl. The ineffective use of brownfield for storage should be rectified and prioritized for public housing development.

There are currently 2.35 million people living in public housing estates in 1,600 hectares of land¹. Effective use of brownfield land can thus solve the land shortage issue and improve citizens’ living standards. We should also examine the brownfield remediation and redevelopment policies in the US and the UK to stop further brownfield sprawl to destroy urban and countryside environment.

- Establish a Statutory Land Conservation Trust

Though private lands with high ecological value are zoned for conservation purposes, it is often difficult to achieve real conservation in practice. The concept of a land conservation trust has long

¹ Land Utilization in Hong Kong 2015 - http://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_tc/info_serv/statistic/landu.html

been considered as an effective solution to the conflict between nature conservation and interest of the landowner.

We opine that reference can be drawn on some international models of nature conservation trust. The establishment of trust should base on a statutory ordinance with a clear objective to conserve regional environment, to operate independently, and support long-term conservation management work. Funding sources include revenue under public-private partnership projects, donations, land sales, government subsidies, and so on. Various forms of conservation such as land resumption, land-swap, management agreement, and so on, should be deployed to retain flexibility. The key is to conserve private land of ecological value, while taking into consideration its agricultural, aesthetic, rural and cultural heritage values.

- Promote Electronic Road Pricing

Roads should not be used without paying. Vehicle emissions, traffic congestion and expansion in road network have created a huge amount of social and medical costs. In 2015, there were 2,196 premature deaths caused by air pollution in Hong Kong, while the direct total economic loss was estimated at HK\$27.4 billion. Cases in Singapore, London and Gothenburg have shown that electronic road pricing can reduce traffic volume by 15-16%.

We believe that private cars are inefficient carriers. Therefore, we advocate for the implementation of electronic road pricing according to the level of emission, with a primary focus on private cars.

- Implement a Pedestrian-oriented Community Planning

City planning in Hong Kong is designed for vehicles with little consideration for pedestrians. In the past decade, number of private cars saw an average annual growth of 4.6%, which accounted for a staggering increase of cars on the road from 390,000 to 540,000 in 2014. Flyovers and highways divide the city into clusters and create canyon effect that causes air pollution. Currently, 4,000 hectares of land is designated for road usage. We have to abandon such city design concept and restore space for pedestrians.

Setting up a pedestrian and tram-only green artery on the 1.4 km-Des Voeux Road Central is the first step to create a green public space at the heart of the commercial core, and reform our existing transportation planning. The government of next term should also investigate creating shared space for pedestrian and cyclist in all districts. By returning the road to the public, a people-oriented urban planning can be achieved.

2) Development of Local Green Economy

Economic development and ecological conservation can go hand in hand. To pave the way to green economy, the Hong Kong government should facilitate the development of industries that can improve the environment, adopt the corresponding policies to attract capital and experts, and reward consumers who support these green industries.

- Improve Energy-saving Industry

Improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings in Hong Kong is an important battlefield in promoting energy conservation. However, without the support from the Government, advanced resources and manpower for the industry cannot be developed.

We recommend the government of next term to revise the Building Energy Efficiency Ordinance and BEAM+ GFA concession requirement, in which both request building owners to meet the minimum standard only. A reward and penalty scheme by rating energy performance into different ranking should be introduced to encourage building owners to keep investing in energy efficiency to support the industry.

The government should sum up the experience in implementing energy efficiency subsidy schemes for buildings under the Government and the two power companies. The subsidies should be increased and a database should be set up such that building owners can refer to the data when selecting energy saving suppliers and projects. Last but not least, professional training to enhance the quality and quantity of the service provided is also the key to the industry development.

- Develop Renewable Energy

The primary energy supply of Hong Kong almost relies on import and is mostly derived from fossil fuel, leading to air pollution problem. The total emission sulphur dioxide (SO₂) from Hong Kong power plant has been increased from 14,000 tonnes in 2011 to 16,800 tonnes in 2014.

We hope that the government of next term can introduce different kinds of renewable energy, and promise to raise the ratio of renewable energy generation. According to the latest study from PolyU, Hong Kong rooftop solar potential can reach an annual capacity of 4,000GWh. This alone can already achieve a breakthrough in our fuel mix, which currently consists of only 0.01% of renewable energy.

From overseas examples of renewable energy development, the government should introduce Feed-in Tariff in the Scheme of Control Agreement with the two power companies to provide rebates for renewable energy investment, together with a mandatory and progressive renewable energy development target. To encourage distributed energy generation and boost up the development of solar energy, the government can consider issuance of renewable energy green

bonds to raise fund from public, invest in projects related to distributed energy generation, and let public share the reward. In long-term, it will eventually shift energy import expenses to the local sustainable energy industry.

- Provide Sufficient Incentives to Support Sustainable Trade and Consumption

Awareness on sustainable lifestyles has been raised in Hong Kong in the past few years, particularly in the use of biological resources such as shark fin, seafood and paper products. However, a gap between awareness and action remains, as revealed by a Consumer Council report in early 2016.

The government plays a vital role in the promotion of sustainable consumption. It should set up incentives such as rebates to encourage consumption of ecologically-friendly products, thereby supporting the market of such sustainable products/produces.

- Boost Local Agriculture

Despite of the fact that agriculture accounts for less than 0.1% of GDP, it serves diverse values and functions, such as environmental protection, ecology, food security, community economy, education, and so on. Hong Kong should refer to international standard such as European Union and Convention of Biological Diversity under United Nation to put sustainable agricultural policy in practice. It is expected to provide more development opportunities for people who are dedicated to or interested in agriculture, including pond fish culture, increase locally-produced fresh food supply for consumer, and conserve natural resources related to agriculture.

Apart from protecting agricultural land, the Administration should also assist in expanding marketing and sales channels for local agriculture, such as promoting farm markets and bazzars in all districts. Meanwhile, more resources should be allocated in supporting new farmers and manpower training.

3) Conserving Ecology, Wise Use of Resources

Facing scarcity of natural resources, every city must utilize resources in a responsible way. Hong Kong should establish a policy to maintain local ecological resources, tackle over-consumption and protect endangered species actively, so that the next generation can enjoy what the nature bestows upon us.

- Strive for over 50% Local Water Supply to Ensure Sustainable Fresh Water Use in Hong Kong

Hong Kong relies on Dongjiang for 70-80% of its fresh water supply. As flow of Dongjiang continues to fall and demand from major cities along the river rises, the competition for water heats up. As climate change intensifies, sustainable management of regional water resources is imperative.

In seven years, the unit price of Dongjiang water is expected to increase to the same level, or surpass that of the unit price of seawater desalination, resulting in what is called a “golden cross”.

When it does reach that critical point, the Hong Kong public and political parties would no doubt question whether Hong Kong should still rely on Dongjiang for such a high proportion of its water supply.

Sustainable water resources management requires sound planning, not reactive measures when the situation becomes dire. Without giving up supply from Dongjiang, Hong Kong definitely has the means to achieve the symbolic local water supply target of over 50% from 2030 onwards. This target can be met through water conservation, increasing local supply, and water tariff reform. Such measures would ensure sustainable fresh water supply in Hong Kong and safeguard water resources for the region to achieve fair and equitable distribution.

- Provide Drinking Water Dispensers Extensively for Waste Reduction and Public Convenience

Hong Kong, as a world-class modern city, should install drinking water dispensers in convenient locations for residents and visitors. Such service would contribute to waste reduction by minimizing the use of disposable water containers. The government should commit to installing water dispensers in all public places owned by government or private, MTR stations, Link REIT properties, large shopping malls, and so on.

- Implement Waste Charging by Volume Swiftly to Achieve 40% Waste Reduction by 2022

Hong Kong's per capita waste generation greatly exceeds those of neighboring developed cities, depleting valuable resources and producing unnecessary carbon emissions. Waste charging by volume is a vanguard legislation to drive waste reduction and therefore, it is of top priority and must be implemented as soon as possible.

Food waste accounts for almost 40% of all municipal solid waste in Hong Kong, making it a crucial area of focus for the government. In addition to speeding up the development of the planned organic waste treatment facilities, the government should also support private organizations in setting up district-based food waste treatment facilities to increase overall food waste treatment capacity.

The government should also enforce producer responsibility regulations to reduce wastes of beverage containers made of plastic, cartons, etc. It must also strengthen the waste reduction and recycling functions of Community Green Stations and large-scale refuse collection points to create a robust recycling pathway. A landfill ban is also required so that the 40% waste reduction target (based on 2011 figures) can be achieved by 2022.

Lastly, the authority must strengthen intelligence collection and law enforcement to prevent Hong Kong from becoming a “free port” for hazardous waste such as e-waste that would add unnecessary burden to our landfills.

- Combat Illegal Trading of Endangered Species

Wildlife crime has become more lucrative and dangerous, involving large-scale, transnational organized criminal networks. It is now the 4th most profitable illicit trade in the world, estimated at up to US\$23 billion each year. Hong Kong has become a major wildlife smuggling hub and the situation is increasingly dire. The cases of wildlife smuggling tripled in the past 5 years, with the value of seized wildlife contraband reaching HK\$130 million in 2015. Wildlife crime is at an all-time high and impossible to ignore.

Wildlife crime urgently needs to be recognized as a serious criminal offense and be included in the Organized and Serious Crime Ordinance. Relevant government departments including AFCD, Customs and Police should strengthen cooperation in law enforcement and investigations. Greater awareness amongst the Judiciary of the seriousness of wildlife crime will lead to stronger penalties that deter criminals.

- Establish Marine Protected Areas Covering At Least 10% Hong Kong Waters

To date, only 1.5% of Hong Kong’s marine areas are designated as protected areas (of which <0.1% are no-take zones), with the rest receiving little or no protection. 2,000 hectares of dolphin habitats have been destroyed by development, and a further 1,500 hectares will be lost to reclamation in the next 10 years. Local capture fisheries have witnessed a decline of 27% in the last 20 years.

We strongly advocate for the establishment of at least 10% of Hong Kong’s coastal and marine areas as a network of Marine Protected Areas. Areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services should be prioritized, and a range of effective protection and conservation measures should be adopted.

Co-signatories:

350 HK, ADM Capital Foundation, League of Justice, The Professional Commons, WWF Hong Kong, Liber Research Community, Save Lantau Alliance, The Conservancy Association, Friends of the Earth (HK), HKWildlife.net, Hong Kong Shark Foundation, The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Clean Air Network, Designing Hong Kong, Grebbish, Green Power, Greenpeace, Wherever Green, The Green Earth, Greeners' Action, Water for Free, Green Sense, Dr Mah Ngar-yin Daphne, Dr Frederick Lee Yok-shiu

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