

21st May, 2019

16 groups jointly propose a 1,120-hectare Country Park to protect the important resources at the Robin's Nest area

16 groups have jointly announced a joint statement on the expectations on the upcoming designation of Robin's Nest Country Park (RNCP). The groups urge Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to conserve areas of high ecological, historical, cultural, landscape conservation significance under the Country Park system as soon as possible, and to protect and strengthen the important terrestrial ecological corridor between Hong Kong and mainland China. A RNCP boundary was proposed for the consideration of AFCD, covering 1,120 hectares of land with over 95% of government land.

The conservation importance of RNCP has long been recognized by the Government. Roy Ng Hei Man, Campaign Manager of The Conservancy Association, mentioned that “Back in 1993 and 2008, the Territorial Development Strategy Review Study and feasibility study of the Land Use Planning for the Frontier Closed Area by the Planning Department have already recommended the designation of the RNCP respectively. The Government promised in the 2017 Policy Address that Robin's Nest will be designated as a Country Park while The Secretary of Environment Mr. Wong Kam Sing also confirmed in December 2018 that the designation of the RNCP is on its way. It is clear that the conservation of Robin's Nest is well-recognized and the Government should therefore not further delay the designation”.

The groups consider that the Country Park system is suitable for the protection, conservation and management of important ecological resources in the Robin's Nest and associated areas. Woo Ming Chuan, Senior Conservation Officer of The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, said that “The northern slope of Robin's Nest, extending from Shan Tsui to San Kwai Tin and Lin Ma Hang, is well covered with continuous secondary woodland intermingled with natural streams of conservation concern. It thus supports a high diversity of flora and fauna. Two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) were even designated in this area for the conservation of the highly restricted, rare freshwater fish Chinese Rasbora and one of the most important bat colonies in Hong Kong. The globally vulnerable Chinese Grassbird preferred upland grassland habitat stretches from the southern slope of Robin's Nest to Wo Keng Shan and Heung Yuen Wai, while the lowland grasslands at Lin Ma Hang and Man Uk Pin are potential wintering sites of this species. Many large *fung shui* woodlands with mature trees are found along the foot of the southern slope of Robin's Nest”.

Robin's Nest is well-recognized as the only obvious terrestrial ecological corridor between Hong Kong and mainland China, with continuous secondary woodland at the northern slope ecologically connected to the Wutongshan National Forest Park in Shenzhen while strips of woodlands and other undisturbed vegetated areas at the southern slope are linked to those at the Pat Sin Leng Country Park. Dr. Cheng Luk Ki, Director of Green Power, said, "This corridor is the only well-vegetated pathway with little built-up area where wild animals (e.g. land birds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals) can still move between Hong Kong and Shenzhen/Guangdong, thus their population in these two places can be healthily sustained. Therefore, all the habitats along this corridor should be well-protected to maintain such ecological connectivity both across and within the Hong Kong border".

Various heritage resources within the Robin's Nest area have different local historical interest or significance. Roy Ng added, "For example, the Grade-2-listed Macintosh Forts at Pak Kung Au and Kong Shan served the role in bringing law and order to the frontier and in the control of illegal immigration. Some ruins, pillboxes and other structures are believed to have been built for defensive purpose during the 20th century. Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine and its adjacent ruins form good evidence in reflecting Hong Kong's mining history. The hilly terrain of Robin's Nest is also identified as being of high landscape value in the Landscape Value Mapping of Hong Kong by the Planning Department in 2003".

Robin's Nest is not only used by local people for passive recreational activities, but is also becoming more popular among hikers and the public since the opening-up of the Frontier Closed Area. Paul Zimmerman, Chief Executive of Designing Hong Kong, said "All these activities indicate the recreational potential of Robin's Nest, and the urgency of the Country Park designation, in order to provide better habitat protection and management for the enjoyment of the public. The Country Park Ordinance (Cap. 208) would offer a higher level of protection than the land use control under the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131). Habitats of conservation concern can be actively managed and protected with regular patrols. Facilities for visitors and hiking routes can be designed, provided and maintained in the ecologically and scenically less-sensitive areas of the Country Park, for public education and enjoyment. Existing graves and burial grounds can be respected and managed within the Country Park for better regulation and fire prevention".

The groups strongly urge AFCD to consider the proposal and define the boundary of the RNCP according to the "Principles and Criteria for Designating Country Parks (2011)" (2011 Principles and Criteria). From the 2011 Principles and Criteria, conservation value, recreation



potential as well as landscape and aesthetic value are the key themes of the intrinsic criteria for identifying suitable areas for designating Country Parks, while private land is not automatically taken as a determining factor for exclusion from the Country Park boundary. The aforementioned areas of high ecological, historical, cultural and landscape value should therefore be included within the boundary of RNCP for nature and heritage conservation and management.

Six co-organized groups (in alphabetical order):

The Conservancy Association, Designing Hong Kong, Green Power, The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, The Hong Kong Countryside Foundation, Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden

Supporting organizations (in alphabetical order):

Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong, Ecology & Biodiversity Society, SS, HKUSU, Friends of the Earth (HK), Friends of Hoi Ha, Greeners Action, Greenpeace, Greensense, Hong Kong Outdoors, Living Islands Movement, Sai Kung Cattle's Angel

– End –

Remark : The press release is jointly issued by The Conservancy Association, Designing Hong Kong, Green Power, The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society and The Hong Kong Countryside Foundation, Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden