

EPD responds to media enquiries about EIA report for San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node

â€œIn response to media inquiries regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node (STT), the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has made the following response yesterday (April 17):

The STT is a designated project that requires an EIA report under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO). The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) has already completed the EIA report of the project in accordance with the EIAO. The EIA report of the project was exhibited for public inspection from February 2 to March 2, 2024.

A spokesperson for the EPD said that the statutory EIA process is a professional, objective and open system. The operation of the EIAO is open and transparent. The Technical Memorandum (TM) under the EIAO lay down principles, procedures, guidelines, requirements and criteria for various EIA matters. All EIA reports will be submitted to the EPD and relevant authorities for review in strict accordance with the provisions of the TM. The EIAO also stipulates statutory procedures for consulting the public and the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) on project profile and EIA report, which include requiring the EPD to consider the comments raised by the public and the ACE in considering approval of EIA reports.

The CEDD engaged a professional environmental consultant to conduct the EIA study of the STT, which included an ecological impact assessment and had completed a 12-month ecological survey. Relevant literature and research information/data and the ecological aspects of the project had also been considered. Survey recorded (including bird observation data and ecological surveys of Eurasian otters), and assessed the potential ecological impacts of the proposed development in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Study Brief (SB) and the TM. In order to compensate for the ecological impact caused by the development of San Tin Technopole, the EIA report has proposed mitigation measures including creating environmental capacity through the proposed Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park to ensure that there will be no net loss in ecological functions and carrying capacity of the wetlands concerned.

Regarding the earlier claim by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society that the photos in the EIA report did not match the names of the birds, the CEDD has explained that it was due to editing problems when the consultant team compiled the attachments to the EIA report. Regarding the above issues, the CEDD has submitted the amended attachments to the EPD, explaining in detail the causes of the incidents and follow-up work. According to paragraph 4.5.2 of the TM, in case the EIA report requires certain amendments but such amendments will not affect the validity of the assessment and the overall

results and conclusions of the report, there is no need to resubmit the EIA report.

On the ecological impact of the project on Eurasian otters, although the ecological survey did not find Eurasian otters within the assessment area of the project, the EIA report has referred to relevant survey records in recent years. Since otter excrement was found within the assessment area in surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, the ecological assessment has assumed that the assessment area is a habitat for Eurasian otter. Corresponding assessment on the potential impact of the project on otters was conducted in the EIA report and relevant mitigation measures were recommended.

The EPD issued the SB for the project on June 30, 2021. Prior to announcing the revised development area last year, the CEDD had notified the EPD in writing of the revised project scope in accordance with the requirements of the SB. The EPD considered that the SB can still cover all the environmental issues that need to be assessed in the EIA report. In addition, the scope of the study will also be adjusted as the project area increases. For example, the study area of the ecological impact assessment will include an area of 500 meters beyond the revised boundary of the project. Therefore, the EPD considered that the SB could cover potential environmental impacts caused by the revised San Tin Technopole development scope and land use proposals, and confirmed that the SB is still valid.

Regarding CEDD's application for approval of the EIA report, the EPD will strictly follow the provisions of the EIAO in processing application, including detailed review of the EIA report, and comprehensive and careful consideration of the requirements of the SB and TM and comments on the environment raised by the public and the ACE during the public inspection period, before making the decision on whether to approve the EIA report and the conditions to be imposed if the EIA report is approved.