

Government announces enhancements to New Nature Conservation Policy

The Government today (October 6) announced enhancements to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Scheme under the New Nature Conservation Policy (NNCP).

In 2004, the Government promulgated the NNCP, under which 12 priority sites of ecological importance were identified for enhanced conservation. These 12 sites are the Ramsar Site, Sha Lo Tung, Tai Ho, Fung Yuen, Luk Keng Marsh, Mui Tsz Lam and Mau Ping, Wu Kau Tang, Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung, Deep Bay Wetland outside Ramsar Site, Cheung Sheung, Yung Shue O, and Sham Chung.

For land owned by private land owners in these priority sites, in order to incentivise private land owners to conserve the ecologically important portion through the development potential of such land, under the original PPP Scheme, the Government will allow certain development in the ecologically less sensitive portion, provided that land owners of the private land undertake to (a) retain and conserve the ecologically important portion of the site (the Conservation Portion); (b) provide a lump sum contribution to the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) that is sufficient to generate recurrent income to support the long-term conservation work; and (c) appoint a conservation agent to apply for funding from the ECF regularly to carry out the required conservation work.

An additional option will be provided under the enhanced PPP. Land owners may opt to follow the existing mechanism to retain the Conservation Portion, or surrender the Conservation Portion to the Government for proactive conservation and management by the Government. Under this option, land owners are still required to provide to the Government a lump sum contribution that is sufficient to generate recurrent income to support the long-term conservation work. Full market value premium will continue to be charged in accordance with the established mechanism for the portion of the site that is ecologically less sensitive and in which certain development is allowed.

A spokesman for the Environment Bureau said, "For most private land owners, the incentive of the Scheme comes mainly from the portion in which certain development is allowed. Under the enhanced PPP Scheme, land owners may opt to surrender the Conservation Portion to the Government. This will help encourage more PPP cases which in turn facilitate conservation of more sites with ecological importance and unleash the development potential of some sites, thereby achieving a better balance of conservation and development."

The spokesman added, "If land owners choose to follow the enhanced PPP Scheme and surrender the Conservation Portion to the Government, the Government can take part in the conservation and management of these

ecologically important sites more proactively, which is conducive to creating environmental capacity and the sustainable development of the whole society."

Apart from the enhancements to the NNCP, the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy has also outlined new measures and new directions for the conservation of the ecological environment and wetland of the future Northern Metropolis.