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ACE Paper 6/2023

For advice on 20 March 2023

Report on the 157th Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting

PURPOSE

At the meeting on 13 February 2023, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee considered the following four EIA reports (hereafter collectively known as “the Projects”) submitted under Section 6(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) –

- (i) Establishment of Fish Culture Zone (FCZ) at Wong Chuk Kok Hoi (WCKH);
- (ii) Establishment of FCZ at Outer Tap Mun (OTM);
- (iii) Establishment of FCZ at Mirs Bay (MB); and
- (iv) Establishment of FCZ at Po Toi (Southeast) (PT(SE)).

2. The above EIA reports were submitted by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (the Project Proponent). Members are requested to note the views of the EIA Subcommittee and advise whether the reports should be endorsed.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

3. To support the modernisation and sustainable development of local fisheries industry, the Chief Executive announced the recommendation of designating new FCZs at suitable locations to create room for growth of mariculture sector. The Projects proposed to establish FCZs at WCKH, OTM, MB and PT(SE) with a total size of about 600 hectares for mariculturists to construct fish farm structures and operate mariculture activities to facilitate the sustainable development of the local mariculture sector.

4. Please refer to ACE-EIA Paper 1/2023 (*Annex A*) for details of the EIA projects.

VIEWS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

5. Members noted that the EIA reports were made available for public inspection during the period from 29 November to 28 December 2022. A total of 10 sets of public comments were received by the Environmental Protection Department for the Projects. All public comments had been submitted to Members of the Subcommittee for consideration before the meeting.

6. Relevant extract of the draft minutes of the EIA Subcommittee meeting held on 13 February 2023 is at *Annex B*.

VIEWS OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

7. The Director of Environmental Protection (DEP), in consultation with relevant authorities, considered that the EIA reports have met the requirements in the respective EIA Study Briefs and the Technical Memorandum on EIA Process, for the purpose of their public exhibition under Section 7(4) of the EIAO.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

8. Having regard to the findings of the EIA reports as well as the information provided by the Project Proponent and its consultants at the meeting, the EIA Subcommittee recommended the full Council to endorse the four EIA reports with the following condition and recommendations –

Condition of Endorsement

The Project Proponent shall devise a Sediment Monitoring Plan (the Plan) to be incorporated in the environmental monitoring and audit programme. The Plan shall identify appropriate locations for sediment monitoring by grab samples based on modelling simulations for tracking the particles flow, and propose monitoring parameters and frequency with a view to monitoring any potential impacts on sediment quality of the seabed due to sediment deposits caused by the Project. The Plan should be submitted to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the Project.

Recommendations

The Project Proponent is recommended to –

- (i) explore ways to achieve carbon neutrality in the Project such as through the use of renewable energy in the operation of the FCZs as well as the marine transportation involved. Low-carbon construction materials should be deployed to reduce embodied carbon and more durable materials should be

adopted for the fish rafts/cages with the aim of minimising maintenance frequency and extending the lifespan of the rafts/cages;

- (ii) deploy non-toxic and eco-friendly coating materials for fish rafts/cages within the FCZs in order to minimise potential impacts on water quality and marine ecology;
- (iii) explore the use of big data and innovative technology, such as satellite images and video images, etc. for real-time surveillance and monitoring with a view to ensuring compliance with the licensing requirements of the FCZs as well as to support research and analysis purposes; and
- (iv) seek veterinary advice on the appropriate usage and dosage of any pharmaceutical products including prescription drugs and disinfectant for diseases so as to minimise potential impacts on water quality and marine ecology.

9. Members of the EIA Subcommittee have agreed at the meeting that the Project Proponent would not be required to attend the full Council meeting in respect of the aforementioned EIA reports.

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
February 2023**