

**Relevant extract of the draft minutes of
the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee meeting
held on 15 June 2026**

EIA report on “Northern Metropolis Highway – San Tin Section”

Question-and-Answer Session (Open session)

Wetland and Woodland

1. Noting the relatively low water level in the wetland area during the site visit, a Member had reiterated the importance of coordinating the construction works with the other development project in the area. He was glad that the project proponent had committed to maintain close liaison with the Ngau Tam Mei (NTM) development project on various issues including the integration of water resources, management and operation plans with a view to boosting the ecological benefits of the wetland.
2. A Member concurred that sufficient water supply was essential for maintaining the functions of the watercourse at NTM. He reminded that the upstream construction works should not affect the water resources for the downstream area. To alleviate the Member's concern, Mr Patrick Ng confirmed that the existing design of the San Tin Section of the Northern Metropolis Highway (NMH) had avoided all natural watercourses in the area. The project team would coordinate closely with the Civil Engineering and Development Department to work out the drainage design in the whole area to ensure that there would be steady water flow for the NTM project during dry season while excessive rainwater in summer would be diverted to the wetlands to enhance regional flood resilience. In response to the Member's further questions on the length of the road, Ms Connie Chan shared that the total length of the San Tin Section was about 2.8 kilometer (km) comprising a 1.9 km Ngau Tam Shan Tunnel and three other short tunnels which were about 200 m or 500 m in length.
3. A Member was pleased that the scattered water ponds would be enhanced and consolidated into a larger wetland area. In response to her question, Mr Steven Wong confirmed that woodland compensation would be provided on a 1:1 basis at She Ling.
4. Given the rather long construction period for the project, the Chairman asked about the timetables for the artificial wetland and woodland compensatory works. Mr Steven Wong said that the relevant compensation works would be completed in a gradual manner before the construction works began. For example, marsh reed compensation for wetlands would start in 2027 before the construction works commenced.

5. Apart from creating wider buffer zones or planting fire-resistant vegetation as firebreaks for the artificial woodland, the Chairman opined that technologies, such as real-time artificial intelligence (AI) fire surveillance system which was currently adopted by AFCD, could be deployed for fire management. Mr Patrick Ng welcomed the suggestion and said that they would follow up on the matter in consultation with the EC to be established for the project.

6. A Member raised questions on the compensation plans for the some 9,000 trees to be felled in the project. Mr Patrick Ng responded that compensatory planting would be completed at She Ling prior to tree felling under the conservation before development principle. The Chairman asked if there were transplantation plans for valuable species such as Incense Trees. Ms Connie Chan assured that all valuable tree species would be preserved as far as possible. The Member suggested that the project proponent should make use of the opportunity to enhance the affected hiking trails. Ms Chan said that there were no official hiking trails within the project boundary, but the project proponent would re-provide as appropriate the affected footpaths leading to specific destinations.

Project Timeline and EC

7. To address a Member's questions on the construction timeline for the different sections of the NMH, Mr Patrick Ng replied that tendering for the construction of the San Tin Section was targeted for early 2027 for completion by 2036 subject to funding approval. With reference to the traffic demand and resource allocation, the Tin Shui Wai Section, Kwu Tung Section and New Territories North New Town Section would be completed within three to four years afterwards to form a complete east-west Northern Metropolis (NM) arterial route. The Member indicated in-principle support to the EIA report and opined that an EC would be essential for monitoring the project progress.

8. A Member sought clarifications on the work arrangement of the EC since it would need to provide advice on diversified issues covering wetland compensation, tree conservation, fish pond management, migratory birds etc. Mr Patrick Ng explained that one EC would be formed under the project to provide overall advice on issues concerning the San Tin Section. He added that separate ECs would be set up for the other three sections of the NMH while joint meetings would be arranged to resolve common issues.

Impacts on wildlife

9. A Member noted that the 24-km NMH would be constructed by phase involving different EIA projects. He questioned whether the cumulative impacts on wildlife including birds and bats would be addressed in the reports. Mr Steven Wong informed that while the assessment in the current EIA report focused on the San Tin Section, the study area had included a 500 m extension beyond the project boundary which covered the alignments of other sections, and a cumulative impact assessment covering all phases had been incorporated.

10. In response to the Chairman's question on the measures to enhance the protection of the egret at Sha Po, Ms Gigi Lam said that construction works at Kam Tin River would be conducted by phase and the affected area would be kept to half of the project area to minimise potential impacts to the Sha Po egret night roost. During the construction period, noisy works within a 100-m radius of the site would be banned one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset while piling works would be restricted to high tide hours during dry season. Additional mitigation measures such as non-reflective and non-transparent hoardings or noise barriers would be used to prevent bird collisions whereas directional shielded lighting would be deployed to prevent light spill into the sensitive area.

11. To address public concerns on the impacts of the project, the Chairman suggested that AI monitoring should be deployed to confirm the number of birds in the egret throughout the pre-construction, construction and operation stages.

Air Quality and Noise Impacts

12. Given that the NMH would serve as a major road network connecting the NM to the Greater Bay Area, a Member enquired whether the traffic impact assessment had taken into consideration the latent air quality risks associated with heavy traffic. Mr Patrick Ng explained that the air and noise impact projections were based on the expected vehicular flow beyond 2046 under the latest NM development blueprint. Mr Steven Wong supplemented that the air quality assessment had adopted the worst-case scenario during the 15-year period after 2036 using the AERMOD Modelling system and the results showed that all statutory air quality standards could be met.

13. With reference to a Member's enquiry on the adjustment of noisy works with reference to the sunrise and sunset time and comments on the adoption of AI for ongoing bird monitoring during and after the construction phase, Mr Patrick Ng advised that the contractors would be required to follow the official sunrise and sunset hours published by the Hong Kong Observatory. He furthered that an EC would be set up to oversee the project which included any on-site adjustments and the adoption of AI monitoring system.

14. A Member raised questions on the locations of the ventilation building and sensitive receivers in the 1.9 km tunnel having regard to the prevailing wind in Hong Kong, the topography in NTM and the projected vehicle mix in obtaining the results in the pollution dispersion study. Mr Steven Wong indicated that there would be no ventilation building along the San Tin Section. Instead, jet fans would be installed to discharge pollutants through tunnel portals. With the relevant portal emission setup incorporated into the simulation models, Mr Wong said the current project would not have adverse air quality impacts to the NTM area.

15. The Chairman asked for details of the mitigation measures to address the public concern on the air quality and noise impacts to the nearby residential areas. Mr Steven Wong said that the assessment results showed that the air quality would be in compliance with the Hong Kong Air Quality Objectives. In accordance with the

EIA standards, a series of noise mitigation measures such as low-noise pavement and noise barriers would be adopted along the San Tin Highway. Mr Wong assured that they would strive to adopt extra improvement measures in consultation with the developers and maintain ongoing communication with the stakeholders concerned.

Conclusion

16. Mr Patrick Ng thanked Members for their comments which would be taken into consideration in preparing the relevant tender documents. He welcomed ongoing inputs from all stakeholders and aspired that Members would support the EIA project.

(A Member and the project proponent team left the meeting after the session.)

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door Session)

17. Given its proximity to Shenzhen and similarity to the Shenzhen Bay Bridge, instead of adopting the traditional styles for highways in Hong Kong, a Member held the view that the aesthetic aspect of the NMH could be further enhanced. The Chairman agreed that the project proponent could consider enhancing the landscape design of the current project in particular at NTM and San Tin.

18. With reference to a Member's comments on a central committee to oversee and evaluate the cumulative impacts of the four sections of NMH, the Chairman stressed that there should be ECs at difference phases to ensure that the project would be under proper monitoring throughout the development. As the development of the other sections of the NMH would be submitted to the ACE at a later stage, he agreed that the requirement for coordination among different ECs could be added in the subsequent EIA reports.

19. The Chairman advised Members that the EIASC could make one of the following recommendations to the ACE on the EIA report –

- (i) endorse the EIA report without condition; or
- (ii) endorse the EIA report with condition(s); or
- (iii) reject the EIA report and inform the project proponent of the right to go to the full Council.

If the EIASC cannot reach a consensus during the meeting, it may –

- (i) ask for a 2nd submission to the EIASC; or
- (ii) defer the decision to the full Council and highlight issues or reasons for not reaching a consensus for the full Council's deliberation.

20. The Chairman proposed and Members agreed to endorse the EIA report with conditions.

Conditions

21. Based on the discussions at the meeting, Members agreed that the following six conditions could be proposed for the full Council's consideration.

(a) Brief Introduction

- (i) The Project Proponent had committed to enhancing and integrating the existing ponds and marsh / reed habitats located to the west of the NTM Water Treatment Works, with the aim of creating a diverse and interconnected wetland habitat of approximately 5 hectares (ha) (S.8.11.4.8 of the EIA report). A Habitat Creation and Management Plan (HCMP) had been prepared and appended to the EIA report. **Condition (1)** was recommended to require the submission of an updated HCMP. The updated HCMP should include specific proposals and implementation proposal demonstrating collaboration with the relevant authorities responsible for the NTM Drainage Channel revitalisation works, with a view to strengthening ecological connectivity and maximising environmental benefits.
- (ii) During the EIA study, the Project Proponent installed an AI-powered monitoring device at the Kam Tin River to better understand bird utilisation of the wetland habitats. Based on the monitoring findings, specific mitigation measures had been devised (S.8.8.2.10 of the EIA report). For example, piling works during the dry season would be scheduled to take place at high tidal levels (i.e. above 1.0 mCD), when the riverbed of the Kam Tin Main Drainage Channel was largely submerged, in order to minimise disturbance to the watercourse and associated avifauna. To further strengthen environmental monitoring for wetland habitat (S.7.3.3 of the Environmental Monitoring and Audit (EM&A) Manual), **Condition (2)** was recommended to encourage the continual application of cost-effective and innovative technologies for long-term monitoring of wetland habitats, thereby facilitating timely review and adaptive management where necessary.
- (iii) The EIA had proposed a woodland compensation site at She Leng (S.8.11.4.6 of the EIA report). Together with the adjacent woodland compensation areas proposed under other projects, a contiguous and sizable woodland area of approximately 22 ha would be formed, with the potential to achieve moderate to high ecological value. The Project Proponent had committed to preparing a Woodland Compensation Plan (WCP). **Condition (3)** was recommended to require the submission of a detailed WCP, including appropriate fire prevention and fire management measures (such as the provision of firebreaks and application of AI-powered hill fire detector(s) where suitable), as well as long-term management and monitoring arrangements of the woodland compensation area.

- (iv) Certain sections of the proposed alignment were located in close proximity to recognised sites of conservation importance and other ecologically sensitive areas, including the Lam Tsuen Country Park. The EIA report had proposed a range of ecologically friendly mitigation measures (S.8.11.3 of the EIA report), such as the extensive adoption of viaduct structures to facilitate wildlife movement beneath the highway, and the incorporation of bird-friendly design features, including the use of non-transparent and non-glaring materials for noise barriers. **Condition (4)** was recommended to require the submission of a Wildlife-friendly Design Guideline (WFDG). The WFDG should set out design principles and measures for highway structures and noise barriers aimed at minimising ecological impacts, including bird collision risks, roadkills, and barrier effects on wildlife movement.
- (v) For continuing the public engagement (S.8.11.4.10 of the EIA report) during the course of design and construction for the Project, **Condition (5)** was recommended in setting up an EC for the Project, comprising government departments, green groups and academics, to advise on the preparation of the HCMP, WCP and WFDG.
- (vi) In view of the numerous planned noise sensitive receivers along the proposed alignment (S.4.4.1.4 of the EIA report), ongoing liaison with the proponents of the planned developments was necessary to refine both at-source mitigation measures (such as the erection of vertical and cantilever noise barriers) and at-receiver mitigation measures (such as the provision of acoustic windows), with a view to formulating a cost-effective and practicable proposal. **Condition (6)** was recommended to require the submission of an updated Road Traffic Noise Mitigation Plan (RTNMP). The updated RTNMP should set out the refined mitigation measures at both source and receiver, and demonstrate the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the proposed noise mitigation measures.

(b) Conditions of Endorsement

The Project Proponent should –

- (i) submit an updated HCMP for the proposed wetland compensation and enhancement areas as recommended in the EIA report to the DEP for approval no later than three months before the commencement of construction of the wetland compensation and enhancement areas. Specifically, the HCMP should include the collaboration with the relevant authorities on the NTM Drainage Channel revitalisation. Moreover, construction works at the wetland habitat to the west of NTM Water Treatment Works should commence only after the construction of the wetland compensation and enhancement areas had begun. The Project Proponent should consult the AFCD on the HCMP prior to submission to the DEP;

- (ii) no later than three months before the commencement of construction of the Project, submit a proposal of smart initiatives (including AI-powered device) to enhance the monitoring works of birds and mammals at the wetland compensation and enhancement areas and at Kam Tin River to the DEP for agreement;
- (iii) submit a WCP for the compensatory woodland as recommended in the EIA report to the DEP for approval no later than three months before the commencement of compensatory woodland planting. Specifically, the WCP should include the fire control measures to be implemented along with application of AI-powered hill fire detector(s). Any construction works of the Project affecting the existing woodland should start only after the commencement of compensatory woodland planting. The Project Proponent should consult the AFCD on the WCP prior to submission to the DEP;
- (iv) submit a WFDG for the Project, including highway structures and noise barriers, to the DEP for approval no later than three months before commencement of construction of the Project. The Guidelines should provide measures to minimise threats including bird collision and roadkills, and barrier effects on wildlife movements. The Project Proponent should consult the AFCD on the WFDG prior to submission to the DEP;
- (v) set up an EC no later than three months before the commencement of construction of the Project. The EC should advise on the preparation of the HCMP, WCP and WFDG, and review the effectiveness of implementation of the proposed ecological mitigation / enhancement measures of the Project according to the EIA report and the approved HCMP, WCP and WFDG. The EC should have a wide representation such as representatives of the relevant government departments (including the AFCD), green groups and academics. The list of members and terms of reference of the EC should be submitted to the DEP for approval; and
- (vi) no later than six months before the commencement of construction of road traffic noise mitigation measures, submit a RTNMP to the DEP for approval. For the planned developments as identified in the EIA report along the project alignments, the Project Proponent should, in consultation with the relevant implementation party(ies) of these planned developments, review and explore the wider use of at-receiver mitigation measures, and provide documentation of their noise reduction performance to demonstrate that the road traffic noise performance requirements set out in the EIA report would not be exceeded with the mitigation measures in place, and to reflect the findings in the RTNMP.

(A Member left the meeting at this juncture.)

(Post-meeting notes: The draft conditions were circulated to Members for comment before the ACE meeting on 13 July 2026.)

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
July 2026**