

**Relevant extract of the draft minutes of
the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee meeting
held on 5 December 2025**

EIA report on “Development at Ngau Tam Mei Area”

Question-and-Answer Session (Open session)

Ngau Tam Mei Drainage Channel (NTMDC)

1. To ensure that the ecological functions of the “blue-green spine” could be achieved as planned, a Member highlighted that it was essential to monitor the quantity and quality of the water in the NTMDC. Another Member added that appropriate management at both upstream and downstream should be maintained. Mr Benjamin Chan remarked that, if needed, suitable diversion of water flow from the neighbouring Kai Kung Leng and Ngau Tam Mei (NTM) Mountain could be arranged during dry seasons to ensure the flow in the channel. Apart from ecological functions, he said that the NTMDC could also serve for public enjoyment. In terms of water quality, Mr Chan explained that the existing illegal or inappropriate discharge activities would be removed when the private land upstream was acquired for the development of a University Town (UniTown). The Government would also improve the drainage system of the nearby villages to ensure that no sewage water would flow into the NTMDC. He anticipated that the above measures would improve both the quantity and quality of the water in NTMDC.

2. The Chairman opined that a comprehensive plan with proper details should be devised to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed design for the drainage channel since the flow and depth of water, the plantation on both banks etc. would have significant impact on the biodiversity in the area. In response to the Chairman’s question on the involvement of channel design experts in the Environmental Committee (EC), Mr Benjamin Chan replied that a project team with drainage design experts would be engaged for the design work whereas other experts, green groups and academic representatives would be engaged in the EC. Mr Chan explained that a two-stage design would be adopted and the existing channel would be widened and deepened with potholes and meanders to be created for different species as appropriate.

3. A Member asked about the flooding situation in the NTM area under inclement weather and whether the design and proposed solutions could cope with extreme weather conditions in the future. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that the current design had taken into account extreme weather conditions by the end of the 21st century and could cope with torrential downpour at the rate of 250 cubic meters

(m³) per second. He supplemented that two stormwater storage tanks including one with a capacity of about of 60,000 m³ would be built. He said that one storage tank would be built first to cope with the need of mid-century while the other one would be built at a later stage.

4. Given that the development was situated in a low-lying area and the footprint of the revitalised NTMDC was large, a Member was concerned about the surface water that could be channelled into NTMDC which would make it a primary stormwater collection point during rainy seasons and might pose safety hazards to the users of the open space. The Member remarked that it was essential to incorporate the sponge-city design and make plans for water collection and storage as well as to address the safety issue. In addition, CEDD should liaise with land users of the UniTown and Integrated Hospital to ensure that they would adopt the same development concept and follow up on the implementation of the proposed enhancement measures.

5. Mr Benjamin Chan remarked that new technologies and artificial intelligence, such as image sensors and rain gauges in the river channel, would be deployed to detect the water level and the upstream conditions as well as to alert people of danger. He assured that the Government would communicate closely with the users in the adjacent sites to ensure the adoption of the sponge-city concept in the overall design to minimise surface runoff and flooding in the area.

Nature-based Solution (NbS)

6. Apart from the NTMDC, a Member suggested the adoption of NbS in more areas under the project and better integration of the development with the nature with a view to enhancing the living environment as a whole. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that NbS were adopted in the design of the river channel which included the relocation of uncontaminated substrates, creation of meanders and potholes to provide habitats for different species, and plantation of native vegetations along the slopes on the two sides to improve the local ecosystem.

7. Another Member concurred that NbS should be adopted in the UniTown and Integrated Hospital to ensure a holistic development in the NTM area. In reply to the Member's enquiry, Mr Benjamin Chan indicated that CEDD would act as a coordinator and maintain close contacts with the university, Hospital Authority and different green groups on the incorporation and implementation of the development concept. Mr Ng Kim-wai assured that CEDD would coordinate with the aforesaid parties after land allocation.

8. In addition to the river design guidelines or other technical guidelines issued by the Drainage Services Department (DSD), a Member suggested that CEDD should adopt the updated global standard on NbS introduced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature which covered eight key aspects for better realisation of the benefits of NbS. He opined that it would be beneficial to introduce the global standard at an early stage in the infrastructure development in Hong Kong

where nature-derived solutions and nature-inspired solutions could be considered. Mr Benjamin Chan shared that CEDD had commissioned a consultancy study on the latest global development of NbS for the establishment of a new guideline on NbS which could serve as a reference for other government departments and organisations.

9. A Member asked whether buffalos could be adopted as a NbS for the project. Mr Benjamin Chan shared that CEDD would conduct a trail on using buffalos in the coming development project at Hung Shui Kiu Ha Tsuen. If proved successful, it might be extended to other projects. He said that CEDD would work with the environmental groups to explore the possibility of deploying buffalos in Kam Tin.

10. Sharing the example of South Korea where waterways were revitalised to create a water-friendly culture, a Member supported the suggestion of the “blue-green spine” as a NbS. Given the proximity, she considered that there should be some synergy with the hospital to bring health benefits to the patients. Mr Benjamin Chan indicated that more considerations would be given to enhance the design to support a water-friendly culture and to provide a natural environment for public enjoyment.

Ecological and Environmental Impacts

11. In response to the Chairman’s and a Member’s questions on bird-friendly measures and the height restrictions of buildings in the development area, Mr Benjamin Chan clarified that the original drainage channel would be widened to 26 to 40 meters under the project. Together with an open space of 20 to 30 meters on each side of the bank, the NTMDC would provide an 80-metre wide flight corridor without buildings for flying birds. For buildings in the nearby area especially those along the “blue-green spine”, he indicated that glass curtain walls would be avoided and bird-friendly designs such as fritted glass would be applied as appropriate. Mr Chan furthered that CEDD would liaise with the land users adjacent to the NTMDC on the adoption of bird-friendly design.

12. A Member sought details of the mitigating measures for minimising the impact on existing species during the construction of the “blue-green spine”. Mr Benjamin Chan replied that ecological surveys would be conducted for baseline and before the construction work commenced. CEDD would carefully identify and monitor the species involved during the relocation process to see if any adjustment to the plan would be required and the construction work would be carried out in phases with a view to minimising the impacts on the existing species in the drainage channel.

13. A Member understood that high-tension cables had been avoided during the selection of a site for the proposed development. He questioned whether the magnetic field of high-tension cables in the south of the proposed hospital would pose any threats to the equipment and patients. The Member suggested that further follow-up actions with the hospital on this aspect might be considered. Mr

Benjamin Chan replied that the EIA report had conducted an assessment on the environmental impact of the electrical transmission towers to the surrounding area based on relevant guidelines which indicated that, as long as the distance and height of the transmission towers were maintained at a considerable distance, they would not pose adverse impact to the surrounding area. Mr Ng Kim-wai supplemented that there would be a distance of tens of metres between the hospital and the transmission towers with at least four traffic lanes and a buffer zone in-between.

Wetland Compensation

14. The Chairman held the view that there should be a dedicated team to work on wetland compensation because meticulous design, detailed planning and careful monitoring of different aspects, including the selection of location, determination of the type of wetland to be developed etc. were required. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that the proposed site for wetland compensation was close to water sources of Kam Tin River which had sufficient water flow even in dry seasons and an underground channel that drew in a large amount of tidal water and river water. He said that the entire site was located beside some bridges, but was not covered by roads. Mr Chan said that they would collect the relevant hydrological data and consult the EC and relevant experts in working out the detailed design for the wetland.

Sustainability

15. A Member encouraged the project proponent to explore the possibility of incorporating the “zero-carbon” and “zero-energy” concepts in the project in consultation with the parties concerned such as the UniTown. Mr Ng Kim-wai thanked the Member for his suggestion and said they would take the matter into consideration.

16. A Member opined that the Government should take into consideration the capacity loading in the overall design and enquired about the residential and working population in the development area in NTM. Mr Benjamin Chan replied that the estimated population in the residential area would be approximately 35,000 to 38,000 whereas the working population was about 26,000.

17. In response to a Member's question on wastewater treatment and circularity arrangements, Mr Benjamin Chan replied that the NTM development area would generate approximately 40,000 to 50,000 m³ of sewage. To make full utilisation of the capacity of the sewage treatment plants in the area, Mr Chan said that the sewage in NTM area would be transmitted to either the sewage treatment plant in San Tin Technopole or the one in Yuen Long through the nearby pumping stations. The reclaimed water would be processed for secondary use such as for flushing or other regeneration purposes.

18. A Member further enquired about the measures to reduce construction waste. Mr Benjamin Chan replied that the construction waste would be used as filling materials to elevate the current ground level from approximately 4.5 to 5 metres principal datum (mPD) to 6.5 mPD to cope with extreme weather conditions at the end of the 21st century. Arrangements would be made for reusing any surplus construction waste in other development projects as far as practicable.

19. A Member asked if the EC would be involved in both the construction and operation phases and whether other stakeholders such as developers, university and hospital operators would be involved. She suggested the adoption of a sustainable design framework for the whole development area such as through setting indicators on waste recycling, efficiency in water usage etc. Mr Benjamin Chan shared that the EC would be involved throughout the design, construction and initial operation phases and there would be an Environmental Management and Assessment (EM&A) before operation. During the commissioning and initial operation, CEDD would oversee the operation of the EC while the maintenance departments would continue with the subsequent work afterwards. On the suggestion of a sustainable design, Mr Chan indicated that the EIA report had outlined different measures including waste reduction to support sustainable development in the area. He said that CEDD would work with the relevant parties such as representatives from UniTown to explore more sustainable approaches. Mr Ng Kim-wai added that they would explore to set a minimum standard for green building ratings in the project area.

Public Comments

20. A Member asked whether CEDD would adopt the suggestions in the five public comments and the reasons for any non-adoption. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that they had taken into consideration different suggestions in their overall plan and design which included the incorporation of a two-stage design, widening and deepening of the drainage channel, providing meanders to improve the ecological value of the surrounding environment etc. In addition, CEDD would include a comprehensive and detailed design for a greenway network for the area, including cycling paths and pedestrian walkways along the riverbank, connection to the railway station etc. On the suggestion of a different site for wetland compensation, Mr Chan said that they would further discuss the matter under the EC with representatives from green groups, academics and other environmental monitoring groups. As for bird-friendly designs and solutions, CEDD would liaise with the nearby users for their adoption. According to the ecological survey, most of the birds identified in the area were waterbirds which foraged along the water. After the enhancement of the NTMDC, the width of the drainage channel would be widened to create a flight path of 80 meters for flying birds.

21. To address a Member's enquiry on the timeframe for the 12-month survey in the EIA Report, Mr Benjamin Chan explained that CEDD had gathered the EIA data through ecological baseline survey during both wet and dry seasons from 2022 to 2024. Mr Chan said that CEDD had compared the results of their ecological survey with those in the updated 2025 Hong Kong biodiversity report.

Notwithstanding the changes in the number of species involved in upgraded or downgraded monitoring, he confirmed that the overall assessment on the ecological impact of the project had not been affected. Meanwhile, CEDD would continue to optimise the existing environment with a view to providing an enhanced and diversified habitats for different species.

22. Mr Benjamin Chan thanked all Members for their invaluable comments and suggestions. He said that CEDD would fully take into account Members' advices in working out the detailed plans for the project in consultation with the stakeholders.

(The project proponent team and a Member left the meeting after the Question-and-Answer Session.)

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door Session)

23. Reminding Members of the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) framework, the Chairman indicated that issues which were not a requirement under the EIAO such as "zero-carbon" should not be included as a condition or recommendation. Dr Samuel Chui highlighted that the proposed conditions should be specific, achievable, enforceable and measurable against suitable benchmarks.

24. To address Members' concerns on the wetland, Mr Gary Tam indicated that the project proponent could be requested to submit a detailed Habitat Creation and Management Plan (HCMP) which included the location of the proposed compensation and implementation programme for the wetland compensation area. A Member suggested the inclusion of a biodiversity management plan to support potential green finance applications. Mr Simon Chan replied that the HCMP would include biodiversity management and the project proponent might also be required to supplement relevant details in the EM&A. The Chairman considered that more case studies could be conducted to facilitate green finance for development projects in the long run. Dr Samuel Chui indicated that the second stage of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan had covered EIAO as part of the mainstreaming efforts. Dr Chui said that the ecological impact assessment included in the EIA report would take species protection in consideration. As for the inclusion of new requirements under the EIAO framework, he said that clear benchmark should be available to facilitate the subsequent assessment.

25. Similar to other development projects, Members opined that a sponge-city design should be adopted for the current EIA project and efforts should be made to enhance the biodiversity in the area. While there were no field signs of otters in the project area, Mr Gary Tam highlighted that the project proponent had already committed at the meeting to conduct another round of search for otters before the construction work.

26. 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) and / or recommendation(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.

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

Conditions

28. In light of the previous discussions, the Chairman summarised the following conditions to be proposed –

(a) Brief Introduction

- (i) According to the EIA Report, detailed design of the proposed wetland compensation site would be included in the HCMP during the detailed design stage. The **Condition (1)** was to require the Project Proponent to provide a detailed HCMP as recommended in the EIA Report to the DEP for approval no later than 3 months before commencement of construction of the Project.
- (ii) In addition, according to the EIA Report, detailed design of the proposed revitalisation works with provision of natural substrates that would encourage colonisation of flora and freshwater fauna in the bottom and banks of the revitalised watercourses would be provided. The **Condition (2)** was to require the Project Proponent to submit an Implementation Plan for Ecological Enhancement Features Design (IPEEFD) for the revitalisation of NTMDC to the DEP for approval no later than 3 months before the commencement of construction of the Project.
- (iii) In line with the EIA Report, the **Condition (3)** was to establish a well-represented EC which would provide professional and stakeholders' advice on the preparation of the HCMP and IPEEFD, and monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the proposed ecological mitigation / enhancement measures of the Project according to the EIA Report and the approved HCMP and IPEEFD.

- (iv) According to the EIA Report, appropriate mitigation measures would be adopted since the construction phase of the Project, such as use of non-transparent or non-glaring materials on buildings and noise barriers. The **Condition (4)** was to require the Project Proponent to substantiate the proposal by submitting a Bird-friendly Design Guideline for buildings within the Project area to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the Project.
- (v) On the other hand, in response to the two particular public comments on wildlife corridor and otter holts / dens, it was noted that:
- 1) According to the EIAO Report, the project proponent would devise the design and location of the wildlife corridor for non-flying mammals. During the detailed design of the proposed road connection, the road design should allow a corridor of appropriate size for wildlife crossing and animal barriers, with reference to the AFCD Nature Conservation Practice Note No. 04 Design of Terrestrial Wildlife Crossing System.
 - 2) According to the EIAO Report, during the ecological baseline surveys, no field signs or individuals of Eurasian Otter were recorded within the Project Site or assessment area. In response to public concern received during the Public Engagement, the project proponent had conducted questionnaire interviews for any sightings of Eurasian Otter within the assessment area. No Eurasian Otter within the Project Site or assessment area was reported by interviewees or recorded during the ecological baseline surveys. Thus, direct impact to Eurasian Otter was not anticipated. During the EIA Subcommittee meeting on 5 December 2025, the Project Proponent said that they would conduct another round of search for otter holts / dens and otter along and / or near the NTMDC before commencement of construction of relevant parts of the Project for prudent sake and implement suitable measures.

(b) Conditions

The Project Proponent should –

- (i) submit a detailed HCMP for the wetland compensation area as recommended in the EIA Report to the DEP for approval no later than 3 months before commencement of construction of the Project. The HCMP should set out design details (including specifications for the target habitats and species), location of wetland compensation, implementation schedule in table form to clearly list out the measures to be implemented, implementation party, implementation programme, environmental performance required for implementation of the measures, management strategy and ecological monitoring and audit requirements of the wetland compensation area. The Project Proponent should consult the AFCD on the HCMP prior to submission to the DEP;

- (ii) submit an IPEEFD for the revitalisation of NTMDC to the DEP for approval no later than 3 months before the commencement of construction of the Project. The IPEEFD should specify the ecological enhancement features, such as ecological engineering, creating meanders, provision of natural substrate that would encourage colonisation of flora and freshwater fauna in the channel bed and banks, and “eco-interface” area along the east of the Project, etc., to be adopted in the Project to enhance its ecological value; include the design of the ecological enhancement features and the implementation programme. It should also include the detailed design of open space and riparian zones along NTMDC. The Project Proponent should consult relevant government departments (including AFCD, the DSD and the PlanD) on the IPEEFD prior to submission to the DEP;
- (iii) set up an EC with subcommittees no later than 4 months before commencement of construction of the Project. The EC should advise on the preparation of the HCMP and IPEEFD, and monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the proposed ecological mitigation / enhancement measures of the Project according to the EIA Report and the approved HCMP and IPEEFD. The EC should have a wide representation such as representatives of relevant government departments (including AFCD and DSD), future land users adjacent to NTMDC (including the university town and the integrated hospital) as well as green groups and academics. The list of members and terms of reference of the EC should be submitted to the DEP for approval; and
- (iv) submit a Bird-friendly Design Guideline for buildings and noise barriers within the Project area to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the Project. The Guideline should provide measures to minimise the risk of bird collisions and the impacts of birds. The Project Proponent should consult relevant government departments (including AFCD, PlanD and LandsD) on the Guideline prior to submission to the DEP, to ensure that the Guideline should be incorporated through the relevant administrative process for adoption by future land users.

(Post-meeting notes: The draft conditions was circulated to Members for comment on 7 December 2025. Members’ comments had been incorporated in ACE Paper 13/2025 which would be discussed at the ACE meeting on 11 December 2025.)

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
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