

**Confirmed Minutes of the 272nd Meeting
of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE)
on 11 December 2025 at 10:00 a.m.**

Present:

Prof John CHAI, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Prof Kenneth LEUNG, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Mr CHEUNG Chi-wah
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Dr Theresa KWONG
Prof Dennis LEUNG
Mr Daryl NG, SBS, JP
Mr Simon NG
Mr Jonathan WU
Dr Raymond YAU
Ms Fabia TAM (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Mr Eric HO
Ms Linda HO
Mr Alex KWAN
Ms Grace KWOK
Prof Alexis LAU, JP
Prof QIU Jian-wen
Mr Albert SU, MH, JP
Prof WONG Kam-bo
Dr William YU

In Attendance:

Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB)

Ms Heidi CHENG	Principal Information Officer
Ms Karen CHEK	Chief Executive Officer (CBD)
Ms Cynthia LAU	Executive Officer (CBD) 1
Miss Glory CHONG	Executive Officer (CBD) 2

Environmental Protection Department (EPD)

Dr Samuel CHUI, JP	Director of Environmental Protection (DEP)
Dr Vanessa AU	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (1)
Mr Gary TAM	Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment)
Ms Clara U	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Territory North)
Ms Flora NG	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Cross Boundary) 2

Ms Kathy HO Environmental Protection Officer (Territory South) 21

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Mr Simon CHAN Assistant Director (Conservation)

Planning Department (PlanD)

Ms Johanna CHENG Assistant Director of Planning/Technical Services

In Attendance for Item 3:

Project Proponent Team

Development Bureau (DEVB)

Ms Pecvin YONG Deputy Director, Northern Metropolis Co-ordination Office

Mr Edwin LEE Assistant Secretary (Northern Metropolis) 6

Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD)

Mr Benjamin CHAN Project Manager (West)

Mr Horace LEE Chief Engineer/W4

Mr Henry TSE Senior Engineer/7(W)

PlanD

Ms Irene LAI Chief Town Planner/Studies and Research

Project Consultant

AECOM Asia Company Limited (AECOM)

Ms Angela TONG Executive Director

Action

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and informed Members that apologies of absence had been received from Mr Eric Ho, Ms Linda Ho, Mr Alex Kwan, Ms Grace Kwok, Prof Alexis Lau, Prof Qiu Jian-wen, Mr Albert Su, Prof Wong Kam-bo and Dr William Yu.

Item 1 : Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 271st meeting held on 6 October 2025 (Closed-door session)

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting were confirmed without any proposed amendments.

Item 2 : Matters arising (Closed-door session)

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Item 3 : Report on the 162nd Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting (ACE Paper 13/2025)

4. The Chairman invited Members to refer to *ACE Paper 13/2025* which reported the recommendations of the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee (EIASC) on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on Development at Ngau Tam Mei (NTM) Area.

5. The Chairman declared that he was the former Vice-Chairman of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). The meeting agreed that the Chairman could stay to lead the discussion.

6. A Member declared that he worked closely with CEDD on researches related to design and implementation of eco-shorelines but such work was irrelevant to the current project. Another Member declared that he was a court member while two other Members declared that they were adjunct professors of the HKUST. The Chairman considered that there was no conflict of interest as the HKUST had no particular role in the project for the time being. Members had no other views.

(The presentation team joined the meeting at this juncture.)

Presentation cum Question-and-Answer Session (Open session)

7. Ms Pecvin Yong gave an opening remark, and Mr Benjamin Chan briefed Members on the background of the project while Mr Horace Lee reported the key EIA findings, public comments as well as their relevant responses with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

Ngau Tam Mei Drainage Channel (NTMDC)

8. A Member supported the proposed revitalisation of NTMDC, but was concerned about the water level during the dry seasons. He considered that reclaimed water could be deployed for maintaining the water level in the channel. Noting that the project proponent had aimed to enhance the biodiversity in the project area through the revitalisation work, he reminded that there were three levels of biodiversity, namely genetic, species and habitat levels. He suggested that the channel design should be able to enhance the biodiversity of all three levels. To yield better results, he suggested that the revitalised channel should be designed to enable different microhabitats to be created through incorporating flow intervals, varying depths of water, diverse vegetation etc.

9. Mr Benjamin Chan advised that it was possible to divert water flow from the neighbouring Kai Kung Leng and Ngau Tam Shan during dry seasons to ensure the water level in the channel. In the NTM New Development Area (NDA), CEDD would explore whether the stormwater storage tank(s), which were meant to cater for extreme weather conditions somewhere in the mid-stream area, could also be

used for regulating the water level during dry seasons. As for the channel design, Mr Chan said that suitable natural substrates from the surrounding areas would be used for the creation of various habitats including uneven channel bed with rocks where appropriate, potholes and meanders for different species as far as possible. In addition, native vegetations would be planted along the slopes on the two sides to provide greenery and to serve sponge-city functions.

10. In response to a Member's enquiry about the revitalisation works for the NTMDC and the measures to ensure the water quality from upstream, Mr Benjamin Chan indicated that the current NTMDC would be widened and the existing illegal or inappropriate discharge activities would be eliminated when the private land upstream was acquired for the development of a University Town (UniTown). The sewage facilities to be provided by the Government for the NDA would also serve the nearby villages, preventing their sewage water from flowing into the NTMDC.

Blue-Green Spine

11. Four Members supported the project and particularly appreciated the “blue-green spine” which spanned across an extensive area in NTM. Given that the UniTown and Integrated Hospital would take up a substantial area in the development project, two Members above concurred with another Member above that other land users including representatives from the UniTown and Integrated Hospital should be engaged early in the Environmental Committee (EC) of the project to ensure that the overall development concept with the adoption of nature-based solutions (NbS) and enhancement measures etc. would be shared and adopted in their respective project areas to achieve a consistent and harmonious design and end results. Members considered that a wider participation would enhance the representativeness and effectiveness of the EC in performing its functions.

12. Mr Benjamin Chan indicated that an EC would be established to provide advice on various issues. CEDD would act as the coordinator and invite different stakeholders including the university groups from the UniTown in joining the EC in future. Ms Pecvin Yong supplemented that the Government would start engaging the Integrated Hospital and UniTown as soon as possible.

13. With reference to a Member's question on the length of the “blue-green spine”, Mr Benjamin Chan said that the entire NTMDC was 2.2 kilometres long which would be about a 1-hour walk. The Member highlighted that the current project was an important part of the Northern Metropolis development which would be the future growth agent of Hong Kong. He aspired that the project would provide additional green space with a view to enhancing the quality of life of the surrounding residents as well as for the safe enjoyment of the general public in Hong Kong. Sharing the successful example of the Singapore Botanic Gardens which had started as part of an urban development plan some one hundred years ago and later became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, he aspired that Hong Kong might also get similar achievements if the project was well implemented.

14. Mr Benjamin Chan thanked the Member for his comments and said that the Government would strive to enhance the blue-green infrastructure in Hong Kong. He aspired that the revitalised NTMDC would create not only a beautiful water-friendly open space for public enjoyment, but also an ecological corridor for enhancing the biodiversity in the area.

15. A Member highlighted the importance of adopting NbS in more areas under the project and better integration of the development with the nature with a view to strengthening the infrastructure in the area and improving its resilience to climate change and extreme weather conditions. He remarked that the “blue-green spine” could serve to bring users to different places in the area including the UniTown and Integrated Hospital. He emphasised the need to engage future land users at an early stage as it was crucial to have the concept integrated into the design since the beginning.

16. Mr Benjamin Chan assured that CEDD would communicate with the relevant stakeholders, including the UniTown, Integrated Hospital, green groups and professional association in different industries during the design and construction phases to ensure their understanding of the development direction. CEDD would collect views and suggestions on the possibility to adopt innovative technologies for environmental protection in the project. Besides, CEDD had commissioned a consultancy study on the latest global development of NbS for the establishment of a new NbS guideline which would be adopted in the current project. Ms Pecvin Yong supplemented that requirements for obtaining green building rating could be explored for the NTM NDA as appropriate.

Compensatory Wetland

17. Noting the existing roads near the compensatory wetland, a Member suggested that the project proponent should explore ways to strengthen the ecological connectivity of the existing wetlands such as through providing corridors. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that San Tin Highway was an elevated pedestrian bridge which would not sever the wetlands and Kam Tin River, and the underground box culvert and channel next to Kam Tin River was also providing water supply to the nearby wetland areas. Connectivity of the river, the compensatory wetland and the surrounding environment would be included in the Habitat Creation and Management Plan (HCMP).

18. In response to a Member's question on using buffalos at the compensatory wetland as a NbS, Mr Benjamin Chan shared that buffalos were currently deployed in various wetlands and CEDD would conduct a trial on adopting buffalos in the proposed floodable open space with wetland element under the Hung Shui Kiu / Ha Tsuen NDA Second Phase Development project. If proved successful, CEDD could consider to work with the green groups to explore the possibility of deploying buffalos in the compensatory wetland.

19. A Member aspired that there would be appropriate tree compensation to replace those trees removed for the project. Mr Benjamin Chan indicated that many of the trees in the compensatory wetland site were invasive species, such as Silver Acacia, which would be replaced by native species to enhance the overall value of the compensatory wetland. CEDD would submit a HCMP and a detailed tree compensation plan.

Ecological and Environmental Impacts

20. In addition to the 80-metre-wide waterway, a Member suggested that the project proponent should adopt bird-friendly design for the exterior walls of buildings in the project area. Mr Benjamin Chan replied that during the design and construction phases, they would prepare a bird-friendly design guideline for noise barriers and buildings in the surrounding area. The guideline would be shared with other land users and discussed at the EC.

21. In response to a Member's suggestion on reusing the existing concrete materials from the drainage channel, Mr Benjamin Chan replied that construction waste would be reused as filling materials as far as possible, to elevate the current ground level from approximately 4.5 to 5 metres above principal datum (mPD) to 6.5 mPD to cope with extreme weather conditions.

22. A Member noted that CEDD would adopt the sponge-city concept in the overall design and had aimed to enhance the biodiversity in the area. She enquired whether there were references of improved biodiversity through sponge-city designs in past projects. Mr Benjamin Chan shared the example of the ecological zone in the Loop Area, in which recorded species had been increased by about 40 percent. CEDD was actively promoting and implementing sponge-city initiatives and would explore different possibilities to optimise the design of the drainage channel in consultation with relevant green groups and stakeholders.

Climate Resilience

23. Apart from enhancing the ecological value, a Member opined that the quality of the overall environment in the project area should also be improved as NTM was a low-lying area which would be prone to flooding and urban heat island (UHI) effect. He suggested the Government to address such issues in the future planning. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that CEDD had taken the relevant issues into account in working out the project plan. A number of ventilation corridors were incorporated in the NTM NDA to minimise the UHI effect, including the 80-metre wide "blue-green spine" and the planned road network. To avoid flooding, CEDD would commence suitable site formation works and drainage improvement works in the NTM NDA.

24. A Member enquired about the measures to ensure the safety of users and stakeholders of the “blue-green spine” in case of flooding under extreme weather conditions. Mr Benjamin Chan explained that the existing drainage channel would be widened from 15 - 25 metres to 26 - 40 metres to cope with extreme weather conditions. To support a water-friendly culture while ensuring safety of the users, Mr Chan said that warning system, such as image sensors and rain gauges in the river channel could be deployed to detect the water level and the upstream conditions as well as to alert people of danger.

Conclusion

25. Highlighting the importance of the NTM development plan, the Chairman remarked that the project would be crucial for the integrated development of education, research, and talent in Hong Kong. Given the international perspective of Hong Kong in all those aspects, the location of the current development project could become an international focus as countless foreign visitors, scholars, and students coming for exchanges might work and stay at or near the UniTown and Integrated Hospital. The Chairman held the view that communication with stakeholders of the project including land users of the UniTown and Integrated Hospital should start as soon as possible as this could help ensure the implementation of the project in a coordinated manner with the joint efforts of all parties. He indicated that if the development project was carefully and well implemented, the area might become a UNESCO site one day and this might serve as the long-term vision of the project. The Chairman encouraged the project proponent to keep up the efforts in balancing the needs of development and conservation and hoped that the project could be implemented smoothly.

(The presentation team left the meeting at this juncture.)

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door session)

Draft Conditions

26. The Chairman reminded and Mr Gary Tam echoed that the conditions proposed by the ACE should be specific to the project concerned under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) framework since the conditions proposed by the ACE, when they were included in the Environmental Permit (EP) for subsequent implementation, would be legally binding for the project proponent.

27. At the Chairman's invitation, Mr Gary Tam and a Member provided a brief recap of the project including the number and stance of the public comments received and Members' views on the EIA report. The Member indicated that after detailed discussion at the meeting on 5 December 2025, the EIASC recommended the endorsement of the EIA report with four conditions as detailed in paragraph 8 of ACE paper 13/2025. Highlighting the improved presentation of the proposed

conditions, the Member said that both legally binding conditions and non-binding recommendations were included in the ACE's comments in the past. For the current EIA report, the Member indicated that recommendations of the EIASC, commitments made by the project proponent and background of the proposed conditions etc. were incorporated in the background brief section which could serve to highlight the point of consideration and concerns of the ACE.

28. Mr Gary Tam expressed that providing the basis and considerations of the proposed conditions in the background brief section would improve the presentation of the recommendations by enabling a better understanding of why and how the conditions were set.

29. Members noted that the first condition set out the details to be provided by the project proponent in the HCMP while the Implementation Plan for Ecological Enhancement Features Design (IPEEFD) under the second condition was about the ecological enhancement and development of open space near the NTMDC. With reference to the Chairman's observations, the wording of Condition (2) was fine-tuned to make the requirements more specific.

30. To address Members' queries on the functions of the EC under the third condition, Mr Gary Tam clarified that the EC would be playing an advisory role with no statutory power. He said that DEP's approval would be required to confirm the terms of reference and composition of the EC while EPD and other relevant authorities would perform the monitoring role to ensure that the statutory requirements under the EP were met. Dr Samuel Chui supplemented that both AFCD and EPD would be involved in the EC to facilitate discussion of issues concerning the environment and ecology. He remarked that the Government would engage consultants as independent environmental checkers of the HCMP and Environmental Monitoring and Audit (EM&A) reports submitted by the project proponent. The consultants would then prepare assessment reports for further review by AFCD and EPD. Members agreed with the proposed third condition after a minor update on the role of the EC.

31. The fourth condition on a Bird-friendly Design Guideline was endorsed with minor textual amendments.

32. The Chairman considered that the proposed changes had demonstrated the continuous efforts of the ACE to improve the presentation of its comments to the DEP. He agreed that the revised presentation could continue to be adopted for future EIA reports.

33. With the above amendments incorporated, the meeting unanimously agreed to endorse the EIA report with the following four conditions.

(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 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 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. The detailed design of the proposed road connection 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 EIASC 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.

(b) Conditions of Endorsement

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 covered scopes of the ecological enhancement and the development of the open space and riparian zones. Regarding the ecological enhancement, IPEEFD should i) specify the ecological enhancement features, including 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; ii) include the design of the ecological enhancement features and iii) include the implementation plan. Regarding the development of the open space and riparian zones along NTMDC, IPEEFD should include the detailed design of these areas. The Project Proponent should consult relevant government departments (including AFCD, Drainage Services Department (DSD) and 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 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 threat to birds including window-collision. The Project Proponent should consult relevant government departments (including AFCD, PlanD and Lands Department) 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 ACE's comments on the EIA report were submitted to DEP on 12 December 2025.)

Item 4 : Report on the 46th Waste Management Subcommittee Meeting (ACE Paper 14/2025)

34. The Waste Management Subcommittee (WMSC) Chairman reported the key discussions at the 46th WMSC Meeting as summarised in *ACE Paper 14/2025*. The WMSC Chairman reported that the subcommittee Members were supportive of the waste management initiatives in the 2025 Policy Address of the EEB and had given valuable comments on various related issues including the recycling facilities, Producer Responsibility Schemes, waste reduction, circular economy, and publicity and public education. EPD had taken note of Members' comments and would provide regular updates on new measures and development.

Item 5 : Any other business (Closed-door session)

EIA Reports not selected by EIASC for submission to ACE

35. The EIASC Chairman reported that since the last ACE Meeting, the EIASC had received the Executive Summary of the EIA reports on "Smart and Green Mass Transit System in Kai Tak" and "Smart and Green Mass Transit System in East Kowloon" which had been circulated to EIASC Members. Members were advised to provide their comments, if any, on the EIA reports directly to DEP within the respective public inspection period. Given that the EIA reports were not selected by the EIASC for presentation and discussion, the EIASC Chairman informed Members that EPD would take that the ACE had no comments on the EIA reports under section 8(3)(b) of the EIA Ordinance.

36. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

Item 6 : Date of next meeting (Closed-door session)

37. Members would be advised on the agenda in due course.
38. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:30 a.m.

**ACE Secretariat
March 2026**