

**Confirmed Minutes of the 274th Meeting
of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE)
on 11 May 2026 at 2:30 p.m.**

Present:

Prof John CHAI, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Prof Kenneth LEUNG, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Mr CHEUNG Chi-wah
Mr Eric HO
Ms Linda HO
Ms Grace KWOK
Dr Theresa KWONG
Prof Dennis LEUNG
Mr Simon NG
Prof QIU Jian-wen
Mr Albert SU, MH, JP
Prof WONG Kam-bo
Mr Jonathan WU
Dr Raymond YAU
Ms Fabia TAM (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Mr Alex KWAN
Prof Alexis LAU, JP
Mr Daryl NG, SBS, JP
Dr William YU

In Attendance:

Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB)

Miss Mavis HUI	Chief 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)
Mr Gary TAM	Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment)

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Mr Simon CHAN	Assistant Director (Conservation)
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Planning Department (PlanD)

Ms Cheryl YEUNG	Technical Secretary / Technical Services
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In Attendance for Item 3:

EPD

Ms Clara U	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Territory North)
Mr William LUNG	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Territory North) 1
Ms Winnie KWOK	Environmental Protection Officer (Territory North) 12

AFCD

Mr Boris KWAN	Senior Nature Conservation Officer (North)
Mr LAU Yun-kwan	Nature Conservation Officer (North)

Project Proponent Team

Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD)

Mr Joe YIP, JP	Acting Project Manager (West)
Mr George LAW	Chief Engineer / West 5
Mr Ricky YIU	Senior Engineer / 3 (West)
Mr Leo LAU	Engineer / 20 (West)

Project Consultant

AECOM Asia Company Limited

Mr Steven WONG	Technical Director
Ms Heather LI	Project Environmental Consultant
Mr David HO	Project Manager
Ms Elly LEUNG	Associate (Landscape Design)

Action

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and informed Members that apologies of absence had been received from Ms Ada Fung, Mr Alex Kwan, Prof Alexis Lau, Mr Daryl Ng and Dr William Yu.

Item 1 : Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 273rd meeting held on 9 March 2026 (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 164th Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting (ACE Paper 4/2026)

4. The Chairman invited Members to refer to *ACE Paper 4/2026* which reported the recommendations of the EIASC on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on Development of the Loop – Eastern Connection Road.

5. The Chairman declared that he was the alternative Chairman of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park Limited (HSITP). In addition, a Member had declared before the EIASC meeting held on 29 April 2026 that his company was in touch with the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the HSITP on Northern Metropolis (NM)-related projects. His company had also recently won a tender for the Kam Sheung Road Station Phase Two Property Development. To avoid potential conflict of interests, the Chairman and the Member abstained from joining the discussion at the ACE meeting. The Deputy Chairman took over the chairmanship from this point onward.

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

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

6. Mr Joe Yip briefed Members on the background and key EIA findings of the project while Mr George Law reported the public comments as well as the project proponent's responses with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

Greening Measures

7. A Member reminded the project proponent of the technical difficulties in transplanting fully grown Incense Trees of 4 m to 7 m tall. He urged the project proponent to make every effort to ensure the success of the transplantation while tree seeds should be collected in advance as a safeguard measure to conserve the genetic biodiversity of the site in case any of the trees did not survive the transplantation. Mr Joe Yip said that qualified arboriculture specialists would be engaged to work out the transplantation plans. In addition, seeds of the affected trees would be collected as far as possible for replanting in the compensatory woodland with a view to sustaining the species locally.

8. With reference to the project proponent's proposal at the EIASC meeting, the Deputy Chairman sought confirmation on the implementation of the mini-forest initiative on top of the standard tree compensatory plan. He pointed out that scattered woodland patches would provide bonus to the ecological environment as they were highly beneficial for birds and insects. Mr Joe Yip said that CEDD would consider implementing mini-forest development schemes and assured that CEDD would actively identify suitable sites along the road for the purpose.

Underpass Design

9. To comply with the Codes of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installation and Equipment, a Member noted that two natural ventilation openings would be installed at a maximum interval of 230 m along the 700-m underpass. Having regard to the dip-and-rise alignment of the underpass, he enquired about the smoke dispersion considerations in case of fire. The Member also raised questions on the air quality level inside the underpass involving only natural ventilation and with the ventilation fans on particularly during traffic congestion, the potential congestion level and whether the current design could meet the air quality objectives stated in the EIA report. He suggested that comprehensive fire scenario analysis should be conducted in the detailed design stage to confirm the effectiveness of the smoke and emergency evacuation plans, even though mechanical smoke extraction systems were exempted under the existing fire regulations.

10. Mr Joe Yip responded that, instead of a deep and long underground tunnel, the current plan was to build an underpass with large ventilation openings of 50 m x 25 m at a 230-m interval which could avoid negative landscape impacts associated with bulky ventilation buildings and high construction / operational costs. With the installation of jet fans to maintain air circulation, he opined that the air quality within the underpass would be maintained at a satisfactory level. The traffic impact assessment modelling showed that the four-lane carriageway together with the other alternative access road would provide sufficient capacity to serve the Loop with no traffic jam expected. In case of accidents in any of the lanes, the remaining lanes could keep the traffic flow. He furthered that the ventilation facilities, designed in consultation with the Fire Services Department (FSD), were adequate for smoke control. In case of fire and emergencies, the nearby fire station could provide rapid emergency response, if needed.

11. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr David Ho provided more details about the expected air quality level. Mr Ho explained that private vehicle emissions would reach its peak in 2034 and the air quality level within the underpass would continue to improve under the existing policy which targeted to cease new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid private cars by 2035. With the jet fans to be installed, the two large ventilation openings of around 1,100 square metres could provide appropriate ventilation through natural airflow. To ensure fire safety, cross-passages would be provided at a 100-m interval for emergency escape. The project team would further liaise with FSD to ensure that the detailed design would fully comply with all fire safety requirements.

Dedicated Legislation for NM

12. A Member noted that the procedures and requirements for Construction Noise Permit (CNP) applications would be streamlined and the validity of the permits would be extended from six months to twelve months under the dedicated legislation for the development of the NM. She asked if there would be specific

arrangements to ensure that the migratory birds would not be affected. The Deputy Chairman also questioned whether there would be concrete measures to safeguard the seasonal roost at Ma Tso Lung, in particular when the construction hours were extended under the dedicated legislative arrangements. He opined that robust mechanisms must be in place to ensure that ecological protection would remain as the priority consideration in development projects.

13. Mr Gary Tam clarified that the dedicated legislation for NM did not affect the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO). The statutory requirements under the EIAO would remain unchanged notwithstanding the streamlined procedures or extended validity period for the CNP. Project proponents would still be required to submit the Construction Noise Management Plan, to implement all noise control measures and to comply with any construction restrictions to protect migratory birds and local avian species. He added that the extended validity of the CNP under the dedicated legislation for the development of the NM mainly aimed to streamline the requirements of locations and sound power level of individual powered mechanical equipment which would be replaced by the requirement of an overall sound pressure level at the construction site boundary with monitoring arrangements. Mr Joe Yip assured that the project team would strictly follow all EP conditions including any restrictions concerning the construction hours for the avifauna habitat. In addition, the project proponent would consult the Environmental Committee (EC) on the relevant protective measures.

Other issues

14. With reference to a Member's suggestion on the composition of the EC to ensure a balanced view, Mr Joe Yip assured that the EC would include representatives from different stakeholders including AFCD, EPD, green groups and academics.

15. A Member appreciated that nature-based solutions were adopted for upgrading the wetlands and fishponds which could serve as a good example to showcase the ecological benefits of the project. She highlighted that the project would bring more comprehensive benefits if nature financing was also incorporated. She supported the arrangement to reserve extra construction time to accommodate the restricted working hours near the bird night roosts, but considered that there should be clear definition on the relevant construction activities to facilitate enforcement by contractors.

16. The Deputy Chairman commended the "Conservation before Construction" principle for the provision of compensatory wetlands. He enquired if green finance tools such as green bonds would be deployed to sustain the long-term management of the wetlands.

17. Mr Joe Yip thanked Members for their positive feedback and confirmed that before-and-after ecological improvement comparison would be conducted for the current project. He added that long-term wetland management and green financing arrangements would be further discussed upon the establishment of the EC.

18. The Chairman thanked the project proponent for the presentation.

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

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door)

Draft Conditions

19. Mr Gary Tam summarised that with the adoption of the revised project design, impacts to high-value pond habitats would be greatly reduced by 87% in the area. Apart from 10 hectares (ha) of compensatory wetland, the project proponent would take the opportunity of the project to enhance an additional 4 ha of existing habitat with a view to delivering extra environmental benefits. He shared that biodiversity improvements were proven in similar projects.

20. The meeting unanimously agreed to endorse the EIA report with the following two conditions.

(a) Brief Introduction

- (i) According to Section 8.13.4 of the EIA Report, an updated Habitat Creation and Management Plan (HCMP) for the Off-site Wetland Compensation Areas (OWCAs) and Area 4 (i.e. Ponds 36 to 38 for ecological enhancement) should be submitted. **Condition (1)** was to require the Project Proponent to provide a detailed and updated 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) Having taken into account the public comments, **Condition (2)** was to require the establishment of a well-represented EC which would advise on the preparation of the HCMP, 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.

(b) Conditions

The Project Proponent should –

- (i) submit a detailed and updated HCMP for the OWCAs and Area 4 (i.e. Ponds 36 to 38 for ecological enhancement) 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 and enhancement works, 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, ecological monitoring and audit requirements, and details of smart initiatives (including AI-powered camera) to enhance the monitoring works of birds and mammals at the wetland compensation and enhancement areas. The Project Proponent should consult the AFCD on the HCMP prior to submission to the DEP; and

- (ii) set up an EC no later than 3 months before the commencement of construction of the Project. The EC should advise on the preparation of the HCMP, 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. The EC should have a wide representation such as representatives of the relevant government departments (including AFCD), green groups and academics. The list of members and terms of reference of the EC should be submitted to the DEP for approval.

(Post-meeting notes: The ACE's comments on the EIA report were submitted to DEP on 18 May 2026.)

Item 4 : Any other business (Closed-door session)

- 21. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

Item 5: Date of next meeting (Closed-door session)

- 22. Members would be advised on the agenda in due course.
- 23. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 3:20 p.m.

**ACE Secretariat
July 2026**