

**Confirmed Minutes of the
39th Nature Conservation Subcommittee Meeting
on Thursday, 29 January 2026 at 2:30 p.m.**

Present:

Dr Theresa KWONG (Chairman)
Mr CHEUNG Chi-wah
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Ms Grace KWOK
Prof Kenneth LEUNG, BBS, JP
Mr Simon NG
Prof QIU Jian-wen
Ms Karen CHEK (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Dr William YU

In Attendance:

Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB)

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)

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Mr Simon CHAN Assistant Director (Conservation)
Dr Flora MOK Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity)
Dr Terence NG Conservation Officer (Biodiversity) 1

In Attendance for Item 2:

EEB

Mr Desmond WU Principal Assistant Secretary for Environment and
Ecology (Nature Conservation)
Mr Sean LEE Assistant Secretary for Environment and Ecology
(Nature Conservation) 1

In Attendance for Item 3:

EPD

Mr Gary TAM Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment)
Ms Clara U Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Territory
North)
Mr Raymond LAI Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Territory
North) 5

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and informed Members that apology of absence had been received from Dr William Yu.

Item 1 : Matters arising (Closed-door session)

2. The Chairman advised Members that the minutes of the last meeting held on 4 December 2023 were confirmed by circulation on 14 May 2024.
3. There was no matter arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Item 2 : Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2035 (ACE-NC Paper 1/2026)

4. The Chairman indicated that the paper provided an overview of the key components and implementation arrangements of the updated Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (the updated BSAP) published in December 2025, which served as the blueprint for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in Hong Kong over the next decade.
5. There was no declaration of interest by Members.

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

6. Mr Simon Chan gave an opening remark on the background of the matter and Dr Terence Ng briefed Members, by way of a PowerPoint presentation, on the key components and implementation arrangements of the updated BSAP.

Funding

7. A Member welcomed the promulgation of the updated BSAP and emphasised the importance of providing sufficient resources to support its implementation in the coming 10 years. To address his question on funding plans, Mr Simon Chan said that different resources including the Government Sustainable Bond Programme, the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF), the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme (CCFS), and the Lantau Conservation Fund (LCF) were available to support biodiversity and conservation projects. He added that a priority action of the updated BSAP was to encourage and mobilise more diversified funding sources, especially from the private sector.
8. While there were funding programmes, such as the LCF, to support management agreement projects, and public-private partnership would be explored in future projects, a Member considered that additional funds should be injected into the CCFS because the remaining 40% of the fund would not be sufficient to cover the needs in the next decade. The Member and another Member indicated that the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) could support the relevant funding applications in relation to the updated BSAP if necessary.

9. Mr Desmond Wu explained that the CCFS was launched as a Policy Address initiative in 2019 with a one-off allocation of \$500 million. So far, a total of 56 projects involving about \$300 million had been approved. Mr Wu said that the Government would continue to monitor the progress of fund deployment and strive to seek diversified funding including green bonds to support the implementation of the BSAP.

10. A Member suggested that the Government should align the funding schemes with the priority actions and projects so that academics and non-governmental organisations could contribute more effectively to the priority themes. Mr Simon Chan indicated that some funding schemes already had a dedicated biodiversity theme with priority topics identified, whereas others, while potentially relevant, were established for different primary purposes. He added that AFCD would also explore appropriate fund-matching mechanisms and platforms for supporting priority projects.

11. A Member agreed that it was not necessary for the Government to fund all projects as some work could be achieved through collaboration and partnering with the stakeholders to achieve a win-win situation. He shared examples on a recent funding application for real-time monitoring of coastal areas by using AI under the Three Runway System and another on the installation of underwater acoustic hydrophones for monitoring Chinese White Dolphins being planned with the Highways Department (HyD).

Capacity Building

12. With reference to a Member's question on the Government's short-to-medium-term actions on capacity building, Mr Simon Chan replied that capacity building was a long-term endeavour involving different sectors. Taking Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as an example, he said that much efforts would be required to guide stakeholders and promote its adoption given that it was a relatively new concept. He shared that a set of NbS design guidelines would be issued soon and a series of activities such as a summer school, symposiums and workshops for stakeholders would be arranged. He remarked that the Government would continue to work on capacity building on different aspects relevant to biodiversity conservation.

13. Noting that the current focus of capacity building was on the technical aspects, a Member remarked that the Government could consider collaborations with the green finance community as it could create synergy to accelerate the application of green finance in biodiversity conservation. In addition, she suggested that the Government could offer professional advice on biodiversity-related matters to facilitate respective sectoral participants to establish and apply NbS in their respective areas.

14. Mr Simon Chan said that partnership and collaborations would be a key direction for capacity building in the next phase of BSAP implementation. He said that the Government welcomed more collaboration opportunities and encouraged the active participation of all sectors so that different expertise could be brought together to support the BSAP.

Deepening Mainstreaming

15. Highlighting the important role of the business sector in nature conservation, a Member shared that some companies had taken the lead in making voluntary disclosures under the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) framework with reference to the priority actions in the updated BSAP. Leveraging the TNFD framework, the Member stressed that the Government should encourage the business sector to understand its relationship with nature through the disclosure process and turn relevant experience into concrete actions. As part of the mainstreaming efforts, Mr Simon Chan said that the Government would arrange relevant workshops or seminars aiming to encourage more business participation in biodiversity conservation, such as through the adoption of the TNFD framework.

16. A Member considered that the interconnections between climate change and nature conservation as well as the co-benefits of biodiversity enhancement and climate resilience should be better communicated to the relevant government departments and the general public. He aspired that the message should be emphasised in the coming Climate Action Plan update as it could draw the attention of the business community to both issues simultaneously.

17. Mr Desmond Wu concurred that biodiversity conservation and climate change were closely related issues. In the near future, many large-scale conservation projects would be implemented in the Northern Metropolis, such as the Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park (SPS WCP), which could serve multiple purposes of biodiversity conservation and wetland preservation relevant to climate change mitigation. In the updated BSAP, it was committed that biodiversity considerations would be taken into account in the next update of the Climate Action Plan 2050 to create synergy.

Publicity and Education

18. As advocated in the past, a Member said that AFCD should strengthen communication with the Education Bureau (EDB) for the incorporation of biodiversity-related contents into the syllabus of kindergarten, primary and secondary students. The Member stressed that education from young age would help develop an awareness of biodiversity conservation and environmental protection among the younger generation which should provide effective mainstreaming impacts. He also highlighted the importance to coordinate with the local tertiary institutions on nurturing the talents required in the areas of biodiversity conservation, as well as sustainable fisheries and agriculture etc.

19. Mr Simon Chan replied that AFCD had been working with EDB on biodiversity education since the implementation of the first BSAP. AFCD had also coordinated with EDB on experiential learning opportunities for kindergartens and primary schools such as through visits to the Hong Kong Wetland Park. He said that AFCD would continue to make various capacity building efforts including arranging relevant courses and training.

20. A Member held the view that AFCD should step up publicity efforts by introducing the updated BSAP to the new Legislative Council (LegCo) members, as well as to schools and the general public through traditional media, social media and roadshows. To save liaison efforts, AFCD could approach relevant principals' associations to follow up on the activities. Another Member added that AFCD could leverage its popular “Mr B Nature Classroom” Facebook page for the promotion. Mr Simon Chan confirmed that AFCD had planned a series of promotional activities with the Environmental Campaign Committee in the coming months, including social media promotions and roadshows, and would provide a briefing on the updated BSAP for the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs.

21. The Chairman considered that the documentary series “Enchanting China” produced by the Government was a good example to showcase the beauty of the country while providing opportunities for cross-border cooperation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). To achieve more effective results, she said that augmented reality and virtual reality technologies could be deployed in publicity and education activities.

Targeted Results

22. Two Members enquired if there were quantifiable key performance indicators (KPIs) for measuring the outcomes or the overall targets set to be achieved by 2035. Mr Simon Chan clarified that the 10 overall targets represented the expected achievements, and explained that not all initiatives were quantifiable. For example, it might not be feasible to pre-determine the number of biodiversity management plans to be developed over the 10-year period as it would be subject to the nature, location and number of projects to be involved in the future, whereas a target timeline could be set for the establishment of the SPS WCP. He indicated that the BSAP was intended to serve as a strategic roadmap with priority actions and projects to guide societal efforts, and the Government would review and report on the progress made through the joint efforts of society via appropriate channels, as well as update and roll out new initiatives in response to the evolving situation, including societal needs and resource availability. Meanwhile, AFCD would explore the adoption of the City Biodiversity Index, a composite index recommended under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity for assessing a city's overall performance in biodiversity conservation.

23. In response to a Member's query on the timeline for the ACE and the public to see the progress and outcomes, Mr Simon Chan remarked that AFCD would report progress to the ACE on an annual basis as in the previous phase of the BSAP. The

Chairman suggested that the AFCD could also report major outcomes to the Nature Conservation Subcommittee to allow more focused discussion on specific actions or projects by Members. AFCD

24. A Member appreciated the hard work of AFCD in putting together the updated BSAP, which was well written and had addressed the comments of the public and the ACE, including taking into account the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2023–2030). With reference to the target of effectively conserving 30% of the Earth’s land and ocean under the KMGBF, the Member asked whether Hong Kong had set specific targets to increase the protection of its sea area over the coming 10 years.

25. Mr Simon Chan indicated that KMGBF targets were intended to be achieved through the collective contributions of the whole world. As stated in the updated BSAP, Hong Kong would continue the efforts in conserving its land where the 30% protected land area target had already been exceeded. Although the existing sea area under statutory protection in Hong Kong was about 5%, trawling had been banned in all local waters. In addition, AFCD would explore the identification of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), a concept recognised by the KMGBF in identifying effectively managed land and sea areas. Mr Chan further informed that Hong Kong's Mirs Bay had been listed as an “Outstanding Example of Beautiful Bays” in the national “Beautiful Bays” campaign, demonstrating Hong Kong’s dedicated efforts in marine ecological environment protection.

26. A Member was pleased to note the priority action on promoting sustainable eco-tourism. He enquired about the direction for baseline assessment of the carrying capacity of different hotspots in Hong Kong as there was no relevant precedence. Having regard to the public attention on the large number of visitors in tourist hotspots, such as the High Island Reservoir East Dam, during public holidays, Mr Desmond Wu said that the Government was reviewing the matter with a view to working out an appropriate approach and effective management measures to strengthen nature and environmental protection while enhancing visitors’ experience.

27. A Member opined that surveillance cameras or sensors could be installed at the pier of Sharp Island to facilitate crowd control. In consultation with relevant stakeholders and the District Council, the Government could devise a mechanism to prevent additional visitors from accessing the island when the carrying capacity was exceeded. Considering that the ecological and recreational corridor on the south side of Lantau Island might face similar issues in the future, he suggested that the Government should consider the application of technology in this regard and engage early with the communities concerned to avoid disputes or unpleasant experiences. He further opined that developing more diversified tourist attractions in Hong Kong would help alleviate the problem.

Conclusion

28. The Chairman thanked the project team for the presentation and concluded that it was important to implement the BSAP with the collaborations of different parties to support the relevant cross-departmental, cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral work.

(Dr Samuel Chui joined the meeting during the discussion session. The presentation team for agenda item 2 left while the presentation team for agenda item 3 joined the meeting at this juncture.)

Item 3 : Any Other Business (Closed-door session)

(i) AI Bird Recognition and Smart Tree Survey

Application of AI in Ecological Surveys

29. At the Chairman's invitation, Dr Samuel Chui gave a brief introduction on the background while Ms Clara U briefed Members on EPD's latest initiative on AI bird recognition and smart tree survey in ecological surveys.

30. Two Members were pleased to note the application of technology in daily monitoring of species to support environmental impact assessment (EIA). A Member above considered that such application could also help with the assessment work related to nature financing. In response to another Member's enquiry on whether the Government would provide a guideline for the consultancy companies to adopt the same technology, Mr Gary Tam replied that EPD had the vision to extend the AI system to non-government projects. He explained that the initial trials in government projects had showed the effectiveness of such applications. He shared that private companies were motivated to adopt AI as it could save time, cost and manpower in data collection and analysis. Mr Tam expected that the AI system would support EIA assessment and address the need of green financing in the long run. He said that the Government would continue to promote the adoption of AI in the EIA process and might consider wider application when the technologies were mature.

31. A Member asked if the EIA process could be further streamlined and shortened when a database for Hong Kong would be ready in the future. Mr Gary Tam replied that the data would be stored and shared in the Hong Kong Environmental Database (HKED) and AI technology would provide a driving force to shorten the EIA procedures and speed up the developments in Hong Kong.

32. To address a Member's questions on data sharing and background of the systems, Ms Clara U shared that EPD had developed the application platform including the dashboard and define the application scenarios whereas the image and sound libraries for birds were sourced from Chinese mainland vendors. EPD had trained the model to improve its accuracy and also used it, as a trial, to observe the migration patterns of birds throughout the year at the Hong Kong Wetland Park. In

addition, EPD had liaised with the HyD on deployment of the system close to the viaducts near Kam Tin River. The data could be used to facilitate future highway designs. As for the light detection and ranging (LiDAR) technology deployed for tree scanning, she said that it was developed by a group of young people in Science Park based on the requirements of EPD.

33. A Member opined that AI could capture real-time data for surveys and reduce unnecessary disputes in the long run. Considering the legal implications of the EIA procedures, he highlighted that it was crucial to plan carefully the aspects that required the use of AI and the timetable of the fade-in of AI. Mr Gary Tam concurred that a comprehensive set of round-the-clock and real-time data could reduce disputes and improve the credibility and transparency of the EIA process.

Public Education and Participation

34. A Member remarked that the data could also be used for public education especially for teaching young people on conservation and environmental protection. The Member suggested that EPD should explore collaboration with different parties such as the Community Involvement Committee on Greening under the Development Bureau which had done much work on the promotion of tree care and conservation, urban greening etc.

35. The Chairman indicated that public participation would be the best form of publicity and education. Quoting the mobile application “iNaturalist” as an example, she opined that EPD could explore the possibility to promote public education and participation in nature conservation while enriching the ecological database with AI technology. A Member added that the Government might consider expanding further the application for the establishment of a warning system on tree fall risk.

36. Mr Gary Tam concurred that apart from assisting in the EIA works process, the real-time data including images and audios could also serve public education purpose to induce more interaction and participation. He said that EPD would explore community operations with different partners and organisations and explore the direction of public involvement in the data collection or identification process in the long run.

Addressing Limitations of AI Technology

37. A Member supported application of AI in the EIA process in the long run as AI could support real-time and round-the-clock operation. To save time in AI training, the Member suggested that EPD could collaborate with scholars such as Prof Wu Jin of the Hong Kong University who had been playing a leading role in the application of AI on tree surveys for species recognition, health status and size identification, etc. In addition, he considered that focus should be put on overcoming the existing limitations on AI application under specific constraints such as in dense forest, or when a large population or small woodland birds were involved etc. He opined that the system could be deployed in important habitats such as wetlands or

development projects to monitor the changes before, during and after the construction works to assess the effectiveness of the mitigation measures. If proved successful, the application could be included as part of the environmental monitoring and audit manual in the future.

38. Mr Gary Tam concurred that the application of AI would be especially meaningful in the key conservation areas from the monitoring or enhancement perspectives. He shared that EPD and CEDD had been working on setting up equipment in Ngau Tam Mei to observe the channel and the flight paths of birds. Noting the existing limitations of AI, Mr Tam said that human efforts and technology should be complementary to each other and EPD would continue to explore potential application of technologies.

39. A Member indicated that the difference in accuracy between manual data collection and AI collection should be compared and it was important to consider the requirement of human involvement to complement the limitation of AI. She asked if AI cameras could be installed in all districts in Hong Kong and whether the data collected would be uploaded to the dashboard automatically. She highlighted the importance to prevent abuse and unfiltered sharing, in particular on those sensitive species which were not disclosed in the current HKED.

40. The Chairman was glad that the Government was receptive and responsive to Members' comments. She shared that the viability and reliability of AI technologies were valid issues to be considered for their scaled-up usage, in particular under restricted conditions such as in dense forests with numerous birds. As stress tests in Hong Kong might not be easy, the Government might consider collaboration opportunities in the GBA.

41. Mr Gary Tam thanked all Members for their invaluable comments. Given that resources were limited, for the time being, the focus of the application would be on ecology-related issues such as baseline survey for the EIA process and further applications in other areas including education would be explored in the long term. In addition, EPD could share the data with other government departments to facilitate exploration of other possible usage.

(Dr Samuel Chui left the meeting after giving a brief introduction on the background of agenda item 3(i).)

(ii) Suggestion from Dr Bosco Chan of WWF Urging an Update of the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance

42. A Member informed Members about a recent letter from Dr Bosco Chan, Conservation Director of World Wide Fund for Nature - Hong Kong (WWF) to the South China Morning Post, urging the Government to update the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (WAPO) (Cap. 170), which was enacted in 1976. Dr Chan considered that the WAPO was unable to protect wild animals adequately despite amendments having been made in the past. In particular, the letter highlighted some

areas of concern, which included: (a) catching unprotected species would be legal as long as hunting equipment was not used; (b) the scientific names of some protected species had not been updated in the Schedules; and (c) globally threatened marine species like whale sharks and horseshoe crabs, as well as some insects and freshwater fishes, were omitted from the Schedules. The Member considered that the WAPO should be amended to close the loopholes.

43. Mr Simon Chan highlighted that the updated BSAP contained measures to protect species in need of conservation, including on combatting illegal poaching and harvesting of wildlife, and on strengthening law enforcement, including the amendment of existing laws. Mr Chan explained the intent behind the existing legislation, and further explained that the WAPO was designed to protect terrestrial animals, whereas marine species were protected under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171). He said that AFCD would review the matter and consider necessary amendments to the WAPO, as well as implement other relevant conservation measures under the updated BSAP.

44. A Member suggested that the Government could amend the WAPO with reference to the List of Threatened Species developed under the first phase of the BSAP. Dr Flora Mok indicated that AFCD had been working on the list and would release it in phases. She explained that the list was intended to reflect the latest conservation status of the species concerned in Hong Kong, rather than being directly applied for the purpose of legislative amendments. Sharing the concern of WWF, Dr Mok considered that the primary goal was to protect those endangered animals by devising the most suitable measures to address the imminent threats they faced. She remarked that, for some species, other approaches beyond legislative measures also provided the necessary support required for their survival.

45. The Chairman suggested reviewing the WAPO with reference to all related matters, including the List of Threatened Species, other relevant ordinances etc. for the sake of completeness and consistency. She aspired that AFCD could provide a timeline for the review for Members' reference at a later stage. AFCD

46. To address WWF's concerns, which could be raised again in the future, a Member opined that the Government should work out an overall plan on the matter. He also suggested that AFCD could inform the public of the relevant measures to be taken under the updated BSAP in the coming publicity activities.

47. Mr Simon Chan remarked that AFCD recognised the need of species protection and had included related actions in the updated BSAP, including reviewing the existing legislation and implementing conservation measures for species in need of protection. For example, while Incense Tree was not a scheduled plant under the Forests and Countryside Ordinance (Cap. 96), a targeted species action plan had been rolled out for enhancing its protection in view of the threats posed by illegal poaching. While WAPO was enacted in 1976, he noted that it had been updated on numerous occasions, including the recent incorporation of a ban on feeding wild animals and feral pigeons in 2024. He said that the Government would continue its efforts in wild

animal protection, and would review the legislation and consider updates or amendments as appropriate.

Date of next meeting (Closed-door session)

48. Members would be advised on the agenda for the next meeting in due course.

49. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:00 p.m.

**Nature Conservation Subcommittee Secretariat
April 2026**