

Dear Ms Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor,

I urge government to designate a large marine park and reroute the ferry traffic to save our local dolphins.

According to the latest figure released by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the number of Chinese White Dolphins (CWD) has reached a historical low in Hong Kong waters in the past decade. As a concerned citizen of Hong Kong, I have grave concerns about the future of CWD inhabiting our local waters.

Recently, the government unveiled the Sustainable Lantau Blueprint and I am deeply disappointed with the insufficient measures to conserve the CWD in Hong Kong for the long term, specifically:

1. The proposed marine parks for the HKIA Three-Runway System Project and the Integrated Waste Management Facilities (IWMF) Phase 1 Project are simply compensation measures under the statutory EIA requirements for these infrastructure projects but not new conservation initiative under the blueprint. Moreover, a painful lesson has been learnt recently from the Brothers Marine Park (BMP) as the compensation measure for another infrastructure project --- the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge. The BMP was to provide protection to favourable habitat to attract the dolphins to return after reclamation works, but thus far no dolphin usage of the BMP has been recorded in the past two years, and it is unlikely to fulfill its original goal in the foreseeable future. In fact, more reclamation projects have been proposed near this marine park, which will further hamper any chance for dolphins to return and utilize this marine park. Therefore, we have serious doubts about the effectiveness of this marine park, and the establishment of similar marine parks as a compensation measure for other infrastructure projects such as the HKIA third runway expansion.
2. Another two proposed marine parks, namely the Southwest Lantau Marine Park (SWLMP) and the Soko Islands Marine Park (SIMP), are not connected and so will have limited value in conserving dolphins because of the small sizes of these parks. The justification for the establishments of these two marine parks is related to the importance as marine habitats for CWD, but the area between the two parks, serving as a critical traveling corridor to move from one to another, remains unprotected. Without protecting the waters between these two proposed marine parks, the integrity of dolphin habitat and full benefits of the marine parks to the dolphins will never be realized.
3. In the Sustainable Lantau Blueprint, the only suggested conservation measure for CWD is to establish marine parks, which are already under planning. Therefore, in reality no new measures have been offered to address the threats CWD are facing, including the development projects in North Lantau waters proposed in the blueprint. Previous studies have shown that intense high-speed ferry traffic has seriously hampered the CWD usage of South Lantau waters as a result of acoustic disturbance and increased risk of vessel collision, and therefore such threats should be removed as soon as possible to create an opportunity for linking up the SWLMP and SIMP for long-term conservation of CWD.

Below are some suggestions for the government to consider:

1. As Chinese White Dolphins are losing a large area of marine habitat in the North Lantau waters, **more high quality habitats** in other areas in HK, including West and South Lantau waters, need to be secured for their conservation.
2. **Rerouting the high speed ferry traffic away from South Lantau** waters will secure a safe and high quality habitat for CWD to **offset the huge loss** of dolphin habitat in North Lantau waters, and should be a high priority for action to reverse the alarming downward trend in dolphin numbers.
3. **Connecting the proposed SWLMP and SIMP** without any fragmentation between them will create a larger and more coherent marine protected area with proper measures and enforcement. If done properly, the ecological value in South Lantau will be greatly enhanced for the dolphins, and they can utilize both marine parks more efficiently and safely.
4. In the long term, **a large marine protected area in the western waters of Hong Kong should be established** to connect the existing Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park, Tai O, Yi O, and the proposed SWLMP and SIMP. A marine protected area of this scale is the only way to ensure the long term survival of CWD in Hong Kong waters.

I sincerely hope that the new administration you are leading will be a responsible one for the environment and protection of our Handover Mascot, and will implement the suggestions I have made above as soon as possible.

Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society