
Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society Press Release (July 10, 2017)

Key Issues:

**Effective Measures are Absent in Sustainable Lantau Blueprint
Diversion of High Speed Ferry and Extension of Marine Parks are called for Long-term
Conservation of Chinese White Dolphins in Hong Kong**

Our handover mascot is losing North Lantau water with continuous human impacts

Chinese white dolphin(CWD) was picked as the handover mascot in 1997, but after 20 years they are having difficulties in surviving in Hong Kong waters as they are facing several threats brought by us. The downward trend in their abundance in Hong Kong hasn't slowed down last decade and it hit a historical low in 2016. The most affected areas are the Northeast and Northwest Lantau by the still ongoing Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge(HZMB) construction. Many dolphins were found disappearing in the area, some of them simply vanished, some shifted their home range to the West or even Southwest Lantau water.

In August 2016, the third runway construction started. More development is planned in the same area including Siu Ho Wan and Lung Kwu Tan reclamation in the next decade. The promise that Highways Department made before the HZMB construction, which Brothers Island Marine Park will be used by dolphins in the future again, will very possibly not come true.

The proposed marine parks are fragmented and are just fake, ineffective measure for dolphins

In December 2016, Brothers Island Marine Park(BIMP) was established to compensate the habitat loss due to the HZMB reclamation and hope CWD will return to use the area again after construction. Unfortunately, many development projects are proposed so there is no room for the environment to recover. And with the disturbance by high speed ferries(HSF) from the Skypier of the airport, the number of CWD using Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park(SCLKCMP) dropped rapidly. We doubt whether CWD will still use North Lantau water as their major habitat in the future.

In June 2017, the government unveil the "Sustainable Lantau Blueprint" (Blueprint). Four Marine Parks are proposed as the strategy for the long-term conservation of CWD. However, two of them are only compensational marine parks for the third runway construction and the Integrated Waste Management Facility(IWMF). After learning a lesson from the failing of the BIMP, we will not believe marine park as a compensational measure will work anymore.

The other two proposed ones are not brand-news ideas and indeed we have asked for them for over 10 years. In 2002, the Chief Executive at that time Mr. Tung Chee-wah promised that the government would establish these two marine parks in a short time. However, until today, these marine parks are still in proposal. And more ironic is, the Southwest Lantau Marine Park(SWLMP) and Soko Islands Marine Park(SIMP) were used as the tool for the approval of EIA report by ACE and EPD. In the Blueprint, the proposed area of the SWLMP and SIMP is so fragmented and we doubt the effectiveness of them.

In other words, all the measures mentioned in the Blueprint are all old stuff and will only be sugar coating but not having real conservation value.

HSF route diversion and a connected marine park are needed

West and Southwest Lantau area will be the focus of CWD conservation in Hong Kong. We may have a chance of losing them if we can't protect these areas well. HSF traffic has always been one of the main threats in South Lantau water and result in 1.) direct collision with CWD; 2.) avoidance of using inshore area by CWD; 3.) cutting off traveling corridor for CWD like the one between Fan Lau and Soko islands.

So, the most important task is to divert the HSF route to the south to avoid important CWD habitat. As a result, the main threat in the area will be removed. Then the proposed SWLMP and SIMP should be connected and eventually all marine parks from SCLKCMP to Tai O, Yi O then to proposed SWLMP and SIMP should be connected as a large marine park to be a truly effective one.

Saving the Handover Mascot campaign

We are now launching a campaign called "Saving the Handover Mascot". We hope Hong Kong public will join in to help with our petition and we need at least 10,000 signatures to put pressure on our government. Our call to Civil Engineering and Development Department is to review the conservation measures of CWD in the Blueprint. We will ask Marine Department to assess the marine traffic in South Lantau and divert the HSF traffic in same area to avoid important CWD habitat. We also hope Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department will review the possibility of connecting the proposed SWLMP and SIMP. A large marine park connecting all important habitats is crucial for the long-term survival of CWD in Hong Kong

HKDCS will provide classroom training for volunteers who help us to spread the message and collect signatures. Hong Kong public is responsible for voicing out for this beautiful mascot and resident of Hong Kong and fight for better conservation measures for them. July 2017 is the time for our new leader Carrie Lam and her new cabinet take up their posts. We hope they will be more responsible and listen to the call of Hong Kong citizens. Greater effort is needed to conserve our marine environment for a better living of CWD.

Saving the Handover Mascot campaign details:

Date: June 20th to July 19th (30-day public consultation period)

Website: www.facebook.com/3RWdolphin and <http://bit.ly/2rxLmmn>

Training sessions: 15/7, 27/7 (public are encouraged to sign up these sessions)

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