

**Question on the environmental impacts
of the three-runway system project of the airport
(Paper IDC 98/2016)**

Written Reply from the Airport Authority Hong Kong

In response to District Council Member Ms Yung Wing-sheung's questions on Chinese White Dolphins and coral translocation, the Airport Authority Hong Kong ('AA') hereby presents our reply.

Chinese White Dolphin Baseline Monitoring Report

When conducting the Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') for Expansion of Hong Kong International Airport into a Three-Runway System ('3RS'), thorough assessment was conducted on potential disturbance to marine ecology and the Chinese White Dolphins ('CWDs') by marine ecology & dolphin experts. The assessment concluded that with the implementation of mitigation measures, residual impact to CWDs is predicted to be acceptable.

AA, in accordance with recommendations in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIA Report') and requirements in the Environmental Permit ('EP'), conducted a 6-month baseline monitoring on CWDs prior to the commencement of marine construction works of the 3RS project. A Chinese White Dolphin Baseline Monitoring Report ('CWDBR') was then submitted to the Environmental Protection Department ('EPD') as per the EP requirement. The baseline monitoring report is available at AA's dedicated environmental website.

The baseline survey took into consideration seasonal effects on the CWDs in order to help determine whether the upcoming construction works will lead to unacceptable influences to the CWD numbers in Hong Kong waters. This methodology is in line with those conducted by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ('AFCD') and other large-scale marine works projects. When further survey data are collected in the ongoing monitoring, AA will review the action levels accordingly.

AA will conduct the CWD impact monitoring and implement the event action plan as stipulated in the CWDBR, and report to the EPD accordingly. Should monitoring results indicate exceedances above the limit levels are due to marine construction works of the 3RS project, AA will consider temporarily stopping relevant marine works to mitigate the impact.

Coral Translocation Plan

As per the EP requirement, AA has deposited a Coral Translocation Plan ('CTP') at the EPD, which includes a detailed baseline survey in areas that are subject to potential direct impact and the translocation details. EPD, in consultation with AFCD, has accepted the CTP.

Corals found along the existing artificial seawalls at the north of the airport island are mainly gorgonian colonies (*Guaiagorgia* sp.), which are commonly found in western waters of Hong Kong, and not regarded as a species of conservation importance or protected under local legislation or international conventions. The EIA assessment concluded low to moderate impact in the construction phase and that no mitigation is required.

In terms of coral coverage, since the focus of the EIA coral surveys and that of the CTP are different, the respective methodologies adopted were therefore not the same. The focus of the EIA surveys aimed at providing a general ecological profile of a large area whereas the CTP targeted at detailed surveys at specific sites known with corals. Thus results obtained by the two sets of surveys ought not be directly compared.

The CTP presented a detailed baseline coral survey at the airport island's artificial seawall and in the proximity of the horizontal directional drilling daylighting location at Sha Chau, including the species, locations, numbers and diameters of coral colonies and the conditions for translocation. The spot dives indicated some 6,400 colonies of corals, majority of which are gorgonian (*Guaiagorgia* sp.) which are commonly found in Hong Kong waters. A total of 10 stations were surveyed and only 7 of which will be directly affected by the 3RS works. Among the 6,400 colonies, about 3,000 therein are at these 7 stations.

As outlined in the CTP, only the coral colonies attached on movable boulders, i.e. less than 50 cm in diameter, are considered suitable and practicable for translocation. This is also the translocation practice adopted by other marine projects in Hong Kong. As such, about 300 gorgonian colonies found at the north-eastern side of the artificial seawall on the airport island will be translocated. Having said that, during the actual translocation, we will assure that translocation will be conducted for all those colonies when it is suitable and practicable to do so. Thus the eventual translocated colony numbers could be higher. As for the 3,300 gorgonian colonies at Sha Chau station, as they are not anticipated to be affected by the 3RS works, they need not be relocated.

In June 2016, AA has uploaded the CTP onto AA's three-runway system dedicated environmental website for viewing by the general public.

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