

Islands District Council
Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries, Environmental Hygiene and
Climate Change Committee
TAFEHCCC Paper No. 66/2020

Extension of Sham Wan Restricted Area

Purpose

This paper seeks to brief Members on the proposed extension of Sham Wan Restricted Area in Sham Wan, Lamma Island, and invites Members' views on the proposal.

Background

2. The sandy beach at Sham Wan, Lamma Island (the Beach) is the only site in Hong Kong where the endangered Green Turtles nest regularly. In the breeding season, Green Turtles migrate from their feeding grounds to the waters adjacent to their natal beaches, and stay there before and in-between nesting. Green Turtles preparing to nest are particularly sensitive to disturbance from human activities such as glare, noise and marine traffic, which may cause them to abandon nesting. These unsuccessful breeding events will eventually affect the proliferation of the species.
3. Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been implementing various conservation measures to protect Green Turtles and their nesting site. These include listing Green Turtle as a protected wild animal and designating the Beach as a Restricted Area between 1 June and 31 October every year under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170). Unauthorised entry into the Sham Wan Restricted Area (SWRA) can be fined a maximum of HK\$50,000. Other conservation measures being implemented include control against wilful disturbance and possession of wild sea turtles (including their nests and eggs), patrol and habitat management of the nesting site, removal of abandoned fishing nets, undertaking of scientific studies, publicity and educational projects as well as regional and international collaborations.
4. The Government noted the bay of Sham Wan has become a popular spot for various activities including boating and fishery activities, which may disturb the breeding and nesting of Green Turtles. In 2018, the Government committed in the

Policy Agenda to expand the Restricted Area at Sham Wan to also cover Green Turtles' breeding ground in the adjacent waters, to strengthen protection to Green Turtles.

Proposal

5. Since breeding Green Turtles stay in the waters adjacent to their nesting beaches before nesting, and they are particularly sensitive to human disturbance and prone to impacts from approaching vessels during this period, controlling human activities in the waters adjacent to the nesting beach prior to the nesting period is necessary to prevent Green Turtles from abandoning nesting due to disturbance impact.

6. To better protect Green Turtles and its breeding habitats in Hong Kong, it is proposed to expand the SWRA to cover the bay of Sham Wan adjoining the Beach and between Yuen Kok and Tai Kok (the Bay) (**Annex**), which has an area of about 98.2 hectares; it is also proposed to extend the restricted period of the expanded SWRA from five months to seven months each year, i.e. from 1 June to 31 October (both days inclusive) to 1 April to 31 October (both days inclusive).

7. AFCD is planning to take forward multi-pronged management measures at SWRA to better manage the extended Restricted Area and strengthen the protection of breeding Green Turtles. In order to minimise unintended access to SWRA and reduce the risk of boats colliding with Green Turtles, we will explore installing notice boards at the headlands or the seaward entrance of the Bay to remind vessels passing by not to enter Deep Bay without permit during the restricted period. Prior to the start of restricted period every year, AFCD will remind relevant stakeholders, including fisherman organisations and marina clubs, about the effective time and relevant control measures; AFCD will also carry out habitat management measures, such as removing climbers and garbage on the beach, and abandoned fishing nets from the Bay. During the restricted period, AFCD will step up patrols in SWRA to control unauthorised entry. Use of surveillance cameras would also be explored to monitor the conditions in the Bay and activities of Green Turtles. AFCD also plans to invite stakeholders to join hands in maintaining SWRA or conducting education and promotion initiatives for conservation of Green Turtles outside the restricted period, in light of the availability of resources and priority of work.

8. The Government has been in touch with various stakeholders since mid of 2019 to consult them about the proposed extension of SWRA, including local representatives, green groups, fishermen associations, local marina clubs and related

government advisory bodies. As a next step, the Government will carefully consider the views gauged, and then prepare for amendment of the relevant legislation within this year, with a view to implementing the proposed extension within 2021.

Advice sought

9. Members are invited to note the content of the paper, and provide their views on the expansion of SWRA and the extension of its restricted period.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
September 2020