

Preliminary Findings on Ecological and Fisheries Surveys in relation to Reclamation Works for Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands

The 12-month surveys on ecology and fisheries commenced in the fourth quarter of 2021 in order to collect baseline information for conducting ecological and fisheries impact assessments. The survey extent covers terrestrial and marine areas adjacent to Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands (KYCAI) and associated infrastructure. The methodologies of surveys comply with requirements under the Study Brief of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The 12-month ecological and fisheries surveys will be completed shortly, and we are carrying out the associated data analyses and collation work. The preliminary survey results related to the proposed reclamation works, based on the data collated, are shown below:

Marine Mammal Surveys

- (a) For the vessel-based line transect survey, neither Chinese White Dolphin (CWD) nor Finless Porpoise (FP) sightings were recorded within the Central Waters area, while FP sightings were mainly recorded between Cheung Chau and Lamma Island. No CWD or FP sightings were recorded within the Central Waters area by the land-based theodolite tracking. The aforementioned survey findings align with the results of long-term monitoring of marine mammals in Hong Kong Waters conducted by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD).
- (b) For the underwater acoustic monitoring, we recorded very low level of CWD occurrence within Central Waters area, while FP detections were recorded in the waters near Kau Yi Chau, Siu Kau Yi Chau, Peng Chau and Sunshine Island. However, the FP detections in the waters near these nearby islands were low when compared with those in other locations (such as Ha Mei Tsui of Lamma Island) under the same survey, as well as other EIA study reports and Environmental Monitoring and Auditing reports.
- (c) In view of the above preliminary survey findings, the Central Waters (where KYCAI is situated) is not considered as an important habitat for marine mammals. This also aligns with AFCD's monitoring results. As such, we consider that no direct impact due to reclamation works on the species concerned is anticipated. We will continue to work on the EIA studies, and recommend appropriate mitigation measures, with a view to minimising indirect impacts arising from the reclamation works as far as possible.

Other Marine Ecological Surveys

- (d) During the sub-tidal ecological survey, hard coral communities with low to medium coral coverage were found along the coastlines of existing islands such as Kau Yi Chau, Siu Kau Yi Chau, Peng Chau, Sunshine Island and Hei Ling Chau. Several species of hard corals recorded along the coastlines were hermatypic corals described in the Field Guide to Hard Corals of Hong Kong, while some are listed as near-threatened or vulnerable species under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List¹. The hard coral communities along the coastlines are considered as natural habitats for marine ecology, and of certain ecological value.
- (e) During the ecological survey for seabed, species including seahorse, pipefish and black coral, which were mentioned in the EIA Study Brief, were not recorded. Besides, isolated hard corals and octocorals, including soft corals, gorgonians and seapens, were found within the soft bottom of reclamation extent. These corals are ahermatypic and common coral species in Hong Kong, and are not species on the IUCN Red List. The overall ecological value of the soft bottom within reclamation footprint were considered relatively low.
- (f) In the intertidal ecological survey, species recorded were mostly algae, snails, crustaceans, bivalves etc., where no species of conservation importance (such as horseshoe crab) were recorded.
- (g) In view of the above preliminary survey findings, we propose to introduce a water channel between KYCAI and nearby islands in order to avoid direct impact to the hard coral communities along the shorelines. We will also proactively consider appropriate mitigation measures to minimise impacts to marine ecology arising from the reclamation works.

¹ The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List is compiled and maintained by the IUCN. IUCN is the world's largest environmental network comprising members from both government and civil society organizations. Its work includes formulating measures needed to safeguard the natural world, such as species survival and protected areas. Its "Red List" has always been considered the most comprehensive and objective assessment method for the conservation status of animals and plants worldwide. In Hong Kong, AFCD is a registered member of IUCN.

Terrestrial Ecological Surveys

- (h) Since the KYCAI has been set back from the nearby islands, we anticipate that the reclamation will not impose direct impact to habitats, plants, birds and terrestrial wildlife on these nearby islands.
- (i) During the terrestrial ecological survey, a pair of White bellied Sea Eagles was recorded nesting on Sunshine Island, but no Bogadek's Burrowing Lizard was recorded. As mentioned in paragraph (h), there will be no direct impact to terrestrial ecology on Sunshine Island due to the reclamation works. We will recommend appropriate mitigation measures to minimise indirect impacts to terrestrial ecology arising from the reclamation works as far as possible.

Fisheries Surveys

- (j) Preliminary survey findings show moderate to high level of fishing activities and low to moderate fisheries resources were recorded in the Central Waters. The above findings were considered to be consistent with results of AFCD's Port Survey 2016/17. We will continue with the fisheries impact assessment, and formulate appropriate measures to minimise indirect impacts arising from the reclamation works as far as possible in accordance with the existing EIA mechanism.