

Planning & Development Division
2017 Annual Conference
COUNTRY PARK
Conservation or Development?

Date : 16 Sep 2017 (Sat)
Time : 9 AM - 1PM
(Registration begins at 8:45 AM)
Venue : 3/F, Junior Ball Room,
Royal Plaza Hotel, Mongkok



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Message From PDD Chairman

On behalf of the Organizing Committee, I wish to extend my warm welcome to all our distinguished speakers, guests, all members and participants of the HKIS Planning & Development Division Annual Conference 2017 "Country Park - Conservation or Development".



I would also like to express my thanks to all members of the Organizing Committee and HKIS secretariat colleagues for their assistance and unfailing support to this Conference. Please join me in wishing HKIS and all its members every success in the years to come.

Sr Prof James Kenneth Pong

*Chairman of Organizing Committee for HKIS PDD Annual Conference 2017
Chairman of HKIS Planning and Development Division*

Biography of PDD Chairman

Prof. James Kenneth Pong is a Fellow Member of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors with extensive working experience which spans across a wide spectrum of professional fields. Working in the public sector, Prof. Pong has involved in building control work, scrutinizing building proposals submitted by private developers, environmental enforcement and prosecution work, reviewing the Waste Disposal Ordinance in relation to flytipping and interpreting various environmental legislations. Working in the private sector as an Authorized Person, a Chartered Town Planner and a Chartered Building Engineer, Prof. Pong has involved in planning and development work for developers including new development work and alteration & additional work, lease modifications, facility management, external façade and hotel fitting-out work. Prof. Pong has also practised as a Barrister specializing in building contract and company law. He was the head of the Central Prosecution Unit of the Environmental Protection Department of the HKSARG.

Holding a Postgraduate Certificate in Education awarded by the University of Hong Kong, Prof. Pong has been delivering part-time lectures at various educational institutes such as the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, SPACE of the University of Hong Kong and the Morrison Hill Technical Institute. Being a Chartered Secretary, Prof Pong is now an executive director of Sundart Holdings Ltd, which is a company listed at the Main Board of Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

Welcome Speech from the PDD Chairman

Country Park – Development or Conservation ?

Today, the Planning & Development Division of HKIS is very honored to have your presence at this annual conference. Town planning and development, I mean sustainable development, are interrelated and interdependent on each other. Adopting the principle of sustainable development, town planning seeks to transform our city into an organized, efficient and benign environment for the people of Hong Kong. Given the limited land resource in Hong Kong, there is a need to strike a balance in land utilization to meet the competing demands for housing, commerce, industry, recreation, nature conservation, heritage preservation, transport and other community needs.

How large is our country park ? Out of the total 1 108 square kilometres of land in Hong Kong, about three quarters is countryside. There are a total of 24 country parks which have been designated for the purposes of nature conservation, countryside recreation and outdoor education. The country parks comprise scenic hills, woodlands, reservoirs and coastline in all parts of Hong Kong. Further, there are 22 special areas, which provide statutory protection for the habitats of diverse flora and fauna, created mainly for the purpose of nature conservation. The country parks and special areas altogether cover a total area of 443 square kilometres, i.e. about 40% of the land in Hong Kong. In addition, 67 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) have been listed to recognize the scientific importance of these sites and to ensure that due consideration to conservation is given when developments in or near these sites are proposed.

In spite of the relatively huge size of country parks and conservation areas, the proposal to use only a few hectares of land lying at the outer fringe (not the enclaves) of the country parks is a very controversial issue. On one hand we desperately need land for building residential units to satisfy the great demand for Hong Kong citizens, especially for the young generations who are the first-time home buyers. There are also voices advocating the construction of homes for the elderly on country parks to serve the need of the aging population in Hong Kong. On the other hand, country parks are our precious asset which we can enjoy during our holidays or retirements. The opposition suggests that any proposed development on country parks will destroy our benign environment and deprive the citizens of Hong Kong from enjoying the natural habitats of

diverse flora and fauna. How are we going to strike a balance of these land uses, i.e. development and nature conservation ?

At this juncture, maybe our history can shed some light to our dilemma. In 1973, with a mission to cope with the soaring demand in housing arising from the ever increasing population and to improve the living environment by decentralizing the population from the over-crowded urban districts, Hong Kong has adopted the concept of “garden city” propounded by the town planner Mr. Ebenezer Howard and developed nine new towns since the initiation of its New Town Development Programme. These new towns were built in the rural or countryside in particular those in the New Territories where the people living there could enjoy the green benign environment and at the same time could find jobs within those new towns.

The nine new towns can be divided into 3 generations. The first batch Tsuen Wan New Town, Sha Tin New Town and Tuen Mun New Town started works in the early 1970s; the second batch Tai Po New Town, Fanling/Sheung Shui New Town and Yuen Long New Town commenced works in late 1970s; and the third batch Tseung Kwan O New Town, Tin Shui Wai New Town and Tung Chung New Town began their evolution in the 1980s and 1990s. These new towns all strived to provide housing in the countryside to relief the pressing needs for residential units of the community in the 70s to 90s.

Having said that, before we decide to build housing on country parks, we need to deliberate *inter alia* the following questions : Is there no other land where we can build housing or homes for the elderly other than on the country parks? What are the merits of using land, in particular those at the fringe of the country parks, for developments? What types of development, if any, are appropriate to be carried out on country parks? The purpose of this conference is to put together the minds of the intelligence to enlighten us the pros and cons in using a minute part of our country parks for development. It is my wish that through the speeches of the honourable guests today and through our Q&A discussions, all of us can have a better understanding of the rationales behind why one votes for or against using country parks for development, and with that in mind, we might narrow down the discrepancies to achieve a balanced use of our precious land resource in Hong Kong.

Conference Programme

08:45	Registration
09:00-09:15	Welcome Speech Sr Prof James Kenneth Pong Chairman, PDD, HKIS
09:15-09:20	Souvenir presentations and group photos session
09:20-09:50	Keynote Speech by Guest of Honor Mr Ma Siu Cheung, Eric, GBS, JP Immediate Past Secretary for Development, HKSAR Government <i>Topic: Hard Facts of Country Parks and Housing in HK</i>
09:50-10:20	Mr Raymond Lee, JP Director of Planning Department, HKSAR Government <i>Topic: When development crosses paths with country parks - A historical account</i>
10:20-10:50	Dr Wong Fook Yee Former Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government <i>Topic: The Role of Protected Areas in achieving a balanced development in Hong Kong</i>
10:50-11:10	Tea Break
11:10-11:40	Prof Lam Chiu Ying, SBS Adjunct Professor of the Geography Resource Management Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong <i>Topic: The irreplaceable value of country parks</i>
11:40-12:10	Prof Ng Cho Nam, SBS, BBS, JP Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Science, The University of Hong Kong <i>Topic: Should country park be a 'no go' area for development?</i>
12:10-12:40	Discussion Forum - Panelists Mr Ma Siu Cheung, Eric, GBS, JP Mr Lee Kai Wing, Raymond, JP Dr Wong Fook Yee Prof Lam Chiu Ying, SBS Prof Ng Cho Nam, SBS, BBS, JP Moderator: Sr Eureka Cheng
12:40-12:50	Conclusion & Remarks Sr Edwin Tsang Past Chairman, PDD, HKIS
12:50-13:00	Vote of Thanks Sr Edmond Yew Vice Chairman, PDD, HKIS
13:00	End of Conference

Distinguished Guest Speakers

Mr Ma Siu Cheung, Eric, GBS, JP

Immediate Past Secretary for Development, HKSAR Government

Topic: Hard Facts of Country Parks and Housing in HK

Biography

Mr Ma was the Immediate Past Secretary and former Under Secretary for Development responsible for the policies on land supply and public works. During his term with the HKSAR Government, he dedicated his effort to increase land supply to address the supply-demand imbalance for land and housing.

Mr Ma is an engineer by profession and has over 30 years of experience in the construction industry. Before joining HKSAR Government, Mr Ma had held senior positions in international consulting firms leading major land use planning and new town development projects including Hung Shiu Kiu, Kai Tak and Tseung Kwan O developments.

Synopsis

Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated cities in the world with the highest density of 57,000 people per square kilometre. The shortage of land for housing and economic activities is still high on the political agenda. There are 270,000 applications for public housing with the average waiting time hitting 4.7 years. The housing problem also poses the potential hazard as many families have no choice but to live in subdivided units, even in industrial buildings.

At the same time, out of the total 1 108 square kilometres of land in Hong Kong, one-quarter is developed whilst the remaining three-quarters is countryside. A total of 24 country parks with total area of 434 square kilometres have been designated for the purposes of nature conservation, countryside recreation and outdoor education. On top of these 24 country parks, there are 22 special areas created mainly for the purpose of nature conservation. Over the years, Government have incorporated more land with high ecological value into country parks enhancing their recreational and educational values.

To alleviate the imminent housing problem, is it worthwhile for the community to evaluate the pros and cons of allocating a small proportion of land on the periphery of country parks with relatively low ecological and public enjoyment value for the much-needed public housing and non-profit-making elderly homes?



Mr Raymond Lee, JP

Director of Planning Department, HKSAR Government



*Topic: When development crosses paths with country parks -
A historical account*

Biography

Mr Raymond Lee is currently the Director of Planning Department in the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. He is also a member of the Planners Registration Board. From late October 2012 to May 2014, Mr Lee was the Head of Energizing Kowloon East Office responsible for facilitating the transformation of Kowloon East into another core business district of Hong Kong. He was the Secretary to the Town Planning Board from May 2014 to November 2016.

Mr Lee has extensive experiences in town planning. He has previously been involved in planning for the old airport site at Kai Tak, review of the Town Planning Ordinance, harbour-front planning and development, boundary closed area and cross-boundary planning, and planning for new development areas in the New Territories.

Synopsis

The form of a city is shaped by the interplay of its political, social, economic and environmental circumstances over a long period of time. The peculiar morphology of Hong Kong with densely urbanised developments in close proximity to country parks is the result of such dynamic interaction. Since the establishment of the first Country Park in Hong Kong in 1977, its evolution has somehow reflected the changing public aspirations in meeting our development needs. This presentation aims to walk our collaborators down the time tunnel to revisit a few cases of land use planning crossing paths with country parks.

Dr Wong Fook Yee

Former Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government



Topic: The Role of Protected Areas in achieving a balanced development in Hong Kong

Biography

Dr. Wong Fook Yee graduated in the University of Hong Kong in Geography. He further his studies in Environmental Forestry in the University College of North Wales. He joined The Agriculture and Fisheries Department in 1978 and has been involved in the planning and management of country parks for almost 30 years before his retirement in 2008. He then started teaching in the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong University on nature conservation and management of protected areas respectively. He is a nature lover and had been involved in the designation of Hong Kong country parks and the provision of recreational and educational facilities. He is a member of the World Commission of Protected Areas (WCPA) under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). He has extensive experience in recreational use of Hong Kong country parks and in nature conservation.

Synopsis

Hong Kong Country Parks are designated under the Country Parks Ordinance, Cap 208. They are the important land-use options decided by the Government and the community some 40 years ago, they match with the protected areas categories of the International Union Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These are part of the important global network for the conservation of nature. Apart from preserving the rich diversity of nature and culture, Hong Kong Country Parks also make enormous contribution towards a balanced and healthy urban environment which people of Hong Kong badly needed.

My presentation would focus on five aspects, namely:

1. Nature of protected areas;
2. Location of protected areas;
3. Role of protected areas;
4. Development of protected areas and
5. Consideration in using country parks for residential or other purposes.

Hopefully the presentation would enable members of the HKIS to have an overall view of the role and nature of Hong Kong protected areas and the feasibility in using them for housing development.

Prof Lam Chiu Ying, SBS

Adjunct Professor of the Geography Resource Management Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Topic: The irreplaceable value of country parks

Biography

Mr LAM is an Adjunct Professor of the Geography Resource Management Department in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Chairman of the Environmental Campaign Committee, and Chairman of the Hong Kong Countryside Foundation. He was previously Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (2003 - 2009). Mr LAM has always been keen in promoting the love of Nature and in raising public awareness about climate change. He is an active public speaker and regularly shares his views on nature conservation in his blog. His publications include *Birds of Hong Kong and South China* 《香港及華南鳥類》, *Cosmos in Flux Where for Peace* 《天地變何處安心》 and *Heaven and Earth Speak Not* 《天地不說話》.

Synopsis

To appreciate the value of country parks, one has to trace the history of country parks in Hong Kong back to the enactment of the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208) in 1976. Some people consider that it was part of Government's response to the riots in 1967. Government realized that young people must be provided with opportunities for recreation in order to avoid the harmful accumulation of distress and dissatisfaction. Thus Cap. 208 makes explicit reference to recreation, tourism and public enjoyment as the management objectives of country parks. The conservation of plants, wild life and built heritage are also listed but contrary to common perception, ecology is not the only nor primary purpose of country parks. The talk will look back at the fundamentals of country parks and explain the range of functions performed by country parks in the service of Hong Kong citizens. Country parks carry such great value to the citizens of Hong Kong that they should not be tampered with as if they are "land resource lying idle doing nothing". Indeed even China Mainland has recognised such value lately and now dictates that the boundary of city development must be established so that the city is placed in the midst of nature and that hills and rivers are to be saved for city dwellers. (儘快把每個城市特別是特大城市開發邊界劃定，把城市放在大自然中，把綠水青山保留給城市居民) Hong Kong must not do worse than Mainland cities.

Prof Ng Cho Nam, SBS, BBS, JP

Associate Professor,

Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Science,
The University of Hong Kong



Topic: Should country park be a 'no go' area for development?

Biography

Dr. Cho Nam Ng is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, The University of Hong Kong. He is an experienced teacher and researcher. His research interests include Environmental Impact Assessment, ecological impacts of urbanisation, sustainable development, river basin study and water governance. He has also actively participated in government advisory committees and environmental NGOs in Hong Kong. Currently he is serving the Country and Marine Park Board, and the Council for Sustainable Development. He is a director of the Conservancy Association and the Hong Kong Countryside Foundation, and the vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Birdwatching Society. Dr Ng was awarded the Bronze Bauhinia Star (2004) and the Silver Bauhinia Star (2014) honours by the Hong Kong SAR Government, “in recognition of his meritorious public and community service, particularly for his contribution to environmental protection and promotion of nature conservation in Hong Kong.”.

Synopsis

Hong Kong is considered as one of a kind in all the world cities that has highly accessible country parks near and surrounding its city core. This unique landscape has recently been challenged by a proposed study on turning part of the country park into other land uses for public low-cost housing and elderly accommodation. On the other hand, although about 40% of Hong Kong’s territory has already been covered by country parks, there are over seventy enclaves excluded from the system where one can find abandoned indigenous villages and ecologically important sites. Over the years, conservation groups have persistently requested the authority to extend country park area to include the enclaves, especially those of high ecological value.

This seminar will examine the merits and major limitations of current country park system in Hong Kong. It will discuss whether the country park should be further extended and at the same time some forms of development could be allowed on country park land. What are the potential benefits and trade off? The seminar will end with a discussion on the way forward to address these controversial issues with an aim to make Hong Kong more sustainable at both community and territorial wide levels.

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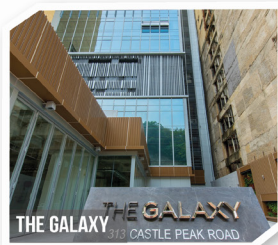
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