



## **The Green Earth's Position Paper on Artificial Islands in the Central Waters (Lantau Tomorrow Vision)**

The Green Earth (TGE) opposes the Lantau Tomorrow Vision development of artificial islands reclamation in the Central Waters (Lantau Tomorrow Vision) in Hong Kong. The development:

1. Is expected to destroy natural habitat in Hong Kong Waters and the Pearl River;
2. requires a huge supply of marine sand as the main fill material that has had severe shortage in the market;
3. will have unacceptably huge carbon emissions; and
4. cannot address Hongkongers' desperate need for public housing in a more reasonable timeframe

Therefore, TGE would like to submit this position paper to persuade members of the Finance Committee of the LegCo to vote AGAINST all agenda items related to the development including but not limited to feasibility studies.

Moreover, TGE urges the committee to arrange public hearing sessions and engagement events for the development project, and let our representatives to participate to present our views and recommendations in-person.

### **Lantau Tomorrow Vision destroys the Natural Habitat**

Increasing Hong Kong's land supply through reclamation has become controversial as public awareness grows about the irreversible damage it causes to marine habitats.

Although the Chinese white dolphin was the mascot of the Hong Kong handover, its numbers have kept dropping because of large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and Hong Kong airport's third runway. There were 188 dolphins recorded in 2003 but only 32 in 2019, an alarming drop of 83 percent.

This beloved mammal has been listed as a "Grade 1 national key protected animal" since 1988 and is also protected by Hong Kong law, but is now on the verge of



extinction due to development without adequate consideration of sustainability. And Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor is, it seems, unconcerned.

Lam's recent responses in media interviews about proposed large-scale reclamation off Lantau Island for increasing land supply give cause for greater anxiety about her apparent lack of environmental consciousness, and even logic.

It was reported that she does not consider reclamation in mainland waters to be an option because of President Xi Jinping's passion for environmental conservation. But she sees no problem for the ecosystem if the Hong Kong government carries out such reclamation in Hong Kong waters.

Lam must be aware that there is no physical boundary separating Hong Kong waters from those of the mainland. If the marine habitat of Hong Kong is destroyed, a line on the map cannot prevent it from having an impact on the mainland's natural environment.

#### Lantau Tomorrow Vision has an insufficient marine sand supply

Another concern regarding reclamation is the huge demand for fill material. The government has claimed that the city has generated a large amount of construction waste that is being stored in public facilities, and which can be used for the 1,700-hectare Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

However, Lam has failed to address the reclamation problems relating to the 650-hectare third runway due to the suspended delivery of fill materials from the mainland for over four months last year. The work was estimated to require 100 million cubic metres of material, with only 10 percent of that to be obtained from the city's public reserve. The remaining 90 million cubic metres, mainly marine sand, are to be bought from Qinzhou in Guangxi.

Dredging such vast quantities of natural sand will cause irreversible damage to the Qinzhou ecosystem. So Lam's apparent belief that no environmental harm will be inflicted on the mainland from reclamation work in Hong Kong waters is sadly misguided.



### Lantau Tomorrow Vision has huge carbon emissions

Another important consideration should be carbon emissions. Based on the estimated fill materials needed for the third runway, the 1,700-hectare Lantau Tomorrow Vision could require over 260 million cubic metres of fill. Delivering these huge amounts of sand the 950km from Qinzhou to Hong Kong will inevitably create a large carbon footprint. This is an inconvenient truth that Lam and her top officials prefer not to disclose.

According to the Development Bureau, 15 million tonnes of construction waste is generated every year in Hong Kong, enough to reclaim only 60 hectares of land. Simple maths shows that should the Lantau Tomorrow Vision mainly rely on the local supply of fill materials, it could take up to 28 years to complete the reclamation work, not to mention the time needed for other statutory procedures such as environmental impact assessments.

Many Hongkongers, who are desperate to live in public housing, would be shocked and frustrated by such a lengthy timeline.

### Lantau Tomorrow Vision cannot fulfill the need for housing, but brownfields

Green groups have often reminded the government that there are more environmentally friendly alternatives than reclamation. The Planning Department's feasibility study on brownfield sites in the New Territories released in November 2019 shows there are 700 hectares of such sites with development potential.

Besides, the Development Bureau estimated that major Hong Kong developers are holding no less than 1,000 hectares of agricultural land in the New Territories. The government has been buying back land from developers by exercising the Lands Resumption Ordinance for public purposes.

Developers that claim to be socially and environmentally responsible should grasp this opportunity to help Hong Kong tackle the land shortage for public housing and simultaneously help conserve nature by agreeing to sell their agricultural land to the



government or jointly developing their land mainly for public housing.

Utilizing brownfield sites in the New Territories for housing would shorten the development time and avoid the ecologically destructive process of large-scale reclamation. If the Lam administration could resolve its public housing shortage using this more sustainable approach, it would ease social tensions and save the Chinese white dolphins from extinction.

-End of The Green Earth's Position Paper-

Date of submission: 11 Nov 2020