

15th March 2016

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Dear Mrs Lam, Mr Chan and Mr Wong,

Joint letter for proper conservation of Sha Lo Tung

The undersigned groups are gravely concerned over the recent, extensive illegal site formation works involving extensive vegetation removal in Sha Lo Tung. This was apparently undertaken by trespasser onto the land under the pretext of "farm rehabilitation".

Part of the riparian zone of the Ecologically Important Stream (EIS) in Cheung Uk, also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), has been trashed since late 2015. Illegal road work and concrete bridge footings have encroached on another section of SSSI near Lo Wai. Vegetation clearance is still on-going and further extends to wetlands in Lei Uk. No government department has been able to stop the widely publicized eco-vandalism. The failure to act effectively is not a good sign for the governance of Hong Kong, nor bodes well for the implementation of a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Sha Lo Tung is ranked second, after Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar site, in the list of 12 Priority Sites for Enhanced Conservation under the New Nature Conservation Policy of 2004. It has long been recognized as an important ecological hotspot which

deserves special protection and conservation. The recent rampant vegetation destruction shows how existing planning control is not working and again reflects the urgent need for new effective measures to protect ecologically important area under private ownership in Sha Lo Tung.

With urgency we request the following:

- Coordinated and immediate joint campaign of relevant departments to stop further eco-vandalism in Sha Lo Tung;
- The pursuit of alternative measures to conserve Sha Lo Tung, such as non in-situ, value-to-value land exchange and government taking over the management of ecologically important land.

We would also be grateful for the Government to respond to the following questions:

- What measures are currently being taken by various departments to stop further eco-vandalism in Sha Lo Tung?
- Do the current site formation and associated vegetation clearance work constitute any unauthorized development?
- What is the progress of the Pilot Project for Public-private Partnership Conservation Scheme in Sha Lo Tung? In particular, have the details of the non in-situ, value-for-value land exchange been further studied among bureaux such as Development Bureau and Environment Bureau? Where does the matter rest at this point in time?

We look forward to a coordinated response from the government as soon as possible, in the hope that the Sha Lo Tung Priority Site for Enhanced Conservation can be preserved from the destruction.

Co-signatories:

Designing Hong Kong

Greenpeace East Asia – Hong Kong

Green Sense

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

The Conservancy Association

The Green Earth

WWF-Hong Kong

Figure 1 Area of vegetation clearance (marked in red)

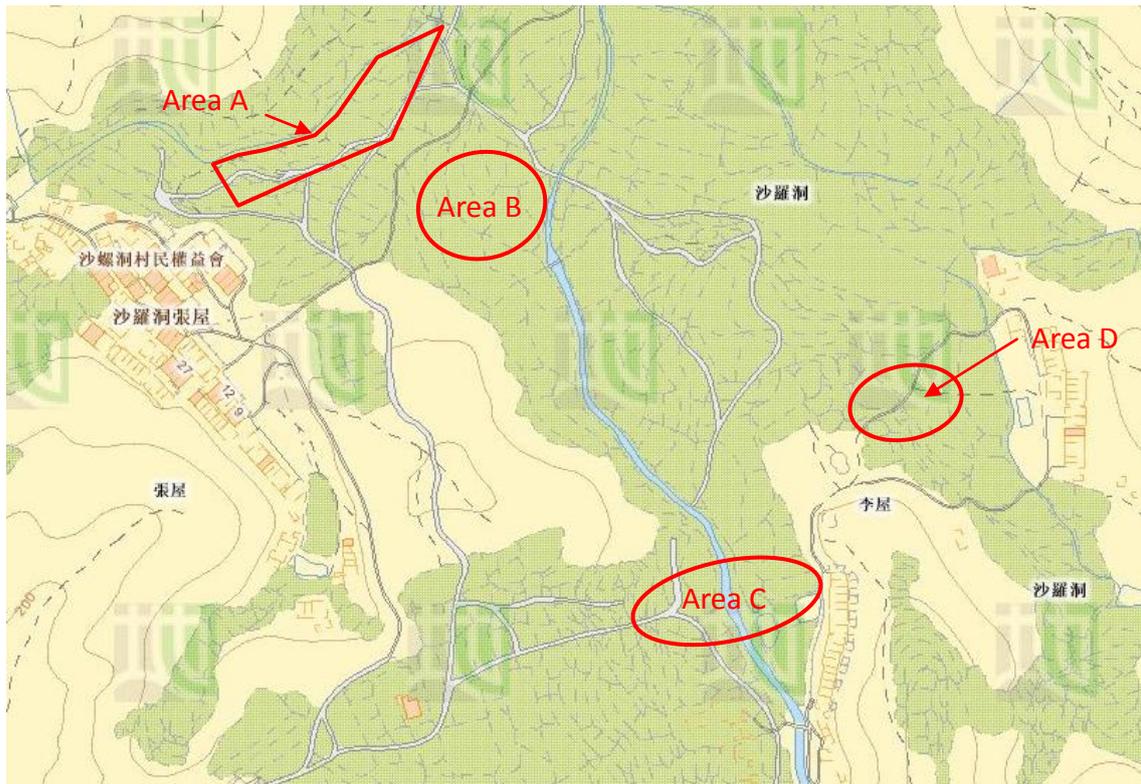


Figure 2 Condition in Area A. The land area (marked in red) lies within SSSI. The existing agricultural activities and associated land excavation work have not obtained the approval from Town Planning Board



Figure 3 Conditions in Area B in 10/2015 (top) and 2/2016 (below). Vegetation were all cleared



Figure 4 A bridge with concrete footings were built exactly within the stream zoned as SSSI



Figure 5 Vegetation clearance work is on-going and approaching the wetland in Lei Uk

