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Concerns over Development on Lantau
Long-term Monitoring of Butterflies at Mui Wo

"Butterfly Surveyor" continually monitors diverse butterfly hotspots in the territory. Green Power included Mui Wo on Lantau in the monitoring this year. The preliminary ecological survey shows the area is rich in butterflies. Also, due to the government's ongoing efforts to push for development of Lantau, Green Power wishes to gather butterfly ecological data from different areas of Lantau as soon as possible.

64 Butterflies Species recorded at Mui Wo

Three preliminary ecological surveys were conducted in Mui Wo. The route was from Chung Hau to Wo Tin, and 64 butterfly species were recorded. Among them were 14 uncommon species and 2 rare species: Cojoined Swift (*Pelopidas conjunctus*) and Falcate Oak Blue (*Mahathala ameria*). The former is larger than regular Skippers, while the shape of hindwings of the latter is chipped and easily recognised. Mui Wo is connected to Lantau North Country Park and Lantau South Country Park, allowing movements of species between the three areas. Mui Wo also has various types of habitats for butterflies. According to past records, 85 species of butterflies have been recorded at Mui Wo. It is believed that there will be more surprising discoveries by Butterfly Surveyors later.

The inclusion of Mui Wo as a location for continual monitoring is due to the government's ever increasing calls for Lantau's development. Remarks from a member of newly established "Lantau Development Advisory Committee", saying it is not impossible to release land from Lantau country parks, has raised many concerns about the conservation and development of Lantau. Lantau Island is in southwestern Hong Kong, and like Sai Kung Peninsula in the northeast acts as an important "backyard" for Hong Kong people, with lush greenery. 70% of Lantau falls within country parks, and there are eight locations designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (out of 70 throughout Hong Kong). With regards to discussions on development and conservation, development should not take priority over conservation.

There are at least 13 known butterfly hotspots on Lantau, such as Pui O, Tong Fuk, and Sha Lo Wan. Only very few of these hotspots are located in country parks, while the rest are located on the boundaries of country parks. Such hotspots in country park enclaves can be easily affected by developments. Early in 2008, Green Power began conducting butterfly surveys at San Tau, which is one of these hotspots. Within the last six years, there were

between 60 to 90 butterfly species recorded each year, with little variation in number of species. Mui Wo is also one of the butterfly hotspots on Lantau.

22-person Butterfly Monitoring Team

The government has previously raised and announced various development plans for Lantau; major ones include the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Tung Chung New Town Extension, Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link, third runway for the Hong Kong International Airport and land reclamation for Siu Ho Wan and Sunny Bay. The completion of transportation development will bring more ancillary facilities and real estate to Lantau, which will increase the demand for land. Rural land could be readily included in the development. On Lantau, much idle rural land that was formerly farmland, greenbelt and conservation area may be developed, subject to applying to amend its land use. It is worrying that these habitats as well as the butterflies may eventually disappear.

Since members of Lantau Development Advisory Committee had recommended developing the country parks of Lantau and improving its transportation to increase development potential, Green Power strongly opposes the suggestions. The Lantau North Country Park and Lantau South Country Park cannot be reduced in size due to economic development, even if little land would be released.

Green Power further noted that currently Tung Chung Road is a restricted road. This protects the entire South Lantau. It is worrying that "traffic improvement" would be used as a reason for developing Tung Chung Road. Compared with the development projects, traffic improvement of Lantau seems to be a reasonable request, but once Tung Chung Road is opened, development of Lantau would not cease. For this reason, any suggestions to open Tung Chung Road require careful consideration.

A 22-person Butterfly Monitoring Team will regularly record the butterfly species and their numbers at Mui Wo. Data collected will be given to relevant departments for their reference. As butterflies indicate the ecological value of habitats, any changes in their variety and number may reflect the status of a particular environment.