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### **Butterflies Abound at Lung Kwu Tan, a Potential Reclamation Site**

**Green Power** announced the latest findings of the Butterfly Survey at Lung Kwu Tan. Earlier, Green Power conducted butterfly surveys at Lung Kwu Tan. A total of 68 species of butterflies were recorded, which accounted for approximately 30% of the total in Hong Kong. Among these species are 1 very rare and 3 rare species, including the Tiny Glass Blue (*Zizula hyrax*) and the Magpie Flat (*Abraximorpha davidii*). The survey route covers a distance of 4.5 km, from Pak Long to Nam Long to Lung Tsai, spanning the whole of Lung Kwu Tan Village.

Lung Kwu Tan is one of the most important butterfly hotspots in the west New Territories. Green Power conducted butterfly surveys here as early from 2004; from 2004 to 2007, a total of 128 species were recorded, including 4 very rare and 12 rare butterfly species. Matthew Sin, Senior Environmental Affairs Manager of Green Power, remarked that the Orange Emigrant (*Catopsilia scylla*) was recorded in Hong Kong for the first time in 2004 and never spotted again; and that the Redspot Sawtooth (*Prioneris philonome*) seen in 2006 was a very rare species only found at Lung Kwu Tan and a small number of other places in Hong Kong, but hardly ever spotted in recent years.

Matthew said that in the past 10 years, there have been many large-scale infrastructure construction projects near Lung Kwu Tan. These include: the Tuen Mun - Chek Lap Kok Link that connects the Boundary Crossing Facilities of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which is expected to be in use this year; West New Territories (WENT) Landfill Extension at Nim Wan; and the forthcoming construction of crematoria and columbaria at Tsang Tsui. In the Cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment Study released by the Civil Engineering and Development Department in 2015, it is stated that the burden of environmental pollution at Tuen Mun District and Lung Kwu Tan would increase significantly.

In April this year, the Task Force on Land Supply commenced the public engagement exercise commonly known as “Land Debate” on land supply. Among the proposed medium-to-long term land supply options is near-coast reclamation. Of the 5 potential reclamation sites, Lung Kwu Tan is the largest and is expected to provide 220 to 250 hectares of developable land, equivalent to a third of the Yau Tsim Mong District in area.

Matthew stressed that reclamation at Lung Kwu Tan would not only impact on the Chinese White Dolphins; the impact on the local butterflies should not be underestimated. As the reclamation site is less than 50 metres away from butterfly habitats and the government proposes that Lung Kwu Tan become an industrial area, the increase in traffic and industrial activities would definitely worsen the environment. “In our experience, whenever industrial activities increase in a rural area, the nearby villages would soon host environmentally damaging facilities such as container yards, depots and recycling yards.” Matthew remarked that presently there are still plenty of shrubs and abandoned agricultural lands at Lung Kwu Tan where butterflies feed and breed. It is also the main habitat of the rare Red Lacewing (*Cethosia biblis*) butterflies. The reclamation would greatly threaten the local ecosystem.

Matthew criticised the government for only focusing on development while neglecting conservation, which has resulted in development and conservation conflicting with each other more than necessary. For instance, since the monitoring of butterflies at Lung Kwu Tan started in 2004, numerous environmentally damaging activities have taken place, such as rubble tipping, building of golf courses and kart tracks.

The Planning Department has so far failed to make any statutory plans for these lands to stop development activities that are not in harmony with the rural environment from the aspect of land use, thereby allowing the environment to be damaged ad infinitum. When the various infrastructure projects near Lung Kwu Tan are completed, or if the reclamation goes ahead, the environment will only “get worse until it is utterly damaged.”

Matthew called on the government to show its determination in conservation by taking care of sensitive ecosystems in the area during development projects. In the case of Lung Kwu Tan, Development Permission Area Plans complying with conservation principles should be issued as soon as possible. These plans should be made with consideration of declaring the remaining butterfly habitats in the area as Conservation Area or incorporate other environmentally sound land plans. In addition, he suggested expanding the existing Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Lung Kwu Tan Valley to Lung Kwu Tan Village area, protecting the butterfly ecosystems with legislation and in the long term.

Matthew remarked that from now on about 30 Butterfly Surveyors will regularly carry out the butterfly surveys at Lung Kwu Tan, in order to collect more data to lobby for stronger conservation efforts in the area.

Green Power recruits and trains members of the public to become Butterfly Surveyors every year to collect data on local butterfly ecology and monitor butterfly hotspots. In 2018, there are 322 Butterfly Surveyors and they monitor a total of 12 local butterfly hotspots: San Tau on Lantau; Luk Keng in Fanling; Wu Kau Tang in Tai Po; Lam Tsuen (She Shan and Ng Tung Chai) in Tai Po; Yuen Tun Ha in Tai Po; Sham Chung and Yung Shue O in Sai Kung; Sha Tau Kok; Pak Sha O and Lai Chi Chong in Sai Kung; Mui Wo on Lantau; Lok Ma Chau/Long Valley/Ho Sheung Heung; Tai Lam Country Park (Kam Tin); and Lung Kwu Tan in Tuen Mun. The Butterfly Survey starts in June each year and ends in May the following year.