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**Submission to Subcommittee on Country Parks**  
**(Designation) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Order 2013**  
**Meeting on 5 November 2013**

**Incorporation of Country Park Enclaves of Tai Long Sai Wan, Kam Shan & Yuen Tun  
into the SKECP, the KSCP & the TLCP respectively.**

Ark Eden would like to show our support to the Amendment Order which proposes to incorporate country park enclaves of Tai Long Sai Wan (TLSW), Kam Shan & Yuen Tun into the Sai Kung East Country Park (SKECP), the Kam Shan Country Park (KSCP) and the Tai Lam Country Park (TLCP) respectively.

The Ark Eden Foundation is a registered Hong Kong charity and leading permaculture education centre based on Lantau Island, working with educational institutions and businesses on sustainability solutions. It was set up in 2006 and presently has around 7000 people a year engaged with projects.

**1. Ecological value of enclaves**

The country park enclaves are sites of spectacular ecological value, and are surrounded by the existing country parks but are not currently within these boundaries. Villagers have lived in these enclaves for many generations, and historically the land has been used for predominately agricultural purposes. Physically and ecologically these enclaves are inseparable from the wider Sai Kung Country Park ecosystem. Many of these enclaves are home to ecologically unique habitats such as freshwater marshes and small rivers, that support wildlife which are rarely present inside the existing country parks. The ecological value of these enclaves are thus of high conservation importance.

Sai Kung East Country Park boasts views of steep hills and meandering fresh rivers, along with idyllic sandy beaches. TLSW is an area of particular natural beauty, and is ranked top of the Hong Kong Best Ten Scenic sites. Developments within this enclave have highlighted how vulnerable our local ecology and natural heritage have become. **Therefore, Ark Eden believes that in terms of high ecological value, the three sites should be incorporated into our country parks to safeguard this natural value for the wider community and future generations.**

## **2. Suggested solutions**

A long-standing problem for rural villages has been their neglect. Ark Eden's vision is to create a network of environmental facilities within Hong Kong, using rural schools and abandoned buildings to enhance education for sustainability and environmental protection as part of school curricula, and provide employment opportunities for villagers. In developing these environmental facilities, Ark Eden does not want to build anything new. Its focus would be to use existing buildings and give these a new lease of life. Ark Eden is concerned that old buildings, some heritage-listed, many abandoned for years, will be lost within 10 years if a new use is not found for them. These buildings include over 70 village schools, old temples, ancestral halls, and the rural villages.

Schools, universities, corporations and groups could use their skills collaboratively to 'adopt' village environmental centres and fund their operation. Within these centres, local villagers would be instrumental in leading the coordination and training for sustainable renovation projects. Traditional knowledge of these communities is invaluable and villagers could become teachers on a variety of local practices such as farming, medicinal plants, traditional skills and Fung Shui woodlands. Traditional skills of the elderly are dying out but many of these practices are sustainable and must be preserved. **For this reason, Ark Eden believes that the incorporation of the TLSW, Kam Shan and Yuen Tun enclaves into the country park will allow for educational tourism to bring villages back to life and provide employment opportunities in rural areas. Moreover, this Amendment Order is fundamental in preventing incompatible developments and activities which risk losing the wealth of heritage and local knowledge present within these enclaves. In order to ensure future success of land-use policies in the long term, Hong Kong should support sustainable use of natural areas by the people who have lived and nurtured these environments for generations.**

## **3. Education targets in line with the 2015 Convention on Biological Diversity**

The Hong Kong government announced in early June of 2011 that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) had been formally extended to Hong Kong. Under the Convention, each member must draft and implement a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). This presents a new opportunity to integrate biodiversity and conservation into the wider policy agenda.

As part of this convention, Hong Kong has stated that according to Article 13, it will (a) *Promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for,*

*the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes; and (b) Cooperate, as appropriate, with other States and international organizations in developing educational and public awareness programmes, with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.*<sup>1</sup> **The convention will come into force in 2015, and Ark Eden is of the view that the incorporation of the TLSW, Kam Shan and Yuen Tun into country parks will allow Hong Kong to fulfil their environmental education targets through the educational value of these sites. This Amendment Order captures the general public expectation to conserve these sites from any incompatible and destructive developments. We therefore sincerely ask the Legislative Council to pass this Amendment Order as soon as possible.**

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Article 13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)  
<http://www.cbd.int/convention/articles/default.shtml?a=cbd-13>