By Karen Lee, Senior Project Manager at Civic Exchange

With more than 500 species of bird, 50 species of mammal, 100 reptile and amphibian species and countless species of insect – including several that are unique to the territory – Hong Kong's rich biodiversity should be treasured; protecting it should be a broad community endeavour.

The international Convention on Biological Diversity was extended to Hong Kong in 2011. It requires the government to develop, in collaboration with the community, a biodiversity

strategy and action plan that takes into consideration local needs and priorities.

In his last policy address, the chief executive announced the launch of Hong Kong's participatory process for the action plan. Unlike a typical public consultation, in which pre-formulated policy options are offered up for people to offer feedback, the strategy is supposed take an open form, with public engagement from the start.

This is the first time such a policy process has been attempted in Hong Kong. It involves a three-tiered committee structure, bringing together stakeholders including government officials, academics, environmental non-government organisations and conservationists. There is also a series of public engagement events, including eight roving exhibitions and four public lectures run by the government. These meetings will forge the parameters for a more traditional public consultation, set to begin early next year. So what happens in those meetings is crucial.

Unfortunately, despite these engagement efforts, the public remains largely unaware of the plan. Publicity has been inadequate. Although the lectures were open to all, little news of their existence reached the wider public. At the first, walk-in participants voiced their concerns about the lack of promotion.

Although two engagement forums were held in June, details were not announced until a few days beforehand. As a result, the participants were mainly existing committee members, principally NGO representatives. Three YouTube videos were produced by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to promote the biodiversity strategy and action plan in March. Yet, on average, they have each attracted around 700 views since their launch. Evidently, the promotion of the high-quality videos must be improved.

Furthermore, as the strategy is intended to develop a holistic approach to managing biodiversity, it requires the collaboration of all government departments to incorporate biodiversity considerations into mainstream policies, from housing to health. Yet, it appears that only the AFCD is heavily involved in its formulation. Such an imbalanced distribution of effort will not get Hong Kong very far in terms of protecting biodiversity.

Clear and in-depth implementation details, including the schedule, budget and specific actions of the plan, should be made available to the public as soon as possible. More thorough public engagement is needed, as are more documents and guidance for the wider public and among government departments, to help raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation. This is the only way Hong Kong can protect its rich biodiversity.

Share this

prev
SCMP: Falling Short

next
A Tribute to Prof. Anthony Hedley

Author: Lawrence lu

Related Posts

Why we need climate justice: prevention isn't enough when the poor are already suffering from a warming world

24 March 2022

New IPCC report on adaptation is a wake-up call for climate-resilient policymaking

24 March 2022

Building capacity to improve Hong Kong a livability and scale new heights in economic development

28 February 2022

Civic Exchange Response to the HKSAR 2022-23 Budget

23 February 2022

Civic Exchange Recommends the HKSAR for the 2022-23 Budget

26 January 2022

Written submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs on promoting the use of electric vehicles

13 January 2020

Get Involved

Civic Exchange's work is made possible through the generosity of our funders and partners that share our goals and objectives. They include private foundations, corporations, government and public sector organisations, individuals and academia. To get involved, please get in touch!

Copyright © 2022 Civic Exchange. All rights reserved.

Civic Exchange is a company with limited liability and a registered charity in Hong Kong.