Harnessing Nature-Based Solutions for a Sustainable Future: Hong Kong's Emerging NbS Landscape

17 November 2025

HKUST

By Kitty Tam, Programme Lead, Civic Exchange

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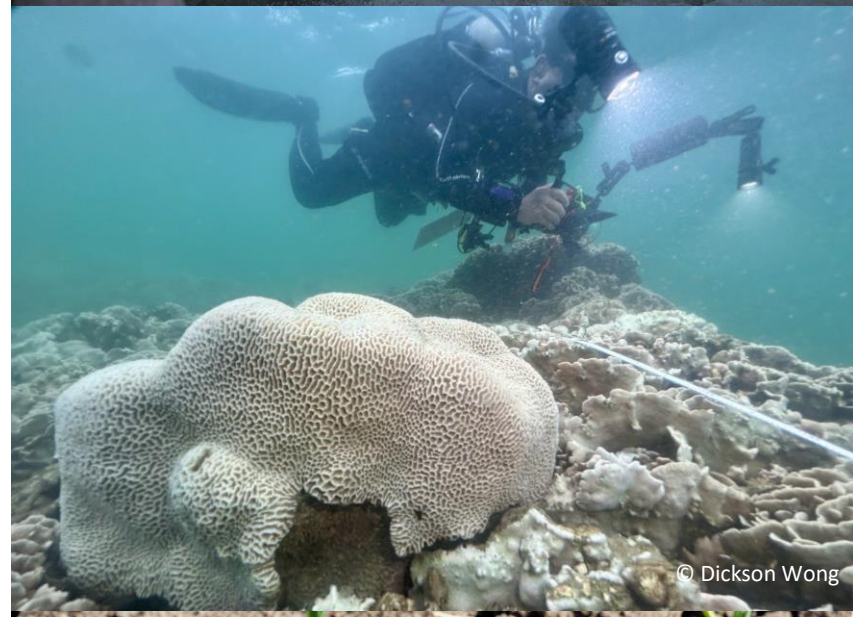
Triple Planetary Crisis

Climate: 1.5°C overshoot risk within 3 years; system collapse risks (permafrost, mangroves)
Biodiversity: 44% coral reef species at risk, loss of ecosystem services & livelihoods
Land: 30-40% degraded; 78% surface getting significantly drier

Interlinked crisis: interlinked approach is needed



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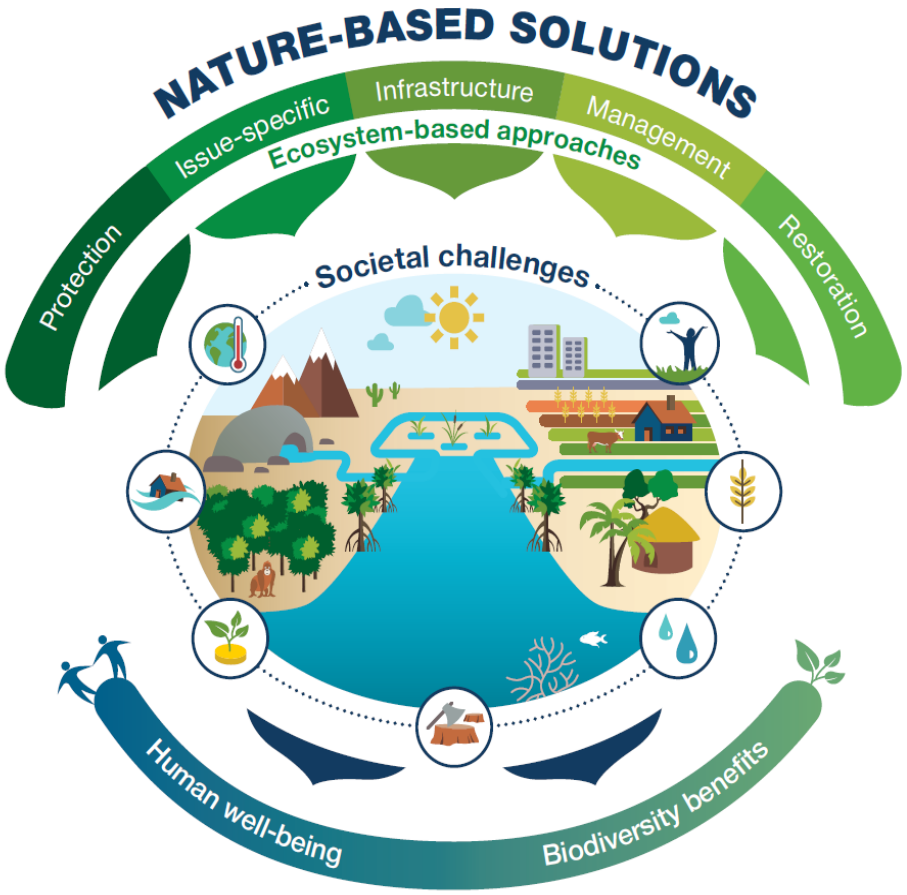
Defining NbS



Actions to protect, **conserve**, restore, **sustainably use** and manage natural or modified **terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems** which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, **ecosystem services, resilience** and biodiversity benefits.

IUCN *Resolution 069, WCC, 2016*

UN environment assembly **UNEP/EA.5/Res.5, 2022**

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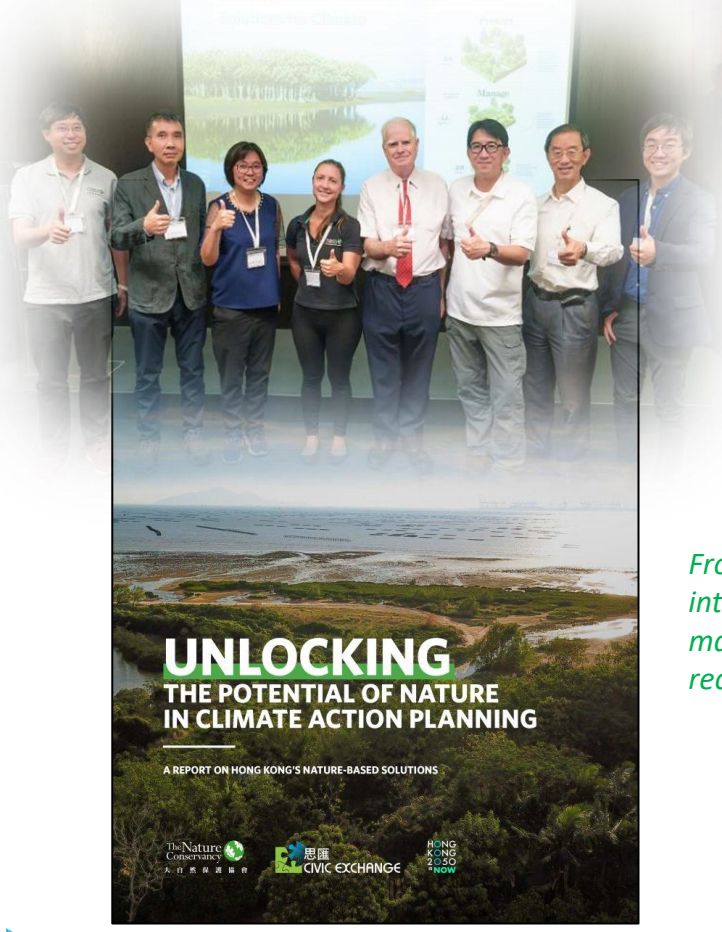
NbS is action, not talk

What led us here?

Year 2023/24 - NbS 1.0

Identified the ***potential*** of individual NbS applications across Hong Kong



From concept introduction to mainstream recognition

Year 2024/25 - NbS 2.0

Proposed the ***Northern Metropolis as a model*** to be observed and replicated

From recognition and planning to pilots and practical applications

Year 2026 - NbS 3.0

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Potential NbS Pathways in NM

- ***Ecosystem Restoration & Conservation***
- ***Sustainable Land and Water Use***
- ***Urban Greening & Biodiversity Enhancement***
- ***Blue-Green Infrastructure***

Provide benefits

- Biodiversity
- Carbon Sequestration
- Climate Resilience

Mangrove & Oyster Reef Restoration
Inter-tidal shoreline
- Buffers storm surges
- Improves water quality
- Carbon sequestration

Revitalised River Corridor
Main Drainage Channel
- Manages stormwater
- Supports biodiversity
- Offers public space

Slope Greening with Native Plants
Urban Slopes
- Reduces erosion
- Cools surfaces
- Creates microhabitats

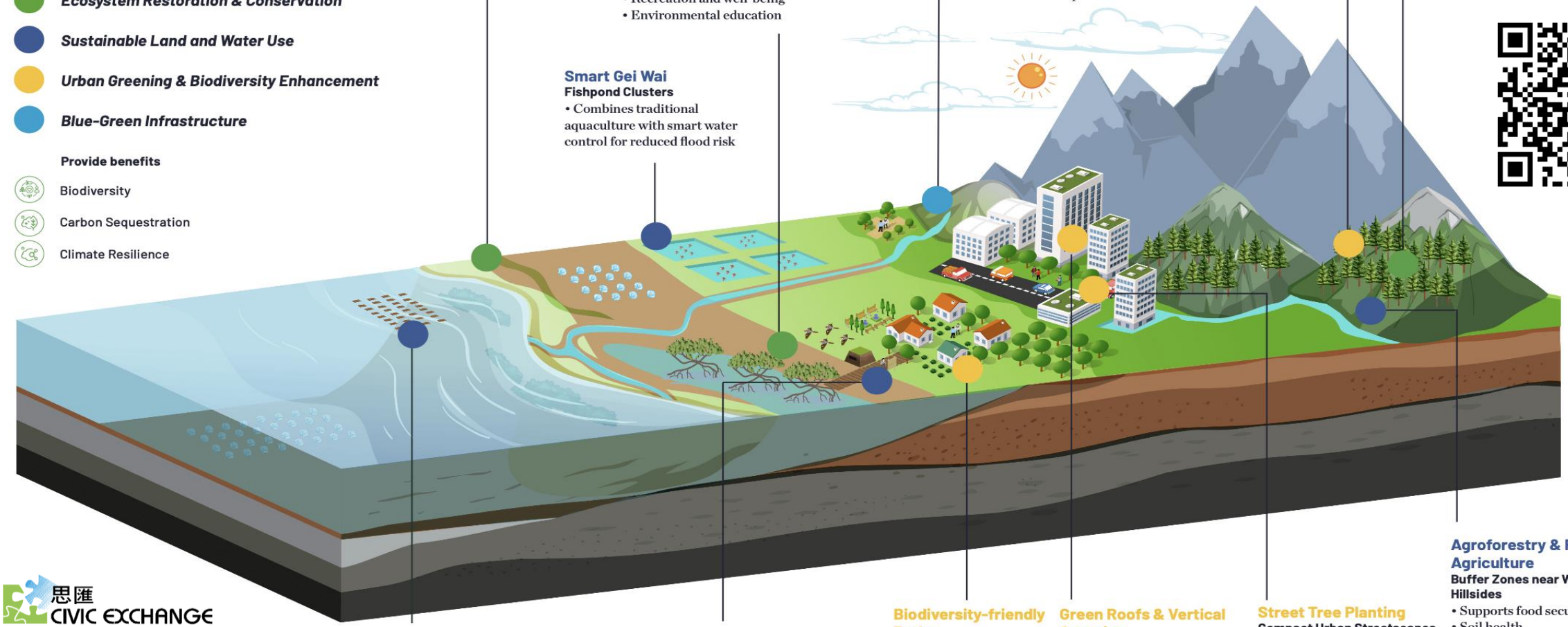
Sponge City Features
Urban Stormwater Management System
- Bioswales,
- Rain gardens
- Permeable pavements

Hillside Reforestation
Barren Hillside
- Stabilises slopes
- Reduce flood risk
- Cools urban areas
- Increased biodiversity corridors

Wetland Conservation Parks
Deep Bay Wetland Network
- Recreation and well-being
- Environmental education

Retention Ponds & Floodable Parks
Low-lying Urban Areas
- Dual-purpose flood buffers and recreational landscapes

Smart Gei Wai
Fishpond Clusters
- Combines traditional aquaculture with smart water control for reduced flood risk



Regenerative Oyster Aquaculture
Oyster Farm
- Water filtration

Ecotourism
Coastal Protection Park
- Sustains traditional livelihoods
- Provides funding for Conservation

Biodiversity-friendly Parks
Urban Parks
- Native plants & water features enhance ecological connectivity

Green Roofs & Vertical Greening
High-Density Developments
- Increases green cover
- Reduces heat
- Supports pollinators

Street Tree Planting
Compact Urban Streetscapes
- Absorb air pollutants
- Urban cooling
- Reduce runoff

Agroforestry & Regenerative Agriculture
Buffer Zones near Wetlands and Hillsides
- Supports food security
- Soil health
- Carbon storage

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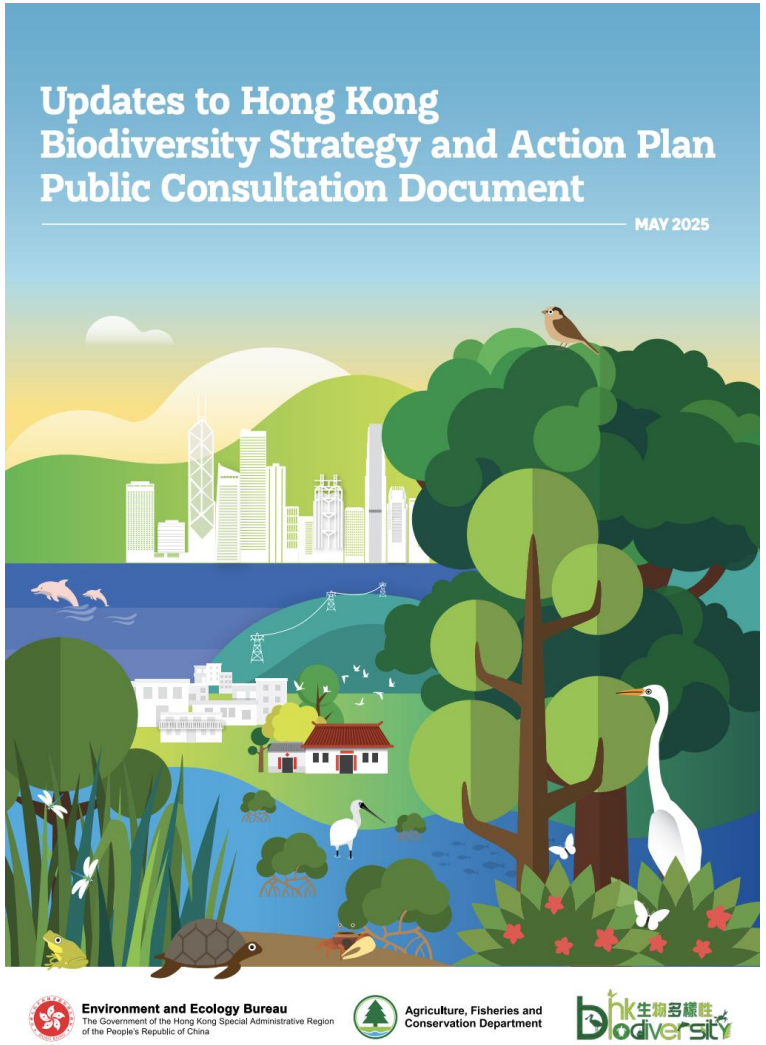
The Nature Conservancy 大自然保護協會

Update of Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan



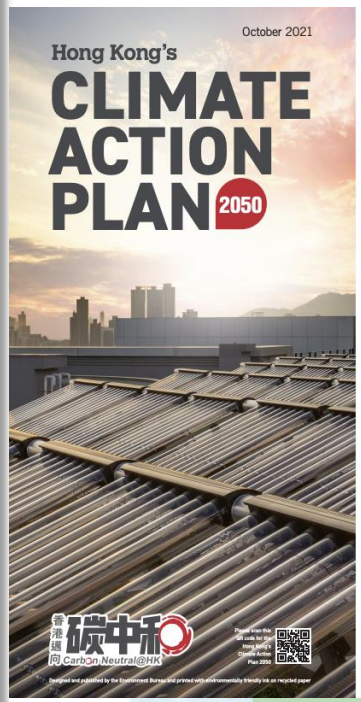
CHAPTER 2:
New Global and National Initiatives

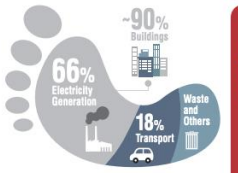
2.1 Kunming–Montreal GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

The COP15 to the CBD held in December 2022 under the presidency of China adopted a new strategic global framework on biodiversity, the KMGBF. The KMGBF sets two overarching goals: firstly, to halt the trend of global biodiversity loss by 2030, and secondly, to achieve harmonious coexistence between humans and nature by 2050. It comprises 23 action-oriented global targets, also known as the "Kunming-Montreal 2030 Targets", which are grouped under three categories: reducing threats to biodiversity (Targets 1-8), meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing (Targets 9-13), and tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming (Targets 14-23). As a key document in international biodiversity governance, the KMGBF establishes global targets that address fundamental human needs while clearly stating that each Party should implement measures in line with its national circumstances, priorities and socio-economic conditions. This approach ensures the effective realisation of sustainable development principles centred on harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

The KMGBF marks a historic milestone in biodiversity conservation. It covers a wide spectrum of topics (e.g. protected areas, species conservation, climate change, pollution/ waste reduction, green finance, biodiversity risk disclosure, sustainable consumption and blue-green space) and relatively new concepts (e.g. other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM[3]) and nature-based solution (NbS[4])). It goes beyond just government commitments for building a nature-based world but calls for action from every sector of society. Everyone, from organisation and business to individual, has an important role to play in this collective endeavour.

Climate Action Plan 2050





Retrospect and Prospect

Decarbonisation

Over the past decade, the Government has allocated over $47 billion to implement various carbon reduction measures. The two power companies have also allocated about $39 billion to decarbonisation projects

Reduce Coal for Electricity Generation

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Energy Saving and Green Buildings

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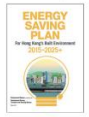

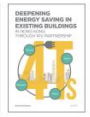

Electric Vehicles (EVs)

In the first half of 2021, one out of every five newly registered private cars is EV

Adaptation and Resilience

The Climate Change Working Group on Infrastructure: Major Studies

Strengthening Infrastructure

- Study on resilience of Government critical infrastructure in Hong Kong under extreme weather
- Sensitivity test under direct hit by super typhoons
- Frequency analysis of extreme sea levels

Tropical Cyclones

- Projection of extreme winds

Extreme Temperatures

- Study on potential impacts on Government infrastructure under extreme temperatures

Reduce Flood Risk

Eliminated 127 flooding blackspots, improvement works for the remaining 4 black spots will be completed in phases

Contingency Plan for Natural Disasters

Inter-departmental Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration to handle natural disasters of a substantial scale

Contingency Plan for Transport System

Update contingency plans to handle emergency situations at major transport infrastructure

Emergency Alert System

Disseminate messages to mobile users during emergency situations to remind the public to adopt contingency measures

Vision

Zero-carbon Emissions • Liveable City • Sustainable Development

Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality

Strategies • Opportunities

Moving towards carbon neutrality can bring ample and diverse development opportunities, enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness and support sustainable development

Steering and Coordination

The Steering Committee on Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive to formulate the overall strategy

Climate Budget

Allocate ~ **$240 billion** to combat climate change in the next 15 to 20 years

Office of Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality

Set up a new office to strengthen coordination and promote decarbonisation

Advisory Committee

Establish a dedicated advisory committee to encourage public participation, including young people

Public Engagement

Government to work together with different sectors to promote low-carbon lifestyle

Green Finance

Accelerate the development of green and sustainable finance, develop Hong Kong into a green financial hub in the region

Green Economy

Facilitate the development of green industries, create investment and job opportunities

Technology and Innovation

Promote I&T development and re-industrialisation, facilitate the application of decarbonisation technologies and green R&D

Capacity Building

Climate change-related content to be incorporated into the curricula of tertiary institutions

Carbon-neutral Communities

Develop strategic growth areas into carbon-neutral communities

Challenges

- Cost of Decarbonisation
- Space Constraint
- Technology Breakthrough
- Extreme Weather
- Demand for Talent
- Participation for All

Net-zero Electricity Generation • Energy Saving and Green Buildings

In 2019, electricity generation accounted for about 66% of total carbon emissions. Hong Kong will gradually reduce the use of fossil fuel and expedite the use of clean zero-carbon energy

Decarbonisation comes at a price. Buildings account for about 90% of Hong Kong's total electricity consumption. Promoting energy conservation and improving energy efficiency can help reduce the cost of transformation

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2035

Cease using coal for daily electricity generation, to be replaced by low to zero-carbon energy

Zero-carbon Energy

2035 **60-70%**

Trial of new energy and closer cooperation with neighbouring areas to increase the supply of zero-carbon electricity

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(Increase to 15% subsequently)

Public and private sectors to develop RE proactively to increase its share in the fuel mix for electricity generation

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Seek investment and development opportunities, participate in and operate zero-carbon energy projects near Hong Kong

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Continuous enhancement of energy performance of buildings

- Expand the scope of regulation to cover all buildings with high energy consumption
- Conduct more frequent energy audits
- Implement the identified energy management opportunities
- Strengthen the promotion of retro-commissioning

Explore setting a minimum energy efficiency requirement for specified appliances

Smart Management

Use smart technologies to enhance energy saving management and energy efficiency of buildings and infrastructure

Incorporate district cooling systems in development projects

Green Transport

Transport constituted about 18% of total carbon emissions in 2019. Popularisation of EVs and other new energy transport can help the transport sector achieve zero carbon emissions

Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong 2035

Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles

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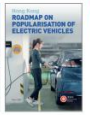
Take forward measures set forth in the EV Roadmap to attain zero vehicular emissions before 2050



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Within 3 years

Test out hydrogen fuel cell electric buses and heavy vehicles

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Municipal Solid Waste Charging

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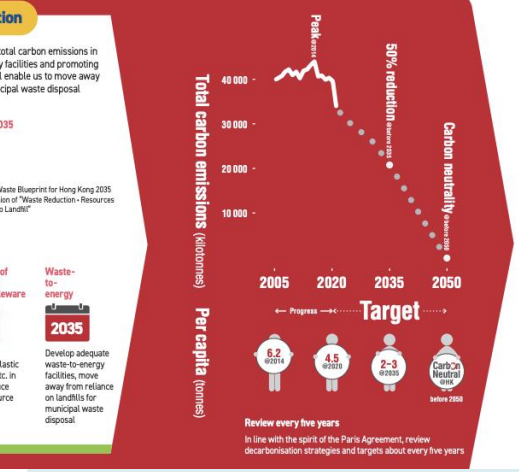

Review every five years

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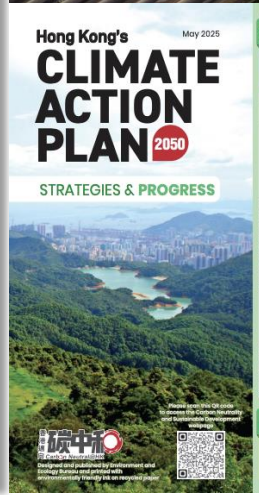

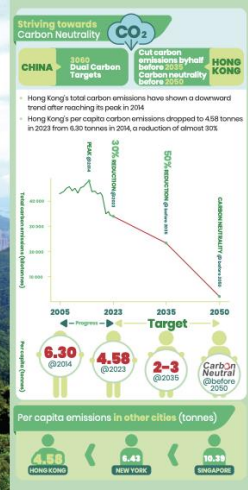

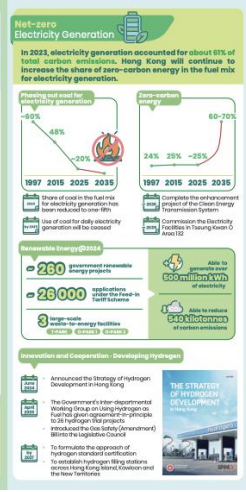

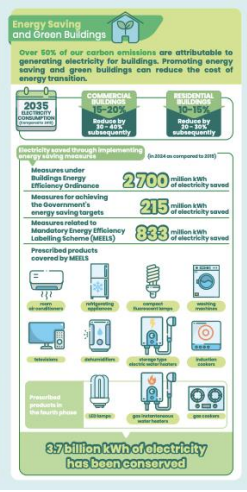

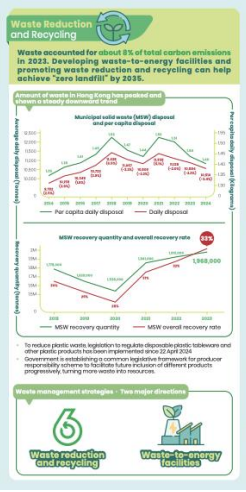

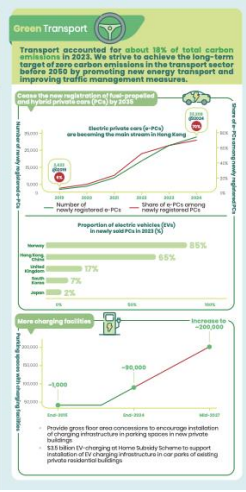

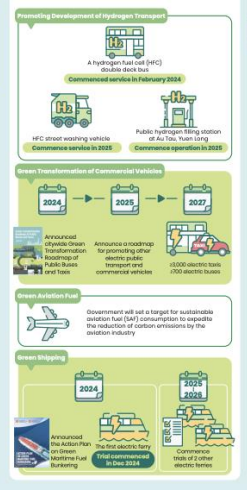

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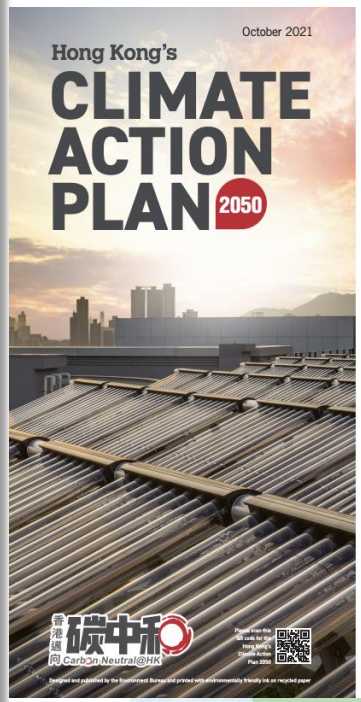

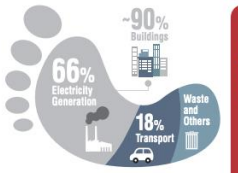

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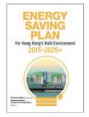

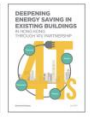

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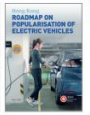

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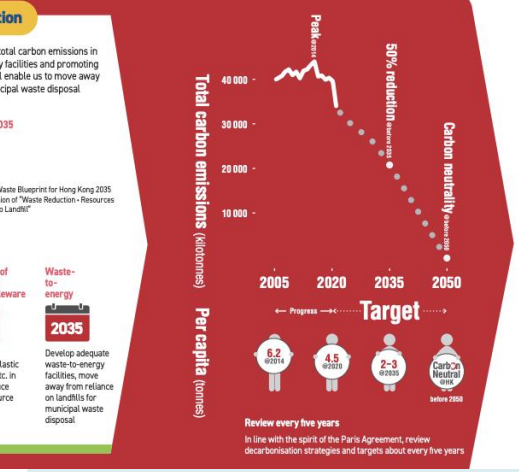

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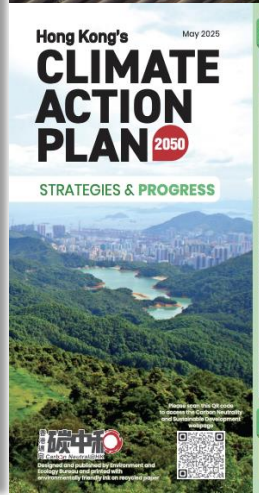
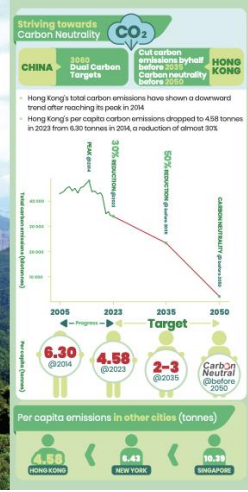
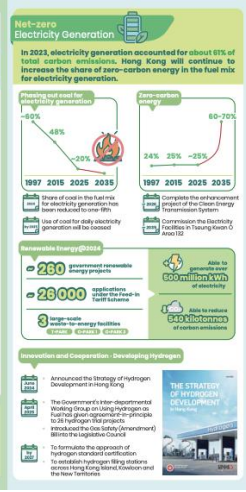
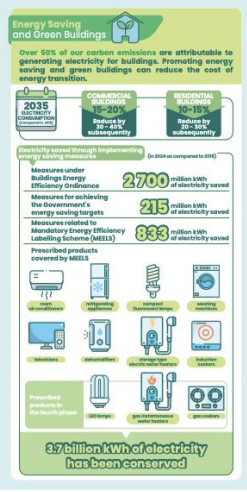
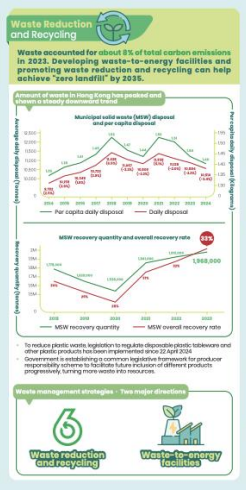
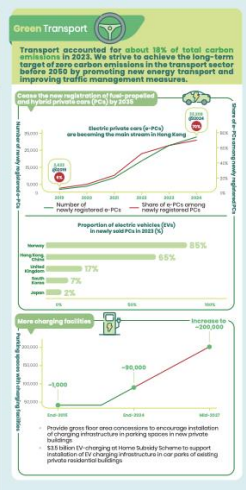


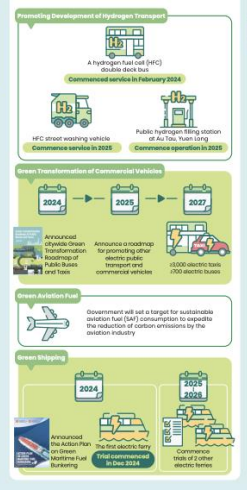




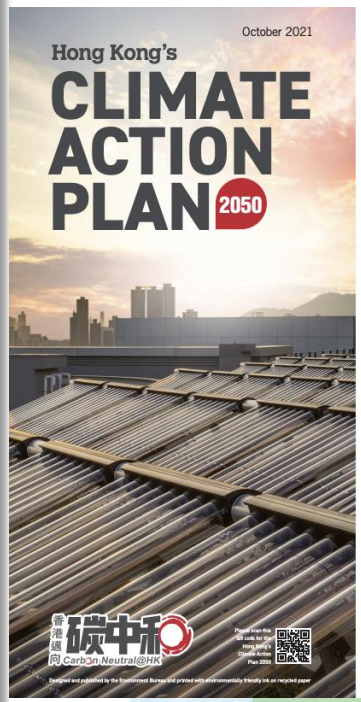


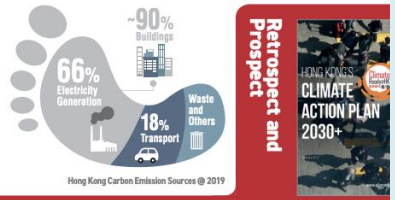






Climate Action Pla





Retrospect and Prospect

Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality

Strategies • Opportunities

Moving towards carbon neutrality can bring ample and diverse development opportunities, enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness and support sustainable development

- **Steering and Coordination** — The Steering Committee on Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive to formulate the overall strategy
- **Climate Budget** — Allocate ~ **$240 billion** to combat climate change in the next 15 to 20 years
- **Office of Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality** — Set up a new office to strengthen coordination and promote decarbonisation
- **Advisory Committee** — Establish a dedicated advisory committee to encourage public participation, including young people
- **Public Engagement** — Government to work together with different sectors to promote low-carbon lifestyle
- **Green Finance** — Accelerate the development of green and sustainable finance, develop Hong Kong into a green financial hub in the region
- **Green Economy** — Facilitate the development of green industries, create investment and job opportunities
- **Technology and Innovation** — Promote I&T development and re-industrialisation, facilitate the application of decarbonisation technologies and green R&D
- **Capacity Building** — Climate change-related content to be incorporated into the curricula of tertiary institutions
- **Carbon-neutral Communities** — Develop strategic growth areas into carbon-neutral communities

Challenges

- Cost of Decarbonisation
- Space Constraint
- Technology Breakthrough
- Extreme Weather
- Demand for Talent
- Participation for All

In 2019, electr… emissions. Ho… expedite the …

No Coal for E…

2035

Cease using co… electricity gene… replaced by low… energy

Renewable E…

2035

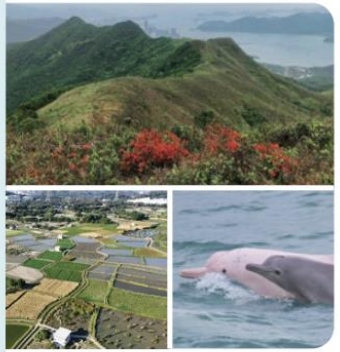
(Increase to …

Public and priv… develop RE pro… increase its sh… for electricity g…

Increase Carbon Sink of the Ecosystem

25 country parks and 22 special areas cover a total area of 44,842 hectares, accounting for about 40% of Hong Kong's total land area.

New Country, Marine and Nature Parks



- Established in 2024, the Robin's Nest Country Park, with its mountain ridges and natural streams, provides habitats for wild animals and plants, forming a cross-boundary ecological corridor to Shenzhen's Wutong Mountain
- 3 new marine parks were established in the past 5 years, including Southwest Lantau Marine Park, South Lantau Marine Park and North Lantau Marine Park, to strengthen conservation of marine ecology
- Long Valley Nature Park was opened in 2024 to better achieve the complementary objectives of conservation and agriculture

Wetland Conservation

- Hong Kong and Shenzhen signed the Framework Arrangement for the Conservation of Shenzhen Bay (Deep Bay) Wetlands in 2023 to jointly strengthen the protection of mudflats at intertidal areas and mangroves
- The development of Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park will commence in 2026/2027, creating synergy with the adjacent Mai Po Nature Reserve to enhance the conservation of wetland ecosystem in the Deep Bay area

Biodiversity

- **2016** — Developed the first Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP)
- **2025** — Over 60 specific actions listed in BSAP substantially completed
- Update BSAP with reference to Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and China's National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030)

Resilience

Tropical Cyclones
- Projection of extreme winds

Extreme Temperatures
- Study on potential impacts on Government infrastructure under extreme temperatures

Reduce Flood Risk
Eliminated 127 flooding blackspots, improvement works for the remaining 4 black spots will be completed in phases

Contingency Plan for Transport System
Update contingency plans to handle emergency situations at major transport infrastructure

Contingency Plan for Natural Disasters
Inter-departmental Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration to handle natural disasters of a substantial scale

Emergency Alert System
Disseminate messages to mobile users during emergency situations to remind the public to adopt contingency measures

Vision

Zero-carbon Emissions • Liveable City • Sustainable Development

Transport

…bout 18% of total carbon emissions in …EVs and other new energy transport …ector achieve zero carbon emissions

…Kong 2035

Popularisation of Electric Vehicles

- **Electric Private Cars** — 2035 — Cease the new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid private cars in 2035 or earlier
- **New Energy Transport** — 2035 — Progressively adopt new energy ferries

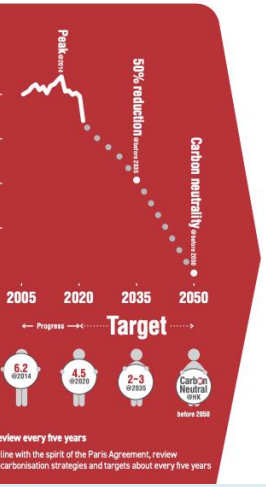
Waste Reduction

Waste accounted for about 7% of total carbon emissions in 2019. Developing waste-to-energy facilities and promoting waste reduction and recycling will enable us to move away from reliance on landfills for municipal waste disposal

Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035

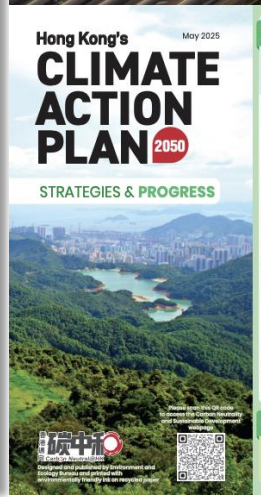
2035 — Implement the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035 to realise the vision of "Waste Reduction • Resources Circulation • Zero Landfill"

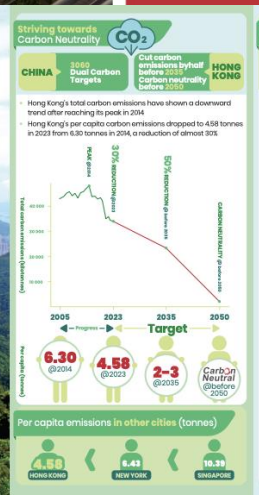
- **Municipal Solid Waste Charging** — 2023 — Prepare for implementation of waste charging, encourage waste reduction and recycling, and strengthen community facilities and support
- **Regulation of Disposable Plastic Tableware** — 2025 — Regulate disposable plastic tableware, etc. in phases, reduce plastic at source
- **Waste-to-energy** — 2035 — Develop adequate waste-to-energy facilities, move away from reliance on landfills for municipal waste disposal

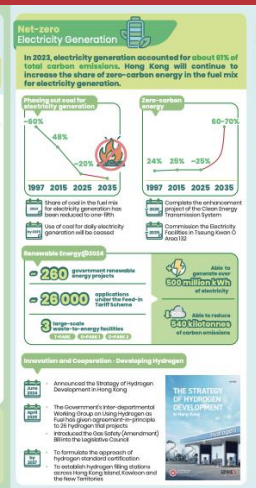


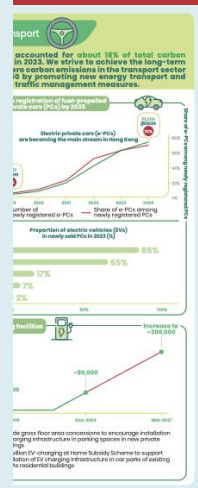
Review every five years

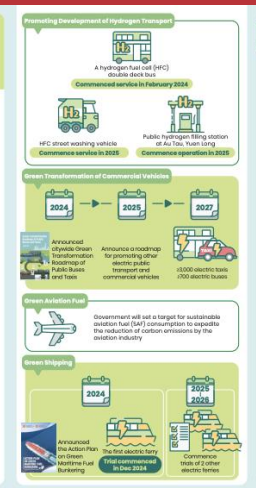
In line with the spirit of the Paris Agreement, review decarbonisation strategies and targets about every five years

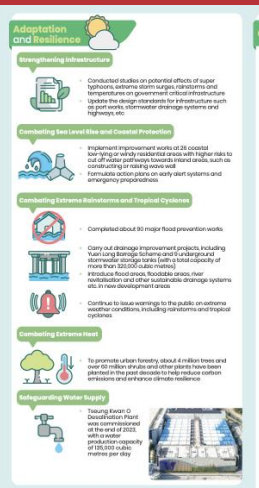






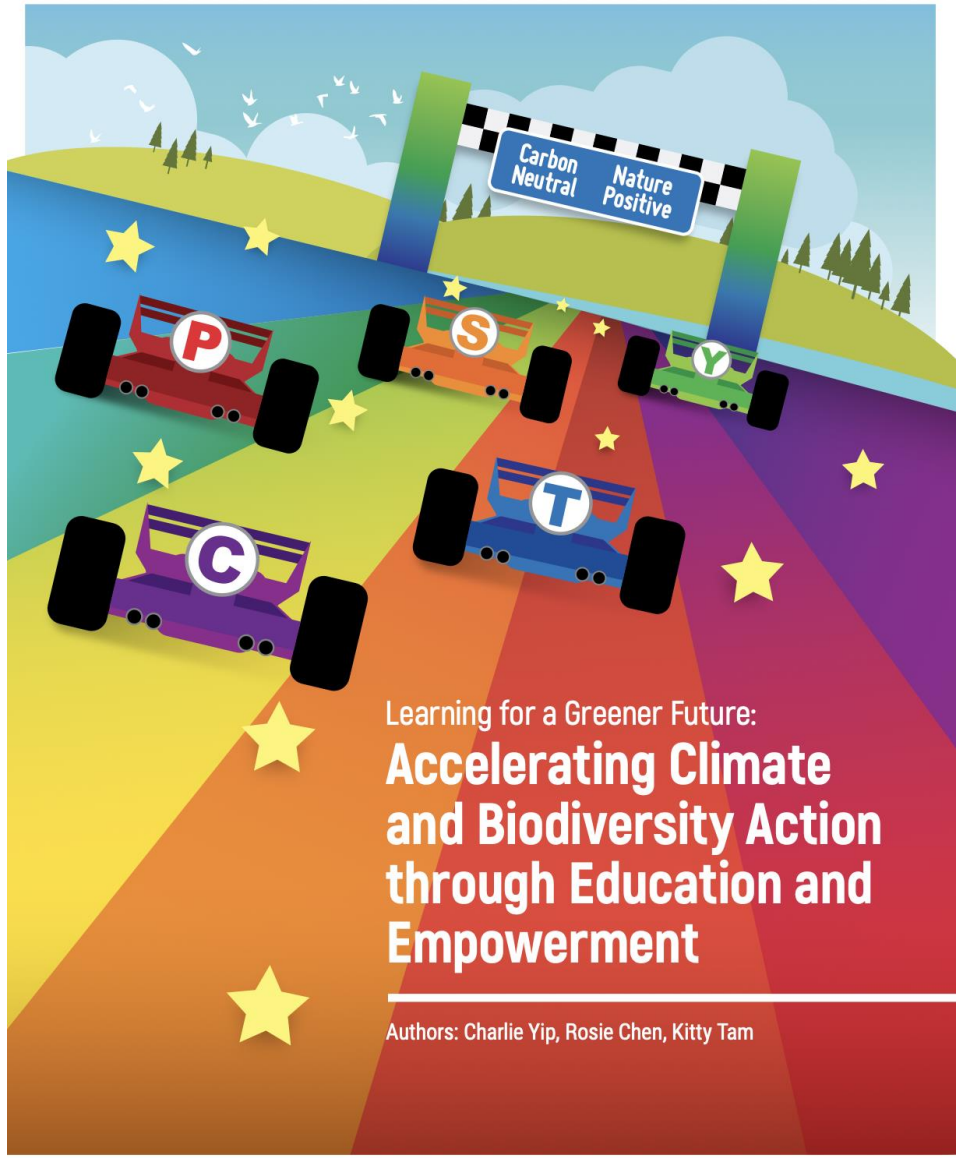






Education

- 482 school development plans: 2% climate change & 1% biodiversity
- Gaps: STEAM Education
- Education Bureau x Civic Exchange NbS Campus Competition



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HONG KONG 2050 IS NOW

Building Up Momentum

Hong Kong NbS Week x 2

(30th October – 20th November 2025)

We organise a series of workshops and site visits with Global Head of IUCN NbS **Charles Karangwa** and IUCN Asia Regional NbS Technical Officer **Hanif Falah**

Co-launch 10 **Hong Kong NbS Case Studies** with IUCN

10

Research on **Urban NbS**

Research on **Eco-Tourism**

2026 NbS Conference Week

(June 2026)

We invite **global, Mainland and local experts, stakeholders, and media** to join a series of conference events and discussions

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Mai Po Nature Reserve

Pak Nai oyster Reef Restoration

Forest Restoration and Rejuvenation

Eco-shoreline at Tung Chung

Conservation Management for Shui Hau

Conservation Management for Lai Chi Wo

Long Valley Nature Park

Fanling North Area 15 Urban Mini Forest

Tsui Ping River Revitalisation

Taikoo Square and Garden

Urban Slope Greening

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Local projects being assessed with IUCN Global NbS Standards

What is the Hong Kong NbS Hub?

We envision HKSAR will become a **regional leader** and **city model** in the application and innovation of **high-integrity Nature-based Solutions** for sustainable development, resilience, and climate action

Mission of Hong Kong NbS Hub

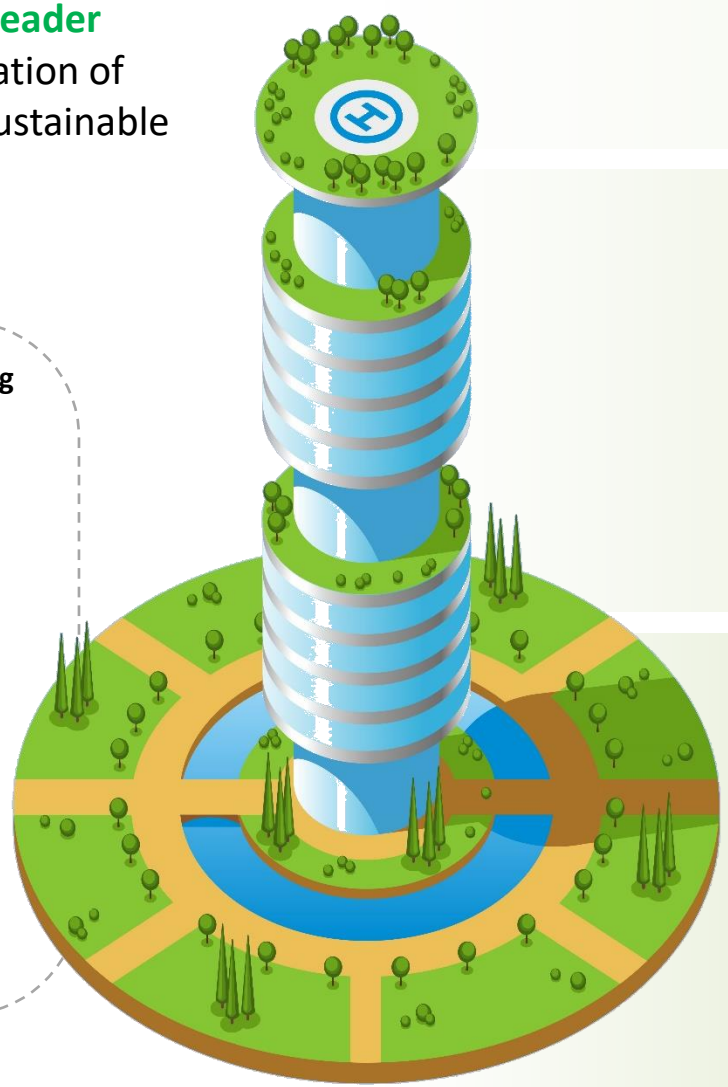
- Support **implementation**, **mainstreaming**, and **scaling** of NbS in HKSAR through a coordinated and science-based approach, anchored in global standards and regional collaboration
- Serve as an **efficient co-working platform** with key stakeholders and experts

Steering Committee

Chaired by HKSARG Bureau and vice-chaired by IUCN Global Head for NbS

Technical Advisory Committee

Joined by 10-12 regional and city NbS experts



Short-Term (1–3 Years)

1. Map ***existing*** and ***potential*** NbS projects
2. Conduct city ***baseline assessment*** using IUCN NbS Self-Assessment Tool
3. Develop 2–3 pilot urban and coastal NbS ***demonstration projects***
4. Publish an NbS HKSAR ***State of Practice Report***
5. Deliver first cohort ***training for professionals*** on IUCN NbS Standard

Medium-Term (3–5 Years)

1. Support ***full NbS integration*** in HKSAR's updated Climate Action Plan 2050 and BSAP
2. Establish a HKSAR NbS ***Knowledge Platform***
3. Host ***regional peer exchange*** and ***high-level symposium*** on Urban NbS
4. Leverage ***financing from MDBs*** and ***private sector*** for scaling

Long-Term (5–10 Years)

1. Become ***regional technical lead*** on urban and infrastructure-integrated NbS
2. Influence ***global guidance*** through documented best practices
3. Offer ***certification*** and technical support across Asia-Pacific cities

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THANK YOU

KTAM@CIVIC-EXCHANGE.ORG