

20 May 2009

Dear Editor,

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB)

We refer to the letter of Ms Janet Walker (*Location of border crossing will benefit engineers, not dolphins* , May 12), concerning the projects associated with the HZMB.

The Government attaches great importance on preserving the dolphin ecology when planning the HZMB projects. The topic is a key subject of study in the robust environmental impact assessments. Our aim is to minimize any impact caused to the dolphins.

To grip the precise pattern of dolphin activities in Hong Kong waters, we have engaged dolphin expert to conduct an in-depth study. The study indicates that dolphins occur year-round at Sha Chau/Lung Kwu Chau, Tai O and at and near the west waters of the Airport Island, while their occurrences at and near the northeast waters of the Airport Island and the Brothers Islands are seasonal. The overall densities, densities of calves, sighting densities of feeding and socializing activities are considerably higher near the west waters of the Airport Island. Moreover, the waters west of the Airport Island is a more important traveling corridor for dolphins in Hong Kong – between Sha Chau/Lung Kwu Chau and Tai O. Accordingly, we put the boundary crossing facilities (BCF) at northeast of the Airport so as to putting human activities further away from the active nursing ground of dolphins around the west waters.

To further protect our dolphins, we have formulated specific mitigation measures to be taken during construction stage according to the expert' s recommendation. We will establish exclusion zone around areas of piling and dredging works and have it closely monitored by experienced independent dolphin observer. Once dolphins are found within the zone, the works will temporarily halt until they leave. Besides, we will employ silt curtains and closed-grab during dredging and dumping operations to minimize water quality degradation; and employ bubble curtains/jacket and avoid percussive piling to prevent acoustic disturbance to

dolphin. We will also apply restrictions on working vessels to reduce their disturbance to dolphin activities. Comprehensive dolphin monitoring will last from works start till a certain period after completion to ensure the effectiveness of these mitigation measures.

We will continue to do our best towards protecting our dolphins as well as our environment.

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