

CHAPTER 6

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Management of the Hong Kong Wetland Park

**Audit Commission
Hong Kong
25 October 2011**

This audit review was carried out under a set of guidelines tabled in the Provisional Legislative Council by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on 11 February 1998. The guidelines were agreed between the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Audit and accepted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Report No. 57 of the Director of Audit contains 12 Chapters which are available on our website at <http://www.aud.gov.hk>.

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MANAGEMENT OF THE HONG KONG WETLAND PARK

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 This PART describes the background to the audit of the **Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)**'s management of the **Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP)**, and outlines the audit objective and scope.

Background

1.2 In the 1980s, the Government started the development of Tin Shui Wai New Town. Reclamation of low-lying areas was conducted in the region to provide land for the development. To compensate for the loss of natural habitats, an ecological mitigation area (EMA) of about 60 hectares was to be constructed at the northern part of Tin Shui Wai. The EMA would also serve as a buffer between the densely populated Tin Shui Wai New Town and the nearby Mai Po Marshes which form part of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site (Note 1).

1.3 In 1999, the Government decided to develop the EMA into a purpose-built wetland park, the HKWP. The HKWP, situated in the vicinity of the Mai Po Marshes, will provide a complementary and more accessible facility for visitors (Note 2). The HKWP would primarily be a conservation and education facility, but would also serve recreation and tourism promotion purposes. The Government had the objective of developing the HKWP into a **world-class conservation, education and tourism facility**. In view of its multi-functional significance, the Government designated the HKWP as a millennium capital works project.

Note 1: *In September 1995, about 1,500 hectares of wetlands in the Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay region were designated as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (i.e. a Ramsar Site). The Convention is an inter-governmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. As at September 2011, the Convention had 160 contracting parties including China. Hong Kong, as part of China, needs to help meet the obligations under the Convention.*

Note 2: *Owing to the ecological sensitivity of the Mai Po Marshes, its number of visitors has been restricted. Entry to the Mai Po Marshes is controlled under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170).*

The HKWP

1.4 In May 2006, the HKWP was opened to the public. It was also Hong Kong's first major green tourism facility. The environmentally friendly design of the HKWP (see Photograph 1), which was drawn up by the Architectural Services Department to ensure harmony with the environment and no disturbance to wildlife, had been awarded the Medal of the Year (2005) by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects. **After the opening of the HKWP, the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Economic Services was informed in May 2006 that the HKWP had the potential of becoming one of the most popular tourist attractions in Hong Kong (Note 3).**

Photograph 1

A bird's eye view of the HKWP near its main entrance



Legend: — Boundary of the HKWP

Source: AFCD records

Note 3: *In May 2006, the then Economic Development and Labour Bureau informed the LegCo Panel on Economic Services that “HKWP will enrich the diversity of our tourism products. It will provide tourists with a unique experience in a natural environment and information on conservation. It has the potential of becoming one of the most popular tourist attractions in Hong Kong”.*

1.5 The HKWP comprises an indoor visitor centre of 10,000 square metres (see Photograph 2) and a 60-hectare Wetland Reserve for plants and wildlife (see Photograph 3). The visitor centre has three major exhibition galleries and other supporting facilities (e.g. theatre, café and souvenir shop). The outdoor Wetland Reserve includes constructed wetlands and re-created habitats, such as freshwater marshes, ponds, mudflats and woodlands. Facilities in the Wetland Reserve include the mangrove boardwalk (see Photograph 4) and houses for bird-watching (i.e. bird hides — see Photograph 5) which help visitors understand the wetland environment and the wildlife there. According to AFCD records, many plant/wildlife species found in Hong Kong can also be found in the HKWP (see Appendix A).

Photograph 2

An interior view of the visitor centre



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 6 June 2011

Photograph 3

Wetland Reserve viewed from the visitor centre



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 6 June 2011

Photograph 4

The mangrove boardwalk



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 6 June 2011

Photograph 5
Inside a bird hide



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 6 June 2011

Operation of the HKWP

1.6 In order to provide a proper legal framework for its management and control, the HKWP has been designated as a special area under the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208). The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation**, as the Country and Marine Parks Authority (Note 4), is responsible for controlling and managing the

Note 4: *According to the Country Parks Ordinance, the duties of the Country and Marine Parks Authority include taking such measures in respect of country parks and special areas as he thinks necessary to:*

- (a) encourage their use and development for the purposes of recreation and tourism;*
- (b) protect the vegetation and wildlife inside country parks and special areas;*
- (c) preserve and maintain buildings and sites of historic or cultural significance within country parks and special areas; and*
- (d) provide facilities and services for the public enjoyment of country parks and special areas.*

HKWP under the AFCD's Nature Conservation and Country Parks Programme. The Programme (Note 5) contributes to two policy areas, namely:

- (a) "Travel and Tourism" under the policy responsibility of the **Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development**; and
- (b) "Environmental Protection, Conservation, Power and Sustainable Development" under the policy responsibility of the **Secretary for the Environment**.

1.7 **Financial resources for the management and operation of the HKWP have come from the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB — Note 6). The AFCD reports solely to the CEDB on the management and operation of the HKWP.** There was no reporting to the Environment Bureau (ENB — Note 7). The Tourism Commission (TC) under the CEDB, which is headed by the Commissioner for Tourism, is tasked to map out the Government's tourism development policy and strategy, including those relating to the HKWP.

1.8 As at 30 September 2011, the AFCD had an establishment of 77 staff (including 33 non-civil-service contract staff) in its Wetland Park Division for managing the HKWP. An organisation chart of the Wetland Park Division is at Appendix B. The AFCD outsourced some of the HKWP services (e.g. security and cleansing — see paras. 5.9 and 5.10) to outside service providers. To help review the HKWP's market position and formulate its marketing strategy, the AFCD had commissioned consultants to conduct marketing studies of the HKWP.

Note 5: *Apart from the management of the HKWP, the Programme also includes other activities such as the management and protection of country parks, special areas, marine parks and marine reserves under the Country Parks Ordinance and the Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476) for the purpose of nature conservation, recreation, nature based tourism and education.*

Note 6: *The CEDB is responsible, among other things, for enhancing Hong Kong's position as a leading international trade and business centre, fostering a business-friendly environment and attracting investment to Hong Kong, and establishing and promoting Hong Kong as Asia's premier international city and a world-class destination for leisure and business visitors.*

Note 7: *The ENB is responsible, among other things, for developing policies covering environmental protection and nature conservation, enforcing environmental legislation and monitoring environmental quality.*

1.9 In 2010-11, the HKWP incurred operating expenses of \$43.7 million and received some 449,000 visitors. During the year, the HKWP had an operating income (mainly from admission fees and café rentals) of \$10.5 million. According to a marketing study in 2008, the HKWP successfully achieved a high awareness level among Hong Kong residents, and tourists from outside Hong Kong were generally very satisfied with their visiting experiences at the HKWP.

Audit review

1.10 The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently carried out a review to examine the AFCD's management of the HKWP, focusing on the following areas:

- (a) patronage of the HKWP (PART 2);
- (b) wetland conservation (PART 3);
- (c) programme management (PART 4);
- (d) other administrative issues (PART 5); and
- (e) performance management (PART 6).

Audit has found that there are areas where improvements can be made and has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

General response from the Administration

1.11 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that the AFCD is grateful for working with Audit to explore opportunities to enhance the AFCD's services in the HKWP.

1.12 The **Commissioner for Tourism** generally agrees with the audit recommendations relating to the tourism promotion objective of the HKWP (see paras. 2.9, 2.30(a) and 6.13). He has said that the TC and the AFCD will endeavour to adhere to the recommendations.

Acknowledgement

1.13 Audit would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and full cooperation of the staff of the AFCD during the course of the audit review.

PART 2: PATRONAGE OF THE HONG KONG WETLAND PARK

2.1 This PART examines visitor patronage of the HKWP and the AFCD's effort in promoting patronage. Audit has found room for improvement in the following areas:

- (a) estimation of patronage of the HKWP (paras. 2.2 to 2.11);
- (b) patronage of tourists (paras. 2.12 to 2.16); and
- (c) measures to promote patronage (paras. 2.17 to 2.38).

Estimation of patronage of the Hong Kong Wetland Park

2.2 The AFCD commissioned two marketing consultancy studies of the HKWP, one in 2002 and another in 2008. In both studies, the consultants provided their estimates of the number of potential visitors in the coming years. These potential visitors would come from local residents (including school teachers and students) and tourists (i.e. visitors from outside Hong Kong, including those from the Mainland).

Patronage estimated by the 2002 marketing study

2.3 According to the 2002 marketing study, it was estimated that the HKWP could attract some 542,000 visitors in the first year after its opening, increasing to 634,000 visitors a year from 2009-10 and beyond (see Table 1). **In May 2006, the LegCo Panel on Economic Services was informed that the HKWP could receive over 500,000 visitors per year, about 30% of whom would be tourists.**

Table 1
Projected patronage
(2002 marketing study)

Year	All visitors (Number — in 000's)	Tourists (Number — in 000's)
2005-06 (Note)	542 (100%)	157 (29%)
2006-07	565 (100%)	167 (30%)
2007-08	588 (100%)	177 (30%)
2008-09	611 (100%)	187 (31%)
2009-10	634 (100%)	196 (31%)
Beyond 2010	634 (100%)	196 (31%)

Source: AFCD records

Note: The HKWP was then expected to open in 2005.

Patronage estimated by the 2008 marketing study

2.4 In the 2008 marketing study, the projected patronage of the HKWP was scaled down. However, an increasing trend of patronage was still projected up to 2011 (see Table 2).

Table 2
Projected patronage
(2008 marketing study)

Year	All visitors (Number — in 000's)	Tourists (Number — in 000's)
2009	462 (100%)	63 (14%)
2010	478 (100%)	70 (15%)
2011	495 (100%)	77 (16%)

Source: AFCD records

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to improve patronage

2.5 In contrast to the increasing trend of patronage projected by both marketing studies, the actual patronage of the HKWP had, in general, decreased over the years (see Table 3).

Table 3
Comparison between actual and projected patronage
(2006 to 2010)

Year	Projected patronage (a) (Number — in 000's)	Actual patronage (b) (Number — in 000's)	Attainment $(c) = \frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%$
May to December 2006 (Note 1)	377 (Note 2)	890	236%
2007	582 (Note 2)	730	125%
2008	605 (Note 2)	435	72%
2009	462 (Note 3)	447	97%
2010	478 (Note 3)	443	93%

Source: Audit analysis of AFCD records

Note 1: The HKWP was officially opened in May 2006.

Note 2: The projected patronage was based on the 2002 marketing study's estimates, adjusted from financial year basis to calendar year basis.

Note 3: The projected patronage was based on the 2008 marketing study's estimates.

Table 3 shows that the actual patronage of the HKWP decreased from 890,000 visitors in 2006 to 435,000 visitors in 2008 and, since then, fluctuated around 440,000 visitors a year. It also shows that, since 2008, the actual patronage had not attained the projected patronage estimated by the marketing studies. Upon enquiry, the AFCD informed Audit in August 2011 that:

- (a) the projected patronage estimated by the 2002 marketing study was based on benchmarking with local and overseas attractions, and public opinion surveys. In particular, the projected patronage of visitors was based on visitor profiling study with arbitrary assumptions such as estimation on visitor penetration rate;
- (b) the projected patronage was revised to a more realistic level in the 2008 marketing study (see Table 2 in para. 2.4);
- (c) in December 2008, the outdoor areas of the Wetland Reserve had been closed for 21 days as a precautionary measure against avian influenza. This had a significant impact on the 2008 patronage as the closure coincided with the peak season of bird watching and the Christmas holidays;
- (d) **since 2008, after the diminishing of novelty effect in 2006 and 2007, the patronage had stabilised at the level of around 440,000 visitors a year; and**
- (e) **as an eco-tourism facility, it was critical to have the right balance among the need for conservation of wildlife and habitats in the HKWP, the quality of visitor experiences, and the promotion of eco-tourism.**

2.6 Audit notes that the Government has regarded the HKWP as a conservation, education and tourism facility (see para. 1.3). **However, the different roles it plays may be in conflict with one another. For example, promoting tourism and increasing the number of visitors could have adverse effects on wetland conservation.** As mentioned in paragraph 6.12, Audit considers that there is a need to strike a fine balance among the different roles, and the AFCD needs to review the positioning of the HKWP. Given that the HKWP has been in operation for just over five years and has the potential to become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Hong Kong (see para. 1.4), it may be too early to have the patronage stagnated at the current level of around 440,000 a year and there may be room for further growth in patronage.

Need to set appropriate target for patronage

2.7 Since 2006 when the LegCo Panel on Economic Services was informed of the projected patronage of the HKWP (i.e. over 500,000 visitors per year including 30% of tourists — see para. 2.3), updated figures of projected patronage had not been publicised. In March 2010, the CEDB asked the AFCD to review the original estimate of patronage

provided to the LegCo Panel on Economic Services in 2006. In its reply to the CEDB in April 2010, the AFCD was of the view that a target patronage of around 440,000 visitors a year, including 15% of tourists, would be appropriate.

2.8 In view of the HKWP's tourism promotion objective, the AFCD may consider setting a more challenging target to drive continuous improvement in patronage of the HKWP.

Audit recommendations

2.9 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should, in consultation with the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development:**

- (a) **review the appropriateness of the target patronage of 440,000 visitors a year (including 15% of tourists) for the HKWP; and**
- (b) **take effective measures to improve patronage of the HKWP.**

Response from the Administration

2.10 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the AFCD will consider kicking off a study in 2012 to review the appropriate patronage and proportion of tourists for the HKWP (see also para. 6.14(b)); and
- (b) in the meantime, the AFCD will continue to explore measures to improve patronage of the HKWP, such as the use of cost-effective advertising channels (e.g. mass online advertising) and organisation of publicity events to increase attractiveness of the HKWP.

2.11 The **Commissioner for Tourism** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the TC has requested the AFCD to review the appropriateness of the target patronage for the HKWP, taking into account the actual patronage which has stabilised since 2008 and factors such as the tourism promotion objective of the park as well as the need to strike a right balance between wetland conservation and tourism promotion;

- (b) depending on the outcome of the review, the TC will consider adjusting the target patronage as appropriate; and
- (c) in the meantime, the TC will continue to convene regular joint liaison meetings with the AFCD, the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong to explore effective measures to enhance the marketing and promotion of the HKWP, targeting at overseas visitors.

Patronage of tourists

2.12 The AFCD reports to the CEDB the HKWP's patronage. The total number of visitors was recorded by the turnstiles at the entrance of the HKWP, whereas the number of tourists was calculated by applying a pre-determined percentage to the total number of visitors. Two methods had been used to determine the percentage:

- (a) *May 2006 to January 2009.* The AFCD surveyed random samples of visitors at the HKWP and determined the percentage based on the proportion of tourists in the respondents; and
- (b) *February 2009 and thereafter.* To collect more accurate information about visitors, the AFCD has, since February 2009, replaced the random surveys with a new method whereby:
 - (i) the AFCD enquired about the countries of residence of visitors when they bought single-entry tickets (i.e. tickets which allow entry to the HKWP on the day of purchase) at the HKWP ticket office;
 - (ii) the information was immediately recorded in a computerised system; and
 - (iii) the AFCD worked out the percentage based on the proportion of tourists in single-entry-ticket holders.

Table 4 shows the patronage of tourists reported by the AFCD to the CEDB.

Table 4
Patronage of tourists reported to the CEDB
(2006 to 2010)

Year	Number of tourists
2006 (May to December)	72,079
2007	110,176
2008	70,123
2009	51,236
2010	51,512

Source: AFCD records

Audit observations and recommendations

Method in use from May 2006 to January 2009

2.13 Audit reviewed the patronage of tourists calculated by the AFCD and found that the patronage of tourists reported to the CEDB did not tally with AFCD records, as follows:

- (a) ***Reported figures differed from Audit's calculated figures.*** The AFCD maintained a summary of the results of visitor surveys (see para. 2.12(a)), but did not have records showing how the patronage of tourists was compiled for reporting to the CEDB. With reference to the monthly percentage of tourists shown in the summary for 2008 (Note 8), Audit re-calculated the patronage of tourists for 2008 (see Appendix C) and noted the following:
- (i) for 8 months, the figures reported to the CEDB were larger than those calculated by Audit. The differences ranged from 696 to 4,940 tourists;

Note 8: *The 2008 summary was provided by the AFCD for Audit examination in June 2011.*

- (ii) for 1 month, the reported figure was smaller than the calculated figure. The difference was 1,575 tourists;
 - (iii) for 2 months (i.e. February and December 2008), the percentages of tourists were not shown in the summary of survey results (Note 9). The patronage of tourists could not be calculated; and
 - (iv) there was no discrepancy for the remaining month (i.e. July 2008); and
- (b) ***Summary of survey results did not tally with underlying survey records.*** Audit examined the records of visitor surveys (see para. 2.12(a)) conducted in 2008, and noted that for 9 months, there were slight discrepancies between the figures of the percentage of tourists in the respondents as shown in the summary of survey results and those calculated from the underlying survey records.

Method in use since February 2009

2.14 Visitors to the HKWP hold either single-entry tickets (i.e. tickets which allow entry to the HKWP on the day of purchase) or multi-entry passes (i.e. annual/half-yearly/family passes which allow entry to the HKWP over a period of time). In 2010, with reference to the percentage of tourists in single-entry-ticket holders, the AFCD multiplied the total number of HKWP visitors by 11.62% to work out the patronage of tourists for the year. **Audit noted that 18% of the HKWP visitors in 2010 were multi-entry-pass holders who, in most cases (99% — Note 10), were not tourists.** Audit considers that assuming 11.62% of these multi-entry-pass holders to be tourists in the AFCD's calculation was not appropriate. **The patronage of tourists could have been overstated.**

Audit recommendations

2.15 **To enhance accountability and transparency, Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **take measures to ascertain more accurate patronage figures of tourists;**

Note 9: *According to the AFCD, visitor surveys were not conducted to ascertain the percentage of tourists in February and December 2008.*

Note 10: *Audit reviewed 2,036 annual/half-yearly/family passes issued in April 2010. Audit found that only 23 (1%) of the 2,036 pass-holders had an overseas correspondence address and were likely tourists.*

- (b) **maintain proper records relating to the compilation of the patronage figures; and**
- (c) **refine the methodology for deriving the patronage of tourists, taking account of the fact that the proportion of tourists in single-entry-ticket holders and multi-entry-pass holders could differ considerably.**

Response from the Administration

2.16 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) under the new method of collecting visitor information (see para. 2.12(b)), information about the countries of residence of visitors is immediately recorded in a computerised system. There is no longer any concern on the maintenance and accuracy of the patronage figures of tourists purchasing single-entry tickets;
- (b) for multi-entry-pass holders, the AFCD will ensure that records of their multi-entry-pass applications are properly maintained; and
- (c) regarding the methodology for deriving the patronage of tourists, since August 2011, the HKWP has taken account of multi-entry-pass holders in calculating the patronage of tourists.

Measures to promote patronage

2.17 To help improve patronage of the HKWP, the AFCD has taken measures, including:

- (a) advertising the HKWP (paras. 2.18 to 2.22);
- (b) reviewing the level of admission fees (paras. 2.23 to 2.32); and
- (c) enhancing the entertainment elements (paras. 2.33 to 2.38).

Advertising the Hong Kong Wetland Park

2.18 Advertising is a major marketing activity for the HKWP. The AFCD employs different advertising means such as television (TV), radio, outdoor advertising (e.g. advertising on bus bodies), print advertising (e.g. placing advertorials in tourist maps), online advertising on the Internet, and mobile advertising on cell phones. The AFCD spends about \$3 million a year on advertising the HKWP. From time to time, the

AFCD supplements the HKWP's paid advertising through other public relations events (e.g. press briefings and media interviews) which provide free exposure for the HKWP on the media.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to review the cost-effectiveness of TV and radio commercials

2.19 Audit reviewed the advertising expenditure of the HKWP in 2009-10 and 2010-11. Table 5 shows that a considerable proportion (i.e. more than 30%) of the advertising expenditure was spent on TV and radio commercials.

Table 5

**Advertising expenditure
(2009-10 and 2010-11)**

Advertising means	2009-10 (\$'000)	2010-11 (\$'000)
Commercials in local TV stations	824 (27%)	566 (18%)
Commercials in a Mainland TV station	0 (0%)	46 (1%)
Radio commercials (including sponsoring radio programmes)	320 (10%)	398 (12%)
<i>Subtotal</i>	1,144 (37%)	1,010 (31%)
Electronic advertising on public transport, print advertising, outdoor advertising, online advertising, mobile advertising, etc.	1,931 (63%)	2,201 (69%)
Total	3,075 (100%)	3,211 (100%)

Source: Audit analysis of AFCD records

Audit noted that the AFCD had not reviewed the cost-effectiveness of the TV and radio commercials.

Need to review the selection of channels for TV and radio commercials

2.20 Audit noted that, of the total spending of \$2.154 million (i.e. \$1.144 million plus \$1.01 million) for TV and radio commercials in 2009-10 and 2010-11, the majority (i.e. \$2.041 million or 95%) was spent on placing commercials with a local TV station and a local radio station. However, none of these stations offered specialty channels on popular science and nature, the audience of which could be a potential source of visitors for the HKWP. For 2011-12, the AFCD had planned to place all the HKWP's TV/radio commercials with the two stations. Upon enquiry, the AFCD informed Audit in September 2011 that the target audience for advertising on TV/radio was the general public, because family visitors (rather than science/nature lovers) were the primary target visitor groups of the HKWP. **Audit noted that the AFCD did not have a mechanism for identifying the most suitable channels for broadcasting the HKWP's TV/radio commercials, taking account of factors such as target audience, required coverage, intended exposure and costs.** In the absence of such a mechanism, there is a risk that TV/radio commercials are habitually placed with certain stations which may not represent the best choice for the HKWP to improve its patronage.

Audit recommendations

2.21 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **review the cost-effectiveness of the TV and radio commercials for the HKWP, taking account of factors such as target audience, coverage, exposure and costs; and**
- (b) **having regard to the results of the review in (a) above, consider establishing a mechanism for identifying the most suitable channels for broadcasting TV and radio commercials for the HKWP.**

Response from the Administration

2.22 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) in preparing the future media plan of the HKWP, the AFCD will review the cost-effectiveness of TV and radio commercials based on statistical reports from the relevant media and results of the HKWP's customer surveys; and

- (b) the decision to advertise on TV was based on the AFCD's careful consideration. The acquisition of market sense and intelligence was by no means a formal process, yet it was important in making marketing decisions. The AFCD collected and considered information from various media for the HKWP, and the selection of TV/radio channels was based on various factors such as the popularity of the channels, target audience and advertising cost of the channels. In surveys conducted on HKWP visitors since November 2009 on how they heard about the HKWP, it was confirmed that TV was among the most popular media through which visitors had heard about the HKWP.

Reviewing the level of admission fees

2.23 The HKWP was intended to be a world-class eco-tourism facility. In 2005, LegCo was informed that, in line with the management of many other similar facilities and exhibition venues, admission fees and car-parking charges would need to be levied on visitors to the HKWP.

Fees and charges of the HKWP

2.24 The fees and charges of the HKWP are set out in the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A). The fee of a single-entry ticket is \$30 for adult and \$15 for child. Concessionary packages are also provided to attract frequent visitors (e.g. family visitors) and tour groups (see Appendix D for details).

2.25 The parking fee for a private car is \$8 per hour, which is equal to the hourly rate of road side meter parking at Tin Shui Wai and other New Territories areas. Parking of coaches is free in order to encourage group visitors to visit the HKWP.

Reviews of fees and charges

2.26 In the 2002 marketing study, surveys were conducted to seek the views of tourists and local residents on the HKWP's admission fees. The survey results indicated that local residents and tourists generally perceived the appropriate fee per head to be \$24 and \$31 respectively, and that they generally agreed with the idea of charging admission fees at the HKWP.

2.27 Apart from commissioning consultancy studies to ascertain the appropriateness of the HKWP's admission fees, the AFCD conducts annual reviews to assess the need for revising the HKWP's fees and charges. According to the AFCD, the admission fees are set according to a basket of factors, such as results of market surveys, affordability of residents, remoteness of the HKWP, and lack of attractions in the vicinity.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need for a clear pricing policy

2.28 In spite of the need for regular reviews of the HKWP's fees and charges, the AFCD has not clearly laid down the policy for pricing HKWP services. In particular, a target cost recovery rate has not been set for the HKWP. In February 2005, upon enquiry by the LegCo Panel on Economic Services, the Commissioner for Tourism said that the estimated level of government subsidy to the HKWP was 80%. In May 2009, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) asked the AFCD to consider setting a target cost recovery rate so as to facilitate the annual fees review of the HKWP. As at June 2011, the target cost recovery rate was still not set.

2.29 Audit noted that, in recent years, the cost recovery rates of the HKWP actually varied between 16.3% and 18.5%, and that the government subsidy rate for the HKWP was more than 80% (see Table 6).

Table 6

**The HKWP's rates of cost recovery and government subsidy
(2008-09 to 2010-11)**

Year	Cost (a) (\$'000)	Revenue (b) (\$'000)	Cost recovery rate (c) = (b) ÷ (a) × 100%	Government subsidy rate (d) = 100% - (c)
2008-09	64,077	10,429	16.3%	83.7%
2009-10	59,502	10,369	17.4%	82.6%
2010-11	56,703	10,469	18.5%	81.5%

Source: AFCD records

Audit considers that setting a clear pricing policy (including a target cost recovery rate) would provide the criteria against which the appropriateness of the HKWP's fees and charges can be assessed, thereby facilitating an effective review of fees and charges. In fact, the fees and charges of the HKWP have not been revised since its opening in 2006.

Audit recommendations

2.30 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **in consultation with the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, lay down a clear pricing policy (including setting a target cost recovery rate) for the HKWP; and**
- (b) **regularly review the fees and charges of the HKWP.**

Response from the Administration

2.31 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the AFCD will, in consultation with the CEDB and the FSTB, devise the pricing policy for the HKWP to facilitate the annual review of its fees and charges;
- (b) assessment of the HKWP's fees and charges will be included in the coming post-implementation review (PIR — see para. 6.14(b) and (c)); and
- (c) the fees and charges of the HKWP are also subject to review annually as required by the FSTB.

2.32 The **Commissioner for Tourism** generally agrees with the audit recommendation in paragraph 2.30(a). He also agrees that there is merit in laying down a pricing policy for the HKWP to facilitate the latter's annual review of fees and charges (see para. 2.28). He has said that:

- (a) as the Administration informed the LegCo Panel on Economic Services in May 2006, the admission fees for the HKWP were determined having regard to visitors' affordability, travelling cost to the park, attractiveness of the park and admission fees of other similar facilities based on the 2002 marketing study;

- (b) the 80% government subsidy to the HKWP was then estimated for indicative purpose. A target cost recovery rate for the HKWP has not been set since the level of government subsidy may vary from year to year as it is based on actual revenue and expenditure, whereas the fees of the HKWP are stipulated in the relevant legislation (see para. 2.24) and they are not meant to be changed frequently; and
- (c) the TC will work with the AFCD to devise a pricing policy for the HKWP.

Enhancing the entertainment elements

2.33 The 2008 marketing study pointed out the need for enhancing the HKWP's entertainment elements to attract more local residents (Note 11). From time to time, the AFCD organised entertainment-oriented activities (e.g. dramas and talk shows) at the HKWP. The AFCD also set up edutainment facilities to enhance visitors' experiences at the HKWP.

Replacement of an edutainment facility

2.34 The water droplet presentation system was an edutainment facility at the HKWP (see Note 12 and Photograph 6). Its utilisation rate had been about 85% on average. In October 2010, the HKWP planned to replace the system by a more sophisticated 4-D theatre (see Photograph 7 — Note 13). In January 2011, the water droplet presentation system was closed.

Note 11: *According to the 2008 marketing study, local residents were the largest segment of visitors to the HKWP, and they valued entertainment elements more than education elements.*

Note 12: *The system, in the setting of a small theatre, combined a film with synchronised motions of seats to illustrate the journey of a water droplet in nature.*

Note 13: *The 4-D theatre would present 3-dimensional films with synchronised motions of seats and other physical effects.*

Photographs 6 to 7

Facilities combining films with synchronised physical effects

6.



Water droplet presentation system

Source: AFCD records

7.



4-D theatre (to be built)

Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 24 June 2011

Audit observations and recommendations

Need for a facility in place of the water droplet presentation system

2.35 In June 2011, Audit examined the progress of the 4-D theatre. Audit noted that the water droplet presentation system had been dismantled to provide room for the 4-D theatre (see Photograph 7) which was yet to be built. According to the AFCD, the core part of the 4-D theatre experience (i.e. the 3-dimensional film production) was completed in May 2011. A contract for the provision of the equipment that fits the 4-D special effects of the film has been awarded and the fitting out works will be completed upon the delivery of the equipment.

2.36 Since the water droplet presentation system was closed in January 2011, the facility housing the system has been left idle, and the HKWP visitors have been deprived of a key edutainment facility. There is a need for speeding up the implementation of the 4-D theatre.

Audit recommendations

2.37 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **expedite the implementation of the 4-D theatre to help maintain the entertainment elements of the HKWP; and**
- (b) **make better arrangements in planning future replacement of key facilities of the HKWP, with a view to minimising the idle time of the facilities.**

Response from the Administration

2.38 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that the fitting-out work at the 4-D theatre would be completed by late 2011 upon the delivery of the equipment.

PART 3: WETLAND CONSERVATION

3.1 This PART examines issues relating to the management of the HKWP's Wetland Reserve.

Conservation objectives

3.2 The Wetland Reserve is 60 hectares in size and is made up of constructed wetlands and re-created habitats. It comprises visitation areas (e.g. visitor paths and nearby areas) and conservation areas (e.g. freshwater marshes, reed beds, mudflats and woodlands to which visitors' access is restricted). The different areas need regular management and maintenance in order to achieve the following conservation objectives:

- (a) providing varied wetland habitats with enhanced ecological functions to replace those habitats lost during the development of Tin Shui Wai, and to attract species of particular interest;
- (b) acting as a buffer between the Tin Shui Wai development and the Mai Po Marshes to reduce disturbance to birds, and to enhance the ecological function of the Mai Po Marshes;
- (c) maintaining the Reserve in a tidy manner for the enjoyment of visitors; and
- (d) maintaining the Reserve in consistency with the design of the HKWP, and to facilitate public awareness and education.

Management of the Wetland Reserve

3.3 The Reserve Section of the Wetland Park Division (see Appendix B) is responsible for managing the Wetland Reserve and takes management actions on the following key areas:

- (a) ***Vegetation management.*** Native plants are planted and invasive plants are removed. Vegetation in conservation areas is maintained to meet the needs of wildlife (e.g. dense emergent vegetation is grown for water birds). Vegetation in visitation areas is kept in a neat, tidy and well-maintained condition for visitors' enjoyment;

- (b) **Wildlife management.** Measures are taken to attract wildlife to the suitable habitats (e.g. artificial nest boxes are installed for forest birds and camouflaged bat boxes are installed to provide roosts for bats). Exotic invasive species (e.g. Golden Apple Snails which feed on submerged plants and floating leaves) are removed from habitats; and
- (c) **Water quality and hydrology management.** Water levels of wetlands are controlled by sluice gates and pumps. The quality of water is monitored to ensure that the various quality indicators (e.g. level of salinity and suspended solids in water) are within targets.

Ecological monitoring of species diversity

3.4 As constructed wetlands and re-created habitats, the Wetland Reserve needs continuous ecological monitoring to ensure that it meets the needs of plants and wildlife. Since 2003, the Reserve Section has conducted regular surveys to collect relevant information (Note 14) about the plants and wildlife in the HKWP (Note 15). In recent years, the Reserve Section recorded 43 wildlife species which were new to the HKWP. Table 7 shows details of the 43 species.

Note 14: *According to the HKWP's Ecological Monitoring Manual, such information includes:*

- (a) *species diversity of selected plants and wildlife (e.g. birds, dragonflies and aquatic plants);*
- (b) *seasonal changes of plants and wildlife;*
- (c) *presence of species of conservation concern and their habitat associations;*
- (d) *breeding and nesting activities of wildlife;*
- (e) *growth, survival and establishment of plant communities at the constructed habitats; and*
- (f) *extent of natural colonisation by other plant species.*

Note 15: *Different methodologies are adopted in the surveys. For example, bird surveys are conducted along fixed routes in the HKWP. Surveyors record the types and number of bird species at selected observation spots by eye-sighting and hearing of bird calls. For mammal surveys, traps are set and the caught animals will be released after identification.*

Table 7
Wildlife species newly recorded in the HKWP
(2008 to 2010)

Wildlife	Number of new species			
	2008	2009	2010	Total
Bird	8	5	3	16
Butterfly	4	4	2	10
Dragonfly	5	2	0	7
Freshwater fish	1	1	0	2
Reptile	5	3	0	8
Total	23	15	5	43

Source: AFCD records

Audit observations and recommendations

Diversity of plant and wildlife species

3.5 Maintaining biodiversity is an objective of conserving the Wetland Reserve (see para. 3.2(a)). The Wetland Reserve had been successful in attracting new species (see Table 7). However, according to the results of the Reserve Section's ecological monitoring (see Table 8), there was a decrease in the recorded number of species for birds, aquatic plants and butterflies in the past few years:

- (a) **Birds.** The recorded number of species decreased from a peak of 181 in 2007 to 152 in 2010;
- (b) **Aquatic plants.** The recorded number of species decreased from a peak of 206 in 2006 to 112 in 2010; and
- (c) **Butterflies.** The recorded number of species decreased from a peak of 133 in 2007 to 113 in 2010.

Audit also noted that, over the years, there were increases in the recorded number of species for dragonflies and freshwater fish, as well as fluctuations in the recorded number of species for reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Audit made enquiries with the AFCD on the recorded number of species of the different plants and wildlife in the HKWP.

Table 8
Species of plants and wildlife in the HKWP
(2003 to 2010)

Wildlife	Number of species							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bird	114	151	158	159	181	162	155	152
Aquatic plant	74	131	88	206	127	103	94	112
Butterfly	53	92	88	115	133	130	123	113
Dragonfly	31	34	31	36	38	43	42	43
Freshwater fish	5	7	12	14	11	11	13	14
Reptile	7	7	5	5	4	14	14	14
Amphibian	9	8	5	8	8	7	7	7
Mammal	5	8	3	6	8	6	7	7

Source: AFCD records

- 3.6 In response to Audit's enquiries, the AFCD informed Audit in August 2011 that:
- (a) it is a natural phenomenon that the biodiversity in natural habitats may fluctuate between years. **It is more scientifically robust to observe the trend of biodiversity over a longer period;**
 - (b) there are confounding factors affecting the biodiversity in the HKWP that are not related to the HKWP. For instance, the occurrence of the birds in the HKWP or Hong Kong is affected by various factors including the habitat conditions and human disturbance along their migratory routes before they arrive at Hong Kong or the HKWP;
 - (c) a large quantity of a wide range of aquatic herbaceous plants was planted at various trial plots in the freshwater marshes prior to the opening of the HKWP in 2006 as a pilot scheme to test the survival rate of different aquatic plants in the re-created habitats; and

- (d) during the natural establishment process, some of the plants were found not adaptive to the environment and disappeared naturally. The existing aquatic plant community should have reached an ecologically stable and healthy condition.

Audit notes the AFCD's explanations. However, given the conservation objectives, the AFCD needs to continue monitoring closely the biodiversity of the Wetland Reserve.

Audit recommendations

3.7 Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:

- (a) **continue to monitor closely the biodiversity of the Wetland Reserve and take appropriate habitat enhancement work where necessary; and**
- (b) **review from time to time whether there is room for further increasing the biodiversity of aquatic plants for visitors' appreciation.**

Response from the Administration

3.8 The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the HKWP's ecological monitoring programme is among the core responsibilities of the AFCD for the long-term management of the HKWP. The AFCD will undoubtedly continue the ecological monitoring programme to monitor the status of the biodiversity in the HKWP. More importantly, the AFCD will also continue appropriate habitat management work and water quality monitoring in order to upkeep and enhance the habitat conditions of the HKWP; and
- (b) the existing aquatic plant community in the HKWP provides an ecologically stable and healthy condition for wildlife. Apart from introducing more aquatic plants, the AFCD has been constantly reviewing the planting of terrestrial plants to enhance the landscape value of the HKWP for visitors' appreciation.

Reporting results of ecological monitoring

3.9 According to the HKWP's Ecological Monitoring Manual issued in 2004, an Annual Report of Monitoring Results should be compiled for each type of monitoring, namely, faunal, floral and water quality monitoring. The contents of the Annual Report are shown at Appendix E.

Audit observations and recommendation

3.10 The AFCD started compiling the Annual Report of Monitoring Results in 2003. The Report contained comprehensive yearly information about all ecological monitoring work of the HKWP. Audit, however, noted that the Report had not been compiled since 2007, shortly after the opening of the HKWP. Upon enquiry, the AFCD informed Audit in August 2011 that, since 2007, the reserve area of the HKWP had become established. The focus of habitat management had shifted towards proposing actions to further enhance the biodiversity and habitats of the Wetland Reserve. Key parts of the monitoring results along with the corresponding management actions were reported in the Wetland Park Division's operational plans, such as the "Work Plan for 2007" and the "Management Plan for 2010-2011".

3.11 According to the AFCD, the reporting of key monitoring results together with the corresponding management actions is an enhanced practice, which would render the HKWP's management information more concise and comprehensive. Audit however notes that such information is only produced for the AFCD's internal use. At present, the AFCD does not publish key performance information for its conservation work in the HKWP (see paras. 6.4(a) and 6.5). In order to enhance transparency and accountability, Audit considers that there is merit in publishing key results of the HKWP's ecological monitoring work.

Audit recommendation

3.12 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should publish performance information on key results of the HKWP's ecological monitoring work, in order to enable stakeholders and the general public to better understand and appreciate the AFCD's conservation efforts at the HKWP.**

Response from the Administration

3.13 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendation. He has said that, since September 2011, the AFCD has published the latest key results of the HKWP's ecological monitoring work on the HKWP's website for public access.

PART 4: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

4.1 This PART examines the management of the HKWP's education and community services programmes, and suggests measures for improvement in the following areas:

- (a) guided tours of the HKWP (paras. 4.3 to 4.10);
- (b) teacher workshops (paras. 4.11 to 4.16); and
- (c) Individual Volunteer Scheme (paras. 4.17 to 4.21).

Education and community services programmes

4.2 The Education and Community Services (ECS) Section of the Wetland Park Division (see Appendix B) organises programmes to promote knowledge and understanding of wetland values and benefits. The programmes target different community groups (e.g. schools and social service organisations) and the general public. Examples of ECS programmes are seminars/talks/workshops (e.g. teacher workshops), education roadshows (e.g. lending education display panels to schools for exhibitions) and guided tours of the HKWP.

Guided tours of the Hong Kong Wetland Park

4.3 Guided tour is a key programme of the ECS Section. In 2010-11, 76,870 visitors joined 3,912 guided tours of the HKWP. The ECS Section provides two types of guided tours, namely:

- (a) ***Guided interpretation.*** It is a 15-minute interpretation session conducted by a guide at a major attraction, such as an eco-location; and
- (b) ***Guided walk.*** It is a more extensive guide-led walk in the HKWP of a longer duration.

Various guided interpretations and guided walks are conducted for different community groups and the general public. Table 9 shows the numbers of guided interpretations and guided walks conducted in 2010-11. Guided walks for schools and other group visitors require pre-registration with the AFCD. Guided interpretations and guided walks for individual visitors do not require pre-registration and are conducted according to a schedule, with individual visitors joining the tours freely at the starting point.

Table 9
Guided interpretations and guided walks
(2010-11)

Guided interpretations/walks	Target visitor	Number of guided interpretations/walks	Number of participants
Guided interpretations	Individuals	2,055	37,262
Guided walks	Individuals	804	10,298
Guided walks	Schools	784	21,210
Guided walks	Groups other than schools	269	8,100
Total		3,912	76,870

Source: AFCD records

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to improve take-up of guided walks on weekdays

4.4 The ECS Section regards guided walks and guided interpretations for individual visitors as its basic service. In 2010-11, 98 (11%) of the 926 guided walks scheduled for individual visitors were called off because no participant appeared at the departure time (Note 16). Most of the cancelled guided walks related to scheduled tours for individual visitors on weekdays (see Table 10). The high cancellation rate is a cause for concern. Staff resources reserved for guided walks that were eventually cancelled could have been better deployed.

Note 16: *Another 24 guided walks were cancelled due to inclement weather. As a result, only 804 guided walks were conducted in 2010-11 (see Table 9). Guided interpretations were generally conducted as scheduled with some cancelled due to inclement weather.*

Table 10
Cancellation rates of guided walks for individual visitors
(2010-11)

Name of guided walk	Language	Number of tours	
		Scheduled	Cancelled (Note)
<i>Scheduled on non-public-holiday weekdays</i>			
Wetland Reserve	English	99 (100%)	53 (54%)
Wetlands walk: aquatic plants	Cantonese	105 (100%)	22 (21%)
Bird watching	Cantonese	42 (100%)	7 (17%)
Take a closer look at the life of insects	Cantonese	43 (100%)	5 (12%)
<i>Scheduled on weekends and public holidays</i>			
Know more on birds	Cantonese	88 (100%)	4 (5%)
Know more on Wetland Reserve	Cantonese	438 (100%)	7 (2%)
Know more on insects	Cantonese	80 (100%)	0 (0%)
Know more on dragonflies	Cantonese	21 (100%)	0 (0%)
Wetlands walk: aquatic plants	Cantonese	10 (100%)	0 (0%)
Overall		926 (100%)	98 (11%)

Source: AFCD records

Note: This includes only those guided walks which were cancelled because there was no participant.

4.5 Since 11 May 2011, the ECS Section has taken measures to improve the conduct of guided walks for individual visitors on weekdays. Under the new practice, staff who conduct the guided walks are also responsible for manning other facilities of the HKWP. Should a guided walk be cancelled, the staff will resume working on his other duties. More English-speaking guided walks are also provided for individual visitors under the new practice. The AFCD has informed Audit that under the new practice, visitor services of the

HKWP have been greatly enhanced (i.e. more scheduled guided walks) with less manpower resources. The manpower required for leading guided walks plus manning the other facilities has been reduced by 40% on Mondays and Thursdays, and 25% on Wednesdays and Fridays. The manpower so released has been redeployed to support a new pre-registered guided tour programme “Wetland Adventure”.

4.6 Audit noted that, of the 58 guided walks scheduled for individual visitors on weekdays during the period 11 May to 30 June 2011, 21 (36%) were cancelled because no participant appeared at the scheduled departure time (Note 17). **Table 11 shows that the cancellation rate under the new practice was still high.**

Table 11
Cancellation rates of guided walks for individual visitors on weekdays
(old practice vs new practice)

Language	Cancellation rate (Note)	
	Old practice (2010-11)	New practice (May and June 2011)
English	54%	46%
Cantonese	18%	27%
Overall	30%	36%

Source: AFCD records

Note: This refers to the percentage of guided walks which were cancelled because there was no participant.

4.7 Upon enquiry, the AFCD informed Audit in August 2011 that there was demand for guided walks on weekdays. According to the AFCD, guided tours form the fundamentals of conservation education. In order to benefit more visitors, Audit considers that the AFCD needs to take measures to improve the take-up rate of guided walks on weekdays as far as possible.

Note 17: Another 16 guided walks were cancelled due to inclement weather.

Need to improve evaluation of guided interpretations and guided walks

4.8 The ECS Section had conducted questionnaire surveys on the participants' satisfaction levels and views of guided interpretations and guided walks. Audit reviewed the ECS Section's surveys in 2010-11 and noted that:

- (a) ***Feedback from students.*** The ECS Section collected teachers' feedback on guided walks for schools, but not the feedback of students. Upon enquiry, the AFCD explained in September 2011 that:
- (i) the questionnaire for school tours was designed to collect teachers' feedback on the programme for evaluation of outputs (e.g. relevancy to the curriculum, effectiveness in meeting teaching objectives, and performance of interpreters). The AFCD considered that the leading teachers (normally the subject teachers) were the appropriate persons to give comments on the programmes. As the teachers were professional educators, they were in a better position to decide whether the HKWP's activities were suitable for their students; and
 - (ii) as the schedule of school tours was tight (2 hours), the AFCD considered it practically difficult (and not worthwhile) to allocate a session of the programme for the large groups of students (up to 200 per group) to manage the distribution and completion of the questionnaires while the AFCD had to keep the content and maintain the quality of the programme.

Audit considers that, since students are the major participants in the guided walks, collecting feedback from them (especially those in upper forms) should be useful. It would also enable the AFCD to better evaluate the guided walks from a user's perspective; and

- (b) ***Questionnaire surveys for guided interpretations.*** Audit noted that questionnaire surveys for guided interpretations were conducted on a sample basis in 2010-11, and that only five questionnaires were completed in the year. Moreover, no more surveys had been conducted since November 2010. Upon enquiry, the AFCD informed Audit in August 2011 that it relied on the general surveys which were conducted at the HKWP to collect visitors' opinions on its services, and that requesting visitors to fill in a number of different questionnaires in a day of visit would cause annoyance to visitors and affect their visit experiences. Audit, however, noted that no specific questions about guided interpretations were asked in the general surveys. Hence, the general surveys may not be able to obtain from visitors specific feedback on guided interpretations.

Audit recommendations

4.9 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **ascertain the reasons for the high cancellation rate of guided walks for individual visitors on weekdays;**
- (b) **take effective measures to improve the take-up rate of guided walks on weekdays;**
- (c) **consider the desirability of collecting feedback from students (e.g. on a sample basis at the end of guided tours, or requiring teachers to provide the AFCD with students' feedback after the HKWP visit), especially those in upper forms; and**
- (d) **consider incorporating specific questions about guided interpretations in the HKWP's general surveys.**

Response from the Administration

4.10 **The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:**

- (a) **the AFCD has taken new measures to encourage HKWP visitors to join the guided walks. Since late May 2011, announcement encouraging visitors to join the guided walks is made at the visitor centre before each walk, and since 18 July 2011, a leaflet showing schedule of all public activities including guided walks on the day is distributed to visitors; and**
- (b) **the AFCD will continue to explore further feasible measures to promote the HKWP's public activities including guided walks.**

Teacher workshops

4.11 **Over the years, the ECS Section has arranged workshops for teachers to support their learning of wetland conservation. The teacher workshops also aim to “train the trainers”, i.e. to train the teachers to lead self-guided tours of the HKWP for their students.**

4.12 Schools need to apply to the AFCD for arranging teacher workshops. From time to time, the ECS Section also arranges teacher workshops in collaboration with the Education Bureau and invites schools to join the workshops. From 2006-07 to 2010-11, a total of 48 teacher workshops were arranged for 1,522 teachers.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to organise workshops for more teachers

4.13 **Audit considers that “train the trainers” is an efficient and cost-effective way to promote wetland conservation** because a trained teacher will be able to benefit many students by leading self-guided tours. Such training can also reduce the heavy demand for guided walks from schools (i.e. 784 guided walks in 2010-11 — see Table 9 in para. 4.3). **However, as compared with 2006-07, the ECS Section had trained fewer teachers in recent years.** Table 12 shows that, during the period 2006-07 to 2010-11, the number of workshops decreased by 58%, and the number of trained teachers decreased by 75%. Upon enquiry, the AFCD informed Audit in September 2011 that teacher workshops were mainly arranged for subject teachers of Biology and Geography, and that there might have been a saturation of demand for teacher workshops. Given that only 1,522 teachers had attended the workshops, Audit considers that there is scope for organising workshops for more teachers (including those who are not subject teachers of Biology and Geography) in future.

Table 12

**Numbers of workshops and trained teachers
(2006-07 to 2010-11)**

Year	Number of workshops	Number of trained teachers
2006-07	19	664
2007-08	14	453
2008-09	5	149
2009-10	2	87
2010-11	8	169
Total	48	1,522

*2010-11 vs 2006-07:
Decreased by 11 (58%)*

*2010-11 vs 2006-07:
Decreased by 495 (75%)*

Source: AFCD records

Need to optimise the size of workshops

4.14 According to the HKWP's guidelines, the optimum size of a teacher workshop should be in the range of 30 to 50 participants. **Table 13 shows that, of the 8 teacher workshops conducted in 2010-11, only 1 (13%) fell within the optimum range.** For the remaining 7 workshops, there is room for enrolling more participants.

Table 13

**Size of teacher workshops
(2010-11)**

Number of participants	Number of workshops
30 to 50 <i>(within optimum range)</i>	1
20 to 29	2
10 to 19	4
Below 10	1
<i>Subtotal (outside optimum range)</i>	7
Total	8

Source: AFCD records

Audit recommendations

4.15 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **arrange workshops for more teachers, to enable them to lead self-guided tours of the HKWP for students; and**
- (b) **take measures to optimise the size of teacher workshops in future (e.g. through combining teacher workshops with low enrolment and stepping up promotion to attract more participants).**

Response from the Administration

4.16 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) it is considered appropriate to conduct teacher workshops from time to time to help train teachers to refresh their knowledge of the education facilities in the HKWP;
- (b) moreover, the AFCD has developed a variety of teaching materials and reference sheets which can be downloaded from the HKWP website. The education materials have helped teachers conduct self-guided tours in the HKWP; and
- (c) the HKWP is developing new education materials and kits, and will collaborate with the Education Bureau to arrange more teacher workshops upon the completion of the materials.

Individual Volunteer Scheme

4.17 The HKWP Individual Volunteer Scheme is for individuals who are willing to contribute their time and effort in conserving wetlands. The aim of the Scheme is to facilitate the generation of a public force for wetland conservation in Hong Kong. Volunteers of the Scheme are ambassadors to promote wetland conservation, who also provide services such as tree planting and conducting guided tours of the HKWP.

4.18 Activities of the HKWP Individual Volunteer Scheme are arranged on a calendar year (i.e. programme year) basis. Individuals may join the Scheme year-round. To qualify as a volunteer, newcomers need to attend induction training of 6.5 hours and acquire 12-hour experience of assisting in HKWP volunteer work. Qualified volunteers can then serve the HKWP as they wish (Note 18).

Note 18: *Depending on the service they provide, qualified volunteers may need to attend further training.*

Audit observations and recommendation

Need to solicit more support from qualified volunteers

4.19 The AFCD has taken measures to recognise the contribution of qualified volunteers who have actively served the HKWP (Note 19). It also maintained good communication with all qualified volunteers (e.g. by e-mails and telephone) to update them about the HKWP's activities and volunteer services. In the 2010 programme year, the HKWP Individual Volunteer Scheme had 811 qualified volunteers (Note 20). Table 14 shows that, in 2010, 375 (46%) volunteered their services with the HKWP while the remaining 436 (54%) did not provide any volunteer service. The AFCD's experiences over the years showed that some volunteers reduced their services mainly because of personal reasons (e.g. volunteers got married or graduated from school).

Note 19: *To recognise the contributions and achievements of qualified volunteers, they will be given the following certificates of award for their annual services to the HKWP:*

- (a) diamond award for 400 hours of services;*
- (b) gold award for 200 hours of services;*
- (c) silver award for 100 hours of services; and*
- (d) bronze award for 50 hours of services.*

Note 20: *Of the 811 qualified volunteers, 186 were qualified in 2010, and 625 were qualified in earlier years but opted to continue serving the HKWP in 2010.*

Table 14

**Volunteer services provided to the HKWP
(2010)**

Number of service hours (Note 1)	Number of qualified volunteers
400 and above	10 (1%)
200 to 399	17 (2%)
100 to 199	35 (4%)
50 to 99	103 (13%)
1 to 49	210 (26%)
0	436 (54%) (Note 2)
Total	811 (100%)

} **375 (46%)**

Source: Audit analysis of AFCD records

Note 1: Service hours before the volunteers obtained their qualified status were not included in the analysis.

Note 2: AFCD records indicated that 394 (90%) of them were qualified before October 2010.

According to AFCD records, the 375 qualified volunteers provided in total 24,700 hours of volunteer services to the HKWP in 2010. This represented an important resource for the HKWP to deliver its services. **Audit considers that the AFCD needs to make efforts to solicit more support from qualified volunteers, including those inactive ones, so as to make better use of this valuable resource.**

Audit recommendation

4.20 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should take effective measures to sustain the interest of volunteers in providing services for the HKWP.**

Response from the Administration

4.21 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the HKWP Individual Volunteer Scheme is successful in recruiting and mobilising qualified volunteers to provide services to the HKWP. There has been an encouraging continuous increase in both the number of qualified volunteers providing services to the HKWP and the number of service hours provided; and
- (b) the AFCD has been recruiting new volunteers for the HKWP, and has spent much effort in consolidating and sustaining the support from the growing team of active qualified volunteers.

PART 5: OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

- 5.1 This PART examines the following administrative issues of the HKWP:
- (a) administration of multi-entry passes (paras. 5.2 to 5.8);
 - (b) outsourcing services of the HKWP (paras. 5.9 to 5.14);
 - (c) organising activities outside normal opening hours (paras. 5.15 to 5.19); and
 - (d) utilisation of audio-visual theatre and classroom (paras. 5.20 to 5.24).

Administration of multi-entry passes

5.2 In 2010, the HKWP had a total of about 443,000 visitors. Some 80,000 (18%) of them were holders of multi-entry passes. The passes, subject to conditions of use (Note 21), allow unlimited number of entries into the HKWP over a period of time. Visitors who agree to abide by the conditions can apply for a multi-entry pass at the HKWP ticket office upon paying a fee. Table 15 shows the fees for the different multi-entry passes.

Note 21: *The conditions of use of multi-entry passes include:*

- (a) *the passes are non-transferable;*
- (b) *each pass admits the pass-holder only;*
- (c) *pass-holders may be required to produce identity proof upon admission; and*
- (d) *pass-holders should comply with the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations.*

Table 15
Fees for multi-entry passes
(September 2011)

Type	Fee		
	Family of not more than four members (Note) (\$)	Adult (\$)	Child/ student/senior (\$)
Annual pass	200	100	50
Half-yearly pass	N.A.	50	25

Source: AFCD records

Note: Each family member will be issued a family pass.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to comply with statutory requirements in issuing family passes

5.3 The fee for family passes (i.e. annual passes for family) was set pursuant to the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations. According to the Regulations, a fee of \$200 (see Table 15) will allow no more than four members of a family, **who are in the relationship of parents and children**, to unlimited number of entries into the HKWP within a year (Note 22). **Audit notes, however, that the AFCD currently issues family passes to “persons of kinship” (up to a maximum of 4 persons — see Appendix D).**

Note 22: *On the annual admission fee of \$200 for unlimited number of entries into the HKWP, the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations state that it applies to a group of not more than four persons “only if one person of the group is the parent, step-parent or adoptive parent of another person of the group, and each of the other persons of the group is the spouse, child, stepchild or adopted child of the first-mentioned person”.*

5.4 Audit examined a sample of 1,243 family passes issued in April 2010 for 317 families. Each family member, limited to four in a family, was issued a family pass. **Audit found that 114 (9%) of the 1,243 family passes were issued to extended family members (e.g. grandparents and spouses of children). This was not in compliance with the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations.** The AFCD needs to consider taking action to rectify the situation and stop issuing family passes to ineligible family members. In this connection, Audit noted that many families would like their members of kinship (i.e. extended family members) to have a family pass (Note 23). If it is the intention of the AFCD to extend the issue of family passes to cover extended family members, it needs to consider amending the relevant provisions of the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations.

Need to deter misuse of multi-entry passes

5.5 Multi-entry passes are not transferable (see Note 21(a) to para. 5.2). Dishonest use of other people's multi-entry passes to enter the HKWP could constitute an offence under the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Note 24). According to AFCD records, there were cases in which perpetrators used other people's multi-entry passes to enter/attempt entering the HKWP. Before January 2011, the AFCD did not record the details of such cases and the warnings, if any, given to the pass-holders concerned. Since January 2011, the AFCD recorded details of perpetrators and the passes concerned. Audit considers that the AFCD could take further measures to deter misuse of multi-entry passes (e.g. to consider the issue of a warning to the pass-holder when a misuse is detected).

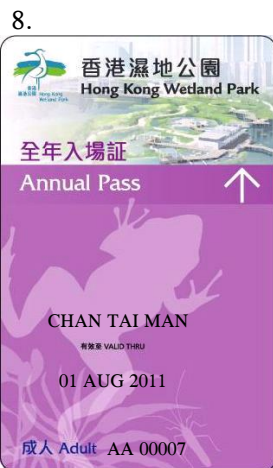
5.6 At present, a multi-entry pass does not have any features (e.g. photograph of the holder) which can render the holder identifiable without having to resort to his identity documents (see Photographs 8 to 11 for examples of multi-entry passes). Audit considers that such features can facilitate the AFCD's enforcement action and discourage misuse.

Note 23: *As regards the 114 family passes issued to extended family members, 109 families were involved, representing 34% of the 317 families in the audit samples.*

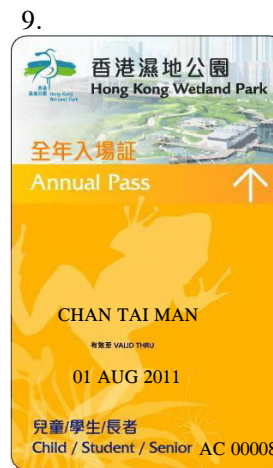
Note 24: *According to the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations, any person who enters the HKWP without paying the required admission fee commits an offence and is liable to a fine of \$2,000.*

Photographs 8 and 9

Annual passes for adult and child/student/senior



Annual pass for adult



Annual pass for child/student/senior

Source: AFCD records

Photographs 10 and 11

Family passes



Family pass for adult family member



Family pass for child family member

Source: AFCD records

Audit recommendations

5.7 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should:**

- (a) **take measures to ensure that the statutory requirements in relation to the issuing of family passes are properly complied with, and stop issuing family passes to ineligible family members;**
- (b) **if it is the intention of the AFCD to extend the issue of family passes to cover extended family members, consider amending the relevant provisions of the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations;**
- (c) **deter the misuse of multi-entry passes by taking such measures as:**
 - (i) **issuing warnings to pass-holders who have let others use their passes; and**
 - (ii) **stepping up enforcement actions against blatant offenders; and**
- (d) **consider providing additional features on the multi-entry passes to discourage misuse.**

Response from the Administration

5.8 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) since early August 2011, the AFCD has undertaken remedial measures to handle applications for family passes in strict compliance with the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations;
- (b) to deter dishonest use of multi-entry passes, further measures (e.g. issuing warnings to pass-holders who may have intentionally let others use their passes) will be critically considered; and
- (c) the AFCD will explore further feasible measures to facilitate the identification of multi-entry-pass holders and take appropriate enforcement actions if the situation so warranted. For example, the feasibility of providing additional features such as a photograph of the holder on multi-entry passes is being explored.

Outsourcing services of the Hong Kong Wetland Park

5.9 In July 2008, LegCo was informed of the Government's long-term plan to manage and operate the HKWP. According to the plan, the AFCD would, in line with the "small government big market" principle, enlarge its scope of outsourcing HKWP services. Basically, areas which do not affect the control and management of the HKWP could be outsourced. Such areas include marketing and promotion, maintenance of exhibits, public education, revenue collection, and public enquiry.

5.10 After the Government's plan was publicised, the AFCD outsourced three services of the HKWP. Together with six other services of the HKWP which had been outsourced, a total of nine services were outsourced as at June 2011. Table 16 shows the outsourced services.

Table 16
Outsourced services of the HKWP
(February 2006 to June 2011)

Service	Details	Commencement of outsourcing
1	Water quality monitoring	February 2006
2	Security guard services	May 2006
3	Cleansing services	May 2006
4	Landscape maintenance services	June 2006
5	Provision of clerical staff services	June 2007
6	Veterinary services	November 2007
7	Animal care-taking and cleansing services at the animal centre, live exhibition gallery, etc.	October 2008
8	Ticket-selling and fee-collection services at the ticket office	April 2009
9	Marketing and promotion services	August 2009

Source: AFCD records

Audit observations and recommendation

Need to assess the cost-benefit of outsourcing

5.11 Audit reviewed three services (i.e. Services 7, 8 and 9) outsourced in 2008 and 2009. Audit noted that it cost more for the AFCD to outsource Service 8 than to provide the service in-house (see Table 17).

Table 17

Estimated cost implications of outsourcing Service 8

Before/after outsourcing	Amount (\$ million)
(a) Before outsourcing Annual cost for providing the service in-house	0.8
(b) After outsourcing Annual amount paid to the service provider in the first outsourcing contract	0.97
(c) Cost increase after outsourcing Amount ((b) – (a))	0.17 (21%)

Source: AFCD records

5.12 According to AFCD records, it was considered that the contract price of Service 8 was fair and reasonable, having regard to factors such as remoteness of the HKWP and the need for working shifts on Sundays and public holidays. However, Audit noted that the AFCD had not conducted a proper cost-benefit analysis to justify the outsourcing initiatives.

Audit recommendation

5.13 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should conduct a proper cost-benefit analysis to ensure that it is justified to outsource services of the HKWP.**

Response from the Administration

5.14 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendation. He has said that the AFCD will consult relevant bureaux and departments on the cost-benefit analysis in future tendering exercises of outsourcing services where necessary.

Organising activities outside normal opening hours

5.15 The HKWP opens from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except on Tuesdays when it is closed. **Some visitors were of the view that the HKWP's daily opening hours should be extended.** One reason was that mornings and evenings were good time for taking photographs of birds and other wildlife.

Audit observations and recommendations

5.16 Audit noted that the AFCD had arranged guided night-tours of the HKWP in the past for special interest groups such as teachers and conservationists (Note 25), and that the tours were well received. The AFCD's questionnaire surveys of participants in the night-tours indicated that, of the 127 respondents, 90% stated that they would join this kind of tours again, and 98% would recommend the tours to their friends. This was an encouraging result. However, the AFCD did not offer similar night-tours again.

5.17 Upon Audit's enquiry, the AFCD explained in September 2011 that it would be inappropriate to organise **regular** night-tours for the general public. Such activities would cause disturbance to the wildlife that inhabits the HKWP, which would not be in line with the HKWP's conservation objective. Audit considers that the AFCD should reassess the demand for activities at the HKWP outside its normal opening hours, in particular, the demand of suitable groups of visitors, and explore ways of meeting the demand.

Note 25: *During the period May to August 2008, the AFCD organised night-tours at the HKWP from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. A total of 195 people joined these tours. Itineraries of the tours included:*

- (a) briefing session about amphibians;*
- (b) observing animals kept at the indoor resource centre; and*
- (c) night safari, i.e. observing fireflies, frogs and other nocturnal animals in the outdoor Wetland Reserve.*

Audit recommendations

5.18 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should, with a view to improving the user-friendliness of the HKWP:**

- (a) **assess the demand for special activities (e.g. night-tours) outside normal opening hours of the HKWP; and**
- (b) **having regard to resources implications and feasibility, consider meeting the demand of suitable groups of visitors for the special activities.**

Response from the Administration

5.19 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the needs of special groups for guided night-tours of the HKWP would have to be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis; and
- (b) the outdoor facilities in the HKWP are not designed for operation at night time. The safety of visitors wandering in the outdoor area in darkness would be a prime concern, apart from operational difficulties and cost-effectiveness of night-tours.

Utilisation of audio-visual theatre and classroom

5.20 The HKWP has an audio-visual (AV) theatre and a classroom. The AV theatre is equipped with facilities for conferences, seminars and film shows. The classroom, equipped with projectors and microphones, is suitable for events of smaller scales such as talks and workshops. Both the AV theatre and the classroom are available for renting to the public and other interested parties (e.g. community groups such as schools and social service organisations). When no one rents them, they will be deployed for other uses (e.g. showing films to visitors and running education programmes).

Audit observations and recommendations

Renting by the public

5.21 Audit examined the AFCD records and found that, in 2010-11:

- (a) the AV theatre was rented out twice for a total of five hours; and

- (b) the classroom was rented out once for two hours.

Audit notes that, since June 2011, the AFCD has publicised the rentable AV theatre and the classroom on the HKWP's website. Audit considers that there is room for stepping up the promotion of these rentable facilities.

Deployment for other uses

5.22 Audit reviewed the use of the AV theatre and the classroom during 2010-11 when they were not rented out. Audit found that:

- (a) the AV theatre was used to arrange a total of 2,821 events (e.g. film shows) for visitors. The average number of visitors per event was 25 (Note 26), representing **only about 12% of the seating capacity** of the AV theatre (Note 27); and
- (b) when the classroom was not rented out:
 - (i) it was used for arranging training, workshops and education programmes for 74% of the time; and
 - (ii) it was left unused for 26% of the time.

Audit recommendations

5.23 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should consider putting HKWP facilities to more gainful use by:**

- (a) **stepping up efforts in promoting the rentable facilities of the HKWP (e.g. publicising rentable facilities to visitors); and**
- (b) **taking measures to improve the utilisation of the AV theatre and the classroom (e.g. making use of the facilities for arranging more education programmes for students and workshops for teachers).**

Note 26: *A total of 70,082 visitors attended the events.*

Note 27: *The AV theatre had a seating capacity of 207 people.*

Response from the Administration

5.24 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the AFCD will step up the promotion of rentable facilities by publicising the facilities to visitors who make advance booking for group tickets, and will display posters at appropriate locations in the HKWP;
- (b) since June 2011, the AFCD has implemented a series of measures to enhance the utilisation of the AV theatre. Examples are revision of the film show schedule, making announcement at the visitor centre of the HKWP before each show, distributing the event schedule, introducing new films of different topics and enhancing the promotion of the film shows. The average attendance of events held at the AV theatre during June to August 2011 has increased by 162% comparing with the attendance for the corresponding period in 2010; and
- (c) the classroom was almost fully used on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in 2010-11. The usage rate of the classroom was lower on Thursdays because the education programme on each Thursday was designed for larger groups of students and was held in the AV theatre instead of in the classroom. The AFCD will explore opportunities to enhance the utilisation of the classroom on Thursdays by arranging more activities and workshops taking into account the resources available.

PART 6: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

6.1 This PART examines the AFCD's performance management relating to the HKWP and suggests areas for improvement.

Performance measures

6.2 Performance measurement, including developing and reporting performance measures, helps enhance government performance, transparency and accountability. According to the FSTB's guidelines, Controlling Officers should, among other things:

- (a) focus on targets measured preferably in terms of intended outcome when developing their performance measures; and
- (b) indicate the extent to which the department's operational objectives are being achieved.

6.3 The AFCD has not included in its Controlling Officer's Report (COR) any performance measures specifically for the HKWP. However, it has adopted, for internal management purpose, six performance indicators for assessing its performance in relation to the HKWP's conservation, education and tourism objectives (see para. 1.3). For each indicator, the AFCD sets an estimated level of attainment, against which the actual attainment is measured. Table 18 shows the performance measures of the HKWP in 2010.

Table 18
Performance measures of the HKWP
(2010)

Objective	Indicator	Level of attainment	
		Estimate	Actual
Conservation	1: Area of wetland habitat maintained (hectares)	61	61
Education	2: Number of guided tours	3,000	3,649
	3: Number of participants in guided tours	50,000	68,310
	4: Number of seminars, talks and workshops	20	19
	5: Number of participants in seminars, talks and workshops	2,000	1,379
Tourism	6: Number of visitors to the HKWP	440,000	443,453

Source: AFCD records

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to develop more appropriate performance indicators

6.4 Audit notes that the six performance indicators in Table 18 do not adequately assess the HKWP's performance in the pursuit of its objectives, as follows:

- (a) **Conservation.** There are no indicators showing how well the HKWP has maintained biodiversity, which is a key objective of the Wetland Reserve (see paras. 3.5 and 6.2(b)). The only conservation indicator adopted (Indicator 1) does not show the extent to which the AFCD has conserved the Wetland Reserve. In fact, the size of the HKWP is fixed (i.e. 61 hectares in total) and has not changed since its opening in May 2006;
- (b) **Education.** The indicators for the promotion of wetland knowledge (Indicators 2 to 5) are output indicators. There are no outcome indicators (e.g. satisfaction levels of participants in guided interpretations and guided walks) showing the effectiveness of the HKWP's ECS Programmes (see para. 4.2); and

- (c) **Tourism.** Indicator 6 is not entirely appropriate because the total number of visitors include local residents and students, who are not tourists. A more appropriate indicator is the patronage of tourists (Note 28), which shows the extent to which the HKWP has realised its potential of being a popular tourist attraction (see para. 1.4), and the extent to which the HKWP has helped promote tourism.

Need to publish performance measures

6.5 The six performance indicators for the HKWP are for internal management purpose only (see para. 6.3). The AFCD does not publish the HKWP's performance measures (covering performance indicators, targets and actual levels of attainment) in the public domain. To enhance transparency and accountability, the AFCD should consider publishing key performance measures in the HKWP's website or the COR of the AFCD.

Audit recommendations

6.6 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should consider:**

- (a) **developing more appropriate performance indicators for measuring the HKWP's performance; and**
- (b) **publishing key performance measures of the HKWP in its website or the COR of the AFCD.**

Response from the Administration

6.7 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that the AFCD will critically review the current performance indicators and develop appropriate new ones, which could include the presence of indicator species in the HKWP, satisfaction levels of participants in guided tours, and satisfaction levels of visitors using the Park's services.

Note 28: *In April 2010, the AFCD informed the CEDB that patronage of around 440,000 visitors a year (including 15% of tourists) would be an appropriate target (see para. 2.7). However, the AFCD has not adopted the target of 15% of tourists for internal management purpose.*

6.8 The **Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury** has said that, subject to the acceptance by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation of publishing the concerned performance indicators in the AFCD's COR, the FSTB would help monitor the follow-up in the preparation of the draft Estimates.

Post-implementation review

6.9 Since its opening in May 2006, the HKWP has been operating as an on-going project to promote conservation, education and tourism. PIR is a tool for evaluating project achievements. In February 2009, the Efficiency Unit (EU) published a best practice guide entitled "A User Guide to Post Implementation Reviews" (the EU Guide). According to the EU Guide, conducting PIRs is a good practice of modern day public sector management. The main purposes of a PIR are to:

- (a) ascertain whether a project has achieved its intended objectives;
- (b) review the performance of project management activities; and
- (c) capture learning points for future improvements.

Audit observations and recommendations

PIR on the HKWP

6.10 The EU Guide states four factors (i.e. importance, purpose, nature and outcome of the project) which have to be taken into account when selecting projects for conducting PIRs. Audit considers that the HKWP, as an on-going project for conservation, education and tourism promotion (see para. 6.9), meets these selection criteria, as elaborated below:

- (a) ***Importance of the project.*** The HKWP has multi-functional significance. It was intended to be developed into a world-class conservation, education and tourism facility (see para. 1.3). Currently, the HKWP is running at a considerable cost of some \$60 million a year (see Table 6 of para. 2.29);
- (b) ***Purpose of the project.*** The HKWP was Hong Kong's first major green tourism facility and was considered to have the potential of becoming one of the most popular tourist attractions in Hong Kong (see para. 1.4). Conducting a PIR on the HKWP could help plan the way forward;
- (c) ***Nature of the project.*** According to the EU Guide, PIRs on on-going projects have a higher reference value than those on one-off projects; and

- (d) ***Outcome of the project.*** While this audit review has identified areas for improvement in the management of the HKWP, certain good practices have also been noted (e.g. the efficient "train the trainers" concept in promoting wetland conservation — see para. 4.13, and tapping significant resources from volunteers to help deliver HKWP services — see para. 4.19). Conducting a PIR on the HKWP could help identify good practices and draw lessons for future improvement.

6.11 As stated in the EU Guide, "a PIR conducted too soon may not be able to assess the full impact, while a review conducted too late may fail to influence the delivery and outcomes of current project and/or future projects". **Audit considers that, after five years of operation, it is timely for the AFCD to conduct a PIR on the HKWP to take stock of the position and plan the way forward.**

Repositioning the HKWP

6.12 In conducting the PIR, it is necessary to clearly define the positioning of the HKWP relative to its different roles. It was the Government's intention to develop the HKWP into a world-class conservation, education and tourism facility (see para. 1.3). However, throughout the HKWP's operation, there had been competing demands on the HKWP in areas such as:

- (a) improving patronage and conserving the Wetland Reserve (see paras. 2.5 and 2.6);
- (b) extending opening hours for visitors and reducing disturbance to wildlife (see paras. 5.15 to 5.17);
- (c) recovering operating cost as a government service (see para. 2.28) and maintaining price competitiveness as an eco-tourism facility (see para. 2.23); and
- (d) improving entertainment elements and preserving education contents of the HKWP (see para. 2.33).

Audit considers that there is a need to strike a fine balance among the multi-dimensional objectives of the HKWP, and review the positioning of the HKWP's role accordingly in planning the way forward.

Audit recommendations

6.13 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should, in consultation with the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development:**

- (a) **conduct a PIR on the HKWP to evaluate, among other things, whether the intended objectives have been achieved, and to identify areas for future improvements; and**
- (b) **in conducting the PIR:**
 - (i) **take into account the findings in this audit review;**
 - (ii) **review the positioning of the HKWP with reference to its roles as a conservation, education and tourism facility. In this connection, other relevant bureaux and departments (e.g. the ENB in respect of the conservation policy) should also be consulted; and**
 - (iii) **having regard to the repositioning of the HKWP, map out a strategy for its future development.**

Response from the Administration

6.14 The **Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation** generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the AFCD has been reporting to the CEDB on the HKWP project. A marketing study on the overall strategy and position of the HKWP was conducted in 2008;
- (b) the AFCD will consider kicking off another review subject to availability of resources; and
- (c) the future review would, taking into account the findings of this audit, review the positioning and fees and charges of the HKWP, and map out a strategy for the HKWP's future development.

6.15 The **Commissioner for Tourism** welcomes the audit recommendation that the AFCD should conduct a PIR on the HKWP as a good practice of modern day public sector management. He has said that the AFCD plans to conduct the next marketing study on the HKWP in 2012. The TC has requested the AFCD to consider whether it would be the appropriate timing for conducting a PIR on the HKWP to take stock of the present position and plan the way forward.

6.16 The **Secretary for the Environment** has said that, as with other bureaux and departments, the ENB would provide comments on any reviews or strategy of the HKWP as appropriate.

Appendix A
(para. 1.5 refers)

**Species of plants and wildlife in the Hong Kong Wetland Park
(30 September 2011)**

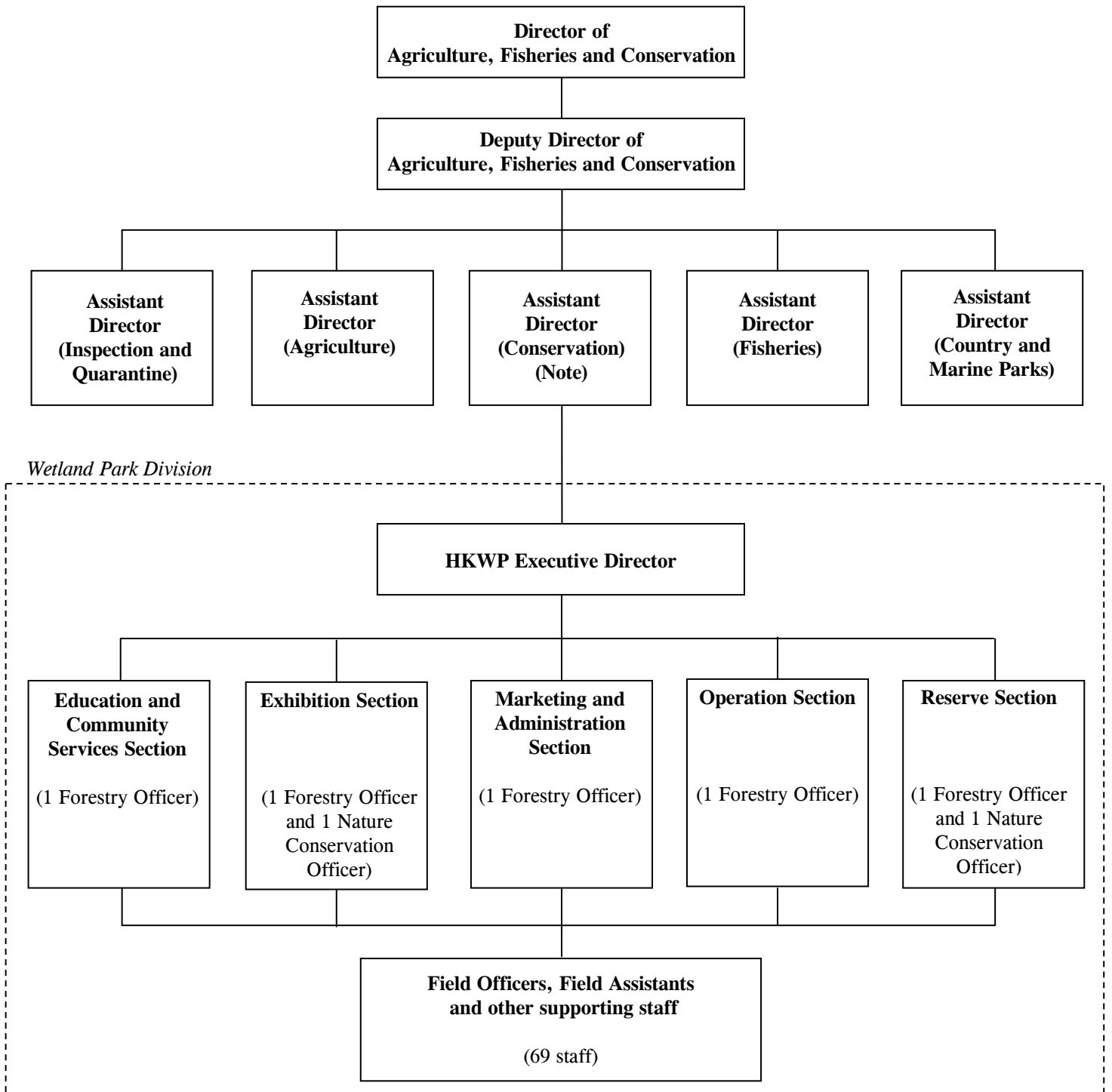
Plant/wildlife	Number of species recorded in the HKWP	Number of species recorded in Hong Kong
Amphibian	9	24
Bird	238	508
Butterfly	152	240
Dragonfly	50	116
Freshwater fish	20 (Note 1)	185 (Note 2)
Mammal	11	56
Plant	553	Over 3,100
Reptile	27	86

Source: AFCD records

Note 1: The dominant aquatic habitats in the HKWP are freshwater habitats. Of the 20 species of freshwater fish, 14 were primary freshwater species.

Note 2: The figure included 75 species of primary freshwater fish.

**Wetland Park Division
Organisation chart
(30 September 2011)**



Source: AFCD records

Note: The Assistant Director (Conservation) also oversaw areas (e.g. nature conservation and endangered species protection) other than the management of the HKWP.

Audit's calculation of patronage of tourists
(2008)

Month	Audit's calculation			Number of tourists reported to the CEDB by the AFCD (d)	Difference in the number of tourists (e) = (d) - (c)
	Number of visitors recorded by turnstiles (a)	Percentage of tourists in AFCD summary of survey results (b)	Number of tourists (c) = (a) × (b)		
January	37,144	7.9%	2,934	7,177	4,243 (144.6%)
February (Note)	36,292	N.A.	N.A.	6,630	N.A.
March	56,788	7.7%	4,373	9,313	4,940 (113.0%)
April	31,848	5.1%	1,624	5,223	3,599 (221.6%)
May	36,788	10.2%	3,752	6,034	2,282 (60.8%)
June	19,385	7.8%	1,512	3,179	1,667 (110.3%)
July	34,156	15.8%	5,397	5,397	0 (0%)
August	27,444	23.3%	6,394	4,819	-1,575 (-24.6%)
September	16,971	12.7%	2,155	2,851	696 (32.3%)
October	43,140	12.1%	5,220	6,811	1,591 (30.5%)
November	67,524	5.9%	3,984	8,825	4,841 (121.5%)
December (Note)	27,602	N.A.	N.A.	3,864	N.A.

Source: Audit analysis of AFCD records

Note: According to the AFCD, surveys were not conducted to ascertain the percentage of tourists for the month.

**Admission fees of the Hong Kong Wetland Park
(September 2011)**

Type of admission	Fee (\$)			
Single-entry ticket				
Adult	30			
Child (aged 3 to below 18)/ full-time student/senior (aged 65 or above)	15			
Child (below 3)	Free			
Multi-entry pass				
Adult	100 (full year)/50 (half year)			
Child (aged 3 to below 18)/ full-time student/senior (aged 65 or above)	50 (full year)/25 (half year)			
Family (a maximum of 4 persons of kinship)	200 (full year)			
Concessionary package for groups	Fee for a single entry per person			
	Group of 10-19 people (\$)	Group of 20-29 people (\$)	Group of 30-49 people (\$)	Group of 50 people or more (\$)
	Adult	27.0	25.5	24.0
Child (aged 3 to below 18)/ full-time student/senior (aged 65 or above)	13.5	12.7	12.0	10.5

Source: AFCD records

Contents of the Annual Report of Monitoring Results

Faunal monitoring

- (a) list of species recorded each month
- (b) list of species recorded by habitats
- (c) species of conservation concern
- (d) any other observations of interest related to habitat management

Floral monitoring

- (e) list of species (planted and colonised) recorded on site
- (f) survival and the extent of growth of each planted species
- (g) spread of invasive species
- (h) any other observations of interest related to habitat management

Water quality monitoring

- (i) summary of the monitoring data collected
- (j) summary of the management actions taken
- (k) review of the performance of the treatment wetland

Source: AFCD records

Acronyms and abbreviations

AFCD	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Audit	Audit Commission
AV	Audio-visual
CEDB	Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
COR	Controlling Officer's Report
ECS	Education and Community Services
EMA	Ecological mitigation area
ENB	Environment Bureau
EU	Efficiency Unit
FSTB	Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau
HKWP	Hong Kong Wetland Park
LegCo	Legislative Council
PIR	Post-implementation review
TC	Tourism Commission
TV	Television