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Talkback

Should the artificial beach go ahead?

The Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong, strongly objects to the development of a 200-metre, man-made beach at Lung Mei.

The environmental impact assessment report and advisory committee on the environment ignored the need for geological and landscape conservation.

The natural coastline is one of Hong Kong's rare valuable resources. Once parts of it are depleted, they can never be restored. The increase in infrastructure and housing developments has already significantly reduced our natural coastline. We must preserve our scarce resources unless a proposed project is critical to the livelihood of the people of Hong Kong.

Robin Kennish, the consultant from Environmental Resources Management, argued that the natural shoreline affected by the project was just 2.2 per cent of the Plover Cove area. However, it cannot be justified no matter how small the percentage.

The striking profile of Pat Sin Leng, and the neighbouring Plover Cove and Tolo Harbour all combine to form an area of rare scenic beauty. There are also panoramic views of the northeastern New Territories. These are unique landmarks of Tai Po District and the northeastern hinterland of Hong Kong. The construction of a man-made beach would permanently destroy these landmarks.

From the environmental landscape aspect, the selected site is totally unsuitable for swimming. Being a highly enclosed body of water in Tolo Harbour, which is an inner bay, Plover Cove has a weak flushing capacity.

With a total shoreline of about 15km, Plover Cove is surrounded by land, with a narrow outlet of only about 0.7km. This narrow outlet accounts for around 5 per cent of the natural coastline of Plover Cove. There is a limited inflow of fresh water, which definitely affects water quality.

With more property developments and a higher population in the area, water quality will deteriorate further as more effluent and other pollutants are discharged into Plover Cove and Tolo Harbour, even with a sewerage network planned. It is unwise of the government to spend HK\$130 million of taxpayers' money to build a beach which is unsuitable for swimming. It will not be sustainable, and future generations will have to bear the burden of operational and maintenance costs.

The money would be better spent developing Lung Mei into a sustainable natural coastline ecological park equipped with facilities integrated with the natural environment.

This would be a win-win situation, retaining our natural coastline while providing recreation for Hong Kong citizens and tourists.

Cindy Choi, Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong