

**URBAN PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW QUARTERLY**

(Published since May 1992)

簡家驄律師行 · 城規環保季刊

*In this edition we, once again, highlight an inexplicable anomaly of Hong Kong's environmental protection programme, namely the consistently low, unrealistic level of penalties ordered by magistrates for environmental offences.*

*The Editors*

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**OFFENCES UNDER ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION ARE NOT PENALISED APPROPRIATELY**

*Low penalties continue to undermine Hong Kong's environmental protection measures*

Since the UPELQ was first published (January 1995), we have regularly drawn attention to the unrealistically and unjustifiably low penalties imposed by the magistracies, the courts in which the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) persecute persons alleged to have breached any of our various environmental statistics.

To briefly recap, this puzzling, serious issue has been canvassed in earlier UPELQs:

- *Weak Penalties Undermine Enforcement of Environmental Laws* (April 2009)
- *Thirty Years on – And the Courts Still Trivialise Environmental Offences* (October 2013)
- *Low Penalties Trivialise Environmental Offences* (July 2015)
- *Weak Enforcement Undermines Effective Conservation in Hong Kong* (March 2019)
- *Lax Judicial Treatment of Polluters Undermines Effectiveness of The Pollution Statutes* (March 2020)

Unfortunately, the EPD' current prosecution statistics show that for those convicted of environmental offences, the Courts' slap-on-the-wrist approach has continued unabated.

*Enforcement agencies*

The EPD is responsible for enforcing Hong Kong's anti-pollution Laws – such as the *Air Pollution Control Ordinance* (Cap 311) (**APCO**), the *Water Pollution Control Ordinance* (Cap 358) and the *Waste Disposal Ordinance* (Cap 354). The AFCD is the authorised enforcement agency in respect of other conservation and environmental protection legislation, e.g. *Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance* (Cap 586); *Country Parks Ordinance* (Cap 208) and *Wild Animals Protection Ordinance* (Cap 170).

For convenience, our discussion is limited to the EPD and the anti-pollution legislation, specifically the APCO, WPCO and WDO. Low penalties are also imposed for offences prosecuted by the AFCD, although perhaps not to quite the same extent as for EPD convictions.

*Prescribed penalties*

Examples of relevant statutory penalties are as follows: -

- **APCO**  
Section 30A (breach of licence) -:  
\$100,000 fine – 1<sup>st</sup> Offence  
\$200,000 fine + 6 months imprisonment – 2<sup>nd</sup> (and subsequent) offence

\$20,000 – per day that the offence continues  
 Section 12(2) (discharge of noxious/offensive emissions): -  
 \$200,000 fine + 6 months imprisonment  
 \$20,000 – daily fine for continuing offence

- **WPCO**

Section 8(1) (prohibited discharge into waters of Hong Kong etc.): -  
 Section 9(1) (discharge non-exempt waste into commercial drain etc.): -  
 Section 11(Penalties): -  
 \$200,000 fine + 6 months imprisonment – 1st offence  
 \$400,000 fine + 6 months imprisonment – 2nd (and subsequent) offence  
 \$10,000 – daily fine for continuing offence.

- **WDO**

Section 18 (Penalties for unlawfully disposing of/depositing waste):-  
 \$200,000 fine + 6 months imprisonment – 1<sup>st</sup> offence  
 \$500,000 fine + 6 months imprisonment – 2<sup>nd</sup> (and subsequent) offence  
 \$10,000 – daily fine for continuing offence

Penalties prescribed by other environmental legislation are similar, if not higher.

### *Penalties imposed on offences*

It is clear from the EPD’s published 2023 prosecution statistics that magistrates continue to view environmental offences as less serious than other criminal or regulatory offences. Average penalties still are very low, given applicable maximum penalties.

### *2023 Environmental prosecution statistics*

#### **Fines for the Year 2023 (HK\$)**

<b>Ordinance</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Highest</b>	<b>Lowest</b>	<b>Average</b>
APCO	1,496,000	32,000	2,000	9,842
NCO	674,300	18,000	1,000	5,438
WPCO	561,000	68,000	2,000	18,097
WDO	1,181,680	40,750	500	5,793
OLPO	0	0	0	0
EIAO	26,500	8,000	2,000	3,786
DASO	0	0	0	0
HCCO	0	0	0	0
PERO	33,200	5,000	600	2,767
PCPNR	498,800	10,000	1,000	2,951
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,471,480</b>	<b>68,000</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>6,397</b>

More recent EPD prosecution statistics confirm magistrates’ long-established lenient approach to environmental offences. Examples are as follows.

### *2024 Environmental prosecution statistics*

#### **EPD convictions in June**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name (Company/ Person)</b>	<b>Date of Offence</b>	<b>Nature of Offence</b>	<b>Fines (\$)/ other sentences</b>	<b>Court</b>
Convictions under the APCO					
1	Individual	28/10/2023	Commenced asbestos work without proper notification	4,000.00	Fanling
2	Individual	28/10/2023	Carried out asbestos work without appointment of a registered contractor, or the contractor failed to discharge his duties	4,500.00	Fanling
3	Twelve Ways Limited	05/12/2023	Failed to take measures to control air pollutant emission	15,000.00	Kwun Tong
Convictions under the Noise Control Ordinance					
4	Shui Wing Construction Company Limited	09/11/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment otherwise than in accordance with construction noise permit conditions	8,000.00	Eastern
5	Proficient Waterproofing & Engineering Limited	03/12/2023	Carried out prescribed construction work in designated area without valid construction noise permit	4,000.00	Eastern
6	Tai Shing Waterproof and Demolition Limited	03/12/2023	Carried out prescribed construction work in designated area without valid construction	4,000.00	Eastern

7	Individual	03/12/2023	noise permit Carried out prescribed construction work in designated area without valid construction noise permit	3,500.00	Fanling
8	Kuly Construction & Engineering Company Limited	21/05/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	3,000.00	Fanling
9	Kong Hing Construction Company Limited	21/05/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	3,500.00	Fanling
10	Sun Fook Kong Construction Limited	05/11/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	20,000.00	Fanling
11	An Kee Engineering Development Limited	05/11/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	6,000.00	Fanling
12	Yue Sang Engineering (HK) Company Limited	05/11/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	6,000.00	Fanling
13	Individual	05/11/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	2,000.00	Fanling
14	Longford Foods Company Limited	22/11/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	9,000.00	Fanling
15	Individual	22/11/2023	Liability of Director	3,500.00	Fanling
16	Ka Wo Farming Limited	31/08/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	5,000.00	Kwun Tong
17	Ka Wo Farming Limited	13/10/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	5,000.00	Kwun Tong
18	Shearer Foods (HK) Company Limited	30/10/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	4,000.00	Kwun Tong
19	Individual (Sole Proprietor)	27/10/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	4,000.00	Kwun Tong
20	Ka Wo Farming Limited	15/01/2024	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	5,000.00	Kwun Tong
Convictions under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation					
21	Shing Lee Scaffolding Limited	20/12/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	2,500.00	Eastern
22	Individual	10/10/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	1,500.00	Fanling
23	Asia Waste Management Limited	02/01/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	4,500.00	Fanling
24	Chun Kin Travel Limited	19/11/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,200.00	Fanling
Convictions under the Waste Disposal Ordinance					
25	Individual	10/06/2019	Exported controlled waste without a permit	25,000.00	Fanling
26	UBW Environmental Co. Limited	19/09/2023	Breached the term of a licence	6,000.00	Fanling
27	Vaford Contracting Company Limited	03/06/2023	Failed to make a billing account application in accordance with the Waste Disposal (Charges for Disposal of Construction Waste) Regulation	12,100.00	Fanling
28	Asphalt Surfaces (international) Limited	26/08/2023	Failed to make a billing account application in accordance with the Waste Disposal (Charges for Disposal of Construction Waste)	7,950.00	Fanling

29	Di Yan Logistics Company Limited	23/11/2023	Regulation Failed to seal chemical waste container properly	4,000.00	Fanling
30	Di Yan Logistics Company Limited	23/11/2023	Container of chemical waste unlabelled or not properly labelled	2,500.00	Fanling
31	Di Yan Logistics Company Limited	23/11/2023	Chemical waste storage area not provided or not in compliance with requirements	6,000.00	Fanling
32	Di Yan Logistics Company Limited	23/11/2023	Failed to display warning panel	2,500.00	Fanling
33	Individual	20/11/2023	Discharged liquid livestock waste improperly	14,000.00	Fanling
34	Yiwan Environmental Technology (HK) Limited	05/12/2023	Failed to seal chemical waste container properly	1,000.00	Fanling
35	Yiwan Environmental Technology (HK) Limited	05/12/2023	Container of chemical waste unlabelled or not properly labelled	700.00	Fanling
36	Yiwan Environmental Technology (HK) Limited	05/12/2023	Chemical waste storage area not provided or not in compliance with requirements	700.00	Fanling
37	Yiwan Environmental Technology (HK) Limited	05/12/2023	Failed to display warning panel	700.00	Fanling
<b>EPD convictions in July</b>					
Convictions under the APCO					
1	Yung Kee Construction Company Limited	08/12/2023	Carried out notifiable work without giving prior notice to the Authority	3,000.00	Eastern
2	Yung Kee Construction Company Limited	15/12/2023	Carried out notifiable work not in accordance with the Construction Dust Regulation	6,000.00	Eastern
3	Well Profit Recycle Limited	02/01/2024	Failed to take measures to control air pollutant emission	15,000.00	Fanling
Convictions under the Noise Control Ordinance					
4	Individual	09/05/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	4,000.00	Fanling
5	Silvery Moon Limited	12/12/2023	Failed to comply with the requirements of a noise abatement notice	6,500.00	Fanling
6	Individual	23/11/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	1,500.00	Kwun Tong
7	Ka Wo Farming Limited	23/11/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	6,000.00	Kwun Tong
8	Taohuayuan Catering Industry Co., Limited	20/12/2023	Failed to comply with the requirements of a noise abatement notice	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
9	Individual	17/12/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	1,000.00	Kwun Tong
10	Yee Fung Construction Engineering Limited	17/12/2023	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	5,000.00	Kwun Tong
11	Individual	13/10/2023	Liability of Director	6,000.00	Kwun Tong
12	Farmer House Food Company Limited	28/12/2023	Made noise in any public place for the purpose of attracting to goods, wares or trade and causing noise annoyance	7,000.00	Kwun Tong
Convictions under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation					
13	Individual	20/01/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
14	E-Trade Development Limited	10/12/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong

15	Individual	20/12/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
16	Individual	07/12/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
17	Individual	12/12/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
18	New Times Investment (Sun Wah) Co., Limited	26/02/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
<b>Convictions under the WDO</b>					
19	Avt Design Contracting Limited	12/10/2023	Failed to make a billing account application in accordance with the Waste Disposal (Charges for Disposal of Construction Waste) Regulation	6,000.00	Fanling
20	Individual (Sole Proprietor)	14/12/2023	Container of chemical waste unlabelled or not properly labelled	3,000.00	Fanling
21	Individual (Sole Proprietor)	14/12/2023	Chemical waste storage area not provided or not in compliance with requirements	5,000.00	Fanling
22	Individual (Sole Proprietor)	14/12/2023	Failed to display warning panel	2,000.00	Fanling
23	Glassglobal Limited	07/12/2023	Stored chemical waste in unsuitable containers	4,000.00	Fanling
24	Glassglobal Limited	07/12/2023	Failed to seal chemical waste container properly	4,000.00	Fanling
25	Glassglobal Limited	07/12/2023	Container of chemical waste unlabelled or not properly labelled	3,000.00	Fanling
26	Glassglobal Limited	07/12/2023	Chemical waste storage area not provided or not in compliance with requirements	6,000.00	Fanling
27	Glassglobal Limited	07/12/2023	Failed to display warning panel	2,000.00	Fanling
28	Sunlinks Group Company Limited	21/07/2023	Stored chemical waste in unsuitable containers	2,000.00	Fanling
29	Sunlinks Group Company Limited	21/07/2023	Failed to seal chemical waste container properly	2,500.00	Fanling
30	Sunlinks Group Company Limited	21/07/2023	Container of chemical waste unlabelled or not properly labelled	2,000.00	Fanling
31	Sunlinks Group Company Limited	21/07/2023	Chemical waste storage area not provided or not in compliance with requirements	3,000.00	Fanling
32	Sunlinks Group Company Limited	21/07/2023	Failed to display warning panel	1,500.00	Fanling
<b>EPD convictions in August</b>					
<b>Convictions under the APCO</b>					
1	Star Fortune F&B Company Limited	15/11/2023	Failed to take measures to control air pollutant emission	9,000.00	Eastern
2	China Concrete Company Limited	08/06/2023	Contravened the terms or conditions of a specified process licence	10,000.00	Fanling
3	China Concrete Company Limited	29/11/2023	Contravened the terms or conditions of a specified process licence	10,000.00	Fanling
4	China Concrete Company Limited	18/01/2024	Contravened the terms or conditions of a specified process licence	13,000.00	Fanling
5	China Concrete Company Limited	18/01/2024	Contravened the terms or conditions of a specified process licence	10,000.00	Fanling
6	China Concrete Company Limited	02/03/2023	Contravened the terms or conditions of a specified process licence	12,500.00	Fanling
7	China Concrete Company Limited	02/03/2023	Contravened the terms or conditions of a specified process licence	12,500.00	Fanling
<b>Convictions under the NCO</b>					
8	Individual	19/01/2024	Used powered mechanical	3,000.00	Fanling

9	Individual	19/01/2024	equipment without valid construction noise permit Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	4,000.00	Fanling
10	Individual	21/01/2024	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	3,500.00	Fanling
11	Individual	21/01/2024	Carried out prescribed construction work in designated area without valid construction noise permit	3,000.00	Fanling
12	Individual	25/01/2024	Used powered mechanical equipment without valid construction noise permit	2,500.00	Kwun Tong
13	Individual	25/01/2024	Carried out prescribed construction work in designated area without valid construction noise permit	2,500.00	Kwun Tong
Convictions under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation					
14	Kin Chiu Engineering Limited	27/06/2023	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	6,000.00	Fanling
15	Individual	09/02/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,200.00	Fanling
16	Individual	27/02/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,200.00	Fanling
17	Individual	21/04/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,200.00	Fanling
18	Individual	23/02/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,200.00	Fanling
19	Individual	24/04/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
20	Individual	25/04/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
21	Best Alliance International Limited	21/02/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
22	Individual	18/03/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
23	P & F Garden Limited	29/04/2024	Littering from vehicles (against owner)	3,000.00	Kwun Tong
Convictions under the Waste Disposal Ordinance					
24	Individual	24/01/2024	Deposited waste unlawfully	1,500.00	Eastern
25	Individual	27/06/2023	Deposited waste unlawfully	4,000.00	Fanling
26	Individual	17/01/2024	Collected / Disposed of waste without a licence	7,500.00	Fanling
Convictions under the WPO					
27	The Incorporated Owners of Mount Pleasure	11/01/2024	Failed to comply with the requirement of a notice	15,000.00	Fanling

Unfortunately, the EPD and AFCD no longer publish details of penalties imposed on repeat offences, as they did until approximately 10 years ago. However, the EPD has informed as that in 2023 there were “more than 700 environmental prosecutions against 400 defendants.” Thus, approximately 75% of prosecutions involved repeat offenders, which is another factor to be kept in mind when comparing the penalties-imposed data with the range of legislated penalties.

### *Lack of enforcement rigour*

The EPD’s published enforcement principles are generally well intentioned.

Briefly, they are:

- (1) Enforcement “*in a fair, consistent and transparent manner*”.
- (2) Enforcement priorities, based on the public health, sensitivity of the receiving environment and “*pollution loads*”.
- (3) Encourage self-monitoring and early rectification.
- (4) Prosecutions are “*a means to deter others, as well as punish polluters who break the law*”.

The EPD also makes the point that it has limited resources.. Therefore, “*priorities have been established based on the risk involved in the polluting activities,*”. The EPD says its enforcement. role is “*to be even-handed and consistent, and to achieve environmental objectives, such as clean air and water.*”



The EPD (Prosecutions Section) has informed us that in their experience courts have penalised offenders properly, taking into account “all relevant factors”, including: “the plea entered, the existence of previous conviction(s), the nature of the offence, the facts of the case, the environmental impact as well as the mitigation”.

Whilst the EPD did not say that list of relevant factors was exhaustive, it is still noteworthy that the most important “relevant factor”, the prescribed penalties, is not mentioned.

On the face of the statistics, there must have been numerous occasions when the EPD should have appealed (against magistrates’ sentences) on the ground the sentence was manifestly inadequate. They have never done so, as far as we are aware.

Further, it is clear that the EPD and AFCD should work towards having the higher courts set more appropriate and realistic sentences to break the magistracies self-imposed low penalties regime applied during the past 30+ years. As well, if realistically possible the agencies could look to having the CFA lay down sentencing guidelines for environmental offence (or the main ones, at least): *Seabrook v. HKSAR (1999) 2 HKFAR 184*.

In the criminal jurisdiction of our courts, the aims of sentencing should be retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, protection of the public, condemnation and incapacitation: *Secretary for Justice v. Wong Chi Fung [2018] 2 HKLRD 699*.

The magistracies, adoption of a sentencing regime for environmental offences which bears little relationship to the legislated penalties, and the EPD’s (and AFCD’s) acceptance of this situation, do not align with those aims. In particular, there is no real retribution if potential offenders know they will be treated leniently should they be caught and prosecuted.

## TOWN PLANNING

### Draft Discovery Bay Outline Zoning Plan approved

On 24 January 2025, the Chief Executive in Council approved the draft Discovery Bay Outline Zoning Plan (“OZP”). The 812 hectares of land covered by the planning scheme is bounded by the Lantau North (Extension) Country Park to its north, west and south and Tai Pak Wan to its east.

The approved OZP comprises the following amendments:

1. rezoning a site to the north of Discovery Valley Road from “Other Specified Uses” to “Residential” for residential development; and
2. zoning the two sea areas in Nim Shue Wan and rezoning the adjoining site near Nim Shue Wan for residential development with servicing facilities, sports and recreational facilities, and a helipad.

[Town Planning Board Press Release, 24/01/2025]

### Approved Tseung Kwan O Outline Zoning Plan amended

On 14 February 2025, the Town Planning Board (“TPB”) announced amendments to the approved Tseung Kwan O Outline Zoning Plan (OZP).

The amendments reflect the proposed reclamation boundary and the current Clear Water Bay Country Park boundary, as well as moving forward the proposed developments at Tseung Kwan O Areas 137 and 132 for a new community primarily for residential purposes and housing public facilities serving the region, both of which require marine frontage to operate.

The main amendments are as follows:

1. zoning two sea areas in Fat Tong O and/or rezoning the adjoining land from “Other Specified Uses” (“OU”) annotated “Deep Waterfront Industry” (“OU(DWI)”) to, *inter alia*, “Residential”, “Public Transport Interchange (1), Government, Institution or Community (10) (“G/IC(10)”), “Green Fuel Station” and “Green Belt” (“GB”);
2. rezoning of a site in Fat Tong Chau from “GB” and “OU(DWI)” to “G/IC(10)”;
3. zoning a site occupied by a pier near Tit Cham Chau and rezoning the adjoining land from “OU(DWI)” to “OU” annotated “Pier”;
4. zoning a sea area in Chiu Keng Wan and/or rezoning the adjoining land from “GB” to “OU” annotated “Electricity Facilities”, “Construction Waste Handling Facility and Public Fill Transfer Facility”, “Refuse Transfer Station”, “Concrete Batching Plant”, “G/IC(10)”, “G/IC”, and an area shown as “Road”;
5. zoning four sites near Chiu Keng Wan to “GB”; and
6. excision of five sites within “OU(DWI)” zone from the planning scheme area.

[Town Planning Board Press Release, 14/02/2025]

## DIGEST OF LEGISLATION

### Ozone legislation strengthened

The *Ozone Layer Protection (Amendment) Bill 2024* (the “**Amendment Bill**”) was published in the Gazette on 6 December 2024 to implement relevant requirements of the *Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer* (the “**Montreal Protocol**”).

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau indicated that the *Kigali Amendment* was adopted by parties of the *Montreal Protocol* in 2016 and entered into force in 2019 with a view to progressively phasing down production and consumption of 18 hydrofluorocarbons (“HFCs”), thereby mitigating global climate change. The *Kigali Amendment* requires its parties to implement a licensing system for the import and export of these 18 HFCs and to meet the relevant phasedown targets.

According to the spokesman, as the *Kigali Amendment* was accepted by China in June 2021 and effected in September 2021, Hong Kong is bound to complete promptly the legislative procedures to fulfil its international obligations.

By amending the *Ozone Layer Protection Ordinance* (Cap. 403), the *Amendment Bill* proposes to implement a three-pronged control strategy with which the government aims to prohibit the manufacture of the 18 HFCs controlled by the *Kigali Amendment* and to implement a licensing system for their import and export from the fourth quarter of 2025. To meet progressively the phasedown targets of the *Kigali Amendment* and assist the market to smoothly transit to suitable alternatives in a safe and environmentally friendly manner, the government also proposes to, by separate subsidiary legislation, progressively implement strategies for relevant product regulations, recovery mandates and related safety requirements, with a target implementation date of mid-2026.

The *Amendment Bill* was introduced into the Legislative Council for first reading on 18 December 2024.

According to the progress update available on the website of the LegCo, the *Amendment Bill* was submitted to the Bills Committee for consideration on 21 January 2025.

[Press Release, Government of Hong Kong, 06/12/2024]

## WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT

### The 122nd Board Meeting of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority held its 122nd board meeting on 16 January 2025, when CEO Betty Fung provided updates concerning the WKCD’s recent achievements and upcoming projects.

Mr. S Fung highlighted the successful conclusion of the *WKCD Christmas Fest 2024*, which had record-breaking attendances of more than 770,000 visitors, marking a 70% increase on the previous year. Building on this momentum, the Authority has introduced the *WKCD Spring Celebrations* from January to February, featuring festive markets, performances, and the return of the popular WKCD Nightscapes event.

In museum activities, M+ Museum reported over 2.6 million visitors in 2024. The acclaimed exhibition, I. M. Pei: Life Is Architecture, drew 225,000 visitors, received international recognition, and its accompanying publication won the Best Architecture Book of the Year. Upcoming at M+ is: *Picasso for Asia—A Conversation*, opening in March 2025, featuring masterpieces from Musée National Picasso-Paris paired with works from M+ collections.

Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM) achieved approximately one million visitors in 2024 and announced seven new exhibitions for 2025. Highlights include a major exhibition of ancient Egyptian artifacts titled *Tutankhamun and the Secrets of Saqqara*, the Qing dynasty military exhibit *The Art of Armaments*, and *A Movable Feast*, exploring food and drink culture in ancient China. Additionally, HKPM received nearly 3,000 important historical Chinese textiles from collector Chris Hall, with planned exhibitions and establishment of a collaborative research centred on historical textiles.

In performing arts, 2024 saw over 1,100 performances attracting approximately 260,000 attendees, notably popular festivals such as the *Freespace Jazz Fest* and *HKT x WESTK POPFEST*. The original Cantonese musical, *The Impossible Trial*, will debut in mainland China in June 2025, followed by a return to Hong Kong in August. Also announced is the return of the family-oriented *WKCD FunFest* in late March, featuring international performances such as Circa's *Carnival of the Animals* and CORPUS's *La bulle*.

Regarding construction projects, significant milestones include completion of the Southern Landing Facility’s pile deck with anticipated operational readiness in Q4 2025, completion of foundation works for the Integrated Basement and Underground Road (Zones 2B and 2C), and substantial progress on the WKCD Performing Arts Centre and Artist Square Towers.

Mr. S Fung reaffirmed WKCD’s commitment to becoming an internationally renowned cultural tourist destination, further enhancing Hong Kong’s cultural profile and economic diversification.

[West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Press Release, 16/01/2025]

## HONG KONG BRIEFING

### Further delays for Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands Project

Hong Kong’s controversial HK\$580 billion Kau Yi Chau artificial islands project faces additional uncertainty, as Development Secretary Bernadette Linn declined to specify a timeline for the reclamation work, as the government prioritises other infrastructure plans amid growing financial concerns.

Speaking on 9 January 2025, Linn emphasised the government's focus on the Northern Metropolis, a major urban development covering 30,000 hectares along the border with mainland China. She stated there was "no need" currently to fix a commencement date for the Kau Yi Chau reclamation, originally scheduled to start in 2025 but previously delayed by up to three years.



This announcement follows Finance Secretary Paul Chan's recent indication of tightened fiscal measures due to Hong Kong's anticipated budget deficit of nearly HK\$100 billion. Chan suggested that government departments would implement further cost-cutting beyond the planned one-percent budget reduction starting in April 2025.

The Kau Yi Chau project, envisioned as Hong Kong's third central business district, aims to provide approximately 190,000 to 210,000 residential units and four million square metres of office space. However, the proposed development has faced strong opposition over its high cost, potential environmental damage, and questions about its necessity, given the current surplus of commercial office space in Hong Kong.

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) report for the artificial islands project has been submitted to the Environmental Protection Department, which will review and decide (within 60 days of receipt) if the report is suitable for public inspection.

Liber Research Community, a development policy think tank, highlighted that budget constraints are not the sole issue facing the project. They pointed out that mega infrastructure projects typically experience significant delays and require adjustments due to evolving social and economic conditions. Research by Liber and Greenpeace Hong Kong further indicated that approximately 80% of similar-scale reclamation projects globally risk failure or incomplete implementation.

In response to budgetary pressures, the Hong Kong government will prioritise urgent infrastructure, housing, and industrial projects in the Northern Metropolis, while deferring less critical initiatives such as landscaping and enhancement of existing facilities. The future of the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands project thus remains uncertain, as fiscal constraints and environmental concerns continue to shape public debate.

[*Hong Kong Free Press, 09/01/2025*]

### **Workshop on digital solar resource maps**

Hong Kong recently hosted the *ASEAN Capacity Building Workshop on Promoting Digital Solar Resource Maps and Management Technologies*, aimed at enhancing renewable energy use across Southeast Asia. Organised by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and supported by the ASEAN-Hong Kong, China Free Trade Agreement's ECOTECH Work Programme, the workshop gathered delegates from ASEAN member states to explore advanced technologies for solar resource management.

In his video welcome address, Secretary for Environment and Ecology Mr. Tse Chin-wan highlighted Hong Kong's commitment to renewable energy, emphasising the city's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. He outlined ongoing government initiatives, including renewable energy installations at restored landfills and reservoirs, the *Pilot Scheme on Building-Integrated Photovoltaics*, and last year's publication of the *Strategy of Hydrogen Development in Hong Kong*.

Mr. Tse emphasised that Hong Kong supports research and pilot projects in green energy fields, particularly solar-to-hydrogen technologies, aligning with national hydrogen energy development strategies.

Addressing the workshop, Secretary for Environment and Ecology Mr. Tse Chin-wan and representatives from the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department encouraged ASEAN participants to adopt innovative solar resource management technologies. The event provided a platform for knowledge sharing among ASEAN member states, promoting collaboration and capacity building to help combat climate change.

[*Government Press Release, 27/02/2025*]

### **Town Planning Board holds "Undetermined" Zoning for Global Innovation Centre Site**

The Town Planning Board (TPB) announced on 14 March 2025 its decision to uphold the "Undetermined" zoning designation for the 4.72-hectare Pok Fu Lam site initially proposed for the University of Hong Kong's (HKU) Global Innovation Centre. This interim zoning decision follows consideration of 1,861 further representations, community opinions, and input from relevant government departments.

Members of the TPB maintained the "Undetermined" ("U") zoning to allow HKU sufficient time to reassess the suitability of the Pok Fu Lam site and explore alternative locations, taking into account stakeholders' concerns, including those from local residents and Ebenezer School. The Board also expects HKU to conduct comprehensive technical assessments, particularly regarding traffic impacts during both construction and operational phases, and to engage proactively with the local community before submitting a revised proposal.

The TPB clarified that their decision was legally sound, supported by government legal advice confirming the appropriateness of the "U" zoning under the *Town Planning Ordinance*. Procedural concerns raised by stakeholders were reviewed and dismissed. The TPB confirming adherence to established administrative guidelines.

The Board emphasised the necessity for HKU to clarify swiftly the project's direction and requested that HKU report back within three months with detailed site selection justifications, a clear development timeline, and updates on stakeholder engagement efforts. The TPB reiterated the significance of continued and constructive community consultation in guiding future decisions on the project.

[*Government Press Release, 14/03/2025*]

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT (ACE)**

On 4 November 2024, the ACE held its 265<sup>th</sup> meeting. The meeting focused on two major topics, namely: (i) a briefing by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology concerning the 2024 Policy Address; and (ii) a report on the 159<sup>th</sup> Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting.

## The 2024 Policy Address

### *Presentation and Q&A Session*

Mr. Tse Chin-wan, the Secretary for Environment and Ecology (the “**Secretary**”), briefed members of the ACE on the major policy measures of the Environment and Ecology Bureau (Environment Branch) in relation to environmental protection and relevant matters in the 2024 Policy Address.

### *Waste Management*

The Secretary indicated that with the implementation of the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Charter* (the “**Charter**”), the public could use recyclable collection facilities within their own residential premises for convenience whereas those who would like to earn GREEN\$ points could visit the GREEN@COMMUNITY recycling network in the neighbourhood.

Two members noted that there had been behavioural changes in the society. The Secretary shared that many people had started to bring their own reusable tableware to restaurants, more restaurants had ceased the provision of disposable tableware for takeaway food and more people were bringing recyclables to the community recycling network.

Three members suggested that the *Charter* should be further expanded to primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as well as government-subsidised organisations. The Secretary indicated that the “*We-recycle@School*” education and promotion campaign was launched in primary and secondary schools to encourage students to practise waste separation and recycling with their families in their daily lives. He added that the Environmental Protection Department (the “**EPD**”) would continue to strengthen public education in schools and other sectors progressively, and consider wider application of the *Charter* in more sectors to encourage various stakeholders to work together in waste reduction in the future.

To address a member’s concern regarding proper handling of recyclables and the capacity of downstream recycling infrastructure, the Secretary said that the current capacity of downstream recycling facilities was adequate to cope with the local demand, and that the local recycling capacity would be further enhanced when a new waste paper recycling facility commenced operation next year. On recycling handling, the Secretary said that the cleansing contractors of some private residential premises might have disposed of the municipal solid waste (“**MSW**”) and recyclables in one-go for the sake of convenience. In this regard, the *Charter* would serve to encourage proper handling of recyclables by private residential premises. The Secretary added that downstream recyclers would ensure the recyclables were properly handled as they were remunerated by the quantity of the recyclables processed, not collected.

A member suggested that the EPD should promote recycled products to encourage buy-in for repeated recycling behaviours whilst keeping the business sustainable. The Secretary replied that currently, the recyclables collected would primarily undergo basic treatment in Hong Kong before being exported to the Mainland for further processing. To support local recycling industry, the government will explore the feasibility of providing longer land leases to encourage the industry to invest in more high-end recycling facilities. In view of the limited land supply and high labour cost in Hong Kong, the government would work with Shenzhen and other Greater Bay Area cities to build a “Zero Waste Bay Area” with a view to developing a regional circular economy.

### *Carbon neutrality*

The Secretary said that Hong Kong’s carbon emission had peaked in 2014. With the implementation of various mitigation measures, under the four major decarbonisation strategies: net-zero electricity generation, energy saving and green buildings, green transport and waste reduction, Hong Kong was moving steadily towards the 2035 decarbonisation target.

In response to a member’s suggestion to deploy advanced technologies to enhance building energy efficiency and to inform the public of the milestones achieved by disclosing more data, the Secretary said that the Environment and Ecology Bureau had been preparing draft legislation on building energy efficiency which required more frequent energy audits and the disclosure of certain information on energy efficiency.

### *Green transport*

The Secretary pointed out that the government had published the *Strategy of Hydrogen Development in Hong Kong* which set out four major strategies including improving legislation, establishing standards, aligning with the market, and advancing with prudence to create an environment conducive to the development of hydrogen energy. Given the high cost of hydrogen, he remarked that it was important to conduct trial projects to test out the cost-effectiveness of different types of hydrogen vehicle at this stage.

Miss Diane Wong, the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, added that the Inter-departmental Working Group on Using Hydrogen as Fuel had given agreement-in-principle to applications of trial hydrogen projects, and projects such as hydrogen bus and hydrogen refuelling facilities, etc. had commenced. The government had earmarked around HK\$750 million under the New Energy Transport Fund to support green transport development, and part of the funding would be used for a subsidy scheme for trials of hydrogen fuel cell heavy vehicles.

### *Nature conservation*

A member suggested there should be cross-departmental collaboration to promote eco-tourism which should integrate nature conservation with historical and cultural heritage. Whilst supportive of the development of eco-tourism, another member was worried about the potential adverse impact on the ecology brought by eco-tourism and human disturbances and thus suggested that there should be strengthened control measures or regulations to protect nature.

Learning from past experiences, the Secretary said that non-development might not be the best way for conservation. Instead, proactive conservation and restoration such as through the establishment of the Robin’s Nest Country Park, the North Lantau Marine Park and Sam Po

Shue Wetland Conservation Park (the “**SPS WCP**”) would be more beneficial in enhancing the ecological value of nature and improving biodiversity. Given the limited land supply in Hong Kong, it was important to fully utilise the land for conservation, eco-tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

According to the Secretary, apart from enhancing the habitat quality and biodiversity of Deep Bay and increasing the environmental capacity of the Northern Metropolis, the SPS WCP would also provide quality outdoor eco-education and eco-recreation experience for the public, as well as help promote modernisation of aquaculture on a larger-scale. The chairman and two members appreciated the proactive conservation approach and agreed that development and nature conservation should co-exist in harmony.

## **Report on the 159<sup>th</sup> Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

### *Presentation and Q&A Session*

At its meeting held on 14 October 2024, the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee (the “**EIASC**”) made some recommendations on the Environmental Impact Assessment report (the “**EIA Report**”) on Development of Integrated Waste Management Facilities Phase 2 (“**I-PARK2**”).

The EIASC Chairmain reported the EIASC’s recommendations regarding the EIA Report.

Members were glad that the project proponent (Waste Infrastructure Division of the EPD) had addressed some comments made by the EIASC and expressed support of the proposed development of I-PARK2 in view of the associated benefits of the project such as reducing reliance on landfill for MSW disposal as well as reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

### *Project design*

The Chairman of the ACE meeting and two members highlighted that the proposed I-PARK2 should provide communal facilities to encourage the public to visit, enjoy and learn about the benefits of modern incineration facilities such as their ability to turn waste into energy and the prevailing state-of-the-art technology. Agreeing that public education was an important element which would be incorporated in I-PARK2, the project proponent said that the EPD would continue with its public education efforts such as through giving school talks and distributing relevant messages through the “*We-recycle@School*” programme.

Addressing a member’s enquiry on fire safety measures, the project proponent advised that the EPD had been working closely with the Fire Services Department (the “**FSD**”) on devising fire safety design and contingency plans. A fire assessment report will be devised in the detailed design stage to consider the fire risks involved in I-PARK2 covering aspects including proper handling of the dangerous goods and the provision of adequate water storage on par with the scale of the facility. In the design of I-PARK2, there would be proper compartmentalisation by fire curtains to minimise the potential danger in case of fire. Automatic alarm system would be installed to alert the FSD immediately when smoke or fire was detected. Emergency response plan and regular drill would also be put in place.

### *Ecological impact*

A member was concerned about the potential adverse impact on marine organisms if seawater cooling was adopted. The project proponent assured members that based on the findings of the EIA Report, both seawater and air cooling systems would not cause adverse impact to the environment.

Three members strongly recommended that the EPD should deploy air cooling system instead of seawater cooling system. With his years of studies of marine ecology, one of these members said that the filter in the pumping system and chlorination involved in seawater cooling would kill a large amount of marine organisms. He pointed out that green groups’ and other stakeholders’ concern regarding seawater cooling systems was prominent, and the adoption of air cooling system was the global trend as it could avoid ecological hazards. Therefore, the EPD should strive to overcome any practical problems such as cost effectiveness or limited space in the project site by exploring different construction possibilities.

The project proponent noted the members’ preference for the air cooling system and will take this into account in conjunction with all other relevant factors before deciding the type of cooling system to be adopted.

[Post-meeting note: Having considered the ACE’s comments, the project proponent informed the EPD that an air cooling system would be adopted for I-PARK2. The project proponent’s letter was circulated to the ACE members on 26 November 2024.]

### *Transportation of waste*

A member expressed concern about the potential leakage or dropping of waste to the sea during the transportation of waste to I-PARK2 by sea. The project proponent responded that currently, MSW was transported to the West New Territories Landfill near the project site by sea in sealed containers and there had been no record of such accidents so far. The project proponent also advised that due considerations would be taken in the design of the vessels and the transportation procedures to avoid the occurrence of accidents in the first place.

A member suggested that the EPD should require the contractor to deploy marine vessels using biofuel or new energy. Whilst refuse transfer vessels were not part of the I-PARK2 project, the project proponent said that the EPD would take members’ suggestions into consideration when preparing the relevant contract in future.

### *Carbon reduction and circular economy*

A member suggested that locally recycled materials should be used in construction of current and future projects with a view to encouraging local circular economy. The project proponent said that the EPD would follow the government's *Green Procurement Policy* in the procurement procedures.

Other members expressed their view that the EPD should strive to reduce carbon footprint and carbon emissions in the design, construction and operational phases. The project proponent advised that the EPD would consider holistically all relevant factors, including greenhouse gas emissions, operating efficiency and cost effectiveness in the design of I-PARK2, and that the EPD had consulted Mainland and overseas experts to deploy state-of-the-art technology and design in I-PARK2 to put in place an incineration facility with very stringent air emission standards.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### Research of efficient solutions for reaching net zero

Funding of £5.7 million has been granted to the Centre for People-Led Digitalisation at the University of Bath to investigate ways businesses and organisations can effectively achieve net zero carbon emissions.

The Centre will work in collaboration and share the findings with councils and organisations nationwide, such as the Bath & North East Somerset Council, to implement action plans. In a statement, the university announced that it would assist the Council in “decarbonising” its offices, and will explore new food production methods.

In announcing the new investment, the UK Research and Innovation agency remarked that the journey to reach net zero carbon emissions is one of the UK's most urgent and complex issues and that understanding at a system level the impacts of different components working collectively is essential. An example given is where deep soil carbon storage is already stable, it is prudent to avoid planting trees on that land.

[BBC, 24/01/2025]

### Trend of flooding discovered

An environment correspondent stationed in the Midlands reviewed climate and weather archives over the past 25 years and discovered that one significant effect of climate change on the West Midlands was the precipitation and flooding it caused.

By putting together flood reports and weather forecasts covering the region over the past quarter of a century and plotting out a trend, it was revealed that the frequency of flooding recorded on the major rivers in the West Midlands was a few times higher in the past few years compared to the first climate change report in early 2000s. It was also noticed that the water level of rivers and humidity in winter have been increasing every year. The causal link of these events is the warmer the atmosphere, which enables more water to be held in the atmosphere. The consequence is higher the rainfall, causing rivers to flood frequently.

The frequent floods have caused dangers to riverside communities when banks have burst, often due to volatile tides. Even farther away from the riverbanks, city centres with poor urban planning and drainage systems will not be able to handle overwhelming rainfall.

Looking on the bright side, compared to people's indifference and scepticism towards climate change as a notion 25 years ago, the actual damage and tangible effects resulting from the warming weather can no longer be ignored. Thus, the public is now more ready to face reality and take action to prevent the worst from happening.

[BBC, 12/02/2025]

### Improved carbon markets science

In the next five years, the world must decrease its carbon emissions by at least 43%. Yet greenhouse gas pollution continues to tick up alongside our planet's collective thermostat, and 2024 hit record highs on both fronts.

While November's UN climate conference (COP29) was not the resounding success we needed, it did bring one promising development: the groundwork for a global voluntary carbon market.

Carbon markets are a useful tool because they can create financial incentives to reduce emissions, and, when working at their best, can direct that capital to grassroots projects, including nature-based solutions, in local communities that benefit from the funding.

#### *The carbon control group conundrum*

Traditionally, the amount of carbon sequestered by a forest enrolled in a carbon market has been measured against a projected baseline: a model of how much carbon would be sequestered and stored on the land over the next 100 years absent the project. The difference between the projected baseline and the actual scenario could signal how well a forest sequesters carbon, and, thus, its worth in carbon credits.

With this static projected scenario, you're considering the conditions present when you build the model. This can be effective in certain situations, but doesn't account for future changes, making carbon credits tricky to verify. And without reliable carbon credits, the market can't do its job. That's a big problem considering we're short on time and racing toward record warming.

Dynamic baselines are one way to address this challenge. Developed by TNC, American Forest Foundation, and Terra Carbon, this alternate methodology is how credits are verified in the Family Forest Carbon Program (FFCP)—a partnership effort that helps small family landowners in the United States manage their forests sustainably and in turn gives them access to the carbon markets that pay for these practices.

With a dynamic scenario, a sample of forest plots enrolled in FFCP is monitored against a similar grouping of unenrolled plots. The unenrolled plots are the control group, providing an actual, real-time baseline against which to measure the carbon benefits of enrolled plots. This enables a continuous, consistent way to compare and quantify carbon sequestration over time.

The key difference? You can measure with a fair degree of accuracy the actual emissions saved through a market-funded project, not just a theoretical projection.

[*Newsletter of The Nature Conservancy*, 13/02/2025]

### Glaciers melting at an historically high rate

The most thorough scientific analysis to date has found that the world's glaciers are melting more quickly than ever before as a result of climate change. Mountain glaciers, which are frozen rivers of ice, provide freshwater to millions of people globally and, if they melted completely, would cause global sea levels to rise by 32cm.

Over the past 25 years, 5% of glaciers have melted; in other words, 6,500 billion tonnes of ice have melted into water. Worse still, the rate of melting is accelerating. Compared to the 2000s, glacier losses have increased by more than a third in the last decade. This study, which was published in the journal *Nature*, helped scientists ascertain the precise rate of glacier melting and their future evolution by combining over 230 regional estimates from 35 research teams worldwide.

Glaciers are considered an outstanding way to monitor climate change. When the climate is stable, the size of glaciers is largely constant, accumulating roughly the same amount of ice from snowfall as they lose from melting. However, over the last two decades, as temperatures have increased due to human activity, primarily the burning of fossil fuels, glaciers have been receding worldwide. For instance, an average of 270 billion tonnes of ice were lost annually by glaciers outside of the main ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica from 2000 to 2023. As an illustration provided by the spokesperson of the World Glacier Monitoring Service, assuming a person consumes 3 litres of water per day, 270 billion tonnes of ice lost is equivalent to 30 years' worth of water consumed by the world population.

The study's findings that glaciers are melting more quickly are not particularly novel news. The real significance of this study lies in its bringing together data from various researchers. Glacier change can be estimated using a variety of methods, including field measurements and various forms of satellite data, each with its respective pros and cons. For instance, although direct measurements of glaciers can provide precise information, it is not a practical method in relation to most glaciers. Scientists are able to make much more accurate conclusions by methodically integrating results from the various methodologies.

Depending on their size, glaciers may take several years to several decades to fully adapt to a changing climate. This implies that they will keep melting in the years to come. The study concludes that if targets for restricting global climate are met, this could mean the difference between losing a quarter of the world's glacier ice and losing nearly half if warming continues unchecked.

[*BBC*, 19/02/2025]

### UK oil field approvals reversed in major climate victory

ELAW partners at Uplift and Greenpeace UK recently shared the good news that Scotland's Court of Session has ruled the previous approval of the massive Rosebank and Jackdaw oil fields unlawful, delivering a much-needed climate win for 2025!

At an estimated 500 million barrels, Rosebank is the largest undeveloped oil field in the UK. Burning Rosebank's reserves would produce more than the annual emissions of the 28 lowest-income countries in the world combined. The Jackdaw Oil and Gas Field in the Scottish North Sea would produce an estimated 2.76 million barrels of crude oil and condensate and 1.4 billion cubic meters of gas annually. In addition to the massive climate damage these projects would cause, the Rosebank project also threatens the Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Marine Protected Area.

"There is almost no public interest in developing the Rosebank oil field," says Tessa Khan, Executive Director of Uplift. "Most of the oil would be sold on the international market for export and do nothing to lower bills or provide energy security for people in the UK. On top of that, the UK public would effectively carry almost all the costs of developing Rosebank, with the field's owners receiving billions of pounds in tax breaks. Rosebank also won't provide long-term security for the oil and gas workforce. Its drilling ship is currently being built in Dubai. Jobs supported by the oil and gas industry have more than halved in the past decade. Workers deserve better, which means governments coming up with a coherent transition plan for the North Sea and help for workers to move into good, clean energy industries that have a future. Rosebank is not the answer to energy security, lower bills, or jobs. It would simply make obscenely rich oil companies even richer while increasing the dangers for the rest of us."

Ruling on the legal challenges brought forward by Uplift and Greenpeace UK, the Scottish Court of Session declared the approvals of the Rosebank and Jackdaw projects unlawful, as they should have accounted for the emissions that would be caused by burning the oil extracted from the field—also known as Scope 3 emissions.

Shell (Jackdaw oil field developer) and Equinor and Ithaca (Rosebank oil field developers) must submit a new application that accounts for Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions to develop these oil fields. The court has ruled that no oil and gas can be extracted unless or until they obtain new development consents from the UK Government, which has recently pledged not to issue any new oil and gas exploration licences.

"Thank you to everyone who has supported the fight to stop Rosebank," says Jack Robirosa, Legal Counsel at Greenpeace UK. "It's our collective effort that has led to this victory today. We appreciate the support of the ELAW Science Team, which provided expert support on issues such as likely ecological and climate impacts."



“Developing Rosebank and Jackdaw is incompatible with a safe climate,” says Dr. Johnnie Chamberlin, ELAW Scientist. “When we have already overshoot agreed safe climate limits, its development would be a slap in the face for communities around the world already bearing the enormous costs of extreme weather.”

Using material in the EIAs for the project and UK regulations for offshore oil production, ELAW provided evidence that Greenpeace UK used to refute the initial claims of Shell that it would not be able to safely pause the development if the consent was quashed. ELAW is also providing guidance about how the amount and impact of Scope 3 emissions must be determined.

[Elaw Press release, 19/02/2025]

## REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

### AFRICA

#### *Extreme weather affects cocoa production*

A recent study conducted by Wageningen University & Research (WUR) reveals that climate change has a significant impact on cocoa production in West and Central Africa. The study concludes that rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns will make some areas less suitable for cocoa cultivation, but some other areas more suitable for increased yield production.

The research team used computer simulation to forecast cocoa production by year 2060 in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. Results show that as much as 50% of farming land currently available in the Ivory Coast will become barren, causing a drop in production. For Ghana, there is likely to be a moderate loss of some premium farming zones.

In contrast, Nigeria and Cameroon are expected to see an expansion of cocoa farming areas. The prediction suggests that production output in Cameroon could increase by as much as 60%. For Nigeria, the forecast shows a rough estimated 40% increase.

WUR researcher, Niels Anten, expressed concern that the migration of farming zones could bring environmental pressures and habitat loss. “Cameroon has a relatively large amount of rainforest, and cocoa is often grown in areas that were originally tropical forests. This puts significant pressure on these ecosystems,” he noted.

*“Addressing the impact of climate change on cocoa requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. It affects every stage of the supply chain: farmers face reduced yields, businesses encounter rising costs, and consumers see higher prices,”* added Asante.

*“Whilst collaboration can be challenging, it is crucial to help current production regions adapt and maintain production on existing plantations. This will prevent cocoa-related deforestation elsewhere and ensure that deforestation-free policies, such as the EU law EUDR [Regulation on Deforestation-free Products], deliver meaningful outcomes.”*

The researchers said their findings were not conclusive as they still need to understand more about some of the factors which could influence cocoa production. One of such factors is the presence of extra atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> associated with climate change. The extra CO<sub>2</sub> available is likely to increase photosynthesis and reduce plant damage from high temperatures and drought. In addition, changes to flowering and fruiting times could also affect cocoa production. These factors require further exploration as to their effect on cocoa cultivation.

The threat to shrinking farming zones can be mitigated by improving productivity gains, the researchers suggested. By enhancing soil fertility management and use of fertiliser, the farmers can obtain a better yield. Additionally, agroforestry can be employed whereby cocoa grows along with other tree species. The shade trees can regulate humidity, moderate extreme temperatures and provide an alternative source of income.

*“Choosing the right shade trees is essential. Some trees use too much water, exacerbating drought issues. It is crucial to select species suited to the local climate and soil conditions,”* said Danaë Rozendaal, a researcher engaged in the study.

[Earth.com, 10/02/2025]

### AUSTRALIA

#### *Macquarie Bank quits global banking sector climate coalition*

On 11 February 2025, Australia's largest investment bank, Macquarie Group, announced it would withdraw from the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA), a global coalition formed to promote climate change mitigation efforts. Macquarie's exit follows a trend set by several North American banks that quit the NZBA since early November last year when Donald Trump was expected to return to the U.S. presidency.

The NZBA, established in 2021 under the United Nations sponsorship and spearheaded by former Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney, aimed to encourage financial institutions to contribute to achieving net-zero emissions. However, since Trump's presidency and his subsequent decisions to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and the UN Green Climate Fund, there has been a growing exodus from the NZBA. Currently, the alliance has 134 members across 44 nations.

Goldman Sachs was the first to exit the alliance in December, followed by major U.S. banks, such as Wells Fargo, Citigroup, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, and JPMorgan. In Canada, TD Bank, Bank of Montreal, National Bank of Canada, and CIBC also pulled out in anticipation of Trump's presidency.



Macquarie did not specify the reasons for its departure but stated it would provide an update on its climate-related initiatives in its annual report scheduled for May 2025.

Kyle Robertson, a senior analyst at Market Forces, criticised Macquarie for abandoning its “green” image and instead following the U.S. banks' lead into undermining global climate objectives.

In contrast, Australia's major banks—Westpac, ANZ, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and National Australia Bank—remain part of the NZBA, as do international financial institutions like HSBC, Barclays, Deutsche Bank, and DBS Bank from Singapore.

[Reuters, 11/02/2025]

### *Environment minister sued by Wilderness Society*

Environmental Minister Tanya Plibersek is being sued by the Wilderness Society, which accused her of breaching federal law and her promise to halt Australia's ongoing extinction crisis by failing to implement plans to save endangered animals, documents lodged with the Federal Court reveal.

The litigation is an escalation in antipathy between sections of the environment sector and Plibersek, who vowed three years ago when she first took on the role that in her watch there “would be no new extinctions”.

But unnamed sources in the conservation movement questioned the timing of the case against Plibersek, which could impact the election campaign due to be called in coming weeks.

Plibersek has failed to deliver on Labor's 2022 election promise to create a federal environmental watchdog agency.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese undercut her role by promising the salmon industry it would not be hit by environmental regulations, making the announcement before Plibersek made her final determination on the industry's environmental impacts on Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania.

Federal laws under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act mandate the environment minister to create what are known as recovery plans within three years of a species being listed as threatened.

These plans are included in the laws, ensuring that flora and fauna that need urgent help can benefit from conservation, efforts, which could mean limiting development in their habitat, reducing numbers of feral species, replanting at risk species or breeding rare animals.

The Wilderness Society, which lodged the Federal Court claim, says successive environment ministers have failed to create recovery plans for hundreds of such threatened and endangered species.

There are currently 2138 plants and animals on the threatened species list. Whilst it is difficult to calculate the exact number of outstanding recovery plans, estimates range up to 600.

“Recovery plans are legally required,” campaign manager Sam Szoke-Burke said.

“We're going to court because Australia's pride and joy, its diverse and world-important environment, is being trashed. Following the law should not be a high bar for government ministers.”

Since colonisation, about 100 of Australia's unique flora and fauna species have been wiped off the planet. The rate of loss, which is as comprehensive as anywhere else on Earth, has not slowed over the past 200 years.

Plibersek said she could not comment on the case, as it is before the court.

However, speaking generally, Plibersek said she had made double the number of recovery plans than her predecessor in the portfolio, Sussan Ley, during her tenure under the Morrison government.

“We've doubled funding for our neglected national parks, invested a record \$1.2 billion to protect and restore the Great Barrier Reef, established more Indigenous Protected Areas, and funded world-leading environmental science - from the Great Barrier Reef to Antarctica,” Plibersek said.

“We're also investing more than half a billion dollars to save our native plants and animals from extinction.”

The Wilderness Society's case will focus on 11 species in a test case that seeks to compel Plibersek to create plans to avoid extinction.

The species are the tree-dwelling greater gliders that live in NSW and Victoria, the long-footed potoroo, Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles, fish species the Australian graylings, Australian lungfish, ghost bats, red goshawks, sandhill dunnarts, and four Western Australian birds Baudin's cockatoos, Carnaby's black cockatoos, forest red-tailed black cockatoos.

The legal action targets Plibersek as the current minister, but she is not mentioned by name and the lawsuit alleges successive environment ministers are to blame.

This means that whoever inherits the environment portfolio after the looming election will also become the subject of the Federal Court action. Environmental Justice Australia senior lawyer Ellen Maybery said aspects of the case were “very novel”.

“It's the first time that we're aware of that the court has been asked to make a mandatory injunction compelling the minister to perform their duties under the EPBC Act,” she said.

“Pursuing litigation in the courts... is time-consuming and expensive, but I think in a case like this, where for decades concerns have been raised about missing recovery plans, it does get to the point where it does start to feel like litigation is the only option when action isn't being taken.” Get to the heart of what's happening with climate change and the environment. Sign up for our fortnightly Environment newsletter.

[*The Age*, 04/03/2025]

## BRAZIL

### *Accountability for devastating dam collapses*

In 2019, a mine tailings dam owned by Vale S.A. Corporation collapsed, killing 272 people and releasing toxic sludge into the environment. It devastated 300 acres of native forests and contaminated the Paraopeba River, which thousands of people, including Indigenous communities, depend on. The event, known as the Brumadinho Dam disaster, occurred three years after the company was involved in another catastrophic failure, called the Mariana Dam disaster.

In December, the Brazilian Securities and Exchange Commission convicted Vale's former high-level director, Peter Poppinga, for failure to comply with the duty of diligence in the Brumadinho Dam collapse. Poppinga must pay a \$4.5 million fine.

ELAW partner Danilo Chammas, a lawyer at Instituto Cordilheira, has worked with his team to represent the association of relatives of the victims of the Brumadinho dam collapse (Associação de Familiares de Vítimas e Atingidos pelo Rompimento da Barragem Mina Córrego do Feijão, AVABRUM). Instituto Cordilheira's legal team includes Chammas, a human rights lawyer with 25 years of experience; an early-career lawyer, Thabata Pena; and a law student, Pablo Martins.

“For the first time, an individual is being held responsible after the two major tragedies in Minas Gerais. This judgment recognizes serious issues in the company's management,” says Chammas. “The lack of accountability in the Mariana Dam disaster led to the second collapse.”

The 2015 Mariana Dam disaster is considered the worst environmental disaster in Brazil's history and one of the worst mine tailings dam collapses ever, killing 19 people and spreading pollutants along 415 miles of the Doce River into the Atlantic Ocean.

Chammas called on ELAW's Law Team to provide resources on corporate criminal liability to support this work.

Police investigations revealed strong evidence of the criminal responsibility of Vale S.A. and the German certifier that issued the dam structure's stability declaration four months before the collapse.

The Public Prosecutor's Office charged 16 directors and managers of the companies with murder and environmental crimes in 2020. The companies themselves are also being prosecuted for environmental crimes. Witness hearings are expected to begin in 2025. “This will be a very important stage in criminal proceedings,” points out Chammas. The victims' lawyers, supported by ELAW, will be able to intervene with questions to the witnesses and requests to the judge.

Instituto Cordilheira's work aims to enhance the effectiveness of the accountability frameworks and the judicial system to fight impunity and ensure that criminal justice is carried out in the Brumadinho case. “This is not only crucial to punish those responsible for these crimes but to prevent similar catastrophes,” says Chammas.

ELAW will continue collaborating with Danilo and his team to help the victims' families secure justice and ensure the company is held accountable for these disasters.

[*Elaw Press release*, 04/02/2025]

## CAMEROON

### *Greenpeace urges government to close national park*

In 2020, the Cameroonian government established the Ma Mbed Mbed Park, which spans over 12,000 hectares, through a decree. This decision has provoked strong reactions from local communities, who have protested publicly, calling for the decree's cancellation. Their concerns include potential human-wildlife conflicts, particularly with elephants, and the risk of losing their land. They also accuse the government of inadequate consultation during the decision-making process.

Professor Ngoussandou Bello Pierre, who was the National Coordinator of the National Toupouri Cultural Association ‘Jag Sir’, stated: “*The Toupouri community views this as a threat to their land and livelihoods. Elephants do not discriminate based on ethnicity, religion, or profession; their presence endangers everyone, including the BIR camp, located less than 12 km away. Kidnappers often operate in Taibong and Guidiguiss before seeking refuge in a protected area in Chad. Expanding this area with the new park would exacerbate insecurity. The government must admit its mistake and revoke the decree to ease tensions. Given the local population's determination, if the government persists, the extermination of elephants will become inevitable.*”

Cameroon's Far North already faces significant challenges, particularly regarding security, and is one of the regions most affected by climate change. Last year, it experienced multiple floods, and food insecurity remains a persistent issue.

Dr. Lamfu Fabrice, Forest Campaigner at Greenpeace Africa, commented: “This park was created to combat climate change and promote social and professional integration—objectives that are commendable. However, the project significantly reduces the land and resources available to

local populations. This is why their essential role in the sustainable management of their land and environment must be recognised. When decisions are made without their free, prior, and informed consent, it can unfortunately lead to delicate situations like this one. We call on the government to reconsider the project. This is one threat too many for the people of the Far North.”

This protest follows a similar demonstration a few weeks ago in the southern region, where residents of the Camvert project in Campo protested. The current situation in the Far North presents similar challenges to those faced by the people of Campo, particularly regarding human-wildlife conflicts, land grabbing, and the lack of public consultation before project development.

[*Green Peace Press Release*, 12/02/2025]

## EGYPT

### *Green Road initiative*

Egypt has launched an initiative called "Green Road," which involves planting trees along the routes leading to natural reserves. As part of the first phase of this project, 1250 trees were planted near the entrances of these reserves. This effort is part of the broader "100 Million Trees" initiative, a presidential campaign aimed at promoting environmental sustainability.

The "Green Road" initiative is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Environment, the Youth Foundation for Development and Creativity, the Arab Network for Development (Raed), and the Mediterranean Cooperation Center of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The project focuses on enhancing the natural beauty and biodiversity of areas frequented by migratory birds in Fayoum Governorate.

During the first phase, specific reserves were targeted for tree planting. For instance, 150 mulberry and poinciana trees were planted at the Ashtum El-Gamil Reserve, and 250 cucumber and mulberry trees were planted at the Wadi El-Rayan Reserve. Additionally, 850 trees were planted along the road leading to the Qarun Reserve, contributing to the improvement of vegetation cover and local biodiversity.

Minister of Environment, Yasmine Fouad, highlighted the planting of 850 Omani mulberry and Shambar cucumber trees along the road to the Qarun Reserve, with the participation of 100 volunteers from 17 African countries. This initiative not only aims to enhance ecosystem sustainability and improve air quality but also seeks to create a supportive environment for wildlife, promote environmental awareness, and boost ecotourism in Egypt.

[*Egypt Today*, 13/02/2025]

## EUROPE

### *Blossoming sustainable flower industry*

The sustainable flower industry is experiencing significant growth as it adapts to the challenges posed by climate change. In Europe, the cut flower industry, which heavily relies on imports from Kenya and large-scale greenhouse operations in the Netherlands, is undergoing a transformation. Growers are increasingly adopting sustainable practices to mitigate the impacts of erratic weather conditions, rising energy costs, and stringent environmental regulations.

Climate change is already affecting flower production globally. In Kenya, where a substantial portion of Europe's roses are grown, unpredictable weather patterns, such as droughts and extreme rainfall, are threatening flower yields and increasing production costs. This not only jeopardises the livelihoods of thousands of flower farm workers but also underscores the need for urgent action to ensure sustainability. Similarly, in Europe, particularly in the Netherlands, the environmental challenges associated with large-scale greenhouse operations—such as high energy consumption, water usage, and pesticide use—are prompting a shift towards greener practices.

Consumers are becoming more aware of the environmental footprint of their purchases, including the carbon emissions from transportation and the environmental impact of greenhouse heating and lighting. This awareness is driving demand for sustainable options, such as Fairtrade-certified flowers, which adhere to strict environmental standards and support fair labour practices. Fairtrade roses from Kenya, for instance, have been shown to have a significantly lower environmental impact compared to those grown in Dutch greenhouses, even when transportation is factored in.

The Dutch flower industry is also making strides in sustainability. Companies like Porta Nova are leading the way by reducing carbon emissions through the use of wind energy, LED lighting, and closed-loop fertilisation systems. Initiatives such as the '*On the way to PlanetProof*' certification are setting new standards for sustainable flower production in Europe.

In addition to supporting Fairtrade and certified European-grown flowers, consumers can also contribute to sustainability by choosing locally grown flowers. Organisations such as the Slow Flower movement in France and Flowers from the Farm in the UK are promoting small-scale, local flower production, which not only reduces the environmental footprint but also supports biodiversity and local economies.

Ultimately, whilst there is no perfect solution for a completely sustainable bouquet, making informed choices—such as opting for Fairtrade-certified flowers, supporting local growers, and looking for certifications like '*On the way to PlanetProof*'—can significantly reduce the environmental impact of the flower industry. As consumer demand for sustainable options continues to grow, the industry is poised to adopt more eco-friendly practices, ensuring a greener future for floriculture.

[*Euronews*, 12/02/2025]

## INDIA

### *New law is killing camels*

Against the backdrop of a global rise in camel numbers, India is experiencing a drastic decline of camel populations, particularly in the state of Rajasthan. The primary cause of this decline is attributed to a 2015 law passed by the government in Rajasthan, which prohibits the slaughter, transport and export of camels. Whilst the law was intended to protect camels, it has inadvertently led to their demise by disrupting traditional breeding and trading practices.

Jeetu Singh, a 65-year-old camel breeder, reflects on the once-thriving camel culture in Rajasthan. His family's herd has dwindled from over 200 camels to just 25, a trend mirrored across the state. "*All that is memory now,*" he says, lamenting the loss of a centuries-old tradition. The law, which criminalises camel transport and slaughter, has made it impossible for breeders to sell their camels, leading to a sharp decline in their numbers. In 2019, Rajasthan's camel population was just over 210,000, a 35% drop from 2012.

The law has had a devastating impact on camel breeders, who relied on selling their animals at fairs like Pushkar, Nagore and Tilwara. Before the passing of the law, camels were sold for between 40,000 and 80,000 rupees (HK\$3600 to HK\$7200). After the law was passed, prices plummeted to just 500 to 1,000 rupees (HK\$46 to HK\$92), making it economically unsustainable to rear camels. "*Suddenly, there were no buyers,*" says Hanuwant Singh Sadri, a camel conservationist. Breeders like Bhanwarlal Chaudhary, who once had 150 camels, now have only 30 left. "*Camels are connected to the language of our survival, our cultural heritage and our everyday life,*" he says. "*Without them, our language, our being has no meaning at all.*"

The law has also been criticised for its broad definition of animal cruelty, which includes even decorating camels. Furthermore, the burden of proof is reversed and requires the accused to prove his or her innocence when prosecuted. Ecologist Sumit Dookia questions the law's effectiveness, asking, "*Why is it that the camel population is still shrinking?*" Retired bureaucrat Narendra Mohan Singh, who helped draft the law, admits it was flawed and implemented without consulting breeders. "*We were told to formulate a law for camels similar to what existed for cows and other cattle. But a law that aimed to protect camels ended up doing the opposite,*" he says.

The decline of camels in India is not just an environmental issue but also a cultural and economic one. Camels are integral to Rajasthan's identity, featuring in festivals, transportation, and agriculture. Their loss threatens the livelihoods of breeders and the cultural heritage of the region. As Sadri warns, "*I will not be shocked or surprised if there are no camels left in India in the next five or ten years. It will be gone forever like dinosaurs did.*"

[*Al Jazeera*, 15/01/2025]

## NEW ZEALAND

### *Climate resilience pilot project for Marae*

On 5 February 2025, Climate Change Minister Simon Watts and Pou Take Ahuarangi (the National Iwi Chirs Forum) chair Marama Royal announced the first climate resilience pilot project funded by the Māori Climate Platform.

The initiative aims to upgrade the marae's reticulation system to ensure safe drinking water for nearby households, the local kura (i.e. schools), and the marae itself. A marae is a communal gathering area for a tribe, sub-tribe or family, often consists of a fenced area of buildings and grounds. It is a place where tribal events such as celebrations and funerals are held.

The initiative comes in response to increasing risks from severe weather events that have impacted the water treatment system, compromising water safety.

A collaboration between the Ministry for the Environment and Pou Take Ahuarangi evaluated climate vulnerabilities across over 1,000 marae to identify suitable pilot projects for funding. Insights from this project will guide other climate initiatives under the Māori Climate Platform.

Additional pilot projects will align with the Government's climate strategy, ensuring geographic diversity and a combination of initiatives that enhance climate resilience and reduce emissions. Climate Change Minister Simon Watts will decide on future projects. These pilot projects are set to launch this year, after which the Māori Climate Platform will be accessible for wider community-led Māori climate action.

Established in 2022, the Māori Climate Platform helps the Crown meet obligations under the *Climate Change Response Act 2002*. Its main goal is to fund climate initiatives that benefit Māori communities, while also building climate knowledge and skills within Māori communities to support New Zealand's overall climate response.

[*The Ministry for the Environment of the New Zealand Government*, 12/02/2025]

## PANAMA

### *Indigenous group flees from sinking island*

The Guna community on the tiny island of Gardi Sugdub in Panama is facing an existential threat from rising sea levels due to climate change.

The island, 400m long and 150m wide, has been home to the Guna people for over a century. It is projected to become uninhabitable by 2050. In June last year, most of the residents relocated to a new settlement on the mainland called Isberyala, a move praised as a model for climate-induced relocations worldwide. However, the transition has been bittersweet, dividing the community and evoking strong emotions.

For Delfino Davies, who chose to stay, the island is more than a home—it's the heart of his culture. "*The people that lose their tradition lose their soul. The essence of our culture is on the islands,*" he says. Delfino remains committed to his way of life, fishing in the ocean and running

a small museum documenting the community's history. Yet, the once vibrant island is now eerily quiet, with about 1,000 residents having left, leaving behind padlocked houses and a sense of loss.

For those who relocated, like Magdalena Martínez, the decision was driven by the increasing threat of rising tides. *"Every year, we saw the tides were higher,"* she recalls. *"We couldn't cook on our stoves and it was always flooded... so we said 'we have to get out of here.'"* In Isberyala, the new community offers modern amenities, including constant electricity, better housing, and a state-of-the-art school. Magdalena, now living with her granddaughter Bianca, is enthusiastic about planting crops on the land behind her new home. Yet, she admits, *"it is quite sad to leave a place you've been in for so long. You miss your friends, the streets where you lived, being so close to the sea."*

The relocation has not been without challenges. Some residents, like Yanisela Vallarino, still return to the island frequently, struggling to adjust to their new life. Additionally, Isberyala lacks healthcare facilities, and its water supply is unreliable. Despite these issues, the community is working to preserve its cultural identity. In the new school, students learn traditional Guna music and dances, and the community leader, Tito López, emphasizes that *"my identity and my culture aren't going to change, it's just the houses that have changed."*

As Erica Bower of Human Rights Watch notes, communities worldwide will be inspired by the Guna's resilience, but the success of such relocations depends on learning from these early cases. For now, the Guna people continue to navigate their new reality, holding onto their traditions while adapting to a changing world.

[BBC, 08/02/2025]

## USA

### *Trump orders massive forest harvests*

President Donald Trump signed an executive order earlier this month ordering those large parcels of forest be chopped down to limit U.S. reliance on foreign timber days before he implemented tariffs on the country's largest trading partners.

In the order titled "Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production" signed on March 1, Trump claimed the country has enough timber resources to meet domestic demand, but federal policies have barred their full utilization and made the U.S. dependent on foreign producers.

The order allows the U.S. Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture to bypass the Endangered Species Act protections to ramp up timber sales, ultimately resulting in the clear-cutting of massive tracts of federal forests. The agencies are directed to collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to set sales goals.

The news comes less than a week after Trump announced he'd selected Tom Schultz, a former Idaho timber executive, to serve as U.S. Forest Service Chief.

Within 90 days of the order's signing, department heads are to set targets for the annual amount of timber to be offered for sale over the next four years.

"This executive order sets in motion a chainsaw free-for-all on our federal forests," argued Blaine Miller-McFeeley, senior legislative representative at Earthjustice, an environmental advocacy organization.

"Americans treasure our forests for all the benefits they provide, such as recreation, clean air, and clean drinking water. This order ignores these values and opens the door for wildlands to be plundered for nothing more than corporate gain."

The organization warns that the executive order will destroy critical wildlife habitats and worsen the effects of climate change.

Federal forests account for about one-third of all the forested lands in the U.S. The country has 81 million acres of protected forest. It's unclear which of those lands would be targeted by the order.

Other environmental groups decried the decisions, stating the order would harm water quality by creating soil erosion, leading to land degradation plus contamination of water sources and driving wildlife to extinction by requiring the departments to use emergency powers to facilitate logging, and increasing the risk of wildfires.

There are more than 400 species protected under the Endangered Species Act, including grizzly bears, spotted owls and wild salmon.

"This executive order will decimate our federal forests. It will use tax dollars to line the pockets of corporate logging interests, undermine environmental laws, and take public forests out of public hands," members of the Climate Forests Coalition said in a joint statement on the executive order.

The order is one of the more than 100 the president has signed since being sworn into office.

Other actions Trump has taken regarding the climate and environment include withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, declaring a "national energy emergency," doubling down on oil and gas exploitation and reversing a goal to make electric vehicles half of new cars sold by 2030.

On Tuesday, Trump imposed tariffs on products imported from Canada, Mexico and China. The U.S. has historically imported timber from Canada, China, Brazil, Chile, and Vietnam.

[The Independent, 05/03/2025]



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**Convictions under environmental legislation:  
December 2024 to February 2025 (March  
data not available)**

**[Note: the EPD no longer classifies second  
(and subsequent) offences.]**

The EPD's summary of convictions recorded and fines imposed during the above period is as follows:

***December 2024***

Forty-seven convictions were recorded in December 2024 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

One of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 7 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 8 were under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation, and 31 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance.

A company was fined \$30,000, which was the heaviest fine in December, for importing waste for disposal without a permit.

***January 2025***

Twenty-seven convictions were recorded in January 2025 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

One of the convictions was under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 1 was under the Noise Control Ordinance, 4 were under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation, 4 were under the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance, 16 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance and 1 was under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance.

A company was fined \$20,000, which was the heaviest fine in January, for importing controlled waste without a permit.

***February 2025***

Forty-eight convictions were recorded in February 2025 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Two of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 6 were under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance, 7 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 9 were under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation, 8 were under the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance, 16 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in February was \$20,000 on an offence assessed against a company that caused another person to import controlled waste without a permit; and another fine of \$20,000 assessed against a company that imported controlled waste without a permit.

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