HONG KONG NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS ACTION WEEK 2026

From Dialogue to Action, From Pilot to Scale a Five-Year Roadmap for Scaling Nature-based Solutions in Hong Kong

Prepared by Civic Exchange and The Nature Conservancy Hong Kong Foundation Limited

HK NbS Action Week 2026 co-hosted by The Nature Conservancy Hong Kong Foundation Limited, The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Civic Exchange

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HONG KONG 2050 IS NOW

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Designer: DESIGNORM

About Civic Exchange: Civic Exchange is an independent Hong Kong public-policy think tank established in 2000. We use in-depth research and dialogue to inform policy and engage stakeholders on addressing environmental and development challenges in Hong Kong. Our research covers four areas that make up a liveable city: environmental, economic, social, and governance. Civic Exchange has been ranked among the top 50 environmental think tanks in the world by the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania since 2011. For more information, please visit: civic-exchange.org

About Hong Kong 2050 is Now: Hong Kong 2050 is Now is a flagship programme under Civic Exchange, and was established jointly with the World Resources Institute, ADM Capital Foundation, and RS Group in 2019, with the aim of mobilising action to transition Hong Kong towards long term carbon neutrality by mid-century. For more information, please visit: hk2050isnow.org

About The Nature Conservancy Hong Kong Foundation Limited (TNC): TNC is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters, and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more resilient. TNC is working to make a lasting difference around the world in 83 countries and territories (39 by direct conservation impact and 44 through partners) through a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. TNC has been in Asia Pacific for over 30 years with projects in Australia, mainland China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. In 2019, TNC was awarded the Lui Che Woo Prize for Sustainable Development.

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Forewords

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The world is entering a period of escalating climate risk. Human and natural communities are already experiencing intensifying heat, flooding, sea-level rise, and ecosystem disruption, while the prospect of temporarily exceeding—or 'overshooting'—the 1.5°C global warming threshold is now impossible to ignore.

Exceeding global temperature goals is not a reason for resignation, it is a call for us all to do more. Every fraction of a degree of warming avoided, and every year spent above 1.5°C, will influence the severity of impacts on people and ecosystems. Rapid emissions reductions remain essential, but they must now be accompanied by the removal of already emitted greenhouse gases and accelerated adaptation, stronger resilience, and the protection and restoration of nature.

High-integrity Nature-based Solutions can play an important role in this response. They can help reduce climate risks while supporting biodiversity and human wellbeing. However, they are not a substitute for decarbonisation, nor is their effectiveness guaranteed in a warmer world. Their success depends on sound ecological evidence, inclusive governance, sustained finance, measurable outcomes, and long-term stewardship.

Hong Kong is well placed to demonstrate how Nature-based Solutions can be integrated into a dense and highly developed city. It has exceptional natural assets and strong capabilities in planning, engineering, ecology, research, and finance. The challenge is to connect these strengths through a coordinated and accountable mechanism that links government decision-making, technical expertise, project preparation, evidence, and finance across the full project lifecycle.

Drawing on the Hong Kong International Nature-based Solutions Action Week 2026, this Five-Year Roadmap provides a practical pathway from dialogue to action and from individual pilots to wider implementation. Its seven priorities set out how Hong Kong can strengthen governance, prepare credible projects, build professional capacity, mobilise finance, and generate the evidence needed for responsible scaling.

In an era where, at current rates, human-induced warming will reach 1.5°C around 2030, fragmented and incremental action will not be enough. The coming five years offer Hong Kong an important opportunity to become a global leader in establishing a credible model for climate-resilient, nature-positive development under climate overshoot. This roadmap provides a practical foundation for taking that next step.

Professor
Wong Kam-sing, GBS, JP

Former Secretary for the Environment,
Hong Kong SAR Government (2012-2022)

During my ten years as Secretary for the Environment, Hong Kong established important foundations for a greener and more climate-resilient city, including its first Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP), its first two Hong Kong's Climate Action Plans, and the commitment to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. That experience reinforced an important lesson: setting a clear policy direction is essential, but lasting progress depends on translating ambition into coordinated implementation across government and society.

Nature-based Solutions offer Hong Kong an opportunity to build on these foundations. Our country parks, wetlands, rivers, coastlines and marine environments are not only valuable ecological assets; they are also integral to the city's resilience, liveability and long-term development. When planned and managed with integrity, nature can complement conventional infrastructure while delivering benefits for climate adaptation, biodiversity and human wellbeing.

Hong Kong already possesses strong capabilities in planning, architecture, engineering, ecology, research, and finance. The next challenge is to connect these strengths more systematically from project preparation and financing to implementation, monitoring, and long-term stewardship. This requires clear responsibilities, sustained cross-sector collaboration, and practical experience demonstrating what works in the Hong Kong context.

Drawing on the Hong Kong International Nature-based Solutions Action Week 2026, this Five-Year Roadmap sets out seven priorities for moving from individual initiatives towards a more coherent delivery system. The proposed NbS Hong Kong Hub can support this transition by connecting government, professionals, researchers, businesses, funders, and communities, while reinforcing government leadership and project-level accountability.

The roadmap is particularly timely as Hong Kong develops its first Five-Year Plan for 2026–2030 and implements the Hong Kong BSAP 2035. The coming five years provide an important opportunity to prepare credible projects, build local capacity and evidence, and embed successful approaches into policy and professional practice.

The foundations have been laid. The task now is to bring them together and turn them into measurable action at scale.

About this roadmap

This roadmap is the concise, forward-looking companion to the full *Hong Kong International Nature-based Solutions Action Week 2026 Synthesis Report*. It retains the report's seven strategic priorities but turns them into a sequenced implementation programme with clear roles, first-year deliverables, five-year outcomes, and programme review.
It is written primarily for senior HKSAR Government decision-makers. It also speaks directly to funders, professional bodies, and implementation partners whose resources, expertise, and participation will be essential to delivery.

What high-integrity Nature-based Solutions means here

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) protect, sustainably manage or restore natural or modified ecosystems to address societal challenges while delivering benefits for biodiversity and human wellbeing[1]. High-integrity NbS are designed and managed as integrated ecological, social, and economic interventions. They address clearly defined challenges, strengthen biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, involve affected communities, manage trade-offs and safeguards, demonstrate feasibility, and provide for monitoring, adaptive management, and long-term stewardship[2].

The roadmap uses two complementary foundations:

- *The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Global Standard for NbS* (Second Edition, 2025) provides the overarching integrity and self-assessment framework.
- *The Hong Kong Nature-based Solutions Design Guidelines* (HKNbSDG, 2026) provide locally relevant guidance for integrating NbS into infrastructure works and development planning and design.

Evidence base

The roadmap draws on theHong Kong Nature-based Solutions Action Week 2026's (NbS Action Week) presentations, case studies, and discussions, the full synthesis report, the HKNbSDG, the IUCN Global Standard, and subsequent stakeholder work on how the recommendations can be implemented in Hong Kong.

1. Executive summary

Global leadership potential and local implementation gaps

Hong Kong can become a city where high-integrity NbS routinely enhance climate resilience, biodiversity, and liveability, while serving as a credible Asia-Pacific platform for NbS knowledge, expertise, and finance. It already has exceptional natural assets, internationally recognised capabilities in planning, engineering, ecology, research and finance, emerging local guidance, and a growing body of practical experience.

This roadmap comes at an important moment in Hong Kong's 2026–2030 planning cycle. It provides a practical implementation pathway that can inform the finalisation and delivery of Hong Kong's first Five-Year Plan[3], support Hong Kong's contribution to the National 15th Five-Year Plan[4], and advance Hong Kong BSAP 2035[5] and China's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan[6], including stronger biodiversity cooperation across the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area. It translates shared priorities for ecological restoration, biodiversity, climate resilience, green infrastructure, finance, and regional cooperation into concrete arrangements for governance, project preparation, capacity building, monitoring, and finance.

The central gap is not a lack of ambition, expertise, or potential projects. Across the full project lifecycle, from initial concept through implementation and monitoring to long-term stewardship, Hong Kong has an opportunity to better connect government decision-making, technical expertise, project preparation, and finance with monitoring and evaluation data on ecological, social, and climate outcomes. Stronger coordination across institutions and more enabling administrative processes could help unlock innovation and support the development and testing of new approaches. This roadmap sets out a practical pathway for achieving this.

A whole-of-society delivery approach

This roadmap proposes a government-endorsed, whole-of-society implementation programme organised around the seven priorities identified by NbS Action Week: coordination, standards, capacity, monitoring and evaluation, projects, finance, and regional leadership. Strategic oversight could be provided by relevant bureaux, including the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) and Development Bureau (DEVB), with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) serving as proposed joint technical leads, subject to government agreement.

The Planning Department (PlanD), Lands Department (LandsD) and other relevant authorities should be engaged early where land-use planning, land status, access, resumption, or statutory approvals may affect project feasibility. The Drainage Services Department (DSD), Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), and other relevant departments could participate as project owners, asset managers, technical partners, or long-term operators, depending on the nature and location of each project. Early and sustained engagement with landowners, communities, and other affected stakeholders would also be essential to identify concerns, build support, and create an enabling environment for implementation.

A proposed IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub—a whole-of-society platform for coordinating expertise, capacity, and project support—would support local implementation by convening civil society, academia, professional bodies, communities, and technical experts; providing capacity building; and supporting project assessment and preparation. Government would retain policy and regulatory authority, while project owners would remain responsible for delivery and long-term stewardship.

During its initial phase, the IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub should provide four core functions: project readiness screening; technical convening and review; capacity building linked to live projects; and coordination of monitoring, learning, and knowledge exchange across stakeholders. These functions would help translate strategic priorities into implementable projects while building a shared evidence base for future scaling.

Further details on the proposed Hub's role and governance are provided under Priority 1.

The first 12 months of implementation

The first 12 months of the proposed implementation programme should establish the coordination arrangements needed to support the local application of NbS and prepare two to three projects selected through an open and objective process. This would include clarifying the respective roles of government, the proposed NbS Hong Kong Hub, project owners, and technical partners.

Each selected project, whether initiated by government, an NGO, a community organisation, a private entity, or another project owner, should complete an initial IUCN Global Standard self-assessment with support from the Hub and relevant technical experts. Projects would first be nominated through an open call or identified by the proposed coordination mechanism, then screened against transparent eligibility and readiness criteria. The responsible authorities and project owners would determine whether projects proceed, particularly where public funding, public land, or statutory approvals are involved.

The projects should also test how the HKNbSDG and IUCN Global Standard could be applied across planning, funding approval, procurement, implementation, and monitoring. Capacity building should combine seminars with multidisciplinary workshops linked to the live projects. Project-specific financing plans should be complemented by a feasibility study examining whether Hong Kong would benefit from a shared project-preparation or catalytic-finance facility.

What success looks like

By the end of Year 3, all projects confirmed as viable should have secured funding and entered implementation, with at least one generating initial monitoring results. Tested requirements should be refined and validated elements formally adopted for wider use.

By the end of Year 5, relevant government processes should routinely require early NbS screening and documented decisions, with full requirements applied wherever an NbS or hybrid approach proceeds. The NbS Hong Kong Hub should by then be formally recognised and sustainably resourced, with long-term funding pathways established to support project preparation, monitoring, adaptive management, maintenance, and stewardship beyond initial implementation.

A shared NbS vision for Hong Kong beyond 2030

Over the first five years, Hong Kong should establish the coordination, standards, capacity, project pipeline, monitoring, and financing foundations needed to scale high-integrity NbS. Looking beyond 2030, NbS should be routinely considered and, where appropriate, integrated into planning, infrastructure, climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and neighbourhood management. A connected network of urban, rural, river, wetland, coastal, and marine interventions could deliver measurable benefits for biodiversity, climate resilience, and communities. This shared vision provides the direction for the seven priorities suggested in this roadmap and a basis for tracking collective progress.

Immediate decision sought from EEB and DEVB: endorse the proposed 12-month implementation programme and establish an appropriate government-endorsed coordination mechanism; explore resourcing for the NbS Hong Kong Hub to support project preparation and delivery; and initiate a transparent process to identify two to three pilot NbS projects.

2. Hong Kong's opportunity — and the missing delivery mechanism

Hong Kong's natural and institutional foundations are unusually strong. The territory boasts 25 country parks and 22 special areas covering 44,842 hectares[7], alongside wetlands, rivers, coastlines, marine habitats, and more than 3,300 vascular plant species, over 580 bird species, and 55 terrestrial mammal species[8]. It also has strong capabilities in urban planning, public works, ecological science, professional services and sustainable finance, as well as internationally recognised expertise in climate-resilient infrastructure and early-warning systems.

The HKNbSDG now provide practical local guidance for integrating NbS into infrastructure works and development projects. The second edition of the IUCN Global Standard provides a globally recognised framework for integrity, inclusive governance, financial feasibility, safeguards, and adaptive management. The NbS Action Week demonstrated significant cross-sector interest and a growing base of local initiatives.

Hong Kong also has a growing portfolio of NbS-related implementation experience across wetlands, rivers, coastlines, catchments, and urban environments. These pioneering projects can serve as practical learning platforms to test how ecological restoration, engineering design, community participation, monitoring, and financing mechanisms can be integrated and refined to support wider adoption of high-integrity NbS.

Yet these foundations do not currently operate as one delivery system. Responsibilities and resources are distributed across bureaux, departments, project owners, researchers, funders, and communities. Differing mandates and responsibilities can make coordinated implementation more complex. Relevant ecological, engineering, planning, and land guidance may only be incorporated after major design choices or funding decisions have been made. Promising projects may lack the preparation needed for approval or finance. Monitoring, stewardship, and maintenance responsibilities may remain unclear.

Supporting the 2026–2030 planning cycle

National and Hong Kong policy frameworks have established a clear direction towards ecological civilisation, green transformation, climate resilience, and regional collaboration. The remaining task is to connect these ambitions with consistent decision-making, technical capacity, well-prepared projects, evidence, and finance. This roadmap provides that delivery pathway and can support Hong Kong's contribution to building a Beautiful China, a Beautiful Hong Kong, and an international first-class Beautiful Bay Area.

Policy framework	Connection to the NbS roadmap
National 15th Five-Year Plan and the Beautiful China 15th Five-Year Plan[10]	Ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, climate adaptation, resilient infrastructure, monitoring, and green finance
Hong Kong's first Five-Year Plan consultation[11]	Green transformation, ecological protection, green infrastructure, urban resilience, Northern Metropolis, finance, and GBA cooperation
Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050[12]	Climate change adaptation and resilience, including blue-green drainage infrastructure, river revitalisation, sustainable drainage systems, urban forestry, biodiversity, and ecological conservation
Hong Kong's BSAP 2035[13]	Explicit targets for widely adopted NbS, upgraded blue-green spaces, and biodiversity-positive cross-jurisdictional initiatives
China's National BSAP[14]	Calls for a joint biodiversity governance mechanism and a regional biodiversity action plan covering Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao
GBA Beautiful China Pioneer Zone Action Plan[15]	Cross-boundary ecological corridors, Mai Po–Shenzhen Bay wetland protection, biodiversity assessment, green finance, and a major-project pipeline

The proposed response

The following arrangement connects authority with expertise and participation without transferring delivery responsibility away from project owners.

Level	Proposed role
Strategic oversight	A government-endorsed mechanism, potentially involving EEB and DEVB, sets strategic direction, facilitates cross-bureau coordination, and reviews programme progress.
Joint technical leadership	Subject to government agreement, AFCD and CEDD provide complementary leadership across biodiversity, conservation, public works, engineering, and climate resilience.
Planning and land enablement	PlanD, LandsD, and other relevant authorities provide early input on land-use compatibility, land status and access, statutory requirements, and approval pathways, helping project owners identify and address feasibility issues at an early stage.
Project-specific government participation	DSD, LCSD, and other relevant departments participate as project owners, asset managers, technical partners, or long-term operators where their mandates, sites, or infrastructure are involved.
Whole-of-society platform	The proposed NbS Hong Kong Hub convenes civil society, academia, professional bodies, finance partners, technical experts, and local communities; provides capacity building and technical support; and supports project preparation and shared learning.
Community participation and stewardship	Affected communities, landowners, local organisations, and resource users participate from an early stage in identifying priorities, shaping project design, addressing impacts and safeguards, agreeing benefit-sharing and access arrangements, and contributing to monitoring and long-term stewardship. Appropriate resources and support should be provided to enable meaningful participation.
Delivery	Project owners remain accountable for project design, implementation, procurement, monitoring, and long-term stewardship, with meaningful participation by affected communities and stakeholders.

3. HK NbS Action Week 2026 key takeaways

HK NbS Action Week 2026 brought together more than 400 participants, 43 speakers, and 195 organisations. Rather than providing a session-by-session recap, this section distils five lessons that define what Hong Kong needs to put in place to implement and responsibly scale high-integrity NbS over the next five years:

1. **Plan for connected systems, not isolated sites.** Ecological functions and climate risks cross individual project sites and administrative boundaries. NbS deliver more when planned at landscape, catchment, and coastal-system scales.

2. **Integrity requires more than visible greening.** High-integrity NbS begin with a defined societal challenge, work with ecological processes, strengthen biodiversity and human wellbeing, address trade-offs and safeguards, and provide for adaptive management.

3. **Implementation continues long after construction.** Long-term partnerships, monitoring, maintenance, community participation, and stewardship determine whether benefits persist.

4. **Finance follows credible preparation and enabling conditions.** Public and philanthropic capital can fund project preparation, establish enabling conditions, and absorb early-stage risk. Private investors require well-prepared projects and clear risk management. Early certainty around land tenure, regulatory, and community support can reduce risk and enhance investability.

5. **Institutions turn pilots into systems.** Demonstration projects are valuable for learning, but they will not scale without common requirements, professional capacity, coordinated decisions, and pathways from evidence to policy and finance.

The central implementation gap

Hong Kong has the vision, expertise, emerging guidance, and growing project experience needed to scale high-integrity NbS. To translate these strengths into delivery, it now needs a coordinated and accountable framework connecting government decision-making, technical expertise, project preparation, finance, and the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes across the full project lifecycle.

The shared NbS vision for Hong Kong beyond 2030 provides the direction for the following seven priorities, which should be treated as one integrated programme rather than separate initiatives. Governance and Hub resourcing enable capacity building, application of standards, project preparation, evidence generation, and finance to advance in parallel. Practical results will build momentum towards wider institutional adoption, city-wide scaling, and regional cooperation.

4. Seven priorities

The seven priorities are mutually reinforcing components of a single delivery framework for the long-term NbS vision for Hong Kong beyond 2030. Coordination enables government, project owners, and partners to apply consistent criteria for designing, assessing, implementing, and monitoring NbS. Standards, capacity, and evidence improve project quality and support financing. Effective city-wide delivery, meaningful community participation, and shared learning then provide a foundation for regional cooperation.

Priorities	Objective	Key 12-month deliverable
1. Strengthen city-wide coordination for NbS	Create a government-endorsed, whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach that connects authority, expertise, participation, projects, monitoring and evaluation, and finance.	Agreed governance, roles, work programme, and accountability arrangements, with the IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub resourced to support delivery.
2. Embed the HKNbSDG into planning and delivery	Make early NbS screening and consistent application of the HKNbSDG and IUCN Global Standard part of relevant public-works and development decisions.	A common application protocol tested through two to three selected projects across planning, funding approval, procurement, and stewardship.
3. Build professional capacity and technical leadership	Equip government project officers and built-environment professionals to apply high-integrity NbS in practice, while supporting community partners, researchers, and project owners.	Introductory seminars plus multidisciplinary applied workshops linked directly to every selected project.
4. Apply, monitor and learn consistently	Build on the HKNbSDG rather than duplicate it, using common core requirements and project-specific indicators to support monitoring, reporting, and adaptive management.	A common monitoring and learning protocol, project-level monitoring plans, and a refined first version based on live testing.
5. Build a pipeline of high-integrity, implementation-ready projects	Move promising projects from concept to credible funding and implementation decisions through structured preparation.	Completed preparatory assessments and proceed, revise, or defer decisions for two to three projects selected through an open and objective process.
6. Build Hong Kong's nature finance ecosystem	Match projects with appropriate public, philanthropic, blended, and private capital across the full NbS lifecycle.	A financing plan and funding decision for every selected project, plus a feasibility study for a shared project-preparation and/or catalytic-finance facility.
7. Strengthen Hong Kong's regional leadership	Establish Hong Kong as an Asia-Pacific platform for knowledge exchange, professional training, technical cooperation, and finance partnerships, with GBA collaboration as one workstream.	An agreed regional partnership model and selection principles, anchored in Hong Kong's local implementation experience.

Strategic priority 1: Strengthen city-wide coordination for NbS

Objective

Establish a government-endorsed, whole-of-society coordination mechanism that connects policy authority, technical leadership, meaningful participation, and delivery accountability.

Why this matters

NbS cut across planning, public works, biodiversity, water, land, finance, research, and community stewardship. Fragmented mandates can cause socio-ecological considerations to enter too late, leave cross-boundary issues unresolved, and obscure responsibility for long-term performance. Instead of simply convening occasional discussions, coordination must allow ensure project co-design, allocate responsibilities, authority, resources, and accountability.

Priority actions

1. Agree the coordination mechanism's mandate, membership and accountability, and develop an implementation framework setting out roles, decision rights and the five-year work programme.

2. Invite EEB and DEVB to provide strategic oversight, with AFCD and CEDD as proposed joint technical leads, subject to government agreement. PlanD and LandsD should provide early planning and land input, while LCSD, DSD, and other relevant departments should participate where their assets, operational responsibilities, or technical mandates are involved.

3. Use the current update of Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 to consider more explicit integration of high-integrity NbS under climate change adaptation and resilience, while also recognising their potential contribution to carbon sequestration.

4. Provide resources for the IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub as the multi-stakeholder platform and secretariat support for capacity building, technical convening, project preparation, and learning.

5. Require meaningful participation by civil society, academia, professional bodies, and local communities in priority-setting, project assessment, monitoring, and learning.

6. Co-develop and promote a clear, public-facing NbS vision for Hong Kong beyond 2030, supported by a communications and engagement programme that connects government, communities, businesses, academia, and civil society and reports progress regularly.

Roles

Government retains policy authority, sets direction, and resolves cross-department issues. **AFCD and CEDD** provide complementary technical leadership, while **PlanD and LandsD** provide early advice on planning, land, access, and approval pathways. **LCSD, DSD** and other relevant departments may act as project owners, asset managers, or technical partners according to the nature and location of individual projects. **The NbS Hong Kong Hub** convenes expertise and participation but does not approve or certify projects. **Project owners** remain accountable for delivery and stewardship.

What success looks like

Year 1	Government-endorsed coordination mechanism and supporting implementation framework agreed; roles, decision rights and five-year work programme defined; coordination function resourced; initial projects selected.
Year 3	Coordination mechanism oversees implementation and learning, while the framework guides the adoption of validated requirements..
Year 5	Coordination is embedded in routine government delivery; the Hub is formally recognised and sustainably resourced.

Strategic priority 2: Embed the HKNbSDG into planning and delivery

Objective

Integrate early NbS screening and validated requirements into the decisions that shape public works and development, while retaining the option to use conventional or hybrid solutions where evidence shows they are more appropriate.

Why this matters

The HKNbSDG provides a local reference for planning and designing NbS. Its value will depend on when and how it is applied. If NbS are considered only after scopes, designs, and budgets are fixed, opportunities to avoid impacts, work with ecological processes, or deliver multiple benefits may already have been lost. The IUCN Global Standard complements the HKNbSDG by addressing integrity, governance, feasibility, safeguards, and long-term sustainability.

Priority actions

1. Introduce early screening in relevant public-works planning and design to identify suitable NbS or hybrid options.

2. Require documented decisions explaining the options considered and reasons for advancing or rejecting them.

3. Integrate requirements into project appraisal and funding approval before designs and budgets are fixed.

4. Embed socio-ecological outcomes, safeguards, monitoring, adaptive management, and long-term maintenance in tendering, procurement, and contracts where NbS proceeds.

Roles

CEDD and AFCD lead the common application protocol and technical interpretation. **Relevant authorities** (e.g. works, planning, funding, and procurement) test it in existing systems. **The IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub** provides training and convenes multidisciplinary support. **Project owners and contractors** implement and report against agreed requirements.

What success looks like

Year 1	Common protocol tested through two to three selected projects.
Year 3	Requirements refined from practice and validated elements formally adopted for wider use.
Year 5	Relevant processes require early screening, documented decisions, and full requirements wherever NbS or hybrid approaches proceed.

Strategic priority 3: Build professional capacity and technical leadership

Objective

Build practical competence among the people who commission, design, assess, fund, deliver, and steward NbS.

Why this matters

NbS require architects, engineers, planners, landscape architects, ecologists, researchers, finance specialists, project owners, and communities to work across disciplinary boundaries. Hong Kong has strong expertise in each field, but many professionals have had limited opportunity to apply the HKNbSDG and IUCN Global Standard together on live projects. Awareness alone will not change project decisions; learning must be connected to delivery.

Priority actions

1. Prioritise government project officers and built-environment professionals, especially architects, engineers, planners, and landscape architects.

2. Deliver introductory seminars on high-integrity NbS, the HKNbSDG, the IUCN Global Standard, and relevant Hong Kong planning and delivery processes.

3. Run multidisciplinary applied workshops linked to the selected projects, covering self-assessment, baselines, participation, safeguards, monitoring, finance, and stewardship.

4. Provide targeted sessions for community partners, researchers, and project owners, and work with professional bodies and universities towards recurring professional development.

Roles

The NbS Hong Kong Hub coordinates the programme and connects training to project preparation. **Government departments**, such as CEDD, AFCD, PlanD, and LandsD, nominate officers and integrate learning into practice. **Professional bodies and universities** contribute technical content and longer-term learning pathways. **Communities and project owners** bring local knowledge and delivery experience.

What success looks like

Year 1	Seminars and applied workshops delivered across all selected projects; lessons captured.
Year 3	Recurring practice-based learning and professional-development pathways established.
Year 5	A mature local community of practitioners supports routine delivery and contributes to regional professional training.

Strategic priority 4: Apply, monitor and learn consistently

Objective

Establish a common process for monitoring and evaluation, and adaptive learning while allowing indicators to reflect different ecosystems, societal challenges, and project objectives.

Why this matters

The HKNbSDG already covers baselines, performance projection, recommended indicators, long-term monitoring, and adaptive management. A new standalone indicator framework would duplicate this work. Instead, the implementation gap is the requirement to develop a consistent protocol that applies the HKNbSDG alongside the IUCN Global Standard, assigns responsibilities, and turns monitoring into decisions and learning.

Priority actions

1. Develop a common application, monitoring, and learning protocol based on the HKNbSDG and IUCN Global Standard.

2. Require every selected project to define intended outcomes; complete the IUCN self-assessment; establish ecological and socioeconomic baselines and targets; and select appropriate HKNbSDG indicators, supplemented where necessary.

3. Assign responsibility and funding for data collection, reporting, and long-term stewardship, with thresholds that trigger adaptive action.

4. Use monitoring and evaluation results to inform future project design, project appraisal, financing decisions, policy development, and adaptive management.

Roles

AFCD, CEDD, and a multidisciplinary technical group guide the protocol. **Universities and research partners** support robust methods. **Project owners** remain responsible for project-level monitoring and reporting. **The Hub** coordinates learning and makes monitoring and evaluation results accessible.

What success looks like

Year 1	Protocol tested; project monitoring plans completed; first version refined.
Year 3	At least one initial project produces monitoring results; validated protocol supports wider adoption.
Year 5	Monitoring and evaluation results, and adaptive-management requirements, operate routinely across relevant programmes.

Results should be assessed against each project's baseline, objectives, and appropriate alternatives. They should not be used to rank fundamentally different projects.

Strategic priority 5: Build a pipeline of high-integrity, implementation-ready projects

Objective

Move promising NbS projects from concept to credible implementation and funding decisions without advancing weak projects merely to meet a numerical target.

Why this matters

Promising concepts often stall between pilot and implementation stages because technical, institutional, social, monitoring, or financing questions remain unresolved. Project preparation must demonstrate both integrity and practical deliverability. The first portfolio should be small enough for deep support and diverse enough to test the approach across different project contexts.

Priority actions

1. Establish transparent selection criteria encompassing the societal challenge, biodiversity benefits, strategic relevance, local ownership and participation, feasibility, readiness, learning value, and stewardship potential.

2. Use an open and objective process to select two to three projects. Any examples discussed publicly should be labelled illustrative rather than treated as confirmed candidates.

3. Complete a standard set of preparatory assessments for each project: IUCN self-assessment; ecological and socioeconomic baselines; technical, regulatory, and institutional feasibility; participation and safeguards; implementation, governance, and stewardship; monitoring; and financing strategy.

4. Establish minimum readiness requirements for selected projects, including a clearly identified project owner, defined site or system boundary, completed feasibility assessment, stakeholder-engagement approach, monitoring framework, stewardship arrangement, and financing pathway.

5. Select projects across a range of NbS contexts, where feasible, including urban, river, wetland, coastal, and community-led interventions to maximise learning value and transferability.

6. End the preparation stage with a documented decision to proceed, revise, or defer.

Roles

The government-endorsed framework approves the selection process and decisions. **The Hub** coordinates technical support and stakeholder participation. **Project owners** supply information, lead design, and retain delivery responsibility. Funders engage early enough to shape realistic financing pathways.

What success looks like

Year 1	Two to three preparatory assessments and proceed, revise, or defer decisions completed.
Year 3	All viable projects funded and underway; at least one generates initial monitoring results.
Year 5	A repeatable preparation process supports a broader, credible city-wide portfolio.

Strategic priority 6: Build Hong Kong's nature finance ecosystem

Objective

Connect high-integrity projects with fit-for-purpose capital across project preparation, implementation, monitoring, adaptive management, and long-term stewardship, ensuring financial sustainability across the full project lifecycle.

Why this matters

NbS often produce public benefits that do not generate conventional project cash flows. Different stages and outcomes may therefore require different combinations of public, philanthropic, blended, and private capital. Financial innovation cannot compensate for weak projects; it must be built on integrity, feasibility, credible evidence, accountable counterparties, and realistic lifecycle costs.

Priority actions

1. Prepare a project-specific financing plan for each selected project that addresses lifecycle funding needs, identifies potential funders and appropriate capital sources, allocates risks appropriately, and outlines the key decisions needed to proceed.

2. Convene project owners, public funding bodies, philanthropies, financial institutions, and technical experts early in the project preparation process.

3. Undertake a feasibility study for a shared project-preparation and/or catalytic-finance facility, without presuming that a new facility must be created.

4. Assess four lifecycle gaps: early preparation and technical assistance; pilot implementation and de-risking; long-term monitoring and stewardship; and project aggregation and portfolio development.

5. Assess long-term funding needs for monitoring, maintenance, adaptive management, and stewardship alongside implementation costs.

Roles

Relevant government and public funding bodies establish enabling policy and appropriate public support. **Funders and financial institutions** identify suitable financing instruments and communicate due-diligence needs. **Project owners** develop credible revenue streams, ecosystem service benefits, and buy-in from the local community to support financing cases. **The Hub** connects actors and supports a transparent feasibility process.

What success looks like

Year 1	Financing plan and funding decisions for each project; facility feasibility study completed.
Year 3	Viable projects financed; decision made to establish a facility, adapt existing arrangements, or pursue alternatives.
Year 5	Stable pathways support preparation, delivery, and stewardship; any facility operates with clear mandate, governance, and safeguards.

Strategic priority 7: Strengthen Hong Kong's regional leadership in NbS

Objective

Build a distinctive Asia-Pacific role around knowledge exchange, professional training, technical cooperation, and finance partnerships, with GBA collaboration as one regional workstream rather than the geographic limit.

Why this matters

Regional cooperation should be anchored in existing national and GBA commitments. China's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan identifies Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao as a strategic region for a joint biodiversity protection and governance mechanism and a dedicated regional biodiversity action plan[16]. The GBA Beautiful China Pioneer Zone Action Plan further calls for integrated ecosystem protection, cross-boundary ecological corridors, biodiversity assessment, green-finance innovation, and a pipeline of major projects[17]. Hong Kong BSAP 2035 likewise promotes cross-boundary collaboration and biodiversity-positive joint initiatives. The IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub can help translate these commitments into a focused, partner-led GBA workstream while maintaining a broader Asia-Pacific role.

Priority actions

1. Build structured partnerships with IUCN, regional networks, universities, professional bodies, finance partners, and locally led institutions.

2. Provide regional knowledge exchange and professional training based on lessons from Hong Kong's local programme.

3. Support a deliberately small partner-led portfolio through technical cooperation, project assessment and preparation, and connections to appropriate finance.

4. Select projects based on local demand and ownership, NbS integrity, readiness, potential impact, and shared-learning value.

5. Work with Guangdong and Macao partners to identify one practical GBA NbS workstream—addressing coastal and wetland connectivity, Beautiful Bay restoration, shared professional capacity, monitoring, or project finance—under a jointly agreed work programme.

Roles

The IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub coordinates the regional platform and links it to the **NbS Asian Hub, the proposed NbS Greater Bay Area Hub, and other regional partners. Local and regional partners** retain decision-making authority and responsibility for implementation and stewardship. **Finance partners** such as commercial banks and philanthropies support credible projects where appropriate. **The Hub** does not own or certify regional projects.

What success looks like

Year 1	Partnership model and selection principles agreed; knowledge exchange begins.
Year 3	Structured technical cooperation supports a small number of partner-led opportunities.
Year 5	Three to five partner-led projects receive preparation support; at least one secures finance or enters implementation, with an ambition for two.

5. Implementation: The first 12 months

The first year should convert the seven priorities into a single integrated and practical programme. Workstreams should proceed in parallel, with governance and Hub resourcing established early enough to support the rest.

Timing	Programme-wide actions and outputs
Months 0–3: **Establish**	Endorse the coordination framework; confirm proposed strategic and technical leadership; agree roles, decision rights, and accountability; provide resources for the IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub; approve transparent project-selection criteria; launch the capacity-building programme.
Months 3–6: **Select and assess**	Select two to three pilot projects through an open and objective process; begin IUCN self-assessments, baselines, and feasibility work; screen how the HKNbSDG applies; map affected stakeholders, rights, participation needs, and safeguards.
Months 6–9: **Prepare and test**	Run project-linked multidisciplinary workshops; develop implementation, governance, and stewardship arrangements; prepare monitoring plans and adaptive triggers; develop lifecycle financing options; test requirements across appraisal, funding, and procurement.
Months 9–12: **Decide and learn**	Complete preparatory assessments and financing plans; decide whether each project proceeds, is revised or deferred; refine the common application and learning protocol; complete the finance-facility feasibility study; publish programme lessons and Phase 2 recommendations.

Minimum preparatory assessments for every selected project

1. Initial self-assessment against the IUCN Global Standard for NbS
2. Ecological and socioeconomic baselines
3. Technical, regulatory, and institutional feasibility assessment
4. Community participation and safeguard arrangements
5. Implementation, governance, and long-term stewardship arrangements
6. Monitoring and adaptive-management plan based on the HKNbSDG
7. Financing strategy and a clear funding decision

Month 12 programme review

At Month 12, the proposed government coordination mechanism should review progress with the IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub, project owners, technical experts, and relevant funders. Based on agreed readiness criteria and available evidence, government should determine which publicly led or supported projects are ready to proceed, require further development, or should be deferred, and approve Phase 2 public funding where appropriate. The review should also refine the application and monitoring protocol, consider the findings of the finance-facility feasibility study, and confirm the coordination arrangements and Hub resources required for Years 2–3.

Projects supported by non-government funding would not require government approval to continue unless statutory approvals, use of public land, or other government decisions are involved. The Hub could continue to support such projects as carefully managed innovation and learning initiatives, provided they meet agreed integrity, safeguards, and monitoring requirements. Their results should inform the wider programme and help test promising approaches that may fall outside normal public-sector risk parameters.

6. Five-year sequence, dependencies, and programme review

Phase 1 – Establish and prepare | Months 0–12

Establish the coordination mechanism and implementation framework, resource the coordination function, build professional capacity, select two to three projects, and complete preparatory assessments. Test the HKNbSDG and IUCN Global Standard across real decisions. Produce project financing plans and assess whether a shared finance facility is justified.

Year 1 review: proceed, revise, or defer each project; approve Phase 2 funding; confirm the tested protocols and institutional arrangements.

Phase 2 – Implement and validate | Years 2–3

Fund and implement all projects confirmed as viable. Generate early implementation and performance data, refine requirements, and document lessons. Establish recurring professional capacity building. Formally adopt validated requirements for wider use and decide whether to establish a finance facility, adapt existing arrangements, or pursue other pathways.

Year 3 review: confirm validated requirements for wider adoption, the next city-wide project portfolio, longer-term Hub resourcing, and the scale of regional work.

Phase 3 – Mainstream and extend | Years 4–5

Embed early NbS screening and documented decisions across relevant government programmes. Apply full planning, funding, procurement, monitoring, and stewardship requirements wherever NbS or hybrid approaches proceed. Sustain the Hub through blended core funding: multi-year public and philanthropic support supplemented by project grants and appropriate training and technical-support income. Expand the partner-led portfolio from the Greater Bay Area to the wider Asia-Pacific region only where potential regional partners have both the capacity and willingness to participate.

Dependencies

- Governance and Hub resourcing enable all other workstreams.
- Capacity, project preparation, monitoring, and finance must develop together.
- Project monitoring and evaluation results should inform institutional adoption; adoption should not run ahead of practical learning.
- Regional expansion should build on local delivery and locally led partnerships.

7. Proposed next steps for government consideration

Subject to government agreement, EEB and DEVB could consider:

1. supporting the development of a 12-month implementation programme and an appropriate government-endorsed coordination mechanism;

2. providing strategic oversight, with AFCD and CEDD invited to serve as joint technical leads, subject to their respective mandates and further government discussion;

3. exploring appropriate resourcing for the IUCN NbS Hong Kong Hub to convene whole-of-society participation, strengthen capacity, and support project preparation;

4. establishing a transparent process through the proposed coordination mechanism to identify two to three suitable demonstration projects, with input from relevant departments, project owners, technical experts, and funders. The Hub could facilitate the process and provide technical support, while selection and any necessary approvals would remain with the responsible authorities and project owners; and

5. conducting a programme review at Month 12 to assess progress and agree an appropriate pathway for Years 2–5, including further project implementation, validation, and potential mainstreaming.

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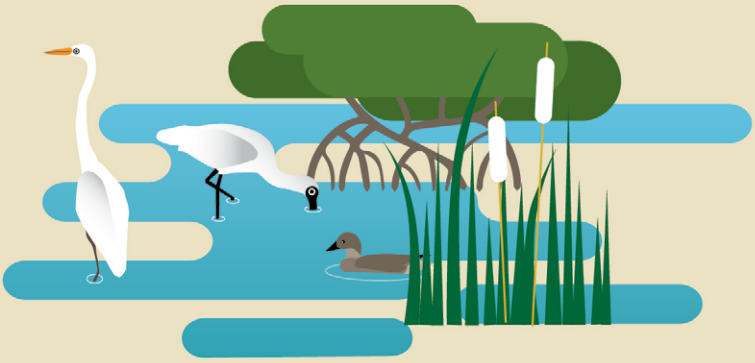
In an era where, at current rates, human-induced warming will reach 1.5°C around 2030, fragmented and incremental action will not be enough. The coming five years offer Hong Kong an important opportunity to become a global leader in establishing a credible model for climate-resilient, nature-positive development under climate overshoot.



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