

Should Hong Kong's waterways be better protected?

Hong Kong has lots of world-renowned architectural wonders that exemplify the creativeness of Hong Kong people. But when speaking of flood control, it seems that the only way that the international city can think of is to turn every natural stream into a concrete channel. The destruction of the Ngong Ping Stream is just one of the many recent cases that shows the unimaginativeness of the Drainage Services Department. Artificial channeling natural rivers may be the easiest and cheapest way to control flooding, but it is also the most damaging to the rivers. I hope the engineers in the Drainage Services Department can prove me wrong by coming up with greener ways to solve the problem.

But being too imaginative may not be commendable either. The reason that the Ngong Ping Stream has been diverted is that the Government planned to build a huge Public Transport Interchange there. And I really mean HUGE: 1.2 ha, more than half the size of the adjoining theme park and is probably the largest PTI in Hong Kong. It is this PTI that forces the anti-flood channel into the country park, destroying 101 mature trees. Why the Government wants to build such a gigantic PTI in the middle of Lantau Island is really beyond my imagination. Well, maybe they want to make it another architectural wonder.

The Ngong Ping Stream could have been saved if the Government had heeded our call to halve the size of the PTI, relocating some of the theme park there, providing more buffer for the stream, and integrating the natural stream area into the theme park. Unfortunately, as with many other cases, transport facilities just have to take priority. Thus another natural resource lost to the tyranny of transport.

LISTER CHEUNG, Chief Executive, The Conservancy Association