



A DECADE OF KEEPING WATCH

2014-2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Hong Kong is a unique city with a remarkable juxtaposition of urban environment and nature. Despite our small land area, we have 25 country parks flourishing with a diverse array of plant and animal species, and landmarks of history and heritage. If you start walking from urban areas, such as Quarry Bay, Admiralty, Yau Tong or Kowloon Tong, you may well arrive at the edge of a country park in less than 30 minutes.

In addition to being essential to carbon capture, climate change mitigation, biodiversity and other benefits, the scenic and peaceful environment of our country parks and green space contributes to

Today, it gives us great joy to see our technology platform connect a large and growing community of nature lovers, enabling them to appreciate and learn more about nature, share their experiences and play a part in conservation.

our physical, mental, social and cultural wellbeing. The people of Hong Kong and travellers to the city evidently agree, with some 12 million of them visiting Hong Kong country parks and green space every year.

With this high volume of usage, challenges such as trail degradation and waste pollution have become much more serious, taking a turn for the worse during the pandemic. Sustainability aside, there are also accessibility issues, whereby communities with disabilities are excluded from nature enjoyment due to lack of infrastructure and information.

Our TrailWatch journey started 10 years ago with conservation, wellbeing and the sustainable enjoyment of nature in mind. Today, it gives us great joy to see our technology platform connect a large and growing community of nature lovers, enabling them to appreciate and learn more about nature, share their experiences and play a part in conservation. A lot can be achieved in ten years, but greater visions could take longer to bring to fruition. Beyond reflecting on our efforts, we should also take this opportunity to consider the possibilities of the present and the future. There is still much to be done in terms of growing awareness, changing mindsets, encouraging learning and meaningful action among our stakeholders through leveraging knowledge, technology, education, and collaboration.

Thank you for being a part of our community and we look forward to the journey ahead with you.

Agnes Cheng
Chief Executive Officer

MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDERS

Hong Kong's natural environment offers abundant biodiversity and green space for our inhabitants to enjoy. Our country parks and trails provide the space for people to gather and socialise, engage in movement, use our senses to experience nature, and contribute to our physical, mental health, social and cultural well-being. They also support our ecosystem by way of improving water, air quality and biodiversity. In other words, they are the bedrock for Hong Kong's sustainability, prosperity and longevity.

The necessity of nature became evident during the pandemic. Hiking and going to the country parks became one of the most popular pastimes of people in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, this has also come at a cost to nature with rapid increase of waste, severe trail degradation, overuse and damage to country park facilities and nature.

The popularity of nature and physical activity is an indication that more education is needed for us all to better educate hiking safety, and the protection of Hong Kong's nature.

Our watch began more than a decade ago when our passion for hiking and love of the countryside inspired the development of the TrailWatch mobile App, creating a platform empowering a community of users to appreciate and enjoy nature. It also strives to equip the public with information and tools they need to care for the trails, care for their wellbeing, and care for Hong Kong. Through the TrailWatch platform and public engagement, participants are encouraged to learn about nature, take action towards conservation and better understand how nature supports our wellbeing. We are glad to see a community of over 200,000 registered users in the past 10 years, who have shared with us their journeys, experience and their contribution through action and reporting trail incidents.

Moving forward, information and data will continue to play a valuable role in encouraging the public to appreciate nature, develop greater awareness, take responsibility and action towards conservation, as well as informing policy decisions.

Apart from conservation, we have also dedicated our effort to promoting the need for nature inclusivity, to support communities such as wheelchair users who face significant challenges in experiencing and enjoying nature.

Our journey in the past 10 years was guided by a constant vision -to sustain a Vibrant Nature for All, that is protected by all.



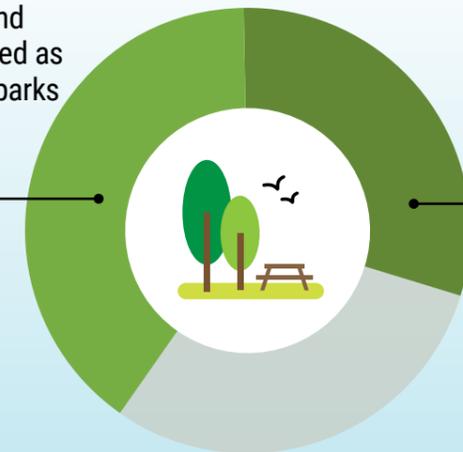
COUNTRY PARKS AND TRAILS

A Major Asset

Hong Kong's urban environment is closely intertwined with its nature.

Hong Kong is one of the most economically developed and densely populated cities in the world.

40%
of our land designated as country parks



30%
as the green belt



Conducted in 2018 with the support of the School of Public Health of the LKS Faculty of Medicine of The University of Hong Kong and WYNG Foundation, the TrailBlazer Research Project showed that around one-third of respondents visited country parks in the recent three months – 2.6 times more than the number recorded in 1990 – and those who visited country parks more frequently reported greater happiness and satisfaction.



12 million+ visitors



Every year, our country parks and trails welcome more than 12 million visitors seeking the therapeutic and recreational benefits of being out in Hong Kong's natural environment, and enrichment from its cultural and historical features.

On the climate front, country parks and trails, trees and forests have the effect of moderating temperature and have the capability of absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere. Our forests and reservoirs also help absorb runoff and maintain slope stability. Meanwhile, mangroves mitigate coastal erosion, storm surges and support the integrity of our ecosystems and biodiversity.



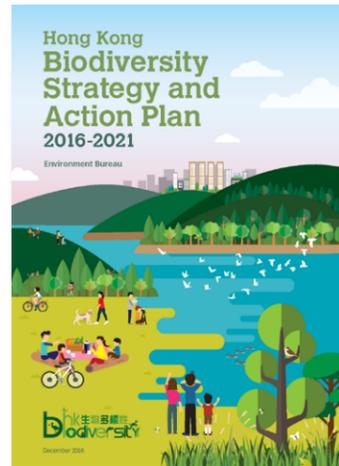
CHALLENGES FACING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Climate change and the need for conservation and greater awareness

Under the planetary boundaries framework, which refers to the anthropogenic pressures threatening Earth, six of the nine boundaries, including climate change, biosphere integrity, biochemical flows, land system change and novel entities, have been transgressed or overstepped, which increases the risk of irreversible environmental change.

In Hong Kong, the government's Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021 highlighted and recognised the importance of climate mitigation and adaptation measures, including the protection of wildlife and biodiversity, and research on climate change and ecosystem services.



CHALLENGES



1

EXTREME CLIMATE

Our largely hilly terrain is particularly vulnerable to extreme rainfall and landslides, drought and hill fires



2

BIODIVERSITY IN CRISIS

Species loss or extinction due to urbanisation, habitat degradation, climate change and lack of awareness

CHALLENGES



3

THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVITY

More accessible infrastructure and inclusion would allow communities with disabilities to connect with and experience nature



4

TRAIL DEGRADATION AND WASTE POLLUTION

Trail degradation, waste dumping, deteriorating vegetation, informal trail creation and landscape fragmentation on trails due to the overuse of country parks and trails

5 THE NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH



More information on legacy trails or historic routes could reveal their sociocultural significance; more localised research could contribute to more sustainable trail management

OPPORTUNITIES



EDUCATION

Education can help to raise awareness, encourage people to learn and acquire a deeper understanding of the interconnections within nature and the consequences of human activities on the environment. It empowers individuals and communities to become active stewards, make informed decisions and take action to protect nature. Education can also help younger generations internalize these values, and develop the right mindsets and skills for conservation.

AWARENESS

Around the world, cities are raising awareness towards nature and environmental protection through education. Hong Kong residents have become increasingly aware of and informed about issues concerning environmental degradation, land conversion and their impact on habitat and biodiversity loss.



CITIZEN SCIENCE

Citizen science is the collaboration in scientific research between scientists and volunteers, including collecting and analysing data on the topic of nature conservation. Around the world, citizen-generated data and citizen science initiatives are becoming more popular for the purpose of raising public awareness, engagement and sense of ownership by motivating participants to contribute to scientific data.



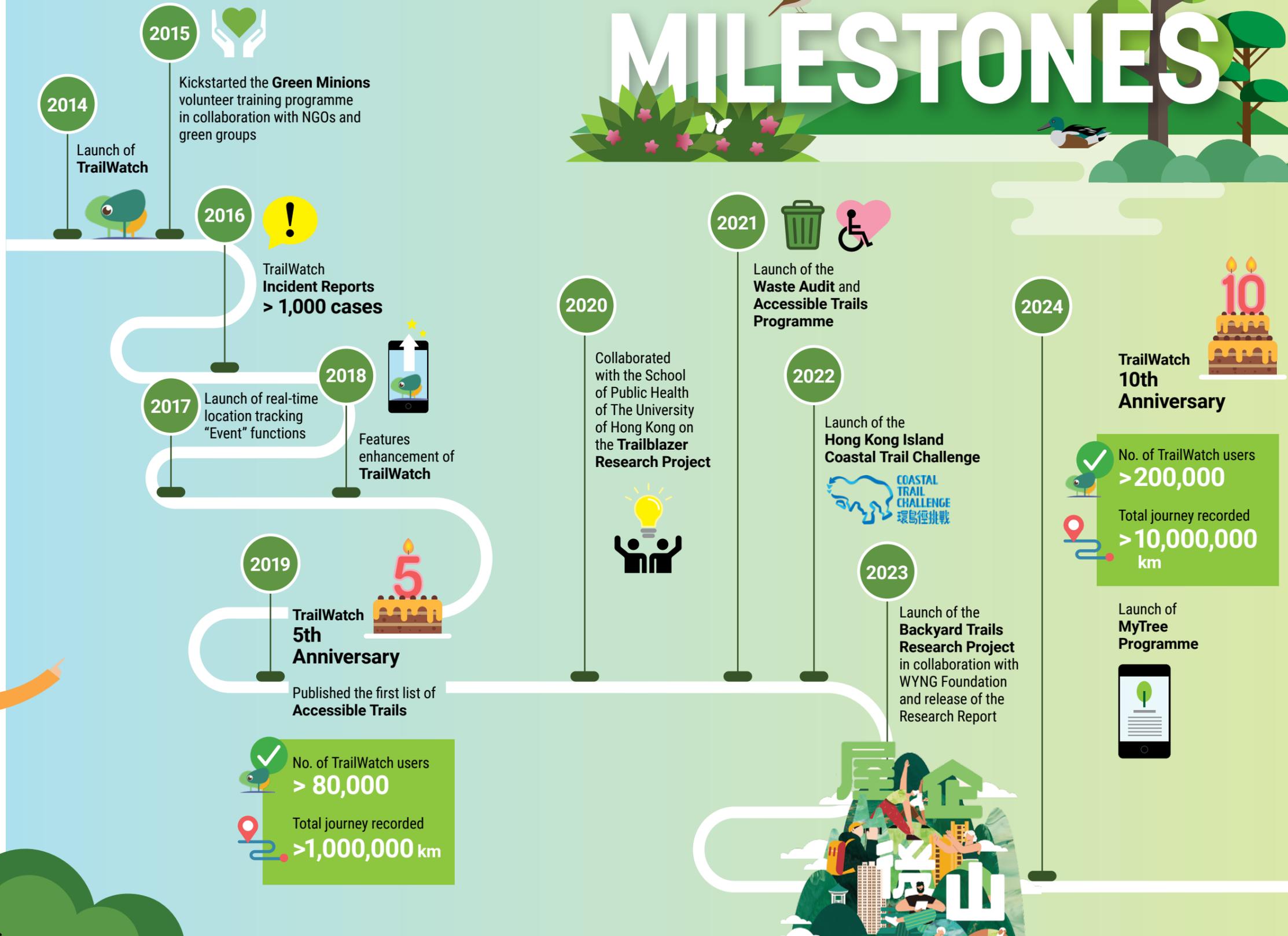
From Trailwatch to PARKS AND TRAILS

Parks and Trails began as TrailWatch, a project launched in 2014 with the support of WYNG Foundation. Its proprietary mobile application (app) has enabled more than 200,000 users to track and share their hiking experiences, and report incidents from the trails, including litter, vandalism and trail degradation.

Over the past decade, TrailWatch formed the backbone of other programmes, including Waste Audit, Accessible Trails and other initiatives, and was later taken over by Parks and Trails, which obtained tax exemption under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance in 2021.



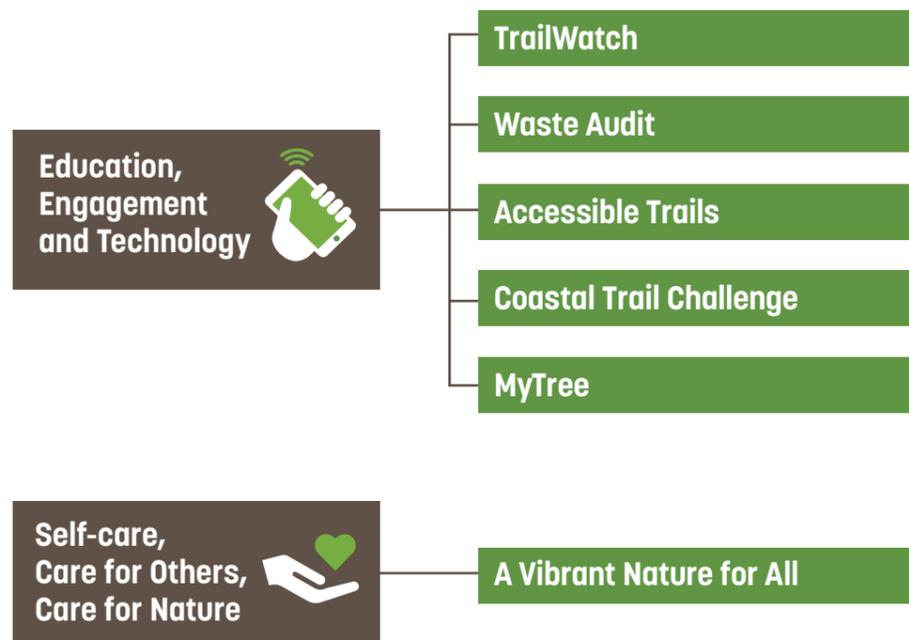
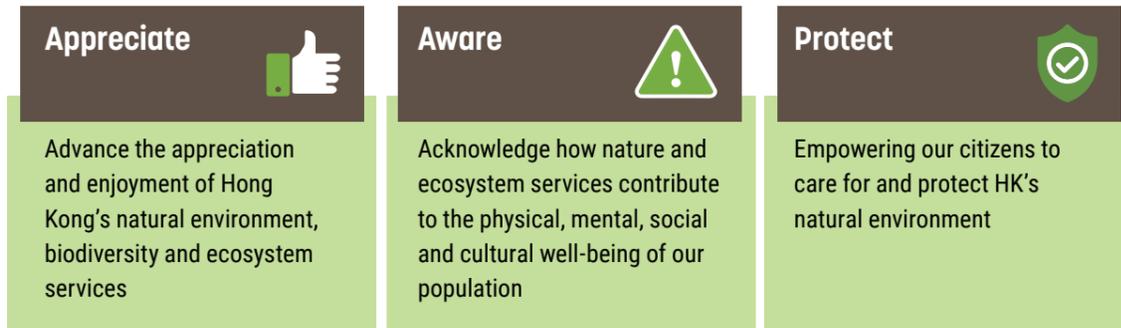
MILESTONES



MISSION, VISION AND EFFECTING CHANGE

Parks and Trails' Mission is to elevate the **Enjoyment** of, **Appreciation** and **Care** for Hong Kong's natural environment by promoting its value and empowering people to protect it. Through knowledge, data, citizen science, education and engagement, we hope to encourage and empower the public and communities to learn about and to take action in conservation.

Guided by our emphasis on sustainability, wellbeing, and responsible use, we hope to increase people's engagement in the "Three Cares": "Self-care", "Care for Others", and "Care for Nature".

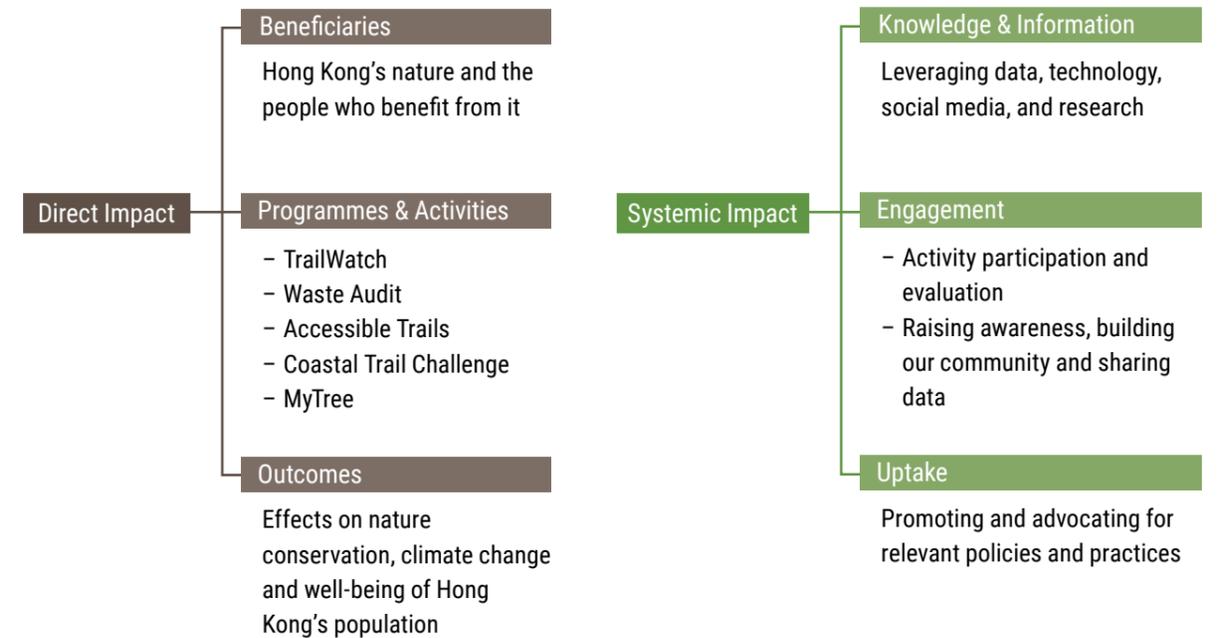


Our Values and Stakeholders

Values



Impact Framework



Our approach to impact monitoring is data-driven and evidence-based. We collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative information to assess and drive the impact of our activities. Our framework consists of both direct impact indicators and systemic impact indicators. This framework, complemented by qualitative information, allows for aggregation and supports understandable, transparent and compelling communication.

OUR IMPACT

2014-2024

TRAILWATCH

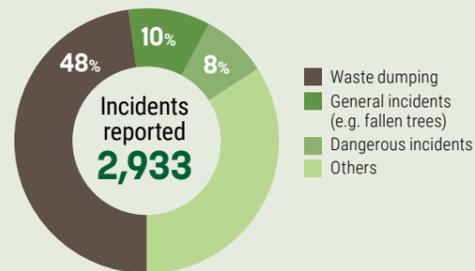
Engaging the Public in nature conservation through technology

At Parks and Trails, we leverage technology and innovation to monitor and safeguard our natural environment and scale up the impact of conservation. Since its inception in 2014, the TrailWatch app has been instrumental in engaging the public in protecting the city's trails. Beyond allowing hikers to plan, track and share their adventures, the app encourages users to report encounters such as waste dumping, vandalism or the suspicious clearance of vegetation and plants. Such reports are then relayed to relevant government departments.

2013 - March 2024

Registered users **>200,000** Hiking records **968,379**

Total length of tracked journeys **10,731,477 km**



Amplifying the Power of One

Hiking influencer Ah Shan carries rubbish collection tools with her on the trails. Recognising that the impact of her individual efforts are limited, she leverages TrailWatch's incident-reporting system to submit photographic evidence and location data to relevant government departments for follow-up action.



Ah Shan
(Instagram @mountaingirlhk)
TrailWatch user since 2016

Making Moves

In collaboration with local sustainability advocacy group DesigningHongKong, TrailWatch studied hiking traffic from 2020 to 2022, reviewing more than 2,500 hiking records crossing Victoria Road to Kong Sin Wan Road. Subsequently, the government upgraded path conditions near the trailheads, and improved guideposts and facilities around the junction, providing hikers and tourists with better amenities and options to extend their journeys.



WASTE AUDIT

Education that Inspires Action

The increasing number of hikers on the trails in recent decades, and, more significantly, during the pandemic, has contributed to trail degradation and waste dumping.

In April 2021, Parks and Trails launched the Waste Audit programme and invited TrailWatch users and public volunteers to do trail clean-ups and log data and images on rubbish removed from the trails on their apps. At the end of each activity, the TrailWatch team would generate reports from the data, and share with relevant government departments. The team also disseminated data, insights and solutions for public engagement and education. In 2023, Waste Audit was recognised as a partner of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department's (AFCD's) "Country Park Clean-up Partnership Scheme".

>16,000 Pieces of rubbish collected from the trails



>130 Trained volunteers in the Waste Audit programme

>2,400 plastic bottles **270 kg** worth of rubbish



Learning to Leave No Trace

In February 2024, students from the Church of Christ China Kei Chun Primary School participated in our Waste Audit activity at Pak Tam Chung and Tai Cham Koi in Sai Kung. Funded by Environment and Conservation Fund, the Trail Ambassadors Education project invited former Secretary for the Environment Wong Kam-sing, and saw participants collecting a total of 975 pieces of rubbish.



"Though our students were no strangers to cleanup activities, the TrailWatch methodology, which involved counting and categorising rubbish before bagging, gave them greater insight on the causes of and solutions for waste problems on trails, including the importance of proper rubbish disposal and making adequate preparations before setting out on a hike to reduce waste at source."

Mr Hugo Ng, Vice Principal

A total of **975** pieces of rubbish were collected



LIFE ON LAND
Our work supports the protection of terrestrial ecosystems

COASTAL TRAIL CHALLENGE

The 65-km Coastal Trail Challenge covers the Hong Kong Island Coastal Trail. Participants can choose to walk or run part or all eight stages of the trail. Created to encourage healthy and sustainable living and responsible travel, the annual Parks and Trails fundraiser also highlights the connectivity, walkability of this spectacular trail and its access to nature and heritage. Four successful Challenges

have been completed, with participants as young as four-year-old to the elderly around 70 years of age that accomplished the 65km loop.



The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address echoed our advocacy. A "Round-the-Island Trail" of about 60 kilometres on Hong Kong Island, connecting the waterfront promenades on the northern shore and a number of existing promenades and countryside walking trails in the Southern District will be developed. From 2023 onwards, works for improving some sections and providing missing links of the Trail commence, with a view to connecting 90% of the trail by end-2027 and completing the remaining larger scale works by end-2031.

Triumph on the Coastal Trail

With donations from the Swire Trust, Parks and Trails offered complimentary entries to RUN, a local charity that supports refugees through education and sports. RUN members hiked the 65-km loop around Hong Kong Island with great team spirit, enjoying the great outdoors and experiencing fresh sights and sounds along the way. We also provided education materials and briefing for them to know more about nature and heritage of this special trail.



TRAILS LESS TRAVELLED

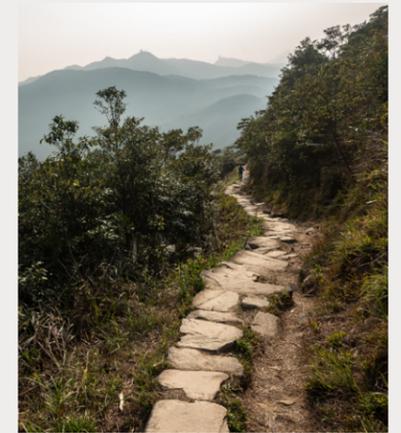
Ancient Trails History and Heritage

Although most of Hong Kong's major trails are located within country parks, a vast network of legacy trails comprising historic routes, defunct utility corridors and visitor-created paths can be found in green belt areas. Little is known of these legacy trails.

Old footpaths reveal early commercial activities, cultural exchanges and communications among villagers, markets and towns across Hong Kong. In 2014, the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) commissioned and published the document, "Study of Old Trails in HK",

which provided an overview of old footpaths built before 1899 and their cultural significance. However, many questions remain.

Since 2023, Parks and Trails has been conducting studies to record old footpaths and their features and conditions that have been excluded from the AMO report. Through studying stone waymarkers, stone mills, the remains of abandoned terraced crop fields, old marketplaces and poems on the walled villages of Hong Kong, our research aims to retrace old transport networks, old footpaths and their roles and functions in their heyday.



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Our work and intervention supports the preservation of nature and its cultural and historical significance to the people of Hong Kong

Backyard Trails

Backyard trails connect country parks and the urban environment and are often situated along the green belt. They are often close to urban or rural residential settlements and traffic routes. For the elderly segments of our population, particularly retirees, a morning walk into these backyard trails became their daily routine.

With the support of WYNG Foundation, a study was convened in 2022 on the usage of these backyard trails, focussing on the spontaneous growth of route webs around some popular areas, and initiatives or enrichment by trail users. These non-government enrichments included shrines of folklores, deities, make-shift rain-shelter or a simple tarp using recycled plastics, or a minimally equipped café serving Kung Fu tea.

The first Backyard Trail research was published in 2023. The findings from research show that backyard trails, most of which are located on green belt land, are well-used by communities and are much more than leftover space. There is a need for more engagement and public understanding on this topic and a collaborative approach involving non-profits and community volunteers can help to address management and maintenance issues in a more sustainable way.



ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

Promoting Inclusivity and Access to Nature

While many visitors enjoy the easy accessibility of Hong Kong's trails and country parks, the same cannot be said for certain communities, such as wheelchair users. **The lack of accessible infrastructure, limited information, and a culture of exclusion prevent these groups from connecting with and experiencing the beauty and benefits of nature.**

To provide wheelchair users with the opportunity to experience our country parks and trails, we launched the "Accessible Trails" programme in 2018 in partnership with organisations such as Wheel Power Challenge and Oasistrek. Since then, Parks and Trails has

established partnerships with other NGOs to provide the following services and training:

- Verify routes and facilities and the sharing of information with the AFCD's "Enjoy Hiking" website;
- Engage wheelchair users, their family members and other volunteers in shared experiences in nature; and
- Offer training workshops for volunteers and caregivers on empathy, community support, and how to create an inclusive and enjoyable trail experience with wheelchair users.

20 
Accessible Trails and locations listed on the TrailWatch platform

>180
Wheelchair users and carers who have attended our workshops



Wheel Impact

Keith
Keith (YouTube @eyes_wheel_wheel)
Wheelchair user, sports enthusiast and YouTuber



Nothing can stop Keith's passion for the great outdoors, not even his wheelchair. As a volunteer of TrailWatch, Keith began exploring wheelchair user-friendly trails, documenting his scenic adventures on the TrailWatch app and the challenges he faced along the way.

In late 2023, Keith even invited his YouTube audience and partners along for the ride, sharing the joy of being out in nature.

Wellbeing for All

During the 2023/4 hiking season, we organised training and nature experiences for wheelchair users, their families and caregivers. For some participants, it was their first time being out in nature as we took them to Tai Tong Country Trail.

These activities were made possible by Lee Kum Kee International Holdings, whose donations also enabled us to expand our effort in providing more information on Accessible Trails and facilities to the public.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Our work helps the people of Hong Kong, including persons with disabilities, access and enjoy the benefits of Hong Kong's country parks and trails



THE FUTURE

Our Watch continues

MYTREE

The Role of Trees in Mitigating Climate Change

Forests worldwide slow down climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in a process known as carbon sequestration. Tropical forests removed 17 per cent of human-made carbon dioxide emissions in the 1990s, but that number fell to 6 per cent in the 2010s, driven largely by the loss of trees to deforestation, logging, extreme climate and fires.

using citizen science methodologies, the project aims to encourage the public to learn about trees, forests, ecosystem services and their relationship with climate change. Through advancing the knowledge of trees and their importance, it also encourages the public to care for and protect our trees.

While many cities around the world have undertaken large-scale studies on the contribution of forests towards carbon sequestration, in Hong Kong, limited data is available. In 2024, Parks and Trails launched "MyTree", which aims to develop a registry of tree species along country park trails. Through the MyTree app and

Our five-year vision for MyTree:



>50,000
trees measured and recorded in the Hong Kong countryside

10,000-20,000



volunteers including students, corporate volunteers and the members of the public



A community of tree experts from NGOs, academia and the public

13 CLIMATE ACTION



CLIMATE ACTION
Our work fosters a better understanding of the climate-related threats and helps mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration





Through the years, our vision has remained constant: to sustain a vibrant nature for all, that is protected by all. On the trail ahead, we hope to expand our reach on the ground, especially among underserved communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Parks and Trails would like to thank the following organisations:

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Outdoor Wildlife Learning Hong Kong
Centre for Water Technology and Policy	RUN Hong Kong
Clean Air Network	Social Ventures Hong Kong
Designing Hong Kong	Swire Hotels
Dr. Billy Hau	The Swire Group Charitable Trust
Environment and Conservation Fund	T8
1st Step Association	Teva
Gilead Sciences	The Conservancy Association
Gone Running	The Green Earth
HandsOn Hong Kong	The Jane Goodall Institute Hong Kong
Historical Walk HK	Time Auction
HK Electric	Urban Spring
Impact46	Wheel Power Challenge
Lee Kum Kee International Holdings Ltd	WMA
Les Beatitudes Foundation	WYNG Foundation
LKS Faculty of Medicine School of Public Health	Zurich Insurance (Hong Kong)

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2014-2024

20/F, Chun Wo Commercial Centre
23-29 Wing Wo Street, Central
Hong Kong
ask@parksandtrails.hk



TrailWatch