The second Asia Pacific Geoparks Network Round Table Conference brings together geopark partners from all around the world

Introduction

As an active member of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN), Hong Kong Global Geopark of China (HKGP) is committed to serving as an intellectual hub for the China Geoparks Network (CGN), Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) and GGN, while at the same time preparing fully for our global geopark revalidation, which will take place in 2015.

During the reporting period, we continued to look for new ways to actively participate in the regional and global geopark movements and to achieve continuous improvement for the betterment of the geopark networks. For instance, the Hong Kong Global Geopark Volcano Discovery Centre (HKGP VDC), which serves as a tourism hub for HKGP, was officially opened on 15 July 2014, and the “2014/2015 Geopark School Programme” was extended to local universities in late 2014. These two geopark-related initiatives were conceived to broaden awareness and the appeal of HKGP.
Our continuous partnership and networking with local communities and our counterparts in the geopark networks continued to flourish in 2014. To foster a closer relationship with the other members of the GGN, we organised around 50 knowledge-transfer and networking activities. To tighten the connections with our geopark partners, we signed sister geopark and cooperation arrangements with Lesvos Global Geopark in Greece and Aso Global Geopark in Japan, respectively.
Major Activities Conducted by HKGP in 2014:

I. Conservation and Management

- To better protect our geosites from incompatible use, about 17 hectares of land in Tai Long Sai Wan were incorporated into the protected framework of the Country Parks Ordinance. This inclusion has improved the control and management of the geo-area, responding to strong public demand.

- Statutory Outline Zoning Plans covering the Tung Ping Chau Geo-Area and Tolo Channel Geo-Area, including Yim Tin Tsai, Ma Shi Chau and Tung Ping Chau, were being prepared at the end of the year under review, with a view to strengthening existing planning controls and conserving outstanding ecological, landscape and geological features in HKGP.
To improve the transparency and image of HKGP, an Annual Report, which summarized our major work in 2013/14, was published on 29 January 2014. A half-yearly Progress Report detailing our work for the first six months of 2014 was also produced and circulated to the GGN Bureau and our geopark partners around the globe in early July 2014.

We reviewed and updated our operation guidelines for the conservation and management of HKGP, taking into account the release of new GGN Association Statutes and the associated operational guidelines released in July 2014, as well as the deliberations on GGN status at the 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks in September 2014. We conducted briefings in September 2014 for related professionals and frontline staff of the Country Parks and Marine Parks.

In August and November 2014, we consulted the Sai Kung District Council on our preparation for global geopark revalidation in 2015, and our local engagement and partnership projects.
II. Capacity Building

- To meet one of the recommendations required for GGN revalidation and to provide our staff with more paleontology knowledge, we invited renowned paleontologists from the Palewonders Institute (Taiwan) to visit Hong Kong to conduct a fossil survey in the North East Sedimentary Rock Region and provide hands-on training, including fossil-cleaning techniques, to HKGP staff.

- In May and June 2014, three staff members from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) attended lectures and visits at Itoigawa Global Geopark of Japan, China University of Geosciences (Wuhan) and Dabieshan National Geopark of China to get first-hand experience in networking and geopark management.

- In November 2014, to reinforce our connections with museums and to keep abreast of the latest curatorial techniques, we arranged the attachment of three geopark staff members to the Kitakyushu Museum of Japan and the Western Australian Museum in Perth.
We engaged geologists from the China Geological Survey, Nanjing, and the China University of Geosciences, Beijing, to carry out geological and paleontological surveys in the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region and the Port Island Geo-Area of the North East Sedimentary Rock Region, respectively, to enhance our understanding of local geology and promote public appreciation of geo-conservation. The knowledge and materials acquired from these studies, along with our continuous collaboration with Japan’s Tsukuba Museum and other scientific institutes, were of great benefit in the establishment of the HKGP VDC and other science-popularization projects.

To ensure that all staff involved in the management and operation of HKGP are well equipped, we organised continuous in-house training and sharing sessions, along with guided visits to geosites and the HKGP VDC for relevant administration and frontline staff of the Country Parks and Marine Parks.

Regular in-house trainings and sharing sessions are provided to Hong Kong Geopark related staff
III. Science Popularization

- On 4 January 2014, at the invitation of the Hong Kong Science Museum, an HKGP representative delivered a lecture at a public seminar at the museum entitled “Does Hong Kong Have Fossils? An Introduction to the Ancient Creatures and Environment of Hong Kong”. At the seminar, the HKGP representative shared exciting fossil finds and other evidence of ancient creatures in Hong Kong. The lecture was followed by interviews with electronic media, which will be broadcast as a science-popularization programme.

- On 21 February 2014, to reach a broader audience, we released three i-books: (1) Hong Kong Global Geopark in Diagrams, (2) Prehistoric Stories, and (3) Global Geoparks of China. The books were sponsored by the Bank of China, Hong Kong and were prepared jointly with the Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong (AGHK).
In March 2014, with the support of the CGN and with input from 24 Chinese Global Geoparks, HKGP published a publication entitled *Myriad Splendours – Activities of China Global Geoparks 2013*, showcasing the science popularization and outreach efforts of China’s global geoparks.

In May 2014, we completed the replacement of the information panels at the Sharp Island, Ma Shi Chau, East Dam, Lai Chi Chong and Lai Chi Wo geosites. To make the panels easily understandable and fun, each one has a multi-language “Geo-lexicon”, which explains technical terms and geopark concepts. Geo-lexicons will be added to more interpretation panels by early 2015.
On 24 July 2014, Hong Kong Post (HKPO) launched a new set of definitive stamps of 16 different denominations with “Hong Kong Global Geopark of China” as the design theme. Along with these definitive stamps, jointly created by HKPO, HKGP and AGHK, first-day covers with a specially designed cancellation were also released. Related to this release was an internet voting event called "My Favourite Geosite in Hong Kong", which was officially launched on 18 June 2014. These beautifully designed definitive stamps, the first-ever in the GGN, display the most scenic landscapes of the eight geo-areas in HKGP. Our goal in releasing these philatelic materials is to popularize earth science and contribute to the promotion of the global geopark movement.

The world’s first definitive stamp set featuring a global geopark

In September 2014, a promotion sheet, with location map and general information on all 29 Chinese global geoparks, was prepared and distributed during the 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks.
A guidebook entitled *A Thousand Miles Begins with One Step*, which is intended to serve as both a travel planner and an essential guide to our China global geoparks, is being prepared, with support from the Lions Nature Education Foundation (LNEF). The guidebook also shares local stories behind the growth and sustainable development of HKGP, along with 10 geo-wonders selected by our rangers.

Two new videos entitled *A Day in the Geopark* were recently released to further promote the vibrant image of HKGP. A famous local singer leads viewers on a journey to HKGP in these new videos.

“A Day in the Geopark” with local famous singer
IV. School Education

- In addition to the 20 original Geopark Schools in Hong Kong, more schools are enrolling in the "Hong Kong Global Geopark School Programme 2014/15". During the reporting period, HKGP staffs were involved in morning assemblies and ceremonies, and campus radio and TV broadcasting at Geopark Schools in activities that were attended by over 16,000 students, teachers and principals. To diversify students’ learning experiences, a series of educational activities, including workshops, guided visits, exhibitions and global E-classroom sessions, are being tailor-made for participating schools.

- In June 2014, we set up a Facebook page to raise public awareness of earth science and to promote the "Hong Kong Global Geopark School Programme 2014/15"
Outreach programme to Universities in Hong Kong

- To promote the geopark concept and to communicate geo-scientific knowledge to university students, we arranged four geopark talks in late 2014 by experts, academics and young scientists from various research institutes and universities.

- We organised over 20 Global Geopark E-classroom sessions, supported and funded by the LNEF, for geopark schools, universities and aspiring geopark managers in Hong Kong, Mainland China, Germany, Greece and Japan to build a communication bridge among the members of the GGN.

- From 21 to 25 August 2014, more than 50 students and staff from Itoigawa Global Geopark of Japan and HKGP gathered in Hong Kong for a five-day student-exchange programme. The annual programme comprised visits to geo-sites, a guided tour of the HKGP VDC, knowledge exchange, and cultural sharing sessions. The programme provides a valuable opportunity for our next generation of leaders to develop global vision, enrich their knowledge of earth science, and enjoy the benefits of cross-cultural cooperation.
On 17 October 2014, we co-organised a special global e-classroom session with the UK’s English Riviera Global Geopark, which brought together representatives from schools spanning five global geoparks in the European Geoparks Network and a natural park in France. Participating geoparks included English Riviera Global Geopark, in the UK, Bergstrasse Odenwald Global Geopark, in Germany, Gea Norvegica Geopark, in Norway, Madonie Natural Park, in Italy, Novohrad-Nograd Geopark, in Slovakia-Hungary, and HKGP.

E-Classroom: A tool bridging students in the European Geoparks Network and in Hong Kong Global Geopark

To better support geo-education in Hong Kong, HKGP and the Education Bureau of Hong Kong held a number of workshops during the year entitled "Quality Life-wide Learning Activity Workshop" for school teachers and principals. The workshop included seminars, sharing sessions and guided tours to HKGP. The workshops received an enthusiastic response and positive feedback from the participants, who requested more such opportunities in the future.
In October and November 2014, HKGP was invited to delivered talks at the China University of Geoscience (Beijing), the China University of Geoscience (Wuhan) and at high schools in some of China’s Global Geoparks to share with the faculty and students our experience in global geopark management and latest findings from the scientific research conducted in HKGP.

Experience sharing in Tianzhushan Global Geopark, China
V. Visitor Centre

The HKGP VDC was officially opened on 15 July 2014. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of the Global Geoparks Bureau, our sister geoparks and other cooperation partners from all over the world. Conveniently located in Sai Kung Waterfront Park, the gateway to HKGP, the VDC is accessible by a wide range of public transport. It is the ideal point for embarking on an exploration of HKGP. The exhibits showcase the geological background and uniqueness of Hong Kong’s hexagonal columns, which were formed during a series of violent volcanic eruptions in Sai Kung 140 million years ago. The trilingual counter service in Cantonese, Putonghua and English is intended to attract both local and overseas visitors to the HKGP VDC and facilitate their exploration of the geopark.
In order to reach a broader spectrum of people, two fossil corners introducing the evolutionary history of living creatures in different geological periods, with representative fossils was set up in the AFCD’s Endangered Species Resource Centre and the Woodside Biodiversity Education Centre.

To attain a broader audience base, exhibits in two existing visitor centres located in the downtown areas are enriched.

The exhibits in the HKGP Visitor Centre introducing the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region are being enriched. This will be followed in 2015 by the renewal of part of the existing exhibits to introduce the geological history of Hong Kong and the GGN.

To cultivate a wider audience base and to enhance the educational elements in public museums, HKGP is joining hands with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of the Hong Kong Government to establish a Paleontology Gallery and Earth Science Gallery in the Hong Kong Science Museum. These permanent exhibitions will showcase the abundant biodiversity of the ancient world and depict the underlying mechanisms that drive our dynamic planet.
VI. Geotourism

In 2014, HKGP continued to work closely with the tourism industry and other relevant stakeholders to encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of geotourism and to enhance the visitor experience by attracting, educating and immersing local and international visitors in the geological wonders, and other natural and cultural riches of HKGP.

HKGP currently has 39 Recommended Geopark Guides (R2Gs) and four Accredited Geopark Guides (A2Gs). Routine training and capacity building sessions, including self-financed visits to Mainland geoparks, were organized for the R2Gs and A2Gs during the reporting period.

We published a new series of promotional leaflets, which are now available in the HKGP VDC and other popular venues, including the tourist counters at Hong Kong International Airport. Also available on the HKGP website are cross-platform and multi-language versions supported by our GGN partners to meet the needs of both local and overseas visitors with different needs.
To enhance the service provided by local tour guides and to promote geo-tourism, HKGP, in collaboration with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), co-organized routine training and seminars for tour guides and other members of the TIC. A guided visit-cum-exchange tour to Hexigten Global Geopark of China was also conducted in early July 2014.

Prof. Nikolas Zouros from Lesvos Geopark and Hong Kong Travel Industry gathered in Hong Kong for promotion of geo-tourism in both geoparks
To strengthen the existing links between HKGP and Lesvos Geopark in Greece and to promote geo-tourism in both geoparks, a meeting between the Director of Lesvos Geopark and the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Travel Industry Council was scheduled in mid-July 2014. An information pack on Lesvos Geopark detailing its key initiatives and tourism potential was prepared and disseminated to Hong Kong Travel Industry Council and relevant local travel agencies.

In November 2014, we conducted inspections of two geopark hotels, L’hotel Island South and L’hotel elan, to ensure they were operating in line with our partnership agreement and the guiding principles of the GGN. The Hong Kong Geopark Hotels organised geopark-themed cooking workshops every Saturday starting in November 2014.
In December 2014, HKGP, in cooperation with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, produced a series of promotional booklets and organised a number of press tours and other geopark-related publicity events.

To maximize opportunities to promote HKGP in all media channels and to reach potential visitors around the globe, we strategically arranged a number of press tours in 2014 and at the same time enriched the content of our website (http://www.geopark.gov.hk).
VII. Local Engagement

HKGP works in partnership with a range of authorities, local communities, non-government organisations and other interested groups. A key part of our role is to enhance sustainable development in HKGP and to ensure mutual benefits for the environment, local people and the economy through HKGP. During the year, we worked closely with local communities and non-governmental organizations to assist them in operating three local geoheritage centers including the following:

The Kat O Geoheritage Centre

The Tai Po Geoheritage Centre

The Lai Chi Wo Geoheritage Centre
The Hong Kong Global Geopark Volcano Discovery Centre, which opened on 15 July 2014, is operated by the Sai Kung District Community Centre (SKDCC), a local, self-sustaining community organization. A special capacity-building session, facilitated by Dr. Marie-Luise Frey from the GGN Bureau, was arranged in May 2014 for SKDCC staff to gain new knowledge on the operation of geopark venues.

We are exploring new partnership projects and possible public maritime services by local operators in the northeast part of HKGP with the aim of upgrading the walking trails and visitor facilities of HKGP and enhancing geosite accessibility. Also underway are substantive improvements in local community amenities through our partnership projects, as well as two signature projects in the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region and the North East New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region.
Members of the Lions Nature Education Foundation visit Zigong, Sichuan to share their vision in geo-conservation

- On 9 to 15 October 2014, members of the LNEF were engaged in organizing an APGN exchange programme with Zigong Global Geopark and in promoting their geo-conservation initiatives related to HKGP. The programme and the active involvement of LNEF inspired knowledge exchange on local engagement and sustainable development in the CGN.

- With the support of HKGP, the Kadoorie Institute of the University of Hong Kong, local villagers in Lai Chi Wo (a geosite in the Double Haven Geo-Area) and a number of non-government environmental groups in Hong Kong jointly introduced a four-year agricultural trail-revitalization programme entitled “Living Water and Community Revitalization – Engagement and Incubation Programme at Lai Chi Wo” to promote sustainable social and economic development and biodiversity conservation in HKGP.

Join a rice harvest activities at Lai Chi Wo.
To showcase the harmonious relationship between local communities and the ambient environment in HKGP, and to promote public awareness of the importance of conservation of the natural environment, and of the geological and cultural relics in HKGP, we are planning to engage the indigenous villagers of Lai Chi Wo Village and to establish a “Double Haven Story Room” in the Double Haven Geo-area.

As part of our efforts to generate an increasingly stronger sense of “community ownership” in the neighborhood areas of the geopark and to bring mutual benefits to both the local community and the natural environment of the geopark, HKGP conducted a series of site visits and interviews during the reporting period. Baseline information collected during the interviews will be consolidated and published as a Hong Kong Global Geopark Food Map, with a view to promoting local businesses that offer unique agricultural/food products and/or geo-experiences to geopark visitors.

Engage the locals in the production of geopark publication, “Hong Kong Global Geopark – Food Map”
VIII. Networking

Guided visit for representatives of the Ministry of Land and Resources

- On 27 January 2014, representatives from the Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR) visited HKGP’s Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region, and we took the opportunity to introduce our major science-popularization projects.

- From 15-18 February 2014, HKGP staff were invited to visit Zigong Global Geopark of China, where we shared our experience in management, networking and science popularization from the perspective of the GGN. We had the opportunity to interact with curators and dinosaur experts at the Zigong Dinosaur Museum and explored possible partnership arrangements and other collaboration with Zigong Global Geopark, including learning tours for Hong Kong students.
A HKGP representative was invited by Germany’s Messel Pit World Heritage Site to be the keynote speaker, representing the CGN, at a two-day geo-education workshop entitled "Earth Discovery Concepts, Geo-Education & Science Transfer in Science Societies", held from 28 February to 1 March 2014.

From 30 April to 4 May 2014, a HKGP delegation headed by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation visited Lesvos Global Geopark in Greece, where the two geoparks signed a sister arrangement.
To promote geo-tourism, geo-education and sustainable development in the Asia Pacific region, HKGP visited Aso Geopark of Japan in mid-May 2014 to share our geopark experience with their geopark managers and to prepare for the signing of a partnership agreement between HKGP and Aso Geopark.

Sharing with geopark managers of JGN during the workshop, “Learning together with GGN Partners”

With a view to sharing best experience in global geopark management and promotion, HKGP coordinated a series of APGN workshops for geopark managers, titled “Learning together with GGN Partners”. Hosted in Japan, Beijing and Hong Kong from 27 May to 2 June 2014, the APGN Knowledge Sharing Workshop was a series of events whose aim was to develop stronger ties among APGN members and to allow over 200 geopark managers to gain valuable insights into geopark operations from the perspective of the GGN. Dr. Marie L. Frey, a representative from the Global Geopark Bureau, was invited as the facilitator.

Sharing with staff from different China Geopark
During the reporting period, HKGP maintained its active exchange with its counterparts, in particular those in the Asian Pacific Region. We were invited by Dabeishan National Geopark, Wudailianchi Global Geopark, Taishan Global Geopark, Fangshan Global Geopark of China and the Japan Geoparks Committee to share our work experience. An HKGP staff member was also invited to visit China University of Geosciences (Wuhan) and the University of Geosciences (Beijing) to deliver lectures on geopark management and science-popularization methods.

To maintain and strengthen the ties between HKGP and our sister geoparks and other cooperation partners from all over the world, a second round-table conference entitled “Networking and Partnership for the Betterment of Global Geoparks”, attended by 12 partners, both old and new, was held in mid-July 2014. The conference served as an exchange platform for geoparks and facilitated sharing on specific challenges and opportunities faced by global geoparks, thereby contributing to the vision and objectives of the GGN.

Managers of 12 sister geoparks and cooperation partners gather at Hong Kong for knowledge exchange during the second round-table conference

Over the past five years, HKGP has established partnership arrangements with over 10 geoparks and related bodies. To foster a closer relationship with our sisters/co-operation partners and to ensure the quality of our partnership arrangements, we started conducting a review of our sister and partnership projects in June 2014, in accordance with the principles of the GGN. We will review the progress and effectiveness of our networking activities every 18 months to ensure they provide mutual benefits to the participants and a continuous contribution to the GGN.
From 12 to 14 August 2014, an HKGP representative visited Scotland’s North West Highlands Geopark, where he was invited to share with the geopark’s staff and partners his insights on networking, local engagement and science-popularization from the Global Geoparks perspective. He delivered a talk entitled “China Global Geoparks Network and Hong Kong Geopark” during the visit.

From 18 to 21 September 2014, we participated in the 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks at Stonehammer Geopark to broaden our exposure to global geoparks in the Americas and to foster closer relationship with our counterparts in the GGN.
In celebration of the 10th anniversary of the CGN and CGN, HKGP, with the support of the MLR, organized an exhibition entitled “10th Anniversary of China’s Global Geoparks” at Stonehammer Geopark on 19-20 September 2014 during the 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks. The exhibition, which featured the latest developments in the CGN, served as a platform for networking and science transfer among delegates from around the globe.

![Image](image_url)

Thematic exhibition entitled “10th Anniversary of China’s Global Geoparks” at Stonehammer Geopark, Canada

In early October 2014, the Head of HKGP visited the MLR, the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO and other Mainland authorities to report on our preparation for GGN revalidation.

In October 2014, to promote geopark concepts among CGN members, HKGP organised a seven-day APGN Exchange Programme in China. The programme provided an excellent platform for networking among CGN members and opportunities for participants from Dunhuang Yardang National Geopark and the Gansu area to learn about geopark leaders’ vision and insights on global geoparks.
From 5 to 7 November 2014, to promote the sustainable development of global geoparks and to provide mutual benefits among CGN members and Japan Global Geoparks Network (JGN) members, HKGP, in conjunction with Mt Aso Geopark, organized a three-day APGN Exchange Programme in Kyushu, Japan. Representatives of Hong Kong Global Geopark moderated a panel discussion entitled ‘Midas Touch – Can We?’ during the programme and encouraged the participants to share the knowledge and information they acquire with their counterparts in the JGN.
- From 24 to 27 November 2014, an HKGP representative attended a preparation meeting with the MLR in Beijing, and an assessment and revalidation workshop organised by the CGN at Tianzhushan Global Geopark, where we shared information about our science transfer system and our observations on the global geopark movement.

Science popularization activities at Tianzhushan, China

- As advised by the MLR during the official meeting in early October 2014 and to make use of our prominence to influence Mainland geoparks, HKGP was invited to conduct an exchange programme at Qinling Zongnanshan Global Geopark of China from 10-13 December 2014.

Inspection of geosites at Qinling Zongnanshan Global Geopark, China
To foster closer relationships and to explore possible collaborations between HKGP and representatives from other global geoparks in the APGN, representatives of HKGP offered a number of guided visits and sharing sessions for representatives from the Mainland, Germany, Greece and Japan during the year.

Mr. Ilious Valiakos from Lesvos Global Geopark, Greece  Delegates from Itoigawa Global Geopark, Japan

Geopark managers, teachers and students from Zigong Global Geopark
Dr. Marie-Luise Frey from Messel Pit World Heritage Site, Germany

To view the electronic format of this Annual Report, please visit http://www.geopark.gov.hk/en_s5d.htm

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