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President Ma,

I have spent the last week in your beautiful country at the request of the Taiwan Environmental Information Association, TEIA, in my capacity as a Director of the International National Trusts Organisation, INTO (www.internationaltrusts.org). This organisation, of which TEIA and Taiwan National Trust are both members, brings together national and heritage trusts from around the world to enhance the protection of our cultural and natural heritage through the establishment of best practice, networking and advocacy.

My experience in heritage matters is based on 32 years experience working for the National Trust in the UK, 18 of which were as a Director, and subsequently as an independent voluntary international heritage consultant, before I was appointed an honorary Director of INTO in March 2008.

The purpose of my visit has been in part to offer guidance and support for the activities of TEIA, to find ways to establish a truly National Trust for Taiwan and to help in the launch of the Pink Dolphin Trust.

My programme in Taiwan has included 2 public presentations, one on Sustainable Tourism, the other on the National Trust's Neptune Coastline Campaign to acquire 900 miles of the coastline of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, of which over 700 miles have so far been acquired; a presentation to TEIA's Annual meeting on the work of the National Trust and INTO; separate meetings with a group of 10 heritage based NGOs and with 5 Government officers explaining at the outset how the National Trust organisation operates and then having lengthy discussions as to how such an organisation might be established in this country.

I have also visited some heritage properties in Taipei, in and near LuKang and Tainan as well as the coastline in ChangHwa County at Dachen.

It is about this latter visit that I write to you to seek your help as I understand you have a great interest in the environment and have previously stated you would like to promote an environmental trust law.

The coastline at Dachen is a hugely important ecological and cultural site. It is an area of intertidal mudflats which provide a natural habitat for migratory waders and other seabird colonies: it also has mangrove swamps and is the last remaining site in Taiwan where the oyster fishermen reach their oyster farms using the traditional ox and cart. The backdrop to this wonderful ecological site is a huge temple from which one can obtain magnificent views of the mudflats and the ocean beyond.

Even more important is the fact that the waters close to the shoreline provide the last remaining habitat for the Pink Dolphin, a species that is already threatened with extinction, partly due to nearby industrialisation of the coastline which, through pollution, has reduced the area of waters in which they can survive. I understand that there are less than 100 of the species remaining

It would be fair to say that if this area was in England it would, at the very least, have been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and more likely a National or Marine Nature Reserve, by Natural England, the Government's agency responsible for identifying and nominating such sites for protection.

The proposal to build a petrochemical plant on this stretch of coastline is, in my view, totally unsustainable. It may take into account economic and social imperatives but it completely ignores the environmental and cultural values and will almost certainly render the Pink Dolphin extinct.

It must be possible to site such a proposal elsewhere and preferably close to the existing industrial zone to minimise the environmental impact. I understand that the cost of the land in this zone is too expensive but that extra cost must be a price worth paying to save such a vitally important ecological site.

With such global pressure to save our environment from the worst effects of climate change it must surely be in Taiwan's interest to carry out a full review of the environmental impact of the expanding petrochemical industries.

During my tour of your island I was presented, amongst other things, with a booklet entitled 'Exploring Biodiversity in Taiwan', published by the Council of Agriculture in 2005. The penultimate paragraph of this booklet states:

"On this beautiful island in the Pacific that we call Formosa, we are currently facing the same test along with all other members of the global village. We must choose between either indulging ourselves in short-term growth by satisfying our own endless material desires; or we must utilise resources in a more wise and sustainable manner. Our decision will determine the future of the Blue Planet. If we destroy more land, forests, oceans and skies, the Earth will be forced to respond harshly. Biodiversity conservation is therefore clearly an obligation that Taiwan's inhabitants cannot shirk."

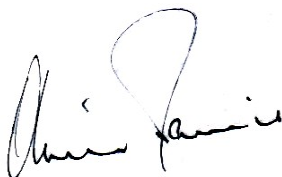
I believe that that sums up the situation perfectly!

I sincerely hope that you, Sir, as the country's highest leader and policy maker will be able to execute an environmental trust law to ensure firstly the protection of the heritage of your country and secondly that this development does not go ahead at Dachen and so destroy both the Dolphin species and this precious environmental and cultural treasure.

I understand that the Secretary General of the TEIA and the Director of the Environmental Trust Centre of the TEIA will be meeting with you on Wednesday and I have asked them to deliver this letter to you in person

Thank you, Sir, for taking the trouble to read this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris James". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Oliver Maurice
Hon Director INTO

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