

Artificial reefs to boost marine life

By Neil Colclough

THE Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) is studying the possibility of building large-scale artificial reefs around Hong Kong to boost marine life and revive the dwindling fish stock.

The study, now in its preliminary stages, is aimed at protecting and boosting marine life around coastlines heavily damaged by reclamation.

Initially, the AFD would base their study on the existing small artificial reef at Hoi Ha Wan. They

also hope to build another small man-made reef at Yan Chau Tong.

Artificial reefs could be constructed from concrete, fuel ash or even old ships.

"The idea is to provide a habitat, previously destroyed, in which marine life could spawn and increase their numbers," fisheries officer Joseph Sham said.

Large-scale artificial reefs had already been used successfully to protect and boost marine life around coastlines of Japan, Thailand and China, Mr Sham said.

The AFD study would look at technical issues such as materials, design and management of the artificial reefs based on the experience of those at Hoi Ha Wan and later at Yan Chau Tong, Mr Sham said.

A pyramid two metres high with three base sides of 10 metres, the Hoi Ha Wan artificial reef is made up of more than 2,000 blocks of coal ash mixed with concrete.

Hoi Ha Wan project leader, Hong Kong University marine biologist Professor Brian Morton, said it was

still too early to tell whether the artificial reef had proved successful.

He said a university study to see if marine life had increased in the area would be completed in three months' time.

However, Professor Morton welcomed the idea of larger artificial reefs around Hong Kong.

"The aim of establishing (artificial) reefs is to provide new breeding sites for fish and encourage marine life to live there," he said.

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