

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Promotion of Hiking Etiquette in Country Parks

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the promotion of hiking etiquette in country parks.

2. Background

2.1 Since the outbreak of the epidemic, many people turned to the country parks for recreation, including those with less experience in countryside activities. The bad habits of some country park visitors such as littering, damaging plants and opening of new paths were adversely affecting the countryside environment and other visitors, and thus arousing concerns among the community. In view of this, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) organised an array of publicity activities under the theme of “Hiking Etiquette” from 2021 to March 2022 to promote good outdoor practice, culture and etiquette so as to deepen the understanding of the public on the relationship of man and nature. AFCD also collaborated with the Environmental Protection Department and integrates “Hiking Etiquette” into the “Leave No Trace at Mountain and Sea” campaign from December 2021 to March 2022. The message would be disseminated to the wider public through online videos and social media engagement.

3. Details of the Promotion Plan

3.1 The promotion of “Hiking Etiquette” covered positive attitude and behaviours in relation to hiking and countryside activities, like “respect nature”, “respect others”, “hike safely”, “prevent hillfire”, “reduce waste” and “Take Your Litter Home”. In the peak hiking season of 2021/22, AFCD organized a series of activities targeted to country park visitors, including “Nature Excursion”, “Orienteering: into the Country Parks”, “Excursion with Paintbrush”, “Bring Your Own Bottle” Reward Scheme and “Mountain Cleanup Hero”. A brief account of the activities is as follow:

- (a) Nature Excursion: AFCD deployed eco-guides to provide nature interpretation of specific themes at geological, ecological and cultural hotspots in country parks, to deepen the understanding of human/nature relationship, and promote various types of hiking etiquette according to the themes of interpretation.

- (b) “Orienteering: into the Country Parks”: Orienteering is a sport that challenges both the body and mind, and is a fun way to experience and enjoy nature. AFCD launched newly designed orienteering courses at the Lions Nature Education Centre in November 2021. Participants could collect electronic stickers depicting various types of hiking etiquette through the QR code of the field control points and share them on social media for promotion to the wider public. Orienteering coaches were present on site to share the skills and enhance the experience of the participants. The electronic stickers have subsequently been uploaded to the “Nature In Touch” website and app store for free download by the public.

- (c) “Excursion with Paintbrush” Drawing Competition: The competition was held from September 2021 to January 2022. Students were encouraged to appreciate the stunning scenery of country parks from different perspectives, and promote the nature’s beauty through their artworks. The winning entries would be published on different platforms for public viewing. At the same time, AFCD has organised a webinar and art jamming classes in the form of school visits. As they learn painting techniques, students could also have a better understanding of country parks and hiking etiquette. The competition received over 2,200 entries.

- (d) “Bring Your Own Bottle” Reward Scheme: During Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from 1 October, 2021 to 31 March, 2022, visitors could collect stamps by showing their reusable water bottles at designated country park visitor centres. To encourage the visitors to reduce waste at source, make proper use of the water filling stations in country parks and avoid the use of one-off plastic disposables, visitors could redeem green souvenirs after collecting the required number of stamps. Photo-taking props embedded with message of “Hiking etiquette” were also available at the visitor centres.

- (e) “Mountain Cleanup Hero”: To express our appreciation to hikers volunteered to clean up the hiking trails and call for concerted efforts to keep the country parks clean, AFCD organises the “Mountain Cleanup Hero” scheme during December 2021 to March 2022. Hikers could borrow tools at designated visitor centres. After they have cleaned up the trails, they could get a souvenir and an e-certificate by scanning the QR code. They could also take photos using the “Mountain Cleanup Hero” props and share them on social media, so that the message could be more widely publicized.

3.2 In view of the latest development of the COVID-19 epidemic, the aforementioned activities are suitably adjusted according to the prevailing anti-epidemic measures. Since country parks visitor centres and education centres have been temporarily closed since 7 January 2022, some promotional activities are suspended. Nevertheless, publicity and promotions are continuing through different channels such as advertisements, online videos and engagement posts in social media. AFCD promoted hiking safety and “Take Your Litter Home” through MTR advertisement panels in the peak hiking season of 2021/22 and produced seven online videos. Among them, a series of four were produced for promotion of hiking safety. The other three videos introduced the work of Tai Tong Nursery and the management work at Lau Shui Heung, Pat Sin Leng Country Park. These videos showed the public the efforts made by country park staff in maintaining the countryside environment, and thereby raising their awareness on the care for nature. AFCD is also engaging the public and continually promoting various types of hiking etiquette through vivid posts in the “Hong Kong Country Parks” Facebook page.

4. Advice Sought

4.1 Members are invited to offer views on the promotion of hiking etiquette in country parks.