

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Conceptual Designs on Setting Up of New Type of Camping Facilities in Country Parks

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the conceptual designs for setting up of new type of camping facilities in country parks.

2. Background

2.1 The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) commissioned the “Consultancy Study on the Enhancement of the Recreation and Education Potential of Country Parks and Special Areas in Hong Kong” (Enhancement Study) in January 2017 to explore opportunities for enhancing the recreation and education potential of country parks and special areas, to enrich visitors' experience and meet the growing demand of the public for countryside recreation. The Enhancement Study was completed in 2019 and four enhancement proposals with strong popularity, including (i) Enhancement of Existing Facilities; (ii) Open Museums for Historical Relics Appreciation; (iii) Tree Top Adventures; and (iv) Glamping sites and Eco-lodges, were considered worth pursuing.

2.2 New style of camping such as glamping has become an increasingly popular form of local getaway in recent years. This style of camping encompasses a tent-like living experience that is more convenient and comfortable than traditional wild camping. The AFCD recognises the need to diversify camping facilities in country parks to meet the changing demands of campers. Providing camping facilities in country parks with enhanced services, or even education/guided tour programmes, would potentially enrich the camping experience and cater for the range of needs of different groups. For example, rental services for camping equipment can be provided to make it more convenient and easier for visitors, especially those with little experience, to enjoy camping.

3. The Consultancy Study

3.1 In November 2022, the AFCD commissioned Otherland Limited (the Consultants) to carry out a consultancy study (the Study) to explore the feasibility of providing new type of

camping facilities in three potential sites in country parks. The potential sites include Tai Mong Tsai in Sai Kung West Country Park, Tai Tong in Tai Lam Country Park and Rotary Park in Tai Mo Shan Country Park. The scope of the Study includes (i) a baseline review of relevant local and overseas examples (ii) market research and recommendation of market position for setting up of new type of camping facilities in country parks; (iii) a preliminary site review of the three potential sites; (iv) preparation of conceptual designs for all three sites; (v) public engagement to collect views from the public and stakeholders on the conceptual designs; (vi) detailed design with sufficient details for construction; and (vii) recommendation of contract strategy, cost estimation, programme and mode of operation.

3.2 During the baseline review, the Consultants examined in detail the design and operation of 13 camping facilities from different parts of the world, with a special emphasis on tropical countries. The review covered aspects such as mode of operation, site context, environmentally friendly designs or systems utilised, size and layout of campsite, type of tents, activities and facilities available, capacity, fee level, target users, type of booking system, staffing and safety standards.

3.3 Additionally, market research including an online public opinion survey and interviews with campers was conducted from February to April 2023, to further ascertain the camping habits of those who camp in country parks and private campsites. Data were collected on their preferred campsite type, services, facilities, operation mode and fee level. It is concluded from the research that a majority of respondents preferred a more economical camping option in country parks. Although they welcomed enhanced facilities and amenities in country parks, the campers would place a higher priority on nature conservation rather than extravagant comforts. Based on the research results, it is recommended to develop upgraded camping facilities for all three sites, with greater emphasis on fostering a nature-oriented camping experience that resonates with the unique characteristics of country parks. As the market research clearly indicated that the provision of luxurious camping facilities in country parks is not preferred, the use of the phrase “glamping” should be avoided in this context.

3.4 Public engagement design workshops were held in October 2023 and stakeholder interviews were conducted from October 2023 to January 2024 to further understand the camping needs of different users and various design considerations. Views from different stakeholders on the preliminary layout, facility and service provision, as well as the operation and management for the three potential sites were collected. A majority of campers preferred camping on grass and welcomed the inclusion of a lawn area. Moreover, campers considered that it was important to promote environmentally-friendly practices such as recycling, and to introduce a proper waste management system. They also provided suggestions on administrative and management measures for better management of the hygiene and noise

problem at the campsites. The results of public engagement and interview indicated a preference for basic facilities that allow campers to enjoy nature, provided free-of-charge or at a low cost.

4. Conceptual Designs for New Type of Camping Facilities

4.1 Based on the findings and recommendations from the baseline review and market research, the Consultants have developed conceptual designs for the three potential sites. They intend to offer low-impact camping spaces with a reasonable degree of comfort and accessibility for a wide range of campers who want to enjoy nature in country parks. In addition to the enhanced facilities, the proposed campsites will provide a wider range of activities throughout the year including different year-round or seasonal nature-based experiential activities. Through the provision of improved amenities and adoption of a better campsite layout design, the Consultants will address the challenges faced by existing campsites and allow flexible usage of camping spaces while ensuring a safer and more comfortable environment for campers. The key elements of the conceptual designs of each site are briefly introduced below and illustrated in the appendices. Detailed design for construction, as well as studies on the mode of operation and pricing, will be undertaken in the next phase of the Study.

Tai Mong Tsai (Appendix A)

Site Context

4.2 The Tai Mong Tsai site has an approximate area of 4 800 m². It is located at Tai Mong Tsai Barbecue (BBQ) Area Nos. 13 & 14 and provided with BBQ pits, picnic tables and a pavilion. The site is characterised by stepped topography with access to the waterfront. It is conveniently situated within a short walk from existing roadside toilets and public transportation (a bus stop). Metered parking spaces are also available within a 15-minute walking distance. The site is surrounded by lush vegetation, and large trees can be found within the BBQ area. Most of the views towards Sam Nga Hau are screened by existing vegetation except for the area close to the waterfront, which is to the south of the site.

Design Approach

4.3 Considering the site's stepped topography and location, additional facilities that may require large construction machinery should be avoided. Space for large group activities may not be feasible because of dense vegetation and existing trees within the site. Large-scale ground levelling works are not recommended to avoid impact on the existing vegetation and slope stability. The recommended target users are campers who are nature-orientated, enjoy

quiet naturalistic surroundings, content with limited facilities, prefer camping in small groups and travel by public transportation.

4.4 To reduce the environmental impact, the site will be limited to the current BBQ area. Existing trees and other vegetation will be retained as far as practicable. Approximately 20-30 camping plots will be available at the site. Facilities will be located in a clearing as close to the road as possible, thus minimising impacts to the existing vegetation. To make the site more accessible, welcoming and inclusive, the narrow steps at the entrance will be replaced with a ramp. This will allow wheelchair users to enjoy the camping experience as well.

Tai Tong (Appendix B)

Site Context

4.5 The Tai Tong site has an approximate area of 7 000 m². It is currently a BBQ area with BBQ pits, picnic tables, a small children's play area, pavilion and seating areas. The site has a flat topography with scattered trees within and vegetated slopes surrounding the site. The site enjoys scenic views of the surrounding hills as well as downtown Yuen Long.

4.6 Campers will need to walk up a ramp to reach the site. There are toilets, washing-up facilities and a water filling station within 5 minutes' walk from the site. Parking spaces are available within a 7-minute walking distance.

Design Approach

4.7 The flat topography and larger size of the site make it suitable for accommodating big groups of campers. The presence of the nearby parking area also makes it ideal for families and campers with heavier equipment. The scattered trees within the site are spread throughout, but bigger camping plots are feasible due to the large spacing between trees. Target users are campers that may typically require more space, such as those with large quantities of camping gear/pets and families.

4.8 To reduce the environmental impact, the site area will be limited to the current BBQ area and the entrance ramp to the site. Existing trees and other vegetation will be retained as far as practicable. Approximately 25-35 camping plots will be available at the site. The layout of the camping plots is planned so that several camping plots can be grouped for large gatherings. A flexible, open space is located at the centre of the campsite for group activities. Three different types of camping ground surfaces are suggested to be provided to diversify the camping experiences. Additionally, there could be a dedicated space for large campfires.

4.9 To improve accessibility, benches will be placed on small pockets of flat area along the entrance ramp to provide visitors with a place to rest. The feasibility of planting trees along the entrance ramp will be considered to provide campers with a comfortable and shaded route to the campsite.

Rotary Park (Appendix C)

Site Context

4.10 The Rotary Park site has an approximate area of 3 900 m². It lies close to the entrance of Tai Mo Shan Country Park Visitor Centre and is situated at the edges of Tai Mo Shan Country Park. The site is connected to the Tai Mo Shan Family Walk and Tai Mo Shan Hiking Practice Trail, surrounded by natural greenery. The existing facilities at Rotary Park site include toilets, sinks and a food kiosk. A small designated campsite, Rotary Park Campsite, is included within the proposed site.

4.11 The current topography of the site consists of stepped flat areas, forming platforms of various sizes at different levels. The areas next to the car park by the existing kiosk are easily accessible while the remaining areas in the east are mainly accessed via narrow trails, ramps and stairs. Existing trees are found scattered among the BBQ pits and picnic tables within and surrounding the site.

4.12 Twisk Barbeque Area Site Nos. 1 & 2, Twisk Campsite and Tai Mo Shan Country Park Visitor Centre are located within a 10-minute distance from the site. Hiking trails, nature trails and a mountain bike trail are also located nearby. A bus stop is also located within a 5-minute walking distance from the site.

Design Approach

4.13 Existing lookout spots, pavilions and sundials will be retained in situ as part of the landscape and established features of the campsite. The nearby parking area makes it ideal for campers with heavy equipment or with pets. Given its proximity to various nature hikes and walks, the site is also anticipated to attract campers who are nature enthusiasts.

4.14 To reduce the environmental impact, the site area will be limited to the parts of the current BBQ area with a gentler gradient. Existing trees and other vegetation will be retained as far as practicable. Approximately 15-20 camping plots will be available at the site, including those at the existing Rotary Park Campsite. The layout of the camping plots will adopt a design approach that involve the minimal slope and ground levelling works. Existing facilities, such

as toilets, sinks, kiosks and Rotary Park Campsite will be kept and integrated as part of the campsite services and accommodations.

5. Advice Sought

5.1 Members are invited to offer views on the conceptual campsite designs set out in this paper and its Appendices. The views and comments will be taken into account during the next phase of the Study.

**Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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