

Country and Marine Parks Board
Summary Report of the Country Parks Committee

1. Purpose

1.1 To inform members on issues discussed at the Country Parks Committee (CPC) meeting held on 23 December 2014. Major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below.

2. Applications for organizing biking competition in Country Parks

2.1 Members were briefed about processing (i) applications for organizing biking competitions in country parks in general, and (ii) the specific application for organizing a biking competition in Tai Lam Country Park in January 2015, including the background of the applications and the Authority's considerations on recent trend of mountain bike events and the proposed competition in Tai Lam Country Park.

2.2 Members in principle supported or had no objection to the proposed criteria for processing applications of organizing biking competitions in country parks in general.

2.3 With the increasing popularity of mountain biking activities, some members were of the view that more biking activities and competitions in county parks should be encouraged provided that effective management, conservation and safety measures were adopted.

2.4 Members had reservation on biking competition at night time because of the need to ensure public safety and protect the tranquility of the natural environment. They noted that the existing mountain bike trails in country parks were often sub-standard roads and paths with winding alignments and without lighting facilities. Bikers with different levels of skill racing at high speed but in poor illumination might pose significant safety risk to themselves and other park users at night time. It was also extremely difficult to carry out rescue in case of emergencies.

2.5 Members had in general expressed objection to the specific application for organizing a biking competition in Tai Lam Country Park in January 2015 given that the

competition would be continued at night time. They also noted that the applicant had a poor track record of violation of conditions listed on the permits of previously approved competitions. A member suggested that the Authority can accede to the application provided that the applicant was able to demonstrate that their management and safety measures at night time could meet AFCD standards.

3. Proposed Demerit Points System for Organized Events in Country Parks

3.1 Members were briefed about the proposed demerit points system (DPS) for organized events in country parks, including the background, the reasons of introducing the DPS and the details of the DPS.

3.2 Members had diverse views on the implementation of the proposed DPS.

3.3 Some members had reservation on the DPS. They were of the view that the Authority would have to put a lot of effort into the preparation of the demerit points of each breach and might get into heated argument about how the demerit points of each incident of breach were set. On the other hand, some members were of the view that commercial organizations could simply wipe out their bad record by applying new business registration certificates.

3.4 Other members supported the DPS. They opined that the DPS was more transparent as the demerit points of the breaches were listed clearly. The DPS was able to address the cumulative effects of breaching permit conditions and reflect the severity of different breaches. In the long run, it is hoped that the compliance of the event organizers could improve with the advent of the checking mechanism of the DPS.

3.5 A member suggested that the terms and conditions of the proposed DPS had to be very specific. In addition, event organizers should place a deposit to cover any cost of rectifying the irregularities found after the events plus a fixed percentage of surcharge on the cost.

3.6 A member suggested that the DPS could grade the breaches into two categories according to the seriousness of the breaches. For the breaches affecting public safety or destroying natural environment, the event organizers who had committed breaches would be banned from lodging fresh applications immediately and such bans should last for a certain period. For other breaches, the demerit points of the breaches could be accrued.

3.7 A member suggested that the DPS should be reviewed periodically after implementation.

3.8 The Chairman summed up that the Authority should take into consideration members' views on the implementation of the proposed DPS. If the DPS were to be implemented, it should take into account of members' views on the details of the system.

4. Presentation

4.1 This paper is prepared for members' information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
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