

## **COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD**

### **Summary Report of the Country Parks Committee**

#### **1. Purpose**

1.1 This paper aims to inform members of the major issues discussed at the Country Parks Committee (CPC) meeting held on 17 March 2020.

#### **2. Enhancing Management and Recreation Facilities along the Lantau Trail Section 2 at Lantau South Country Park**

2.1 To promote green tourism, the Government has earmarked an additional funding for 5 years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 to enhance the tourism supporting facilities of some popular hiking trails and those with tourism potential within country parks. Lantau Trail Section 2 is one of the ten trails selected for enhancement. In the meeting, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) briefed members on the series of enhancement works on the management and recreation facilities along Lantau Trail Section 2, which were being carried out in phases. Apart from the ongoing trail maintenance, other major enhancement works included construction of viewing platforms and installation of interpretation panels regarding the Lantau Mountain Camp and the stone chalets. Besides, facilities at the trail starting points at Pak Kung Au and Nam Shan would be improved.

2.2 Besides, to better protect and manage the Yi Tung Shan area along the Lantau Trail Section 2, AFCD assessed the suitability of incorporating Yi Tung Shan enclave into Lantau South Country Park (LSCP), based on the revised principles and criteria for designating country parks endorsed by Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB). According to the assessment, the Yi Tung Shan enclave was rated medium high in conservation value, landscape and aesthetic value, and recreation potential. In addition, the existing land uses and the overall tranquil environment of the enclave were compatible with the surrounding country parks. In light of the above assessment results, the enclave was considered suitable for incorporation into LSCP. Details of the assessment and the proposed incorporation of the Yi Tung Shan enclave into LSCP

were provided to members.

2.3 Members generally supported the enhancement works along Lantau Trail Section 2. Given the popularity of the trail, members suggested AFCD and relevant government departments to explore the possibility of enhancing the public transportation to Pak Kung Au. They also suggested AFCD to enhance the quantity and quality of toilet facilities at Pak Kung Au. Viewing that Lantau Trail Section 2 is a challenging trail, members advised AFCD to step up publicity about hiking safety and advise the public to get well prepared before taking the trail. Members also suggested AFCD to explore possible preservation of the Lantau Mountain Camp with the owners of the stone chalets. AFCD noted members' suggestions.

2.4 Moreover, members supported the proposed incorporation of the Yi Tung Shan enclave into LSCP for better protection of the environment. At present, some people would camp and set up campfires near the stone chalets. To protect the stone chalets and prevent hill fires, members generally agreed that after the Yi Tung Shan enclave was incorporated into LSCP, AFCD should control and manage camping activities in the area of the Lantau Mountain Camp by designating a camping site at suitable location to cater for the needs of campers. They also suggested that AFCD should consider establishing a camping site where no litter bins would be placed and campers needed to take all their litter home and adopt the Leave No Trace principle. AFCD noted members' suggestions and responded that the Department would consult the relevant stakeholders, including the owners of the stone chalets and hikers, on the future management of Yi Tung Shan.

### **3. Management of Campsites at Country Parks – Pilot Scheme on Advance Booking System**

3.1 AFCD briefed members on the details of the pilot scheme on advance booking system for country park campsites. The pilot scheme, which aimed to gain experience on an advance booking system for country park campsites and gather public opinions, would be introduced at Twisk Campsite. In the pilot scheme, an applicant could reserve a camping space from one month ahead up to 48 hours before the date of camping through an online booking system, and any camping spaces left unfilled within 48 hours could be reserved on-site or by telephone. All camping spaces would be allocated on a first-come, first served basis and it was proposed that at least 70% of the camping spaces would be reserved for Hong Kong residents for each opening days. Each applicant could only hold one booking at a time and the maximum period of stay was two nights. To

ensure fair use of the campsite and minimise wastage of resources, there would be penalties for applicants who did not show up to use their booked camping space without prior cancellation and users who contravened the relevant legislation in using the campsite.

3.2 Members supported AFCD's proposal and made a few suggestions. AFCD was suggested to consider allowing booking by telephone or in-person for the convenience of people who did not have access to the Internet. Besides, AFCD was advised to consider appropriate cancellation policy for adverse weather conditions. To minimise wastage of resources, AFCD was suggested to consider charging a fee for booking camping spaces. AFCD indicated that the Department would examine the result of the pilot scheme and made modifications as necessary.

#### **4. Any Other Business**

##### **(a) Situation of Country Parks during Anti-epidemic Period**

4.1 AFCD reported that during the anti-epidemic (Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)) period, many people flocked to the countryside for hiking, camping and barbecuing. The number of visitors to country parks in Feb 2020 increased by 25% compared to the same month last year. Given the increased number of visitors, the usage rate of toilets in country parks was noticeably higher and the amount of litter collected in country parks also rose. Most of the litter were collected from the recreation sites while the hygiene condition of most hiking trails was good. Besides, more vehicles were found along the roads near popular country parks and some involved illegal parking. In view of the above situation, AFCD stepped up cleansing efforts at popular recreation sites and hiking trails, toilets as well as other country park facilities, and temporarily provided more and larger litter bins at popular recreation sites. In addition, the Department stepped up patrol and deployed staff to remind visitors to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene and dispose of their rubbish and face masks properly. Banners and posters were also put up at popular locations of country parks. Moreover, the Department carried out special operations against littering, unauthorised entry of vehicles and illegal camping at weekends. Messages on maintaining environmental hygiene were also promoted through the social media platforms, radio programme and network of partner organisations and hiking groups.

**5. Advice Sought**

5.1 Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Country and Marine Parks Authority

May 2020