

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Accessible Routes in Country Parks

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the existing and new accessible routes in country parks.

2. Background

2.1 To contribute to an inclusive society, promote the rich natural resources of country parks, and facilitate the physically-challenged persons to enjoy nature, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) provides barrier-free facilities in country parks, such as accessible toilets, barrier-free barbecue sites, electric wheelchair charging spots, etc. Barrier-free access and facilities are also available in country parks visitor centres.

2.2 Electric wheelchairs have become more popular in recent years, which have improved the mobility of the physically-challenged persons, enabling outings in country parks more possible. In light of the above, AFCD promulgated four accessible routes that were suitable for wheelchair users in 2020, to enrich their outdoor experience and provide them with more opportunities and choices to get close to nature. To further our work, we have been identifying more routes and scenic spots in country parks that are suitable for wheelchair users.

3. Existing Accessible Routes

3.1 AFCD identified four accessible routes for wheelchair users in 2020 in consultation with stakeholders. In identifying these routes, we considered the following major factors: trail conditions (e.g. trail surface, gradient, width of the trail, suitable barrier-free facilities); transportation facilities (e.g. availability of suitable loading space for barrier-free vehicles near country parks); barriers outside country parks (e.g. width of pavements, obstacles such as lamp posts and road signs along the way); and variance of wheelchairs (e.g. difference in size, design and battery capacity).

3.2 The four existing accessible routes in country parks are as follows. More information on the following accessible routes is available at the Enjoy Hiking website (hiking.gov.hk/trail).

i. Shing Mun Country Park (Paperbark Tree Forest) Accessible Route

This is a well-shaded forest track with ups and downs, offering a scenic visit to the Shing Mun Reservoir. The route is highlighted by the presence of Paperbark Trees around the reservoir and the sight of butterflies during spring and summer. Accessible toilets are located near the refreshment kiosk.

ii. Tai Tam Country Park (Tai Tam Tuk Reservoir) Accessible Route

This is a flat forest track that travels from south to north along the Tai Tam Tuk Reservoir. The route passes by a number of waterworks structures, which are declared monuments. Accessible toilets are available at the entrance of the route.

iii. Aberdeen Country Park (Aberdeen Upper Reservoir) Accessible Route

This is a wide and well-shaded path leading to the Aberdeen Upper Reservoir. The route first reaches the Aberdeen Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied (P.H.A.B.) Site, where there are barrier-free barbecue sites and toilets. At the endpoint of the route, there are a number of declared monuments, e.g. the valve house and dam of the Aberdeen Upper Reservoir.

iv. Tai Lam Country Park (Tsing Tam Upper Irrigation Reservoir) Accessible Route

This is a forest track with ups and downs. Along the way to the Tsing Tam Upper Irrigation Reservoir, the route overlooks the scenic views of Kai Kung Leng, Tai To Yan, and Tin Shui Wai town centre. Accessible toilets are located at the barbecue site along the way.

4. New Accessible Routes

4.1 Apart from the four relatively long-distance accessible routes for wheelchair users introduced above, there are other short-distance routes or scenic spots that have potential for developing as accessible routes. Potential accessible routes are identified based on the considerations mentioned in paragraph 3.1. Trial visits had been conducted with stakeholders, and their observations and feedback have been incorporated in developing these new accessible routes, for example levelling curbs, providing clearer signage to indicate the locations of accessible toilets, etc.

4.2 Brief information of some potential accessible routes, with suggested enhancement measures are as follows:

i. Lions Nature Education Centre (LNEC)

The LNEC has a number of exhibition halls that are accessible to wheelchair users. There are also different outdoor zones that feature various habitats as well as plants and animals, such as lotus ponds, butterfly valley, arboretum, etc., for promoting nature education. There are accessible toilets at the LNEC. Most of the paths inside LNEC are wide and paved, with a slight incline at the entrance and along the path towards the Deaf Cafeteria. Minor enhancement measures such as levelling some roadside curbs would be carried out.

ii. Plover Cove Country Park – Tai Mei Tuk and the Plover Cove Reservoir

Tai Mei Tuk is a convenient location accessible by public transport and is a popular site for barbecue and sightseeing. The main dam of the Plover Cove Reservoir offers a spectacular view of Tolo Harbour and Pat Sin Leng. It only takes a short travel from Tai Mei Tuk Bus Terminus along the promenade by the seashore to the main dam of Plover Cove Reservoir. The path is mostly flat, with a slope leading up to the main dam. There are accessible toilets at the Tai Mei Tuk Barbecue Area within the Plover Cove Country Park. Minor enhancement measures such as providing clearer signage for accessible toilets would be carried out.

iii. Clear Water Bay Country Park – Tai Hang Tun

At Tai Hang Tun, there is an extensive view of the Clear Water Bay and the south-eastern seascape. It is also a popular site for kite-flying and stargazing. The wide, paved pathway leads from the car park to the hill top of Tai Hang Tun, and extends to some grassy slopes towards the end of the path. There are a number of barrier-free facilities, including ramps leading to the pavilions, barbecue sites, accessible toilets and picnic tables. Minor enhancement measures such as providing clearer signage for accessible toilets would be carried out.

4.3 In addition to accessible routes, the AFCD has taken the opportunity to incorporate accessible and inclusive design elements in various enhancement projects in country parks, such as the reconstruction of toilet and refreshment kiosk in Aberdeen Country Park P.H.A.B. Barbecue Site, the new viewing platform overlooking Aberdeen Upper Reservoir and

associated P.H.A.B. recreation facilities in Aberdeen Country Park, as well as the new type of camping facilities at Tai Tong in Tai Lam Country Park. At the Aberdeen P.H.A.B. Barbecue Site, upgrades include up-to-standard accessible toilets and ramps that enable wheelchair users to access the rooftop sitting-out area of the toilet and kiosk building. Meanwhile, the existing barbecue site near Aberdeen Upper Reservoir would be upgraded and improved with barrier-free access and facilities such as the new viewing platform and barbecue facilities. Additionally, accessible camping spaces would be provided at the new camp site at Tai Tong.

5. Way Forward

5.1 AFCD will continue to identify suitable routes and scenic spots, as well as incorporate barrier-free elements in our facilities to foster a more inclusive and safe outdoor experience for wheelchair users.

6. Advice Sought

6.1 Members are invited to offer views on the accessible routes in country parks.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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