

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Management Work and Visitor Services Arranged for the Robin's Nest Country Park

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the management work and visitor services arranged for the Robin's Nest Country Park (RNCP) since its designation on 1 March 2024.

2. Background

2.1 Since the designation of the RNCP in March, 2024, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has already started implementing a series of management work and ranger services for the RNCP, with an aim to meeting the country park objectives, namely nature conservation, outdoor recreation and nature education.

2.2 The RNCP is located in Sha Tau Kok bounded to the north by the Frontier Closed Area (FCA), geographically connected with the ridges of the Shenzhen Wutong Mountain Scenic Area. The AFCD is collaborating with the Planning and Natural Resources Bureau of the Shenzhen Municipality (SZPNR) in formulating a joint work programme to enhance the ecological connectivity of the Shenzhen Wutong Mountain – Hong Kong Robin's Nest Ecological Corridor. Details of the above-mentioned work are provided below.

3. Nature Conservation

3.1 The RNCP comprises habitats and wildlife species of high ecological value. For example, the upland grassland on Robin's Nest is an important habitat for the vulnerable Chinese Grassbird. Red Azalea and Chinese New Year Flower that bestrew the slopes are both protected plants. The Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine, an

important roosting site for bats, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The dense secondary woodland on the northern slope of Robin's Nest is a key component of the terrestrial ecological corridor between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

3.2 The active conservation management work being conducted by the AFCD include regular patrols, enforcement of the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A), establishment and maintenance of firebreaks to prevent and control hill fire, planting of native species such as Red Azalea to enhance existing landscape and habitats, conservation of the upland grassland where Chinese Grassbird inhabits, and removal of invasive plants such as *Mikania* spp.

3.3 During the planning stage of the new country park, the end of the jeep track which branches off from Wo Keng Shan Road was identified as one of the official entrances, and would be connected to the hiking trail network of the RNCP. However, the planned route is currently not accessible due to the serious landslide in September 2023. AFCD has engaged various departments in exploring possibilities of re-opening the trail section, and would continue to monitor the site condition.

3.4 The jeep track was an abandoned steep, winding and single-lane military road with poor visibility and very few lay-bys. Currently, there is no control on the use of this road but traffic safety risk and user conflicts have significantly increased since the opening of the RNCP. For the sake of traffic safety, vehicular access to the jeep track should be controlled, and to prevent illegal entry of vehicles to the country park area beyond the track. AFCD has been liaising with the managing department and relevant stakeholders of the jeep track on resolving this matter. All concerned parties have agreed to set up a gate at the toe of the jeep track to control unauthorised vehicular entry. The installation works will be completed within this year.

3.5 Meanwhile, AFCD has planned to carry out rehabilitation works for a long existing erosion scar at the uphill position of the jeep track to enhance public safety, prevent further soil erosion and re-establish the vegetation cover. AFCD would also study the feasibility of constructing a hiking trail on the rehabilitated scar area. The works has been scheduled to commence in October 2024 for completion within the dry season.

4. Outdoor Recreation and Visitor Service

4.1 The Robin's Nest area, with its undulating hills in a picturesque natural setting, is excellent for hiking and nature appreciation. Currently, two country trails - Robin's Nest Country Trail (3.5km) and Lin Ma Hang Country Trail (2.6km) are open to the public. These routes link up Shan Tsui of Sha Tau Kok in the east and Lin Ma Hang Village in the west. The total hiking time is about 4 to 5 hours (**Annex 1**). The AFCD has provided maps and information boards, directional signs and distance posts along these two trails to give clear guidance for hikers. In addition, visitors can enjoy wonderful vistas across Starling Inlet and Wutong Mountain of Shenzhen at the lookout point near Hung Fa Chai.

4.2 To facilitate visitors travelling to and from the starting point of Lin Ma Hang Country Trail, the AFCD has constructed a connecting path outside the Frontier Closed Area section of Lin Ma Hang Road, and installed waymarks at trail entrances. In addition to the maintenance and enhancement of trails and associated facilities, the AFCD is planning to construct a rain shelter near Hung Fa Chai, install various thematic interpretation panels along the country trails and establish a picnic site near Shan Tsui within this financial year.

4.3 The RNCP is positioned as part of the Blue and Green Recreation, Tourism and Conservation Circle of the Northern Metropolis. Further to on-site maps and signage, the AFCD also provided information on transportation, hiking trails and attractions through websites and social media platforms. The AFCD has arranged interpretation and education services at the main entrances of the RNCP in weekends and public holidays during the hiking season. Visitor control is also arranged when necessary, to avoid disturbance to the country park and nearby villages.

4.4 The AFCD is working with the Office of the Communications Authority and other relevant departments to explore ways to improve the mobile network coverage in the RNCP especially along the existing and planned hiking trails, so that visitors could identify their locations and seek for helps more easily under emergency situation. The Hong Kong Police Force also supports signal improvement in particular along the border fence of the Lin Ma Hang Road, as there were occasional cases in which visitors got lost through wandering off the maintained trails.

5. Enhancing Ecological Connectivity between Hong Kong and Shenzhen

5.1 The rolling hills and intertwining natural streams on Robin's Nest provide diverse habitats for a host of wildlife and plant species. Geographically connected, the RNCP and Wutong Mountain in Shenzhen form naturally an ecological corridor across the two places.

5.2 In June 2023 and March 2024, the AFCD and the SZPNR held two meetings to discuss the formulation of a joint work programme for enhancing the “Wutong Mountain-Robin's Nest Ecological Corridor”. The initial plan for the programme includes setting up an ecological data exchange platform, conducting biodiversity monitoring at both sites, removing invasive species, and exploring ways to improve the ecological connectivity for some animals, with a view to promoting ecological integration between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The scope of cooperation also includes exchanging experiences in nature education. The detailed programme is expected to be finalised by the end of this year.

5.3 On 15 August 2024, the AFCD and SZPNR signed the “Cooperative Framework Agreement for the Enhancement of Shenzhen Wutong Mountain – Hong Kong Robin's Nest Ecological Corridor” for establishing the co-operation framework agreement on creating an ecological corridor between Wutong Mountain Scenic Area in Shenzhen and Robin's Nest Country Park in Hong Kong.

6. Education and Publicity

6.1 In addition to its rich biodiversity, the RNCP also hosts an array of cultural and historic elements. The AFCD engaged experts to gather information on RNCP's war relics and lead mine, and consolidated information from local villagers about the cultural and historic aspects of the RNCP, for promoting to the public in different platforms, e.g. leaflets, on-site interpretation panels, illustrative map, websites, social media platforms, etc.

6.2 The Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine at the northwestern corner of the RNCP was once an important site of Hong Kong's mining industry. Once occupied by the Japanese forces in World War II, the lead mine holds memories of brave resistance put up by the Lin Ma Hang villagers and Dongjiang Guerilla Force against the Japanese. Today, the long-abandoned mine is an important bat habitat in Hong Kong and was

designated as a SSSI in 1994. Currently, the AFCD is collaborating with the Civil Engineering and Development Department to revitalise the lead mine into an open museum, so as to create an enhanced visitor experience by showcasing Hong Kong's mining history, war relics, bat ecology as well as the unique cultural landscape of the mine. The site is now cordoned off for revitalisation works, and is expected to be opened to the public upon completion of works by the end of this year.

6.3 A series of educational and publicity activities titled “Discovering Robin’s Nest Country Park – The Interconnected Landscape & Ecology” will be organised from September 2024 to February 2025, including a series of six videos to be released in phases starting from September 2024, a “Discovering RNCP” Hiking Challenge from November 2024 to February 2025, and an opening ceremony for the RNCP cum launching ceremony of the “Discovering RNCP” Hiking Challenge in November 2024. Through these events, the AFCD encourages the public to explore the different facets of the newly established country park and experience its rich resources for green tourism. The “Discovering RNCP” videos series cover six features of the RNCP, namely the RNCP’s scenic landscape, its rich biodiversity and ecological connection with the Shenzhen Wutong Mountain, the Grade 2 historic buildings MacIntosh Forts, Lin Ma Hang village, war history, and the Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine site. For the hiking challenge, eight checkpoints at representative locations of the RNCP will be set up along the two country trails. Upon completion of a certain number of check points, the participants would receive souvenirs featuring the RNCP. We will invite hikers from both Hong Kong and Shenzhen to attend the launching ceremony of the “Discovering RNCP” Hiking Challenge, and participate in the “first hike” of hiking challenge, to signify the interconnection between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, in terms of ecology, geographical location as well as the love for nature.

7. Advice Sought

7.1 Members are invited to comment on the management work and visitor services arranged for the RNCP.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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