

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Consultancy Study on Enhancement of the Recreation and Education Potential of Country Parks and Special Areas – Public Opinion Survey and Stakeholder Engagement

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the progress of the consultancy study on enhancement of the recreation and education potential of country parks and special areas (the Study).

2. Background

2.1 The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) commissioned Urbis Limited in association with Mott Macdonald in January 2017 to explore and identify opportunities for enhancing the recreation potential of country parks and special areas (CP/SA) so as to broaden and diversify visitors' experience in CP/SA and meet the growing demand for countryside recreation. The Study aims to formulate a strategy and recommend proposals in three broad aspects, namely overnight facilities, adventurous activities and leisure.

2.2 Given the importance of CP/SA in protecting and conserving biodiversity and landscape, it has been clearly specified in the study brief that recreation and education options to be proposed should not be incompatible with the conservation objective of CP/SA. Progress and findings of the Study have been reported to the Country Parks Committee at its previous meetings of 7 March and 9 June 2017 and 24 January 2018.

3. Progress of the Study

3.1 The Study is conducted in four stages: (a) baseline review, (b) formulation of enhancement options for shortlisting, (c) recommendation of shortlisted proposals, and (d) public consultation.

3.2 At the Baseline Review stage, the consultant reviewed the existing mode of operation, statutory requirements and existing resources of CP/SA in Hong Kong, interviewed key stakeholders¹ to gather their views and ideas on the possible enhancement options, and reviewed international experiences and practices of recreational uses and the associated educational elements.

3.3 Based on the results of the Baseline Review, the consultant compiled a longlist of potential enhancement options and collected views of the general public and country park users on these options through a questionnaire survey. The survey was completed in December 2017 and more than 2,000 valid questionnaires were completed. The general preference of respondents on the three broad categories and other ancillary facilities is summarised as follows:

	Top three preferred options	
	General public	Country park users
Overnight facilities	1. Wild camping site 2. Campsite with equipment rental services 3. Eco-lodge	1. Wild camping site 2. Campsite with equipment rental services 3. Eco-lodge
Adventurous activities	1. Grass sliding 2. Water sports 3. Tree top adventure / tree climbing	1. Grass sliding 2. Tree top adventure / tree climbing 3. Orienteering
Leisure	1. Landscape appreciation 2. Hiking 3. Barbecue	1. Hiking 2. Landscape appreciation 3. Barbecue
Other Ancillary Facilities	1. Kiosk / shop 2. Transportation hub 3. Café / restaurant	1. Kiosk / shop 2. Transportation hub 3. Café / restaurant

3.4 In March 2018, the consultant conducted two engagement workshops with key stakeholders¹ and some members of the Country Parks Committee on the preferred options mentioned in paragraph 3.3 above. Workshop participants generally considered that the existing recreational uses in country parks such as hiking and camping were appropriate. While they did not have strong views on the

¹ Key stakeholders consulted include representatives of hiking and outdoor recreation associations, eco-tourism sector, academia, relevant non-governmental organisations, green groups, youth groups, professional bodies and cultural and heritage groups.

preferred options, they expressed that any options proposed should not compromise the conservation objective of CP/SA. In addition, they demanded that more financial resources and manpower should be allocated to AFCD for improving the management and maintenance of CP/SA and their facilities such as enhancing the hiking trail networks and the management of campsites.

3.5 Making reference to the views and comments gathered, the consultant will prepare a shortlist of proposals and broadly assess their feasibility with recommendations on their implementation. A public consultation on the short-listed proposals will be conducted in the second half of 2018. We will keep the Country and Marine Parks Board and Country Parks Committee informed of the progress, findings and recommendations of the Study.

4. Advice sought

4.1 Members are invited to comment on the Study, particularly the potential enhancement options identified by the consultant.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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