

# **Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department**

## **Guidelines on Permit Applications for Holding Fund-raising Events, Sporting Competitions, Public Meetings or Making Public Speeches in Country Parks or Special Areas**

### **Preamble**

- (1) According to the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A) (the “Regulations”), a permit in writing granted by the Country and Marine Parks Authority (the Authority) is required for holding sporting competitions, public meetings, making public speeches or events organised for the purpose of raising funds in country parks or special areas. An application for the above permit shall be made in writing to the Authority and shall be accompanied by the appropriate fee prescribed in the Regulations, except where a permit is to be issued free of charge. Upon receipt of an application, the Authority may (a) grant a permit, subject to such conditions as he thinks fit; or (b) refuse to grant a permit.
- (2) In order to facilitate event organisers to submit applications for holding sporting competitions, public meetings, making public speeches or events organised for the purpose of raising funds in country parks, these application guidelines set out the considerations and procedures for the processing of permit applications. Applicants should read the following considerations and guidelines before applying.

### **Considerations of the Authority**

- (3) As applications for holding sporting competitions, public meeting, making public speeches or events organised for the purpose of raising funds vary on their nature of activities, event locations, scale (e.g. number of participants) and duration, the Authority would carefully assess each application on its own merit taking into account the following principles: (a) impacts on the environment; (b) disturbance to other country park users; and (c) public safety.
- (4) Permits are not necessary for organising picnics, barbecues, hiking, training, nature appreciation guided-tours, or camping activities at designated sites. However, the application of permits may be necessary if such activities involve making public speeches, ceremonies or for fund-raising purpose.
- (5) In principle, events that will adversely impact on the natural environment and country park facilities, seriously affect the enjoyment and use of country park facilities by

other country park visitors, or pose safety hazard to the event participants or other country park users will not be approved. In this connection, stream courses and densely vegetated areas are more susceptible to environmental impacts arisen from sporting competition events; events involving large area, large number of participants, long duration and prolonged occupation of popular picnic, barbecue or camping sites are more likely to affect other country park users; and trekking along stream courses or seriously eroded trails are riskier than those on maintained trails. The Authority will also consider whether the nature of the activity is compatible with the natural environment of the countryside.

(6) In applying the above principles, the Authority has specific considerations for the following activities:

(a) Events at stream course

Applications for events conducted primarily along natural stream courses, including stream trekking or river rock scrambling, whether or not competitive in nature, shall not be approved in principle in view of the environmental and safety concerns.

(b) Sporting competitions at night

As the nocturnal wildlife is generally more active during wet season, applications for holding sporting competitions at night from 1 April to 30 September inclusive shall not be approved in principle. For night events in the rest of the year, strong justifications and appropriate measures to address the potential environmental impact and safety concerns should be provided.

(c) Events off regularly maintained trails

Sporting competitions and fund-raising events should be confined to maintained trails as far as possible. Pristine ridgeline and seriously eroded areas shall be avoided for running events in order to prevent exacerbating soil erosion, preserve the integrity of natural landscape and ensure public safety. Inclusion of a short unmaintained path for connecting maintained trails may be acceptable. Any proposed events involving unmaintained trails should be well justified for the Authority's consideration. Applicants can refer to the trail maps on AFCD's "Enjoy Hiking" website when planning the event route:  
<https://www.hiking.gov.hk/trailwithincpsa?lang=en-us>

(d) Biking events

To comply with the Regulations, biking events shall be confined to the designated mountain bike trails. Biking events should limit the number of

participants to a manageable size, avoid large coverage (e.g. covering more than one country park) and avoid popular recreational venues. In order to ensure public safety and protect tranquillity of the natural environment, biking events at night shall not be approved. In general, all biking events should be finished before 5:00 p.m.

### **Guidelines for the applicants**

- (7) Applications can be made 9 months in advance of the activity at the earliest, and must reach the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) at least 10 working days before the activity day. Applications made after the event will not be accepted. The submission time starts at 8:00 a.m. every day. AFCD will process the applications on a first-come-first-served basis. In general, only one event can be held in each country park on the same day subject to AFCD's consideration of each application.
- (8) In order to process the application promptly, ALL essential information including particulars of the organiser and applicant, event date, location, route plan (if applicable) and rundown) **MUST** be provided. Applications with incomplete information will not be accepted. The applicant may be required to submit supplementary information, including but not limited to layout plans of the venue(s) indicating any set-up such as shelters, banners, sound equipment, temporary portable toilets, etc.. The applicant should provide clarification and/or supplementary information within **10 working days** upon request by the AFCD. Failure to submit supplementary information and provide clarification within the said timeframe will be considered as a cancellation / withdrawal of application and the concerned activity date(s) will be reopened for application.
- (9) Applicants should minimise the number of shelters to be erected and confine the use of shelters to relevant supporting activities of the event, such as paramedics and marshals. If there is a genuine need to erect shelters, it should be specified on the application form, providing information on the size, number, design and location of the proposed shelters to be erected. If the size, number, design or location of erection of such shelters deviates from that specified on the application form, AFCD staff may demand the applicant to remove the shelters concerned.
- (10) Applicants should also minimise the number of signs, notices, posters, banners or advertisements displayed in country parks. If there is a genuine need to display them, this should be specified on the application form. Banners or signs may only be displayed at the main entrance or the main activity venue, and must not be displayed in a manner that will cause damage to trees or vegetation. Application for display of

items purely for commercial advertising purposes shall not be approved. If the size, number or location of display of such items deviates from that specified on the application form, AFCD staff may demand the applicant to remove the items concerned.

- (11) Applicants should avoid erecting backboards or platforms, or using sound equipment. If there is a genuine need to do so, it should be specified on the application form, showing the design of the proposed structures / equipment and providing information on their size, number and location to be erected / installed. Backboards and platforms should be kept to minimal sizes taking into account the physical setting of the venues and that the use of venues by other country park visitors would not be impacted. Besides, the use of sound equipment should not cause annoyance to other country park visitors.
- (12) Design details such as artwork of any platforms, shelters, signs, notices, posters and banners to be displayed in country parks should be submitted together with the application as far as possible. Fine adjustment is acceptable in the later stage but the finalised design must be provided to the AFCD at least 3 working days before the activity date or the concerned set-ups will not be approved.
- (13) No more than two applications can be made for a single event i.e. no more than one “backup” date can be applied for an event. To apply for the 3<sup>rd</sup> activity date(s) for the same event, the applicant should write to withdraw one of the previous applications (no matter it has been approved or not) and submit a new application. If an organiser wishes to hold two or more different events in the same area (e.g. same country park / similar route) within a 1-month period, the applicant must demonstrate that those are separate events (e.g. different event nature or target participants).
- (14) After confirmation of an application by the AFCD, request for amendment of essential information for the event namely particulars of organiser and applicant, event date, location, route plan and rundown) will render the application invalid. Unless justifiable reason(s) (e.g. inclement weather) are provided for the amendment, the applicant will be required to withdraw the related application(s) and submit a new application with the modified information. The applicant should provide a contingency plan for inclement weather in the application, with clear instructions to participants on the event arrangement in advance.
- (15) For fairness, should an application (no matter it is being assessed or has been approved) be withdrawn / cancelled according to para. (13) or (14), the applicant can only submit a new application for the same event or same activity date(s) 28 calendar days after the date of withdrawal / cancellation of event application (“downtime”) to make sure that other applicants will have a chance to note the concerned date is released. Permit

fee paid will not be refunded while separate permit fee will be charged for the new application.

- (16) Withdrawal / cancellation of application after issuance of permit or within 28 calendar days prior to the activity date without justifiable reasons (e.g. inclement weather), or cancellation of event at any juncture without informing the AFCD in advance i.e. “no show” to an approved event, will result in a bad track record for the concerned applicant.
- (17) Applicants should avoid bringing vehicles into the country parks. If there is a genuine need to do so, the number of vehicles should be minimised. The use of vehicles must be indicated specifically with justification when submitting the application. If the details of vehicles to be used could not be confirmed when applying the event permit, the applicant should submit a separate written application for bringing vehicles into country parks before the event day. Vehicles over 5.5 tonnes are generally not allowed to enter country parks. **Upon approval, applicants should obtain the hard copy of vehicle permit (in person / by registered post which will normally take at least 7 working days), and should display the permit on the vehicle’s window when in use.**
- (18) In order to maintain the cleanliness and naturalness of country parks and to promote waste reduction, the Authority encourages applicants to reduce the use of one-time / disposable items such as bottled waters. To ensure the waste generated in the event will be properly dealt with, the application should include a waste management plan detailing the overall reduction, collection and disposal of waste. Normally, applicants should collect and remove the waste generated upon completion of the event and ensure no litter is left over.
- (19) Permission of the activity does not mean the organisers have the exclusive right to use the activity area. General public and government personnel are free to access the venues at all time.
- (20) Permit fees are payable upon approval of permit application. Successful applicants will be notified by email or by telephone. They are required to pay the relevant permit fees within 5 working days upon notice in order to obtain the permits. Permission for the applications will be revoked if the applicants fail to pay the relevant permit fees within the specified period. Permits must be obtained before the commencement of the activity.
- (21) The permit fees are subject to adjustment without prior notice. Permit fees paid will NOT be refunded under any circumstances.
- (22) Successful applicants may pay the relevant permit fees in person at AFCD’s

Headquarters (5/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon), or via online payment (by credit card and FPS only). Upon confirmation of successful payment, AFCD will send the electronic organised event permit to the applicant by email. Unless otherwise requested, no printed copy of the permit will be provided to the applicant. Applicants may select to collect the printed copy permit in person or by post, if necessary.

- (23) Applicant is required to pay the permit fee and collect the permit in person if the payment is only made in:
  - (a) less than 3 working days prior to the permit use date; or
  - (b) less than 7 working days prior to the permit use date if the applicant has requested for a printed copy of the permit or applied for vehicle permit(s).
- (24) Information about permitted activities, including the location, date and time will be uploaded to AFCD's website for public inspection. If the applicant considers that some of the information should not be made available on the website, he/she should specifically indicate this and give justifications for our consideration when submitting the application.
- (25) Applicants issued with AFCD's permits for holding an event still need to apply for other permits required by other legislations. They should check for themselves whether they need to approach other government departments such as the Water Supplies Department or the Hong Kong Police Force in respect of the activities.
- (26) Applicants must observe closely the conditions listed on the permits and they have the responsibility to remind all staff, participants, agents, contractors, volunteers, etc. of the conditions. A permit may be revoked if the permit holder contravenes the Regulations or fail to comply with the permit condition(s). Violation of the Regulations is subject to prosecution.
- (27) Compliance with permit conditions is an indication of the permit holder's capability of effectively implementing a permitted event. Permit holders who fail to comply with the permit condition(s) will receive a warning letter listing the non-compliances detected.
- (28) The AFCD will take into account an organiser / applicant's track record including any record of non-compliance e.g. violation of permit conditions when vetting its future applications. Depending on the circumstances, the AFCD may consider suspending or imposing a certain period of "downtime" on the subsequent applications from the respective organiser / applicant.
- (29) Applicants and their employees or agents must not offer an advantage as defined in the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201) to any government officer in

connection with their applications or while having dealings of any kind with government departments.

- (30) The AFCD reserves the right to make the final decision on approving an application and to refuse the approval without giving any reason and without bearing any liability to any person.

**Circumstances where organised events will NOT be approved in principle**

- (31) To minimise impacts to the environment and other country park or special area users, approval for organised events at specific location and/or during a specific period will NOT be granted in principle, including but not limited to the following, subject to AFCD's advice:
- (a) Trail running events at Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve and Lions Nature Education Centre
  - (b) Any organised events at the area between Tai Tong and Kat Hing Bridge during "Red-leaf Season" (usually from December to January, subject to consideration by AFCD each year)
  - (c) Any organised events at the Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan during "Silvergrass Season" (usually from November to December, subject to consideration by AFCD each year)
  - (d) Any organised events at Tai Lam Country Park on Ching Ming Festival and Chung Yeung Festival and the Sunday before the concerned festivals
  - (e) Non-biking events at Dragon's Back Mountain Bike Trail from Monday to Saturday which is non-Public Holiday
  - (f) Any organised events at East Dam of High Island Reservoir and Dragon's Back during the National Golden Weeks, including but not limited to the Golden Week of Chinese New Year, Labour Day and National Day (exact dates are subject to further announcement).