

## **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 organized 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 organizers to submit applications for holding sporting competitions, public meetings, making public speeches or events organized 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 submitting an application.

#### **Considerations of the Authority**

- (3) As applications for holding sporting competitions, public meeting, making public speeches or events organized for the purpose of raising funds vary on their nature of activities, event locations, scale (e.g. number of participants), duration, the Authority would carefully assess each application on its own merit taking into account the following principles: (a) its impacts on the environment; (b) disturbance to other country park users; and (c) public safety.
- (4) In general, 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 principle. 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 prolong occupation of popular picnic, barbeque or camping sites are more likely to affect other country park users; and trekking along stream courses or seriously eroded trails are more risky 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.

(5) 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. Racing routes intercepting or crossing stream courses may be considered if strong justifications and appropriate measures to address potential environmental impact and safety concerns are provided.

(b) Sporting competitions at night

As the nocturnal wildlife is generally more active during summer or wet season, applications for holding sporting competitions at night from April to September inclusive shall not be approved in principle. For holding night time 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. An example of such an exception would be to include a short unmaintained path connecting maintained trails. Any proposed events involving unmaintained trails should be well justified for the consideration of the Authority.

(d) Biking events

In line with the Regulations, biking events shall be confined to designated mountain bike trails. Biking events should contain the number of participants to a manageable size, avoid large area coverage (such as involving more than one country park) and affecting popular recreational sites. In order to ensure public safety and protect tranquility of the natural environment, biking events at night time shall not be approved in principle. In general, all biking events should be finished before 5:00pm.

## **Guidelines for the applicants**

- (6) Applications can be made 9 months in advance (with effect from 1 January 2016) of the activity at the earliest, and must reach the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) at least 3 working days before the activity day. Applications made after the event will not be accepted. The submission time starts at 8:00am every day. If more than one application regarding the same venue for the same period is received, the AFCD will process the applications on a first-come-first-served basis.
- (7) In order to process the application promptly, information mentioned in Part C of the application form must be provided when submitting the application.
- (8) Permits are not necessary for organizing picnics, barbecues, hiking, training, nature appreciation guided-tours, or camping activities at designated sites, etc. However, the application of permits is necessary if such activities involve making public speeches, ceremonies or the use of large sound equipment system.
- (9) Country parks are for public enjoyment, and applicants should minimize the number of shelters to be erected and confine the use of shelters to relevant supporting activities of the event, such as paramedics and marshal. If there is a genuine need to do so, this should be indicated specifically on the application form, specifying the design of the proposed shelters and providing information on their size, number, design and location to be erected. In general, each shelter should not cover an area exceeding 10 m<sup>2</sup>. If the AFCD's on-site staff find that the size, number, design and location of erection of such shelters are different from those specified on the application form, they may demand the applicant to remove the shelters concerned.
- (10) Applicants should minimize the number of signs, notices, posters, banners or advertisements displayed in country parks. If there is a genuine need to display such items which are larger than A3 size, this should be indicated specifically on the application form. Banners or signs may only be hung at the main entrance or the main activity venue, and must not be hung in a manner that will cause damage to trees or vegetation. Application for display of items purely for commercial advertising purposes will not be approved. In general, all display items should not exceed the size of 1 m x 4 m. If the AFCD's on-site staff find that the size, number and location of display of such items are different from those specified on the application form, they may demand the applicant to remove the items concerned. For items smaller than A3 size, the applicant is free to post a reasonable number at/along the event routes during the activity time within the venue. However, the AFCD's staff, with regard to the situation, reserves the right to demand the applicant to modify the content of the items posted or remove them.

- (11) Applicants should as far as possible avoid erecting backboards or platforms, or installing sound equipment. If there is a genuine need to do so, this should be indicated specifically on the application form, specifying 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 small sizes taking into account the physical setting of the venues such that the use of venues by other country park visitors would not be interfered. The operation of sound equipment should not cause annoyance to other country park visitors.
- (12) Applicants must submit a layout plan of the venue, indicating the position of any shelter, poster, banner, advertisement, sound equipment, table, chair, machinery, reception counter, first aid post, support post, temporary toilet, etc. The layout plan should be as detailed as possible and all items/structures must be positioned according to the layout plan. However, the AFCD's staff may demand the applicant to change the position of the items with regard to the situation at site on the activity day.
- (13) Applicants should avoid bringing vehicles into the country parks. If there is a genuine need to do so, the number of vehicles should be minimized. 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 written application for bringing vehicles into country parks before the event day. Vehicles over 5.5 tonnes are not allowed to enter country parks. **Upon approval, applicants should obtain the hard copy vehicle entry permit (in person/by registered post which will normally take at least 6 working days), and should display the permit on the vehicle's window when in use.**
- (14) 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 water. To ensure the wastes generated in the course of the event are properly dealt with, the application should be accompanied with a waste management plan which provides for the overall reduction, collection and disposal of wastes. Normally, applicants should collect and remove the wastes generated upon completion of the event and ensure no left-over.
- (15) Permission of the activity does not mean the organizers have the exclusive right to use the activity area. General public and government personnel are free to access the venues at all time.
- (16) After the issuance of a permit, request for amendment of information provided on the application form will be regarded as a new application. The applicant should submit a written request 3 working days before the activity day for consideration of the amendment. A regular permit fee will be charged upon approval.

- (17) Successful applicants will be notified by email, fax or by telephone. They are required to pay the relevant fees within 5 working days upon notice and obtain the permits. Permission for the applications will be revoked if the applicants fail to pay the relevant fees within the specified period. Note: Permits must be obtained before the commencement of the activity.
- (18) Successful applicants may pay the relevant 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 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.
- (19) Applicants are required to collect the permit(s) in person if the online payment has been successful in:
- (a) less than 3 working days prior to the permit use date; or
  - (b) less than 6 working days prior to the permit use date if the applicants have requested a printed copy of the permit or applied for vehicle permit(s).
- (20) Permit fees are payable upon collection of permits at the following rates: \$520 for each event; \$317 for each shelter; and \$250 each month (or for a period less than a month) for the display of any sign, notice, poster, banner or advertisement. The fees are subject to adjustment without prior notice. Permit fees paid will NOT be refunded under any circumstances.
- (21) Information about permitted activities, including the location, date and time may 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.
- (22) 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.

- (23) Applicants must observe closely the conditions listed on the permits and they have the responsibility to remind all participants, workers and volunteers 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.
  
- (24) 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-compliance detected. The AFCD will take into account an applicant's records of non-compliance in processing future applications.

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