

For discussion on
26 May 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development Development of Tourism on Outlying Islands

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the development and promotion of tourism on outlying islands.

Background

2. Many outlying islands in Hong Kong, including Lantau Island, Cheung Chau, Lamma Island, Peng Chau, Kat O, Tap Mun, Tung Ping Chau etc. are picturesque and interesting, offering favourable conditions for development of green tourism. These islands' uniqueness lies in their natural scenery, local living culture and heritage, traditional festivals and customs, as well as seafood cuisines. All these appeal to both local residents and overseas visitors alike.

3. Developing a diversified portfolio of tourist attractions can help enhance Hong Kong's attractiveness as a premier tourist destination. The Government has been developing green tourism on outlying islands in line with the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development to enrich visitors' travelling experience and help boost the local community economy of these islands.

Tourism Infrastructures and Supporting Facilities

4. Lantau Island is the largest among all outlying islands. The Government has been developing major tourism infrastructures in North Lantau in recent years. These include the Hong Kong Disneyland, Ngong Ping 360, AsiaWorld-Expo, Terminal Building No. 2 – SkyPlaza etc. The Tourism Commission (TC) will also commence work on the Public Facilities Enhancement Programme at Ngong Ping on Lantau Island in June 2008, which includes the construction of a landscaped piazza linking the Giant Buddha, the

Po Lin Monastery, the Wisdom Path, Ngong Ping 360 etc. to facilitate better pedestrian flow and maximize the synergy among these attractions. The construction works are expected to complete in late 2009. As regards South Lantau and other outlying islands, their natural scenery is our most valuable asset. The Government will continue to provide and enhance supporting tourism facilities on these islands under the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development.

5. For the convenience of visitors to outlying islands, the TC has, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and the Architectural Services Department, installed a number of directional signs and mapboards on the islands. The TC also facilitates the participation of private and voluntary organisations in providing tourism-related information boards along the island trails. For example, the TC has recently assisted the Hongkong Electric Company Limited and the Conservancy Association in implementing the “Green Lamma Green” programme which involves installation of 20 information boards on Lamma Island with a view to introducing the natural ecology of the island to visitors. The project has just been completed this month. In addition, the TC has implemented in phases enhancement programmes for a number of green tourism attractions in Northeast New Territories, including Kat O, Tap Mun, Ap Chau and Tung Ping Chau. The projects include reconstruction of piazzas, installation of identification signs and mapboards, provision and improvement of seating facilities, lighting enhancement, tree planting, and improvement of existing tourism facilities such as toilets and piers. Most of the works will be completed in 2008.

6. To enhance the travel industry’s knowledge in eco-tourism, the Government has, since 2004, provided training courses on nature guided tours through the Skills Upgrading Scheme for tourist guides and staff of travel agencies. So far some 360 persons have completed their training.

7. On the other hand, the Home Affairs Department (HAD), through its Rural Public Works Programme, improves the infrastructure and the living environment of the rural areas on outlying islands in response to community needs, e.g. improving or repaving footpaths and vehicular access. Moreover, the District Councils (DCs) may deploy funds under the District Minor Works Programme to initiate and implement district minor works projects to improve

or provide tourism facilities in support of the tourism development on outlying islands. The HAD and DCs also use their resources to organise or support various activities on outlying islands to promote the local attractions, thereby improving residents' sense of belonging to the outlying islands and boosting the local community economy.

8. Much of the outlying islands has been designated as country parks and some of the surrounding waters marine parks, under the management of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD). The AFCD has put in a lot of efforts in the management of country parks, implementation of nature conservation and educational initiatives, protection of local fauna and flora, as well as continuous improvement of the environment of country parks. For instance, in response to visitors' demand, the AFCD has erected numbered signs with brief descriptions on local wildlife along the trails in the Lantau North and Lantau South Country Parks. The Department has also developed the Ngong Ping Fun Walk Trail to enable local and overseas visitors to understand better the attractions and ecological features of Ngong Ping. In March this year, it set up a visitors' centre in Ngong Ping where eco-tour guide services and DIY (Do-It-Yourself) itineraries are provided to help visitors better understand and appreciate nature as well as temples and other cultural features on Lantau Island.

Promotion and Publicity

9. On overseas publicity, the HKTB has been promoting the attractions on Lantau Island, Cheung Chau, Lamma Island, Peng Chau etc. through various channels, including its website, promotional activities and publications like *Hong Kong Visitor's Kit*, *Discover Hong Kong Nature* and *Hong Kong Family Fun Guide*. The HKTB also promotes the Island Hopping Pass, a one-day ferry pass for visitors to travel to Lantau Island, Cheung Chau and Peng Chau, and introducing to them quality guided tours to outlying islands such as the New Lantau Island Tour. In addition, the HKTB works with the travel industry to promote special traditional Chinese customs and festivals such as the Buddha's Birthday celebrations at Po Lin Monastery, the Hung Shing Festival in Mui Wo, the Cheung Chau Bun Festival etc., and encourages the industry to organise various tours for visitors to participate in the festive programmes. In recent years, the HKTB has developed with the industry an islands hopping tour to attract visitors to appreciate the natural and scenic spots

in Northeast New Territories including the coastal landscape of the Yan Chau Tong Marine Park, the unique indigenous tree species and Hakka villages in Lai Chi Wo, the traditional fishing village and Tin Hau Kung Temple in Kat O, as well as the famous Balanced Rock in Tap Mun. Meanwhile, the Nature Kaleidoscope programme organised by the HKTB offers the Tai O Eco-tour and promotes the Ngong Ping Fun Walk organised by the AFCD to entice visitors to appreciate the attractions of outlying islands. The HKTB also organizes various public relations and publicity programmes like familiarisation visits for overseas mass media, and joint productions with overseas travel media including the press and TV stations, to introduce to overseas visitors Hong Kong's green scenery, and the unique features, living culture and traditional festivals of outlying islands.

10. As for local publicity, the HAD has set up the "Hong Kong Fun in 18 Districts" website to provide information on district characteristics and attractions, including the attractions on the outlying islands, such as the Silver Mine Cave in Mui Wo (Lantau Island), the Cheung Po Tsai Cave on Cheung Chau, the Kamikaze Cave on Lamma Island, as well as the Lung Mo Temple and Golden Flower Shrine on Peng Chau. In addition, the HAD has been working in collaboration with DCs in implementing various measures to promote district attractions. These measures include promoting and celebrating traditional festivals, publishing a booklet on *Heritages of the Islands District Hong Kong*, a leaflet on *Exploring Islands* and *Postcards of Islands District 2007* designed to present the natural and cultural heritage as well as cultural activities on outlying islands.

11. In parallel, the AFCD has been promoting green tourism, highlighting in particular Hong Kong's country parks, through different channels such as the internet, publications, on-site information boards and themed activities. In this connection, the AFCD plans to produce a publication to present to visitors the countryside characteristics of Hong Kong's outlying islands.

Way Forward

12. The support and participation of the local community is an important factor for tourism development on outlying islands. The HAD will continue to provide the public and visitors with information on the

characteristics and attractions of various districts through the “Hong Kong Fun in 18 Districts” website. It will also continue to render support to DCs’ projects on publicising local attractions.

13. To achieve the long-term target of improving Mui Wo and Tai O areas, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) commissioned in June 2007 a consultancy study on the feasibility of the “Facelift of Mui Wo” and the “Facelift of Tai O” projects, followed by a public forum on the consultants’ preliminary ideas in September 2007. The CEDD is now collating the views collected, which will form the basis for future work.

14. The AFCD is planning to extend the existing Lantau Trail to Northeast Lantau. There are also plans to construct new country trails for local and overseas visitors alike. In addition, the AFCD will provide campsites around Mong To Au and Lo Fu Tau, and identify appropriate locations for viewing platforms along the Lantau Trail and other country trails. In collaboration with Islands DC, AFCD plans to develop an eco-heritage trail that leads from Peng Chau to Lantau Country Parks and other sites of ecological, historical and cultural interests nearby to promote nature tourism on Lantau Island.

15. According to the market research conducted by the HKTB in 2007, visits to outlying islands are more appealing to long-haul markets, with some 20% of the overnight vacation visitors indicating that they have visited the islands. For short-haul markets (South and Southeast Asia), about 8% of the visitors have been to outlying islands and they are mainly interested in visiting temples and the Giant Buddha.

16. As regards tourism assets, each island has its own character and unique features. The HKTB will continue to step up the promotion of the characteristics of various outlying islands, such as the Giant Buddha at Ngong Ping, the fishing village in Tai O, the country walks in North Lantau, the natural scenery of South Lantau, the small island ambience and traditional festivals on Cheung Chau, the seafood cuisines and hiking trails on Lamma Island, as well as the small bazaar with ancient appearance on Peng Chau.

17. To enhance its overseas promotion, the HKTB is planning to work with the travel industry to offer more tourism products related to the outlying islands, including Lamma Island guided tours, Tung Lung Island tours, and

tours to Sai Kung and its adjacent islands. This summer, the HKTB will also publish *Living Culture Tours to HK's Outlying Islands*, which introduces the special features of outlying islands. Under the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development, the TC will, in collaboration with the HKTB and the industry, continue to develop and promote green tourism on various scenic and distinctive islands, encourage the development of diversified tourism, with a view to strengthening Hong Kong's position as the most popular city destination in Asia, and further boosting Hong Kong's tourism and local community economy.

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
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