

Chapter 5 Situation Analysis and Recommendations

- 239 This chapter presents a situation analysis of issues and opportunities affecting the Northern New Territories. Study area wide and site specific recommendations are identified to develop tourism activity, overcome barriers or improve services and facilities. Chapter 6 provides specific actions for each of the 10 clusters examined in detail.



5.1 Macro-environmental Issues

5.1.1 Master Planning

- 240 The mandate of the study was to examine the tourism potential of the Northern New Territories and to propose a number of actions. It is recognized that this research represents the first step in developing the tourism potential of the region. However, before any large scale tourism activity occurs, a regional master plan is required.
- 241 A number of stakeholder groups have expressed an interest in tourism in the region. The study team also found a number of incidents of conflicting or potentially conflicting land and water uses (farming and temples, aquaculture and recreation), potential for conflict in activity uses (bushwalkers vs. cyclists) and the like. The pig farm next to Wun Tsuen Seen Koon is a typical example of conflicting land use. The strong smell of the pigs is an unpleasant welcome for visitors to the temple.
- 242 Finally, the existing tourism industry is typified by an informal, unregulated, unlicensed and part-time sector that offers low quality tourism services and facilities. Spontaneous development and lack of coordination is apparent.

Recommendation 1

To develop a formal tourism master plan for the Northern New Territories, building on the ideas generated in this report.

- 243 The purpose of this study was to conduct a supply side assessment of the tourism potential of the Northern New Territories. The local, Hong Kong market has been identified as the primary market for much of this area. Yet, virtually no market research has been conducted examining the demand side interest in visiting this area.

Recommendation 2

To commission a comprehensive examination of the domestic tourism market interest into the tourism potential of the Northern New Territories.

5.1.2 Maintaining the Integrity of the Region

- 244 The study area is unique in Hong Kong. It is still largely rural, contains a number of protected areas and country parks has largely maintained its unique cultural heritage and its natural assets remain robust. From a tourism perspective, the area has the potential to offer both local residents and international tourists experiences that cannot easily be found elsewhere in Hong Kong. It is noted that statutory planning controls exist and these together with the regulations governing the use of land in ecologically sensitive areas will have to be taken into consideration in any future tourism development. Tourism activity and any tourism development that is incompatible with these assets will detract from the appeal of the region.

Recommendation 3

Any tourism activity should seek to maintain the essential cultural, heritage and ecological character of the area, with the conservation of cultural and natural heritage assets being the guiding principle. The Government of the HKSAR must have mechanisms in place to control and monitor tourism development in these sensitive areas before it can be allowed to begin.

- 245 The Northern New Territories contains a number of small, mostly unoccupied villages that have significant potential to be converted for tourism use. Adaptive reuse includes interpretation, the creation of house museums, the provision of tourism services, the provision of tourism accommodation and amenity improvement as previous outlined in this report. However, the cultural heritage fabric of many of these villages could be irreparably damaged without proper planning to conserve their values and assets.

Recommendation 4

Comprehensive conservation plans be completed and implemented for Luk Keng, Nam Chung, Lai Chi Wo, Sam a Tsuen, Sha Tau, Lin Ma Hang, Heung Yuen Wai, Ha Hueng Yuen, Tsung Yuen Ha, Fung Wong Wu and other villages identified for tourism use, based on the principles and guidelines of the Australian International Council on Monuments and Sites Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter) that is now becoming the model for such work in Hong Kong SAR.

5.1.3 Interpretation

- 246 While large parts of the study area have been set aside as protected areas, either as country parks, marine parks, a RAMSAR site or reservoirs, the special features of the study area are not presented as effectively as they could be to visitors. Some information about natural heritage is available, but generally no interpretation of the cultural heritage has been developed. In addition, access to this information is inconsistent. One government department is not able to sell publications produced by another department, information is not available at trailheads or transport access points, the quality of interpretation is variable and some interpretation is presented unilingually.

Recommendation 5

Interpret and explain the natural and cultural landscapes more effectively, through the development of an integrated series of guide books, trail notes, village histories, site museums, and the interpretation of special items of interest in villages or along trails. Guides who are to lead nature oriented tours would need special training unless they themselves are already very experienced in wildlife observation.



Information is available but not for sale



5.1.4 Signage at the KCR

- 247 Awareness of the area is low. Elsewhere in this report, a variety of measures are proposed to increase awareness. The recommendation below relates to information provision at rail access points:

Recommendation 6

To erect bilingual signs and maps (large and small scale) and interactive computer terminals at Tai Po, Fanling and Sheng Shui KCR stations as well as Tin Shui Wai LRT and West Rail stations identifying features of the region and providing access information. (It is noted from Tai Po District Office that action is already in hand to install an interactive touch screen computer terminal at Tai Po Market KCR station. Signage and tourist maps will also be put up at Tai Po Market and Tai Wo KCR stations. Additional signage will be erected in Tai Po Market downtown area adjoining the KCR station.)

5.1.5 Amenity and Visual Appeal of the Region

- 248 Overall, the amenity of the study area needs improvement. While it is recognized that significant steps have been taken to improve the amenity of the Northern New Territories over the past 10 years, much of the area is still unattractive for tourists. Visual pollution caused by containers, abandoned cars and litter detract from the area. Black, foul smelling streams flow past villages and farmland of cultural interest. Floating garbage, especially in marine parks, and remote village harbours littered with everything from beds to refrigerators, to batteries are counterproductive to the presentation of the area as an attractive setting for nature based tourism. In addition, at every anchorage the study team visited, garbage and debris including abandoned fishing nets were picked up by anchors, making moorings potentially hazardous. Finally, remote villages both on outer islands and on the Hong Kong mainland are in a generally poor state of presentation, with debris, abandoned vehicles, tyres, motorcycles, garbage and litter detracting from the appeal of the region.

Recommendation 7

To initiate a systematic, ongoing campaign to clean up the environment and remove garbage from terrestrial and marine environments.

The study team recommends strongly that the Tourism Commission advocate for the establishment of a program similar to the Tourism Orientation Program (TOPS) for environmental management, whereby a corps of young people be employed to clean up the environment. Such a project could be pilot tested in the study area and, when proven successful, be expanded across Hong Kong. Maintenance of the cleaned areas would be turned over to local resident committees.



A few shots of visual pollution in the area

5.1.6 Coordination

- 249 The study area encompasses two administrative districts fully (Tai Po and North Districts) and also three districts partly (Yuen Long, Sha Tin and Sai Kung Districts). In the past, each of these districts has undertaken some tourism promotion activities and has advocated tourism development proposals independently. Yet, it is evident that these districts share much in common and that more benefits could accrue through cooperation and collaboration rather than by independent action.
- 250 Further, numerous Government departments have a legitimate interest in the management of the region (including all on the Steering Committee).

Recommendation 8

That a Northern New Territories Tourism Advisory Group be established with membership from all Districts involved to coordinate orderly development of the region and to jointly promote and market the area. This body should also have representation from the private sector and from other government departments.

Recommendation 9

That a Northern New Territories Tourism Working Group be established among Government Departments at an SAR wide level to coordinate and plan future tourism activities.

5.1.7 Carrying Capacity Issues

- 251 Parts of the study area are very environmentally sensitive and as a consequence have a limited carrying capacity. Generally the further north one travels, the more limited the carrying capacity becomes. Most parts of the Inner Tolo Harbour are robust as is the area designated for high intensity recreational use. However, the nature and cultural tourism zones and the FCA have limited abilities to withstand visitation.
- 252 The terrestrial and marine resource base is finite and can only withstand limited amounts of visitation before it will begin to deteriorate. Much of the historic cultural heritage is in a poor state of repair and, more importantly, is frequently not protected. Souveniring of remnant cultural and historic artefacts is a threat to the potential cultural integrity of the area. The water and sewage infrastructure is limited, further limiting the amount of tourism activity. Parking facilities for self-drive local motorists is limited. There is a small, aged, remnant resident population who may not be interested in welcoming tourists. Finally existing tourism activity, in the form of organized days tours, is already at times overwhelming some of the smaller localities, such as the villages on Kat O.

Recommendation 10

That each of the four main regions identified (and their component 10 sub-zones) be managed to achieve different goals relating to volume and intensity of use.

Recommendation 11

That the southern parts of the study area, including the inner Tolo Harbour, Tolo Channel and related islands, plus the villages in Kat O be designated as heavy-use recreational zones.

Recommendation 12

That the northern part of the study region, including the Frontier Closed Area and the Protected Areas be managed for lower intensity but high yield tourism.

Recommendation 13

That pending further analysis of the impacts of tourism activity in protected areas, active management plans be introduced to control usage. Such actions can include entry by ballot, daily quotas on use, and active policing.

5.1.8 Early Stages of Tourism

- 253 At present, the Northern New Territories is in the very early stage of the tourism life cycle. While the region has a number of natural and cultural assets that are sufficiently interesting to draw significant numbers of local and international tourists, it is lacking in infrastructure to cater for many of the needs of these tourists and to provide high-quality experiences. While tourism promotion is encouraged, caution is urged to limit the scale of such activity until infrastructure and management that cater for tourist use are in place.

Recommendation 14

That the Hong Kong Tourism Board be strongly advised to adopt a cautious approach in promoting the more remote parts of this area until appropriate tourist services and facilities are provided and until management regimes are in place that ensure the sustainable use of the resources.

5.1.9 Frontier Closed Area

- 254 The study team recognizes the unique and special issues relating to the Frontier Closed Area (FCA). The team further recognizes the need to maintain the integrity of the FCA and that wide ranging and open access to this area is unlikely to occur in the short term. Given the current restrictions it must, however, be noted that the existing permit system effectively precludes the tourism potential of the area from being realized.
- 255 However, it must also be recognized that the area within the FCA contains a wide array of unique and attractive tourism opportunities, including ecotourism activities, nature based recreational activities (such as walking and bicycle riding), a wide variety of commercial or revenue generating touring opportunities, frontier tourism, dining, historical tourism, and overnight accommodation opportunities. Further, Sha Tau Kok is uniquely situated to become the gateway for outer islands and to marine park tourism.

Recommendation 15

That two different tourism protocols be applied to Sha Tau Kok and the rest of the FCA, with the current police post located between San Kwai Tan and Pak Kung Au identified as the boundary between the two districts.

Recommendation 16

To establish Sha Tau Kok as the tourist and supply gateway to the outer islands, the study team recommends the establishment of direct, non-stop, dedicated shuttle bus links between the Fanling KCR Station / Sheung Shui and the Sha Tau Kok ferry pier. A model similar to the one used for cross border buses is proposed. A secure shopping zone plus ancillary facilities would need to be provided in close proximity to the ferry pier for these passengers. Other than being a local gateway, the area can also serve as a cross border town with traffic to and from the mainland.

Recommendation 17

In principle, access restrictions for Hong Kong residents visiting Sha Tau Kok should be relaxed. However, it is recognized that this issue requires further investigation.

Recommendation 18

Working in co-operation with Chinese immigration authorities, access to Chung Ying Street be provided for Hong Kong residents and international visitors with a valid China visa.

Recommendation 19

That access restrictions be eased in the rest of the FCA (excluding Sha Tau Kok) according to the following proposals:

- controlled access be provided through licensed tour operators for a variety of nature-based, ecotourism and cultural tourism activities. A system similar to that used with Mai Po Nature Reserve (floating permits allocated to operators) be implemented. In this manner, access could be provided but would be controlled through a small number of operators.
- additional access be provided for tourists wishing to stay overnight in selected registered bed and breakfasts and village houses. Each property would apply for a limited number of access permits based on the number of beds provided. Property owners would be required to satisfy a number of conditions to be eligible to accommodate fee paying visitors, including: registration with a designated tour operator/property management company; licensing and other regulatory requirements.

5.2 Competitive Issues

5.2.1 *Scale of Tourism*

256 Tourism within the study area can only succeed if it overcomes its competitive disadvantages and capitalizes on its competitive advantages. The area faces a number of potential competitive disadvantages, including:

- physical remoteness
- difficulty of access compared to other Hong Kong destinations
- psychological remoteness (perceived to be at the end of the already isolated New Territories)
- poor market access (Sai Kung, Lamma Island, Cheung Chau and Lantau are closer to main residential and tourist areas)
- poor awareness of the islands of the Northern New Territories as a destination, compared to Lamma Island, Cheung Chau and Lantau Island
- a lack of existing facilities and services to cater for tourists and local residents
- a lack of a recognized gateway centre

257 However, it does enjoy several potential competitive advantages, including:

- isolation and remoteness and peace and quiet
- spectacular scenery
- largely intact cultural heritage
- protected areas and closed areas, which has led to the conservation of many intact villages and much farmland.

258 The combination of these features will dictate the type and volume of tourist attracted to the area.

Recommendation 20

The southern part of the study area including Tolo Harbour, Tolo Channel and Plover Cove Reservoir, plus the villages in Kat O are suitable for intense local recreational day visitors.

Recommendation 21

The northern part of the study area including the FCA, country and marine parks and outer islands should be positioned as a low volume, high quality destination area.

5.2.2 Access / Gateway Point

- 259 At present, the area lacks a clearly identifiable gateway, for both tourists (land and water transport hub, shops, etc) and supplies point for tourist facilities in the area (service centre to transport goods and supplies to outer areas). Sai Kung town is an example of an effective gateway in a different region of Hong Kong. On weekends especially, it is a hive of activity as tourists access outer islands and country parks from its harbour. Local shops provide a wide range of goods and services to day visitors and overnight tourists.

Recommendation 22

Given the unique features of the area, it is recommended that Tai Po (and later Ma On Shan once the KCR extension is completed) be designated the southern gateways, while Sha Tau Kok be designated the north-eastern gateway. Tai Po will serve largely the Tolo Harbour and Tolo Channel area, Hoi Ha Wan and Tap Mun Island and also act as the southern gateway into the country parks. Sha Tau Kok will serve as the northern gateway into the country park and, primarily, as the access point to marine parks and outer islands.



The existing pier at Ma Liu Shui is mainly used during weekends. No food or information facilities are available.

5.3 Business Structure

5.3.1 *Part-time vs. Full-time Business*

- 260 With the exception of facilities along Ting Kok Rd, including restaurants located in and around Tai Mei Tuk, the study area is typified by an informal, unregulated, unlicensed part-time tourism industry of modest to low standard. This situation applies particularly to the accommodation sector, where a robust, but informal accommodation sector seems to exist in many remote areas. However, it also applies to some food service and activity providers, especially in the more remote areas where former residents return to their villages on weekends to sell products to tourists.
- 261 It is likely that most of these operators are not interested in becoming full-time tourist operators as they have full-time jobs elsewhere.



Budget accommodation on Tung Ping Chau

- 262 Moreover, many of the remote villages that act as the focal point for tourism have no permanent populations or a low permanent population typified by senior citizens. Much tourism activity occurs in abandoned or mostly abandoned villages, where former residents return on weekends. During the week, even the most basic services are not available.
- 263 The informal, unstructured and part-time nature of the tourism business represents a significant impediment to the development of a commercially viable tourism sector. In addition, the lack of regulation also raises health and safety questions about such things as food hygiene, fire regulations and liability insurance coverage.

Recommendation 23

Informal and unlicensed accommodation, food service, attraction and transport operators need to be licensed or at least registered and hence subjected to inspection and control.

Recommendation 24

The development of this area as an international tourism destination requires the establishment of a permanent tourism industry. This will likely occur through the introduction of non-local residents into ownership and/or management positions in tourism businesses.



Store on Ping Chau offering food service and marine information

5.3.2 Pricing and Value for Money

- 264 Day trip ferry tours to outer islands are offered at as little as \$109, including a meal. The local restaurateur earns as little as \$25 per person for a meal. Likewise, accommodation can be had for as little as \$20 per person per night. The low prices charged reflect the low quality of services provided, creating a vicious circle: insufficient income is generated to improve the quality, so the quality stays low, ensuring low prices. The main beneficiaries are the Hong Kong based tour operators and the tourists.

Recommendation 25

Operators must enhance the quality of the product offered, insuring high value for money.

5.3.3 Information Dissemination

- 265 It is difficult to find information about organized tours, charter boat or water taxi access to this area. What tours exist tend to operate mostly by word of mouth, targeting specific neighbourhoods or suburbs and targeting exclusively the Cantonese speaking population. Therefore, it is almost impossible for international tourists and those who lack contacts with word of mouth providers to obtain information, presenting a severe limitation on their ability to visit. In addition, it is difficult for most local residents who do not have the word of mouth knowledge to participate in organized tours to this region.

Recommendation 26

That a website offering a central clearing house of information about product offerings including commercial tours to this area be established and maintained regularly. This site could be run by the HKTb to encourage more domestic tourism.

5.3.4 Cruise Operators Association

- 266 The potential for commercial day and overnight cruises to the area is high, yet, again, unless one has contacts within the boating fraternity, it is difficult to hire a vessel. While there is no formal industry, a substantial informal cruise industry exists.

Recommendation 27

To work with the boating sector to establish an association of commercial boat operators whose primary objectives are to establish a register of boats available for hire and to coordinate the marketing of day and overnight boat tours.

5.4 Infrastructure

5.4.1 *Improve Infrastructure*

267 The study team has identified a number of development opportunities to capitalize on the tourism potential of this region. However, the lack of infrastructure, in particular water and sewage infrastructure, represents a significant limiting factor to the ability to provide appropriate tourism facilities. It is recognized that a number of Public Works projects are currently under way to provide water and sewage to isolated villages.

Recommendation 28

Where indicated in the report, water, sewage and electricity infrastructure be provided or enhanced.

Recommendation 29

Expand or extend ferry piers at Kat O and Tap Mun as demand requires. (It is noted from the Marine Department that the piers at Kat O and Tap Mun will soon be modified.)



Pier at Kat O

5.4.2 Public Transport

- 268 Physical access remains difficult. There is overall deficiency in the frequency and type of public transportation facilities provided. Many bus and ferry services operate only on weekends and public holidays, which inhibits the development of this area as a destination attraction. The study team recommends strongly that public transport services be enhanced, but does not recommend that the existing road network be modified without a thorough transport needs study being conducted first.

Recommendation 30

Expand the range and type of public transport services provided, including increasing the number of water taxis serving outer islands.

Recommendation 31

Create a ‘hop-on-hop-off’ circle bus and route running in both directions between Tai Po and Fanling / Sheung Shui via Plover Cove.

Recommendation 32

Extend the bicycle path from Tai Mei Tuk to Sha Tau Kok Road. (It is noted from North District Office that TDD is employing a consultant to study the provision of cycling tracks in the New Territories.)

5.4.3 Deepwater Cruise Ship Terminal

269 The entrance to the Tolo Channel offers unique and spectacular views, reminiscent of sailing through a fjord. Hong Kong is searching for a second cruise ship terminal location and a site in Kai Tak has been identified. Tolo Harbour holds much potential to become a new cruise centre. However, the waters in the harbour are apparently valuable spawning and nursery grounds for commercial fishes, and these may be affected by increases in shipping activity. Establishing a terminal in this location would relieve the congestion in Victoria Harbour, and move the focus of shipboard tourism northwards into the study area. Tolo Harbour would be an excellent departure point for passenger ferries along the China coast to Shantou, Xiamen, and Shanghai. The Tolo Channel is a natural deep-water passage that does not require maintenance dredging, therefore there would be no establishment or maintenance costs. Currently, ocean-going vessels are mothballed near Tai Po, demonstrating that access is practicable.

Recommendation 33

To conduct a detailed feasibility study, including environmental impact assessment of establishing a new deepwater cruise terminal in Tolo Harbour at the reclamation area next to the new Science Park, thus providing visitors with a different approach to Hong Kong.

5.5 Accommodation

5.5.1 *Provision of a Range of Accommodation*

- 270 The creation of suitable overnight accommodation is important for the ability of this area to generate the maximum benefits from tourism. If this area is to become a destination, then suitable overnight accommodation must be provided.
- 271 At present, the area is largely a day trip destination for local residents, with some camping and boat based overnight tourism. In addition, as mentioned above, an informal accommodation sector exists providing very low quality accommodation with questionable safety standards.



Unlicensed accommodation

- 272 The development of large-scale commercial accommodation outside of the areas identified for intense recreational use is unlikely to occur. Moreover, access restrictions preclude large-scale resort development in the FCA.
- 273 However, the array of abandoned and partly abandoned villages offers a significant opportunity to provide commercial accommodation using existing village houses. In addition, there are many structurally sound, but abandoned historic buildings in the area that have the potential to be brought back to life as accommodation houses providing a unique, authentic heritage experience. Lastly, some villages are suited to be transformed from abandoned or mostly abandoned villages into vibrant centres of tourist activity.
- 274 The recommendations itemized below identify opportunities to create a variety of tourist accommodations, from hostel style lodging to up-market, authentic historic lodgings. In doing so, the proposals also provide opportunities for many villages to become economically viable again, while at the same time providing a justification to conserve historic structures and tangible heritage.
- 275 The recommendations may require modifying existing regulations to allow commercial accommodation or to create new classes of commercial accommodation.
- 276 The following recommendations need to be viewed in their entirety. Different scales are proposed, with the last recommendation identifying a possible management structure.

Recommendation 34

Resort development be considered only in the following areas identified for intense recreational use:

- **Wu Kai Sha Tsui (Whitehead site), near Ma On Shan in the inner Tolo Harbour is identified as the most appropriate location for large-scale resort development. It is noted that alternative development plans may already be in place for the site.**
- **Tai Mei Tuk**
- **The villages of Tung O and Chung Kan O on Kat O also hold potential for small-scale resort development. Such a development would necessitate the demolition of many of the existing village houses, making this proposal a longer term suggestion.**

Recommendation 35

Hostel-style accommodation be formalized and provided for international backpackers and low budget local residents. Existing, unlicensed premises should be converted first as market demand already exists. New opportunities can also be developed. Potential locations include:

- **Tung Ping Chau - A Ma Tsui and surrounds**
- **Tap Mun - Chung Mei Kok**
- **Lai Chi Wo**
- **Kat O**



Recommendation 36

Unused buildings in government ownership (e.g. schools) be converted to hostel-style accommodation.



The unused school house at Lai Chi Wo

Recommendation 37

Existing village houses be converted into commercial bed and breakfast accommodation. Suitable licensing conditions will need to be established. In particular, the following villages are identified:

- **FCA - Hang Yuen Wai, Lin Ma Hang, Tsung Yuen Ha and Fung Wong Wu**
- **Sha Tau Kok Hoi - Luk Keng and Nam Chung**
- **Plover Cove Country Park - Lai Chi Wo**
- **Tung Ping Chau - A Ma Tsui and surrounds**
- **Other villages as identified**

Recommendation 38

That a bed and breakfast association be established to manage and market commercial bed and breakfast operations.

Recommendation 39

That structurally sound historic houses (whether occupied or not) be converted to heritage tourist accommodation. Such a process would be funded through a formal government policy encouraging the sensitive conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage houses for tourism accommodation, as a means of conserving the rapidly dwindling tangible cultural heritage of Hong Kong. Criteria for selecting eligible structures (including structural soundness, formulation of a business plan, registration with a tour operator, etc) need to be determined. (Note: this proposal would involve the formal creation of a heritage conservation fund by the Government to assist with the protection and preservation of remnant heritage buildings. Tourism provides a economic justification for their conservation.)

The study team identified numerous villages throughout the study area that had buildings with potential, including, but not limited to:

- **FCA - Hang Yuen Wai, Lin Ma Hang, Tsung Yuen Ha and Fung Wong Wu**
- **Sha Tau Kok Hoi - Luk Keng and Nam Chung**
- **Plover Cove Country Park - Lai Chi Wo, Sam A Tsuen**
- **Tung Ping Chau - A Ma Tsui and surrounds**
- **Pat Sin Leng Country Park - Sha Lo Tung and surrounds**



Recommendation 40

In special cases, entirely abandoned or nearly abandoned villages could be identified as tourist accommodation centres and renovated to provide traditional, authentic accommodations. Integrated facilities can be provided, including accommodation, food services and recreational facilities that are compatible with the surrounding land and water resources. In particular, the following villages have potential to be converted into heritage resorts:

- **Lai Chi Wo and Sam A Tsuen**
- **Heung Yeung Wai and Ha Heung Yuen**

Recommendation 41

That a private sector tourist accommodation property management company (or companies) be established to manage, market, administer and package these properties to both the domestic and international marketplace. The tourists property management company structure model would be similar to those used in ski resorts in Australia or amongst privately-owned tourist accommodation second homes in places like Australia and Canada. This recommendation clearly delineates the roles played by property owners and the property management company. Property owners would be responsible for ownership, furnishing and physical upkeep of the property, for which they would receive a rental fee. They would also be able to designate specific times of the year when they have exclusive access to the property. Otherwise, their role is passive. The property management company would be responsible for the day-to-day management of the properties when rented (cleaning, changing sheets, etc), the marketing of the property directly to consumer or through travel intermediaries, the packaging and promotion of the property through travel intermediaries and international travel trade. In exchange, they would receive a commission on all sales.

5.6 Product Development

5.6.1 Tour Options

- 277 Tourists, be they local or international, need a compelling reason to visit the area. Tourism product development, therefore, becomes equally as important as the provision of overnight accommodation in optimising the tourism benefits. A variety of product and tour options for each of the zones have been identified. The specific actions recommended for each zone are discussed in the next chapter whereas the main recommendations are reviewed in this section.
- 278 A number of land- and water-based revenue generating tour opportunities have been identified. In some cases, commercial tour operators may be interested in including these tour options in their product portfolio. In other instances, new specialty tour operators may enter business. However, it is also recognized that some of the specialty tours proposed may generate revenue but may not provide a sufficient return on investment to warrant involvement by the commercial tour sector. In such cases, registered societies, associations sporting and recreation clubs may be interested in offering package tour products.

Recommendation 42

Encourage both commercial tour operators and not-for-profit associations, societies and sports clubs to offer fee-paying tours to the New Territories to local residents and tourists.

5.6.2 Focus on Cultural and Natural Heritage

- 279 The cultural heritage, natural history, ecology, land and water-based recreation and geology of the area are exemplary. It is these features that should form the basis of new-product development.

Recommendation 43

To encourage tour product development that focuses on cultural heritage, natural history, ecology, geology and land and water-based recreation.

5.6.3 House Museums to Conserve Cultural Heritage

280 The cultural heritage of the area is under threat. Many villages are abandoned or depopulated to the state that they are no longer viable. In addition, many of the buildings are in a state of disrepair, with some having already collapsed. Some houses were abandoned with personal belongings left behind. A unique opportunity exists to record and conserve the fast disappearing cultural heritage and to present it for tourist consumption.

Recommendation 44

That a series of house (or site) museums be established in a number of villages throughout the region to record and conserve the tangible heritage of these villages. House museums can be located in structurally sound buildings and abandoned schools in individual villages. Artefacts presented and the history conveyed will be specific to that individual village or nearby zone of villages. House museums can be managed by local residents and open to tourists on request or on weekends.

Recommendation 45

That oral histories of abandoned or near abandoned villages be gathered to record the fast disappearing heritage in the northern New Territories. Transcripts or excerpts of these oral histories can be presented in house museums.

Recommendation 46

That selected festivals and traditions, such as “da chiu” and basin meals, that reflect the ethnic diversity of the Northern New Territories be developed for tourist visitation.

5.6.4 Integrate Natural and Cultural Heritage

- 281 Often a destination's natural history and cultural heritage have been regarded as separate, even though they are closely linked. Some of the natural history and ecology of the area is interpreted, but little of the cultural heritage is interpreted.

Recommendation 47

That integrated thematic tours be developed interpreting both the natural and cultural heritage of the area and that interpretive signage be established.

5.6.5 Cater for Independent Visitors

- 282 Independent tourists will also want to travel to the area and will need quality information and interpretative materials. At present, such information is either lacking, or is difficult to come by. Retail sales of guidebooks and maps in the area are limited and, in many instances, no information is available.

Recommendation 48

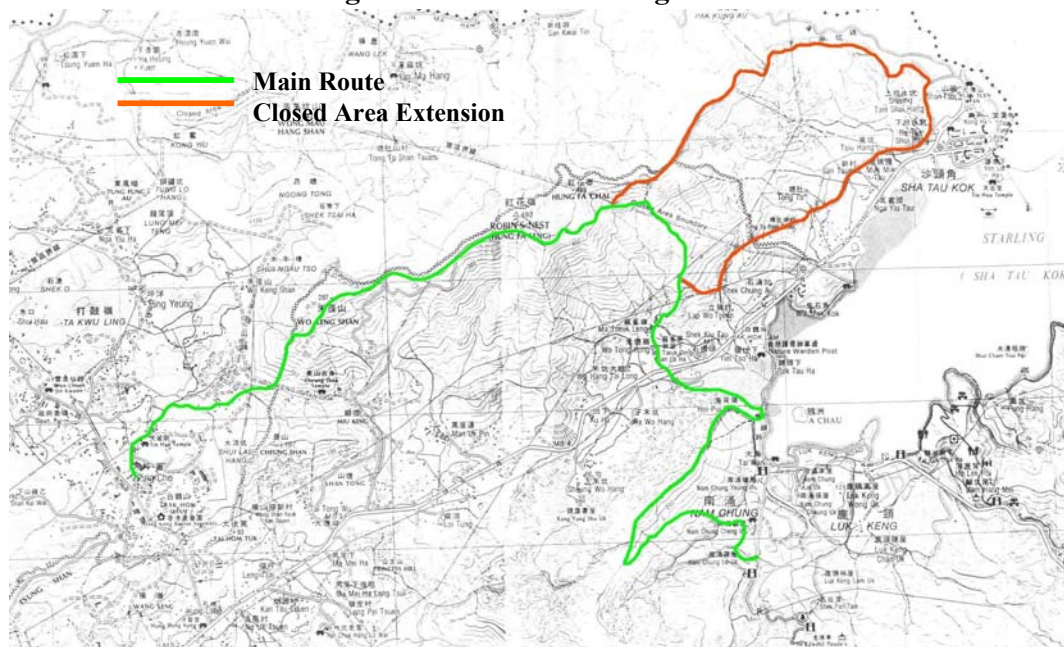
To prepare an integrated set of information materials about the study area, ranging in scale from a region-wide guidebook, to sub-region (or zone specific) brochures.

5.6.6 Hiking Trails

283 There is scope for increasing the number of marked and publicised long distance walking trails in the Study Area, by formalising sections of the existing pattern of informal footpaths and trackways. For example, three new trails could be designated, which are linked to the eastern end of the Wilson Trail:

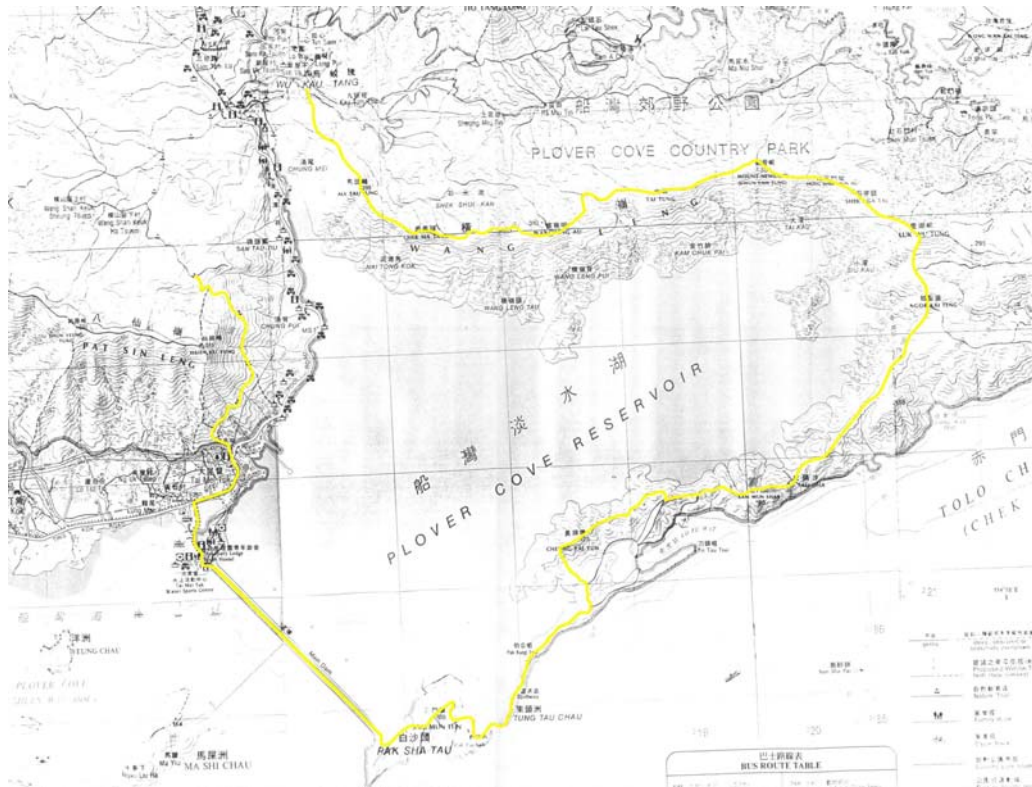
- a) The Border Range Trail: Establish an extension of the Wilson Trail from its terminus at Nam Chung to Lap Wo Tsuen and Ha Tam Shui Hang, then up the ridge to the summit of Hung Fa Leng (Robin's Nest). The new trail could terminate at Ping Che. Part of this hiking trail falls within FCA and permit is required for visitors' entry to the area.

Figure 4 The Border Range Trail



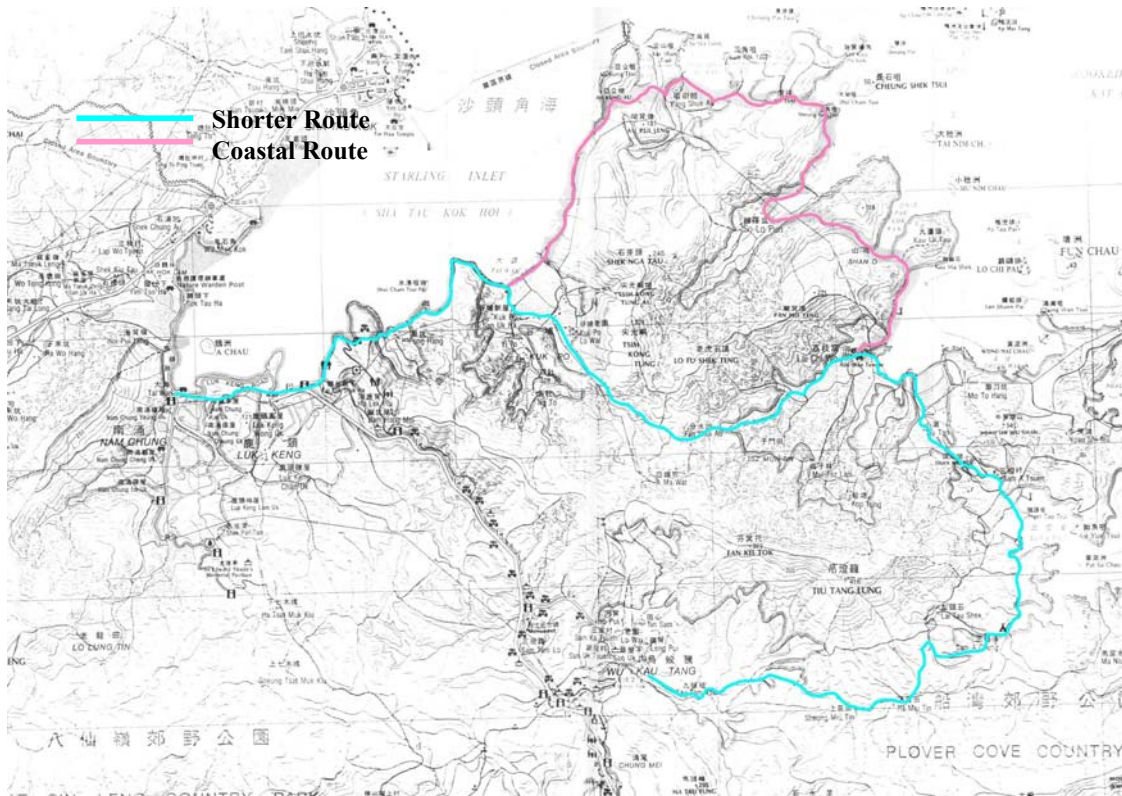
- b) The Plover Cove Circuit: From the end of Stage 9 of the Wilson Trail at Hsien Ku Fung an alternative branch route could be established. This would turn southwards to Tai Mei Tuk and cross the Plover Cove Dam before ascending the ridge of Fung Wang Wat Teng. The route would diverge northwards to climb Wang Leng, the eastwards extension of the Pat Sin Leng, and head northwest to finish at Wu Kau Tang, or join the Coastal Villages Trail. A campsite could be established at Wu Kau Tang.

Figure 5 The Plover Cove Circuit



- c) Coastal Villages Trail: Establish a trail from Wu Kau Tang via Lai Tau Shek to the coast at Sam A Tsuen, then over the spur to Siu Tan and Lai Chi Wo. From here a short route to Luk Keng could be signposted via Kuk Po Lo Wai, or a longer more scenic coastal route via So Lo Pun, Yung Shue Au and along the southern shore of Starling Inlet. Both routes could then join the Wilson Trail at Luk Keng (Nam Chung). Campsites could be established near Fung Hang or Nam Chung.

Figure 6 Coastal Villages Trail



284 Additional campsites are required to encourage walkers and backpackers to stay in the area. These could be located in quiet scenic spots, or along existing or upgraded walking trails. Possible locations include, near Fung Hang or Nam Chung to service the Coastal Villages Trail and the end of the Wilson Trail and at Wu Kau Tang to service the Plover Cove Circuit, and as a link to the Coastal Villages Trail (see above).

Recommendation 49

Extend the network of hiking trails and registered camp sites.

5.6.7 Plover Cove Reservoir

285 Plover Cove Reservoir potentially offers a large body of freshwater for a variety of recreational purposes including non-motorized water sports such as sailing, windsurfing, rowing, canoeing as well as recreational fishing. At present the reservoir is an under-utilized recreational asset. Concerns about potential impacts of recreational uses on the water quality limit its use. However, reservoirs are used widely for recreation in Australia and the UK and with proper management negative impacts can be minimized. The Water Supplies Department indicates that it has an open mind regarding the use of reservoirs for recreation but would like to see some monitored trials first.

Recommendation 50

Open Plover Cove Reservoir to recreational boating and fishing under a strict management regime.

Recommendation 51

At present users of the numerous BBQ areas along Bride's Pool Road are not able to purchase food, drinks or information on site. It is recommended that a limited number of licenses for mobile van food and information vendors be issued to encourage better servicing of the large number of users of these sites.