

## Chapter 6 Identification of Priority Clusters and Priority Action Plans



- 286 This Chapter identifies those clusters with the highest tourism potential and outlines a series of prioritised actions for them. The actions outlined include product/service initiatives and policy and administrative issues that require immediate attention if the future potential of the area is to be met.
- 287 Chapter 4 clearly indicates that, in the view of the study team, some clusters have greater tourism potential than others. Some also have strong tourism potential but a number of significant administrative and/or policy obstacles that inhibit the achievement of that potential. Given the limited resources available, it is appropriate to identify those clusters where the greatest results can be achieved reasonably quickly in a cost effective manner, as well as other clusters with high but more difficult to achieve exceptional potential.
- 288 Five clusters matching those criteria were identified. They are described in the following table. (Note: The Wetlands cluster, including Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve and the Hong Kong Wetlands Centre, has been excluded from this list. This cluster has extremely strong tourism potential that is already being realised through a series of large scale initiatives.)
- 289 Chapter 4 includes a detailed examination of 10 clusters within the study area. Appendix A contains detailed assessments, visions and sets of immediate and medium/longer term actions to achieve the tourism potential for each cluster studied.

**Table 7 Top Five Priority Clusters**

Cluster Number	Name	Reason for Identification as a Priority Cluster	Vision
2	Plover Cove Reservoir and North Shore of Tolo Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An already popular area with well established recreation services and facilities</li> <li>• Good physical access</li> <li>• Potential to expand use and enhance the range of activities available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High intensity recreational area targeted primarily at local residents, offering water and land based recreation, food services and dining</li> <li>• Develop Plover Cove Reservoir for fresh water recreational activities</li> </ul>
5	Yan Chau Tong Marine Park and Plover Cove Country Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area with exceptional potential to become a nature-based and cultural tourism destination of international significance</li> <li>• Possesses unique cultural and natural assets in protected areas</li> <li>• Recognised as a longer term project, but the potential of the area warrants its inclusion as a priority cluster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An internationally recognised nature-based and cultural tourism destination, focusing around Lai Chi Wo and Sam A Tsuen.</li> <li>• Commercial accommodation and the provision of other tourism services in Lai Chi Wo and Sam A Tsuen through the sensitive adaptive reuse of existing structures.</li> <li>• Yan Chau Tong Marine Park for water-based ecotourism with Sam a Tsuen as the focal point.</li> <li>• Development of hike in/hike out, or boat in/hike out and other tours</li> </ul>

Cluster Number	Name	Reason for Identification as a Priority Cluster	Vision
6	Tung Ping Chau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area with unique geological and biological assets</li> <li>• Currently popular as a day trip destination by Hong Kong residents</li> <li>• Potential to develop cross border ecotourism and small scaled nature based tourism targeted at the international marketplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique, small scale ecotourism destination focusing on the marine, land based and cultural values of the island</li> <li>• Continuation of day trip visitation, but manage the impacts more closely</li> <li>• Commercial accommodation and the provision of other tourism services in Sha Tau through the sensitive adaptive reuse of existing structures.</li> <li>• Provide visa free access for high quality, non-intrusive ecotourism activities from mainland resorts.</li> </ul>
7	Luk Keng and Country Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area with potential to become the cultural and heritage tourism focal point for the Northern New Territories</li> <li>• Possesses a critical mass of easily accessible natural, cultural and remnant agricultural assets</li> <li>• Outstanding nature based tourism potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature based and cultural heritage tourism centre for the Northern NT.</li> <li>• Luk Keng as the focal point for cultural tourism activities in this part of the Northern New Territories</li> <li>• Develop linked, thematic cultural hikes between villages in Country Parks</li> </ul>
10	Sha Tau Kok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique location provides opportunity for cross border tourism</li> <li>• Ideally situated to become the access and service point for outer island tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sha Tau Kok as an ‘open’ district for shopping, dining and cross border tourism</li> <li>• Access and service centre for tourism to the outer islands</li> </ul>

## 6.1 Priority Product and Service Development Actions

290 The 13 actions outlined in the following section represent activities that can be implemented quickly and at relatively little expense to enhance the awareness and appeal of the clusters, improve the quality of services provided and broaden the product base. Implementation issues are also identified where relevant.

### *6.1.1 Information / Interpretation*

291 Interpret and explain the natural and cultural landscapes more effectively, through the development of an integrated series of guide books, trail notes, village histories and the interpretation of special items of interest in villages or along trails. In particular, priority should be given to:

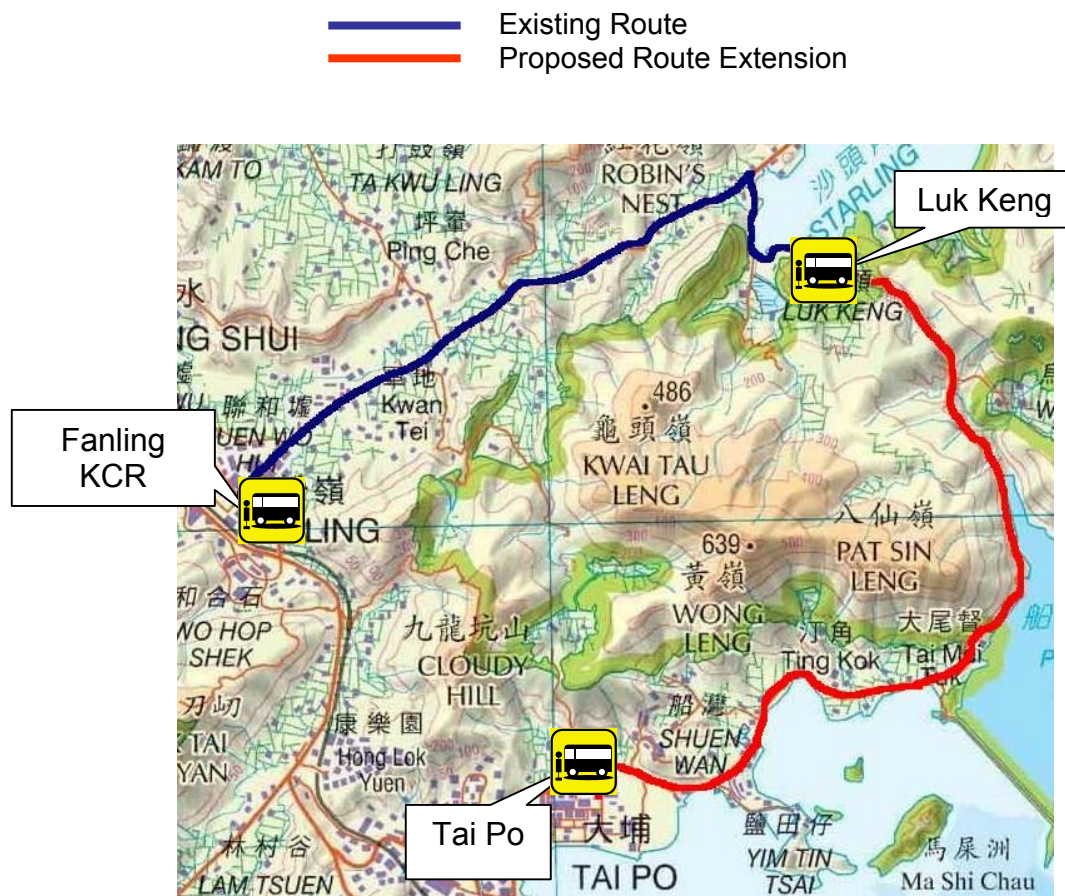
- interpreting the cultural heritage of Tung Ping Chau and Luk Keng
- developing village histories for Luk Keng, Lai Chi Wo, Sam a Tsuen and the villages on Tung Ping Chau
- providing interpretive signage for the above mentioned villages
- developing a series of trail notes for self guided walks interpreting the cultural and natural values in a clusters 5, 6, and 7.

292 To erect bilingual signs and maps (large and small scale) and interactive computer terminals at Tai Po, Fanling and Sheung Shui KCR stations identifying features of the region and providing access information. Note, it is understood that this initiative is currently being acted on, however, consultation with the Tourism Commission to provide information in accordance with the recommendations in this report is strongly encouraged.

## 6.1.2 Access

293 Create a ‘hop-on-hop-off’ circle bus route running in both directions between Tai Po and Fanling via Plover Cove and Bride’s Pool Road. Initially, this service could run on weekends and public holidays, with the express understanding that it will become a permanent bus route. Permission from the TD is required, but it has indicated support in principal for this action.

**Figure 7 Circle bus route**



294 Extend the bicycle path from Tai Mei Tuk to Sha Tau Kok Road. Possible future expansion into the Frontier Closed Area should be considered. A study of bicycle tour route development is currently being completed by the TDD.

295 Access to the islands remains their biggest obstacle to tourism development. At present, limited ferry service operates on weekends. It is proposed that water transport service be provided using fast boats to shuttle visitors from a convenient access point to the outer islands and road-inaccessible coastlines in the Plover Cove Country Park. Ideally, this service should be provided from Starling Inlet (Sha Tau Kok Hoi) with Sha Tau Kok as the logical embarkation point. Licensing of water transport may emerge as an implementation issue. Initially, fast water transport services should be provided to:

- Tung Ping Chau
- Lai Chi Wo
- Ap Chau
- Kat O
- and multi-destination, island hopping trips

**Figure 8 Ferry route between Sha Tau Kok and Tai Po**



296 The public light bus service to Luk Keng terminates in a small parking lot across the street from a number of dai pai dong. The drivers rarely turn off the engine while at this terminus, creating noise and air pollution and generally disturbing the amenity of the area. Moving the bus stop closer to the existing parking area at Luk Keng is strongly recommended.

### 6.1.3 New Product Development

297 A variety of fee paying tours could be offered by commercial tour operators, sporting organizations, societies, non-profit organizations and community groups to expose the area to local residents and international visitors alike. These tours, envisioned as being primarily of a small scale, can include specialist themes (such as geology, anthropology, birding, etc) or more generalist themes presenting the area's cultural and natural heritage. They can be offered on a regular basis by commercial tour operators, but may also be offered on an infrequent basis by clubs, societies and other organisations, providing enough advance notice is given to enable visitors to join. Implementation issues relate to permissions to bring tourists to sensitive or privately owned areas, liability insurance for associations, clubs and other non-profit agencies and the ability to disseminate information effectively through different communication channels. The range of tour options includes:

- interpretive geological tours of Tung Ping Chau, and country parks
- guided walking historical tours of villages, including those on Tung Ping Chau, Lai Chi Wo and surrounds (extending to Kat O), Sam a Tsuen and surrounds, Luk Keng and surrounds, and unoccupied villages within country parks.
- a range of natural history excursions
- guided water based tours of Marine Parks
- small scale snorkelling and scuba expeditions
- inter-island tours stopping at a number of islands and the coast in the Northeast corner of the study area
- heritage tours and walks focusing on traditional aquacultural and agricultural activities in Luk Keng and Lai Chi Wo
- tours of current aquacultural practice

298 The cultural heritage of this area is disappearing rapidly. Remaining heritage can be conserved and preserved in a cost-effective manner through the development of house museums in existing 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 group of villages. They can be managed by local residents and open to tourists on request or on weekends. Implementation issues relate to community support for such an initiative, selecting an appropriate venue and granting permission to display artefacts. Candidate communities for house museums in the priority precincts are:

- Sha Tau
- Luk Keng
- Lai Chi Wo
- Sam A Tsuen
- Sha Tau Kok



- 299 Establish festivals and events. There are few implementation issues other than liability insurances, permissions to use certain locales, identifying lead organisations and gaining community support for cultural events. These can include, but are not limited to:
- sporting events, such as triathlons, biathlons, canoe races, mountain bike races, etc in the Plover Cove Reservoir and North Coast of Tolo Channel cluster
  - recreational events such as kite flying festivals
  - markets and flea markets on the Plover Cove Reservoir wall
  - basin lunches and other festive events on Tung Ping Chau, Sha Tau Kok and Luk Keng
  - traditional festivals similar to the Cheung Chau Bun Festival, but highlighting the unique traditions and myths of the study area, especially focusing around Lai Chi Wo and Kat O
  - homecoming festivals for former residents and their families
  - festivals highlighting the ethnic and cultural diversity, especially of traditional, minority groups in the study area
- 300 The range of food products available on Bride's Pool Road is limited. Visitors must carry in their own food, creating litter problems. The expansion of the number of licensed mobile food product vans offering a variety of hot and cold foods would provide a valuable service to visitors and create employment opportunities. In addition, these vans can provide information services.
- 301 Marine Parks are exposed to heavy visitation, threatening the ecological integrity of corals. Glass bottom boat tours on Tung Ping Chau will provide an opportunity for many people to passably view the corals, while at the same time creating small business opportunities. Permission to run commercial tours in Marine Parks is required.

#### ***6.1.4 Amenity / Infrastructure Improvement***

- 302 As outlined in the study report, visual pollution, garbage and the general untidy amenity of villages detracts from the appeal of the area. A strong recommendation is to initiate a systematic, ongoing campaign to clean up the environment and remove garbage from terrestrial and marine environments. This is an issue that has Hong Kong wide implications. The suggestion is to identify one cluster for a pilot project and, when proven successful, to expand across Hong Kong. The Wetland cluster, though not formally identified as a priority cluster, would be an ideal pilot cluster for an amenity improvement programme.
- 303 Some of the hiking trails are in a state of disrepair, especially on Tung Ping Chau and in the Plover Cove Country Park. Hiking path maintenance and repair is recommended. Further, using alternatives to concreting pathways is strongly encouraged.

## 6.2 Priority Policy and/or Administrative Actions

304 The recommendations outlined in Chapter 5 identify policy and/or administrative actions that need to be undertaken to achieve, in the longer term, the tourism potential of the study area. It is recognized that some of these recommendations can be implemented fairly quickly. Others, however, could take a number of years to implement because of their complex nature and the need for co-operative solutions from different government departments at many levels.

### ***6.2.1 Policy / Planning***

305 The purpose of this study was to conduct a preliminary, supply side assessment of the tourism potential of the study area. To build on these findings and to ensure that sustainable tourism occurs, the Tourism Commission is strongly recommended to develop a formal tourism master plan for the Northern New Territories, building on the ideas generated in this report.

306 Much of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the study area is at risk, especially if tourism activity increases. As such, it is strongly recommended that the Tourism Commission, in association with the appropriate government bodies (such as the Antiquities and Monuments Office) prepare comprehensive conservation plans to identify and conserve the cultural heritage assets of the villages in and around 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. These plans must be based on the principles and guidelines of the Australia 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.

### **6.2.2 Coordination**

307 Spontaneous, uncoordinated tourism development and promotion, coupled with a lack of collective vision for the study area will inhibit the achievement of the tourism potential. The following two recommendations provide a framework to ensure greater coordination between stakeholders:

- to establish a Northern New Territories Tourism Advisory Group with membership from all District Councils. This body would also have representation from the private sector and from other government departments.
- to establish a Northern New Territories Tourism Working Group among Government Departments at an SAR wide level. Involved departments would include those on the Advisory Steering Committee for this study, plus representatives of the Security Bureau.

308 Information dissemination must also be addressed. At present tourists have great difficulty acquiring information about the study area and local residents seem to be able to acquire information only by word of mouth. A central clearing house of information offering web-based information, booking service and hard copy information is required. It is suggested that the Hong Kong Tourism Board assume the role of domestic tourism information dissemination in addition to its mandate for international tourism promotion.

### **6.2.3 Transport/Access**

309 Access and accommodation are the two biggest issues affecting the expansion of tourism in this area. Restricted access to the Frontier Closed Area, in general, and to Sha Tau Kok and its associated pier infrastructure, in particular, present major barriers to tourism. Addressing the access issue to Sha Tau Kok, therefore, is an antecedent to any other tourism activity. The study team has identified a number of recommendations to provide orderly, controlled access to the FCA. The Tourism Commission must take the lead in advocating sensible, limited liberalisation of access into the FCA.

- Marine access also remains problematic. In the short term, expanding the range and type of public marine transport services provided, including the number of water taxis serving outer islands, will address the access issue

## 6.2.4 Infrastructure / Products

310 Where indicated in the report, water, sewage and electricity infrastructure needs to be provided or enhanced. In particular, the following infrastructure improvements are required:

- boat docking and ferry facilities at Tung Ping Chau, Kat O and, in the longer term, Lai Chi Wo and Sam a Tsuen
- introduction of a new ferry service between Ma On Shan and Tai Mei Tuk and provision of pier facilities at Ma On Shan and Tai Mei Tuk
- improved water and sewerage facilities in Tung Ping Chau, Luk Keng and, in the longer term, Lai Chi Wo and Sam a Tsuen

**Figure 9 Ferry route between Ma On Shan and Tai Mei Tuk**



311 At present, there is no freshwater recreation available in Hong Kong. The study identified significant recreational potential in the Plover Cove Reservoir, including the potential for recreational fishing, boating and camping. Opening Plover Cove Reservoir to recreational use is strongly recommended.

312 The shortage, or in most cases, complete lack of licensed accommodation must be overcome if the area is to become a destination in its own right. A series of recommendations have been forwarded to provide commercial accommodation ranging from bed-and-breakfast, to the creation of heritage accommodation by the sensitive adaptive reuse of existing facilities, to small-scale resort development, to the ambitious plan of converting unoccupied villages into heritage resorts. It is recognized that a number of issues relating to licensing and regulation must be addressed. However, without the establishment of a commercial accommodation sector, this area will continue to be a day trip destination providing limited economic benefits to the region. Suggestions for the creation of roofed accommodation include the establishment of pilot projects:

- converting abandoned school houses to hostel style accommodation in Lai Chi Wo
- monitoring and controlling the informal accommodation sector on Tung Ping Chau
- establishing pilot bed-and-breakfast programs in Tai Mei Tuk, Luk Keng and Lai Chi Wo
- examining the potential to convert structurally sound buildings into heritage tourism accommodation in Sam A Tsuen and Luk Keng