



**“Consultation on the Northern New Territories
Green Tourism Development Programme”**

February – March 2005

Analysis Report

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Analysis Report by A-World Training and Consultancies Limited
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Background

1. A-World Training and Consultancies Limited was commissioned by the Tourism Commission (TC) to conduct a consultation exercise on the “Northern New Territories Green Tourism Development Programme” (the NNT Programme) from February to March 2005.

Subjects for Consultation

2. The subjects for consultation as set out in the consultation paper published in February 2005 are:

- (a) a proposed action plan to promote green tourism in the Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area including :
 - (i) a works programme to provide and enhance basic facilities required for developing tourism in the area;
 - (ii) an island-hopping sightseeing itinerary; and
 - (iii) complementary conservation and education initiatives

- (b) options for the development of green tourism on Tung Ping Chau.

Format of Consultation

3. Upon publishing the consultation paper in February 2005, a consultation forum was held on 18 February 2005 at Hong Kong Institute of Education to collect the views of major stakeholders on the subjects set out in paragraph 2. At the same time, the paper was uploaded onto TC’s website (www.tourism.gov.hk) to solicit written submissions over a one-month period.

4. It is very encouraging that about 140 participants attended the forum which indicates their interest in the Programme. They came from different sectors including the academics, relevant District Councils, Government departments, green

groups, local residents, the tourism trade, related trades and service operators and sports clubs.

Summary of Feedback Received

5. There was active discussion and exchange of views among the participants during the forum which lasted about four hours. A total of 19 written submissions were received after the forum.

6. Of the comments and opinions received, about two-thirds came from local residents and green groups and the rest from the other sectors. About 40% of the comments and opinions are related to conservation and sustainable development. Another 50% of the opinions received spread across the proposed enhancement works, the sightseeing itinerary and Tung Ping Chau's development by more or less the same split. The remaining views include comments on either relevant or general issues, or subjects outside the identified scope of the consultation.

7. A detailed mapping on the comments and suggestions raised at the forum and in subsequent written submissions is appended at **Annex**. The views are grouped according to subject and summarized as follows:

Proposed Action Plan for the Plover Cove and Tolo Channel Area

(a) Enhancement works for basic facilities

8. The proposed enhancement works were generally welcomed and there were not many specific comments on the proposed works on toilets, signage, shelters and seating facilities at the identified sites.

9. There were a number of different opinions on further improvement works including a repeated suggestion for the building of a gazebo at the hilltop of Ap Chau. Other views include reconstructing and renovating some of the existing piers which were generally considered to be either insufficient or in need of upgrading.

10. Other concerns raised include tidal problems which would impede the operation of ferries, the potential impact of tourism on nature and culture, and potential inconvenience arising from the possible reduction of circulation area in some piers if additional facilities are installed.

11. Besides, public transportation and parking facilities were considered to be insufficient in some areas.

(b) Sightseeing itinerary

12. The proposed sightseeing itinerary drew a lot of feedback. While this development was generally welcomed, there were suggestions to include other sightseeing spots such as the Pearl Farm in Lo Fu Wat and the featured rocks at Port Island. Other suggested sightseeing spots included Hip Tin Temple, Hok Shan Che, the “Hollow Tree” and “Five Fingers” camphor tree, Champion’s Bauhinia and “Looking-glass Tree” in Lai Chi Wo. Hung Shek Mun was also thought to be an interesting spot that might be added to the tour. Moreover, there were alternative views on the suitable location for starting the tour.

13. Some opinions suggested incorporating onshore and offshore tours to complement the proposed itinerary. There was one suggestion to end the itinerary at Lo Fu Wat after touring Double Haven, Ap Chau and Kat O, so that visitors would take the land route from Lo Fu Wat back to Plover Cove Reservoir to enjoy the panoramic view of the uniquely elongated inlet of Lo Fu Wat. Another suggested land tour would take visitors to see mangroves via Luk Keng and experience the culture, buildings and features of Wai Tsuen (walled villages) etc. There were also suggestions to develop out-right land tours alongside the proposed itinerary, such as one between Tai Mei Tuk and Wu Kau Tang to provide a different land-based experience.

14. Other suggested complements for the sightseeing itinerary include a tourist centre for visitors to refill their supplies, a land-based green tourism hub at Wu Kau Tang, as well as promotion of the local culture of Lai Chi Wo. Some also suggested that the feasibility of establishing home-stay facilities in certain areas, such as Lai Chi Wo, Double Haven and Tap Mun, should be explored.

15. There are also more general views that the proposed sightseeing itinerary need to be enriched, and its development should take a step by step approach.

(c) Conservation and education initiatives

16. With respect to conservation initiatives, suggestions were made to establish a registration system to monitor green tourism; develop strategic and management

framework and guidelines; promote the principles of responsible tourism development; and set up a comprehensive licensing system to manage both the quantity and quality of sightseeing boats within the marine parks. The general consensus was that there should be a good balance between sustainable development and the livelihood of the local community.

17. On education initiatives, it was suggested that specialised tours should be organized for teenagers, and in-depth knowledge and information should be provided through a proper website.

18. Other comments pointed to the need for a clear eco-tourism policy, a master plan to ensure sustainable development, assessment of the impact of increased tourism to ensure effective protection of the ecologically sensitive areas, enhanced conservation efforts, integration of the proposed initiatives with the conservation plans of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. It was generally considered that site patrol should be stepped up to ensure that the integrity of the natural environment would not be compromised by increase in visitation. There was also a general call for strengthening communication between Government and stakeholders.

19. As regards specific issues, there were concerns about possible impact caused by the operation of ferries in the marine park, including the speed of ferries, their routes and frequencies, and potential hazards such as fuel spillage.

Options for Development of Tung Ping Chau

20. While there was general recognition that various constraints impeded development on Tung Ping Chau, views differed with respect to its development options. The majority views were that any development on the island should be consistent with the principles of natural conservation focusing on appreciation of its natural environment. There is a general call for preservation of the unique geological and natural features on the island. There were views that outward bound or hostel-type accommodation would be more suitable as compared to spa and resort development or organic farm. A few rejected the idea of any development on the island.

21. There were quite a number of suggestions on the need to enhance the infrastructures, for example, by such means as electricity supply, toilet systems

conversion, underground water usage, sewage management, construction of a larger pier and strengthening regular ferry services to improve accessibility.

22. Some other suggestions were made such as building a new pier with a marine education centre; developing a multi-functional trail and introducing international events like round-the-island marathon, etc. Some considered that local residents' interest should be safeguarded in any form of development. Others expressed that the capacity of the island should always be taken into account.

Conclusion

23. The proposed enhancement works programme and island-hopping sightseeing itinerary for the Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area were generally accepted. Suggestions were made to enrich both, alongside views on conservation issues either related to the proposals or from a holistic perspective. In terms of the latter, it was considered that a holistic plan on green tourism for the Northern New Territories with clear policy directions was needed. The project should also be taken forward progressively in a balanced way. Development of Tung Ping Chau should avoid putting natural resources at risk and should focus primarily on the attractiveness of its natural features.

24. In general, many constructive opinions and suggestions were gathered in this consultation exercise. They reflect the public's awareness of the importance of environmental conservation in the development of green tourism and the call for the interests of local residents to be properly looked after.