

LCQ1:Operation of the HK Wetland Park

Following is a question by the Hon Selina Chow and a reply by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

Regarding operation of the Hong Kong Wetland Park ("HKWP") since its opening in May 2006, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the respective monthly attendance of HKWP since its opening; how these figures compare to the original forecasts; and whether the HKWP authority can cope with the above attendance in terms of venue management and crowd control;

(b) whether it has systematically sought visitors' views on HKWP; if it has, of their overall comments; and

(c) given that there were complaints during the initial period following HKWP's opening that some visitors smoked in the open area of HKWP and left behind cigarette butts, whether the situation has improved so far; and of the measures adopted by the HKWP authority to comply with the no-smoking requirements of the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Ordinance 2006, which has come into operation since January 1, 2007?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) The Hong Kong Wetland Park (the Park) received 900,000 visitors from its opening in May 2006 to end December 2006. The average monthly visitor number is over 120,000, with about 2,000 to 3,000 on weekdays and 8,000 to 10,000 during weekends and public holidays. Patronage so far has been encouraging, which is higher than the estimation of 540,000 per year made in 2002, indicating that this world-class conservation, education and tourism facility has been well-received by the public.

Since the opening of the Park, we have, in the light of our operational experience, continued to enhance and improve the Park's service and facilities. Measures include increasing coach drop-off spaces, improving the drop-off and pick-up arrangement at the entrance area, increasing ticketing counters during weekends and public holidays,

deploying additional manpower to maintain cleanliness of the surroundings, erection of additional information signage in the Park, and planting of more trees and placing temporary marquees in the outdoor areas to provide more shelters for visitors. For the convenience of visitors to the Park, more pedestrian and vehicle direction signs have been installed, and more are planned to be installed in the vicinity of the Park. Moreover, we have been liaising closely with the travel industry through seminars and briefings to enhance the trade's knowledge of the Park's facilities and conservation concepts as well as to collect user feedback and discuss ways to refine tour admission arrangements so as to improve crowd management. We consider that the current venue and crowd management measures adopted by the Park is adequate to meet public demand.

(b) The Park has been conducting visitor surveys by means of questionnaires, and using the survey results as reference for improving its operation, service and exhibits. As shown by the survey, over 85% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the Park's facilities and would visit it again; over 90% of the respondents would introduce the Park to their family members and friends; some 60% of the visitors spent two to four hours in the Park. The most popular facilities in descending order were Mangrove Boardwalk, Wetland World Gallery, Bird Hides, Wetland Challenge Gallery and Human Culture Gallery.

(c) During the initial period after its opening, the Park did receive reports that smoking and cigarette studs were found in the outdoor areas. Apart from encouraging the visitors not to smoke, the Park has promptly erected additional advisory notices, stepped up patrolling, and strengthened publicity and education efforts in this regard. The situation has improved considerably. So far, the Park has issued summons to 12 visitors for littering or plucking plants.

Since January 1, 2007, the Park has been designated as a no-smoking area. Following the guidelines of the Tobacco Control Office under the Department of Health, the Park has drawn up and issued operational manual to all staff responsible for taking enforcement action. Moreover, posters and notices have been placed at prominent locations of the Park to remind visitors of the no-smoking requirement.

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