

LCQ10: Developing local tourism products

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (December 16):

Question:

In the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry published by the Government in 2017, one of the four development strategies is to nurture and develop tourism products and initiatives with local and international characteristics. The five-year implementation goals under this strategy include developing green tourism and facilitating the development of local historical and heritage, cultural and creative tourism. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the latest progress and the effectiveness of the various short and medium term measures implemented for achieving the aforesaid goals;

(2) as inbound visitors to Hong Kong have virtually disappeared due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, whether the authorities will step up efforts to develop local tourism products targeting at Hong Kong people, in order to support the tourism industry; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the authorities have plans to develop leisure farms as a tourism product and provide the following support: (i) streamlining the application procedure for the relevant licences and the construction of farm structures to be used for receiving visitors, and facilitating such applications, as well as (ii) assisting such farms in promoting their signature local agricultural produce among members of the public; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Tourism is a pillar industry in Hong Kong. The current-term Government published the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry in 2017 setting a clear vision and mission for the tourism industry, which is to press ahead with the development of Hong Kong into a world-class premier tourism destination with a view to ensuring the balanced, healthy and sustainable development of the industry. Accordingly, four development strategies have been mapped out as the backbone of the development blueprint for formulating and implementing various short-, medium- to long-term tourism initiatives and measures in a holistic and orderly manner.

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan, in consultation with the Food and Health Bureau, the Government's reply is as follows:

(1) The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) published the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry in 2017. Following the Blueprint, CEDB have developed various products and initiatives in respect of green, heritage, cultural and creative tourism. Their latest progress and effectiveness are as follows:

Green Tourism

The Government has been promoting green tourism and actively exploring the development of new green attractions following the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development. In collaboration with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Tourism Commission (TC) has been enhancing the tourism supporting facilities of some hiking trails within country parks which are popular and with tourism appeal from 2018-19 to 2022-23. The enhancement works include improvement to existing hiking trail network, control of soil erosion at the trails, enhancement of vegetation coverage, addition of lookout points, enrichment of visitor information and enhancement of cleansing services, etc. The overall enhancement works are expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2022.

AFCD also launched the enhanced thematic website in December 2019 to provide detailed information on hiking trails and green attractions to enrich visitors' experience. As at end-November 2020, there have been more than 1.32 million pageviews at the enhanced "Enjoy Hiking" thematic website.

TC, in collaboration with AFCD and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), also plans to develop a hiking hub in Lantau by improving the facilities of the Ngong Ping Nature Centre to complement the enhancement of the hiking trails nearby. Besides, TC, in collaboration with AFCD and the Architectural Services Department, is conducting a preliminary planning study on the proposal to develop Pak Tam Chung into a green tourism hub; and will upgrade the facilities of the Hong Kong Wetland Park in cooperation with AFCD, etc.

To enhance the land transport services to the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark (Geopark), the Transport Department has approved a new franchised bus route and enhanced green minibus service. For water transport, the kaito ferry service has been enhanced with increased service frequency and introduction of a new route. In addition, TC, in collaboration with CEDD, will implement face-lifting works at the Ma Liu Shui Ferry Pier and Yim Tin Tsai Pier which are the gateways to the Geopark.

For the promotion of green tourism, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) actively promotes Hong Kong's nature-based green tourism products and countryside landscapes covering the Geopark, hiking trails and itineraries featuring the outlying islands, as well as guided tours and green tourism products organised by the travel trade or other organisations, through the "Great Outdoors Hong Kong" platform during hiking season.

To support the travel trade to develop in-depth green tourism products, HKTB also launched the Pilot Scheme to Promote In-depth Green Tourism from January 2018 to March 2019, during which a total of five green tourism products were subsidised.

Meanwhile, TC has earlier launched the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme to encourage travel agents to organise green lifestyle local tours for the public to enjoy nature and experience green lifestyles.

Cultural, Heritage and Creative Tourism

The Government has been taking forward various projects of cultural, heritage and creative tourism with different themes in different districts. HKTB also strives to promote various traditional festive activities rich in local characteristics.

On cultural and heritage tourism, TC completed the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in Central and Sheung Wan in April 2018. Together with the Tai Kwun (Central Police Station Compound), PMQ and the adjacent tourism spots, the Central and Western District has been developed into a new hub of heritage, cultural and creative tourism, offering creative and in-depth travel experience to visitors. HKTB also promotes activities with distinctive local characteristic, for example the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, for visitors to experience Hong Kong's local culture. Besides, HKTB also rolled out "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods – Old Town Central" and "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods – Sham Shui Po" in April 2017 and September 2018 respectively to further promote in-depth local tourism.

In January 2018, HKTB launched the Pilot Scheme for Characteristic Local Tourism Events to provide funding support for arts, cultural, festivals, dining or sports events with Hong Kong's local characteristics and unique attributes. Supported events include the Yu Lan Cultural Festival 2018 and the Apleichau Hung Shing Culture Festival 2019. With a view to supporting more local characteristic events with tourism appeal, HKTB revamped the Pilot Scheme's conditions and terms in 2020 for enhancing its attractiveness.

In 2019, TC launched the Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival, which is a three-year pilot arts cum cultural, heritage and green tourism project organised in Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung. The first event, Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival 2019, was held from November 30 to December 29, 2019. During the event period, the number of visitors and participants of related activities in Yim Tin Tsai was over 22 000, whereas the number of visitors to Visitor Centre cum Exhibition Hall and participants of activities in Sai Kung Town was over 39 000. After the first event, some of the artworks showcased have become permanent exhibits for visitors' appreciation. TC is now preparing for the implementation of the next phase of event and will announce the details in due course.

TC will also upgrade the facilities of the Wong Nai Chung Gap Trail with a view to enhancing its appeal as a heritage and green tourism attraction and visitors' experience. The works are expected to commence in the fourth quarter of 2021.

With the phased opening of various art and cultural facilities in Hong Kong, including the Xiqu Centre opened in early 2019, the Hong Kong Museum of Art re-opened in November 2019, and the museums to be completed in the pipeline in the West Kowloon Cultural District, these facilities will become new important tourism attractions. In addition, the annual business exhibitions featuring design, culture and arts, spearheaded by the Business of Design Week, have also become a new initiative attracting tourists in recent years.

On creative tourism, TC is partnering with the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong to take forward the project in bringing back to life the history of individual landmarks of Hong Kong by using augmented reality and creative multimedia technology through mobile application to enable visitors to understand the historical landscape and community culture of places rich in history and culture, thereby enhancing their experience in Hong Kong. The project is tentatively scheduled for launching in Tsim Sha Tsui and Central areas in the first quarter of 2021.

TC, the Hong Kong Design Centre and the Hong Kong Comics and Animation Federation have been in collaboration to launch the three-year creative tourism project, "Design District Hong Kong", which comprises various place-making artworks and creative tourism events to enhance the appeal of Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po Districts. During 2018 to 2020, various activities were rolled out under the project, including the display of more than 50 pieces of design art works at different locations in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay, and the hosting of two fashion street events in Sham Shui Po so as to enrich the creative atmosphere, activate the public space and showcase local cultural lives.

(2) In view of the pandemic, visitors could not visit Hong Kong, and Hong Kong people have not been able to travel abroad at the moment. With both inbound and outbound travel essentially in a stalemate, HKTb rolled out the "Holiday at Home" promotional campaign in mid-June 2020 to encourage Hong Kong people to be the tourists of their own city to boost local consumption and to reinvigorate the local atmosphere before the full resumption of inbound travel, while conveying positive messages to our source markets and increasing visitors' confidence in visiting Hong Kong in the future.

In addition to the various in-depth local tour itineraries introduced in the campaign to encourage Hong Kong people to discover points of interests and lesser-known experiences, HKTb also rolled out a "Free Tour" programme in late October under which consumers can redeem a free tour upon spending \$800 at local retail and dining outlets. For each participant in the free tours, HKTb provides a subsidy of \$500 to the organising travel agent. 10 000 quotas have been fully enrolled.

In view of the recent development of COVID-19 epidemic, the Government has further tightened various social distancing measures and also removed the conditional exemption for local group tours under the group gathering restrictions. HKTb has suspended the "Free Tour" programme. The remaining tours will be rescheduled when

the epidemic stabilises.

HKTB will continue to leverage the one-stop "Holiday at Home" platform to provide information on local travel consumption and tactical offers.

As stated above, TC has earlier launched the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme and enhanced the Scheme, including increasing the amount of cash incentive per tour participant and the quota of tour participants for each travel agent to apply for cash incentives, as well as extending the application deadline for the Scheme to March 2021, so as to extend support to the travel agents and related practitioners and encourage travel agents to develop and organise green lifestyle local tours.

(3) AFCD has all along been promoting leisure farming as an auxiliary activity related to agriculture to enable farmers to increase their income, market their produce and reach out to potential customers. These leisure farms are principally engaged in commercial crop production. They also provide farming-related leisure activities such as guided farm walk and other ancillary activities, including on-farm sale of fresh produce and related products. In general, conducting crop production and related activities on agricultural land does not require a licence. If construction of farm structures is required, AFCD has been providing one-stop service to assist farmers to make application to the relevant departments.

At present, there are over 130 leisure farms in Hong Kong. AFCD has produced an interactive webpage and a mobile application to provide information on these farms to promote leisure farming and facilitate the public to make visit. In addition, AFCD has been working closely with the industry (including local agricultural associations, the Vegetable Marketing Organization (VMO), etc.) to actively promote local agricultural products to the public and the food catering industry through different events and exhibitions such as FarmFest, Local Organic Watermelon Festival, Hong Kong Flower Show, Food Expo and so on.

On marketing, VMO has been promoting a diverse range of local vegetables and providing information of local farms to the public and the food catering industry, including supermarket chains and high-end restaurants, through electronic media and advertisements.

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