

NORTHERN NEW TERRITORIES

GREEN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Consultation Paper

PURPOSE

This paper sets out the Northern New Territories (NNT) Green Tourism Development Programme being taken forward by the Tourism Commission (TC) and invites comments on:

- (a) a proposed action plan to promote green tourism in the Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area; and
- (b) options for the development of green tourism on Tung Ping Chau.

BACKGROUND

2. Development and promotion of green tourism will, apart from enhancing Hong Kong's diverse attractions, help raise public awareness of environmental conservation and benefit the local community economy. The Government intends to make optimum use of existing resources for promotion and also actively explores new opportunities for development based on sustainability and ecological conservation principles.

3. NNT, by virtue of its rich natural, cultural and heritage assets, has great potential for developing green tourism. From August to December 2002, TC commissioned a consultancy study on "Development of Tourism in the Northern New Territories". The objective of the Study was to assess NNT's green tourism potential and identify opportunities for sustainable development. Accordingly, the consultancy report proposed a wide range of short-term and long-term recommendations based on sustainable utilisation of NNT's natural resources for green, cultural and heritage tourism.

4. In May 2003, TC conducted a consultative forum to solicit the initial views of major stakeholders on the consultancy's recommendations. The consultancy report had also been put on TC's website. The response was generally positive. While some parties expressed concern

about the potential impact of tourism activities on NNT's environment, others especially the locals of NNT expressed strong support for tourism development in view of its economic benefits for the rural community.

5. In June 2003, TC set up an Interdepartmental Committee (the Committee) to take forward the NNT programme. Having considered the consultancy's recommendations and public views collected, the Committee identified two areas for pilot development:

Stage One - Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area

Stage Two - Tung Ping Chau

— A map showing the scope of these two areas is at **Annex A**.

6. The Committee then conducted detailed study on specific aspects of the two pilot areas. Based on the findings, the Committee has drawn up an action plan for the Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area, and is now exploring options for the development of green tourism on Tung Ping Chau.

STAGE ONE - PLOVER COVE AND TOLO CHANNEL AREA

Scope

7. This area covers mainly the Plover Cove and Pat Sin Leng Country Parks on the land side, and the sea area encompassing Tolo Harbour, Tolo Channel and Mirs Bay including the Hoi Ha Wan and Yan Chau Tong Marine Parks and the north-eastern outlying islands.

Present Position

8. The country parks, in particular the Tai Mei Tuk area, are a popular leisure and recreational hub housing a range of attractions including water sports centres, cycle paths, hiking trails, BBQ sites, ecological areas, indigenous villages, heritage buildings etc. On the sea side, the rich marine resources, popular diving spots, scenic coastal areas and outlying islands in the north-eastern waters offer potential for developing water-based tourism, with Tolo Harbour acting as the key access point.

Proposed Action Plan

9. The proposed action plan intends to leverage on the existing popularity of the Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area for promoting tourism, and exploit the area's potential for water-based tourism.

10. The proposed action plan comprises three main components:

- (a) A works programme to provide and enhance basic facilities required for developing tourism in the area;
- (b) An island-hopping sight-seeing itinerary; and
- (c) Complementary conservation and educational initiatives.

The works programme will be implemented by TC with the Civil Engineering and Development Department as the works agent. The sight-seeing itinerary is proposed by the Hong Kong Tourism Board. Details are at **Annexes B and C** respectively.

11. To ensure sustainable development, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will continue to implement an ongoing comprehensive conservation plan for this area encompassing nature conservation, facilities upgrading for visitors' benefits, publicity about nature appreciation and good conduct in the countryside, and eco-tourism promotion. The Tourism Commission in conjunction with the Hong Kong Tourism Board will continue to provide the necessary complementary promotion. In terms of education, the country and marine parks managed by AFCD are equipped with a range of facilities to promote nature education, including interpretive signs about locations and natural features of ecological, geological and cultural interest; visitor centres such as the one at Tai Mei Tuk etc. These are supplemented by publications and website information including information about NNT. AFCD also takes part in developing education programmes for the World Wide Fund's Marine Life Centre at Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park. It will continue to promote marine conservation education in conjunction with the Centre's activities.

12. To ensure that the professional standards of tourist guides will meet the demand of tourism development, TC has since July 2002 been working with the tourism trade to provide a training programme for tourist guides under the Skills Upgrading Scheme. Under this initiative,

specialist training in areas such as green tourism is also provided.

STAGE TWO - TUNG PING CHAU

Present Position

13. Located in the most north-eastern side of Hong Kong, Tung Ping Chau possesses unique natural and heritage attractions and is ecologically sensitive. The investigation made by the Committee found a number of constraints impeding Tung Ping Chau's development. The key issues include:

- (a) a lack of basic infrastructure including water supply, drainage and sewerage facilities;
- (b) the island's ecological sensitivity and status as an area for conservation which subject basically all developments to stringent environmental assessment and statutory procedures; and
- (c) a lack of land suitable for development, with the majority of the island being either country park or private land with absentee owners.

Development Options

14. Tung Ping Chau's potential for development of high-end resort-type tourism has been explored by the Committee. Separately, TC's "Consultancy Study on the Development of New Tourism Infrastructure - Spa & Resort Facilities" conducted in July 2004 also included Tung Ping Chau among the potential sites assessed. Both studies concurred that visitor accommodation of a nature akin to ecotourism, such as hostel or the outward bound type of simple lodging, is more suitable for Tung Ping Chau. Their respective findings are summarised at **Annex D**.

15. On the other hand, TC has received a private proposal to develop an organic farm on Tung Ping Chau which also has an ecotourism-oriented nature. The proposal includes an extensive organic farm, restaurant, shop, education centre, visitor information centre etc. The consultation will also include this option.

CONSULTATION

16. You are invited to comment on the proposed action plan for the pilot project in Plover Cove and Tolo Channel area, and the options for development of green tourism on Tung Ping Chau, at the consultation forum on 18 February 2005. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the Stage One action plan will be suitably fine-tuned for implementation. A development plan will also be drawn up for Tung Ping Chau.

Tourism Commission
Economic Development and Labour Bureau
February 2005

Note

Members of the public may send their comments to us on or before 18 March 2005 through any of the following channels :

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