

LCQ4: Promoting cross-boundary eco-tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

It has been reported that the Dapeng Peninsula of Shenzhen, which is adjacent to Yan Chau Tong of Hong Kong, possesses rich ecological resources, and both Shenzhen and Hong Kong have expressed intentions in recent years to strengthen cooperation in eco-tourism and marine conservation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of cooperation projects commenced and co-operation agreements reached between the SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government and the relevant government departments of Dapeng New District, Shenzhen in terms of, among others, eco-tourism, green economy, and marine conservation; whether it has compiled statistics on the specific data and effectiveness of such co-operation projects over the past five years;

(2) whether it has plans to promote cross-boundary eco-tourism from Kat O and Tung Ping Chau to the Dapeng Peninsula and devise related sea routes, including the construction of piers for "co-location arrangement" in such areas; if so, of the details and progress of the ongoing negotiations with Shenzhen authorities, including technical feasibility, estimated timetable, and related ancillary facilities; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the Government has assessed the expected benefits of the aforementioned cross-boundary eco-tourism routes for Hong Kong's tourism industry and local economy, as well as the potential risks involved in environmental conservation; if so, of the assessment results, and the policy directions determined in response to such results?

Reply:

President,

According to the Northern Metropolis (NM) Action Agenda announced in 2023, the Blue and Green Recreation, Tourism and Conservation Circle situated in the easternmost part of the NM comprises Robin's Nest, Lin Ma Hang, Sha Tau Kok, Yan Chau Tong as well as coastal villages and the outlying islands. With abundant blue and green resources including country parks, marine parks and geopark as well as a number of traditional rural townships, this zone has the potential for recreation and tourism development.

As set out in the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry

2.0, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) promotes in-depth integration of Hong Kong's unique world-class resources with tourism, and crafts tourism products and projects with distinctive features and strong appeal, with "Ecology+Tourism" being one of the development strategies. On the premises of respecting the nature and protecting the environment, we will appropriately unveil Hong Kong's precious ecological resources to visitors, and at the same time minimise the potential environmental impact due to too many visitors as far as practicable, thereby balancing the needs for conservation and tourism development.

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) under the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) has designated places of high ecological value in Yan Chau Tong as country park, marine park and geopark, for conservation and eco-education and recreation purposes.

In taking forth the above work, the wish of some local communities for maintaining a quiet countryside environment should also be considered.

Having consulted the EEB, the Development Bureau, the Security Bureau and the Transport and Logistics Bureau, a consolidated reply in response to the questions raised by the Hon Dominic Lee is as follows:

(1) The HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) Government has established mechanisms with the Shenzhen authorities for the cooperation in individual areas. On ecological conservation and environmental protection, following the establishment of the Robin's Nest Country Park last year, the AFCD and the Planning and Natural Resources Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality signed the Cooperation Agreement last year on the establishment of the ecological corridor between Shenzhen Wutong Mountain and Hong Kong Robin's Nest, including jointly removing invasive species, conducting ecological surveys, examining enhancement of animal corridors and enhancing publicity and education. The Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark also collaborated with the Shenzhen Dapeng Peninsula National Geological Natural Park to hold science lectures and exhibitions in both locations last year and this year, enabling citizens of both sides to have better understanding of the geological history, landforms, and geoparks of the two places.

On marine conservation, the Environmental Protection Department and the Ecology and Environment Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality have been improving sewage collection and treatment through the Mirs Bay and Deep Bay (Shenzhen Bay) Areas Environmental Management Special Panel. With the concerted efforts of both sides, the water quality of Mirs Bay has been kept at a good level, and it is conducive to the conservation of marine ecology, especially the hard corals in the northeast waters of Hong Kong.

The CSTB has been strengthening co-operation with the Shenzhen authorities in the tourism aspect under the principle of mutual benefits, including encouraging the trade to design eco-tourism products and itineraries on the premise of striking a balance between ecological conservation and tourism development. The travel trade of the Shenzhen and Hong Kong will also organise relevant familiarisation visits to help with the

promotion work.

(2) and (3) Yan Chau Tong in the northeastern part of Hong Kong possesses unique geological landscape, rich ecology and village culture with long history. The AFCD has, in collaboration with stakeholders and the local community, established visitor centers, cultural trails, land tour routes, island-hopping itineraries, and maritime tour routes, providing tourists an in-depth green tour experience. In addition, the Countryside Conservation Office under the EEB is dedicated to revitalising villages, and held the Countryside Harvest Festival: Kuk Po 'Sound, Sight, Taste Fusion' Tour at Kuk Po in Sha Tau Kok from January to February 2025. The event blended local natural ecology, historical architecture and countryside culture, allowing the public to experience the unique charm of Hong Kong's countryside.

Through the Working Group for Sha Tau Kok Co-operation Zone set up under the Task Force for Collaboration on the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy under the Guangdong-Hong Kong and Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation mechanism, the CSTB collaborates with Shenzhen to promote the tourism development in Sha Tau Kok and nearby areas (including Kat O) under the overall principle of "low density, high quality" and through enriching its historical and cultural elements. The CSTB has also been encouraging the business sector to develop diversified tourism products. At present, Mainland visitors can conveniently enter Hong Kong through various boundary control points to join local tours, including eco-tourism itineraries in Hong Kong. Earlier on, in collaboration with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, the CSTB actively engaged with the trade in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. For instance, the CSTB organised the Sha Tau Kok island-hopping familiarisation tour for the travel trade from Yantian District of Shenzhen in December last year, which included visits to Lai Chi Wo, Kat O and Ap Chau, etc, for designing Sha Tau Kok island-hopping tours after crossing the boundary from the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point.

As regards the construction of piers for "co-location arrangement" for developing cross-boundary ferry routes between the eastern waters of Shenzhen and the NM area of Hong Kong as mentioned in part two of the question, it will indeed involve a number of complex considerations as mentioned in part three of the question, including the long-term market demand for the ferry routes concerned and the carrying capacity of the region; the infrastructure facilities that are required, the consequential change of planning as well as the economic and cost-effectiveness of the infrastructure investment; the security challenges that will have to be faced; and the potential impacts on the ecological environment, etc. which require long-term consideration by both sides of the governments.

Thank you President.