

LCQ22: Ancillary facilities of the Robin's Nest Country Park

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

The Country Parks (Designation) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Order 2023 (the Order) was made by the Chief Executive last year after consultation with the Executive Council to designate the relevant area delineated as a country park, to be known as the Robin's Nest Country Park (RNCP). The Order came into operation on March 1 this year. However, some members of the public have relayed to me that when they visited RNCP for a site inspection earlier on, they found that there were still no relevant road signs and ancillary facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has formulated a specific implementation timetable for improving the ancillary facilities of RNCP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it has plans to set up a visitors' centre for RNCP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) as it is learnt that there are many military relics of historical value (such as lookouts, firing trenches and forts) in the areas around RNCP, whether the Government will conserve and revitalize such military relics, so as to turn them into military-themed tourism resources; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) as it is learnt that currently, a section of the hiking track involving Lin Ma Hang Road and leading to the MacIntosh Fort (Kong Shan) and the Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine Cave which is undergoing revitalization works is within the Frontier Closed Area (FCA), hikers are prone to trespass on the area inadvertently and need to backtrack and leave through another exit, whether the authorities have considered opening up the part of FCA in the vicinity of RNCP to make it convenient for tourists to go there for sightseeing and leave by going downhill along the trail; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Robin's Nest Country Park (RNCP), located at Sha Tau Kok in the Northeastern New Territories, covers about 530 hectares of land, which is a hilly terrain with secondary woodland, shrubland and upland grassland,

presenting a pleasant landscape of high aesthetic value. RNCP is rich in biodiversity, with over 500 species of plants and animals identified therein, many of which are with high conservation value, such as Red Azalea, Incense Tree, Chinese Grassbird and Chinese Pipistrelle. RNCP also features cultural heritage resources including MacIntosh Forts and Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine relics, and is geographically connected with the Wutong Mountain in Shenzhen, forming a cross-boundary ecological corridor between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The Government officially established RNCP on March 1, 2024 to preserve the natural environment, scenic landscape and cultural heritage resources of the area concerned, and enhance its biodiversity, thereby allowing the public to appreciate the unique scenery and enjoy hiking. However, the public should assess their physical strength and hiking experience in planning a hike at RNCP as it is remotely located with rugged terrain, and it is normally a four-to-five-hour's walk along the two hiking trails. In response to Hon Yiu's questions, a consolidated reply, in consultation with the Security Bureau for parts (3) and (4) of the question, is prepared as follows:

(1) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been improving the hiking trail network, picnic sites and viewing points and other recreational facilities in RNCP. Currently, two hiking trails, namely Robin's Nest Country Trail and Lin Ma Hang Country Trail, are open for use, and their entrances are located at Shan Tsui of Sha Tau Kok and Lin Ma Hang Village respectively. Information boards, directional signs and distance posts, as well as viewing points and interpretation panels, have been installed along the hiking trails to facilitate hiking and appreciation of the nature and cultural heritage. The AFCD has also planned to construct a rain shelter and install various thematic interpretation panels within this year, and will build other hiking trails and facilities to enrich the visitors' experience. In addition, the AFCD is working with relevant departments to revitalise the Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine relics located within RNCP into an open museum to showcase its mining history and bat ecology to the public. The mine relic is currently closed for the revitalisation works, and is expected to be open to the public upon completion of works by end-2024.

(2) As RNCP is located in the mountainous area with rugged terrain, there are practical difficulties in setting up a new visitor centre. The AFCD has been disseminating relevant information of RNCP to the visitors through diverse channels, including website, social media, information boards and waymarks, covering hiking routes and attractions, hiking etiquette and safety. On weekends and public holidays during hiking peak season, interpreters are deployed at major entrances of RNCP to provide visitors' information and introduce the attractions in the area to enhance visitors' understanding of Robin's Nest and enrich their recreational experiences. Besides, the AFCD has been closely communicating with the relevant departments and villagers to explore the feasibility of providing visitors' supporting facilities.

(3) War relics in Robin's Nest area are mainly concentrated at Shan Tsui at the eastern part of the country park. The AFCD has engaged expert to collect relevant historical information and will install interpretation panels at suitable locations along the hiking trail so that visitors could appreciate the cultural heritage and understand the history while hiking.

(4) Currently, the section of Lin Ma Hang Road between Wang Lek and the entrance of Lin Ma Hang Village is still within Frontier Closed Area (FCA). To facilitate visitors going to RNCP via Lin Ma Hang Village, the AFCD has constructed a connecting path on the hillside outside the FCA, allowing visitors to reach the Lin Ma Hang Country Trail and Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine Cave without trespassing into the Lin Ma Hang Road FCA section. At certain spots along the connection path, stairs and stepping stones were built, railings were added, with overgrown grasses removed and slope-edges stabilized. Hence, visitors need not worry of inadvertently trespassing on the FCA, nor a backtrack to leave through another exit.