

## LCQ6: Developing island tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Regina Ip and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

There are views that Hong Kong has the potential for developing island tourism with its outlying islands boasting beautiful natural scenery, rural landscape, numerous antiquities and monuments, as well as other traditional festive events. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Government proposed in the Policy Address delivered last year to re-examine the planning of the ex-Lamma Quarry site, with the relevant study to be completed within this year, of the current progress of the study, and the expected time for publishing the finalised study report;

(2) as it is learnt that the development of outlying island tourism has been hindered due to rather backward infrastructure facilities including piers, roads and mobile communications facilities as well as inadequate hotel accommodation facilities, whether the Government has formulated measures and enhanced planning to expedite the improvement of supporting infrastructure, and encourage investment in hotels and resorts, etc; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the Government has formulated measures to step up publicity on island tourism; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether it will formulate such measures in the future?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong is rich in natural tourism resources with many outlying islands surrounded by azure and clear water, allowing water activities and island tours. Some islands locating in the northeast part of the New Territories and Sai Kung have been designated as Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark. The Government follows the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development when actively promoting green tourism. The Tourism Commission (TC) has been implementing Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival and Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival since 2019, featuring an integration of arts with the islands (including Yim Tin Tsai, Sharp Island, Kau Sai Chau and High Island), allowing visitors to experience the natural landscape, history, culture and heritage of Sai Kung Hoi, revitalising the islands as well as the economic activities there. The third edition of Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival will be held at the end of this year. Hong Kong's outlying islands also have rich and vivid resources of the intangible cultural heritage, such as the Tai O dragon boat water parade, Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, etc. We have been encouraging

the trade to utilise these characteristics to develop more related itineraries and tourism products and continue to actively develop and promote island tourism, attracting locals and tourists to explore the scenery and culture of the outlying islands in Hong Kong.

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip, in consultation with the Development Bureau (DEVB), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA), the reply is as follows:

(1) The Ex-Lamma Quarry, which comprises a 20-hectare (ha) platform area, a 5-ha man-made lake, and a 1-kilometre shoreline, is located at the northern coast of Sok Kwu Wan. It is currently used by a non-governmental organisation under a short-term tenancy for non-profit making environmental education and wildlife activity centre. To make the best use and optimise the advantages of the site, the DEVB commenced a review in November last year. The Study will explore to optimise the use of the beautiful environment and man-made lake of the site, nearby villages, hiking trail, seafood street and the water body of Sok Kwu Wan, to develop the area for resort and out-door recreational uses to enhance island tourism. Since such development will need to upgrade the basic infrastructure facilities, we will explore to incorporate accommodation facilities such as resort hotel, high-end camping facilities and low-density residential use so as to enhance the commercial viability and market interest to participate in the development project. We will make recommendations on the direction of development, including land use and development model, within this year.

(2) The Government has been actively developing island tourism. The TC will play a co-ordinating role to facilitate private organisations or individuals to develop various tourism facilities, such as accommodation and dining, etc outlying islands. At the same time, the TC has been co-ordinating and promoting effective use of smart technology by individual bureaux/departments with a view to promoting smart tourism, as well as formulating and implementing measures to enhance visitors' travel experiences and strengthen Hong Kong's competitiveness as a major tourist destination. With respect to telecommunications infrastructure facilities on outlying islands and remote areas, the OFCA has been taking forward the Subsidy Scheme to Extend Fibre-based Networks to Villages in Remote Areas and expediting the expansion of mobile network infrastructure in rural and remote areas through subsidies to enhance the overall coverage of mobile network facilities.

The Government is implementing a Pier Improvement Programme which aims to improve the external sea transportation of the remote areas in the outlying islands and the New Territories through the construction or reconstruction of public piers and the upgrading of facilities. The programme currently involves 23 piers, among which one has been completed, 10 are under construction and to be completed progressively from this year, and the remaining are in planning and engineering design stages. The Government has also been striving to enhance the public transport services for accessing to green attractions, including strengthening the kaito ferry services between Sai Kung and Kau Sai Village/High Island; and the new kaito ferry services

between Sha Tau Kok (STK)/Ma Liu Shui/Tai Shui Hang and Lai Chi Wo/Ap Chau/Kat O.

In recent years, the Government has also improved hiking trails on various outlying islands, including Lantau Trail Section 2, Sharp Island Country Trail and the hiking trails in Ngong Ping area, and renovated the Ngong Ping Nature Centre. The improvement works on Lantau Trail Section 3 have also commenced.

The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) proposes to make the best use of the natural and historical and cultural resources in the South Lantau (including Cheung Sha, Shui Hau, Shek Pik and Pui O), provide sustainable leisure and recreational facilities with different themes, enhance the land and water transport amenities in South Lantau (including a new pier at Cheung Sha) and provide accommodation facilities at Cheung Sha and Pui O, for example, beach campsite, quality holiday accommodation and glamping site. The CEDD will explore various implementation approaches, including inviting private developers/investors to participate in the projects. The CEDD has commenced a two-month public engagement on May 28 this year to collect views from the public.

(3) The Government actively promotes island tourism through different channels, introducing the distinctive characteristics of outlying islands to visitors. The TC has launched the Cultural and Heritage Sites Local Tour Incentive Scheme and the Characteristic Local Tourism Incentive Scheme consecutively to encourage the trade to develop more thematic in-depth tours and tourism products. Locations related to these outlying island tours include marine parks in Hoi Ha Wan and Tung Ping Chau as well as the natural islands such as Sharp Island and Yim Tin Tsai. The Government provided financial support to the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong to organise the "Deeper into Hong Kong: Creative Itinerary Design Competition" in 2023 to encourage travel agents to design in-depth themed itineraries, including outlying island tour routes. We will continue to encourage the trade to develop more thematic tourism products.

Besides, through its year-round promotional platform "Hong Kong Great Outdoors", the Hong Kong Tourism Board promotes green tourism products under the themes such as hiking and island hopping.

The AFCD has also set up various land and sea tour routes and visitor centres, and promotes related attractions and transport information through social media, Internet and the "Enjoy Hiking" thematic website.

In collaboration with relevant bureaux/departments, we will continue to promote the development of island tourism and utilise the valuable blue and green resources in Hong Kong; thereby implementing "Tourism is everywhere" concept. Thank you President.