

LCQ20: Facilities at recreation venues

Following is a question by the Hon Frederick Fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (May 23):

Question

Regarding the facilities provided by the Government at its recreation venues, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the standards and procedures adopted for assessing the demand for various recreational facilities in different communities, and the criteria used for determining the types of facilities to be provided at its recreation venues;

(b) of the respective numbers of pebble walking trails provided at venues managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Housing Department; as there are press reports that improper use of such facilities may cause injuries to the soles, whether the Government has studied the merits and demerits of such facilities before introducing them, and whether guidelines on their safe use have been posted in their vicinity, as well as whether it will remove these facilities; and

(c) among the jogging tracks currently provided by the Government in its parks and other outdoor venues (for example, those along Tolo Highway and Shing Mun River), of the number and total length of those which are surfaced with vibration-absorbing materials, the respective percentages of these figures in the relevant totals, as well as the specific locations of such tracks; as there are press reports that knee joints are more vulnerable to strain from the impact of jogging on hard surfaces for a long period of time, whether the Government will consider surfacing all jogging tracks with vibration-absorbing materials?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) In planning the provision of district recreational facilities, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will take into account a series of factors including the

preference of the local community for recreational facilities, the supply and utilisation rates of the facilities currently provided by the LCSD in the district, the district population and its distribution, the standard for provision of recreational facilities recommended by the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines according to the population of each district, the expectation of the District Council (DC), the supply of similar facilities by the private sector in the district and the utilisation rates of these facilities. In drawing up the project scope, the LCSD will consult the DC concerned. Subject to the consent of the DC, the project will be implemented.

(b) In response to the demand from the public, the LCSD has provided pebble walking trails in recreation venues under its management as an additional recreational facility for the public and a way to encourage them to do more exercises. Since the pebble walking trails were first introduced into LCSD recreation venues in 1996, a total of 128 walking trails paved with natural pebbles have been provided in our venues for public use.

A User Guide has been posted at all venues with pebble walking trails to explain the correct way of using the trails and remind users to make sure that they are in the suitable physical condition and have the appropriate ability to use the facility. It is aimed to ensure good hygiene and the safety of the users when using the facility.

The LCSD has consulted the professional organisations concerned and the Department of Health (DH) on the provision of pebble walking trails. According to the information provided by the DH, no data indicates that there has been any report from the public of any foot illness or injury caused by the use of pebble walking trails. Therefore, there is no need to remove the existing pebble walking trails. As a considerable number of pebble walking trails have already been provided in various districts, the LCSD will only provide such trails in new projects or add the trails to the existing facilities according to the actual demands from districts.

The Housing Department provides a total of 219 pebble walking trails in some of its public housing estates. With effect from September 2006, a Safety Guideline sign shall be installed at each of the newly-constructed pebble walking trails to remind users of the points to note, including how to use the facility safely, the types of people who are not suitable to use the facility, how to ensure good hygiene and when to stop using the facility. The Housing Department is now arranging for the signs to be installed at the pebble walking trails built in the past. It is expected that the installation works will be completed in the coming August. As these pebbled walking

trails are popular among residents of the housing estates, the Housing Department has no plan to close these facilities.

(c) At present, the LCSD provides jogging trails in 67 parks, 50 of which have hard-surfaced jogging trails. The jogging trails in the other 17 parks with a total length of 8 223 metres are paved with vibration-absorbing materials, which is a softer material. As for the list of venues with jogging trails paved with vibration-absorbing materials and the respective lengths of the trails, please refer to the Annex. The number and the length of these trails account for about a quarter of the total number and the total length of the LCSD jogging trails. There are no jogging trails along Tolo Highway and Shing Mun River Promenade under the Highways Department. The LCSD will consider the use of softer vibration-absorbing materials for constructing new jogging trails and repaving the existing ones in the parks.

Ends/Wednesday, May 23, 2007