

Islands District Council
Traffic and Transport Committee
Paper T&TC 33/2015

**Review of Closed Road Arrangements in South Lantau
and Proposals for Relaxation**

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the closed road arrangements in South Lantau and the proposals for relaxation.

Background

2. Since the 1970s, roads in South Lantau have been subject to 24-hour restriction of road closure. All motor vehicles are required to be issued with Lantau Closed Road Permits ("LCRP") before entering the closed roads. Since completion of the upgrading works of Tung Chung Road in February 2009, traffic restrictions in South Lantau have been gradually relaxed. The following traffic and transport arrangements are implemented in South Lantau at present:

- (a) Members of the public may access South Lantau by means of public transport, including Lantau buses, Lantau taxis and ferries.
- (b) Tung Chung Road (the section south of Shek Mun Kap Road) and all roads in South Lantau are designated as closed roads. Residents and business operators in South Lantau can be issued with long-term LCRPs for access to South Lantau. Members of the public with genuine needs to enter South Lantau may also apply for temporary LCRPs from the Transport Department ("TD"), but applications for recreational and leisure purposes would not be accepted; and
- (c) A maximum of 30 coaches are allowed to access South Lantau via Tung Chung Road per day through the issuance of LCRPs.

3. A map showing the existing closed roads in South Lantau is at **Annex A**. In 2014, a total of around 12 700 LCRPs¹ were issued, of which 4 000 were long-term permits and 8 700 were temporary ones.

Review of arrangements for closed roads and issuance of closed road permits for Lantau

4. In January 2015, the Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address that in 2015, among others, review of arrangements for closed roads and issuance of

¹ Long term permits have been issued to residents/business operators in South Lantau with valid address proof. Temporary or ad hoc permits are issued upon application to vehicles on a case-by-case basis, subject to provision of justifications.

closed road permits for Lantau will be rolled out in full swing to support its short term economic and community development.

5. As for relaxation of traffic restrictions in South Lantau, the TD considers that the measures should be in tandem with the current planning intention for preserving South Lantau as a conservation area². Besides, the measures should be formulated with due regard to the receiving capacities of the tourist ancillary facilities. The scale of relaxation must not cause unacceptable negative impacts on the environment, traffic safety and the livelihood of the residents.

6. The capacity of Tung Chung Road is about 10 000 vehicles per day and those of South Lantau Road and Keung Shan Road are both about 8 000 vehicles per day. According to the survey conducted by the TD, the average daily traffic is about 3 700 vehicles on Tung Chung Road, and 2 770 on South Lantau Road. The average daily traffic is about 1 120 vehicles on the section of Keung Shan Road between Sham Wat Road and Tai O Road, and 2 600 on the section between South Lantau Road and Sham Wat Road. Although the major roads in South Lantau still have spare capacity to accommodate more traffic, Keung Shan Road, South Lantau Road and Tai O Road are only 6.8-metre wide; and there are sharp bends at various locations as the roads are built along hillside. Drivers of long vehicles have to pay extra attention when passing oncoming long vehicles at these sharp bends. If the traffic volume increases substantially, there will be a higher frequency of head-on passing of long vehicles at these bends and vehicles overtaking the buses/ coaches that are setting down or picking up passengers at bus stops/ on roadside. It is therefore important to retain control over the entry of heavy and long vehicles into the roads in South Lantau, and to consider pursuing relaxation of traffic restrictions in a gradual and orderly manner.

Proposals to relax the traffic restrictions on roads in South Lantau

7. In view of the current road condition, traffic volume, parking facilities and their utilisation in South Lantau, the TD proposes to implement the following measures to promote local tourism and economy in the near future.

(1) To increase the maximum number of coaches that can enter roads in South Lantau per day from 30 to 50

8. Since the full opening of the improved Tung Chung Road in early 2009, the TD has allowed a maximum of 30 coaches to access South Lantau via the road every day. According to the TD's records, there are a total of 14 days in 2014 that the 30 daily coach quotas were fully utilised. Their distribution is set out below:

Weekdays	0
Saturdays	3
Sundays	11

² The Revised Concept Plan for Lantau published in 2007 reaffirmed the planning intention of focusing the major economic infrastructure and tourism development in North Lantau and preserving the rest of the island, which comprised high-quality landscape and ecologically sensitive natural environment, for nature conservation and sustainable recreational and visitor uses.

public holidays	0
Total	14

The average number of applications rejected due to full quota on these 14 days was 15 and the highest number of applications rejected was 45 on 16 February 2014. Since the availability of quota for the next two weeks is published on the TD's website for public information, some applicants might have cancelled their plans to South Lantau due to full quota on their target days. Hence, the above figures may not be able to fully reflect the demand of coaches for accessing South Lantau.

9. The number of coach parking spaces in South Lantau has been increasing in recent years, from 33 in 2009 to the present 48 (**Annex B**). These coach parking spaces are mostly located in popular tourist locations like Tai O and Ngong Ping. In view of public demand for coaches and the increased number of coach parking spaces, the TD proposes increasing the daily coach quota from 30 to 50 to encourage more package tours going to South Lantau and to promote its tourism. As it is unlikely that all the coaches will arrive at the same tourist spot at the same time, the number of coach parking spaces should be able to cope with the increased demand if the daily coach quota is revised to 50.

(2) To permit 50 private cars to enter roads in South Lantau on Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays)

10. The TD receives from time to time requests from members of the public (non-South-Lantau residents) for the LCRPs to drive their own private cars to enter South Lantau for recreational purpose. From January 2012 to 2014, a total of about 70 such requests/applications were received. Allowing private cars to enter South Lantau will no doubt encourage members of the public to enter South Lantau for recreational and leisure purposes, and hence help promote development of local economy and tourism in South Lantau.

11. There are about 350 public private car parking spaces in South Lantau (**Annex C**). It is noted from a TD survey that parking demand from private cars is relatively lower during daytime on weekdays and there are many unoccupied parking spaces at Pui O, Ngong Ping and Tong Fuk on weekdays. As such, the TD proposes providing a quota for non-resident private cars of 50 per day from Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays). At present, most tourists visit Lantau on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. There are fewer visitors on weekdays and the traffic is smooth. Therefore, the proposal should not be posing unacceptable impact on the traffic and residents in South Lantau.

Implementation

12. The above two proposals may be implemented at the same time or in phases. The TD will allocate such quota by issuing LCRPs. With the use of a dedicated fax line, the TD has established a quota application system on a first come, first served basis for coaches and it has been working very well. For private cars, the TD is now studying the application procedures in detail. To facilitate applications from members of the public, the TD will consider adopting online application and

uploading onto its website the application status on a daily basis for public information.

13. The TD has consulted the Traffic and Transport Subcommittee of the Lantau Development Advisory Committee in late June. The proposals were generally supported by the Subcommittee. The TD will consult relevant stakeholders including the tourism trade, transport trade and green groups on the proposals. Views from different parties will be considered and balanced before making any decision. The TD aims to implement the proposals this year. Upon implementation of the new measures, the TD will closely monitor their impact on road traffic and the environment and conduct a review one year afterwards.

Advice Sought

14. Members are invited to comment on the above proposals.

Transport Department
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