

3rd November, 2019

Countryside Visitors Adopting Green Habits Green Power Appeals to Public to “Leave No Trace”

Stepping into its 27th anniversary, “Clean Up the World in Hong Kong”, a waste reduction campaign organised by Green Power, and supported by HK Electric, released its findings on “Hong Kong Countryside Rubbish Survey”⁽¹⁾ 2019 today in Wan Chai Gap Park.

First conducted in 2016, the survey highlights the changing habits of countryside visitors over the years. The 2019 survey shows that tissue papers (68%), food packaging (65%) and plastic bags (47%) remain the top three dumping items, which together represent an average of one to two pieces of each item generated per visitor. **Mr. Henry LUI, Senior Conservation Manager of Green Power** said comparing the latest findings with the first survey in 2016, 10% more of respondents are bringing back their waste to urban area for disposal. **LUI** attributed the success to the rubbish bin removal plan by the government, which he believes has encouraged the public on the green move.

There are contrasting views though regarding the policy being implemented in campsites and barbecue areas, as leftover food especially is difficult to be taken back home. However, respondents tend to agree more on removing litter bins along trails, beaches and parks. **LUI** suggests that the government might implement the policy in phases to allow enough time for the public to fit into a new green mode of thinking and habit.

The survey also notes that more hikers are bringing their own water bottles instead of buying bottled water as more water fountains and dispensers are being set up in the countryside. However, **LUI** points out that some 60% of respondents have expressed difficulty finding the water dispenser locations and urges for improvements from the government on the publicity and better promotion.

Tissue papers are the most discarded items in the countryside, and only 26% of the respondents indicated their change to using handkerchiefs, while 33% are yet to establish the habit. According to the findings, each countryside visitors generates 2.3 unwanted tissue paper on average. **LUI** urges the public to reduce waste at source, and avoid using tissue papers.

“Leave No Trace” has been promoted by some green groups in recent years to minimise disturbance and harm to the natural environment. LUI said they found in their survey that although quite a number of respondents are already practising some of the principles advocated, about 37% do not fully grasp the meaning and value behind these principles, and as high as 40% have not even heard of the concept. Hence Green Power is advocating for a more comprehensive education in the area.

Guests who attended the activity today included **Mr. TSE Chin-wan, Under Secretary for the Environment from the Environment Bureau; Mr. HO Yin-Piu, Deputy General Manager (Corporate Development) of HK Electric; and Dr. CHENG Luk-ki, Director of Green Power.**

“With hiking becoming more popular, said **Mr. TSE**, the Environment Bureau has been advocating the “Leave No Trace” principles and low-carbon local tours. To encourage hikers to bring their own water bottles, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department has set up more water filling facilities in the country parks with its ‘Let's Go Plastic Free’ campaign. The Environmental Protection Department also launches another campaign to promote less use of disposable tableware. All targeted to encouraging the public to build up a new green habit.”

Mr. HO said, “Having supported the event for 25 consecutive years, HK Electric is pleased to learn of the progress made in cutting down waste at source, and calls for more concerted efforts from the public to minimise waste.”

HK Electric volunteers team up with helpers from Green Power to gather dumped refuse along Wan Chai Nature Trail and Bowen Road Fitness Trail for proper disposal after the ceremony, and help make appeals to hikers to “Leave No Trace”.

⁽¹⁾ *“Hong Kong Countryside Rubbish Survey” has been conducted online yearly since 2016. This year the survey was conducted between 24 September and 7 October, 2019. The subjects had visited the countryside during the past year and were at least 16 years old.*

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