

7. Experience sharing (2) -
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Task Group on Harbour Planning Principles

The Harbour Planning Principles (HPPs) are actually a set of harbour-front enhancement principles and guidelines. This set of principles and guidelines is a planning, development, implementation, management tool. The review of the HPPs was on the table from the very early HEC meetings. We had a robust document in the form of a planning study of the harbour in 2003. It addressed certain missions, visions and principles and also lot of information about guidance, but then they were all buried in the document. Part of our job is to review the document and look at how to take it forward as part of the HEC harbour-front enhancement activities.

In the document, the guidelines are strongly driven by tourism, for example, grouping tourist attractions in cluster, consolidating tourism clusters, and locating secondary tourism nodes. What we have tried to do in the review is to look at the harbour-front enhancement all-roundedly instead of only emphasizing tourism. Every project that is going on around the harbour needs to refer back to the current HEC HPPs or guidelines. There are many important ones added to the 2003 framework prepared by the Planning Department. They are the "early and ongoing stake-holders engagement", "sustainable development", "integration", "multi-accessibility" and "multi-uses and activities". It has been an evolutionary process.

The guidelines have only been endorsed by the HEC earlier this month, but it was not too late. Throughout the process, we have learnt from every project and applicant. We have countless proposals from government departments and private developers. They spent time explaining their projects and the HEC asked them how they were applying the HPPs into the projects and how they were adopting good harbour-front enhancement strategies in their proposals. We have learnt that it has been a two-way process of learning. All have been going on within the public ground with members of the public and press participating in the meetings. The process has been transparent with lot of dialogues and feedback. Overall the process has been in different approaches, such as engagement, working and learning approach.

Our job also includes a great degree of consultation with statutory bodies, advisory bodies and public bodies, like the Town Planning Board presentations, the LegCo presentations, Joint District Councils Forum and also through feedback from the community in the website. We end up with a rather robust document that most people now cite as being the reference tool. When compared to the harbour or port authorities in other places, our HPPs

stand out pretty well in terms of addressing all of the key issues. The issue is now how to implement. Ownership is important for moving forward. HEC is an advisory committee. What we are aiming to do is to get the HEC guidelines and principles applied to the existing planning tools. So that the government will take them on as we move on to ensure that these tools work.

There are differences between principles and guidelines. Principles are short and things that we broadly would like to achieve while guidelines are the articulation of those principles. They are more illustrative, more specific in descriptions and have more clarity. If we are talking about not reclaiming the Victoria Harbour and the overriding public needs, it cuts across into what we've learned as both process and also the application of principles. It deals with macro and micro issues, future and present, both short and long term. Sustainable development means across the generation, so the cultural heritage and long term issues become very important. How about temporary sites? Is it a uniform application to all the harbour-front projects? The simple answer is the set of guidelines is not the universal guidelines across all sites. Different projects have different natures. Indeed, the guidelines need to apply to all of these so we have tried our best to give credence to both large-scale and small-scale projects.

To conclude, we have consulted widely on the guidelines, so it does not matter if you did not get the chance to consult and comment. What we have entwined into the principles should be dynamic. They should change and evolve as times go on. As the HEC continues its journey, we should continue to evolve these guidelines as best practice becomes more evident and as new ideas and thinking get seeded in. We should end up with a process which creates and inspires to create the world's most high-class harbour-front.