

For discussion on
6 April 2009

**Legislative Council Panel on Development
Subcommittee on Harbourfront Planning**

Harbourfront Planning, Enhancement and Management

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on Government's work on harbourfront planning, beautification and management, and invites Members' views on how this work may be enhanced.

HARBOURFRONT POLICY

2. Victoria Harbour is an icon of our city and the most precious public asset. We are committed to protecting, preserving and beautifying the harbourfront for public enjoyment. With the high level support received from the Chief Executive in his 2008-09 Policy Address and the Financial Secretary in his 2009-10 Budget Speech, we will spare no efforts in enhancing and revitalizing the harbourfront areas, improving accessibility and connectivity of the harbourfront, providing more open space, and creating continuous promenades on both sides of Victoria Harbour. Our vision is to create a vibrant, green, accessible and sustainable harbourfront through effective and balanced planning and utilization of land resources.

STRATEGIES

3. In pursuit of this vision, we have to acknowledge that there are existing limitations and constraints in the planning and usage of some of the harbourfront sites, some of which are mentioned in paragraph 11 below. Since at this moment, different departments and agencies are involved as project proponents, works agents and management agents for

different projects, we are acutely aware of the need for stronger leadership and more effective coordination. In practice, harbourfront enhancement work requires visionary planning, extensive consultations and strong execution work. In this regard, the Development Bureau, which has recently set up a dedicated harbour unit, will –

- (a) coordinate inter-departmental efforts on harbourfront planning;
- (b) identify and implement short, medium and long term enhancement projects; and
- (c) develop practicable and suitable models for the sustainable management of the harbourfront.

4. In the process of planning, developing and managing the harbourfront areas, we will –

- (a) have due regard to the Town Planning Board's Vision and Goals for Victoria Harbour (**Annex A**) as well as the Harbour Planning Principles and Guidelines (**Annex B**) promulgated by the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC);
- (b) adopt a more proactive and flexible approach in the use of land resources such as opening up as much vacant government land as possible (including, where appropriate, sites now under short-term tenancies or temporary government land allocations) for the creation of continuous promenades or harbourfront enhancement projects;
- (c) explore the possibility of relocating or setting back existing government facilities which are incompatible with a vibrant waterfront or do not need to be located at the waterfront;
- (d) if relocation or setting back is not possible, explore the feasibility of introducing a façade or landscape treatment to

the existing government facilities to improve their visual appearance;

- (e) actively study the feasibility of public private partnership or other forms of private sector involvement in providing walkway or open space adjoining a private development to achieve greater vibrancy of the harbourfront area; and
- (f) last but not least, strengthen public engagement from early planning, development to implementation stages.

HARBOURFRONT ENHANCEMENT

5. As we informed Members in January 2009, we will press ahead with harbourfront enhancement work on short, medium and long term bases, in consultation with parties concerned.

Short-term Initiatives

6. We have in the past few years implemented a number of quick-wins or temporary proposals to enhance the harbourfront, such as temporary promenades in the West Kowloon Cultural District and the Wan Chai waterfront (commonly known as the “pet garden”). In the short-term, we will continue to identify and launch various quick-wins or temporary projects to beautify and provide harbourfront promenades for public enjoyment. A list of 15 projects to be completed within the next five years is tabulated at **Annex C**.

7. Another short-term initiative being actively looked into is the improvement of directional signage to the harbourfront with a view to providing clearer directions to both residents and tourists to access the harbourfront. DEVB will draw on the experience of the Tourism Commission’s Visitor Signage Improvement Scheme and work with relevant departments and District Councils (DCs) to implement the proposal.

Medium-term Initiatives

8. Medium-term work includes other possible harbourfront enhancement on both Government (**Annex D**) and private lands (**Annex E**), the implementation details and timetable of which have to be further worked out. A location plan for open space and harbourfront enhancement works covering the sites at Annexes C to E is at **Annex F**. Among them, we are actively studying the feasibility of public private partnership for developing the Hung Hom waterfront promenade (i.e. item B13 at Annex D) near the Hung Hom Pier. The Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui is a good and workable model of private sector involvement and we will keep an open mind on applying such a model to other sites.

9. We are also considering practicable and effective models for the sustainable management of the harbourfront areas. Details are set out in paragraph 17 below.

Long-term Initiatives

10. The new harbourfront arising from the Central Reclamation Phase III and the Wan Chai Development Phase II will provide an invaluable opportunity to meet the public expectation. The Planning Department's Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront, which aims at refining the planning and design briefs for the development of eight key sites in the new Central harbourfront, is approaching completion. We will brief Members on the outcome of the Stage 2 public engagement of the Study and our proposals for refining the planning and design of the sites later this year. Even for strips of the harbourfront which are taken up by a major highway, i.e. the Island Eastern Corridor, we have not given up the feasibility of creating public access. As regards the new Wan Chai harbourfront, the overall planning and design concept for its land uses is to emphasize the relation of the new waterfront with the Harbour, the cultural and historical context of Wan Chai and Causeway Bay, and the surrounding environment. The Planning Department will shortly commence the Hong Kong Island East Harbourfront Study to explore means to enhance connectivity and accessibility to the harbourfront and identify other feasible waterfront

enhancement measures in the Eastern District.

Constraints

11. As shown in the overview plan at **Annex G**, whilst a significant portion of both sides of Victoria Harbour has already been or is planned to be developed into open space or promenades, some existing land uses or facilities have posed constraints to harbourfront enhancement. These include port-related facilities and economic activities, public utilities, military uses and privately-owned harbourfront land. Existing roads along the harbourfront, such as the Island Eastern Corridor and the Kwun Tong Bypass, also limit the opportunities for harbourfront enhancement and affect the visual appeal of the harbourfront area. As mentioned in paragraph 4 above, we will explore the possibility of relocating or setting back existing government facilities which are incompatible with a vibrant waterfront or do not need to be located at the waterfront. If relocation or setting back is not possible in the short to medium term, we will explore the feasibility of improving the visual appearance to match with the harbourfront setting. Concerning harbourfront lands that are privately-owned, we would need to identify more innovative ways to motivate private owners to cooperate.

Public Engagement

12. There has been growing public interest in the protection and use of the harbour. Public engagement has become a vital area of work at all stages of harbour planning and development. We will engage all relevant stakeholders, including non-government organizations, harbour concern groups, DCs, business groups, etc., in the identification and implementation of harbourfront enhancement proposals. In this connection, HEC is a forerunner in public engagement. Under the steer of HEC, extensive public engagement programmes for major planning reviews and studies, including the Kai Tak Planning Review, Harbourfront Enhancement Review – Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and Adjoining Areas, and Hung Hom District Study, were organized. We will continue to engage the public in other studies, including those mentioned in paragraph 10 above. Government bureaux, departments and private developers have also been advised to engage the HEC,

relevant DCs and the public on harbourfront development at an early stage.

WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE HARBOUR

13. Victoria Harbour has always been a busy working harbour. As requested by Members, the various existing marine uses and activities are shown at **Annex H** and explained in detail at **Annex I**. Some of these uses include :

- (a) fairways;
- (b) anchorages;
- (c) typhoon shelters;
- (d) mooring buoys;
- (e) sea areas designated for different purposes and/or with different restrictions;
- (f) vessel bunkering areas;
- (g) private mooring areas;
- (h) marine works areas; and
- (i) entry restricted areas.

14. In Planning Department's "Planning Study on the Harbour and its Waterfront Areas" completed in 2003, some water-based activities which would contribute to the vibrancy of the Harbour were suggested. They include boat races, tall ship regatta, maritime pageant, "son et lumière" (sound and light) presentations, fireworks, dining and marine demonstration. Other activities, including swimming race, recreational fishing on boats, boating and diving, marine excursions, advertisement by flying balloons from vessels, filming in the sea area in the harbour, boat parade, water spray from boats, special vessel display, concert or other performance on vessels, and exhibition on vessels, could also be considered. However, given the level of routine activities in various areas of the harbour, whether a certain activity can be allowed in a particular sea area in the harbour would depend on a number of considerations including safety and avoidance of conflict between different uses within the water.

15. To allow the beneficial use of marine facilities, we intend to look into the possible re-use of individual piers which have been left idle or under-utilised, so that such piers would contribute to the vibrancy of the waterfront. In view of comments from the Central and Western DC and the local residents there, we will also consider whether and how the four idle piers in the Western Wholesale Food Market can be put to better use. We will also explore the possibility of rationalizing the existing port-related uses within the Harbour. If the Public Cargo Working Area (PCWA) operation at the remaining portion of the Kwun Tong PCWA could be relocated by the expiry of its current license in 2011, the 200-metre temporary waterfront promenade listed in item A8 at Annex C could be extended to the whole Kwun Tong PCWA.

HARBOURFRONT MANAGEMENT

16. In managing the harbourfront, the Government will adopt a proactive, pragmatic and supportive approach in the coordination and management of the harbourfront area. We will work closely with the local community, DCs and relevant stakeholders in managing the harbour. Where applicable, private sector involvement would be encouraged to finance, develop and/or manage public waterfront promenades or open space adjoining a private development.

17. On the suitability of creating a Harbour Authority in managing the harbourfront, the Administration conducted a desk-top research on overseas harbour authorities in 2003. The research suggests that the concept of “harbour authority” frequently mentioned in the community may be over-generalized. While statutory harbour authorities have been set up in various overseas cities, their functions and roles in harbour planning and development vary greatly from city to city. Some are primarily port authorities to deal with port and navigational affairs, which can be found in many port cities in the United States and Canada (e.g. Vancouver Port Fraser Authority). Some are redevelopment corporations whose main objective is to regenerate defunct docklands, such as Waterfront Toronto, Cardiff Harbour Authority in Wales and VicUrban in Victoria of Australia. Some are multi-functional in nature, like the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and the Port of San

Francisco, which may be involved in land disposal, land use planning and development, property management, preservation of waterfront sites, event management, shipping activities and maintenance of port facilities, etc. Each of these authorities was created to suit the needs and administrative contexts of their own. However, none of them was created solely for harbourfront management. In this connection, we consider that Hong Kong should devise a model of its own having regard to our circumstances. The HEC Task Group on Management Model for the Harbourfront (TGMMH) is studying both local and overseas management models and will submit its recommendations to the Government after deliberation and endorsement by the HEC. We will carefully study TGMMH's recommendations when received.

ADVICE SOUGHT

18. Members are invited to give their views on the content of this paper.

ANNEX

Annex A Town Planning Board's Vision and Goals for Victoria Harbour

Annex B HEC's Harbour Planning Principles and Guidelines

Annex C Timetable for Harbourfront Enhancement Works on Government Land

Annex D Other Possible Harbourfront Enhancement Proposals on Government Land

Annex E Possible Harbourfront Enhancement Works on Private Land

Annex F Open Space and Harbourfront Enhancement Works around Victoria Harbour

Annex G Overview – Opportunities and Constraints for Harbourfront Enhancement in Victoria Harbour

Annex H Hong Kong Harbour Facilities & Layout Plan

Annex I Existing Marine Uses and Activities

Development Bureau (Planning and Lands Branch)
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