

# Harbourfront Commission

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For discussion  
on 21 July 2010

HC/02/2010

## **Relocation of Hong Kong Maritime Museum to the New Central Harbourfront**

### **PURPOSE**

This discussion paper is intended to brief the Harbourfront Commission on the Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM) and seek Members' support for its relocation to and expansion at Central Pier 8 (Pier 8) on the new Central harbourfront in terms of the museum's contribution to a vibrant harbourfront.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE MUSEUM**

#### ***Creation***

2. The HKMM is an independent museum financed by the international shipping community in Hong Kong and is not operated as a facility within the governmental system. That said, it is a public facility in any normal definition of that term, in that it is run for the people of Hong Kong and open to all who visit at a very modest fee. It is thus distinct from other private museums (for example Cathay Pacific's Aviation Discovery Centre in Cathay City, or the Fan Museum in Shau Kei Wan) to which access is available only at the discretion of the owner.

#### ***Governance***

3. The HKMM is financed and overseen by the Hong Kong Maritime Museum Trust (HKMMT) composed of 12 trustees drawn from Hong Kong's international shipping and maritime community. The HKMMT wholly owns the Hong Kong Maritime Museum Ltd (HKMML), which is the Trust's operating arm charged with management and operation of the museum under the responsibility of a Board of Directors with seven members appointed from the maritime and academic communities. It oversees the work of the 11 museum staff under the Museum Director.

## ***Location***

4. In 2004 the HKMM found temporary premises on a six year lease on the ground floor of Murray House, Stanley Plaza, Stanley. These premises originally belonged to the Housing Authority but became part of the portfolio of the newly formed Link Real Estate Investment Trust on 25 November 2005 in a divestment exercise. The premises are managed by the Link Management Ltd. A concessionary rent was agreed on gallery spaces, a reduced commercial rent on the museum shop, and a commercial rental on the two shop premises in Ma Hang Estate necessary for additional storage and office space. Sufficient funds were raised from the international shipping community to establish the museum with the intention of operating it for a maximum of eight years until either public financing support could be agreed or arrangements be made to close the museum and dispose of the collection.

## ***Mission and vision***

5. The museum has expanded rapidly and extensively in order to fulfill its mission and its vision –

- **Mission Statement**

The HKMM is the home of Hong Kong's maritime heritage past, present and future where we place Hong Kong's maritime story into its local, regional and international context; and

- **Vision statement**

To become the maritime museum showcasing Hong Kong and China's maritime connections to the world focused on the Pearl River Delta and the emergence and development of Hong Kong as a port and international shipping centre.

## ***Collection***

6. The collection has expanded from c. 600 items at launch in 2005 to over 2000 items today. The library and archive from c. 20

items at launch to c. 2000 items today. The museum is a member of the International Council of Museums – the premier international museums’ organisation – and an active member of the International Congress of Maritime Museums whose biennial conference HKMM hopes to host in partnership with the Macao Maritime Museum in 2015. HKMM is also a member of the American Association of Museums and the Museums Association (UK) and 11 other professional and academic associations. It has relationships with 51 maritime and maritime related museums in 19 countries around the world.

### ***Needs going forward***

7. It soon became evident that the HKMM is facing three problems –

- Its temporary lease – this provides only a six year time horizon in commercial premises while most museums are planned on a normal 20 year horizon, or a minimum of no less than 10 years;
- Its expansion – impelled by the richness and variety of Hong Kong’s maritime heritage, and collections donated or on loan, the HKMM – had outgrown its premises within two years. Its current commercial premises offer no room for expansion. Standard maritime museums in equivalent port cities around the world have 6,000 to 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of usable area (see **Annex 1**);
- Its temporary financing arrangements – given that no museum can ordinarily pay its way, the HKMM has been looking for some form of government support over the years to ensure its sustainability – ideally with the creation of an effective and supportive government museum policy that could accommodate independent museums. In addition, a long term endowment fund has been envisioned to help sustain the museum’s operations over the long term.

8. Since 2006, the HKMM has been looking for new premises and for government support, a campaign that lasted until provisional agreement on the present relocation and expansion project, under the aegis of the Home Affairs Bureau, was reached in August 2009.

## **THE RELOCATION AND EXPANSION PROJECT**

### ***Inception***

9. In September 2007, the HKMML learned of vacant spaces on Pier 8, which might be available for use as museum premises. These would be up to five times the size of the existing premises. The HKMM conducted deliberations with the Government on the basis of securing these premises on concessionary terms and forging an agreement with government providing finance for the capital development and for recurrent operations on reopening. Spearheaded by HAB and with the support of DEVB, the HKMM's proposed relocation has obtained the necessary Government support.

### ***Design commencement***

10. In January 2010, with support of Government funding, the HKMM appointed the Lead Consultant (P&T Architects and Engineers Ltd), the Museum Design Consultant (Haley Sharpe Design Ltd.) and the Independent Quantity Surveyor (H.A. Brechin Ltd.) and the initial stages of the project began. Detailed designs are expected to be complete by the end of the third quarter 2010 and, subject to obtaining planning approval from the Town Planning Board and subsequent funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, it is hoped that construction will begin in early 2011.

### ***Design content***

11. The museum is envisaged to have 14 galleries displaying up to 1000 exhibits at any one time, including a wide range of educational but entertaining interactive ones including a panoramic, past/present interactive Victoria Harbour Viewing Gallery with real time shipping data feed. Major exhibitions will regularly be offered in the Special

Exhibition Gallery, usually visiting exhibitions from the world's other major maritime museums.

## ***Consultations with stakeholders***

12. A Section 16 application has been submitted to the Town Planning Board for change of use of Pier 8. Stakeholders have been or are being consulted including the Legislative Council's Panel on Home Affairs in January 2008, the Central and Western District Council in April, June and July 2010 and the Society for the Protection of the Harbour in May 2010. As the project is receiving coordinated advisory service from DEVB's Development Opportunities Office, the Land and Development Advisory Committee will also be consulted on 22 July 2010. It is tentatively planned to seek formal approval of the project and its financing from the Legislative Council's Panel on Home Affairs, Public Works Sub-committee and Finance Committee early in the 2010-2011 Legislative Session.

## ***Project enhancements***

13. In addition to the significant benefits to accrue to the harbourfront from having an international standard maritime museum in the heart of one of the world's most magnificent and most important harbours, the HKMM has offered from its collection, for enhancement of the immediate area around the museum and to act as a 'maritime theme' focus, one of the main anchors of what was until 2010 the world's largest ship, and one that had been in Hong Kong ownership or management from her launch to her scrapping. The intention is to create a major memorial, common in many major ports, to seafarers and port workers. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has agreed in principle to include the anchor in the open space of the new Central harbourfront, but will still need consultation with relevant stakeholders.

## ***Project completion & re-launch***

14. Should all approvals come in on the timeline and construction begin as planned, the present museum will close in late 2011. The museum staff and collection will move to the new storage and office premises in Pier 8 in early 2012 to help final display installation and to

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vacate the Murray House premises for restoration to their original condition before the formal end of the recently negotiated 18 month lease extension. The museum's re-opening is planned for the beginning of the last quarter 2012.

## PROJECTS BENEFITS AND REQUIREMENTS

15. In justifying its relocation to Pier 8, the HKMM has put forth the following benefits –

- **Enhance the harbour** as a place to visit by offering an internationally recognisable and international quality heritage attraction in the optimum location for both local people and foreign tourists;
- **Provide a focus** of activity on the new waterfront, especially in the two to three years between the re-launch of the museum and the final completion of the new Central harbourfront, but also in the decades to come as the museum grows and further establishes its international reputation;
- **Create vibrancy** and interest along the key section of Victoria Harbour by giving the section a specific context and content rich theme not only in terms of general maritime interest, but specifically in relation to the story of Victoria Harbour past, present and future;
- **Consolidate a heritage node** with the Star Ferry, the *Jahre Viking/Seawise Giant* anchor seafarers and port workers memorial and Queen's Pier, each in its way an icon of Hong Kong's maritime and port heritage, thereby giving this section of the waterfront an organic, rather than contrived identity;
- **Promote better understanding** of the history of the harbour and Hong Kong via its rich collection of relevant objects, paintings, charts, photographs and memorabilia relating to Victoria Harbour;

- **Become a learning centre** for people of Hong Kong and tourists through its educational displays and the availability of the Museum's Maritime Heritage Resource Centre;
- **Better utilise** existing vacant or underused spaces by providing a quality environment for family entertainment in the galleries, a meeting place for all in the museum café and a unique shopping experience in the museum shop; and
- **Be respectful of the pier design** whilst creating a recognisable identity for the museum by a combination of innovative and attractive museum design and harmonious external appearance.

DEVB generally recognises the above benefits and thus has been offering the project our support and assistance.

16. It is the museum's view that all this can be done in a way wholly compatible with present planning for the new harbourfront. There will be no significant traffic impact, the numbers for even the most optimistic visitor forecasts being far less daily than the regular passenger ferry loadings for which the pier was planned. Some adjustments will be necessary to the immediate surrounds of Pier 8 to facilitate –

- **Pedestrian access** by visitors by a realignment of the planned bridge connection between the Comprehensive Development Area site north of Statute Square and the Central Terminal Building;
- **Vehicular access** by group visitors, especially those with disabilities, by provision of a coach/minibus drop off (as at present); and
- **Visibility** to visitors by effective signage in the immediate environs.

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These are minor adjustments which should not pose any impediment to the project.

17. Some relevant pictures of the existing museum and design sketches of the new museum are attached at **Annex 2** for reference.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

18. As the HKMM will be one of the first prominent public facilities on the new Central Harbourfront, the support and endorsement of the relevant parties is crucial to its success. Given its value to our vision for a vibrant and attractive harbourfront for public enjoyment, we would recommend that Harbourfront Commission render its support to the project. We believe this should help the project to go through its subsequent stages of approval.

**Development Bureau**  
**July 2010**