

## **Activating the Wan Chai Waterfront**

An opportunity to provide a venue for the promotion of  
water-related events on the Harbour

### **PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Harbourfront Commission (HC) members on the opportunity to animate the Wan Chai waterfront as a legacy of the Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII), Central-Wan Chai Bypass (CWB) and Shatin to Central Link (SCL) works. It outlines the potential to create a world-class event venue for public enjoyment of the Harbourfront and explores some of the issues that need to be resolved in order to enable the activation of the core facilities.

2. Policy support to the principles of water-dependant sport and event use of the Wan Chai waterfront as outlined in this paper is sought from the HC so this can be incorporated into the realisation and detailed planning stage.

3. HC is asked to recommend to relevant Government bureaux and departments that a timely and coherent strategic masterplan and associated feasibility study is jointly agreed in order not to squander the legacy opportunity from the ongoing civil engineering works currently affecting the Wan Chai waterfront.

### **BACKGROUND**

4. The RHKYC has been actively involved in the public consultation process relating to WDII since its inception. In 2005 the club submitted a pamphlet to the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee as part of the Harbour-front Enhancement Review (HER) process. A number of the concepts outlined in that document are indeed mirrored in the images used on CEDD's WDII project documentation and even the hoardings that surround the works areas.

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5. Following on from the 2005 HER paper, in January 2012 the RHKYC submitted a paper to the Secretariat of the Harbourfront Commission (HC) regarding possible developments along the Wan Chai waterfront (including the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter (CBTS), the ex-PCWA and the new Wan Chai waterfront) upon the completion of the CWB / WDII / SCL works. The January 2012 paper advocated for specific projects to be activated in a timely fashion so as to ensure a positive legacy for public use and enjoyment of the Harbour following on from the current civil works.

6. The newly formed Water-Land Interface Task Force of the Harbourfront Commission made site visits to various facilities around Victoria Harbour on 11 May 2012, during which members conducted a brief tour of the RHKYC to get a first-hand understanding of what facilities exist at the club and how those facilities were managed. They also got a view of the club's existing water access to both the CBTS and the ex-PCWA and the opportunity for a very brief discussion regarding opportunities for improved public amenities.

7. During this tour and discussion the RHKYC emphasized that the club had no agenda in regard to the ex-PCWA or Wan Chai waterfront other than a desire to see a cohesive, compatible and appropriate development plan that made the best use of the land and water spaces that were either created or preserved under the WDII scheme. The club sees this as a not-to-be-missed opportunity for contributing to the positive development of waterfront facilities that make the most of our valued resource (the Harbour) and that are for the benefit of Hong Kong.

8. The RHKYC is a not-for-profit sporting organization that seeks to contribute to enhancing Hong Kong, its water bodies and its waterfronts. The club has some concepts to offer to the community for civic benefit, and it has the willingness to share expertise as a potential stakeholder in future public-private collaboration to enhance this high profile part of the Harbour.

9. The club has been established at Kellett Island since the early 1940s and has played a significant role in both the development of sailing and rowing in Hong Kong, and more generally in bringing activity to the Harbour. It has played an important part in creating an enviable international profile for Hong Kong in the marine world. The RHKYC is a significant local employer and is sustaining marine skills and capacity for repair and maintenance that is rapidly being lost elsewhere in the HKSAR. The club is also an active participant in the Marine Department Local Vessel

Advisory Committee overseeing safe pleasure boating activity in Hong Kong waters.

10. Subsequent to the May 2012 HC Task Force visit, RHKYC has now been invited to submit a paper and make a presentation for the review and consideration of the HC as a whole.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME**

11. Victoria Harbour lacks venues with suitable facilities and amenities to stage cultural and sporting events that would give Hong Kong worldwide prestige, spectator appeal, commercial impact and media coverage. It also lacks places within the Harbour for easy and safe public access to the water for small craft, to get on and off water taxis and water tours within sheltered water.

12. A venue with suitable facilities and proactive management can attract world-class events and performances to Hong Kong and will provide a destination of distinctive character and attraction; it will foster small- and medium-scale commercial activity, private sector investment and jobs; and opportunities for celebration of local character and culture.

## **SCOPE OF PROGRAMME AND POTENTIAL SUB-PROJECTS**

13. The concept goal is to deliver a new, well-provisioned venue and associated infrastructure for water-related and water-dependent events such as major yacht race stopovers and regattas; dragon-boat racing; “Harbour Day” pageants and heritage ship collections and regattas. The venue should include facilities for large numbers of spectators to view fireworks displays plus open air arenas for concerts and opera. The venue needs to maintain open space on land to provide for flexible event set up and sheltered water space of sufficient depth that is clear of fairways and other marine constraints. The venue could also provide a base for a small boat “City Sailing Centre” designed to maximize the public recreational usage of the water space and adjacent land.

- (a) A venue for “Race Village” for internationally significant yacht races such as the Volvo Ocean Race, America’s Cup World Series, World Match Racing Tour, Extreme 40 Series etc);

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- (b) A venue for major international boat shows and other public events;
- (c) A venue for a “City Sailing Centre”;
- (d) Small-scale retail and F&B facilities;
- (e) A permanent visitor attraction and amenity value such as the Hong Kong Maritime Museum with adjacent mooring for the permanent “in water” display of vessels of a historic nature;
- (f) Temporary mooring facilities for large visiting yachts;
- (g) A viewing arena for a floating stage for public performances;
- (h) Safe and sheltered water for public access to the Harbour (water taxis / water tours etc)

14. In order to be able to fully deliver on the above goals it would be necessary for the Wan Chai waterfront between the new Star Ferry pier and the ex-PCWA to be functionally integrated with the development and facilities within and surrounding the ex-PCWA.

15. To deliver on these goals the core infrastructure elements might include:-

- (a) Wave protection and attenuation, ideally involving an additional permanent breakwater across the mouth of the ex-PCWA and a moored wave attenuator parallel to the newly created Wan Chai waterfront. Depending on the degree of wave protection, a wave absorbing lining to the ex-PCWA might also form part of this project;
- (b) Fringing pontoons within the ex-PCWA with secure gangway style access;
- (c) Improvements to water depth and water quality within the ex-PCWA;
- (d) Provision for adequate public access to the ex-PCWA;
- (e) Permanent public installations within the ex-PCWA that make the best use of the waterside access (such as maritime museum);

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- (f) Fringing pontoons along the new WDII harbour wall with secure gangway style access;
- (g) Provision within the detailed design of the newly created WDII Wan Chai waterfront to allow for multiple use of the land area including the capability to erect temporary or permanent spectator seating arenas / temporary grandstands, temporary structures for race management; broadcast facilities; VIP areas; temporary toilets; and associated power, water, drainage and lighting as well as access for vehicles and pedestrians and other such facilities that would be required for a “race village” set up.

16. A simple “block” plan detailing some of these elements is included under Appendix 1 of this paper.

## **BENEFITS EXPECTED**

17. Tangible benefits include revenue generation and employment creation through sponsorship income and cash expenditure in Hong Kong by visitors and competitor teams.

18. Intangible benefits include media coverage and development of Hong Kong’s prestige and world status; celebration of Hong Kong’s historic relationship with the sea, increase in public awareness of Hong Kong’s maritime heritage and provision of year-round spectacle, animation and public attraction on the Harbour.

- (a) Providing enhanced public access to the Harbour and waterfront;
- (b) Centerpiece for Wan Chai waterfront that complements the Convention and Exhibition Centre;
- (c) Reconnecting the Wan Chai community with the waterfront;
- (d) Enhanced public access to and enjoyment of the Harbour;
- (e) Providing a valued recreational and sporting resource for the Hong Kong public;
- (f) A safe embarkation and disembarkation point for access to the Harbour;

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- (g) Enabling the hosting of International and Regional marine sporting events;

## INDICATIVE PROGRAMME TIMELINE

2012	Programme definition and strategic case (rationale) agreed;
2013	Programme preparation, technical feasibility and scoping study (objectives) and pilot procurement strategy completed; outline business case accepted;
2014	Consultation, options appraisal, detailed design, tendering; and full business case (appraisal) for pilot project completed and investment approved;
2015	Design of enabling civil engineering works and arena facilities;
2016-7	Implementation and commissioning following WDII / CWB civil project completion.

## PRIMARY REQUIREMENTS AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

19. This programme needs to integrate land use planning with economic planning, tourism development, transportation planning, environmental planning together with marine traffic and safety management. An Integrated Strategic Plan is needed for locating uses in the right locations and management of conflicts between vested local interests.

20. Crucial issues include the need to provide sheltered water with wave attenuation for safe embarkations and mooring of watercraft; availability of sufficient water depth for berthing of boats; ease of access and departure by mass transit for large numbers of spectators; road access for logistics and emergency vehicles; hardstanding with space to erect temporary grandstands as well as F&B facilities and amenities for spectators, media, and event management such as power, water, drainage, telecoms, toilets; berthing for spectator craft and press craft.

## POLICY SUPPORT, PROGRAMME OWNER AND PROJECT PROPONENTS

21. Town Planning Board 1999 “Vision and Goals for Victoria Harbour” incorporating the following specific objectives:

*“To bring the people to the Harbour and the Harbour to the people; To enhance the Harbour as a unique attraction for our people and tourists; To create a quality harbour-front through encouraging innovative building design and a variety of tourist, retail, leisure and recreational activities....”*

22. CEDD’s Project Information Leaflet (February 2011) identifies Harbour enhancement as being a key opportunity resulting from WDII works, and goes on to identify 5 “precincts” along the Wan Chai and Causeway Bay waterfront.

- (a) HKCEC - Arts & Culture Precinct;
- (b) New WDII waterfront – Water Park Precinct;
- (c) Ex-PCWA – Water Recreation Precinct;
- (d) Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter – Heritage Precinct;
- (e) North Point waterfront – Leisure and Recreation Precinct

23. The Programme “Owner” should be the Secretary for Development until a Harbour Authority is established. Individual sub-projects can have different proponents and public-private collaboration is likely to be an effective means of procurement, funding and project management. RHKYC is not in a position to be a project proponent but will be a highly supportive partner organization willing to share expertise and experience.

## **RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

24. The main perceived risk is that by default the civil works will reinstate the ex-PCWA to its pre-existing state and the community will thereby lose a low-cost opportunity for enhancement of the Harbour, including sheltered landing and boarding of a variety of vessels including water taxis. The main opportunity is to make minor amendments to the civil projects such that legacy benefit is achieved by enabling the re-purposing of the ex-PCWA as a civic amenity and an active enhancement to the Harbour.

25. Timing is now critical to make minor amendments to the terms of the civil contracts. For example, the ex-PCWA is currently to be reinstated to existing depths which wastes the opportunity of Harbour enhancement at near-zero marginal cost. In addition, the basin as existing

has only one set of landing steps which connect to the Yacht Club's site; with timely intervention the opportunity exists to enhance the basin at very low marginal cost.

26. Most importantly, if an integrated approach to land use planning of the Wan Chai Waterfront can be taken by multiple Government Departments; suitable public access can be enabled to the waterfront for large numbers of spectators, participants and support for economically significant water-based events and activities for the benefit of future generations.

## **FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

27. The timing for defining projects along the new Wan Chai Waterfront and ex-PCWA is critical, and directly related to the completion of the civil works in 2016 / 2017. The focus of this paper is thus on these two areas. However, in order to take maximum advantage of the legacy opportunities presented by the current civil projects, attention also needs to be paid to the upgrading of the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter (SCL works expected to be completed mid-2018) and the newly created waterfront at the Eastern portal to the CWB tunnel.

## **KEY STAKEHOLDERS IDENTIFIED**

28. Harbourfront Commission; Wan Chai District Council; Tourism Board and Commission; Society for Protection of the Harbour; Business Environment Council; Harbour Business Forum; Development Bureau coordinating many Departments and Bureaux, notably Marine Department; LCSD; Home Affairs Bureau; Financial Services and Treasury Bureau; Transport and Housing Bureau; Food and Health Bureau; Environment Bureau; Sports Governing Bodies. NGO stakeholders would include RHKYC; HK Maritime Museum; Star Ferry; Hong Kong Marine Industry Association; water tour operators.

## **The Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club**

**September 2012**



APPENDIX 1 - Possible land and water elements – WDII waterfront and ex-PCWA



-  **Landmark structure**
-  **Maritime museum buildings**  
Approx 3,700 sq. m GFA
-  **Small boat operations**
-  **Support facilities for visitor berthing, F&B / retail / public areas - approx. 8,500 sq. m**
-  **Floating pontoons**
-  **Permanent breakwater**
-  **Floating breakwater / wave attenuator**