



22 December, 2014

Mr Nicholas Brooke
Chairman of the Harbourfront Commission
Harbourfront Commission
17/F, West Wing,
Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue,
Tamar, Hong Kong

Dear Mr Nicholas Brooke

Re: Proposed Establishment of a Harbourfront Authority (HFA)
Phase II Public Engagement Consultation

We refer to the Harbourfront Commission's (HC's) Phase II Public Engagement Consultation Digest and the consultation undertaken with representative of the Sustainable Development Committee of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and Macau (AustCham). We are pleased to continue to offer our involvement in the second round of consultation and provide the following feedback and comments.

The objectives of HFA

The objectives of the HFA are overall supported. There are numerous international examples, including Sydney, to justify that the set up of a HFA is necessary to provide a world-class harbour that would be an asset to Hong Kong. The current piecemeal approach to management and development falls far short of achieving this objective. It is considered that 'sharing' is an important concept in order to achieve a vibrant and diverse waterfront and is fully advocated. This would also promote a more inclusive and tolerant society reflecting different cultures, ethnic and social groups. Examples of harbour front areas that promote a shared space include Parklands in Brisbane which offer visitors a beach and lagoon with unobstructed views of the business district, gardens, rainforest walks, picnic and barbeque areas, restaurants and cafes, tourist attractions, and cycling and pedestrian walkways. However, an overarching planning strategy for the Harbourfront areas is lacking and is necessary before funding and implementation plans can be progressed.

The definition of 'Victoria Harbourfront' and the remit of HFA

It is considered that the HFA objective of presenting a one-stop, holistic, consistent or integrated approach to developing the Harbourfront would be affected unless the HFA has a full executive role for the majority of areas occurring within the "Victoria Harbourfront". It will not be possible to meet the key objectives of connectivity and

vitality if areas of Harbourfront land use (which have the potential to affect the success of the revitalized areas) are controlled by several parties with conflicting objectives, with the HFA having an advisory role only in these areas. Thus, based upon the incremental strategy, the current land allocation cannot meet the objectives of the HFA. A comprehensive review is needed to identify land parcels not currently highlighted for potential HFA control but which would benefit the Harbourfront if they were transferred.

HFA's governance and management functions, including board composition, land and finance matters, and provisions on public accountability

It is considered that developing separated smaller pockets of land would not meet the overall objectives of the HFA nor be as effective as having a set of interlinked areas creating a more continuous and diverse space. In addition, development on both sides of the harbour is recommended, allowing the Kowloon side public to reduce travel before being able to make use of the Harbourfront. In addition, it is considered that the objectives and success of the harbour areas would be compromised if generating income is a pre-requisite or priority for the sites' development and should not influence the overall strategy for the Harbourfront (see point made above on need for an overarching planning strategy).

HFA's advisory and advocacy functions in respect of the Victoria Harbourfront as a whole

It is recommended that sustainable planning must be applied for all future Harbourfront developments and construction phases. This includes environmental and biodiversity aspects across the marine, land and air quality spheres.

Hong Kong can be slow to adopt new technology for sustainable benefits until it has been piloted and proven, despite the fact that often such initiatives are adopted successfully overseas. Thus, the HFA should pioneer the use of state of the art technology for sustainability advancements. Key factors in this respect are considered to be:

- a) That wind, solar and other renewable forms of energy are used for future lighting wherever possible such as on streets, promenades and piers;
- b) The use of recycled materials, green construction methods and green buildings must be a mandatory part of the planning and design;
- c) Recycling and general waste collection points are readily available around the harbour and associated development areas; and
- d) That an environmental assessment is carried out for all future developments.

An example of where this type of development has been successfully undertaken elsewhere is Elizabeth Quay in Perth, Australia. The project is being managed by the

Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA), whose key redevelopment goals are to enhance environmental integrity by encouraging ecologically sustainable design, resource efficiency, recycling, renewable energy and protection of the local ecology. The development is still underway and is being developed in accordance with Australia's sustainable infrastructure council's rating scheme (ISCA).

Other projects similar in approach are the Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York, a dockland restoration project that has balanced real estate development with a large-scale public space. The new landscape structure couples the traditional features of the park (sports, picnics, promenades, and playgrounds) with recreation of native wetland and salt marshes, alerting the visitors to the long disappeared local biota and providing new habitats for native fauna. The project also acknowledges localised landscape effects, in particular the movement of stormwater across the site. Stormwater is collected and stored in a horizontal buried tubes, the water is then gradually released in an irrigation programme.

Other notable sustainable waterfront development projects include the Jeddah Master Plan in Dubai and the Queens Wharf Passenger Terminal, Auckland, New Zealand.

The HFA's remit must include all existing facilities and government land that is presently within the Harbourfront area as this will enhance forward planning and reduce "multi departmental" influence with regards to development. Current utility undertakers and private use holders must be encouraged to be part of the future development of the Harbourfront by either relocating existing services and in planning for new services.

HFA's executive functions in respect of the harbourfront sites allocated to it, and the set-up of its executive office

While temporary facilities may be advantageous to enhance the diversity of the harbourfront areas, create a changing setting and ensure that the land is not underutilised, the sustainability of such facilities needs to be taken into account to avoid excessive use of resources and waste.

Regarding the proposal that the Executive Office should be manned by a dedicated Government Team seconded to the HFA in the initial stages, all members of the HFA must be made aware that the areas being developed by the HFA cannot follow typical Hong Kong practice and all members must have the ability to move away from 'business as usual' for the planning, development and use of open spaces in Hong Kong. This approach and vision needs to be promoted from top down and in this regard, it is supported that the HFA should have a unique set of rules and regulations that are applicable to these areas.

We note your specific request for comments on the use of water transport for and between the Harbourfront areas. We consider that water taxis would provide vital connectivity between the Harbourfront areas and there are many examples of the successful use of water transport around the world including Sydney, Brisbane and Perth. However, any scheme would need to take into account the following:

- 1) Must be made preferable (cost, ease of use, timetable) to land transport so as to avoid “double’ counting of journeys and emissions.
- 2) Marine transport is a major source of air emissions in Hong Kong. So as not to further degrade the environmental quality of Victoria Harbour, any water taxi services should adhere to the HFA’s sustainability and environmental objectives by using green alternative fuels and renewable energy.
- 3) Water transport should allow passage of bicycles and dogs etc. so that all Harbourfront activities can be accommodated.
- 4) Existing infrastructure (piers, moorings) should be utilised where possible.

Bicycle hire schemes such as those used in other cities, such as Paris’ *Vélib* scheme (*Vélos en libre service*) and London, which uses a subscription model for bicycles that can be picked up and dropped off freely between points around the city, should also be considered.

AustCham commends the comments in this letter for the HC’s consideration. If further input or clarification is required, AustCham members stand ready to support for the betterment of our great city.

Yours faithfully



Chris Knop
Chair, Sustainable Development Committee
Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and Macau