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HKIP's Comments on Phase 1 Public Engagement of the Proposed Establishment of the Harbourfront Authority

General Comments

HKIP appreciates the value of Victoria Harbour as Hong Kong's heritage and a precious asset unique to the World. There is a general consensus in the community that the Harbour should be protected and the harbourfront should be made available for public enjoyment.

HKIP concurs with the limitations of the current development and management model for waterfront developments stipulated in the public engagement digest and that feasible solutions should be devised to address these limitations.

Upon reviewing the development cycle for harbourfront projects, it is acknowledged that the time required for completion of harbourfront enhancement projects, including seeking funding approval, planning and design, public consultation, tendering, construction and implementation, is a very lengthy process. Every effort should be made to shorten this process, for example the time required for seeking funding approval for individual projects may be shortened if a designated block vote of fund for harbourfront enhancement projects can be set aside, similar to that of the Environment and Conservation Fund. Such an arrangement will provide flexibility in mobilizing resources on harbourfront enhancement projects without having to compete for financial resources with other Government projects on an individual development project basis.

While there is no lack of creative talents in the design of the Government projects as evidenced by the winning of many design awards organized by professional institutes such as the Wetland Park and the Sai Kung waterfront projects, operation and management limitations have often prohibited them from being vibrant places for public to enjoy. For instance, the management of Open Space at the Waterfront by LCSD is governed by the Pleasure Grounds Regulation which sets stringent restrictions on different types of activities. There is also a lack of running of programmes or activities in making the place more vibrant. It is important that the role of management should not be only confined to daily operation and maintenance. Appropriate activities to attract different users to the waterfront park/promenade should also be organized.

Incremental Approach

In view of the above, it is recommended that an incremental approach be adopted to overcome the limitations of the current development and management model. Consideration can be given to identifying some harbourfront projects as pilot schemes to empower a responsible party (be it the Harbourfront Commission (HC) or a new Harbourfront Authority) to plan, design, construct and manage these projects while the existing advisory and advocacy roles of HC for the harbourfront areas can also be exercised by this party.

For those identified pilot schemes, a holistic approach for planning, implementation and management of projects should be adopted so that the development cycle of these projects can be expedited. On the other hand, more flexibility for creative design as well as adoption of tailor-made management rules which may allow many different types of compatible uses and activities at the harbourfront, such as restaurants and cafés, regular or ad hoc events/fun fairs, can be facilitated in making the waterfront a more diverse, vibrant and attractive place.

HKIP considers that the responsible party (be it HC or the new Harbourfront Authority) should be established as early as possible to create vibrant and attractive waterfront for public enjoyment.

Detailed Comments

Scope and Responsibility – The harbourfront land comprises Government land and private land. It should be made accessible to the public as much as possible. Hence, the government should encourage landowners holding land fronting onto the harbourfront to provide access to the waterfront for public enjoyment in their development.

Working harbour – Essential cargo working areas, public landings and piers for ferries and public vessels should be maintained and preferably logically grouped together instead of creating conflicts with recreational uses both on the landward and seaward sides.

Mission – the responsible party (be it HC or the new Harbourfront Authority) should pledge to deliver a short /medium term enhancement programme under a creative long-term vision with inputs from public participation.

City's strategic planning vision – harbourfront planning and enhancement projects are only part of the city's overall strategic planning and development framework. They should tally with the city's overall long-term planning vision. The public should be widely engaged when formulating the harbourfront planning and enhancement projects.

Relationship with other statutory authorities –the responsible party (be it HC or the new Harbourfront Authority) should not take over the roles and functions of other statutory authorities and should also be abided by the current statutory planning system.

Administration support and set-up – flexibility should be provided to support the work of the responsible party in taking forward its projects. Although it may not necessarily be serviced by a Government department, it should have the support of a multi-disciplinary professional team, including professional planners, architects, engineers and landscaped architects.

Working with the private sector –the responsible party needs to work closely with the private sector with a view to tapping its network and resource of different expertise through market forces.

Mode of operation - the responsible party (be it HC or the new Harbourfront Authority) should maintain an open and transparent operation that is subject to public scrutiny, including budgeting and auditing of its financial account.



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