

Information Paper for Legislative Council Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Bearing Issue of the Tsing Ma Bridge

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the conclusion of the bearing issue of Tsing Ma Bridge.

BACKGROUND

2. Construction of Tsing Ma Bridge was substantially completed and opened to traffic in May 1997. In November 1998, a minor extrusion of a thin plastic material (called PTFE) from two bearings¹ at Pier T1 was observed. In August 2000, a similar problem was also observed for Bearing No. 42 at Pier T2². In October 2000, two international experts were jointly engaged by Highways Department (HyD) and the Contractor of Tsing Ma Bridge to investigate the causes of the PTFE extrusion at the bearings.

3. In response to a LegCo question regarding the bearing issue, the then Secretary for Works (S for W) gave a written reply for the Council meeting on 20 June 2001. Members of the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works noted the reply and requested the Administration to provide the Panel, in due course, with a copy of the investigation report of the two independent international experts. The then S for W replied on 13 July 2001 indicating that in order not to inhibit possible commercial settlement or any subsequent dispute proceedings, the report could not be provided to the LegCo at that stage but that he had no objection to the release of the report subject to the conclusion of the bearing issue as well as the consent to be given by the Contractor. The bearing issue has recently been concluded with the Contractor. However, the Contractor has refused to give consent to release the investigation report to the public on grounds of confidentiality.

¹ Bearings are the components which support the bridge decks on columns or abutments and accommodate differential movements due to temperature changes and other external forces such as wind.

² Piers T1 and T2 are the piers next to the Tsing Yi Tower on Tsing Yi Island.

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT WITH CONTRACTOR

4. The bearing issues are complex, including a significant amount of highly technical matters. Following lengthy negotiations, a Settlement Agreement was executed on 10 December 2002 between Government and the Contractor. The settlement is considered to be a very satisfactory one for Government as the money recovered from the Contractor will be sufficient to cover the cost of the repair works already undertaken and also the foreseeable maintenance works on the bearings. The terms of the Settlement Agreement may be provided to the Panel should the Panel so require.

REMEDIAL MEASURES

5. In Tsing Ma Bridge, there are 62 bearings in total and among which 22 are of the same type as those concerned bearings on the Tsing Yi side. The PTFE sheets in the bearings at Piers T1 (6 nos.) and T2 (4 nos.) were replaced in December 2002 and March 2001 respectively. The repair works were successfully carried out and there was no disruption to either vehicular or rail traffic during the repair process.

FUTURE PLAN

6. Repair works to the bearings on Pier T1 and Pier T2 have been completed as mentioned in paragraph 5. A more focused routine inspection programme is being implemented to ensure that the 22 bearings are performing satisfactorily. These bearings are being closely monitored and repair work/maintenance work will be carried out as and when required in the future.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
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