

October 26, 2005

Hon. Alan Leong Kah-kit  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development  
c/o Legislative Council  
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Re: Invitation of views on the way forward for the West Kowloon Cultural District Project.

It is our position that clustering a large number of cultural facilities in one high-intensity development, originally conceived as a financial development model, has little urban planning, harbour planning, or cultural development merits.

We believe strongly that the claim that there is a majority support for the West Kowloon Cultural District Project is NOT justified by any of the research findings, as the research failed to provide alternative locations or configurations to choose from.

Having said this, the work on the West Kowloon Cultural District Project, all related research and the public consultation to date, has generated significant consensus on various policy elements to be retained for Hong Kong - namely:

1. The need for new and additional arts and culture venues and the funding thereof;
2. The desire for outstanding architecture for public venues and quality design of public space and the funding thereof;
3. The need for diversity in management of venues;
4. The need for diversity in funding for arts and culture development;
5. The (re-)establishment of a commission to guide funding and development of arts, culture and heritage;
6. The transfer of prime harbour-front land to a 'development agent' with professional and public participation to plan and manage a quality harbour-front - and to generate the funds for the development of new venues and for the funding of arts and culture (and leisure and sports).

Our key recommendations therefore can be summarized as follows:

7. To appoint a 'Deputy Chief Executive' with oversight over urban planning and strategic development;
8. To expand the mandate of the proposed 'West Kowloon Authority' and to establish a 'Harbour-front Development Agency' chaired by the DCE, comprising all key departments and bureaux, professionals and public representatives;
9. To confirm that West Kowloon falls under the mandate of the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee to facilitate public consultation;
10. To review the designated distribution of the key facilities around the harbour (see the note below);
11. To create a 'Arts and Culture Development Commission' with significant public and professional participation and a significant degree of independence.

We note that there is consensus forming that Hong Kong requires a number of key facilities in prime areas around the harbour, including new cultural and arts venues, cruise terminals, sports facilities, public parks and open spaces, promenades, Government offices, LegCo building and marine facilities.

Considering the existing transport infrastructure and urban plan, there may well be a more efficient and sustainable distribution of these facilities - over the available sites around the harbour (West Kowloon, Hung Hom, Kai Tak, North Point Estate, Tamar and CR3).

Examples of possible improvement include, off-peak traffic land uses (i.e. cultural facilities) in Central given the land and transport capacity constraints; or land uses which require significant goods vehicle access as well as proximity to the airport and tourist facilities (i.e. cruise terminals) in West Kowloon where all this is readily available, rather than the tip of the Kai Tak runway, which is as far away as one can possibly get from these facilities around Hong Kong's harbour.

The distribution of facilities around the harbour, and the intensity of development (versus creation of true public space), must now become the key focus of the debate, and the mandate of any new agency to be established.

Yours sincerely,

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