

**Consultative Committee on the
Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the
West Kowloon Cultural District**

Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group

Summary Of Views Received

Purpose

This paper provides a summary of views received so far on the need for performing arts venues as core arts and cultural facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), which forms the basis of discussion on the 'Work Plan for the Coming Months' (Discussion Paper PATAG/14/2006).

Advice Sought

2. Members are invited to note the summary of views received so far on the need for performing venues and other related issues in WKCD (paragraph 6).

Background

3. At the first PATAG meeting held on 24 April 2006, Members endorsed the proposed work plan of holding open consultative forums and sector-specific focus group meetings to gauge views on the performing arts venues as core arts and cultural facilities and other arts and cultural facilities in WKCD in May and early June.

4. The list of meetings, focus group meetings and open consultative forums held by PATAG in the past two months is at **Annex A**.

Summary of Views Received

5. Views received at the focus group meetings and the open consultative forums are summarized in the attached Annexes. (For details of the discussion, please refer to the notes of the concerned meetings and consultative forums). As the deadline of written submissions has just passed and work is still in hand to consolidate the views received, their views will be presented separately.

6. Summary of views received are as follows –

- (a) the Cantonese Opera Sector at **Annex B**
- (b) the Tourism Sector at **Annex C**
- (c) the Presenters of Cultural and Entertainment Events at **Annex D**
- (d) the Open Consultative Forums at **Annex E**

**Secretariat, Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group
June 2006**

List of Meetings, Focus Group Meetings and Open Consultative Forums held by Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group from April to June 2006

PATAG Meetings

	<u>Date</u>
1 st Meeting	Monday, 24 April
2 nd Meeting	Tuesday, 16 May
3 rd Meeting	Thursday, 22 June

Focus Group Meetings

- Meeting with the Cantonese Opera Sector on 9 May 2006
- Meeting with the Tourism Sector on 22 May 2006
- Meeting with Presenters of Cultural and Entertainment Events on 26 May 2006
- Meeting with the Presenters of Cantonese Opera on 2 June 2006
- Meeting with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong on 17 June 2006

Open Consultative Forums

- 1st session at Lecture Hall, Sheung Wan Civic Centre, Hong Kong on 1 June
- 2nd session at Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, Kowloon Park, Kowloon on 2 June

Summary of Views Received from the Cantonese Opera Sector

(a) Focus Group Meeting with the Cantonese Opera Sector on 9 May 2006

1. The acute shortage of venues for Cantonese Opera performances had greatly hindered the development of this art form. The closure of Sunbeam Theatre in January 2009 rendered the need for a permanent performing venue became very imminent.
2. Some views expressed that there was a need for two purpose-built Cantonese Opera theatres. The larger theatre should have 1,200 – 2,000 seats for staging professional performances while the smaller theatre should have a capacity of 800 seats as a training platform for the budding Cantonese Opera artists.
3. Many views considered that the development of Cantonese Opera in WKCD should be integrated with catering, retail, exhibitions on the history of Cantonese Opera and tourists activities. The idea of having a ‘Cantonese Opera City’ (戲曲城) to integrate the various types of activities with Cantonese Opera to promote tourism was raised.
4. Many expressed that corresponding software facilities for Cantonese Opera had to be in place to commensurate with the hardware facilities in WKCD. The mode of operation and management of Leisure and Cultural Services Department venues lacked flexibility and did not address the needs of Cantonese Opera troupes. The proposed independent WKCD authority should adopt a more flexible and commercially viable mode of operation.
5. There were views that more efforts and resources should be allocated in nurturing Cantonese Opera artists and audience-building.

(b) Focus Group Meeting with the Presenters of Cantonese Opera on 2 June 2006

1. Views were unanimous that the design of Ko Shan Theatre failed to meet the requirements of Cantonese Opera performance in terms of the design of seats, back stage set up and equipment. The Theatre was also not ideally located. In view of the imminent need of a performance venue, further enhancement works in the Theatre were considered necessary.
2. A large majority view considered that a purpose-built venue with a seating capacity of 1,000 to 1,200 for Cantonese Opera performances would be needed in WKCD. Other ancillary facilities such as rehearsal venues were indispensable.
3. Some views considered that a matshed theatre could be built outside the purpose-built performing venue for budding Cantonese Opera artists to perform and provide free entertainment for the visitors (locals and tourists). There could also be gallery for exhibition of the history of the Cantonese Opera and a souvenir shop.
4. Many views expressed that a more flexible approach should be adopted for the future mode of operation of the proposed Cantonese Opera Theatre in WKCD. The sustainability of the theatre depended to a large extent on whether the venue recital was set at an affordable level.
5. Some expressed that the number of youngsters interested in Cantonese Opera had increased over the years and efforts should be endeavoured to foster students' interest in Cantonese Opera.

(c) Focus Group Meeting with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong on 17 June 2006

1. The shortage of performing venues remained a long-standing problem of the sector. There was a need for a purpose-built theatre of about 1,200 seats as a base for Chinese Opera performances and a smaller theatre of 400 seats as a performance venue to nurture budding Cantonese Opera artists in WKCD. These two theatres should be complemented by quality supporting facilities. Flexibility should also be allowed in the seating capacity of the two proposed theatres to cope with future expansion.
2. The outlook and the design of the two proposed theatres should demonstrate the characteristics and unique identity of Cantonese Opera. The backstage facilities and the dressing rooms of the theatres should be situated on the same level as the stage.
3. Tourism consideration should be taken into account in developing this venue. Apart from Cantonese Opera excerpts for tourists, it was proposed to have a Cantonese Opera Museum and a souvenir shop nearby to attract tourists and to educate the visitors of this traditional performing arts form. Laoshe Tea House (老舍茶館) and Prince Gong's Mansion (恭王府) in Beijing were cited as examples for reference.
4. The small theatre of 400 seats could be used for children Cantonese Opera performances. Not only would it be an attraction for visitors, it also helped in enhancing children's interests in watching and performing Cantonese Opera. Also Cantonese Opera sung in English could be a gimmick for consideration but should not be confused with the mainstream Cantonese Opera.
5. The idea of having an artistic director to give artistic direction and safeguard the quality and professionalism of the performances of the two proposed Chinese Opera theatres would be further considered at a later stage.

6. Views were exchanged on the need to increase the coherence of the Cantonese Opera sector and that joint efforts should be made to solve the succession problem of Cantonese Opera artists. Furthermore, the idea of setting up the Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe could be further explored in the context of Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee and Committee on Performing Arts. Consideration should also be given to cross-over Cantonese Opera with other art forms to enhance creativity in this traditional art form.

Summary of Views Received from the Tourism Sector

1. A majority of views expressed that arts and cultural elements in WKCD could be appropriately blended with tourism to develop the district into an integrated world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district.
2. Some expressed that tailor-made entertainment programmes for tourists particularly at night would appeal to the tourists. Entertainment with oriental style or local characteristics like excerpts of Cantonese Opera would be attractive.
3. A few opined that hotel facilities should cluster with other facilities like shopping arcades, outdoor performance venues etc., sufficient carparking spaces particularly for coaches of the travel agents, should be provided in order to attract people flow to WKCD.
4. An attendee considered that a sight-seeing tower in WKCD could be an attraction for tourists and icon of the district.
5. A few expressed that since tourists would like to visit places where local people go, efforts should be made to attract local people to the district so that tourists would be drawn there.
6. A few expressed that partnership between the arts and cultural sector and the tourism sector was essential in order to promote WKCD as an international icon which would attract visitors all over the world year-round. There was a need for more involvement of travel agents who organised inbound tour groups to facilitate overseas tourists to attend arts and cultural events.

7. Some views expressed that the current ticketing system could not adequately support overseas booking for the arts and cultural events and looked forward to an enhanced ticketing system to be in place in September 2006. The tourism sector would like to be provided with timely information about arts and cultural activities inside WKCD venues to recommend to the tourists.

8. Different categories of hotels should be built to cater for different types of tourists.

**Summary of Views Received from the
Presenters of Cultural and Entertainment Events**

1. The majority views expressed that the Hong Kong Coliseum, which was not purposely-built as a performing venue, had a lot of limitations for pop concerts and entertainment events. They supported a performance venue be built in WKCD with no less than 10, 000 seats for popular entertainment events. There was also a view that the design of the 10, 000 seats venues should have the flexibility of configuring into two separate venues with 5,000 seats each.
2. The majority views supported that the performance venue should be provided with basic acoustic design and lighting configuration and equipment and a spacious backstage.
3. There was a view that there should be different sizes purpose-built performing venues for different performances and suggested a venue of 4,000 for classical music performance and 7,000 for entertainment events. Besides, there was another view that a performing venue of 2,000 seats for opera production and another flexibly designed venue of 4,500 seats for different performing arts forms should be considered.
4. A few expressed that the design of the venue should have an iconic effect to signify Hong Kong as an arts and cultural centre.
5. A number of views held that there should be adequate outdoor performance venues to stage outdoor shows like circus and aviation show but others were concerned about the noise pollution problem.

6. A few expressed that there should be more open space and places for food and beverages outside the performing venues for visitors to hang out. This would create people flow all day throughout in WKCD.
7. Some views were concerned that the current ticketing system could not adequately support overseas booking. They hoped that the system could soon be improved to facilitate visitors, particularly those from the Mainland, and the South East Asia, to see arts, cultural and entertainment events in Hong Kong.
8. Many views opined that the future mode of operation of the performance venue in WKCD would be crucial in deciding whether the venue could be commercially sustainable. They were particularly concerned about whether the future rental would be too expensive.
9. The booking system currently adopted for the LCSD venues for arts and cultural and entertainment events was not suitable for WKCD performing venues. A different system was needed.

**Summary of Views Received from the
Open Consultative Forums**

Overall WKCD Concept

1. Most of the views supported the development of WKCD into an integrated world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district. Action should be expedited to implement the project without further delay.
2. A number of views expressed that facilities in WKCD should be able to meet the need of the long-term development of arts and culture in Hong Kong, say in 20 to 30 years' time. An opinion considered it necessary to get the positioning of WKCD right before discussing the kind of facilities to be provided.
3. Some expressed that the need of the tourists should be taken into account in considering the hardware and software of various arts forms in WKCD. Efforts should be made to attract culture tourists to the district.

Views on the facilities for Cantonese Opera/Chinese Opera

4. All the views supported the provision of a dedicated performing venue for Cantonese Opera in WKCD. They opined that this could help to preserve this traditional and indigenous form of art.
5. A few expressed that Ko Shan Theatre, as a base for Cantonese Opera, had a lot of limitations in staging performances. With the closure of Sunbeam Theatre imminently approaching, the government should also assist the industry to solve the problem of venue shortage in the interim, before WKCD comes into play. They said the

Cantonese Opera sector supported a performing venue for Cantonese Opera of 1,200 to 1,400 seats.

6. There were views in support of a purpose-built theatre of 1,500 for traditional Xiqu (both Cantonese Opera and other types of Chinese Opera). There was a suggestion to have several large theatres in WKCD, one of which be dedicated for Cantonese Opera performances. The theatre should have oriental architectural design to enhance its appeal to audience.
7. A number of opinions suggested WKCD should have training venues for budding Cantonese Opera artists, couple with a library and a resources centre on the history of Cantonese Opera for the furtherance and development of this art form.
8. An opinion suggested the setting up of the 'Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe' which comprises professional artists and musicians of the industry.
9. A few opined that resources were currently tilted towards other flagship art groups and more resources should be allocated to Cantonese Opera in future.

Views on other performing arts facilities

10. An opinion considered that WKCD should make reference to Lincoln Centre which had a number of performing venues each with their own identity and function. A few remarked that the characteristics and individuality would be lost if the venues were multi-purposes. They opined that dedicated theatres would have more appeal to audience.
11. There were suggestions to have opera houses of 2,500 to 3,000; 3000 and 6,000 to 7,000 seats respectively.

12. A few failed to understand why the Invitation for Proposals (IFP) did not include a concert hall as one of the mandatory requirements. A concert hall with high quality acoustics was considered a must for a world-class arts and cultural district like WKCD. Another opinion suggested a concert hall of 2,500 seats.
13. Many agreed that many art forms were closely related to music and all performing venues in WKCD should have good acoustics.
14. A few opined that there should be different theatres to cater for the need of the programmes and the three theatres proposed in the IFP were considered not adequate. An opinion supported the idea of 'Theatreland' as it would have a lot of small-sized theatres to meet the need of performing troupes with different sizes. There was one suggestion for a theatre of 800 to 1,000 seats.
15. Some expressed that the requirements for backstage and technical facilities of the performing venues, from the users' point of view, should not be overlooked.

Other facilities and ancillaries

16. A majority of views expressed the need for large outdoor performing venues and one proposed a venue which could accommodate 25, 000 to 30, 000 people.
17. A few supported the provision of piazzas and water amphitheatre in WKCD as they would provide free entertainment to the audience and help increasing public involvement in arts and culture. These venues would create the right atmosphere for the district and help to draw people together.

18. An opinion suggested the setting up a Chinese Cultural City (「中華文化城」) and the Palace Museum (Hong Kong Branch) (「故宮博物館院(香港分院)」). Another suggested the Chinese Cultural Museum (「中華文化專館」) and Chinese Literary Art Museum (「中華文學院」) to boost the literary standard in Hong Kong.
19. There was a suggestion for setting up a Chinese Book City (「中華書城」) to put all the Chinese publications all over the world under one roof in WKCD.
20. There was one opinion on the need for a sight-seeing tower and sightseeing boats as tourists attractions.
21. An opinion considered using part of WKCD as shooting locations for movies and they would be open for locals and tourists to visit.
22. An opinion expressed that WKCD could be developed into a world-class gourmet centre to attract renowned restaurants to set up their branches here.
23. A few considered that priority should be given to qualified local arts groups to become resident companies of WKCD.
24. A majority of view expressed that the development of software should be accorded equal priority, if not higher, alongside with the hardware facilities in WKCD. This included audience building and cultivation of artistic talents. It was also hoped that arts education could be implemented in primary and secondary schools as soon as practicable to prepare for WKCD which hopefully would be completed in 10 years' time.
25. There was an opinion of the need to nurture and groom arts administrators as they played an important role in steering arts development.

26. There were suggestions that education venues, in particular a Performing Arts School, to nurture the younger generation were needed in WKCD.

Other suggestions

27. An opinion expressed that PATAG should consult major business corporations on the feasibility of introducing foreign capital in WKCD.