

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

Progress Report of the Museums Advisory Group

Purpose

This paper sets out the progress on the work of the Museums Advisory Group (MAG) under the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD).

Advice Sought

2. Members are invited to
 - (a) note the progress made by MAG during the past two months (paragraphs 3 to 8); and
 - (b) discuss the proposed way forward for the coming months (paragraph 9).

Progress after the previous Consultative Committee Meeting

3. At the previous Consultative Committee meeting held on 26 June 2006, Members discussed and noted the progress report of the MAG and its work plan in the subsequent months.

4. Subsequently, MAG held three regular meetings on 4 July, 8 August and 1 September, and a special meeting on 3 August. During these meetings, MAG Members had an opportunity to exchange views with the Committee on Museums (CoM), which is tasked to conduct a review on the services of existing public museums, particularly on the mode of governance, professional support and development strategies for public museums, as well as proposed new museums in WKCD. MAG Members also had an intensive discussion on the most appropriate way to deliberate on themes for the museum(s) (or museum type of institutions) in WKCD. It was subsequently agreed to start with a series of key considerations on developing new museums as guiding principles. The finalised text, as agreed by MAG on 8 August 2006, is at **Annex**.

5. At the meeting on 1 September, members had a thorough discussion of the various themes received in previous consultation exercises on the basis of the agreed key considerations. Members emphasized particularly on the need for museums in WKCD to present from Hong Kong and contemporary perspectives as well as a global cultural vision, highlighting Hong Kong's cultural position of bridging the East

and the West. MAG Members eventually agreed that one cultural institution with museum functions which focused on several specialty subject areas falling within the broad field of “visual culture” in 20th to 21st Century, including “modern/contemporary arts” (which should cover “ink art”), “design”, “film” and “popular culture” should be developed in WKCD. MAG would further deliberate on the major specifications and planning requirements of such an institution on 8 September 2006.

Overseas Experience

6. To facilitate MAG Members to have a better understanding about how renowned museums in other countries were planned and developed, MAG held four briefings from 10 to 12 July 2006 and invited overseas experts from the US, Japan, France and Australia to share their experience and vision with MAG Members. They were also invited to offer their views on key considerations for developing new museums in WKCD.

7. An overseas study visit was organised from 17 to 25 July 2006. The Convenor led a small delegation to visit over 10 museums and institutions in Paris, London, New York and San Francisco. The study focused on how these museums were first conceived and developed, as well as how their theme(s) or specialty area(s) were selected. The major observations are -

- (a) The selection of themes for new museums appeared to be quite a subjective and political decision. In most cases such decisions did not seem to be based on any prior comprehensive research or studies;
- (b) An impressive architectural design, together with a spacious surrounding with sufficient indoor area within the building, could be particularly conducive to the development of a museum, especially in terms of boosting attendance;
- (c) In view of the dynamic needs for installation and display of art works, the configuration of usable space has become critical to the development of a museum. In other words, a flexible configuration of space with movable walls or partitions is important;
- (d) The development and programming strategy as well as orientation of the museum would have a significant impact on cost, attendance and staffing etc.;
- (e) The proportion of a museum's operating expenditure to be designated to collections is an important museum management decision, as collections should not only be considered solely for display, but should also be an asset to negotiate for valuable loans from other museums; and

- (f) Museum programming which includes the organization of good and attractive exhibitions is very expensive. In addition, it is a world trend that Governments no longer provide substantial funding for museums to purchase collections. The role of the Development Office in each museum is becoming increasingly important.

8. A summary of the visit findings will be tabled for Members' reference.

The Way Forward

9. To follow up on the results of discussion at the meeting on 1 September 2006, MAG will discuss the major planning requirements, mode of governance and other matters relating to the selected specialty areas of the museums at the next meeting on 8 September 2006, with a view to drawing up the major recommendations. The MAG will also have to discuss other related issues like the need for an Art Exhibition Centre. It is expected that a final report would be ready for submission to the Consultative Committee by mid-October 2006.

Secretariat, Museums Advisory Group
September 2006

**Key Considerations for Building New Museums in the
West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD)
(Revised on 8 August 2006)**

(a) Vision and Objectives of the New Museum Facility

- (i) Whether the proposed theme(s) and development concept of the museum are conducive to achieving the objectives of developing the WKCD into a world-class arts and cultural district comprising local, traditional as well as international elements, and to sustaining Hong Kong's cultural position as a special administrative region in China which bridges Chinese culture and other cultures of the world.
- (ii) Whether the proposed theme(s) could reflect the cultural characteristics of Hong Kong.

(b) Function of a New Museum Facility

Whether the proposed theme(s) are compatible with the development of the museum as a cultural institution performing its core functions, including preservation, research, interpretation and education.

(c) Sustainable development of the New Museum Facility

Whether there is strong potential to sustain the interests of, and engagements with local and overseas visitors.

(d) Feasibility of the New Museum Facility

(i) Whether there is sufficient expertise available to provide sustainable support in museum management and curating as well as providing input to enhance the museum's collection acquisition, development, research and educational role.

(ii) Whether there is strong potential for quality collection development and creative interpretation.

(e) Contribution to the Cultural Ecology of Hong Kong

Whether the theme(s) can enrich the cultural ecology of Hong Kong.

Note: Revised according to the comments received from the 4th MAG meeting on 8 August 2006.