

**Motion on “Policy on conservation of monuments”  
moved by Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee  
at the Legislative Council meeting  
of Wednesday, 17 January 2007**

**Background**

At the Legislative Council meeting on 17 January 2007, the motion moved by Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee as amended by Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Hon Howard YOUNG and Hon CHOY So-yuk was passed as follows:

“That, as the policies and laws on the protection and conservation of antiquities and monuments in Hong Kong are imperfect, and the demolition of the Central Star Ferry Pier by the Government has aroused wide concern in the community, which reflects an increasing public awareness of and participation in the conservation of antiquities and monuments, preservation of cultural environment and good town planning, this Council urges the Government to:

- (a) reform the policies and laws on the protection and conservation of antiquities and monuments on the basis of comprehensive consultation, and formulate a timetable for legislative amendments;
- (b) establish a fund on protection and conservation of antiquities and monuments to enhance the protection and conservation of antiquities and monuments, as well as for repair, education and promotion work;
- (c) formulate codes for the evaluation of social benefits and proper consultation procedures setting out in detail the cost-effectiveness of various options and their impact on antiquities and monuments;
- (d) formulate criteria for the preservation of collective memories, community sights and regional cultural characteristics;
- (e) establish a mechanism for the participation of such concern groups as District Councils, professional bodies and resident groups as well as the public in the decision-making process of town planning and community redevelopment;
- (f) consider providing economic incentives to private property owners,

including adopting such means as acquisition, land exchange and transfer of plot ratios, to preserve more privately-owned monuments and prevent them from being demolished;

- (g) make reference to the sponsorship policies on antiquities and monuments, including sponsorship by individuals, enterprises and communities, etc, which have been implemented for many years in such countries as the UK, the USA and France, so as to pave a new way for the protection and conservation of antiquities and monuments in Hong Kong;
- (h) draw from the successful experience in revitalizing antique buildings, such as the derelict industrial park on Vancouver's Granville Island, Japan's Otaru warehouses and the Taipei Story House, to promote multi-faceted development in humanities, history education, art, creative industries, tourism and community involvement, etc, thereby creating more employment opportunities; and
- (i) conduct a comprehensive and extensive consultation on the built heritage conservation policy and expeditiously formulate a proper built heritage conservation policy, with the aim of striking a balance between heritage conservation and urban development, so as to facilitate a sustainable and balanced development of the community.”

This paper serves to inform Members of the progress of follow-up actions taken by the Administration with regard to the motion.

### **Progress Report**

2. The Administration will take into account the proposals at (a) to (d) and (f) to (i) above in the context of the on-going policy review of built heritage conservation. The latest progress of the policy review is set out below.

3. We organised a series of public forums in January and February 2007 to provide the community with an opportunity to understand our current policy and measures on built heritage conservation, as well as to express views on what and how to conserve our built heritage before we

finalise our policy review. Specifically, three types of forums were held:

- (a) Three regional forums (one on Hong Kong Island, one in Kowloon and one in the New Territories) for members of District Councils (DCs) and other district personalities;
- (b) Three open forums for all members of the public; and
- (c) A focus group discussion for major stakeholder groups and concerned academics and professionals.

4. The response to this round of public discussion on built heritage conservation has been encouraging and over 600 participants attended the forums. We have also made use of other channels (e.g. radio and television programmes, website forum and e-mail) to disseminate information and collect public views. A summary of views initially received through various channels is as follows:

- (a) The public generally agrees that there is a need for substantial improvements to the current policy and practices on built heritage conservation with regard to –
  - The current assessment and grading criteria;
  - Formulation of measures to conserve built heritage and on adaptive re-use;
  - Formulation of different financing options to support built heritage conservation initiatives, e.g. setting up of a heritage trust fund;
  - Widening and deepening public participation in heritage conservation matters; and
  - Co-ordination among government bureaux and departments.
- (b) Quite a substantial number of views point to the inadequacies of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance, which provides only one form for conservation (i.e. declaration of monuments) and is confined to conservation of historic buildings. There have been calls for adopting a “holistic approach” to heritage conservation. This holistic approach does not only involve revamping the heritage assessment and grading mechanism, but also the widening of the statutory protection from stand-alone individual buildings to groups of buildings, conservation

areas and zones.

- (c) While most are supportive of the need to strike a balance between heritage conservation and economic development, views are rather diverse and mixed as to where the balancing point should be. There are also suggestions that economic and social costs-and-benefits analysis on different conservation options should be conducted to facilitate the assessment.
- (d) There are specific concerns expressed over the conservation approach of specific historic buildings and sites, such as the former Police Married Quarters at Hollywood Road, the Central Police Station Compound, the Queen's Pier, as well as re-development projects of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) which involve graded historic buildings and heritage sites, including the Wan Chai Market, the Blue House, Lee Tung Street, Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street.
- (e) Though many are mindful of the need for a potentially huge commitment of resources to ensure more effective heritage conservation work, there have been relatively less discussions on where the sources of finances should be. Suggestions in this regard include Government funding, private donations to the heritage trust fund, hypothecation of part of the Betting Duty revenue, and introduction of a heritage tax.

5. We are planning to conduct a telephone opinion survey on the general public covering the key issues regarding the built heritage conservation, in order to gauge the views of a scientifically representative sample of the general Hong Kong population. In the meantime, we are consolidating the public views and comments received from the public forums and other channels.

6. From late March onwards, Secretary for Home Affairs will personally attend the meetings of the 18 DCs to discuss the subject with DC members, with particular attention to historic buildings and sites in each of the relevant districts. We will continue to keep an open mind to listen to the views of the community and take into account the results of this round of public engagement to draw up a package of concrete improvement proposals on built heritage conservation. Subject to the results, we expect to be able to announce the proposals and measures on built heritage conservation in the

latter half of 2007.

7. As regards item (e), the Administration will continue to engage the public, DCs and stakeholders in town planning through various statutory and administrative means under the flexible and highly transparent town planning mechanism. This will enable us to duly consider the public views and suitably conserve heritage of historical and architectural value. The URA will continue its practice to proactively engage the relevant stakeholders in the course of undertaking urban renewal. Through the formation of District Advisory Committees with representatives from wide sectors of the community, the URA will consult the local residents and stakeholders through various channels on their aspirations and views. As regards the conservation of built heritage and local characteristics, the URA will work closely with the Antiquities and Monuments Office, the Antiquities Advisory Board and DCs etc. in conserving or enhancing, as far as practicable, the built heritage and local characteristics which have been identified as worthy of conservation.

Home Affairs Bureau  
April 2007