

Proposed Research Outline

Built Heritage Conservation Policy in Selected Places

1. Background

1.1 On 8 January 2007, the Government announced the launch of another series of consultation on built heritage conservation policy, in view of the recent spate of public concerns and heated discussions on the issue of conservation of heritage structures. The previous consultation exercise was conducted in 2004, when the Government issued a consultation paper entitled "Review of Built Heritage Conservation Policy" to invite the public and concern groups to comment on heritage conservation.

1.2 The current consultation exercise includes two large-scale regional forums, three open forums and a focus group discussion conducted during January-February 2007. The Government aims to put forward specific measures on built heritage conservation for public consultation in mid-2007.

1.3 The research to be conducted by the Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) focuses on the built heritage conservation policy implemented in selected places. The study aims to provide Members of the Panel on Home Affairs with overseas experiences relevant to the Hong Kong situation.

2. Proposed places to be studied

2.1 The proposed study will cover the built heritage conservation policy in the following places:

- (a) the United Kingdom (UK);
- (b) Singapore; and
- (c) Macao.

2.2 The UK has put in place a comprehensive institutional arrangement and legislative framework to protect buildings of historical and architectural importance. In particular, voluntary organizations, executive non-governmental public bodies and heritage trusts are well represented in the UK's conservation system, advising the government on conservation planning decisions and implementing their own conservation works. Many of these bodies are funded by a diverse range of sources, such as state funding, membership fees, private donations and commercial activities (e.g. admission fees from the historic properties managed). For example, the 27-year-old National Heritage Memorial Fund receives private donations and grant-in-aid from the government to help finance activities relating to acquiring, maintaining and preserving land, buildings, objects and collections that are of outstanding interest and importance to the national heritage.

2.3 The approach adopted by land-scarce Singapore is to integrate its built heritage conservation policy with urban planning. While the legislation sets out the protection of historic buildings, it also provides for the modification of these buildings to accommodate new uses where possible. In addition, Singapore adopts the concept of "conservation area" in its built heritage conservation policy, whereby protection is not limited to individual buildings but also extended to the environs to conserve whole cultural and historic streets, areas or districts.

2.4 The Macao government plays a leading role in the conservation of built heritage by proactively promoting buildings and areas of historical and architectural merits to both the local people and tourists. In 2005, Macao succeeded in bidding for its inclusion on the World Heritage List established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to identify and secure sites of outstanding universal value for lasting protection. The Macao government has defined a broad picture of built heritage conservation, with the establishment of protection zones to protect the aesthetic vicinity of protected heritage properties.

3. Research outline

3.1 RLSD proposes the following outline for the study:

Part 1 — Introduction

3.2 This part provides the background information of the research.

Part 2 — The United Kingdom

Part 3 — Singapore

Part 4 — Macao

3.3 Parts 2 to 4 present the socio-economic background against which the UK, Singapore and Macao implemented their respective built heritage conservation policies. The institutional arrangement and legislative framework established for conservation works is also studied. This is followed by a discussion of the respective approach and procedure governing the conservation of built heritage, in terms of the assessment criteria and classification system of protected buildings, the methods of conservation, public participation in conservation works, the funding mechanism and economic incentives available for heritage protection.

Part 5 — Analysis

3.4 This part compares the major characteristics of the built heritage conservation policy implemented in the selected places.

4. Completion date

- 4.1 RLSD proposes to complete the research report by May/June 2007.

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