

Enclosure

**Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
on “Planning arrangements for the existing Queen’s Pier and the relics of the
former Star Ferry Pier in Central”
for submission to LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works**

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers has reviewed the background brief on planning arrangements for the Star Ferry Pier and Queen’s Pier in Central and is pleased to offer our views below on the issue.

Planning arrangements for former Star Ferry Pier and Queen’s Pier

2. We acknowledge the fact that the Central Reclamation Project has undergone detailed considerations and statutory consultation procedures in the last few years through District Council, Town Planning Board and Antiquities Advisory Board, and has got Legislative Council’s approval for the funding. We also know that changing any parts of a project at its advanced stage would cause major impact on its progress as well as significant financial implications under the construction contract. There are contractual issues such as extension of time and additional costs arising from changes in design and construction programmes. All these issues will involve significant public money as compensation to the contractor due to last minute changes in a large scale construction contract. Furthermore, there will be a nine month or longer time required to process Town Planning amendments due to the change in the planned MTR overrun and the Road P2 network, which is necessary to connect the existing roads built under Central Reclamation Phases I and II. Such long delay would not only aggravate the problem of having to pay off a huge financial compensation to the contractor but would also cause considerable delay to the availability of the essential transportation infrastructure for use by the public. The above factors must be taken into account in any decision making. When Government was faced with the strong sentiment against the demolition of the clock tower right at the time when the demolition work was in progress Government had to consider the serious consequences of suspending work and try to find a compromise which would not result in such an undesirable impact. In the event Government’s decision on the reprovisioning of an identical clock tower nearby is a pragmatic solution after taking all factors into consideration.

3. The situation of the Queen’s Pier is similar in terms of the serious consequences if major design changes are contemplated to preserve the pier in situ but there are still a few more months for Government to plan ahead. We opine that Government should make the best use of the time interval to conduct more consultation with the various groups of conservationists with a view to finding an amicable solution in the way of preserving this relic. While Government has the responsibility to avoid excessive public spending it must not overlook the fact that it also has the duty to ensure that valuable relics are justifiably preserved.

The Lesson Learned

4. The demolition of the former Star Ferry pier has provoked a public outcry and dismay when the demolition work became imminent. Although Government has been legitimate in having gone through all the governmental and statutory processes in the planning leading to implementation of the project, we are of the view that Government should be more circumspect in reacting to the public's sentiment. Clear explanations should be given to the public in terms of the problem in entertaining the interest groups' request in its totality and more face to face discussions should be conducted with them in finding an amicable alternative solution. Needless to say, Government should do its best to retain all relics of historical value so that they can be preserved for the public to recollect their memory of these heritages. We opine that Government should conduct comprehensive and transparent public consultations and level up its communication with various interest groups to ensure that in the future demolitions of historical buildings and structures as well as the preservation arrangements would be conducted in a smooth and effective manner, with alternative solutions where retaining them in place would pose undue technical or financial problems. In this respect, we hope that Government would be able to plan forward more smoothly in other projects in future after the experience gained from the incident of the former Star Ferry Clock Tower and the Queen's Pier.