

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Consultancy Study for the Review of the *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 1997*

Purpose

This paper reports to Members the comments received during the 6-month public consultation on the draft of the revised *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 1997* (the draft revised DM) conducted by the Administration, and our initial responses to the comments.

Background

2. At the meetings held on 9 January and 12 June 2006, the Administration reported to the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services progress of the Consultancy Study for the review of the *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 1997*, and sought Members' views on the draft revised DM. Members of the LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works were also invited to join the discussions for the meeting of June 2006. The Administration committed at the meetings to report back to LegCo Panel on Welfare Services upon completion of the public consultation for the draft revised DM.

Public Consultation

3. The Administration conducted a 6-month public consultation on the draft revised DM in January 2006. The public consultation was completed at the end of June 2006.

4. During the consultation, the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) advertised in newspapers, issued a press release and wrote to the 18 District Councils as well as some 100 organizations of people with disabilities (PWDs) to introduce to members of the public and stakeholders details of the public consultation, and to invite them to comment on the draft revised DM. The draft revised DM was also posted on the web sites of HWFB and the Buildings Department (BD) for ease of reference by the public. In addition, two open discussion forums were organized by BD on 15 and 21 February 2006 at venues on the Hong Kong and Kowloon side respectively to obtain views from the general public.

Key Views Received and Initial Responses

5. 71 written submissions were received during the consultation, 28 of which came from individuals and 43 from organizations. A summary of the key comments received and the Administration's initial responses are given below:

(A) Exemptions from Application of the Design Manual

- **Comments:** The views received are quite diverse on this issue. While some support the idea of specifying those areas or parts of a building to be exempted from the application of the Design Manual, there are also suggestions that exemptions should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- **Initial Responses:** We consider that the exemptions and application should be specified in the Design Manual for clarity, transparency and ensuring consistent and fair application.

(B) Tactile Guide Paths

- **Comments:** Some request for the provision of more tactile guide paths in a building to facilitate the visually impaired persons while some do not support the provision of tactile guide paths in shopping arcades and to escalators or cinemas.
- **Reference Information:** According to the consultant's study, the installations of tactile guide paths are commonly supported by the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Norway and Japan in the following situations -
 - (a) where traditional guidance given by a standard footway between the property line and carriageway does not exist, e.g. in a pedestrian precinct;
 - (b) where pedestrians need to be guided around obstacles/ hazardous environment;
 - (c) where a number of visually impaired persons need to find a specific location; and
 - (d) in transport terminals to guide visually impaired persons between facilities.
- **Initial Responses:** We consider that large shopping complexes should be provided with tactile guide paths. We

agree to delete the requirement for tactile guide paths leading to escalators taking into account the potential risk posed to visually impaired persons in using escalators. Having noted the claim that visually impaired persons are also cinema-goers, we consider that we should retain the requirement in the draft revised DM for the provision of tactile guide paths to cinemas.

(C) Luminous Contrast between Walls, Floors, Hand-Rails and Tactile Warning Strips

- **Comments:** Concern has been raised by practitioners about the method of measurement of luminous contrast.
- **Initial Responses:** As the concept of luminous contrast is new in Hong Kong, we will introduce it as a recommended design requirement for the time being. We will provide guidelines on the measurement of luminous contrast in the Design Manual and specify the mandatory standard after more experience has been gained by the industry in the next review.

(D) Slip Resistance of Accessible Ramps and Corridors

- **Comments:** Concern has been raised by practitioners about the difficulties in the testing and measurement of the coefficient of friction.
- **Initial Responses:** We propose to defer the introduction of a standard on slip resistance until substantial knowledge on the subject has been gained in other parts of the world and by the local industry.

(E) Illumination Levels of Lift Lobbies, Corridors and Staircases

(i) Matters regarding Illumination Levels

- **Proposed Illumination Levels in the draft revised DM:** The level proposed was 45 lux for corridors, accessible paths and staircases, 85 lux for lift lobbies of upper floors and 120 lux for ground floor entrance lobbies and lifts.
- **Comments:** The organizations of visually impaired persons consider that the illumination levels for all public areas of a building should be set at 120 lux or higher. Others object to the setting of proposed illumination levels on energy saving and environmental protection grounds.
- **Reference Information:** For a room of 100 sq. ft., a 100W and a 200W tungsten lamp bulb at 2.6m high would produce 26.5 lux and 57 lux respectively at floor level, and 4.5 numbers of 100W lamp bulbs are required to produce 120 lux.
- According to international standards, the minimum illumination level at places frequented by people should be 100 lux, whereas places less frequented by people should be around 40 to 50 lux.
- **Initial Responses:** To strike a balance between the needs of visually impaired persons and energy conservation, we have reservation in further revising the illumination level proposed in the draft revised DM.

(ii) Proposed Installation of Sensor-Operated Systems

- **Comments:** At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services on 12 June 2006, Members enquired whether it was

feasible to install in the common areas of buildings lights to be operated by sensory devices, with a view to conserving energy.

- **Reference Information:** According to the information provided by the Housing Department, the installation cost of a sensor-operated system for a harmony block in a public housing estate is around \$300,000, not to mention the maintenance cost. For a typical 40-storey harmony block, there are about 2600 occupants and their usage of the common areas of the building would trigger the sensor frequently, resulting in a shorter life cycle of the system.
- **Initial Responses:** We agree that there would not be much technical problem in the installation of sensor-operated systems. However, whether the system is suitable for a development would depend on the frequency of usage and the possible nuisance caused to residents.

(F) Unisex Toilets

- **Comments:** There are strong views from the PWDs that the provision of unisex accessible toilets shall be mandatory and a clear maneuvering space of 1500mm x 1500mm should be provided inside such a toilet.
- **Initial Responses:** We agree that the provision of unisex toilets for PWDs be made mandatory. If the toilet is not fitted with an automatic door, we will require the enlargement of the internal clear space to a size of 1500 mm x 1500mm.

Way Forward

6. We will listen to the views of the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services to further amend the revised draft DM. When a consensus on the draft is reached amongst the various parties, we will proceed to amend the related regulatory mechanism.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to comment on the paper.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Buildings Department
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