

**Proposed Shared-use of the Government Helipad
near the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre
by Commercial Helicopter Operators**

**Supplementary Information requested by the
LegCo Panel on Economic Development**

Flights of Government Flying Service

Information on the flight movements of the Government Flying Service (GFS) at the former Central Helipad and the existing temporary helipad at Wan Chai (Wan Chai Temporary Helipad) in the past five years is as follows –

Flying Tasks	2004 ¹		2005	2006	2007	2008
	Central	Wan Chai	Wan Chai	Wan Chai	Wan Chai	Wan Chai
Emergency flights	74	2 476	2 630	2 654	2 460	2 488
Other Government tasks	102	2 372	1 962	2 056	1 616	1 512
Total	5 024		4 592	4 710	4 076	4 000

2. Emergency flying services include –
- (a) **casualty evacuation** – This involves transferring patients from remote areas/islands to hospitals on Hong Kong Island following the professional opinions of attending doctors or nurses. Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) is the only hospital on Hong Kong Island with a rooftop helipad, which is 390 feet above the sea level and surrounded by high ground and residential buildings. Helicopter operations at this helipad may be precluded by adverse weather conditions such as low cloud base and

¹ The Central Helipad was closed in January 2004 to make way for the implementation of the Central Reclamation Phase III works. GFS has since relocated its operations to the present Wan Chai Temporary Helipad pending the reprovisioning of a permanent helipad.

turbulence. Moreover, to minimize the noise impact on nearby residents, the GFS will use this helipad only in casualty evacuation of patients suffering from life or limb threatening conditions; in other cases involving patients requiring urgent medical attention, the GFS will use the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad so that the patients can be taken to hospital by ambulance;

- (b) **search and rescue** – the GFS has the duty to perform offshore search and rescue operations up to 700 nm south of Hong Kong. The GFS will normally deliver persons rescued during the operations to the PYNEH or Tuen Mun Hospital, both of which have a helipad. In adverse weather conditions, the GFS will use the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad; and
- (c) **support for law enforcement operations** – This involves providing flying support to various police operations for law enforcement purposes and for maintaining law and order. For example, the GFS may need to transport officers and equipment of the Police Tactical Unit, the Special Duties Unit or the Bomb Disposal Unit in emergency situations.

3. Other Government tasks include transportation of personnel and equipment to remote places (normally inaccessible by road transport) to perform various government tasks, transportation of important visitors, aerial photography and survey flights, etc. as requested by various government departments such as the Lands Department, Marine Department, Information Services Department, and Electrical and Mechanical Services Department. Such are examples of GFS's essential flying services.

4. The GFS's experience of using the former Central Helipad and the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad shows that the GFS operates about 4 000 to 5 000 flight movements annually (or 12 to 14 movements a day). Since the GFS's flights depend on the needs of members of the public and the requests of Government departments, it is difficult to project the growth in the GFS's flights in the future, but the GFS expects such flights to follow the trend of past statistics.

Commercial Flights

5. Information on commercial flight movements at the former Central Helipad and the former West Kowloon Helipad from 2003 to 2005² is as follows –

Purpose of flight \ Year	2003	2004	2005
Aerial Work / Lifting	220	27	58
Aerial Photography	947	204	169
Sightseeing	7 024	4 401	4 137
Special Charter	5	5	0
Medical Charter	0	0	0
Others (including non-revenue positioning flights, private flights, training flights, refuelling etc.)	1 251	385	227
Total	9 447	5 022	4 591

6. Information on commercial flight movements at the rooftop of the Peninsula Hotel during the past five years is as follows –

Purpose of flight \ Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Aerial Work / Lifting	5	41	50	71	57	74
Aerial Photography	26	382	372	363	366	283
Sightseeing	1 339	2 759	2 642	2 816	2 402	1 848

² The former West Kowloon Helipad was closed in 2005.

Purpose of flight \ Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Special Charter	0	70	28	8	65	89
Medical Charter	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others (including non-revenue positioning flights, private flights, training flights, refuelling etc.)	14	116	87	115	118	147
Total	1 384	3 368	3 179	3 373	3 008	2 441

7. So the total number of commercial helicopter flight movements in the past five years is set out below -

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total	8 390	7 770	3 373	3 008	2 441

8. We expect commercial helicopter flight movements to reach about 20 000 movements a year by 2020, which has been worked out having regard to the number of domestic helicopter movements in 2004 and assuming an annual average growth rate of 6.3%.

Justifications for reprovisioning Permanent Government Helipad within Central Business District

9. Reprovisioning the permanent Government helipad near the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) is justified as follows –

- (a) for casualty evacuation and search and rescue operations, the airlifted patients and casualties are normally taken to the PYNEH direct. When weather conditions do not permit the GFS's helicopters to land at the PYNEH, the airlifted patients and casualties will be transferred to other nearby hospitals by land transport. The proposed site is very

conveniently located for such transfer purpose;

- (b) the proximity of the proposed location to the Hong Kong Police Force Headquarters will facilitate speedy transfer of police officers and equipment by the GFS's helicopters to other parts of the territory to support law enforcement operations of the Police;
- (c) the proposed location meets aviation safety and the GFS's operational requirements by providing two obstacle-free take-off climb and approach surfaces; and
- (d) the proposed location is relatively distant from residential developments, thus minimizing the noise impact of helicopter operations on residents.

Shared-use Arrangements

10. Under the shared-use arrangements, the GFS will be responsible for managing the proposed helipad. The spare capacity of the proposed helipad will be made available for the provision of commercial helicopter services at a charge to be determined by the Government, provided that Government emergency and essential flying services have absolute priority at all times in using the helipad.

11. Subject to the shared-use experience at the Wan Chai temporary helipad and the flight trials at the permanent helipad, the GFS will facilitate commercial helicopter flights generally on a first-come-first-served basis. With operational efficiency and safety in mind, commercial helicopter operators would need to file with the GFS the scheduled flight details in advance for landing/taking-off coordination at the proposed helipad.

12. We will continue to work with the commercial helicopter operators and interested parties such as the Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (RHWG) in drawing up the detailed operational procedures for the proposed helipad.

Consultation with Relevant Parties and Helicopter Service Industry on Proposed Government Helipad near HKCEC and other Helipad Facilities

13. The Administration has conducted long and extensive consultation on the provision of a permanent helipad. A table summarising our previous consultation with the LegCo, District Councils, the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) and the Town Planning Board (TPB) is at the **Annex**.

14. The RHWG, comprising industry players with an active interest over the development of the proposed helipad, has been kept informed of the details of the technical feasibility study on the proposed helipad. In fact, the proposed helipad layout comprising three pads and other supporting facilities was based on a proposal submitted by the RHWG in December 2005. The RHWG was also invited to observe the field measurements conducted at the GFS's Kowloon Bay Helipad on 1 February 2007 and 20 March 2007 as part of the technical feasibility study.

15. We have also consulted other relevant parties on the findings of the technical feasibility study, as summarised below –

Date	Details
17 January 2008	An advance copy of the final report was provided to the RHWG and the former Heli Express (now called Sky Shuttle), an existing helicopter operator, for comments. A briefing was held on 23 January 2008 to take them through the findings of the study. The attendees expressed general support for the findings and recommendations of the study, and raised some issues relating to the modus operandi of the helipad under the future shared-use arrangement. We undertook to continue to work closely with the industry and draw up detailed operational procedures for the helipad.

Date	Details
20 February 2008	A copy of the executive summary of the study report was sent to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (TDC) for comments. The TDC was concerned about the possible noise impact on the HKCEC's conference and meeting areas, especially that generated by idling helicopters waiting for passengers and clearance for departure from the helipad. We have provided the TDC and HKCEC with information on the noise impact on the HKCEC (which shows that the maximum noise level inside the HKCEC arising from helicopter operations would be below 65dB(A), which should be acceptable).
18 March 2008	We briefed the Wan Chai District Council (WCDC) on the results of the technical feasibility study for the project and consulted it on the proposed shared-use arrangement of the permanent government helipad. The WCDC did not object to the proposal. It suggested that the Government should co-ordinate the development of the permanent government helipad with other future developments in the area, and asked the Government to give due consideration to the detailed design of the helipad. A suggestion was also made that there should be a cap on the number of commercial flights at the beginning. We would take these views into account when drawing up the design of the helipad and the operational procedures.
27 March 2008	We sent a copy of the LegCo Panel paper to the HEC and undertook to brief the HEC on the detailed design of the helipad once available.

16. When taking forward the helipad project near the HKCEC, we will continue to engage the relevant stakeholders. As to other helipad facilities in Hong Kong, we stand ready to consult the relevant stakeholders and Government departments and public bodies as necessary.

Government's Policy and Plans in Medium Term and Long Term on Development of Domestic and Cross-Boundary Helipads

17. We are committed to supporting the development of our helicopter industry. On the domestic front, the proposed Government helipad near HKCEC is expected to provide sufficient capacity to meet the forecast demand up to 2020.

18. On the cross-boundary front, the expansion of the existing heliport on the rooftop of the Macau Ferry Terminal (MFT), when completed towards the end of 2009, will be able to accommodate 55 000 movements a year, compared with the present actual number of movements at about 17 000 a year. We have also reserved a site in the Kai Tak Development Area for use as a second cross-boundary heliport in the future. The future Kai Tak Heliport is expected to be able to accommodate about 38 000 movements a year. These projects will provide sufficient capacity to meet the forecast demand up to at least 2020.

19. The earliest time for the heliport site in the Kai Tak Development Area to be available for development will be August 2014, having regard to the works programme for the development of a cruise terminal at Kai Tak, the first berth of which is expected to be available in 2013.

Transport and Housing Bureau
May 2009

**Consultation with Relevant Parties and
Helicopter Service Industry on Proposed Government Helipad
near Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre**

Date	Details
2001	When considering the then proposed Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII Development), the former LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel) expressed reservation on a proposal to provide a helipad to the north of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) out of concern that the proposed helipad would unduly disturb the neighbouring land uses. We undertook that only a small helipad confined to Government and emergency flying services would be provided.
2003/early 2004	We briefed the former LegCo Panel on Economic Services (ES Panel) on the findings of the Consultancy on Helicopter Traffic Demand and Heliport Development in Hong Kong (the Consultancy Study), which recommended, among others, the development of a permanent domestic heliport. The former ES Panel generally supported the proposal.
End 2004	After a comprehensive site search exercise covering both sides of the Harbour, only a site at the waterfront in front of the Western Park Sports Centre was identified. We consulted the former ES Panel on a proposal to develop a permanent heliport there in December 2004. However, the Central and Western District Council (C&W DC) objected in May 2004 to the proposal to develop a domestic heliport in the district. The helicopter industry considered the site inappropriate and requested the Administration to allow commercial uses at the proposed helipad near the HKCEC.

Date	Details
13 January 2005	We consulted the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) on the proposed helipad in Sheung Wan. Whilst some members supported the proposal, views were divided on whether the helipad should be located within the Central Business District (CBD) or further away to avoid compromising the invaluable waterfront areas along the harbour. Some members considered that a least intrusive solution should be sought to strike a balance between providing public accessibility to the waterfront and meeting the needs of helicopter operators and clients.
18 January 2005	We consulted the Wan Chai District Council (WCDC) on the proposal of building a Government helipad near the HKCEC. Whilst raising no objection to the use of the site by the Government Flying Service (GFS), the WCDC strongly objected to any commercial operation.
20 and 21 January 2005	We consulted the C&W DC and the District's Area Committees on the proposed helipad in Sheung Wan and they raised strong objection.
31 January 2005	<p>We briefed a joint meeting of the former ES Panel and PLW Panel on the results of our consideration of the proposed shared-use of the site near the HKCEC and the outcome of public consultation on the Sheung Wan Helipad proposal.</p> <p>Representatives from Hong Kong Express Airways Ltd (HK Express), the Regional Heliport Working Group (RHWG), Designing HK Harbour District, the HK Hotels Association, Aerospace Forum Asia, the C&W DC, the Travel Industry Council of HK (TIC) and the WCDC attended the meeting. HK Express, the RHWG, the HK Hotels Association and Aerospace Forum Asia supported the development of a permanent heliport near the HKCEC. The TIC did not raise any particular comments, whereas the WCDC strongly objected to any commercial operation at the site.</p> <p>Members generally agreed that the GFS and commercial helicopter services should be accommodated at one heliport as far as possible.</p>

Date	Details
28 February 2005	<p>The former ES Panel and PLW Panel joint meeting passed a motion urging “the Government to expedite the provision of a permanent commercial heliport and associated facilities in the central business district of the Hong Kong Island, and, under the principle of no unlawful reclamation, allow the heliport at the HKCEC to accommodate both commercial uses by helicopter operators and government uses”.</p>
May to November 2005	<p>A public engagement project entitled ‘Harbour-front Enhancement Review – Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and Adjoining Areas’ (HER) was initiated by the HEC and conducted in parallel with the WD II Review for the purpose of enhancing public participation in the WDII Review. It was steered by the HEC Sub-committee on WDII Review (HEC Sub-committee). The HER project, which comprised the Envisioning, Realization and Detailed Planning stages, was designed to engage the public before the preliminary planning concepts were produced so that members of the community could express at an early stage their visions and aspirations for the sustainable development of the harbour-front with a view to building a consensus.</p> <p>At the Envisioning Stage of the HER from May to November 2005, public engagement activities included five public forums, two community design charrettes, opinion surveys and a consolidation forum. At the community design charrette, some groups supported locating a helipad near the HKCEC to promote tourism. At the consolidation forum, a representative of the RHWG championed their helipad proposal which involves no reclamation and a new building providing noise mitigation as well as an area for public enjoyment.</p>

Date	Details
25 July 2005	<p>We reported to a joint meeting of the former ES Panel and PLW Panel the difficulties in identifying a suitable location for a permanent commercial heliport within the CBD, and consulted Members on the shared-use of the site near the HKCEC.</p> <p>We consulted the commercial operators on the draft layout of the helipad. The RHWG objected because they considered the development scale too small to meet the long-term development needs of both domestic and cross-boundary services. They continued to pursue a full-fledged helipad which required reclamation.</p>
9 August 2005	<p>Both the RHWG and we presented proposals to the HEC Sub-committee on WD II Review. The Sub-committee did not support the RHWG's proposal as the expansive scale of the project would take away a valuable part of Victoria Harbour.</p> <p>The Sub-committee decided that the RHWG's proposal should not be pursued further in the on-going consultation under the HER covering Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and adjoining areas. It agreed that further public views should be sought on the Government's proposal which should be included in the outline concept plan to be prepared for the next stage of the public engagement exercise under HER. In addition to the HKCEC site, it considered that the existing temporary Government helipad at the former Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area (ex-PCWA) could be a possible site for developing a permanent helipad and should also be included in the outline concept plan for further public engagement by end 2005. [Note: The Sub-committee subsequently agreed on 12 December 2005 that the suggestion of converting the temporary helipad at the ex-PCWA into permanent use should be dropped.]</p>
22 August 2005	<p>We consulted the Islands DC (IsDC). They considered that regardless of the location and scale of development, the shared-use arrangement should not adversely affect the provision of emergency helicopter services by the GFS. We indicated that appropriate operational procedures would be drawn up to ensure priority use by the GFS.</p>

Date	Details
20 September 2005	The WCDC reiterated objection to the shared-use of the helipad site near the HKCEC and added that the subject should only be reviewed when overall planning for the development of Wan Chai harbour-front had been completed.
7 October 2005	We sought the views of the Town Planning Board (TPB) on the shared-use proposal. Members expressed concern about the possible noise and traffic implications on the neighbouring areas, the rationale for selecting the HKCEC site and the capacity of the helipad in catering for commercial uses and the GFS's operations. We indicated that a technical feasibility study would be conducted on the proposal; the subject site was the only suitable site taking account of constraints after a thorough site search; and the estimated capacity was based on past operations at a former helipad in Central.
24 October 2005	We reported the outcome of the consultation to the former ES Panel and PLW Panel, and undertook to conduct a technical feasibility study.

Date	Details
<p>October to December 2006</p>	<p>At the Realization Stage of HER from October to December 2006, the public was engaged on the WDII Concept Plan (the proposed helipad near the HKCEC formed part of the Concept Plan) through a wide range of activities. The public engagement activities included a series of roving exhibitions, a collaborators' workshop session, two harbour walks and two community workshops, and a consensus building town hall meeting.</p> <p>At the community workshops, there were different views on the proposed helipad site near the HKCEC, intended for both Government and commercial uses, but with priority to emergency services. Some considered that the helipad should be purely for emergency purposes, while the RHWG requested the helipad to be expanded beyond the proposed site without further reclamation to allow 4 pads and cross-boundary services. Some suggested relocating the helipad due to the noise concern and requested the Government to conduct detailed assessment on the design of the proposed helipad to minimize environmental impacts on the surrounding area.</p> <p>To solicit public opinion on the Concept Plan, view collection forms were distributed. According to the public opinion collected, the proposed helipad received support from about half of the respondents.</p>
<p>January to July 2007</p>	<p>At the Detailed Planning Stage from January to June 2007, the Recommended Outline Development Plan (RODP) of WDII and the proposed amendments to relevant Outline Zoning Plans (OZPs) were drafted for consultation. The proposed helipad near HKCEC formed part of the draft RODP and relevant OZP. On 15 May and 11 June 2007, when the WCDC was consulted on the draft RODP and relevant OZPs, members had not raised objection to the proposed shared-use of the site. At a public briefing held on 23 June 2007, there was general consensus that the RODP and OZPs had reflected most of the views and directions on the Concept Plan expressed at the previous two stages.</p> <p>Proposed amendments to the draft Wan Chai North OZP, including the proposed helipad zone, was considered and agreed by the TPB. The proposed amendments were gazetted on 27 July 2007.</p>

Date	Details
December 2007/January 2008	The RHWG and The “Star” Ferry Company Limited submitted further objections to the proposed amendments to the draft Wan Chai North OZP, proposing expansion and deletion of the helipad zone respectively. After the hearing on 7 December 2007, the TPB decided on 11 January 2008 not to uphold the further objections.

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