

**For discussion
on 18 December 2007**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON DEVELOPMENT**

**Proposed Creation of a New Rank and Permanent Post of
Chief Landscape Architect in the Architectural Services Department**

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to create a new rank and permanent post of Chief Landscape Architect (CLA) (ranked at D1 level) in the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) to strengthen professional landscape architectural expertise within Government so as to meet increasing public aspiration on the quality of living environment and greening.

PROPOSAL

2. The Director of Architectural Services (DArchS), with the support of the Secretary for Development, proposes to create a new rank and a permanent post of CLA for providing strategic professional landscape architectural input in public works projects; providing support in the formulation of policies on landscape planning and greening as well as serving as a focal point for co-ordination amongst departments and parties concerned.

JUSTIFICATION

Increasing Importance of Landscape Planning and Greening

3. In the 2007-08 Policy Address, the Chief Executive highlighted the importance of quality life by building a green city. Indeed, there has been growing public expectation for a strategic and holistic approach in integrating landscape planning and urban design with due regard to environmental protection considerations. Good landscaping and greening will go a long way in improving the living environment particularly in a densely populated city as Hong Kong. There is in fact a close relationship between greening and improvement of air quality. During day time, green plants can help act as a sponge by sequestering carbon dioxide in the atmosphere while releasing breathable oxygen. They can improve air quality by intercepting particulate matters and absorbing gaseous contaminants such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide in the atmosphere as well as help lower urban temperature. Through greening and various anti-air pollution measures, we can significantly improve the general environment which is another important mission of the Government.

4. In the light of the above, Government has in recent years actively pursued the following -

(a) Implementation of Annual Planting Programme

Each year, we compile a territory-wide greening programme to facilitate planning and monitoring of progress and outcome. In particular, we strive to maximise greening opportunities during the planning and development of new projects. We have planted about 35 million plants including trees, shrubs and annuals in the past five years. Planting works have been integrated into major projects including Infrastructure for Penny's Bay Development (4.7 million plants); Trunk Road T7 in Ma On Shan (1.2 million plants) and Kam Tin Bypass (1.1 million plants);

(b) Development and Implementation of Greening Master Plans (GMPs)

Apart from maximising planting in new capital works projects, we also make every effort to improve urban greenery through development and implementation of GMPs. A GMP seeks to define comprehensively the greening framework of an area with coherent themes and plant species to promote a clear district identity.

Works associated with GMPs for Central and Tsim Sha Tsui were completed in March 2007. Studies on the development of GMPs for Sheung Wan/Wan Chai/Causeway Bay and Mong Kok/Yau Ma Tei are in progress for completion by end 2007. Thereafter works will commence. Another study for developing GMPs for the remaining urban areas is also in progress for completion in early 2009. We also plan to commence the studies for GMPs for the New Territories in mid-2009;

(c) Development of Quality Parks and Open Spaces

Leisure and Cultural Services Department, with the assistance of ArchSD, has been providing new parks and open spaces to meet the requirements of the general public. 18 open spaces and parks were completed in the last five years. These included the Open Space in Areas 18 and 21 Fanling which has won the Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) Annual Award and the Open Space in Area 14 Tuen Mun, which has a sustainable theme (including the use of recycled plastics moulded to the form, texture and colour of timber as the major construction materials). The Cherry Street Park in Tai Kok Tsui provides a range of active and passive park facilities for urban dwellers, whereas the Dragon Park in Area 25 Tin Shui Wai is a Suzhou style traditional Chinese garden;

(d) Promotion of Rooftop Greening

Since green roofs can help improve cityscape and attenuate urban heat island effect, ArchSD has incorporated rooftop and podium landscape designs in new Government building projects wherever practicable. About 60 projects with such green features have been completed. Also, about 40 projects with such facilities are under construction or planning;

(e) Pursuit of New Techniques in Greening

As we encounter more and more difficulties in finding space for planting in built-up areas, we are also shifting our attention from “quantity” to “quality”, i.e. to go for quality planting which can create much greater visual impact by adopting new techniques such as vertical greening, and planting at open water channels like Yuen Long Nullah. In doing so, we will also make reference to overseas experience; and

(f) Collaboration with the Private Sector

Apart from Government making its own efforts, initiatives and support from both quasi-government organisations and the private sector are most welcomed. This is also a demonstration of community support. The streetscape improvement works in Des Voeux Road Central and Hollywood Road are good examples of such joint efforts.

For more details, please refer to Development Panel paper on “Greening – Review and Way Forward” to be discussed at the same meeting on 18 December 2007.

Role of Landscape Architects

5. In undertaking landscape planning and greening initiatives, Landscape Architects (LAs) play a most important role. In the delivery of public works projects such as development of New Development Areas, large scale engineering

projects (e.g. construction of highways and site formation), development of district and local open spaces, construction of various recreational and tourism projects, etc., LAs have to critically plan, design and implement appropriate landscape works in order to achieve the desired objectives. The highly successful Hong Kong Wetland Park which has won 15 awards, both local and overseas including the Medal of the Year of the HKIA 2006 Annual Award and the Urban Land Institute Global Award, has well demonstrated how good landscaping work can contribute to both environmental education and tourism objectives. The expertise of LAs is also critical to the urban planning process and help to define an appropriate urban fabric for our city.

6. The work of LAs in Government is characterised by substantial scope as well as breadth. It also entails multiple interface with various professional disciplines such as architects, town planners and engineers. In view of the important and unique role of the landscape architectural profession, it is necessary for Government to be provided with sufficient expertise.

Present Situation

7. At present, there is a total establishment of 45 LA grade officers in Government working in ArchSD, Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), Highways Department (HyD); and Planning Department (PlanD). [Note : In addition, there are also 13 posts of LA grade officers in Housing Department which comes under the Housing Authority.]

8. The LA grade comprises three ranks, viz. the entry ranks of Assistant Landscape Architect (ALA) and LA (remunerated at Master Pay Scale (MPS) points 18 to 27, and MPS points 30 to 44 respectively) and the promotion rank of Senior Landscape Architect (SLA) (remunerated at MPS points 45 to 49). The distribution of the establishment of the LA grade by rank and departments is listed below -

Rank	ArchSD	CEDD	HyD	PlanD	Total
ALA/LA #	11	7	13	4	35
SLA	4	2	3	1	10
Total :	15	9	16	5	45

Combined establishment, the post can be filled either by ALA or LA.

Despite the importance of the landscape architectural discipline, there is at present no rank at the directorate level in the LA grade.

Need for a New Rank and Permanent Post of CLA

9. LA is a professional grade under the central management of ArchSD. Under existing arrangement, Assistant Director (Architectural) (AD(A)) who is an officer of the architectural discipline, is the head of the LA grade. Apart from management of the LA grade, AD(A) is also responsible for the grade management of Architect and Technical Officer (Architectural) grades, in addition to her other administrative duties such as management of the Architectural Branch in ArchSD. In other words, planning of LA issues and handling of grade management matters constitute only a portion of her duties.

10. LA grade staff are posted to work in different departments with the SLAs reporting to directorate officers of various non-LA discipline on landscape matters. For example, in ArchSD, SLAs work to Chief Architects; in CEDD and HyD, they work to Chief Engineers and in PlanD, they work to Chief Town Planners. There are the following inadequacies in the current arrangement which we consider can be alleviated by the addition of a CLA rank/post -

- (a) while LAs can satisfactorily carry out their duties at the operational level presently, there is a lack of steer or central co-ordination of landscape work at the strategic level. It would therefore be much more desirable to have a fully dedicated CLA at D1 level to co-ordinate issues of high level as well as involving inter-departmental concerns, and to dovetail the efforts on various fronts to the best effect particularly with regard to

matters like setting of standards, upholding of quality, research into new techniques in landscaping as well as rendering advice to individual works departments on complex landscape issues which cannot be adequately addressed under the departments' existing set-up. Moreover, a CLA would be able to better pursue cross sector collaboration among Government bureaux/departments, academia and non-governmental organisations in enhancing the quality of landscape planning and greening as well as to provide better support to the Works Branch of the Development Bureau (DEVB), which is the policy bureau for greening, in furthering its objectives;

- (b) for the sustained implementation of various greening initiatives, there is also a need for a dedicated officer at the directorate level to spearhead research into greening means which are presently not widely adopted in Hong Kong (such as vertical greening, rooftop greening especially in the private sector, greening on flyovers and highways, use of scent to complement visual enjoyment in greening, etc.). The proposed CLA would explore latest trends in overseas countries for adaptive use in the local setting; and
- (c) it is pertinent to highlight that greening and development of GMPs do not only entail growing of plants wherever possible. Development of GMPs entails three levels: short, medium and long term measures. Short term measures are those conforming to district layout, posing no conflict with land use and/or traffic arrangements. As for medium and long term measures, they are usually associated with urban renewal or redevelopment when opportunities arise to re-shape the area for enhanced greening such as introduction of tree corridors along thoroughfares. While CEDD will continue to spearhead the development and implementation of GMPs, it would be necessary to have a CLA who possesses a high level of professional competence and negotiation skill to liaise/coordinate among relevant parties cutting across planning, land use and project delivery fronts to achieve smooth sail of these medium and long term measures.

We consider that should the existing structure of the LA grade remain intact, realisation of these initiatives will be difficult.

11. Apart from the operational reasons spelt out above, it is also on parity ground to support the proposed creation of a CLA post as among the professional grades in ArchSD viz. Architect, Maintenance Surveyor, Quantity Surveyor and Structural Engineer, LA grade is the only exception with no access to the directorate level. This is not reasonable taking into account the importance and uniqueness of their work. In fact, like all other professional grades in ArchSD, LAs are required to possess membership of a professional institution as one of the pre-requisite entry requirements.

12. We propose to create the CLA post under ArchSD since the LA grade is basically related to the architectural stream. The present proposal would cause minimal disruption to the current grade management structure whereby the LA grade is under the central management of ArchSD. Moreover, while the CLA will contribute to the implementation of GMPs (which is under CEDD's portfolio), he/she will be heavily involved in other strategic aspects including giving steer and maintaining quality of landscape architectural services in Government, spearheading research as well as pursuing cross sector collaboration under ArchSD's portfolio.

13. In brief, we propose to create a CLA post in ArchSD to provide a focal point for meeting the operational needs of enhancing greening efforts so as to develop Hong Kong into a green model comparable to other world cities with outstanding achievements in greening. Secondly, the proposed CLA will provide the level of expertise required to interface with key stakeholders like the Urban Renewal Authority, Buildings Department, PlanD, etc. in order to pursue the long term objectives of greening. Thirdly, to create a CLA post will bring the LA grade on a par with the other professional grades in ArchSD which all have access to the directorate level.

14. The job description of the proposed CLA post is at Enclosure 1. The proposed organisation chart of ArchSD is at Enclosure 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The proposal will bring about an additional notional annual salary cost at mid-point of \$1,201,200. The additional full annual average staff cost including salary and staff on-cost is about \$1,700,000. The additional cost will be met from within DEVB's existing resources. The proposal has been covered in ECI(2007-08)8 on "Update on Overall Directorate Establishment Position" issued by the Administration on 9 November 2007.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members are requested to comment on the proposal. Subject to Members' views, we will seek the endorsement of ESC/FC on the proposed creation of a new rank and permanent post of CLA in ArchSD. Assuming smooth passage, we intend to create and fill the post by internal promotion in the first instance and failing which, by open recruitment.

**Job Description of the Proposed
Chief Landscape Architect Post**

Rank : Chief Landscape Architect

Responsible to : Assistant Director (Architectural), Architectural Services
Department

Main Duties and Responsibilities -

1. To develop strategic plans to take forward landscape planning and greening in a more integrated and innovative manner, including setting standards, and identifying possible areas and measures for improvement.
2. To lead research into new methods of greening having regard to overseas experience and local situation; and to formulate guidelines for implementation of the new methods in capital works projects, e.g. parks.
3. To monitor the overall quality of landscape architectural works through monitoring of landscape architectural design, contract management, project implementation, etc.
4. To assist the Assistant Director (Architectural) in grade management of the Landscape Architect grade, including deployment of resources and dealing with recruitment, posting, promotion and training matters.
5. To monitor the overall quality of landscape architectural services delivered by Landscape Architects in Government; and to promote best practices where possible.
6. To act as a focal point for co-ordination amongst various government bureaux/departments, academia, non-governmental organisations and other relevant parties on landscape planning and greening matters.
7. To provide professional landscape architectural advice to the Development Bureau and other government bureaux/departments.

Proposed Organisation Chart of Architectural Services Department

