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Panel on Development

Meeting on 26 May 2009

**Background brief on
proposed development of a government helipad near
the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the proposed development of a Government helipad near the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) and the views and concerns of Legislative Council (LegCo) Members on the proposal and related issues.

Background

Proposal for a domestic helipad near HKCEC

2. The Consultancy on Helicopter Traffic Demand and Heliport Development in Hong Kong commissioned by the Civil Aviation Department in April 2001 projected that there would be continued growth in domestic¹ helicopter services and affirmed the need for additional helipads to cater the forecast growth. The domestic helicopter services had been operating from the Central Helipad at Lung Wui Road. With the vacation of the Central Helipad in January 2004 to make way for the implementation of the Central Reclamation Phase III works, there was no permanent heliport in the urban area for commercial services.

3. Since 1998, the Administration had been actively searching for suitable sites on both sides of the harbour to provide for a permanent domestic heliport. The site should be centrally located, easily accessible and also in close proximity

¹ Helicopter services for local sightseeing flights, business charters, and special-purpose flights for airlifting, aerial surveying and photography.

to the central business district, major hotels and conference facilities. It should be located at the waterfront with unobstructed flight path and fulfill all necessary safety and environmental requirements.

4. Between 1999 and 2001, the Government consulted the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel)² on the reprovisioning of the Central Helipad to a site near HKCEC³ in the context of the Wan Chai Development Phase 2 project. To address members' concern about the adverse noise impact of the heliport, the Government committed that the proposed helipad would be confined to emergency services, essential security and support operations the Government Flying Service (GFS). At the meeting of the Panel on Economic Services⁴ (ES Panel) on 7 December 2004, members urged the Administration to examine the feasibility of providing a shared-use helipad for GFS and commercial helicopter industry at the site near HKCEC.

5. Initially, the Administration had expressed reservation about the proposal as the increased use of the helipad might affect GFS's efficiency in providing emergency services. Taking into account ES Panel members' concerns and the views of the helicopter service industry, the Administration agreed to allow the helipad to accommodate both Government and commercial uses, on conditions that Government emergency and other essential flying services must have absolute priority at all times in using the helipad, and the spare capacity of the helipad would be open to commercial uses at a charge to be determined by the Government.

Technical feasibility study of the proposed helipad near HKCEC

6. A technical feasibility study was conducted to take forward the shared-use of the proposed helipad, which would comprise three pads (the outer pad as the landing and takeoff pad, the middle pad as the takeoff pad and the inner pad as the parking pad) and supporting facilities (including a passenger terminal cum control tower and underground refueling facilities). The study covered the assessment of the noise impact, the downwash effect, potential hazard of the proposed refueling facilities and the appropriate general layout of the helipad.

7. The study was completed in December 2007 and concluded that with suitable mitigation measures, the noise generated by helicopters would be kept

² The Panel on Planning, Lands and Works has been renamed as the Panel on Development with effect from the 2007-2008 session.

³ To meet the emergency operational requirements of the Police, the GFS heliport must be located close to the Police Headquarter Building. It was mainly on this consideration that the HKCEC site was chosen for provision of a GFS heliport notwithstanding the various constraints.

⁴ The Panel on Economic Services has been renamed as the Panel on Economic Development with effect from the 2007-2008 session.

within acceptable levels. The study also recommended the installation of a six-metre high noise barrier along the landward side of the boundary of the proposed site to lessen the noise impact, which could also reduce the wind speed generated by downwash to an acceptable level. A hazard assessment of the refueling facilities concluded that the risks would be low. The helicopter industry generally supported the findings and recommendations of the study.

Observations/concerns of LegCo Members

8. The PLW Panel and ES Panel had held joint meetings on 31 January 2005, 28 February 2005, 25 July 2005 and 24 October 2005 to discuss the proposed shared-use of the Government helipad near HKCEC and other related issues. The ES Panel had also been briefed on the results of the technical feasibility study regarding the proposal on 25 February 2008. Members' major views and concerns expressed at the meetings are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Domestic heliport development

9. Panel members urged the Administration to expedite action to provide for a permanent surface-level heliport for commercial domestic helicopter services in the urban area preferably on the Hong Kong Island. They considered that adequate measures should be taken to mitigate the noise impact, such as to impose restrictions on the operating hours.

Shared-use of the proposed government helipad

10. Members had divergent views on the proposed shared-use of the helipad. Some members expressed support for the proposal to minimize the number of heliports and to save resources. They also considered it necessary for the Administration to work out a set of reasonable and practicable operational procedures that could meet the needs of the industry. Some members expressed concern about the inadequacy of parking facilities for commercial helicopters and suggested that these commercial helicopters should be allowed to park on the helipad while awaiting their passengers unless clearance was necessary to cater for GFS operations.

11. Some members, however, were concerned that the shared-use arrangements might adversely affect the emergency operations of GFS. They were keen to ensure that the emergency operations for the residents on outlying Islands would always be accorded priority over commercial services under the shared-use arrangement. Some other members considered that it might not be necessary to accord absolute priority to GFS at all times as the demand for commercial flights would be small with purposes mainly confined to local

tourism. They also considered that the respective scope of "emergency" and "essential" flying services of GFS should be set out clearly.

Latest developments

12. The Administration will brief the Panel on Development on the Central-Wan Chai Bypass, Wan Chai Development Phase 2 and related works, including the development of the proposed helipad near HKCEC at the meeting on 26 May 2009.

References

13. A list of the relevant papers is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
22 May 2009

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List of relevant papers

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel)	17 July 2001	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)952/01-02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/panels/plw/minutes/pl011207.pdf
Panel on Economic Services (ES Panel)	23 June 2003	Administration's paper on "Helicopter traffic demand and heliport development in Hong Kong" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1959/02-03(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/es/papers/es0623cb1-1959-4e.pdf Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2252/02-03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/es/minutes/es030623.pdf
ES Panel	7 December 2004	Administration's paper on "proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)376/04-05(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/es1207cb1-376-4e.pdf Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)673/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/es041207.pdf
ES Panel and PLW Panel	26 January 2005	Background brief on the proposed domestic heliport development (LC Paper No. CB(1)770/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-770-e.pdf

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
ES Panel and PLW Panel	31 January 2005	<p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)769/04-05(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-769-4e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of joint meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1013/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/plw/minutes/espl0131.pdf</p>
ES Panel and PLW Panel	28 February 2005	<p>Information note on proposed shared-use of the Government helipad at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre with commercial operators (LC Paper No. CB(1)968/04-05(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-968-3e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of joint meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1124/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/espl0228.pdf</p>
ES Panel and PLW Panel	25 July 2005	<p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)2099/04-05(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0725cb1-2099-1e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of joint meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2242/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/espl0725.pdf</p>
ES Panel and PLW Panel	24 October 2005	<p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)84/05-06(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/es/papers/esplw1024cb1-84-1e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of joint meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)372/05-06) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/plw/minutes/espl1024.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
Panel on Economic Development	25 February 2008	<p>Administration's paper on "Proposed Development of Government Helipad at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre" (LC Paper No. CB(1)825/07-08(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/es/papers/edev0225cb1-825-3-e.pdf</p> <p>Background brief on the proposed shared-use of the Government helipad at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre with commercial operators (LC Paper No. CB(1)825/07-08(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/es/papers/edev0225cb1-825-4-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1268/07-08) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/es/minutes/ev080225.pdf</p>