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31 March 2009

Ms Joanne Mak (麥麗嫻女士) Central-Western District Council Meeting
Secretary, Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Panel on Transport
Legislative Council
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

Via Ms Winnie Cheng (鄭維賢女士)
by email (wcheng@legco.gov.hk) and fax (2121 0420)

Mass Transit Railway Western Island Line (WIL) Hearing,
31 March 2009 (Tuesday)

Right at the outset, the general feeling we sense of fellow residents at The Belcher's (**Belcher**) on the construction of the WIL is positive. Our concern arises from two key issues.

First, possible relocation of the duct [for transferring the rubbish, debris and waste from the inland construction sites to the waterfront to be shipped away]: We suggested an alternative location (a site at the slight slope between Ricci Hall and a power station close-by along Pokfulam Road right down Sai Cheung Street (西祥街)) in one of the meetings with the representatives from the MTR and the government agencies concerned for the so-called consultation presentations held on 5 March 2008. At the end of this meeting, the engineering representatives went with us for a site inspection of this alternative location. We were advised on site that the alternative location would be technically feasible as it would amount to only slight amendments, and that our suggestion would be taken into consideration for subsequent amendments to the construction plan. However, this advice turns to be lip service, as it was washed down to nothing in subsequent consultation sessions.

Second, safety to the **Belcher** buildings: There are good reasons for us to worry about the potential impact on the foundations on which the buildings were constructed and surface structures of the buildings as a result of (i) the conveying duct referred to above being located right underneath or adjacent to where the **Belcher** foundation lies, and (ii) the methods of digging/evacuation and the explosives to be used in the construction of the underground tunnel works which will no doubt perturb the natural environment but also induce destructive disturbance to the structure of the buildings with hidden damage. Point (ii) was challenged and queried in the hearing held on 9 October 2008: MTR has covered up the risk – the risk because of carrying out “炸藥爆破工程” underneath the **Belcher**

foundation; the cover-up because of the information presented by MTR in its road show at all the meetings, which vaguely indicated that “炸葯爆破工程” would be carried out only in some sections of the WIL, withholding the exact, specific locations where “炸葯爆破” would be applied until the end of 2007 were we told about that the **Belcher** mentioned in Point (i). Further, that MTR should be concerned with public not just with cost and profit.

The way these issues were treated by the representatives of MTR and those of the government agencies concerned induces our fear and fuels our anger. Our fear attributes to the dishonest attitude taken by our counterpart, and our anger is fuelled by the lies we suffered and the negligence committed by our counterpart.

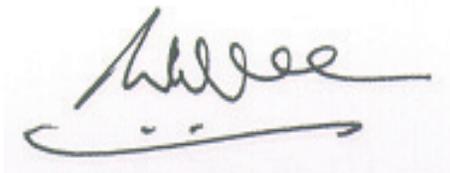
Premise 1: We had been kept in the dark about the alternative location of the duct despite our attempt to ascertain in subsequent meetings over the years since it was raised. We were always given an evasive answer until years later during the hearing conducted by the Central-Western District Council on 9 October 2008 when financial consideration was given as the determining factor that overrides the alternative location. This confirms the lip services we were given, and it amounts to concretely proved to be an act of dishonesty.

Premise 2: We were again kept in the dark about the use of explosives in conjunction with evacuation; it was unclear about the methods of digging/evacuation and the use of explosives during all the consultation sessions until the meeting held on 5 March 2008. Particularly if the duct is to locate right underneath our foundation, there is bound to be the risk of vibration emitted from the evacuation work and the explosions that will be so strong as to shake the structure of the **Belcher** buildings and cause internal as well as external damage. We asked right at this meeting whether a Risk Assessment was carried out, and if so, whether the list of risk factors included **Belcher** and if not why not. We made it quite clear what we wanted to see was the possible impact on the stability of the foundation and the structure of the buildings at **Belcher**. A senior project manager (a Mr Tang) of the MTR team responded that MTR had conducted a risk assessment of the impact by the method of using explosives in digging the tunnel. We asked to see a copy of the risk assessment report; and arrangement for a copy was promised by Mr Tang from whom we never received anything. We raised this concern at the Central-Western District Council hearing on 9 October 2008 – nothing forthcoming. In the hearing of objections to the WIL on 29 December 2008 when we met Mr Tang again after nine months, we asked for that copy of risk assessment. Having failed to produce one despite the urge from the Chair of the hearing and other panel members, Mr Tang handed to us, off session, a website and advised us to visit it for further information. To our disappointment and anger, the information provided at the website is an Environmental Impact Assessment report about the possible effect on air quality, landscape, but NOT physical safety of the surrounding, particularly residential buildings in the surrounding areas along the WIL. This demonstrates clearly an intent of deceit at the operational level and negligence of MTR as a whole.

Conclusion: On this basis, we ask the Subcommittee to consider and ensure that

- (i) the duct be relocated as we suggested to the slight slope next to Ricci Hall straight down to Sai Cheung Street (西祥街) where the impact on safety and property should be at a minimum;
- (ii) a proper Risk Analysis in terms of structural security of the **Belcher** buildings be conducted by independent assessors;
- (iii) the potential impact on the structure works of the buildings of Belcher due to the tunnel work including the digging work and the explosives used be included in the list of parametric values to compute the exposure in the risk analysis; and
- (iv) only those methods of evacuation and explosives which are tolerable under a mutually acceptable exposure derived from the analysis will be applied.

On behalf of my fellow **Belcher** owners and residents, particularly 李邵海琪女士, I wish to thank the Subcommittee in anticipation for hearing our case and for any follow-up action for our concern.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wanbil Lee', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Wanbil Lee

Action Group for the Pursuit of MTR in the Western District (Advisor)