

The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review of the Government's actions on conserving monuments, graded buildings and other historic buildings.

2. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses to its enquiries.

3. According to paragraph 4.5 of the Director of Audit's Report ("Audit Report"), whilst most of the 57 Government monuments and 203 graded buildings had been put into gainful use by the responsible bureaux or departments ("B/Ds"), 10 Government graded buildings had not been allocated to any B/Ds. The Committee enquired:

- why the 10 unallocated Government graded buildings had been left unattended for a long period of time and, owing to the lack of proper maintenance, some had become dilapidated; and
- what actions had been/would be taken to ensure that all unallocated Government buildings were properly maintained and gainfully used.

4. The **Secretary for Development** explained in his letter of 5 June 2013 (in *Appendix 5*) that:

- the 10 Government graded buildings were located on unallocated land with no user identified; and
- earlier this year, the Development Bureau ("DEVB") had reviewed the management and maintenance responsibilities of the 10 unallocated Government graded buildings with the relevant departments. The relevant departments had been requested to carry out the maintenance works, which were now still in progress. Whilst the relevant B/Ds would put in concerted efforts to identify gainful uses for these buildings, it should be noted that such uses might not be readily identified in view of the inherent site constraints.

5. According to paragraph 5.21 of the Audit Report, when prioritizing the maintenance works for the monuments, the Antiquities and Monuments Office ("AMO") had adopted a pragmatic approach by firstly addressing the most urgent cases, followed by the relatively less urgent ones (such as those not posing safety

risks). In this connection, the Committee enquired about the criteria adopted by the AMO in prioritizing the maintenance works for monuments and graded buildings.

6. The **Secretary for Development** replied in the same letter that:

- owners of privately-owned monuments were responsible for their maintenance. The owners could seek assistance from the AMO to carry out maintenance works for their monuments if necessary. Based on the requirements identified through inspections, the AMO would prioritize maintenance works for privately-owned monuments according to the following criteria:
 - (a) urgency (e.g. public safety concerns);
 - (b) condition of the monuments;
 - (c) promotion of heritage tourism (e.g. monuments along heritage trails); and
 - (d) cost of the works; and
- for Government-owned monuments and graded buildings that were in use by different departments, they would be maintained by the respective departments and their works agents.

7. In view of the shortage of construction workers in the labour market, the Committee enquired whether the AMO had encountered difficulties in carrying out the maintenance works for monuments and graded buildings and whether there had been cases of delays in completing such maintenance works.

8. The **Secretary for Development** replied that the AMO had not encountered difficulties in carrying out maintenance works for monuments, nor had such maintenance works been delayed, due to the shortage of construction workers.

9. Having regard to Audit's recommendation that the DEVB should make reference to overseas practices on heritage conservation, the Committee enquired whether consideration would be given to drawing experience from Macao on using

conservation of monuments and historic buildings to complement its work in promoting tourism in Macao.

10. The **Secretary for Development** responded in his letter that the DEVB had taken into account the tourism aspect in its heritage conservation work. For examples, the DEVB had:

- organized the heritage tourism expo to showcase our rich built heritage throughout our territory, Beijing and Macao;
- published a booklet "Notes of a Heritage Visitor" introducing six tour routes which had been distributed free of charge and uploaded onto their website (<http://www.heritage.gov.hk/en/doc/heritageBookletEng.pdf>); and
- selected suitable historic buildings for public access and guided tours under the Heritage Fiesta.

The DEVB would consider whether and how their work could be further enhanced on this aspect.

11. The Committee notes the above replies of the Secretary for Development and wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit.