



**HONG KONG REGIONAL HELIPORT
WORKING GROUP**

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Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Chairman
Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services

Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Chairman
Legislative Council Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Legislative Council
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Chairmen,

The provision of a scheduled airport at the HKCEC and the draft Wanchai North OZP

On 28th February 2005 the Joint Panels on Economic Services and Planning, Lands and Works passed a motion to “*urge the government to expedite the provision of a permanent commercial heliport and associated facilities in the central business district (“CBD”) ... and to allow the heliport at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”) to accommodate both commercial uses by helicopter operators and government uses*”.

In light of that Motion, government agreed to permit the sharing of the heliport at HKCEC with commercial interests. In complying with the Motion, it however also added a restriction to give GFS priority at all times and did not agree to consider enlarging the heliport from its earlier planned size of 2,675m² comprising 2-pads. The shared-use heliport at Fenwick Pier that was closed in 2003 had five pads. The restriction on the use of the heliport and government’s refusal to consider expanding its size we believe does not properly reflect either the intention or the spirit of the Joint Panel Motion.

Inadequate capacity for meaningful shared-use

In a paper to the Panel of Economic Affairs in December 2004, government proposed a commercial heliport in Sheung Wan of initially 4,400 m² with the potential of expanding to 7,400 m². Government justified these areas by stating that “*Between 2001 and 2003, the number of annual domestic flights increased by 126% from 4,790 movements to 10,831 movements. The growth was mainly driven by the demand for*

sightseeing flights and business charters which took up about 80% of the total domestic helicopter movements in 2003. According to the consultancy, the domestic helicopter services is estimated to grow by an average of 6.3% per year between now and 2020." Clearly, to provide a heliport having a size of only 2,675 m2 not only falls far short of government's own 2004 estimate of the minimum size requirements but also ignores the implications of its own forecast of an average of 6.3% year on year growth up to 2020 in helicopter movements.

I would like to take the opportunity in this letter to brief you on the various initiatives we have undertaken to address a number of public misconceptions about the operation of helicopters in Hong Kong.

Noise – To address the public's concern of the noise impact of the proposed heliport, our Working Group has liaised closely with a number of parties including in particular the Wan Chai District Council over the last eighteen months. In September 2005, we commissioned Mott Connell Limited to conduct an independent helicopter noise test. The findings confirm that the noise generated by the proposed heliport is hardly distinguishable from the ambient noise in the Wan Chai district which stands at 85 to 90 decibels. In addition, at the request of the Wan Chai District Council, we conducted a further noise test and trial flights in February 2007. As a result, at the 15th May meeting of the Wan Chai District Council Sub-Committee for Planning, Transport and Environmental Protection Committee, all councilors, including the Council Chairman, supported the use of the heliport by commercial interests. This is a 180 deg. swing from their position two years ago.

Public Involvement – To reach out to the community, the WG participated actively in the Wan Chai Festival in January 2007 where it displayed a concept model of the proposed 4-pad heliport, involving absolutely NO reclamation. On the same occasion, the WG carried out an opinion survey through a questionnaire which indicated that over 80% of the respondents favoured the WG's proposal. Both the exhibition and the questionnaire survey were repeated from 18th April through 5th June 2007 at the World Trade Centre in Causeway Bay, the Peak Tower, Pacific Place in Admiralty, Alexandra House in Central and Festival Walk in Kowloon. In excess of 20,000 visitors have viewed the model and some 650 questionnaires were returned to us. Overall, 70% of the respondents supported the WG's proposal to develop a heliport at the HKCEC. The Harbour Enhancement's own survey indicated that twice as many respondents favoured the proposed heliport than were against it. In addition, the WG has received many letters of support from the commercial and academic sectors in Hong Kong. The evolving understanding and support in the community is encouraging.

On 2nd May this year, in response to a question for a Legislator, the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Stephen Ip, advised that the heliport at Macau Ferry Terminal ("MFT") alone would satisfy the demands of the helicopter industry and that it would be expanded to meet forecast growth for cross-boundary helicopter services. His reply indicates a flawed policy in that Civil Aviation Department's

regulations do not permit single-engine helicopters to use elevated helipads and as a result, single-engine helicopters are banned from using MFT. Further, it is important to note that 85% of the world's helicopter fleet consists of single-engine helicopters.

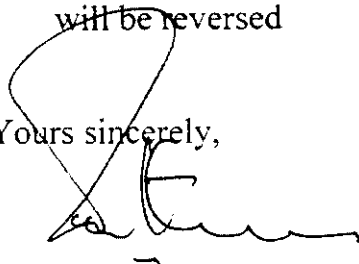
The omission by the government to plan for adequate facilities for single-engine helicopters runs contrary to trends in other leading world cities where additional facilities are being provided to meet increasing demand.

The government refers to the proposed heliport development at Kai Tak as an answer to the industry's request. In this regard the WG have informed government that Kai Tak is not in the CBD and its target completion date in 2015 is too distant to be helpful for developments of the industry and Hong Kong's connectivity to the PRD. There is also no guarantee that it will be included in the final OZP for Kai Tak.

Way Forward

1. The draft Wan Chai North OZP is currently working its way through the plan-making process. This draft includes no provision for expansion of the HKCEC heliport. Our Working Group has pressed government in vain to make provision for an additional area of 2,225 m² that is immediately adjacent to the heliport and currently designated as "open space".
2. Unless provision for the further expansion of this heliport can be introduced into the OZP at this critical moment, it will be virtually impossible to change the zoning for this area in the future and a vital piece of transport infrastructure will be lost forever. It goes without saying that if this happened, a permanent heliport in the CBD that is both too small for domestic demand and is incapable of meeting Hong Kong's future economic development will be very much to the detriment of Hong Kong.
3. A motion at this time by the Joint Panels directing the administration to change the draft OZP to allow for future expansion as and when the economic circumstances justify is seen to be now the only way that the current situation will be reversed

Yours sincerely,



R. J. F. Brothers
Chairman
Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group