

Civil Society Declaration on Queen's Pier

The preservation of Queen's Pier has come to a critical point. Despite widespread concerns from civil society and the Legislative Council, HKSAR Government is still reluctant to commit to preserving the Queen's Pier for the sake of cultural heritage. Its recent focus on the technical issues of cost and construction details has been an attempt to divert public attention from the long-standing failure of its heritage conservation policy. Careful examinations by professional bodies and government representatives have confirmed that there are no insurmountable technical hurdles in the conservation of Queen's Pier.

Queen's Pier is a core part of the Star Ferry, Edinburgh Place and the City Hall complex, which together constitute a significant and integrated historical site of Hong Kong. Although the function of Queen's Pier may have to change as a result of the unfortunate earlier decision to proceed with the Central reclamation, the Government's responsibility to preserve Queen's Pier in accordance with international best practice has not diminished.

The HKSAR Government has embraced the concept of sustainable development as its development strategy since 1999. It must therefore shoulder its undeniable responsibility for heritage conservation. However, the Government has repeatedly missed opportunities to formulate the most desirable conservation plans for the Star Ferry and the Queen's Pier during the past few years. These mistakes should not be used as excuses for making further mistakes, or for transferring the costs of policy failure to the general public.

- ★ **A lapse of five years: The assessment of cultural value still unavailable**
The Government should have conducted an assessment of cultural value for the Star Ferry and the Queen's Pier when the Antiquities Advisory Board discussed the issue of Central reclamation in 2002. Yet no assessment report has been made available up to this date.
- ★ **Three years slipped away: The alignment of P2 Road still up in the air**
The Government neglected the need for Queen's Pier conservation when it gazetted the alignment of P2 Road in 2004. It has missed the opportunity to rectify the mistake and re-gazette a new alignment over the last three years.
- ★ **A delay of twenty months: Design review of the Central Reclamation has yet to commence**
The Town Planning Board instructed the Planning Department to conduct an urban design review of the Central reclamation area in August 2005. The review has not yet to begin. This procrastination has denied the public the opportunities to search for an appropriate design to facilitate conservation of the whole historical complex including Star Ferry, Queen's Pier, Edinburgh Place and City Hall.

Over the years the Government has avoided its responsibility in formulating a comprehensive set of heritage conservation policies. Now it is only right that when devising the conservation plan for Queen's Pier, it should adhere to the "**Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China**" (the "**China Principles**") adopted by the Central Government in 2000. These principles are the result of international collaboration encapsulated in the Venice Charter (1964) and Burra Charter (1979, revised 1999) of the Australia section, International Council on Monuments & Sites ("ICOMOS"). The "China Principles" thus represent the prevailing international best practice, and the four articles below are of particular relevance to the conservation of Queen's Pier:

Article 18 **Conservation must be undertaken in situ.** Only in the face of uncontrollable natural threats or when a major development project of national importance is undertaken and relocation is the sole means of saving elements of a site may then be moved in their historic condition.

Article 19 **Intervention should be minimal.** Apart from routine maintenance, there should be no intervention on parts of a building or a site that are not at imminent risk of serious damage. Intervention should only be undertaken when absolutely necessary and then should be kept to a minimum.

Article 21 **Physical remains should be conserved in their historic condition without loss of evidence.** Respect for the significance of the physical remains must guide any restoration; vestiges and traces of significant events and persons must be preserved.

Article 24 **The setting of heritage site must be conserved.** Natural and cultural landscapes that form part of a site's setting contribute to its significance and should be integrated with its conservation.

In light of the above provisions, the Government is clearly in violation of the "China Principles" with proposal to chop Queen's Pier into pieces before relocation. Such a proposal is simply not acceptable to us.

In fact, the explanations provided by government representatives in various LegCo meetings and the Public Hearing on April 4, 2007, clearly showed that there is no evidence to justify that "a major development project of national importance is undertaken and relocation is the sole means of saving elements of a site" All factors considered, the Government has no ground to deviate from the unambiguous conservation requirements of the "China Principles" on the assumptions of uncertain data, uncertain delay, uncertain costs, or, worse, future projects that may never occur.

We hereby petition the HKSAR Government to adhere to the "China Principles" and to develop an effective conservation plan on the basis of the overriding principles of "**in-situ conservation, minimal intervention, preserving the current condition, and conserving heritage setting**". In order to demonstrate the Government's determination in heritage conservation, we urge the government to implement the conservation of Queen's Pier as soon as possible so as not to repeat past mistakes in the destruction of important historical assets.

Co-signatories:

Heritage Watch

Heritage Hong Kong

Community Cultural Concern

Civic Act-up

Hong Kong People's Council for Sustainable Development

SEE Network

Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour

Conservancy Association

The 30S Group

Designing Hong Kong Harbour District

Central & Western Concern Group

Society for Protection of the Harbour

Dragon Garden Charitable Trust

LANTAUPOST

People's Democracy Foundation

Local Action

Green Sense