

4 MINUTE PRESENTATION TO LEGCO PLANNING, LANDS AND WORKS PANEL

14th November 2006

Proposed Kai Tak International Regatta Centre

Mr. Chairman, Honorable members,

The proposal is to create a venue for water sports alongside the old airport runway, using the Kai Tak Approach Channel and part of the Kwun Tong typhoon shelter.

This is an important proposal and I hope that members will take the time to read it. It deserves your careful attention and understanding. The full technical details are in the paper, but in the limited time available today I would like to emphasise three things:

1. The proposal will create a 50 hectare recreational facility in the heart of Hong Kong, that can be used by thousands of people very day. It perfectly compliments the multi-purpose stadium and other sports facilities planned for the Kai Tak area and enhances the vision of creating a sports hub at Kai Tak.
2. The proposal creates a water sports facility that can host competitions up to world championship level and a wide variety of other water based activities and events.
3. The proposal puts forward a much more effective method of cleaning up the Kai Tak Approach Channel (KTAC) than the present Government proposal.

Hong Kong, and in particular East Kowloon, is very short of recreational facilities. The move to a five-day working week will substantially increase demand for recreation and for participation in organised training and competition. Land for new recreational facilities is in short supply, but Hong Kong is surrounded by water that can be used for recreation. The proposal creates a new, much needed, recreational facility conveniently located in the heart of the main urban area.

The proposed location for the regatta centre is presently an unused part of the harbour and converting it to recreational use will not interfere with other harbour uses. The water is already there and it makes sense to convert it to recreational use for the long-term benefit of the community.

What about pollution? The need to clean up the Kai Tak Approach Channel is something with which we all agree. The Government's proposal is to remove 600 metres of the old runway - 12 hectares - then cover over the gap with a concrete slab. This would be a huge and costly undertaking. Their hope is that connecting KTAC with To Kwa Wan Typhoon Shelter will improve the water quality of both areas, but will connecting two areas of the harbour that each suffer from poor water circulation improve matters?

I should like to remind members that tidal flows through the harbour have diminished due to harbour reclamation. Filling in the harbour does not increase the speed of flow. It reduces the quantity of water flowing through the harbour. Water finds the easiest path and harbour reclamation results in more water flowing round the other side of Hong Kong Island and less water flowing through the harbour. Connecting the KTAC and the typhoon shelter is not the most effective option open to us for cleaning up the KTAC.

A key feature and advantage of our proposal is the effective management of tidal flows to clean the KTAC.

The proposed regatta centre is an enclosed basin. As the tide rises, water will be admitted at the southern end. As the tide goes down, the basin will empty at the northern end. Each day some 2 million cubic meters of water will flow through the KTAC and into the typhoon shelter. It is obvious that this system will be far more effective than the Government's proposal to cut 600 meters out of the old runway. I invite members to ask the Government to commission an independent engineering study to compare the effectiveness of the two proposals.

Lastly, there is the question of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance. I have no time today to deal with this, but I would say that it would be absurd if the ordinance was invoked to prevent the very things that it was set up to achieve; that is the preservation of the harbour for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Hong Kong.

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