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Panel on Economic Development
Meeting on 25 February 2008

**Background brief on the proposed shared-use of the
Government helipad at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre
with commercial operators**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the proposed shared-use of the Government helipad at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) with commercial operators, and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo Members) on the subject.

Need for a permanent domestic heliport

2. Domestic helicopter services comprise mainly local sightseeing flights, business charters, and special-purpose flights for airlifting, aerial surveying and photography. Such services have recorded substantial growth in recent years. According to the projection of the consultancy commissioned by the Administration in 2001, the domestic helicopter services market is estimated to grow by an average of 6.3% per year up to 2020.¹ However, there is no permanent heliport for commercial services in the urban area since the closure of the Central Heliport in Admiralty in 2004. Moreover, it is necessary to relocate the government helipad there. Therefore, the Government considers that there is an urgent need to put in place a permanent domestic heliport for long-term development of commercial helicopter services as well to cater for reprovisioning of the Central Heliport². Given the nature of the expanding market, i.e. premium

¹ The Civil Aviation Department commissioned a Consultancy Study on "Helicopter Traffic Demand and Heliport Development in Hong Kong" in April 2001. 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.

² With the closure of the Central Heliport in January 2004, a site on the West Kowloon Region was identified for temporary use as a heliport for commercial operators. However, the West Kowloon Heliport has ceased its operation after 31 December 2005. The government helipad was relocated to the former Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area since 2004.

and tourism/charter services, an easily-accessible heliport in close proximity to major hotels and business and conference facilities was considered necessary.

Site search for a permanent domestic heliport

Site on the waterfront of Sheung Wan

3. Since 1998, the Government had conducted repeated rounds of site searches to identify a suitable site for a domestic heliport. After a comprehensive site-search exercise conducted on both sides of the Harbour, the Administration had identified a suitable waterfront site near the Western Park Sports Centre in Sheung Wan.³ However, the Central and Western District Council (C&WDC) raised strong objections to the development proposal due to concerns about the adverse noise impact of helicopter operations and the proposed heliport would occupy valuable waterfront promenade for public enjoyment.

4. The helicopter industry also held the view that the proposed site in Sheung Wan was inappropriate. As an alternative, the industry requested the Government to allow commercial uses at the heliport planned outside the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC). However, concerns were raised about the possible noise and safety impact on visitors to the HKCEC and the effect on the HKCEC as a tourist attraction. At the meeting of the Panel on Economic Services (ES Panel)⁴ on 7 December 2004, some members considered that given the objections raised by major stakeholders against the proposed site in Sheung Wan, the Administration should further examine the feasibility of providing a shared heliport for the Government Flying Service (GFS) and commercial helicopter industry at the HKCEC site instead.

Planned heliport outside the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

5. The ES Panel held joint meetings with the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel)⁵ (Joint-Panel meeting) on 31 January 2005, 28 February 2005 and 25 July 2005 to discuss the related issues. The two Panels also received views from the C&WDC, Wan Chai District Council (WCDC), the commercial helicopter industry and other interested parties on the development of heliport facilities in Hong Kong. At the joint meeting on 28 February 2005, members passed a motion as follows:

³ According to the Administration, it had undertaken a comprehensive review of all available Government sites along the harbour-front stretching from Sheung Wan in the west to the eastern end of the Central Reclamation Phase III. A total of 19 sites had been identified and reviewed but no one had been found suitable either because they were occupied by irreplaceable existing uses or had been earmarked for essential future uses; or they failed to meet the safety-related requirements.

⁴ The Panel on Economic Services has been renamed as the Panel on Economic Development with effect from the 2007-08 session.

⁵ The Panel on Planning, Lands and Works has been renamed as the Panel on Development with effect from the 2007-08 session.

“That, the Panel on Economic Services and the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works urge the Government to expedite the provision of a permanent commercial heliport and associated facilities in the central business district of the Hong Kong Island, and, under the principle of no unlawful reclamation, allow the heliport at the HKCEC to accommodate both commercial uses by helicopter operators and government uses.”

6. The Government's original plan was to build a government helipad at the north-eastern corner of the HKCEC solely for the GFS to provide emergency services and other government flying services.⁶ The Administration took on board the Panels' request for the planned Government helipad at the north-eastern corner of the HKCEC to accommodate both Government and commercial uses. At the Joint-Panel meeting on 25 July 2005, the Administration introduced a proposal that, whilst Government emergency and essential flying services must have priority at all times using the Government helipad, the spare capacity of the helipad would be open to commercial uses at a charge to be determined by the Government. The proposed helipad project would not require reclamation. Members also noted a proposal put forward by the Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (HKRHWG) to develop a heliport of a much larger scale involving the use of floating pontoon adjacent to the ferry pier at the HKCEC.

7. According to the Administration, both the Government and HKRHWG presented their respective proposals to the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) Sub-committee on Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII) Review and the Islands District Council in August 2005 and the WCDC in September 2005. The Administration also sought the views of the Town Planning Board (TPB) in October 2005. Views received are set out in **Appendix I**.

8. At the Joint-Panel meeting on 24 October 2005, the Administration advised that it had revisited the design of the Government helipad at the HKCEC to allow shared use by commercial heliport operators and the Government. Under the shared-use arrangement, the Government helipad with a size of about 2 700 m² would provide a sufficient capacity to meet the forecast demand for domestic helicopter services up to 2020. The facilities were only confined to domestic helicopter service. Separate plan had been made to expand the cross-boundary heliport at Macau Ferry Terminal to cater for the growth in cross-boundary service. Members further noted that the Administration would proceed to conduct a technical feasibility study and detailed design on the proposed shared-use helipad at the HKCEC. Separately, in 2006, the Government announced that a site in the Kai Tak Development area has been

⁶ According to the Administration, the planned heliport at HKCEC would be confined to the operation of the GFS only and primarily for emergency and security purposes. To meet the emergency operational requirements of the Police, the GFS heliport must be located close to the Police Headquarter Building. It was mainly on this consideration that the HKCEC site was chosen for provision of a GFS heliport notwithstanding the various constraints.

reserved as a second cross-boundary heliport for Hong Kong to facilitate the long-term development of cross-boundary helicopter services.

Discussion by LegCo Members

9. Members have raised a number of questions at Council meetings on related issues including cross-boundary heliports in Hong Kong, cross-boundary helicopter service, as well as policy on use of proposed helipad north-east of the HKCEC. Details are hyperlinked in **Appendix II**.

10. Some members of the ES Panel expressed reservation on the proposed Government helipad at the HKCEC since the WCDC did not agree to open the heliport at the HKCEC for commercial use. Some members however expressed support for the Government's proposal to conduct a technical feasibility study and detailed design on the Government helipad at the HKCEC to accommodate both Government and commercial use. During the discussion, members had also raised a number of concerns on the proposed shared-use arrangement as follows:

- (a) While expressing support for the proposed heliport to locate in proximity to the Central Business District, relevant District Councils had raised concern about the noise problem associated with the heliport. Some Panel members called on the Administration to draw on international experience and devise appropriate noise mitigation measures to address the concern, as well as consider regulating the operating hours of the heliport.
- (b) Some Panel members were concerned about the licensing framework for the helicopter services and whether licences would be issued to new operators. Members noted the Administration's reply that in granting an Air Operator's Certificate for registered helicopters to fly for the purpose of public transport in Hong Kong, the Director-General of Civil Aviation would take into consideration the applicant's previous conduct and experience, his equipment, organization, staffing maintenance and other arrangements. The Administration also welcomed eligible operators to join the market in providing helicopter services.
- (c) On the choice of appropriate helicopters for operation in Hong Kong, some Panel members considered that apart from cost consideration, commercial operators should consider the merits of deploying twin-engine helicopters for operation as they could use roof-tops of commercial buildings in central business district for landing and taking off.

Latest development

11. The HKRHWG sent in a submission to the ES Panel in June 2007 suggesting expanding the proposed heliport at the HKCEC to cater for commercial use. According to the Administration's written response to the Panel on 9 August 2007, the TPB has endorsed the Government's helipad proposal at the HKCEC as the basis for amending the draft Wan Chai North Outline Zoning Planning (OZP) No.S/H25/1. The proposed amendments to the draft OZP was gazetted on 27 July 2007 under section 6(7) of the pre-amended Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131).

12. On the shared-use of the planned helipad in Wan Chai by commercial operators, WCDC members' latest views were divided. Some DC members expressed support for the shared-use by commercial operators provided that Government emergency helicopter service must have priority at all times and opined that the nearby residents should be consulted before the decision was made. Others were concerned about the noise nuisance to the surrounding area. The survey carried out in the Realization Stage of the Harbour-front Enhancement Review has indicated that 49% of the respondents accepted the planned government helipad at its current size as shown in the Concept Plan for Wan Chai Development Phase II. The HEC has not received many expressed views that supported the HKRHWG's expansion proposal of the helipad site.

13. The Administration will brief the Panel on Economic Development on the results of the technical feasibility study and the way forward regarding the proposed shared-use arrangements at the meeting on 25 February 2008.

References

14. A list of relevant papers with their hyperlinks is in **Appendix II**.

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Legislative Council Secretariat
22 February 2008

Outcome of the public consultation conducted in 2005

According to the Administration, the outcome of the consultation is as follows:

- (i) The Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) Sub-committee on Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII) did not support Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group's (HKRHWG) proposal as it considered that the expansive scale of the project would take away a valuable part of the Victoria Harbour. The HEC Sub-committee on WDII decided that HKRHWG's proposal should not be pursued further in the on-going consultation under the Harbour-front Enhancement Review (HER) covering Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and adjoining areas. On the other hand, the HEC Sub-committee on WDII agreed that further public views should be sought on the Government's proposal which should be included in the outline concept plan to be prepared for the next stage of the public engagement exercises under HER.
- (ii) The Island District Council considered that regardless of the location and scale of development, their primary concern was to ensure that the shared-use arrangement would not adversely affect the provision of emergency helicopter services by Government Flying Service (GFS).
- (iii) The Wan Chai District Council (WCDC) maintained that the proposed Government helipad at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) should only be used for providing GFS's services and objected to shared-use of the helipad. It passed a motion 20 September 2005 to object to the shared-use arrangement.
- (iv) The Town Planning Board noted that the proposed Government helipad was a permitted use according to the draft Wan Chai North Outline Zoning Plan. Some members expressed concerns about the possible noise and traffic implications on the neighbouring areas arising from shared-use of the helipad with commercial operators. Some members also raised questions on the rationale for selecting the HKCEC site, the capacity of the helipad in catering for commercial uses and the GFS's operation of emergency services.

(Summary from the Administration's paper on "Proposed Domestic Heliport Development" issued on 18 October 2005 (LC paper No. CB(1)84/05-06(01))

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List of relevant papers

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
Panel on Economic Services Panel (ES Panel)	17 July 2001	<p>Administration's paper on "Helicopter services in Hong Kong" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr00-01/english/panels/es/papers/a1763e03.pdf</p> <p>Submission from the Helicopters Hong Kong Ltd., (LC Paper No. CB(1)1519/00-01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr00-01/english/panels/es/papers/1519e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr00-01/english/panels/es/minutes/es170701.pdf</p>
ES Panel	23 June 2003	<p>Administration's paper on "Helicopter traffic demand and heliport development in Hong Kong" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1959/02-03(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/es/papers/es0623cb1-1959-4e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/es/minutes/es030623.pdf</p>
ES Panel	15 January 2004	<p>Administration's paper on "Expansion of heliport facilities at Macau Ferry Terminal" (LC Paper No. CB(1)742/03-04(05)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr03-04/english/panels/es/papers/es0115cb1-742-5e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr03-04/english/panels/es/minutes/es040115.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
ES Panel	7 December 2004	<p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)376/04-05(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/es1207cb1-376-4e.pdf</p> <p>Submission from Central & Western District Council (with Chinese version only) (LC Paper No. CB(1)399/04-05(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/chinese/panels/es/papers/es1207cb1-399-1c-scan.pdf</p> <p>Submission from Sir Elly Kadoorie & Sons Limited (with English version only) (LC Paper No. CB(1)416/04-05(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/es1207cb1-416-1e-scan.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/es041207.pdf</p>
ES Panel and Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Planer) (joint-meeting)	31 January 2005	<p>Submission from Hong Kong Express Airways Limited (LC Paper No. CB(1)769/04-05(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-769-1e-scan.pdf</p> <p>Submission from The Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (LC Paper No. CB(1)769/04-05(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-769-2e.pdf</p> <p>Submission from The Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (LC Paper No. CB(1)791/04-05(03)) (English version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-791-3e.pdf</p> <p>Submission from Designing Hong Kong Harbour District (LC Paper No. CB(1)769/04-05(03)) (English version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-769-3e-scan.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
		<p>Submission from Central and Western District Council (LC Paper No. CB(1)399/04-05(01)) (Chinese version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/chinese/panels/es/papers/es1207cb1-399-1c-scan.pdf</p> <p>Submission from Wan Chai District Council (LC Paper No. CB(1)791/04-05(02)) (Chinese version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/chinese/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-791-2c-scan.pdf</p> <p>Submission from Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (LC Paper No. CB(1)791/04-05(01)) (English version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-791-1e.pdf</p> <p>Submission from The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (LC Paper No. CB(1)802/04-05(01)) (English version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-802-1e-scan.pdf</p> <p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)769/04-05(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-769-4e.pdf</p> <p>Administration's supplementation information on "Movement statistics of the Government Flying Service at Central Heliport/Wanchai Temporary Heliport" (LC Paper No. CB(1)769/04-05(05)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-769-5e.pdf</p> <p>Background brief on the "Proposed development of a domestic heliport in Sheung Wan" (LC Paper No. CB(1) 770/04-05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0131cb1-770-e.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
		<p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/espl0131.pdf</p>
<p>ES Panel and PLW Panel (joint meeting)</p>	<p>28 February 2005</p>	<p>The original motion moved by Hon Howard YOUNG and the amendments moved by Hon CHAN Wai-yip, Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO, Hon CHAN Kam-lam and Hon CHOY So-yuk (updated version) (LC Paper No. CB(1)990/04-05(01) and LC Paper No. CB(1)990/04-05(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-990-1e.pdf http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-990-2e.pdf</p> <p>Procedure to be followed for handling the motion and amendments on "Development of heliport facilities in Hong Kong" (LC Paper No. CB(1)990/04-05(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-990-3e.pdf</p> <p>Administration's paper on "Proposed shared-use of the Government heliport at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre with commercial operators" (LC Paper No. CB(1)968/04-05(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-968-3e.pdf</p> <p>Letter from Hon WONG Kwok-hing (with Chinese version only) (LC Paper No. CB(1)968/04-05(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/chinese/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-968-4c-scan.pdf</p> <p>Submissions dated 18 February 2005 from Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (LC Paper No. CB(1)980/04-05(01) and LC Paper No. CB(1)980/04-05(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-980-1e.pdf http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0228cb1-980-2e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/espl0228.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
ES Panel and PLW Panel (joint meeting)	25 July 2005	<p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)2099/04-05(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0725cb1-2099-1e.pdf</p> <p>Submission from the Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (LC Paper No. CB(1)2099/04-05(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/papers/esplw0725cb1-2099-2e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/es/minutes/espl0725.pdf</p>
ES Panel and PLW Panel (joint meeting)	24 October 2005	<p>Submission from the Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (LC Paper No. CB(1)84/05-06(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/es/papers/esplw1024cb1-84-2e.pdf</p> <p>Submission from Wan Chai District Council (Chinese version only) (LC Paper No. CB(1)116/05-06(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/chinese/panels/es/papers/esplw1024cb1-116-c.pdf</p> <p>Administration's paper on "Proposed domestic heliport development" (LC Paper No. CB(1)84/05-06(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/es/papers/esplw1024cb1-84-1e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/es/papers/esplw1024cb1-84-1e.pdf</p>
Council Meeting	2 May 2007	<p>Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung raised a question on granting of tenancy agreement for operating cross-boundary heliports in Hong Kong [Hansard "page 67"] http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/counmtg/hansard/cm0502-translate-e.pdf</p>

Panel/Committee	Date	Paper
-	22 June 2007	Letter from the Hong Kong Regional Heliport Working Group (LC Paper No. CB(1)2179/06-07(01)) (English version only) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/es/papers/escb1-2179-1-e.pdf Administration's written response (LC Paper No. CB(1)2266/06-07(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/es/papers/escb1-2266-1-e.pdf
Council Meeting	11 July 2007	Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung raised a question on cross-boundary heliport [Hansard floor version, "page 96"] http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/chinese/counmtg/floor/cm0711-confirm-ec.pdf
Council Meeting	14 November 2007	Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki raised a question on policy on use of proposed helipad at north-east of Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre [Hansard not yet available] Press release http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200711/14/P200711140185_print.htm

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