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AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND
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29 January 2009

Clerk to Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Serena CHU)

Dear Ms Chu,

**Follow-up to Public Accounts Committee Report No. 48
Management of government fresh food wholesale markets**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 January 2009. Our response is as follows.

(a) Four unused market piers at Western Market

This Department consulted the Sub-committee on Harbour Plan Review of the Harbour Enhancement Committee on 24 September 2008. The Sub-committee strongly objected to demolishing the piers. The relevant meeting notes are enclosed for your reference.

On 20 November 2008, the Culture, Leisure and Social Affairs Committee of the Central and Western District Council reiterated its suggestion of developing the area of the vacant piers into leisure facilities for the enjoyment of the public. As one of the measures to beautify and revitalize the harbourfront areas as pledged by the Chief Executive in his 2008-09 Policy Address, the Development Bureau will study the possible beneficial re-use of piers which have been left idle (including the four unused piers at the Western Wholesale Food Market) but cannot be

replaced under the restriction on reclamation in Victoria Harbour, with a view for these piers to contribute to vibrancy of the waterfront. To this end, this Department stands ready to surrender the four vacant piers for other uses provided that the security, operations and pedestrian safety of the Western Wholesale Food Market and its vicinity are not compromised.

(b) Re provisioning of outdated wholesale markets

Consultation with the fruit wholesalers is ongoing. The Administration has been discussing different aspects of the relocation, including the location, mode of operation and design of the new market with the fruit wholesalers through various channels, including the Working Group on Concern for the Yau Ma Tei Fruit Market under the Yau Tsim Mong District Council. The tentative timetable submitted earlier on depicts the general procedures for public works projects. The Administration will explore whether there is any room for compressing the works timetable in due course.

Yours faithfully,



(Liu Kwei-kin)

for Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

- c.c. Director of Audit
SDEV (Attn: Miss Amy Yuen)
SFH (Attn: Mr Francis Ho)
DO(C&W)(Attn: Mrs Winnie Ho)
DO(YTM)(Attn: Mrs Vicki Kwok)

Extract from

HEC Sub-committee on Harbour Plan Review

Minutes of Twenty-fourth Meeting dated 24.9.2008

Item 6 Alternative Use of Four Vacant Piers at the Western Wholesale Food Market (Paper No. 21/2008)

- 6.1 The following representatives of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Proponent, were invited to the meeting:

Mr Chan Chi-chiu
Mr Yen Wai-hon

- 6.2 **The Proponent** made a presentation with the aid of powerpoint slides.

6.3 Members had the following comments/questions:

- (a) the piers should not be demolished because, once demolished, they could hardly be reinstated due to the requirements under PHO. Whether it was possible to strengthen the loading of the piers for other beneficial uses by reinforcing the pier structures;
- (b) information on the maintenance cost of the piers should be provided for reference. Moreover, in assessing the economic value of the piers, not only short-term cost savings, but also long-term community benefits should be considered;
- (c) given their harbour-front location, the piers would probably be of a high land value. In considering the land value of the piers, the associated opportunity cost forgone should also be assessed;
- (d) instead of demolishing the piers, the Government should estimate the cost of fixing the piers for public enjoyment and enhancing their connectivity with the adjoining harbour-front;
- (e) car parking was not a desirable use from harbour-front enhancement point of view. The stakeholders, including the private sector, should be engaged to determine the alternative beneficial uses of the piers;
- (f) the entire wholesale market site could be enhanced as an attraction point by incorporating seafood restaurants and improving public access to the waterfront. Reference could also be made to the proposals in the "Harbourfront Connectivity Study" by the Harbour Business Forum; and
- (g) a separate study funded by HEC to identify the constraints and formulate the enhancement plan for the whole site could be considered.

6.4 The Proponent responded as follows:

- (a) according to the advice of CEDD, the one-off cost of rehabilitating each pier for general use and the

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subsequent annual maintenance cost were estimated to be \$2M - \$3M and \$0.3M - \$0.4M respectively. It would not be cost-effective to lease out the piers for general commercial uses like car parking. Nonetheless, if the piers were to be retained for public enjoyment, the matter should be considered from a different perspective; and

- (b) DEVB could assist to coordinate enhancement of harbour-front sites including the subject piers.

6.5 The Chairman made the following points:

- (a) the Sub-committee did not support the removal of any under-utilised piers from the harbour-front. If the piers were no longer required by AFCD for wholesale market use, they should be returned to the Government for consideration of an appropriate harbour-front use, which could be enjoyed by members of the public with reference to HPPs; and
- (b) the suggestion of identifying individual harbour-front sites for detailed study should be further considered as it required coordination with other district review studies to be carried out under the overall Harbour Plan Review and would have resources implications.

6.6 Miss Amy Yuen said that the purpose of the submission was to follow up the Audit Report and the request of the Public Accounts Committee. The Sub-committee's concern on demolition of the piers was fully acknowledged and Members' view would be taken into account in considering the way forward.

**DEVB and
AFCD**

6.7 The Chairman thanked the Proponent for attending the meeting.