

香港特別行政區政府

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

政府總部
發展局香港添馬添美道二號
政府總部西翼十九樓Development Bureau
Government Secretariat19/F, West Wing,
Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar,
Hong Kong

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電話號碼 Tel No.: 3509 7308
傳真號碼 Fax No.: 2189 7264

26 May 2014

Clerk to Panel on Development, Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Ms Sharon CHUNG)

Dear Ms Chung,

Panel on Development
Concerns about the Archaeological Discoveries at the Works Site
of the To Kwa Wan Station of the Shatin to Central Link

At the instruction of the Chairman of the Panel on Development, the Panel Clerk sent two emails dated 11 April 2014 and 21 May 2014 to this Bureau, which have respectively enclosed a letter dated 10 April 2014 from Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai and a letter dated 20 May 2014 from Dr Hon Kwok Ka-ki, who have expressed their concerns about the archaeological discoveries at the works site of the To Kwa Wan Station of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) of the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL). In this connection, we would like to provide the following information:

There are three areas for archaeological work within the works site of the SCL's To Kwa Wan Station in the Sacred Hill area. Five stone wells were found in the first area. Since the square-shaped stone well of the Song Dynasty unearthed at the first area in the east has significant heritage value, the Government has decided to preserve it in-situ. Three out of the four round-shaped wells were structures between 1920s and 1960s. The remaining one can be dated from the late Qing Dynasty to the period of the Republic of China, but the bottom part of which may be structure of the Song Dynasty. In order to search for the cultural layer of Song-Yuan period, these wells have been

removed by the archaeologist engaged by the MTRCL after detailed recording, including photograph taking and drawing of the archaeological findings as well as making measurements for future research work. The archaeologist engaged by the MTRCL is still studying and processing the movable artefacts such as scattered ceramic sherds and coins, and the whole lot of movable artefacts will be handed over to the Central Archaeological Repository of the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO). Finds of special archaeological value will be arranged for display in suitable venues in future. Excavation in this area has reached the sterile layer at 2.3 to 4.8 metres below ground, and the archaeological work has been completed.

As regards the second area of archaeological work in the west of the To Kwa Wan Station, the only area where archaeological work has yet to be completed is the T1 Area in the southwest corner with an area of about 400 square metres. Archaeological excavation outside the T1 Area has reached the sterile layer at 2.6 to 4.5 metres below ground and has been completed. In mid-March this year, another square-shaped stone well as well as stone structures of house foundation and open drainage of the Song Dynasty were identified in the T1 Area by the archaeologist, but this stone well is not as intact as the one unearthed earlier. To order to guard against the effects of adverse weather condition, these archaeological features have been covered with tents and the soils in the surrounding areas have been protected with structural support so that the stone well together with the remnants of other stone structures can be preserved.

With the exception of the T1 Area of the second archaeological work area, the archaeological work is mainly focused on the third area, i.e. the area between the two archaeological work areas in the east and the west, as well as the areas to the west and southwest of the T1 Area. Since the relevant archaeological work has not been completed, we have not yet fully grasped the overall condition and extent of the remnants of human settlements dating back to the Song-Yuan period there. We, however, believe that when archaeological work is completed in the third quarter of this year, we can gather more data of the archaeological site for further study and analysis, so as to draw a more comprehensive and concrete conclusion regarding the extent and condition of the archaeological remains as well as their overall heritage value, and to formulate appropriate conservation proposals and measures. By then, we will first consult the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) before a more comprehensive and concrete conclusion is drawn. At this stage, the Secretary for Development has instructed the AMO to provide monthly reports to the AAB and himself on the progress of the archaeological work at the site in accordance with the existing notification mechanism, and to increase the frequency of reporting when necessary.

The site and the relics unearthed have been properly preserved under the supervision of the AMO. For areas where archaeological work has not yet been completed, except for work processes that are required for the archaeological excavation, all MTRCL works have been suspended to ensure that the relics exposed will be properly protected. The MTRCL will suspend all works within the existing archaeological work areas until the archaeological work is completed.

When considering the conservation proposals or recommendations regarding the relics unearthed or the sites of discovery, the Administration will take into full account all the relevant factors, consult the AAB and consider the advice of the AMO. From the discovery of the first stone well to the discussion of the in-situ preservation proposal for the first stone well, all the Government departments concerned have made concerted efforts to look for a win-win solution to the dual challenges of urban development and heritage conservation. In future, even or works projects that are inter-related, large-scale and complicated, the Government will make reference to previous practices to strive to conserve heritage while completing the projects in phases according to the schedule.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wong Chi-pan', is centered below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

(WONG Chi-pan)
for Secretary for Development