

For discussion on
23 July 2014

Legislative Council
Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the
West Kowloon Cultural District Project

Update on the Park Development –
Design, Use and Management

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the development of the Park of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), in terms of its design, use and management.

BACKGROUND

2. As an integral part of the 23-hectare public open space within the WKCD, the Park will provide a major green open space in the heart of the city. During the three-stage public engagement (PE) exercises from 2009 to 2011, members of the public expressed their views and aspirations towards the future Park and public open space of the WKCD, a summary of which is appended at **Annex**.

3. Located on the western part of the WKCD, the Park will feature a waterfront promenade which wraps around the entire headland area, offering spectacular views over Victoria Harbour. The Park will also house a series of arts and cultural venues including the Arts Pavilion and Freespace (with a Black Box and an Outdoor Stage). Other planned provisions of the Park include retail, dining and entertainment facilities; cycling tracks and bicycle rental points; waterfront promenade and walks; marine landing facilities (subject to compliance with the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531) and relevant Government departments' agreement); and other recreational and leisure facilities.

4. At the Joint Subcommittee meeting on 23 April 2013, Members were briefed on the progress of the Park development,

including the indicative phasing plan, arts and cultural facilities within the Park, selection of the design team, and preparation of bylaws for future management of the Park.

5. At the Joint Subcommittee meetings on 3 July 2013 and 28 May 2014, Members were further informed that the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) had committed to early delivery of the Park and adoption of a simple and functional design in a cost-effective manner, as part of the pragmatic approach to implement the WKCD project.

POSITIONING OF THE PARK

6. The Park is an imperative part of the WKCD, providing a leisurely atmosphere and relaxing space much sought after by the public. Perceived as a highlight in Foster + Partners' City Park conceptual plan, the Park also offers opportunities for all sorts of cultural happenings from open-air performances, festivals, to outdoor art installations and other activities. Taking into account views expressed during the PE exercises, WKCDA has defined a clear positioning for the WKCD Park that would set it apart and distinguish it from other public parks in Hong Kong, which mainly serve to provide recreation and leisure space for the general public. It is important that the positioning of the Park is clearly defined, in order to guide how the Park will be enjoyed by the public in future. The positioning of the Park, in the form of a vision and mission statement, is as follows –

Vision

- To create a quality green open space that would make Hong Kong proud

Mission

- A waterfront park to inspire, promote and encourage cultural pursuits for all

UPDATE OF THE PARK DESIGN

7. On 28 February 2014, WKCDA announced that a design team led by Dennis Lau & Ng Chun Man Architects & Engineers (Hong Kong) Ltd, supported by landscape architects, West 8 (Netherlands) and ACLA (Hong Kong), was chosen to design and

administer the construction of the Park in the WKCD.

8. The Park is currently in the concept design stage. By introducing a major path in the Park tentatively named “Cultural Boulevard” that joins up the Arts Pavilion (see paragraph 12), Black Box and Outdoor Stage, and a waterfront promenade that embraces a great variety of harbourfront experience, the Park will be an accessible urban oasis for relaxation and contemplation. A leisure cycling track, with good flexibility to extend within the Park will be accommodated. Over time, art installations will characterise the Park under the curatorial effort of the M+ team.

9. All arts and cultural venues and activities equipped in the Park will be integrated and embedded in a rich landscape setting. Topographic variations are imposed to invite exploration and reward visitors with unexpected views and experiences. A double edged design is proposed on the southern edge of the Park allowing visitors to enjoy the spectacular view of the Victoria Harbour at different levels. Spaces of tranquility and intimacy within the Park provide a counterpoint to the grandeur of harbour views from the promenade. All will become the amazing backdrop for cultural events, ranging from festivals and exhibitions through to large outdoor concerts without compromising simultaneous enjoyment of the Park by the public for passive or active recreation.

10. In order to deliver the Park in a cost-effective manner, the Park design team will implement the following measures in developing the Park –

- (a) Integrating topographic variation with the drainage system to minimise hard surfaces;
- (b) Matching Park site formation and M+ development programme for more economic use of excavation materials;
- (c) Adopting a high portion of soft landscape coverage;
- (d) Using innovative paving materials suitable for the purpose; and
- (e) Erecting modularised hard work installation.

11. The Park design team recommends a more organic

approach to set out the Park delivery programme. Both permanent development and interim improvement works will be proposed and well aligned in the programme throughout the development process starting from 2015, aiming to maintain partial opening and enjoyment of the Park area.

Arts Pavilion

12. After successful completion of the design competition for the Arts Pavilion in the Park, the winner, VPANG architects ltd + JET Architecture Inc + Lisa Cheung, was appointed to design and administer the construction of the Arts Pavilion. This 900-square-metre¹ Arts Pavilion will be the base for M+ before the completion of the M+ building and will be available for use by the local art community thereafter. With the revised location integrated with the design of the Park and taking into account the availability of utility provision, the Arts Pavilion is currently in the detailed design phase and the construction works are anticipated to complete in early 2016 according to WKCDA's latest assessment.

UPDATE ON USE AND MANAGEMENT

13. In parallel with developing the Park design, WKCDA has been preparing for the future operation of the Park, which includes collecting public views on the approach to be taken in the management of the Park, drafting of the Park bylaws, as well as experimenting with different possible uses, in the run-up to the opening of the Park.

Background of Park bylaws

14. Section 37(1) of the WKCDA Ordinance (WKCDAO) (Cap. 601) empowers WKCDA to make bylaws for one or more of the following purposes –

- (a) for the regulation, operation or management of arts and cultural facilities, related facilities or ancillary facilities; and
- (b) for the conduct of all persons within any premises, buildings, structures, facilities or land (including public

¹ Based on General Building Plans submitted to Buildings Department.

places) which the Authority holds or manages, whether within or outside the leased area.

15. Section 37(2)(c) of the WKCDAO provides that all bylaws made by WKCDA are subject to the approval of the Legislative Council (LegCo).

16. At present, the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade is managed by WKCDA with a set of temporary administrative house rules, which were presented to the LegCo Subcommittee on Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Public Pleasure Grounds) (Amendment of Fourth Schedule) (No. 2) Order for reference in October 2012. In this connection, WKCDA is preparing the draft bylaws in accordance with section 37(1) of the WKCDAO to cater for the opening of the future Park. The following Park management approach is set out accordingly to seek Members' views on the general framework of the bylaws.

Park management approach

17. WKCDA has worked on the general philosophy that the use of the Park should be as free and open as possible to all people in Hong Kong, but preserving the right and authority for persons authorised by WKCDA to intervene where necessary in order to ensure that activities by any one or more Park users do not excessively interfere with or disturb the use of the Park by others. At the Joint Subcommittee meeting on 23 April 2013, WKCDA stated in the relevant discussion paper that it intended to achieve the following –

- (a) to provide proper management of the Park and arts and cultural facilities within the Park, as well as dining and refreshment facilities therein, and to afford safe and convenient access by the general public;
- (b) to avoid causing inconvenience or nuisance to other park users by authorising WKCDA or its agents to manage certain conduct of visitors to the Park;
- (c) to provide for the effective use of the Park by WKCDA and other community and commercial groups and organisations to conduct concerts, exhibitions and festivals and other arts and cultural activities which may be ticketed and for the handling of lost property found in

the Park; and

- (d) to provide for proper management of car parking facilities, and for the management of cycling activities in the Park.

18. While WKCDA contemplates that the Park management will be undertaken with a light hand, it would not be sensible, prudent or in the best interests of public safety and security to have no rules of conduct in place. WKCDA has therefore attempted to structure the bylaws such that there are minimum restrictions on most activities², but where it may be necessary to restrict any activity, such activity may be done if authorised, or may be done in a designated area of the Park where they are specifically authorised by notice.

19. Similarly, as WKCDA hopes to encourage arts activities, performances and presentations by a variety of individuals and groups, some of which may require admission fees whilst others are free of charge, it needs to be able to limit audience numbers to provide safe conditions for audiences. WKCDA therefore proposes to be able to delineate restricted areas in the Park to which admission may be regulated. As activities may take place in different areas of the Park at different times, WKCDA proposes to put in place a booking or registration system for the public to hire the use of these areas with or without charges. Where a given area is to be restricted temporarily, the public will be informed in advance of the arrangement via WKCDA's website, by notices placed at the Park entrances and at the entrances to any such restricted areas, as well as through other available channels.

² For example, WKCDA preliminarily proposes that users of the Park would commit an offence and be liable to a fine if they –

- (a) obstruct, disturb, annoy or offend other users or use obscene language;
- (b) spit, urinate, defecate or do other bodily functions contrary to public decency or propriety;
- (c) obstruct an authorised person or Authority's employee or contractor in performance of their duties;
- (d) throw stones or missiles, discharge firearms, air guns, bows and arrows catapults or similar devices;
- (e) beg or solicit alms;
- (f) smoke except in designated areas;
- (g) give reasonable cause for annoyance to others after being requested to desist by an authorised person;
- (h) offer goods or services for sale without authorisation;
- (i) play ball games, use skateboards, bicycles or roller skates/blades in areas where such activities are prohibited by notice;
- (j) fly kites and model aircraft or use hot-air balloons etc.; and
- (k) climb perimeter fences, walls, posts, barriers or other structure.

Preparation of the Park bylaws

20. WKCDA and its external legal advisers have surveyed park bylaws from a number of common-law jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, as well as local bylaws of Ocean Park and facilities of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

21. Taking into account the Park management approach set out above, the draft Park bylaws is under preparation and will be revised having regard to the results of the Park survey as detailed below. WKCDA targets to table the final draft bylaws at LegCo in early 2015.

Public engagement on the use and management of the Park

22. To ensure that public views are taken into account when formulating WKCDA's approach to the drafting of the Park bylaws, an engagement exercise titled "A Park We Share – Public Survey on the Operation of the Future West Kowloon Cultural District Park" had been carried out to seek views and ideas from the public on how the Park in the WKCD can be operated and managed in new, innovative ways that would meet the aspirations of the public.

23. The survey was conducted by an independent research agency from May to June 2014, comprising an online questionnaire survey and a series of focus group discussions. The online public survey ran from 9 May to 29 June 2014, with a total of 3,302 questionnaires having been completed. Seven focus group sessions were held between 31 May and 27 June 2014. Three of the sessions involved members of the general public, and the other four involved LegCo Members, District Council members, stakeholders from cultural and creative industry sectors as well as non-governmental organisations. With 52 participants in total, these sessions provided opportunities for more in-depth discussions and exchanges, especially among stakeholders holding different views.

24. Report on the survey results is under preparation. Meanwhile, some key preliminary findings from the online survey are summarised as follows –

- (a) An overwhelming majority of the respondents reported that they wished "lying/picnicking on the lawn", "street

art” and “cycling” to be allowed in the WKCD Park, while the majority wished “bringing pets”, “skateboarding/roller-skating”, “ball games”, “water games/water guns”, “fishing” and “tree climbing” to be allowed;

- (b) About half of the respondents indicated that there should be no restrictions on “lying/picnicking on the lawn” and “street art”. More than half of the respondents suggested that “ball games”, “skateboarding/roller-skating”, “water games/water guns” and “bringing pets” should be restricted to designated areas. Less than half of the respondents indicated that “cycling”, “fishing”, “street art”, “tree climbing” and “lying/picnicking on the lawn” should be restricted to designated areas;
- (c) “Self-discipline of park users” was chosen as the most important condition to allow harmonious co-existence of different activities in the WKCD Park;
- (d) More than half of the respondents indicated that “cycling path”, “bazaar or street markets” and “food/vendor kiosk” should be restricted to designed areas; and
- (e) With regard to street performance policies, “designated hours”, “designated area” and “volume control” were considered acceptable to most of the respondents. On the other hand, about half of the respondents indicated that “requiring permit” and “booking in advance” were not acceptable. Nearly half of the respondents considered it acceptable for WKCD to assume an overall curatorial role for street performances.

25. Nearly 90% of the respondents were aged 45 or below, and more than two-third had visited the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade before.

26. During the focus group discussions, many participants expressed that the positioning of the Park was critical in informing the management model or style. Views and suggestions were also received on issues including mode of governance, arts and cultural programming in the Park, role of frontline staff, ways of attracting visitors to the Park, resolving conflicting uses, opening hours etc.. There were divergent views on allowable activities in the Park and how they should be managed. The research consultant is analysing

these views which WKCDA will take into account in drafting the Park bylaws.

Pre-opening activities and pilot scheme

27. To prepare itself and the public for the future Park, WKCDA has been making use of the existing West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade to accumulate operational experience and build up public expectation through events and pilot schemes.

28. After taking over its management in October 2012, WKCDA has continued to open the Promenade for public enjoyment. Major public events such as Freespace Fest and Mobile M+: INFLATION! have enabled the general public to become more familiar with the location of and access to the future Park site. The Promenade has now become a popular destination for outdoor activities especially for families and young people.

29. WKCDA has also experimented with different uses on the future Park site through its own programmes as well as external hirer events. More than 30 events have been held on the site since 2012, from ticketed to free events, major festivals to intimate concerts, and community events to corporate functions, attracting more than 660,000 visitors to the site so far. These events not only bring vibrancy to the site and give the public a foretaste of cultural happenings in the Park, but also provide useful references for WKCDA on future Park operation as well as venue hire.

30. Incorporating public views from a trial run in February 2014, WKCDA launched an automated bicycle rental service, SmartBike, as a pilot scheme in April 2014, which enables visitors to enjoy the stunning views of the Victoria Harbour along the cycling path.

31. Two SmartBike stations have been set up along the Promenade and a third one is planned to open in summer. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals' BiciLine Cycling Eco-Tourism Social Enterprise has been engaged by WKCDA to operate the SmartBike service, which also provides job opportunities for disadvantaged young people. The SmartBike service has been well-received by the public, with more than 4,200 users in the first two months. Over 70% of the SmartBike users are satisfied with the service according to the user survey. WKCDA will continue to evaluate and improve the service leading up to the opening of the Park.

DISCUSSION

32. Members are invited to note the progress updates on the Park's design, use and management, and provide comments on the Park management approach.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
July 2014

Views expressed about the Park and public open space during the three-stage public engagement exercise

STAGE 1 (8 October 2009 to 7 January 2010)

Park

- The general views on green space and the Park mainly include provision of sufficient seats/benches and shades.

Public open space

- Respondents generally welcome more such spaces, stressing the importance of effective management, and allowing flexibility to cater for the needs of different groups and activities.
- Commonly supported features for open space: “Green Setting and Environmental Friendliness” and “A Relaxing Atmosphere”.
- Promenade as the top public facility that the public are more likely to visit. Public views stress the important roles of the promenade – access to the harbour, cycling track along the waterfront, and as a place to watch activities staged on the harbour.

STAGE 2 (20 August to 20 November 2010)

Foster + Partners’ City Park was favoured by the people of Hong Kong, in terms of green features, the public open space and accessibility. Features relevant to the Park are set out as follows –

Exhibiting a Green Setting

- Ample trees and ample public open space.

Experiencing a Relaxing Atmosphere

- Relaxing and comfortable feel of the design.

Providing Public Open Space

- The spaciousness, facilitating outdoor cultural activities and providing a downtown place for relaxation.

STAGE 3 (30 September to 30 October 2011)

Park

- Regarding the Park, many respondents found the idea of natural forest in an urban city appealing. Some opined that it was duplicating other parks, lacking a theme, too remote, and questioned whether it would truly be a forest.

Public open space

- Promenade – there were diverse suggestions received in terms of its width, facilities along the path, and themes.
- The Avenue – (1) some found a straight Avenue mundane, (2) being too commercial, too much like Mong Kok, and (3) having insufficient greenery. There were views (4) for and against street performance in the Avenue.
- Suggestions included (1) winding roads, (2) arcades to connect one city block with another, (3) more space for shops and supporting facilities, and (4) expanding the scale of the Avenue so that decorated float parades can be held.