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Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Chairman
Panel on Development
Legislative Council
Hong Kong

**"The Development of the Hong Kong Harbourfront and the Proposed Boardwalk
underneath the Island Eastern Corridor"**

Dear Chairman and panel members,

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has long been involved in supporting the development of vibrant, active and inclusive public open space and has worked on projects with many partners over recent years (including WKCD, LCSD, and CEDD). We have also been actively engaged in many of the different consultation processes with regards to the development of the harbourfront and town planning in general.

We note that the vision for the Hong Kong Harbourfront is to create a harbour for everyone to enjoy – focusing on leisure, recreation and relaxation. As such we would request that the approach to the development and management of the harbourfront as a whole is one that considers and integrates the needs of pet owners - allowing pet access.

The plan for the Hong Kong Harbourfront is to create a connected, vibrant space one that should be available to all residents to use for a variety of activities. Residents who wish to simply walk their dogs on leash or enjoy a coffee whilst taking in the stunning harbor views accompanied by family, friends and their canine companions should have their needs catered for too. Such an inclusive and integrated approach is adopted in many world leading, metropolitan cities such as New York, London and Paris and is increasingly being adopted in Hong Kong with a notable example being the West Kowloon Cultural District. This positive approach to integrating this use of public open space and meeting the needs of dog owning residents is also reflected in the current initiative by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department to allow dog owners to use more parks – removing time restrictions and allowing them access with their dogs being kept on leash.

In 2006 we assisted with the project development and implementation of the temporary Wan Chai Waterfront Promenade which was a project supported by Wan Chai District council and developed by the CEDD and managed by the LCSD and commenced operation in April 2007.

With the area being designated as a promenade as opposed to being gazetted as a park and with the SPCA's head office being situated in close proximity we were happy to observe the how well utilised the vibrant space was with many regular visitors and how a wide range of users enjoyed

the facilities, carrying out a varied range of activities during its (unfortunately too short) existence.

On the whole the SPCA prefers an integrated approach, where owners and their dogs (on leash) can simply and easily stroll along the harbourfront – sharing the space and facilities with other users. We note that whilst “pet zones” or “off leash areas” have benefit (and it is great if they can be provided) however the provision of such is secondary to the requirement for pet owners to have general access to the harbourfront and its open space across the districts.

Research we have done over the years shows that this need for access is recognised and supported by the majority of public open space users surveyed (whether they are dog owners or not) with support levels consistently over 80%. The importance of ease of access and neighbourhood location of pet-friendly open space was also recognised as important.

To this end we request that a pet friendly approach to the whole of the Hong Kong Harbourfront public open space be adopted and the CEDD led model of the Wan Chai temporary waterfront promenade, the approach of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority and the LCSD’s new “inclusive parks” initiative be referenced.

It is also timely, as the Panel on Development meets this week, to specifically discuss the proposed Boardwalk under the Eastern Island Corridor that we raise this specific scheme and to request that an inclusive approach is adopted for the Boardwalk with pet access being allowed. This is not only important as it allows the many local residents who own dogs to access their local public open space but the Boardwalk is a key 2km long connective element of the proposed continuous 9 km stretch of promenade along the harbourfront that will run from Sai Wan Ho to Central. Preventing access will place an unnecessary barrier to pet owners accessing the different sections of the promenade and the different activity areas and zones.

The feedback from the from the different public consultation sessions over the years requested that the Boardwalk be accessible and provide a public open space that could be shared amongst various social groups and accommodate different recreational activities. Dog owners and dog walking are a social group and a recreational activity which should be integrated into the planning of the Boardwalk and accommodated.

Adopting in principle this inclusive and integrated approach to different users and their needs (allowing pet owners and their pets to access the harbourfront) would further align the harbourfront development with the vision of the Harbourfront Commission and also echo the CE’s 2018 policy address aiming to link up the waterfront and provide quality public space that all can enjoy. Moreover such an approach would also be aligned with the Administration’s and the Legislative Council’s commitment to developing animal friendly policies.

We would be delighted to help facilitate this initiative in any way that we can. Should you have any enquiries in relation to our request please do not hesitate to contact me on 2232563 or by email: fiona.woodhouse@spca.org.hk.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Woodhouse (electronically)

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cc.

Mr Lau Chun-kit, Ricky, JP Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Mr Vincent Ng, Chair Harbourfront Commission