



Animals Asia Foundation
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Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Chairman

Subcommittee to Follow Up the Issues Related to the Wang Chau Development Project
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Dear Hon CHU,

Forced abandonment of companion animals due to rehousing

It has been brought to our attention, having followed the recent news¹²³⁴ and events surrounding the proposed development of the New Territories village of Wang Chau (Wing Ning Tsuen, Fung Chi Tsuen and Yeung Uk San Tsuen), that displaced residents (approx 180 households, 400 residents) are being given the 'option' to be rehoused in Government provided public housing.

It seems the Government has not taken into consideration the many companion animals also to be affected by this development project and is effectively forcing those who need to be relocated to public housing, to abandon their animals or, become homeless if they do not accept relocation to public housing, because they cannot bring their pets.

¹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-economy/article/2183066/fanling-north-and-kwu-tung-north-development-plan>

² <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2105248/wang-chau-villagers-threaten-bloody-fight-face-eviction>

³ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/economy/article/2092719/angry-wang-chau-residents-block-village-entrances-over-sudden>

⁴ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2039980/district-council-votes-against-suspending-controversial-wang>

The current situation banning pets in public housing, has long been a controversial one⁵, with many NGO's petitioning the Government repeatedly, to review the situation⁶⁷.

'Pet ownership in public housing – especially of dogs - has been a repeated social and animal welfare concern over the past 25 years. Pet ownership (including dogs) is increasing and it is the Governments policy to increase the amount of public and subsidised housing in Hong Kong. Good town planning (including public housing estate design) takes into account modern life and aims to meet the needs of society. The fact that some of the policies and rules regulating how current tenants in public housing should behave and are treated still date from the 1960's. This issue will likely remain a hot topic in coming years with increasing rates of dog and pet ownership and changing societal needs and expectations'. SPCA, 2017⁸

Given this relocation to public housing ultimatum, the Government is in effect, not considering the needs of the Wang Chau residents, their companion animals and effectively pushing the needs of the animals of Wang Chau, onto local NGO's and animal shelter organizations, expecting (and basically forcing) them to deal with the stray and loosely owned animals left homeless from their owner's relocation.

Neglecting to consider and factor in the needs of the licensed and properly registered companion animals of the Wang Chau residents and those animals loosely owned living in the area, in the development plans, has the potential to create a dire situation for the owners of the companion animals and also the animals themselves, not to mention the increased strain on already stretched NGO's and animal organisations to 'deal' with a situation the Government has neither planned for, or is funding a solution for.

The villagers, from our understanding, are not being provided with any pet friendly relocation options enabling them to continue to care for and live with their companions, or maintain their current lifestyle⁹.

It is also concerning that in order for those who are allocated to public housing, they often need to claim mental illness or distress, to be able to keep their companion animals with them. But even then, there is always the threat of eviction looming. The social disharmony caused to individuals in this community, but also throughout Hong Kong, should be enough in itself to instigate change in policy and encourage a solution to this long standing issue with pets in public housing.

⁵ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1868983/owners-forced-abandon-pets-following-crackdown-public-housing-estates>

⁶ <https://www.sPCA.org.hk/en/about-us/media-relations/press-releases/item/1175-08-12-2015>

⁷ https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/fseh/fseh_ar/papers/fseh_ar20170221cb2-813-6-e.pdf

⁸ https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/fseh/fseh_ar/papers/fseh_ar20170221cb2-813-6-e.pdf

⁹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/2183213/farmers-evicted-under-new-town-project-can-continue>

There is absolutely a need and responsibility for pet owners to ensure their animals are properly licensed and registered, as well as ensuring they do not cause nuisance to others, so yet again it is proposed that the Government, including the housing authority dedicated time and effort into seeking solutions that include companion animals, for those who need to relocate or whom are allocated to public housing. TNR and adoption solutions should also be encouraged and supported by the Government.

The entire public housing system, has long neglected to accept and accommodate the fact that pet ownership in Hong Kong is increasing rapidly¹⁰. Repeatedly, animal welfare NGO's have suggested to the Government that in all future public housing developments, pet friendly blocks should be designated, to accommodate pet owners, enabling them to keep their pets and continue to care for them appropriately.

It is imperative that the needs of pet owners should be considered in all aspects of town planning, infrastructure development and management. Where legislation and policy positions are obstacles to supporting responsible pet ownership and may even drive significant animal welfare problems such as animal abandonment, there should be change.

The number of people wishing to own dogs is likely to follow the trend and continue to increase and when considered alongside the Long Term Housing Strategy which proposes to accommodate 60% of Hong Kong people in public housing, means it will be important to find ways to accommodate the inevitable growth of pet owners and meet their needs alongside those of non-pet owners.

Animals Asia Foundation will continue to offer assistance where possible on this issue, should the Government wish to seek further comment on this matter.

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(Electronically)

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¹⁰ <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp410.jsp?productCode=C0000034>