

For discussion on
1 April 2019

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

Update on the development of the Art Park and Freespace

PURPOSE

This paper provides an update on the development of the Art Park and Freespace in the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD).

BACKGROUND

2. The Art Park is the green heart of WKCD and features a rich variety of trees and green planting as well as open lawn spaces for performances, leisure and relaxation. The Park will also feature a waterfront promenade which wraps the entire headland area, offering spectacular views over Victoria Harbour and west to Lantau. It provides a vibrant venue for open-air performances as well as art exhibitions and other cultural events. It will also provide space for large-scale outdoor sculptures and installations curated by M+.

3. As an integral part of the 23-hectare public open space within WKCD, the Art Park will be completed in three phases. The first phase of the Park includes the south of the Nursery Park and part of the Promenade as well as the Great Lawn, which is a flexible space in the western area of the Park, capable of accommodating over 10 000 standing visitors for outdoor festivals, classical or pop concerts, and other performances. Phase 2 covers the surrounding of M+ Pavilion, the Small Lawn, the Harbourside Lawn, part of the Promenade, the Viewing Terrace where all the retail and dining facilities are located, as well as the management office and storage block of the Park. Phase 3 covers Freespace and Outdoor Stage as

well as the M+ Lawn above the interfacing car park next to M+. A phasing plan for the construction of the Art Park is at **Annex 1**.

LANDSCAPING AND FACILITIES OF THE ART PARK

4. The Art Park has green coverage of 60%, which meets the requirement stipulated in the approved Development Plan. Structural and ornamental planting emphasizing seasonal beauty, stimulation of the senses, microclimate enhancement and, most of all, leisure enjoyment is planned in the Park design. The thoughtfully landscaped grounds will contain a rich variety of trees and plants – including native woodland species, some of which will display attractive colours in different seasons; waterfront species which are salt tolerant and can be commonly found in the waterfront or areas close to the water; urban forest species that are sun tolerant and can be planted to provide shade while allowing sufficient space for pedestrian circulation and other activities, as well as a number of lawns. As at end of February 2019, over 2 000 trees were successfully planted in the Art Park. A number of trees were affected by Typhoon Mangkhut but almost all have been firmed up and recovered. A few trees were too damaged and will have to be replaced. This is being done gradually as it is subject to the availability of trees of a similar size and condition. Tree crown thinning and re-staking of trees in the Art Park has also been carried out to further improve the condition of trees affected by typhoon.

5. The Great Lawn in the Art Park has been used as an event venue starting from September 2018. We have just completed the first winter season of *Freespace Happening* and other events. The Great Lawn condition is being monitoring by the Park Contractor, reinstatement works have been carried out after events. Further work will be carried out in the months ahead. A vine planting ceremony was held in Growing Up, the temporary pavilion in the Nursery Park on 23 February 2019. This marks the start of a process to test the suitability of the Art Park site for vine growth as we investigate the possibility of installing a waterfront vineyard in WKCD. The vineyard project is at the preliminary investigation stage and follows on from similar trials of other species of trees and shrubs in the Nursery Park.

6. Alongside the green open space for public enjoyment, the Art Park integrates a range of facilities, including the M+ Pavilion and Freespace as well as food and beverage outlets and shelters. The venues in the Park will be linked by a cultural boulevard, an extension from the Avenue that runs through the heart of WKCD. Opportunities to cycle within and beyond the Park into the rest of the District will also be provided to enrich the leisure experience. The retail and dining facilities at the Viewing Terrace at the southern edge of the Park will allow visitors to enjoy spectacular views of Hong Kong Island. The interfacing carpark, next to M+ underneath the eastern part of the Park, opened to public in early 2019 and provides 209 parking spaces and 17 motorcycle spaces. There are also 20 electric vehicle charging stations at the B2 level.

7. Located within the Art Park surrounded by green public space, the M+ Pavilion, which opened in late July 2016, was the first permanent facility completed in WKCD. The M+ Pavilion currently serves as M+'s home for exhibitions in the run-up to the opening of the M+ building. After that, the Pavilion will be converted to serve as the interim home base for the Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM) while the HKPM building is under construction. In due course, it will be a space for hire allowing Hong Kong's creative communities to stage small-scale exhibitions and events and be renamed the Arts Pavilion.

8. Situated in the centre of the Art Park, Freespace is Hong Kong's new centre for contemporary performances. We invite the audience to engage with and be inspired by new artistic experiences through innovative programming across all genres. Freespace facilities include:

- **The Box**, one of the largest black box theatres in Hong Kong, provides a flexible performance space with an audience capacity of up to 450 seated or 900 standing. Accommodating longer running productions as well as productions not possible in other Hong Kong venues, The Box will set a new benchmark for artistic excellence and innovation. The Box will present ticketed performances by professional groups and hirers, both local and international.

- Two smaller workshop facilities on the first floor provide space for rehearsals and workshops. **The Room**, a multi-purpose function space with a capacity of 100, and **The Studio** will be used to enhance learning and participation activities to build audience engagement. They also will be used as creation and cultural exchange space to build capacity for Hong Kong artists and fulfil WKCD's mandate to foster a strong arts ecology in Hong Kong. Activities for audience and artist development including workshops, public discussions and work-in-progress showcases will take place in these two multi-functional spaces.
- **The Livehouse** at the main entrance of Freespace will present live music in a bar-café environment. Audience capacity is 100 seated or 150 standing. The Livehouse will become a vibrant centre for intimate live music experiences in the heart of the Art Park.

9. To provide cycling opportunities in WKCD, WKCD launched Hong Kong's first bike sharing programme, the SmartBike, in April 2014 to encourage visitors to use bicycles as a sustainable means of getting around the Nursery Park and Art Park. This service will continue and be enhanced to allow visitors access to the restaurants, cafes and shops in the Art Park as well as the harbourfront easily by riding the SmartBike. Currently, a rental point is situated next to the WKCD entrance to the north of the western end of the site and 50 bikes are available for children and adults. An improved online booking experience is being explored to include a bike reservation function. Upon enhancement of the software, the bike reservation may be made via mobile application. In addition, bike locking/ unlocking will only be provided at designated locations to avoid illegal parking. Of course, we welcome visitors to bring their own bikes with them but ask that they are looked after properly and removed at the end of the visit.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

10. The Art Park is substantially complete. Tree and shrub planting is nearing completion and the trees and shrubs are undergoing an establishment period. The first phase of the Art

Park including the south of the Nursery Park and northern part of the Promenade and the Great Lawn was completed and gradually opened in early 2018. The second phase, including the surroundings of the M+ Pavilion, the Small Lawn, the Harbourside Lawn, the southern part of approximately 300 metres of the Promenade and the Viewing Terrace where the retail and dining facilities will be located are gradually opened for public enjoyment since 8 March 2019. The final phase including Freespace and the Outdoor Stage will come into operation in mid-2019 while the M+ Lawn will be opened by end 2019. Of course, planting will be an ongoing process throughout the year as part of the regular maintenance of the site. Areas may be closed to the public to allow for this maintenance to take place. An aerial view of the Art Park is at **Annex 2**.

11. Freespace was officially topped out in July 2017 and the whole building is substantially completed. The fire safety inspection is ongoing, and it is targeted to obtain the fire certificate and occupation permit before the end of March 2019.

OPENING PLAN FOR FREESPACE AND THE ART PARK

12. Freespace will come into operation in mid-2019. It will comprise invited local and international performances, local companies and WKCD self-produced performances covering genres including dance, theatre, music, and multi-media/ cross-genre art forms.

13. Programming in The Box at Freespace includes partnership co-presentations with Edward Lam Dance Theatre, Le French May, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre among others. Lectures, discussions, workshops, work-in-progress showcases will be organised in The Room and The Studio at Freespace to facilitate artistic exchange and collaboration. The Livehouse, an intimate bar-cafe at the main entrance of Freespace, will programme long-running live music performances from all genres including indie, classical, jazz, and more. A major new *Freespace World Jazz Festival* will launch in the Autumn utilising all venues in Freespace and selected areas of the Art Park, featuring global jazz and world music luminaries as well as local jazz artists in performances, workshops, and improv jams.

14. To continue to encourage wider participation in the arts, WKCD flagship free programme *Freespace Happening* and *WE Dance* will launch their 2019-2020 season in the Art Park. Free and paid workshops, West Kowloon 101 lecture series, other audience development activities will also be programmed at Freespace and the Art Park.

STREET PERFORMANCE SCHEME

15. Street performances are an important part of a city's cultural life. WKCD has established a Street Performance Scheme (the Scheme) to encourage street entertainment that adds to the colour and life of WKCD. The Scheme allows the general public to enjoy a wide variety of performances in suitable public space within the Nursery Park and gradually within the Art Park and the District generally.

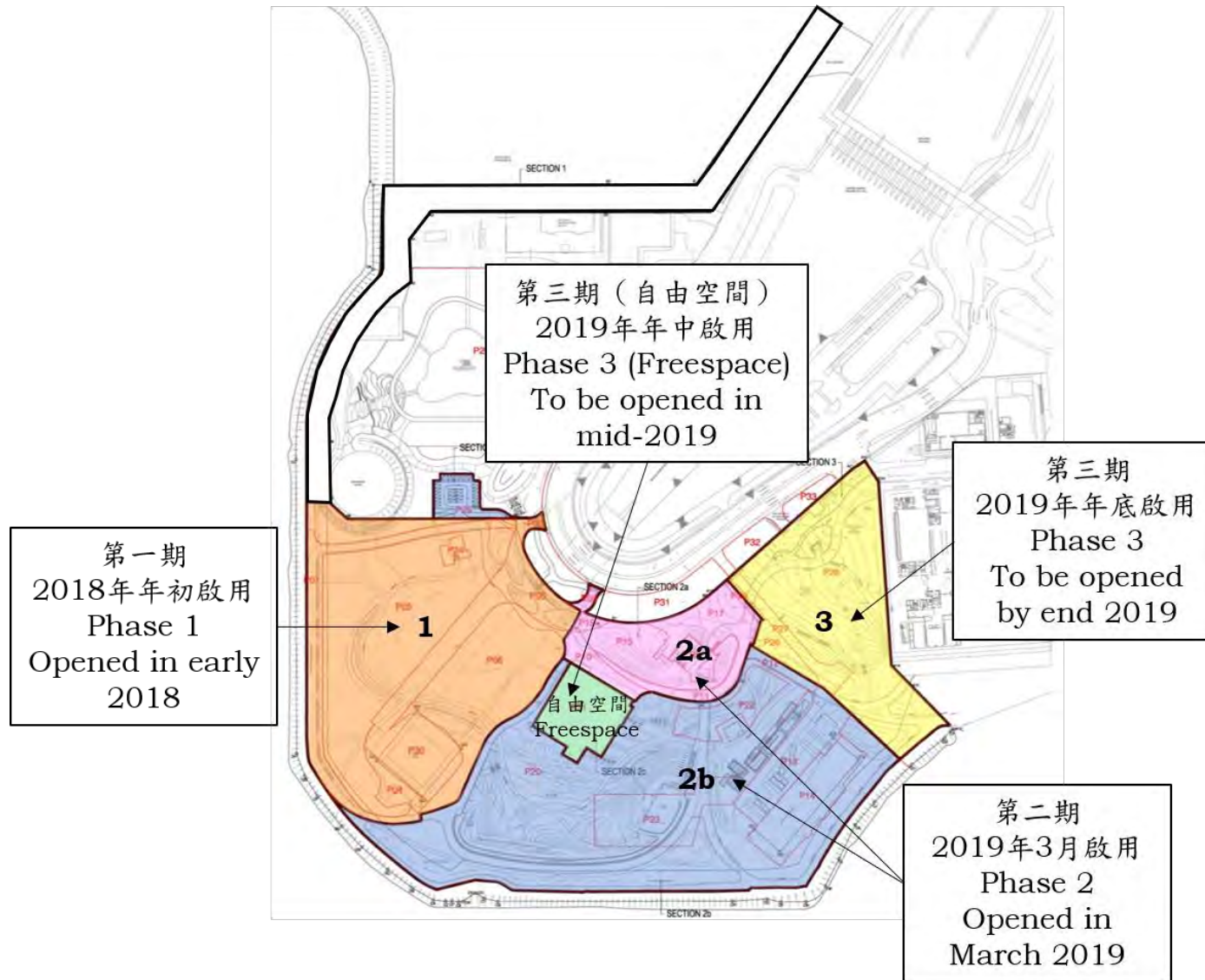
16. The Scheme was established on 1 August 2015 with a set of guidelines highlighting the importance of cooperation and mutual respect in the sharing of public space by street performers, the public and other users. According to the guidelines, all street performers in WKCD are required to hold a valid permit and comply with the regulations on volume, performance hours, performance duration and location. As at January 2019, over 500 Street Performance Permits have been issued by WKCD since the establishment of the Scheme, of which 124 are currently valid.

ADVICE SOUGHT

17. Members are invited to note the latest development of the Art Park and Freespace in WKCD.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
March 2019

附件一：藝術公園分階段發展圖
Annex 1: Phasing Plan of the Art Park



附件二：藝術公園鳥瞰圖
Annex 2: Aerial View of the Art Park

