

Legislative Council Panel on Development

Progress of work by the Sustainable Lantau Office ("SLO"), and staffing proposals of SLO, Planning Department and Railway Development Office of Highways Department for taking forward and implementation of development and conservation projects related to Lantau

Follow-up actions arising from the meeting of the Panel on Development on 23 February 2021

During the meeting of the Panel on Development on 23 February 2021, the Government was requested to provide the following information:

- (a) the latest progress of the planning and engineering study on Sunny Bay Reclamation; and
- (b) detailed justifications for the proposed creation of the supernumerary directorate Chief Town Planner (CTP) post in the Planning Department (PlanD) and the supernumerary directorate Chief Engineer (CE) post in the Railway Development Office (RDO) of the Highways Department (HyD).

2. For the matters mentioned above, having consulted the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), PlanD and HyD, the Development Bureau hereby provides a consolidated reply as follows:

(a) Planning and Engineering Study on Sunny Bay Reclamation

3. When conducting the planning and engineering study on Sunny Bay Reclamation, we will explore development proposals with different land uses, inter alia, developing a multi-purpose venue for leisure and entertainment purposes, hotels and resorts, an international motor racing circuit, a large-scale entertainment and performance complex, recreational fisheries, logistics facilities, etc. Considering the unprecedented hit at the Hong Kong's economy caused by the COVID-19 epidemic over the past year or so, profoundly affecting the travel and entertainment industries, we must exercise prudence in reviewing the priority of project implementation and seek funding approval for the related study from the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee at an appropriate time.

(b) Detailed Justifications for the Proposed Creation of Supernumerary Directorate Posts at PlanD and RDO of HyD

PlanD

4. The main duties of the supernumerary CTP post that PlanD proposes creating are to provide high-level steer to the various strategic planning tasks regarding the sustainable development of Lantau (including the planning and engineering study on the artificial islands in the Central Waters (the Study) and to dovetail the territorial development strategy and the various long-term strategic initiatives/targets of the Government which are related to land development.

5. The Study is jointly commissioned by PlanD and CEDD. The two departments are endowed with planning and engineering professionals respectively. They perform their respective functions so as to balance considerations of various aspects such as planning, environment, technology, construction, cost, etc. The same approach was adopted in the planning and engineering studies on Tung Chung New Town Extension, Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area and Fanling North/Kwu Tung North New Development Area.

6. The artificial islands in the Central Waters¹ is a strategic growth area proposed under PlanD's "Hong Kong 2030+", which includes the development of the third Core Business District (CBD3). The relevant study needs to complete the highly complex planning works for the artificial islands of 1 000 hectares, CBD3 and the supporting infrastructures within the tight timeframe of 42 months, including:

- (a) formulating planning visions, guiding principles as well as smart, green and resilient initiatives; and conducting land requirement assessment;
- (b) completing relevant technical assessments (including landscape and visual impact assessments and air ventilation assessments, etc. under the purview of PlanD) and environmental impact assessments;

¹Higher planning standards will be applied to the artificial islands so as to build a liveable city, and a vision-driven and forward-looking approach will be adopted to develop a smart, green, resilient and near carbon neutral liveable community.

- (c) formulating detailed master layout plan for CBD3, as well as a master urban design plan, landscape master plan, detailed layout plan and outline development plan for the entire artificial islands which will serve as the blueprint for the future statutory outline zoning plan; and
- (d) maintaining continuous communication with local and overseas experts in the course of the Study, conducting public consultation, addressing comments from other departments and the public, and hosting a design competition.

7. On the macro level, the planning and development of the artificial islands needs to dovetail with the territorial planning of Hong Kong. As regards the details, the study team needs to keep abreast of the latest development parameters, planning standards and the latest urban design/air ventilation requirements in order to formulate the appropriate outline development plan in a timely manner. PlanD is the dedicated department responsible for Hong Kong's strategic spatial planning. It is also responsible for formulating the planning parameters for the entire city, coordinating planning standards and overseeing air ventilation assessments, landscape and visual impact assessments and urban design. The dedicated CTP together with the PlanD's in-house planning team will provide town planning parameters and support to the study team in a more direct, detailed and effective manner, thereby enhancing the work quality and efficiency of the study team and expediting the formulation of the required outline development plan.

8. Over the past few years, without increasing any directorate posts, PlanD made the best endeavours to take forward new policies/tasks, including various land supply initiatives/projects, transitional housing, Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, "single site, multiple use" initiatives, etc. Currently the preparation work for the Study is undertaken by a CTP in addition to his other duties. The CTP is mainly responsible for the various duties set out in paragraph 11 of Enclosure 2 of the discussion paper of the Panel. He/ She has no spare resources or capacity to absorb the demanding new tasks arising from the commencement of the Study (paragraphs 5 to 9 of Enclosure 2). PlanD also considers that the 16 existing CTPs are already fully engaged in their existing heavy duties (Paragraphs 11 and 12 and Annex 3 of Enclosure 2), rendering internal redeployment impossible. Therefore, the Government considers it necessary to create a supernumerary directorate CTP post to take up the aforementioned new duties after detailed examination and consideration of the relevant manpower resources.

RDO of HyD

9. The main duty of the supernumerary CE post that RDO proposes creating is to provide technical support in the planning and implementation of the proposed priority rail links and the possible rail links for the longer term under the “Studies related to the artificial islands in the Central Waters” (Central Waters Study).

10. On the transport infrastructure front, the Central Waters Study will include (i) an area-wide transport study covering the proposed priority rail links as well as the possible rail links for longer term, connecting Hong Kong Island, the artificial islands in the Central Waters, Lantau and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun; and (ii) an engineering feasibility study of the priority rail links connecting Hong Kong Island, the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands, Northeast Lantau and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun. The rail links mentioned above are mega railway infrastructure projects with substantial engineering works. Their design and construction are highly challenging². The Government must examine each proposal meticulously, and provide professional advice and steer on the assumptions, analysis methodology and recommendations adopted by the consultants, so as to formulate a railway proposal which will be cost-effective, compatible with the planning of the artificial islands in the Central Waters, and convenient to the public.

11. In addition, RDO is conducting the “Strategic Study on Railways beyond 2030”. While the focus of this study is the railways outside the Central

²The proposed rail links have several cross harbour railway sections, which involve complicated engineering design and need to overcome different technical challenges. They will also connect to the existing and planned railways, which will encounter technical problems on interfacing works. During the course of the design process, apart from fulfilling the relevant design specifications and requirements, the consultants also require to draw up different proposals regarding the proposed rail links in respect of alignment, location, ventilation, fire escape, rescue facilities, train operation arrangements, stabling and maintenance issues, etc. They also need to compare and analyse the pros and cons of the different proposals. Estimation of the patronage of the proposed rail links is required, which will involve considerable amount of planning data, such as population and employment distributions, age distribution, travel patterns, travel purposes, etc. as well as the latest transport infrastructure, transport network, and fare level of different transport modes. Furthermore, the consultants need to analyse the financial performance, which involves estimating the fare revenue, operating expenses as well as the cost of system upgrade of the proposed priority rail links.

Waters Study with no overlap between the two studies, the outcome of the analyses on the layout of the respective proposed railway schemes under both studies will affect each other. RDO needs to carry out close coordination work to ensure that the planning data and the outcome of the analyses of both studies will be compatible. Therefore, as a dedicated department implementing railway projects, RDO requires a CE to specialise in supervising and coordinating the relevant work, providing a wide range of technical inputs to the area-wide transport study and the engineering feasibility study of the proposed priority rail links under the Central Waters Study, as well as to coordinate the proposed railway projects with the relevant existing and planned railway projects, with a view to formulating an appropriate implementation strategy with application of overall planning and integrated design concept.

12. RDO has critically examined the possibility of redeploying its five existing CEs to take up the relevant duties of the proposed CE post. However, as they are already fully engaged in their respective duties, it is operationally not practicable for them to take up additional tasks without affecting their discharge of the current duties. The duties of the five existing CEs include: –

- (a) monitoring the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to implement the Shatin to Central Link project, which is at the critical stage of construction;
- (b) overseeing the Tung Chung Line Extension, Tuen Mun South Extension and Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station) railway projects³;
- (c) supervising the consultants in conducting studies such as the “Strategic Study on Railways beyond 2030”, the “Feasibility Study on Segregating Light Rail and Other Road Users at Selected Busy Junctions”, and the study on “Monitoring and Control Strategies for New Railway Projects”, etc.;
- (d) administering the Entrustment Agreement of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) project signed between the Government and MTRCL, overseeing

³Detailed planning and design work of the three projects mentioned above commenced in 2020 and is expected to enter into the construction stage in 2023.

MTRCL in conducting the remaining works of the XRL works project and reviewing MTRCL's finalisation of the project accounts of the XRL project;

- (e) overseeing the other four new railway works projects recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (including the East Kowloon Line, North Island Line, Hung Shui Kiu Station and South Island Line (West)) and the planning and design of the Siu Ho Wan Station;
- (f) monitoring the cost of the major capital works of the South Island Line (East) and Kwun Tong Line Extension;
- (g) overseeing the various station improvement works related to railway operation proposed by MTRCL; and
- (h) examining development proposals put forward by public and private organisations near the existing and planned railway lines to duly protect the railway lines as well as providing professional advice regarding railway development on the various land use planning and housing development studies.

13. We have also critically examined the possibility of redeploying other existing CEs in HyD to take up the duties of the proposed CE post. However, they are already fully engaged in their respective duties, including management of various major highway works projects, such as the Central Kowloon Route, Widening of the Fanling Highway, Hiram's Highway Improvement, Widening of Castle Peak Road – Castle Peak Bay, Route 11 (between Yuen Long and North Lantau) project, etc. (details are provided at Annex 3 of Enclosure 3), rendering internal redeployment impossible. After detailed examination and consideration of the relevant manpower resources, the Government considers it necessary to create one directorate supernumerary CE post to handle the new tasks mentioned above.

Development Bureau
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