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5 February 2021

Clerk to Panel on Economic Development
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Shirley Chan)

Dear Ms Chan,

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2021 attaching a submission from a member of the public regarding the Proposed Way Forward of Ocean Park. Our response to the submission is set out below.

As set out in our paper submitted to the Panel on Economic Development (Paper No. CB(4)387/20-21(01)), we have explored the option of wholesale outsourcing of Ocean Park to a private operator and sounded out some potential investors. While there was private sector interest, Government expenditure would have to be involved as there was expectation that the Government would write off the two Government loans and settle all the outstanding liabilities of the Ocean Park Corporation. One investor specifically requested an upfront payment from the Government to tide over the financial difficulty likely to ensue from the pandemic. As our discussion with private investors was undertaken on a confidential basis with sensitive commercial information involved, the proposals put forth by the potential investors have already been summarised above. The Government is unable to disclose the relevant details.

As we have set out in the abovementioned paper, we believe if the Park is outsourced in its entirety to a private operator, it would likely reduce its focus and efforts in conservation and education as well as its community initiatives (e.g. concessionary admission) due to cost considerations. The opening of Water World in the summer of 2021 will also be very unlikely as it takes time to tender and negotiate the outsourcing deal. This arrangement would deviate from our previous commitment to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council of re-orienting the focus of Ocean Park towards conservation and education as well as the commitment made in the 2020 Policy Address of opening Water World in summer 2021. Such arrangement will also incur significant financial implications to the Government (including the provision of funding for the upfront payment and writing off of two Government loans with total loan balance projected to be about \$5.4 billion). We therefore do not recommend this option.

Yours sincerely,



(Anson Lai)
for Commissioner for Tourism