

For discussion on
18 January 2021

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 progress of
the West Kowloon Cultural District development

PURPOSE

1. This paper provides an update on the progress made in the hardware development of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD or the District) as well as the measures implemented by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA or the Authority) to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and in support of the community particularly the arts and cultural sector.

2. Progress on the Zone 3 developments, covering M+, the Lyric Theatre Complex (LTC), the WKCDA Tower, etc. has been reported in a separate paper (LC Paper No. CB(1) 403/20-21(03)), for discussion under another agenda item of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the WKCD project (Joint Subcommittee) meeting on 18 January 2021. Furthermore, detailed updates on developments of the cultural software, venue operations and other major initiatives will be reported to the Joint Subcommittee at future meetings.

BACKGROUND

3. Progress has been made in the past year on the hardware development in WKCD. In addition to the progressive opening of the Art Park since 2018, the commissioning of the Xiqu Centre and Freespace in 2019, the completion of the building works of M+ as reported in a separate paper, construction works for the Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM), and the Integrated Basement (IB) are underway. A schematic plan of major WKCD facilities is attached at **Annex 1**.

4. The unprecedented challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic has swept across all sectors in Hong Kong and around the globe. The Authority has made every effort to minimise the disruption to its operation and provide support to the arts and culture industry.

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

5. Notwithstanding the challenging circumstances under the COVID-19 pandemic, WKCDA has adhered to its mission and commitment to creating a vibrant arts and cultural quarter for Hong Kong. Apart from implementing stringent social distancing measures to prevent the spread of the virus and to keep our community safe, WKCDA has played a part in supporting the arts and culture industry during this difficult time. The main measures taken by the Authority are set out below:

Arts Relief Scheme 2020

6. In line with the Government's call to show solidarity with the public in times of adversity, WKCDA's senior executive team made a voluntary deduction of 10% of their monthly salary during the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 to support the local arts and cultural community affected by the pandemic. Together with the generous donation from Mr Henry Tang Ying-yen, Chairman of the WKCDA Board, the Arts Relief Scheme 2020 (the Scheme), with total funding amounting to around HK\$3 million, has been set up to provide time-limited support and relief to the arts and cultural sector.

7. The Scheme has received overwhelming response with over 360 applications from various arts disciplines and art forms, covering visual arts, cultural heritage, music, theatre, dance, xiqu, technical arts and cross-disciplinary arts. After a rigorous selection process, the Authority announced on 10 August 2020 that 13 projects would be supported by the Scheme, with a ceiling of HK\$300,000 per project.

Assistance to artistic groups and venue hirers

8. To comply with the Government's anti-pandemic and social distancing measures, the Authority has temporarily closed its performing arts venues, as well as other facilities during different periods since early 2020. Meanwhile, the Art Park remains open with enhanced public health and hygiene measures. The booking of performing arts venues and performances have been adversely affected in the past year with multiple cancellations and rebooking. The Authority has offered venue hirers maximum flexibility so that they can reschedule and rescope their bookings/events. Rate concessions and/or refund have also been arranged having regard to their individual circumstances.

9. Despite the pandemic and its unprecedented impact on WKCD leading to the intermittent venue closures and programme cancellations, the District has strived to reinvent programmes and present a variety of events and performances online. These include live performances that are permitted under licensing regulations and strict adherence to social distancing and safety and health measures, as well as digital presentation such as online talks, video series, livestreaming and recorded broadcasts, with the aim of providing audiences with access to performances and helping the performing arts practitioners to sustain their work and livelihood during the prolonged pandemic. In light of travel restrictions, the Authority has presented more collaborations with local artists, such as the all-new line-up of home-grown talents performing in Freespace Jazz Fest in November 2020, as well as two locally produced award-winning Experimental Cantonese Opera programmes, 'Wenguang Explores the Valley' and 'Farewell My Concubine' (New Adaptation) at the Xiqu Centre in October and November 2020 respectively. The Authority will continue to explore alternative arrangements to enable the public to enjoy different arts and cultural programmes during the pandemic.

Rental concession to tenants

10. Since June 2019, WKCD has granted altogether three times (total 16 months) of rental concession to the District's tenants, primarily food and beverage outlets, whose businesses have been adversely affected first by the social unrest in the second half of 2019 and then by the pandemic throughout 2020. The purpose is to

provide temporary relief to the tenants to relieve their financial burden whilst maintaining the operations of the District.

Job creation

11. Providing career opportunities to cultivate and nurture graduates and younger practitioners has always been an integral part of the mission of the Authority. This is reflective of WKCD's key objectives to foster the organic growth and development of the local cultural and creative industries. With the impending commissioning of more arts and cultural facilities such as M+ and HKPM, and the need to expand our core functions to support the organic development of the District, more job opportunities will be available to the arts and cultural industry.

12. In response to the Government's job creation measures to alleviate unemployment, WKCD has participated in the Job Creation Scheme under the second round of the Anti-Epidemic Fund (AEF) and created 50 time-limited positions. Recruitment is underway and it is expected that most of these posts will be filled in the first half of 2021. The Authority also welcomes the opportunity to enhance manpower resources in the coming years by responding to the sector-specific job creation scheme announced in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address.

13. WKCD also participated in the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) Externships 100 Scheme funded by the AEF by offering eight positions for 12 months to help nurture their graduates. These young local talents will be offered hands-on work experience in performing arts, visual arts and corporate functions to pursue their professional growth. The recruitment is underway.

Impact on construction projects

14. In order to minimise the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 among the site office and construction workers, precautionary measures have been implemented at all workplaces and sites. These include the introduction of a health declaration system, regular body temperature checking, enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the environment and of workplace facilities, work-from-home arrangements by which alternative teams attend offices

and sites on different days, and participation in the ‘Construction Industry Council COVID-19 Testing Service Scheme’ etc.

15. The spread of the coronavirus has to some extent affected the progress of the WKCD projects. For example, the pandemic has caused delays in the delivery of key construction materials and the suspension and/or restriction of the global supply chain, particularly in the first half of 2020. In the second half of 2020, the delivery of construction materials and availability of resources has largely resumed and the number of workers on site has returned to a normal level. Since June 2020, good progress has been made to recover some of the programme slippage.

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

16. From January to October 2020, a further 7.9 million man-hours of work were undertaken in respect of project construction. On average, approximately 3 500 to 4 000 staff and workers were at work on WKCD construction sites daily in 2020. The Authority has continued to achieve an exemplary site safety record for its projects. The accident frequency rate remained at a low of 0.11 reportable accidents per 100 000 man-hours from January to October 2020. From 2014 to October 2020, over 40.2 million man-hours in total have been expended on developing the District, while the overall accident frequency rate has remained at 0.13 reportable accidents per 100 000 man-hours.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Xiqu Centre

17. The Xiqu Centre, WKCD’s first performing arts venue dedicated to promoting the rich heritage of xiqu, opened in January 2019. All defect rectification works were completed in April 2020.

Art Park and Freespace

18. The hugely popular open amenity areas and waterfront trails within WKCD have been expanded: the remaining portions of the Art Park, which adjoin the western and southern sides of M+, were opened in early 2020, bringing the cumulative amount of green

space for public enjoyment to about 11 hectares. It is expected all the defect rectification work in the Art Park and Freespace will be completed within January 2021.

Hong Kong Palace Museum (HKPM)

19. The structure of the HKPM building has been substantially completed. CLP Power Hong Kong completed the transformer installation and the first stage of the cabling work in early September 2020 to facilitate energisation in November 2020. Major Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) plant and machinery including chillers, electric generators and escalators are being installed. All visual mock-ups for the building façade and interior fit out works have been completed, and bulk production of the external façade cladding and interior stonework is progressing well in Mainland China and overseas. MEP works and other Architectural Builders Works and Finishes (ABWF) are making good progress. Externally, the structure of the Art Park Ramp adjoining the south side of HKPM is anticipated to be completed in January 2021.

20. Due to the pandemic, currently progress on the HKPM building is approximately seven weeks behind schedule. Every effort is being made to catch up and the Authority remains confident that construction will be completed at the end of 2021 in accordance with the works contract with opening targeted in mid-2022.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS (PIW)

21. Collectively, PIW refers to communal and government facilities and related engineering works in WKCD such as roads, bridges, drainage, sewage, and other ancillary facilities to support the whole District. As part of the first PIW construction package, an at-grade road, **Museum Drive**, was substantially completed at the end of 2018. The road serves the Art Park and the western side of the District.

22. The second PIW construction package includes the **Austin Road Pedestrian Linkage System** connecting the Xiqu Centre

basement to MTR Austin Station. Construction started in May 2018 and all works have been substantially completed. After conducting the necessary statutory inspections and obtaining completion certificates, the target is to open this pedestrian link in the first quarter of 2021.

23. The third PIW construction package is the **Artist Square Bridge (ASB)** which comprises a lift tower structure and a footbridge connecting the MTR Kowloon Station Development and the Artist Square in WKCD. Following funding approval by the LegCo Finance Committee in March 2020, the works contract for the ASB was awarded on 20 May 2020 with a target for completion before mid-2022. The detailed design for the main footbridge and lift tower has been completed and approved by the relevant government departments. Fabrication of the steel bridge offsite in Mainland China and construction of the lift tower are on track with onsite works commencing in October 2020.

24. In September 2018, the Government entrusted WKCD to commence a **New Exit Road (NER)** design consultancy to improve the connectivity between the completed Museum Drive and the external road network to the north of the District alongside the entrance of the Western Harbour Crossing. The scheme has been agreed in principle by relevant government departments and the consultant is now carrying out the design of the NER. After completion of public consultation and road gazettal, and subject to the funding approval of the LegCo Finance Committee, it is targeted to commence construction in early 2022 for completion by 2025.

25. In March 2020, the Government entrusted the Authority to commence the design consultancy for WKCD's **marine landing facilities**. Currently, WKCD is working with the consultants to explore the feasibility of different potential locations for the proposed landing facilities. It is also expected that the to-be-launched water taxi service (tendered by the Government) will make use of these landing facilities as one of its service stops, connecting visitors in Central, Hung Hom and Kai Tak with WKCD. Currently, WKCD is working with the design consultants on the preliminary design of the landing facilities and carrying out the necessary stakeholder consultation in conjunction with the Government.

26. The Development Plan of WKCD contains proposals to provide a footbridge over Canton Road as a future possible linkage to connect WKCD with Kowloon Park (**Kowloon Park Bridge**), as well as a new above-ground connection between the China Ferry Terminal and the waterfront promenade of WKCD (**China Ferry Terminal Bridge**). The two PIW proposals will enhance the accessibility of the eastern end of WKCD including the Xiqu Centre and the Zone 2 developments. In July 2020, WKCD tendered out the Kowloon Park Bridge and China Ferry Terminal Bridge design consultancy contract. It is targeted to award the consultancy contract in early 2021.

ZONES 2A, 2B AND 2C OF THE INTEGRATED BASEMENT (IB Zone 2)

27. IB Zone 2 refers to the IB located between the Xiqu Centre to the east and the LTC to the west. IB Zone 2 will support the future Core Arts and Cultural Facilities, the Retail, Dining and Entertainment (RDE) facilities, and the Hotel/Office/Residential (HOR) developments planned for this zone. It will also house the transport infrastructure and utilities necessary for the operational readiness of the future venues and facilities. Zone 2 comprises Zone 2A, 2B and 2C with Zone 2A located within the eastern portion of Zone 2 around the High Speed Rail West Kowloon Station. The location of IB Zone 2A, 2B and 2C is attached at **Annex 2**.

28. At the LegCo Finance Committee meeting held on 20 March 2020, funding was granted for the design and site investigation works of the IB in Zones 2B and 2C and for the subsequent construction of the whole IB Zone 2. The detailed design work for the IB Zone 2A has been substantially completed. The works contract for the Foundation and Excavation and Lateral Support for the Integrated Basement/Underground Road in Zone 2A commenced in May 2020 and works are well underway at this time. The detailed design of the piling works for Zones 2B and 2C has also been substantially completed, and the tender for the piling works has been issued in the fourth quarter of 2020. Site work is planned to commence by the second quarter of 2021. The detailed design consultancy services of the IB for Zones 2B and 2C were tendered in the second quarter of 2020 and is planned to be awarded in January 2021.

ART, COMMERCE, EXHIBITIONS (ACE) DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE

29. The original ACE Project includes an exhibition centre set in a vibrant downtown art district, a hotel, and rental offices together with embedded RDE facilities. The exhibition centre element was planned to provide about 47 000m² of art, commerce and exhibitions space to accommodate the types of art fairs, exhibitions, conventions and entertainment programmes. Adjacent to the exhibition centre is a U-shaped site to provide about 81 000m² of hotel and rental offices as well as about 7 000m² of embedded RDE facilities (see **Annex 1**).

30. The Expression of Interest exercise for the ACE Project started in mid-2019 at a time of strong interest, and hence WKCDA decided to commence the tender process in April 2020 on that basis. However, due to the uncertain market economic outlook amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the response to the tender was not as positive as expected. As a prudent response to the situation and in the best interest of WKCDA and the community, WKCDA decided to withdraw the tender in August 2020. WKCDA is reviewing and assessing various options, before deciding on the best way forward.

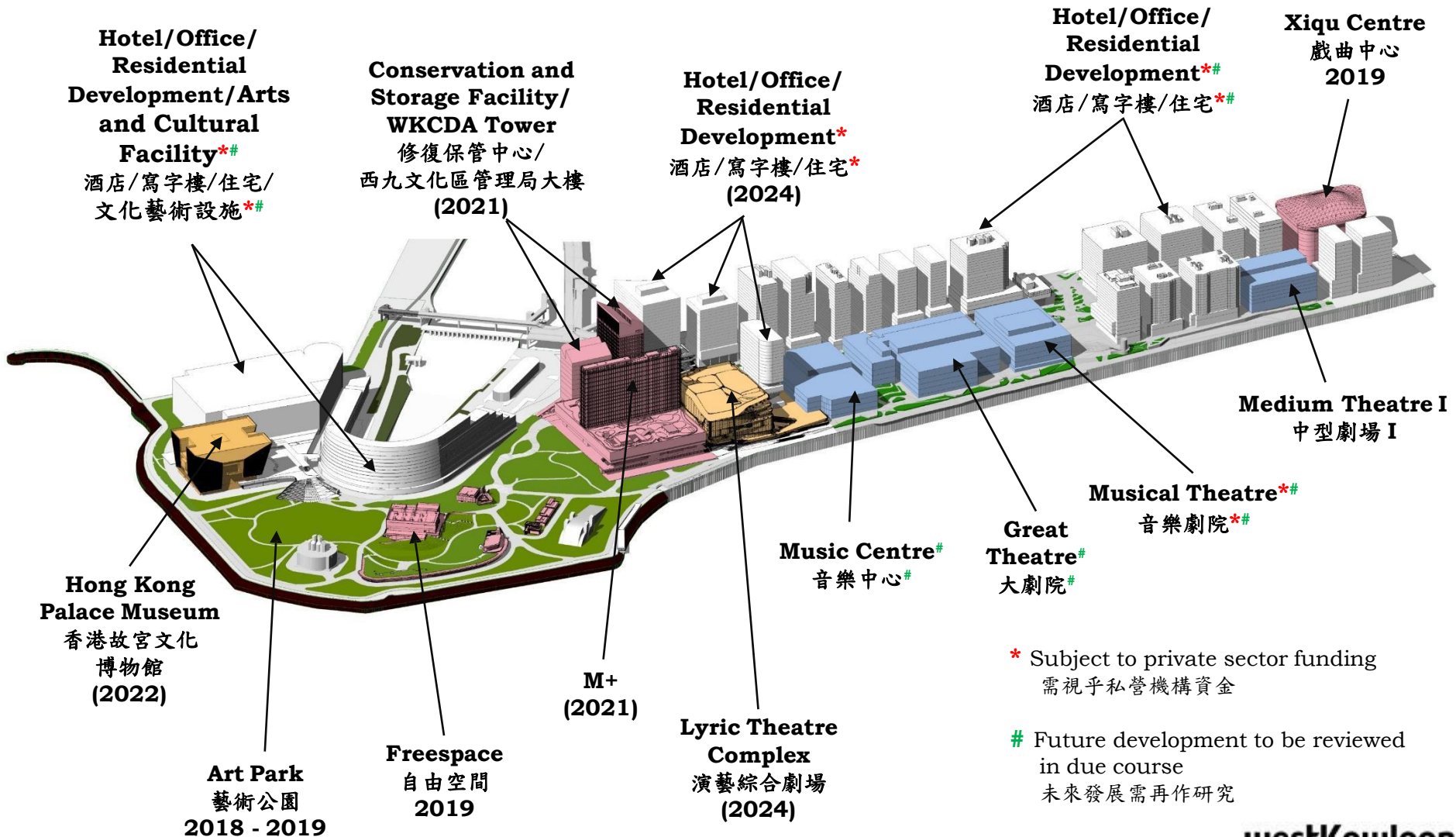
ADVICE SOUGHT

31. Members are invited to note the contents of this report.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
January 2021

Schematic Plan of Major WKCD Facilities

西九文化區主要設施示意圖



Zones 2A, 2B and 2C of Integrated Basement (IB Zone 2)

綜合地庫2A、2B和2C區 (綜合地庫2區)

