

CE unveils visionary Northern Metropolis plan in Policy Address

In her Policy Address today (October 6), titled "Building a Bright Future Together", the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, outlined a far-reaching proposal to transform northern Hong Kong into a metropolis covering about 300 square kilometres.

The Northern Metropolis would include the Yuen Long District and North District administration areas and follow the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Boundary Control Points Economic Belt from west to east, as well as the deeper hinterlands.

Mrs Lam said the large-scale urban space would become the most important area in Hong Kong that facilitates the city's development integration with Shenzhen and connection with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Noting that the Northern Metropolis will be developed as an international I&T (innovation and technology) hub, she said that upon full development, it would be home to some 2.5 million people and offer 650 000 jobs, including 150 000 in the I&T sector.

In targeting I&T, the Northern Metropolis would serve as an innovative complement to the Harbour Metropolis. Supporting Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre, the Harbour Metropolis will expand to embrace the reclaimed land of the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

"These two metropolises, spearheading their respective economic engines and complementing each other, will drive the future development of Hong Kong," Mrs Lam said.

The Northern Metropolis would be connected by a railway-centred transport system. It would include construction of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Railway linking Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and Qianhai in Shenzhen, and an extension of the planned Northern Link northwards to connect to the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen via the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop.

Land supply is critical to the Northern Metropolis' I&T plans. The Northern Metropolis Development Strategy (the Development Strategy) proposes to make optimal use of the land vacated upon relocation of the Lok Ma Chau Control Point to the new Huanggang Boundary Control Point in Shenzhen, along with some rural land and adjacent fish ponds. This, together with the original land-use plans for the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, would provide about 150 hectares of additional land for developing the San Tin Technopole.

Mrs Lam said land supply would also be critical to ensuring that the Northern Metropolis offers a "home-job balance" in the most vibrant area where urban development and major population growth of Hong Kong in the next 20 years will take place.

A number of development projects, planned or under planning, in the Northern Metropolis are expected to provide about 350,000 residential units. An additional 600 hectares of land could be developed for residential and industry use, offering up to 186,000 residential units.

Mrs Lam said that "Urban-Rural Integration and Co-existence of Development and Conservation" will distinguish the Northern Metropolis, creating an area "ideal for people to live, work and travel".

The area is blessed with a variety of habitats, including wetlands to the west, a vast area of fish ponds in the centre and, to the east, the proposed Robin's Nest Country Park, a marine park and the world-class Geopark.

The Development Strategy calls for a proactive conservation policy, the Chief Executive said, adding that about 2 000 hectares of conservation area, including the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, will be enhanced, thus achieving better conservation of wetlands in Hong Kong while creating a quality living environment for the Northern Metropolis.

She pointed out that the Government must strengthen high-level steer, promote collaboration across bureaux and departments and work closely with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to take forward relevant projects of the Development Strategy.