

LCQ1: Universal Accessibility Programme

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 27):

Question:

In August 2012, the Government introduced the Universal Accessibility Programme (the Programme) to retrofit barrier-free access facilities to public walkways, and expanded its scope in 2016. In October last year, the Government announced that it would commence a feasibility study in the first half of this year on proposals to retrofit lifts to the remaining some 120 walkways under the Programme. On retrofitting barrier-free access facilities to walkways, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the (i) names, (ii) (anticipated) works commencement dates, (iii) anticipated works completion dates and (iv) anticipated commissioning dates, of those projects under the Programme at present which are underway or have yet to commence works;

(2) of the (i) implementation timetable and (ii) latest progress of the aforesaid feasibility study;

(3) whether the Government invoked the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Cap 124) in the past decade to resume private lands for carrying out lift retrofitting projects not under the Programme; if so, of the details; and

(4) given that the Government has all along been refusing to include in the Programme those walkways which are within the areas of the Tenants Purchase Scheme estates and private housing estates on grounds that such walkways are privately owned, whether the Government will consider bearing the costs of retrofitting barrier-free access facilities to such walkways; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by Hon Wilson Or is as follows:

The Government has been installing barrier-free access facilities at public walkways (i.e. public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways maintained by the Highways Department (HyD)) (referred to as the Original Programme). Currently, 95 of the 145 items under the Original Programme have been completed. The HyD is undertaking construction works for 41 items (most

of them are anticipated to be completed for commissioning in the next one to two years) and carrying out investigation or design work for the remaining nine items (works schedules to be confirmed upon the completion of design work and public consultation). The relevant information is set out in Annex I.

The Government launched the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme in August 2012 to expand the programme to retrofit barrier-free access facilities at public walkways with a view to facilitating the access to public walkways by the public. When the Programme was announced, the Government invited members of the public to propose locations at public walkways where they considered lift retrofitting necessary. Response from the public was overwhelming and numerous proposals were suggested. Upon the invitation of the Government, the 18 District Councils (DCs) selected a total of 57 items (Note 1) for priority implementation (referred to as the Expanded Programme). Currently, 22 items under the Expanded Programme have been completed. The HyD is undertaking construction works for 33 items (most of them are anticipated to be completed for commissioning in the next one to two years) and carrying out investigation or design work for the remaining two items (works schedules to be confirmed upon the completion of design work and public consultation). The relevant information is set out in Annex II.

In response to public demand, the Government announced in the 2016 Policy Address that the ambit of the UA Programme would be further expanded to cover walkways meeting certain criteria (Note 2) and no longer be confined to public walkways. Among the public suggestions which fall within the expanded ambit of the Programme, the DCs further selected 47 items (Note 3) for implementation (referred to as the Second Phase). At present, the HyD is carrying out investigation or design work for these items with a view to commencing the construction works progressively starting from the first half of this year. The relevant information is set out in Annex III.

As the UA Programme has been widely supported by the community, the Government announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the Government would commence a feasibility study on lift retrofitting proposals at the remaining some 120 walkways across various districts under the current ambit of the Programme with a view to taking forward the feasible items expeditiously so as to benefit the elderly and people in need (referred to as the Third Phase). The HyD has been undertaking the relevant preparation work with a view to engaging consultants in the first half of 2019 to carry out investigation and design work for the lift retrofitting items under the Third Phase. If the lift retrofitting items are confirmed to be technically feasible, the HyD will subsequently commence their design work and conduct public consultation. Subject to the support of the respective DCs, the relevant constructions works are anticipated to commence progressively from 2021.

Having consulted the Lands Department, the Government did not invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Cap 124) to resume private land for carrying out any lift retrofitting project in the past decade.

To ensure the proper use of public funds and to avoid the Government taking over the responsibilities of private owners, walkways within the areas of Tenants Purchase Scheme estates and private housing estates are currently not covered under the UA Programme. Subsequent to the Government's announcement in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government is conducting a review to explore whether there is any scope for further expansion of the UA Programme. The Government will consider the relevant suggestions when reviewing the ambit of the Programme.

Note 1: Each DC selected three public walkways (locations) for priority implementation, viz. a total of 54 public walkways (locations). Among them, some public walkways (locations) involve more than one structure number (item), resulting in a total of 57 priority items.

Note 2: The following criteria have to be met and no land resumption should be involved for the walkways:

- (i) the walkways span across public roads repaired and maintained by the HyD;
- (ii) the walkways are open for public access from public roads at all times;
- (iii) the walkways are not privately owned; and
- (iv) the parties responsible for the management and maintenance of the walkways agree to such lift retrofitting proposals and are willing to co-operate with the Government during the implementation of the retrofitting works for the said lifts as well as the subsequent management and maintenance works of the lifts.

Note 3: Upon the Government's invitation, each DC has further selected not more than three existing walkways for implementation under the Second Phase and a total of 45 walkways (locations) have been selected. Among them, one of the walkway (location) involves three structure numbers (items), resulting in a total of 47 items. However, two items have been confirmed to be technically infeasible after investigation. The HyD has reported the relevant findings to the respective DCs. Therefore, investigation or design work for a total of 45 items are being carried out currently.