

LCQ12: Development of historical and heritage tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (February 3):

Question:

Earlier on, the Government decided to demolish a disused underground cistern at Bishop Hill in Sham Shui Po. When the demolition works were in progress in December last year, some residents discovered that the cistern had distinctive architectural features. Subsequently, the Water Supplies Department halted the works, and confirmed that the cistern had been completed as early as in 1904. The incident has aroused wide public concerns. Some members of the public are worried that damages will be caused to buildings with historical value due to the insufficient sensitivity of and incomprehensive co-ordination among the relevant government departments, rendering the loss of highly attractive tourism resources in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of monuments for which the Government carried out protection, restoration and maintenance works in each of the past three years, and the details of the works concerned;

(2) given that the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry, published by the Government in 2017, set a five-year implementation goal of facilitating the development of local historical and heritage, cultural and creative tourism, of the expenditure incurred by the Government on facilitating historical and heritage tourism in each year since 2017;

(3) whether it has regularly reviewed the attractiveness of the various monuments to local and overseas tourists, and made timely adjustments to the relevant publicity efforts and promotional strategies; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the further measures in place to develop and enrich historical and heritage tourism, with a view to giving tourists a more unforgettable travel experience?

Reply:

President:

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Yiu Si-wing, in consultation with the Development Bureau (DEVB), my reply is as follows:

(1) In addition to assisting in the maintenance of declared monuments through the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO), the Government also provides assistance in the form of grants to the owners of privately-owned graded

historical buildings and tenants, which are non-profit-making organisations, of government-owned declared monuments and graded historical buildings for them to carry out minor maintenance works so that the condition of these historical buildings will not deteriorate due to disrepair.

In the past three years, a total of 71 (21 in 2018, 25 in 2019 and 25 in 2020) repair and restoration projects of historic buildings (including declared monuments) were completed through the Financial Assistance for Maintenance Scheme on Built Heritage or through the AMO. The scopes of these projects broadly include repairs to roofs, structures, walls, windows and doors/gates.

(2) & (3) The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau published the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry in 2017, which sets out four development strategies, and various short-, medium- to long-term tourism initiatives and measures. The work progress and expenditures incurred on the development of local historical and heritage tourism are as follows:

The Government has been taking forward various projects of historical and heritage tourism with different themes in different districts. Amongst others, the DEVB has invited non-profit-making organisations to revitalise and reuse some distinctive government historic buildings through the "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" (Revitalisation Scheme), and open such buildings for visit by the public and visitors. For example, the Old Tai O Police Station has been revitalised into the Tai O Heritage Hotel, and the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital has been revitalised into the Jao Tsung-I Academy to promote Chinese culture.

In addition, the Government also conserves buildings with important cultural and historical value in Central through the "Conserving Central" initiative to add life and vibrancy to the area and attract visitors. Amongst them, the former Police Married Quarters on Hollywood Road has been revitalised into a creative industry landmark, PMQ, and the Central Police Station Compound (Tai Kwun) has been revitalised into the "Tai Kwun – Centre for Heritage and Arts". The two projects have become tourist attractions with historical, creative and artistic elements.

The Tourism Commission (TC) completed the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in Central and Sheung Wan in April 2018. Together with Tai Kwun which was opened in the same year, PMQ and the adjacent tourism spots, the Central and Western District has been developed into a new hub of heritage, cultural and creative tourism, offering creative and in-depth travel experience to visitors. The expenditure of the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail was about \$10 million.

In 2019, the TC launched the "Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival", which is a three-year pilot arts cum cultural, heritage and green tourism project organised in Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung. The first event was held from November 30 to December 29, 2019. During the event period, the number of visitors and participants of related activities in Yim Tin Tsai was over 22 000, whereas the number of visitors to Visitor Centre cum Exhibition Hall and participants of activities in Sai Kung Town was over 39 000. After the first event, some

of the artworks showcased have become permanent exhibits for visitors' appreciation. As for the expenditure, the Government awarded a three-year contract at a price of \$20 million to a suitable curatorial organisation through open tender in early 2019. The actual total expenses incurred will be confirmed upon the completion of the three-year project.

To promote green and heritage tourism, the TC, in collaboration with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), has been implementing a five-year project since 2018, with an annual funding of \$15 million, to enhance the tourism supporting facilities of some hiking trails within country parks which are popular and with tourism appeal. The first phase covers enhancement works at Pinewood Battery Heritage Trail along Peak Trail, including construction of boardwalk and installation of interpretation panels with QR codes to introduce in detail the history of Pinewood Battery to visitors. The enhancement works were completed in 2019. The AFCD also introduces the information of military relics within country parks on the updated "Enjoy Hiking" thematic website.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) also continuously promotes to visitors revitalised historical architectures and monuments, and introduces routes of leisure walk in different districts featuring buildings with historical value, through various channels including website, social media and Visitor Centres. In addition, the HKTB also provides subsidies to trade partners or assists them in promotion under the "Explore Hong Kong Tours" scheme, with a view to encouraging the travel trade to develop and launch more new travel products, including monument-themed itineraries.

The HKTB has launched the "Old Town Central" and "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods – Sham Shui Po" in April 2017 and September 2018 respectively to promote in-depth tours in local neighbourhoods, showcasing the historical side of Hong Kong. The expenditures of the two promotion projects were about \$6.15 million and \$12 million respectively. The HKTB will continue to promote the distinctiveness of local tourism under the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" promotional framework.

The TC and the HKTB will from time to time adjust the publicity works and promotional strategies of the projects of historical and heritage tourism, with a view to maintaining their attractiveness to visitors.

(4) The Government will continue to develop historical, cultural and heritage tourism to enrich visitors' experience in Hong Kong. The details are as follows:

Through the "Revitalisation Scheme", No. 12 School Street at Tai Hang will be revitalised into the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Heritage Centre to promote the Tai Hang fire dragon dance and traditional Hakka culture, customs and history. The project is expected to commence operation in 2021 and will become a new cultural and tourist landmark with Hong Kong characteristics.

For the various projects under the "Revitalisation Scheme", the DEVB will strengthen publicity and promotion in its dedicated heritage website (www.heritage.gov.hk/en/index.htm) and the bi-monthly heritage newsletter

"æ´»â€-@Heritage" to keep the public informed about the latest development of the projects and the Government's work in this area. In addition, the DEVB is also preparing for the "2021 Heritage Fiesta" and roving exhibitions to be held at the end of this year to promote the revitalised historic buildings under Batches I to III of the "Revitalisation Scheme" and PMQ. Besides, through the social media, Instagram, the "photo points" located at the historic buildings under Batches I to III of the "Revitalisation Scheme" will be promoted to attract more people to visit and take photos at these historic buildings. The DEVB will also distribute leaflets at different locations to introduce and promote these revitalised buildings.

The TC is partnering with the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong to take forward the project in bringing back to life the history of individual landmarks of Hong Kong by using augmented reality and creative multimedia technology through mobile application to enable visitors to understand the historical landscape and community culture of places rich in history and culture, thereby enhancing their experience in Hong Kong. The project is tentatively scheduled for launching in Tsim Sha Tsui and Central areas in the first quarter of 2021.

The TC is now preparing for the implementation of the next phase of "Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival", which is scheduled for the first quarter of 2021, and will announce the details in due course.

The TC will continue collaborating with the AFCD to enhance the facilities at Wilson Trail (Section 2), including the installation of interpretation panels to introduce the history of the military relics along the hiking trail. The enhancement works are expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2021.

Besides, the TC will upgrade the facilities of the Wong Nai Chung Gap Trail with a view to enhancing its appeal as a heritage and green tourism attraction and visitors' experience. The works are expected to commence in the fourth quarter of 2021.

In the future, the HKTB will continue to promote to visitors the revitalised monuments and historical architectures through various channels, and will enhance the development of local in-depth tours about Hong Kong's history. When planning neighbourhood promotional campaigns, the HKTB will take into account the resources, facilities and infrastructure of different districts and neighbourhoods, and maintain substantial communication with stakeholders before finalising implementation details of the campaigns.