

LCQ13: Promoting yacht tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Benson Luk and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

The Government released the Recreation & Tourism Development Strategy for Lantau – Feasibility Study as early as October 2018, which indicated that Sunny Bay, Lantau Island was considered appropriate to attract a premium market for marinas. Moreover, the Chief Executive has proposed in the 2024 Policy Address to promote yacht tourism in the expansion area of Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter, the exâ€™Lamma Quarry area and the development of the waterfront site in the vicinity of the Hung Hom Station. Subsequently, the Secretary for Development has further elaborated that the relevant development focus is to attract international yachts to Hong Kong, and encourage overseas visitors to buy yachts in Hong Kong and sail yachts directly to Hong Kong for travel. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current total number of Class IV licensed vessels (local pleasure vessels) in Hong Kong, and the locations where such vessels are mainly berthed and the number of berthing spaces available;

(2) regarding the development of international yacht tourism, of the objectives set by the Government, as well as the construction plans and operation modes of the piers, berthing spaces, island landing facilities and related tourism supporting infrastructures for use by the vessels concerned; whether the relevant implementation timetable is available at present; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the authorities have compiled statistics on the current number of international yachts entering and leaving Hong Kong and the number of inbound and outbound passenger trips concerned; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the authorities will, by drawing reference from the practices of some Southeast Asian countries, streamline and facilitate the immigration clearance procedures for international yachts, including setting up a dedicated mobile team for immigration matters to provide bookable immigration clearance services for international yachts near their berthing places; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) in the long run, whether the authorities have plans to promote the development of the yacht manufacturing business and the maintenance business of small vessels (including yachts) in Hong Kong, and promote yacht-related services such as marketing, chartering, registration, certification and insurance; whether the authorities have plans to allocate more resources to

launch plans for the development of the relevant industrial chains; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The 2024 Policy Address has set out, among others, the initiative of promoting yacht tourism at three locations, namely the expansion area of Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter, the ex-Lamma Quarry area and the waterfront site in the vicinity of the Hung Hom Station. The initiative was put forward by the Development Bureau (DEVB), mainly because we see the potential of setting up yacht clubs at these locations for increasing the supply of berths, having considered the coastal environment and the condition of the water bodies in the course of the land use related studies being undertaken for the three locations. The initiative aims to help promote yacht tourism on the one hand, and help support the development of the yacht industry on the other. We will explore the interest of the private sector in constructing and operating yacht berthing facilities at the three locations through inviting expressions of interest (EOI) in the first half of next year. As pointed out by the Hon Luk in the question, in order to build up the yacht industry chain, apart from providing more berthing facilities to address the shortage of berths, it is also important to consider whether there is any need to further improve the arrangements for yacht registration and crew licensing, immigration procedures, as well as ancillary facilities such as berths and ship repairing, which involve the work of various bureaux and departments. We will make use of next year's EOI exercises to collect the industry's views on the related ancillary facilities and improvement suggestions, and provide them to relevant bureaux and departments for their review of the relevant policies, with a view to facilitating the formulation of a more holistic yacht industrial policy in the future. For the DEVB and the departments under its purview, we would make appropriate preparation relating to land use planning and the hardware for disembarkation and shores facilities.

In consultation with the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB), the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB), the Marine Department (MD) and the Immigration Department (ImmD), our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) According to the MD, as at the end of October 2024, there are 12 330 Class IV vessels (i.e. pleasure vessels) with valid operating license in Hong Kong. Their berthing spaces are primarily provided in typhoon shelters, sheltered anchorages, private mooring areas and privately operated private yacht/boat clubs. There are currently 14 typhoon shelters and 18 sheltered anchorages located in different parts of Hong Kong waters, providing around 422 hectares (ha) and 182 ha of sheltered space respectively for use by vessels of all types. At the same time, there are 43 private mooring areas and 11 private yacht/boat clubs within Hong Kong waters. Besides, according to marine legislation, under normal weather conditions, except for certain areas of waters where anchoring is prohibited, local vessels (including pleasure vessels) may be anchored at any safe and suitable locations within

Hong Kong waters provided that no obstruction is caused to marine traffic. No permission from the MD is required.

(2) As mentioned above, we will make good use of the EOI exercises to be conducted in the first half of next year to collect the industry's views on the yacht industrial policy which will be provided to relevant bureaux and departments for their review of the relevant policies, with a view to facilitating the formulation of measures to support the development of the industry.

It is worth mentioning that, apart from the three locations proposed by the DEVB, the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) is considering developing a yacht bay with ancillary facilities in the sea area near the Airport Island to open up the sea-air passenger market and to promote high-end commercial, tourist and leisure activities. The AAHK will announce the development details of the project and other development plans regarding the expanded Airport City in the first half of next year.

(3) According to the MD and the ImmD, in the period between 2021 and the end of October 2024, the annual figures of vessel arrivals of non-locally registered visiting pleasure vessels and the associated number of arriving and departing passengers are tabulated below:

Year	Non-locally registered visiting pleasure vessels (Note 1)	
	Number of vessel arrivals	Number of related arriving and departing passengers
2021	37	106
2022	42	277
2023	80	711
2024 (as at the end of October)	58 (Note 2)	680

Note 1: These figures have yet to capture the number of visitors arriving Hong Kong through locally registered pleasure vessels.

Note 2: This is a preliminary figure. The final figure will be published in the annual Port of Hong Kong Statistical Tables.

(4) At present, visiting pleasure vessels (including those from the Mainland) entering Hong Kong waters are required to complete port formalities with the MD, the ImmD, the Department of Health (DH) and the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department (for cases where cargo clearance and passenger clearance are required). If a vessel intends to cruise in the waters of Hong Kong for leisure purposes, conduct repairs, participate in a racing event in the waters of Hong Kong or change its berthing location, it would have to file an application to the Marine Offices for permission to navigate in the waters of Hong Kong.

Generally speaking, visiting yachts would appoint a local agent to handle all the port formalities in Hong Kong. The MD has set up an electronic business system to provide one-stop service for visiting pleasure vessels, allowing them to submit the required documents to the MD, the ImmD and the DH through the online system in an efficient and convenient manner. At the same time, visiting pleasure vessels are currently not required to be anchored at an approved immigration anchorage whilst awaiting immigration clearance. The master of the visiting pleasure vessel, or its agent, is only required to complete the immigration procedures at the Harbour Control Section of the ImmD (which operates 24 hours a day) located at the Central Government Pier within 24 hours after the arrival of the vessel in and before the intended departure the Hong Kong waters. The aforementioned arrangement, which is not applicable to other visiting vessels, aims at simplifying and facilitating the immigration procedures for visiting pleasure vessels.

(5) Currently, the MD will issue certificate of ownership and operating license to local vessels (including yachts) in accordance with maritime legislation. As for ship repairing, according to the TLB, the shipyards in Hong Kong are currently able to meet the demand of ship repairing services including those of yachts. Besides, according to the prevailing requirement, when filing an application for permission to navigate a visiting pleasure vessel in the waters of Hong Kong, the applicant shall produce a valid third party risks insurance policy of not less than HK\$5,000,000 coverage for operation of his/her vessel within the waters of Hong Kong. According to the FSTB, third party risks insurance and other yacht-related insurance products that comply with law are currently available in the market. The Government has provided a 50 per cent profits tax rate concession for marine insurance, reinsurance and insurance brokerage businesses since March 2021.