

## LCQ2: Making good use of government-owned monuments to develop tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (June 28):

Question:

There are views pointing out that the 1 444 historic buildings in Hong Kong, which have been graded by the Antiquities Advisory Board, are precious tourism resources, but quite a number of government-owned monuments are not being put to good use at present, and some of them are even fenced off. Taking the facade of the Old Mental Hospital at High Street as an example, this monument is of monumental Early-Baroque architectural style featuring a wide arched verandah as well as rusticated granite blocks at the lower level, but it has been locked up. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of graded historic buildings owned by the Government and, among them, the number of those which can be open for public visit; the criteria based on which the Government decides to open such historic buildings for public visit;

(2) of the reasons why the verandah at the facade is not open for public visit; whether the authorities will consider opening up the verandah to make it another landmark in the Central and Western District that attracts "check-ins" on social media; and

(3) apart from the existing Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme, whether the authorities have plans to comprehensively examine the tourism potential of government-owned monuments from the perspective of tourism development values, with a view to opening for public visit more monuments which are of viewing and historical values, conveniently accessible by transport and easy to manage, thereby promoting heritage, culture and history tourism in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The development of heritage tourism involves different purviews including policies on tourism as well as the usage and promotion of declared monuments and historic buildings, etc. After consultation with the Cultural, Sports and Tourism Bureau and other relevant departments, the reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) As at June 2023, a total of 276 government-owned historic buildings/structures have been accorded Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3 status, while 70 declared monuments are under government ownership.

Among these 340 plus government-owned historic buildings, over 200 are open to the public through appropriate arrangements having regard to their actual circumstances, including museums and exhibition spaces, and the historic buildings operated by non-profit-making organisations under the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme of the Development Bureau.

Some buildings open to the public are currently used as government department operation, for example, the Former Kowloon British School in Tsim Sha Tsui now houses the Antiquities and Monuments Office; the Former Peak School now houses the Victoria Peak Fire Station; and the Hong Kong Observatory in Tsim Sha Tsui now houses its headquarters, and public visit are arranged through special arrangements such as advance appointment or open days in order to strike a balance between service provision and public access.

Besides, many historic buildings, including military relics such as batteries, are located in country parks and rural areas. Most of them can be appreciated by the public, with the exception of certain items which have to be fenced off due to building structure or public safety considerations.

For the remaining government-owned historic buildings that are not open to the public, security and privacy are some of the considerations. Examples include the Green Island Lighthouse in Central and Western District with maritime security and safety concerns; Tai Po Lookout now leased out for private residential use; and the Headquarters Building of the Ex-Royal Air Force Station (Kai Tak) in Kwun Tong which is now a family crisis support centre.

We will continue to encourage government departments to open their historic buildings for public visit and enjoyment wherever practicable, and provide them with appropriate support from the heritage conservation perspective. We will continue to explore installation of information plaques at historic buildings which could not be open to the public, in order to facilitate public knowledge of their historical background and heritage values.

(2) The Old Mental Hospital at 2 High Street was rebuilt as Sai Ying Pun Community Complex in 2001, and is managed by the Central and Western District Office (C&WDO).

The granite façade of the Old Mental Hospital, as mentioned by Member, including the wide arched verandah and the granite blocks underneath, were retained in the rebuild, and was declared a monument in 2015. All along, organisations may submit applications for location filming at the verandah. The verandah is currently undergoing maintenance works. The C&WDO plans to open the façade and the verandah for public access starting from September

this year upon completion of the works.

(3) The Tourism Commission (TC) has all along been promoting various tourism projects covering historical and heritage themes. These include the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail with the theme of "art across time" leading visitors to trace the history of 16 spots along the Trail; the organisation of the Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival at Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung from 2019 to 2021 to provide participants with an experience that integrates arts, culture, heritage and green elements through a variety of artworks in different forms; the Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival between 2022 and 2024, with the coverage gradually expanded to Kau Sai Chau, and High Island, etc; the TC has also launched the City in Time project which presents the historical panoramic images of individual landmarks of Hong Kong by using augmented reality and multimedia technology, enabling visitors to understand the historical landscape and community culture at that time through smartphones; and in collaboration with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, has also been enhancing the tourism supporting facilities of some hiking trails within country parks by phases which are popular and with tourism appeal, with a view to enhancing their appeal as heritage and green tourism attractions, including some with war relics, such as the Pinewood Battery Heritage Trail, and the Shing Mun War Relics Trail.

In terms of trade collaboration, the TC launched the Cultural and Heritage Sites Local Tour Incentive Scheme in October 2022 with a funding commitment of \$600 million to encourage local travel agents to develop and launch more tourism itineraries and products with cultural and heritage tourism elements, including visiting historic buildings

In terms of promotion and publicity, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has also been promoting to visitors revitalised historical architectures through various channels including website, social media and visitor centres, etc, as well as introducing routes of leisure walk in different districts, including buildings with historical value.

In addition, the HKTB's "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" project showcases authentic culture, characteristics, history, etc, of these neighbourhoods, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's tourism appeal. The HKTB will continue to promote the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" and develop new elements into existing programmes to attract visitors with authentic culture.