

LCQ2: Sites for hosting outdoor mega events

Following is a question by the Hon Benson Luk and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

The Harbourfront Commission discussed earlier the proposed construction of a ventilation building measuring some 18 metres in height and occupying a footprint area of 55 metres by 40 metres for the MTR Airport Railway at the Central Harbourfront Event Space site. The relevant works are proposed to commence next year and last for seven years. There are views that the land occupied by the relevant project and its associated site works as well as the noise and dust generated from the works may create a continuous impact on the use of the Central harbourfront by various sectors for organising mega events, such as large-scale concerts, outdoor exhibitions, funfairs with amusement rides and art exhibitions, and the area and capacity of the mega events site will be reduced as a direct consequence. Regarding sites for hosting outdoor mega events, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it has been reported that the aforesaid works were first conceived at the time of the Central Reclamation project many years ago, of the reasons why the authorities have deferred the commencement of the works to next year; the increase in construction costs of the works over the original estimation, as well as the planning and progress of the works;

(2) whether it will, in the light of the adverse impact to be brought about by the aforesaid works on the mega events site at Central harbourfront, identify an alternative site suitable for carrying out the relevant works, or consider other modes and options to minimise the impact; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the number of additional outdoor mega events sites to be made available over the next five years for the purpose of promoting the mega event economy, as well as the respective areas of such sites and the respective numbers of seats to be provided?

Reply:

President,

The Central Harbourfront Event Space (CHES) is located to the north of Lung Wo Road in Central and has a site area of 3.7 hectares (ha). The Development Bureau (DEVB) has let the site to private organisations by way of short term tenancy since 2014 for operation. Various large-scale local and international cultural and recreational mega events have been hosted there, bringing diversified experiences to the residents and tourists alike and

promoting the mega-event economy. As such, we share the concern of the Hon Benson Luk about the possible impact of the Airport Railway Extended Overrun Tunnel (AREOT) project on the CHES. The concerned project involves the construction of a tunnel of around 500 metres long beneath Lung Wo Road to the east of the Hong Kong Station, which will enable trains running on the Tung Chung Line and the Airport Express Line to turn around at the back of the Hong Kong Station, i.e. to the east of the station. Such arrangement will enable increase in train frequency, enhancing the train carrying capacities and operation efficiency so as to support the transport demand from the developments in Tung Chung, Siu Ho Wan and the airport.

Having consulted the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB) and the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the replies to the various parts of the question are as follows:

Regarding part (1) of the question, the AREOT project is part of the Airport Railway project. The funding support for the AREOT project was already provided by the Government to the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (later renamed as the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL)) as part of the Airport Railway project. Since there had not yet been an imminent need for the said extended overrun tunnel at the time when the Airport Railway was constructed in the 1990s, the Government agreed then that the timetable for its construction would be firmed up subject to the future patronage at a later juncture. In the light of the recent developments, to support the transport demand from the developments in Tung Chung, Siu Ho Wan and the airport, the MTRCL commenced the planning and preliminary design works in 2022.

Regarding part (2) of the question, in order for the said overrun tunnel to connect with the existing tracks of the Tung Chung Line and the Airport Express Line of the Hong Kong Station, it is necessary to construct the tunnel beneath Lung Wo Road to the east of the Hong Kong Station. To cope with ventilation and fire safety requirements, a ventilation cum emergency access building will need to be built aboveground as part of the project. Nonetheless, the DEVB, the TLB and the MTRCL have been in liaison with a view to minimising the impact of the construction of the tunnel on the CHES as far as practicable; and have been working together to proactively follow up the review of the project proposal after the project was discussed at the Harbourfront Commission last year.

The proposal is reviewed along the following directions: (1) to reduce the footprint and height of the ventilation cum emergency access building, as well as its location, for reducing the long-term impact of these permanent facilities to the CHES; (2) to reduce the aboveground works area needed during the construction of the tunnel, so that outdoor events such as open-air concerts that are popular these years can still be held at the CHES during the construction period; and (3) to reduce the inconvenience brought to the various types of events to be held at the CHES during the construction period, and to postpone the commencement of construction to after 2025, in order that the event organisers may consider using the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) which would then be opened. The TLB and the MTRCL are working on the

project proposal according to the above directions, with a view to minimising the impact and enabling the CHES to continuously deliver its function effectively.

Regarding part (3) of the question, the DEVB has let the 1.4-ha Wan Chai Harbourfront Event Space late last year for operation by the market. As for the Kowloon side, a number of outdoor event spaces have been opened in the West Kowloon Cultural District, including the Art Park and the Wonderland. The former contains a Great Lawn that can accommodate about 10 000 standing visitors to enjoy performances, and the latter is an outdoor performance venue that can accommodate about 8 000 spectators. The KTSP will be open in the first half of 2025, providing modern and multi-purpose sports and recreation facilities, including a 50 000-seat Main Stadium and an outdoor Public Sports Ground with a capacity of about 5 000 spectators, which are of great significance to the development of not only sports, but also the mega-event economy of Hong Kong. The aforesaid venues have not yet taken into account the new outdoor event venues at the SPORTS PARK Sai Sha and the adjacent GO PARK Sai Sha that will come into operation by phases in the near future by private enterprises.