

LCQ7: Planning and uses of harbourfront

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (January 22):

Question:

At present, the Government adopts the incremental approach in carrying out works to connect the waterfront promenades on both sides of the Victoria Harbour. In addition, the Government has proposed to introduce legislative amendments to the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531) to facilitate and promote harbourfront enhancement for public enjoyment and to strengthen harbour functions. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether harbourfront connection and enhancement works will be carried out concurrently in order to better plan for harbourfront development; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will consider organising large-scale activities such as marathon races and the Wine and Dine Festival at the harbourfront, so as to better utilise the harbourfront areas; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will include elements of dining, leisure and arts in the connected Kowloon waterfront or even organise exhibitions, bazaars and youth activities there, as well as inject new impetus into the Kowloon waterfront by adopting a coherent and thematic approach; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Victoria Harbour is a symbol of Hong Kong, and a precious natural asset for the public. It is the policy objective and vision of the Government to provide the public with harbourfront sites that are diversified, vibrant, accessible and inclusive by enhancing the Victoria harbourfront. The Development Bureau (DEVB), in close collaboration with the Harbourfront Commission (HC), has all along been committed to taking forward various harbourfront enhancements on both sides of Victoria Harbour.

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In consultation with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB), the reply to various parts is as follows:

(1) The purpose of the "incremental approach" is to advance the opening of

the connected harbourfront for public enjoyment, but it does not mean that the planning for "connecting" and "enhancing" the harbourfront is separately handled. As a matter of fact, a number of projects involve the planning of both the development of the harbourfront promenade, and the enhancement of the adjoining land site altogether under a single project where practicable. The harbourfront promenade would be opened early for the public once completed, without waiting until the full completion of the enhancement works as under the conventional arrangements. For example, the boardwalk at the Belcher Bay harbourfront open space was opened in the first quarter of 2019, which was 19 months ahead of the full opening of the concerned open space. The opening of the promenade at the East Coast Park (Phase 1) is even about three years ahead of schedule. With the advanced opening of Cha Kwo Ling Promenade and Tsui Ping Seaside in August 2023, a harbourfront of about 1.7 kilometres in Kwun Tong area has been connected; and the remaining promenade of some 910 metres is expected to be opened by phases from 2028.

The work on connecting harbourfront is bearing fruits. As at end-2024, the total length of the harbourfront promenades on both sides of Victoria Harbour was about 29 kilometres, about six kilometres longer than five years ago (i.e. end-2019). We aim at further extending the promenade length to 34 kilometres on or before 2028. In other words, about five kilometres of promenades would be provided in the coming few years, the majority of which would be located in Kowloon.

At the same time, we continue to improve and enhance existing harbourfront facilities with due emphasis on both quality and quantity. A total of about 40 hectares of harbourfront open spaces have been opened to the public during the past five years (2020-2024). Examples of recently or soon-to-be completed projects include the Hung Hom Urban Park (Phase 1) which was completed last year, as well as the Hung Hom Urban Park (Phase 2) and the open space at Eastern Street North at Sai Ying Pun, both of which will be completed in mid-2025. These projects are examples of enhancement works on top of the connected harbourfront. They provide harbourfront spaces of about 0.9 and 1.32 hectares in Hung Hom and Sai Ying Pun respectively for public enjoyment. The former provides a number of recreational facilities including an exhibition area of fire engine, elderly fitness corner; and the latter will provide diversified feature leisure facilities and inter-generational play areas, such as an outdoor bouncy trampoline, the water and sand play areas.

Besides, we have submitted to the Legislative Council a Bill to amend the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance. If the Bill is passed, there will be greater flexibility in exploring options for connecting and enhancing the harbourfront through facilitating small-scale reclamations conducive to harbourfront enhancement.

(2) With prime geographical locations and high accessibility, many large-scale cultural, sports and tourism mega events have been held at both sides of Victoria Harbour.

The DEVB and the HC have all along supported and encouraged various government departments/organisations to make good use of the relevant

harbourfront venues for hosting various types of activities and injecting vibrancy of the harbourfront. To make use of market forces, the DEVB has let private operators to operate the Central Harbourfront Event Space and Wan Chai Harbourfront Event Space. The West Kowloon Cultural District and venues under the purview of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (such as Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade and the Avenue of Stars) are also important venues of the Victoria Harbourfront. Events held at venues at both sides of the Victoria Harbourfront include various signature events, such as Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, Hong Kong WinterFest, as well as large-scale open-air concerts. Besides, a number of marathons have also taken place at both sides of Victoria Harbour, including the Hong Kong Streetathon held in late 2024 covering Kwun Tong Promenade and other venues at both sides of the Victoria Harbourfront; and the special marathon at the Central Harbourfront in early January 2025.

As more harbourfront enhancement works (such as the East Coast Boardwalk) are completed progressively, we will be better placed to host a diversified range of activities at the harbourfront. We welcome different private and non-government organisations to make use of these sites to organise activities. Also, we will bring more activities to the harbourfront upon discussing with relevant organisations and through the operators of the event spaces.

(3) In addition to connecting and enhancing the harbourfront, we will introduce commercial facilities such as food and beverages (F&B), retail and entertainment facilities at selected suitable harbourfront locations on a pilot basis to bring convenience and better experience to visitors.

As far as the harbourfront in Kowloon is concerned, two smart specialty vending facilities at the promenades in Kwun Tong and Cha Kwo Ling have commenced their operation last month. They offer a variety of snacks, specialty drinks and "pop-up" products. The outlook of the facilities is also specially designed for visitors to take photos. Besides, it is stated in the 2024 Policy Address (PA) that we will drive the development of the waterfront and the former pier sites in the vicinity of the Hung Hom Station with a view to releasing the potential for commercial and residential developments of the concerned land lots. At the same time, event venues would be provided, and facilities such as retail, F&B and entertainment would be introduced so as to develop a new harbourfront landmark there.

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At the Fly the Flyover sites at the Kwun Tong harbourfront, restaurants and food kiosks are available to provide F&B services for the locals and visitors. The Energizing Kowloon East Office of the DEVB and the operator will continue to work in partnership to utilise the concerned sites for creative, arts and cultural uses, to provide spaces for leisure and entertainment to the public, and to host events of arts and culture, creativity, sports, green and healthy living, in a bid to complement the sustainable development of Kowloon East as the second core business district.

â€‹We have been proactively injecting vibrancy into the Kai Tak Development Area and its neighbouring harbourfront. Opening in March 2025, the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) provides a one-stop sports, leisure, catering

and shopping experience for locals and tourists. In particular, there are over 700 000 feet of retail, catering as well as leisure and entertainment facilities within the KTSP. The Dining Cove also accommodates nine restaurants of diversified concepts where locals and tourists can choose to dine in the indoor or outdoor areas and enjoy the breathtaking views of Victoria Harbour. In addition, the KTSP will make best use of the public spaces at the harbourfront and the some 14-hectare landscaped open space within the KTSP to organise a variety of events. As for the residential developments located at the southern part of the former runway area in Kai Tak, "Shop and Services" and "Eating Place" are always permitted on the lowest two floors of buildings in terms of planning, so that catering and retail facilities could be provided at the waterfront area. The developments therein are expected to be gradually completed from 2025 to 2027.

Apart from the above-mentioned facilities, as set out in the 2024 PA, the HYAB will create a youth development facility by converting the community isolation facility at the former runway area in Kai Tak, which includes setting up a Youth Post hostel and creating spaces for Mainland, overseas and local young people to stimulate creativity, develop culture, arts and sports, and engage in mutual exchange.

As regards the public open spaces developed and managed by private developers within the harbourfront area, as explained by the Secretary for Development in an oral reply to a question asked by the Hon Vincent Cheng dated November 27, 2024, the relevant government departments will seek to facilitate proposals of utilising outdoor or public spaces as much as possible, as long as the proposed commercial or other activities will not cause issues relating to passage, safety or hygiene, and will not obstruct the enjoyment of the public space by other users. To simplify approval procedures, the Lands Department (LandsD) will adopt a streamlined approach when handling straightforward cases, such as activities of a non-commercial nature (including activities hosted by non-government organisations or community activities relating to festive celebrations). As for commercial activities, the DEVB is working with the LandsD to explore ways to streamline applications, such as suitably relaxing the limit of area to be occupied and putting forward standard rates for waiver applications.

When taking forward harbourfront development in different districts, we will take into account district-specific characteristics and relevant considerations, and be willing to listen to views of the communities on relevant themes.