

Proposals invited for Batch VI of Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (with photo/video)

The Development Bureau (DEVB) today (December 3) announced the four historic buildings included under Batch VI of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Revitalisation Scheme), and invited revitalisation proposals from non-profit-making organisations (NPOs).

The four historic buildings are the Tai Tam Tuk Raw Water Pumping Station Staff Quarters Compound; Homi Villa in Ting Kau, Tsuen Wan; King Yin Lei in Wan Chai; and Fong Yuen Study Hall in Ma Wan, Tsuen Wan.

The Tai Tam Tuk Raw Water Pumping Station Staff Quarters Compound is a declared monument. The three staff quarters were constructed in 1905, 1907 and 1936. As the operation of the pumping station is now automated and under centralised control, staff of the Water Supplies Department no longer need to stay in the quarters.

A Grade 3 historic building built in the 1930s, Homi Villa was originally a property of the Ruttonjee family. The Government acquired the building in 1973 and converted it into the Airport Core Programme Exhibition Centre in 1995 for public use.

King Yin Lei, a declared monument built in 1937, was included in Batches III and IV of the Revitalisation Scheme but no suitable revitalisation proposal was selected. As the community has accumulated years of experience in revitalising historic buildings, the Government has decided to include King Yin Lei in Batch VI of the Revitalisation Scheme, hoping to tap community wisdom and creativity in finding the most suitable partner and use for the mansion.

Fong Yuen Study Hall is a Grade 3 historic building built in the 1920s and '30s. It was previously included in Batch I of the Revitalisation Scheme, but was returned to the Government by the operator in 2017. It was subsequently put in Batch V but no suitable revitalisation proposal was identified. The Government has now included it in Batch VI in the hope of finding a suitable use.

Speaking at a press conference, the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, said, "We hope to fully tap the wisdom of the community to unleash again the economic and social value of historic buildings while allowing the public to visit and enjoy them. This is in line with the concept of sustainable conservation."

He said that to support and promote the Revitalisation Scheme, a total of \$2.4 billion has been earmarked to cover the cost of works of the buildings. In addition, the Government will charge only nominal rent and provide one-off grants to assist operators in meeting the start-up costs as well as possible deficits in the first two years of operation. The Government will also provide a one-stop service to help NPOs resolve issues relating to heritage conservation, land use and planning, building construction and more.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Built Heritage Conservation, Professor Lau Chi-pang, also spoke at the press conference, detailing his experience in assessing the applications for the previous five batches of projects. He said that the committee focuses on the ideas and concepts of the proposals and applicants should avoid excessive concentration on technical aspects. Moreover, the extent of public access and enjoyment of the historic buildings would be one of the key factors for consideration.

So far, five batches of projects under the Revitalisation Scheme have been rolled out, involving a total of 19 projects. Among the 12 projects in operation, five have received United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. They are the Hong Kong Campus of the Savannah College of Art and Design (the former North Kowloon Magistracy), the Tai O Heritage Hotel (the old Tai O Police Station), YHA Mei Ho House Youth Hostel (Mei Ho House of Shek Kip Mei Estate), the Green Hub for Sustainable Living (the old Tai Po Police Station) and Viva Blue House (the Blue House Cluster in Wan Chai).

Looking ahead, the DEVB anticipates that the revitalisation works of the three projects under Batch IV will be completed in 2020 and 2021, and a further four projects under Batch V are expected to be completed between 2023 and 2025.

The four historic buildings under Batch VI of the Revitalisation Scheme will be open for interested NPOs with guided tours from December 17 to 20. A workshop will be held on January 7, 2020, for those interested to learn more about the application procedures and assessment criteria.

The application guide, the application form and resource kits containing the historical background details of the four buildings and conservation guidelines, as well as other related information, can be obtained from the Commissioner for Heritage's Office of the DEVB at Unit 701B, 7/F, Empire Centre, 68 Mody Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, or downloaded from www.heritage.gov.hk. The deadline for submission of applications is noon on April 3, 2020.

