

SDEV speaks to the media

Following is the transcript of remarks at a media session by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, after attending a radio programme this morning (October 14):

Reporter: Mr Wong, can you explain how the reclamation will improve the traffic of north-western New Territories? And you mentioned during the programme that Hong Kong's land reserve will be used up by 2032 if the reclamation doesn't take place?

Secretary for Development: The second question first. That is not what I said. What I was saying is that if you look at our demand for housing, if you look at the figures under the ten-year Long Term Housing Strategy, nowadays every year we are talking about 46 000 units. A few years ago we were taking about 48 000 units. So let's say it's about 40 000 units every year. Year by year, in 15 years' time, we will be talking about 600 000 units. This is basically what we have to prepare under the current situation, about intensifying the development density of existing areas and also about the upcoming new development areas (NDAs), Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Hung Shui Kiu. We will use that up.

What I didn't say is if we don't do reclamation, we will be at a total loss. What I said was that we need a sizeable source of land supply. Somehow we will need it. The Government, under Mrs Lam's vision, has come up with the 1 000-hactre phase one reclamation at Kau Yi Chau which will help us solve this problem.

You may say that the community doesn't like reclamation at Kau Yi Chau. Then you have to look at other sources of sizeable supply. What I said was, if you talk about, not reclamation but resumption of land, cost-wise, the difference is not that substantial. In terms of infrastructure, we still need to put on a layer of infrastructure. In terms of difficulty and costs, it is not necessarily easier. Actually, if you have gone through the process of trying to put on sizeable infrastructure in built-up areas, the challenges are greater. The costs are likely to be higher. So that was what I said.

Your first question is about traffic. Just look at the location. The location of Kau Yi Chau allows us to have a good linkage point further up north to Sunny Bay and then Tuen Mun South. And you know that for Tuen Mun South, there are other plans ongoing and being under study as in the Railway Development Strategy 2014. The expansion of Tuen Mun South is being looked at. From Kau Yi Chau to the east, basically the link goes back to the northern side of Hong Kong Island. And we are talking about a distance around 4 kilometres. It's a short distance and very convenient driving. So that is an advantage of Kau Yi Chau which is unparalleled by choices such as Tseung Kwan O.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)