

Working Group on Developing Low-altitude Economy holds first meeting (with photos)

The Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address to establish the Working Group on Developing Low-altitude Economy (the Working Group). The Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Michael Wong, convened the first meeting as the Head of the Working Group today (November 12).

In the meeting, the Working Group discussed the overall strategies and work plan for developing the low-altitude economy (LAE). The relevant work directions are as follows:

- Regulatory Sandbox (Sandbox): the Government will take forward Sandbox pilot projects progressively, starting from early next year, in collaboration with industry and partner organisations. The first phase is expected to mainly cover drone deliveries, with restrictions on "flying beyond visual line of sight" to be relaxed. The scope of low-altitude flying applications will be expanded and enriched progressively;
- Enhancements to legislation: the Government will amend the relevant existing civil aviation legislation by making reference to the legislation and standards on the Mainland and other areas, having full regard to the current and long-term development need. This includes reviewing the regulatory regime applicable to larger-sized unmanned aircraft (i.e. those weighing more than 25 kilograms). The plan is to submit the proposal to the Legislative Council in the first half of 2025;
- Study and plan for low-altitude infrastructure: the Government will embark on technical studies and planning for low-altitude infrastructure, including take-off/landing points, communication networks, air route networks, low-altitude surveillance and management systems; and
- Greater Bay Area (GBA) low-altitude cross-boundary corridor: the Government will promote an interface with the Mainland to facilitate cross-boundary low-altitude flying activities within the GBA.

Mr Wong said, "The LAE will bring new opportunities to Hong Kong and

promote the development of the economy and various industries. Adopting a forward-thinking mindset and from the perspective of a facilitator, the Working Group will enable the simulation of diversified scenarios, multiple air routes and overarching low-altitude airspace management through the Sandbox pilot projects. Operational data and experience accumulated will guide our work on different fronts including regulations, infrastructure and applications. We will make good use of market forces and actively communicate and co-operate with the Mainland to jointly promote the development of the LAE."

In today's meeting, the Working Group has also formulated the details of the Sandbox pilot projects, including eligibility and procedures for application, as well as factors for evaluating and prioritising applications. The Transport and Logistics Bureau will carry out the Sandbox pilot projects by batches. The first batch will be open for applications starting from tomorrow (November 13) with the deadline on December 31 this year. Relevant details have been uploaded to the website of the Transport and Logistics Bureau (www.tlb.gov.hk/eng/highlights/transport/low-altitude.html).

The Secretary for Transport and Logistics is the Deputy Head of the Working Group. Other members include the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development; the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism; the Secretary for Development; the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry; the Secretary for Security and other relevant Heads of Departments.

In addition, a Project Facilitation Task Force (the Task Force) will be established under the Working Group, comprising members from relevant government technical departments. The Task Force is responsible for taking forward technical matters for the development of the LAE. The Working Group also agreed to appoint the Hong Kong Productivity Council as technical partner, whereas the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited will be the venue partners to provide suitable places and supporting facilities for pilot projects.

The terms of reference of the Working Group, as well as the membership of the Working Group and the Task Force, are set out in the Annex.



