

For discussion on
20 April 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Views and Suggestions Received from the Public on the Review of Built Heritage Conservation Policy

Purpose

This paper sets out a summary of the public views and suggestions gathered on the review of built heritage conservation policy from 2004 to early 2007.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on 9 March 2007, Members proposed that the Administration should provide a summary of major views, concerns and suggestions received since the 2004 public consultation exercise. The summary should include views relating to legislative, funding or administrative proposals, as well as key issues over which consensus or divided views had been expressed by the public.

Summary of Public Views

3. Against the above background, a summary of views, concerns, and suggestions covering the following main areas regarding built heritage conservation is at **Annex** –

- (a) What do we conserve;
- (b) How do we conserve;
- (c) How much, and who should pay; and
- (d) Suggestions on legislative and institutional measures.

4. The public views we have received so far point to the need for substantial improvements to the current policy and practices on built heritage conservation. There was general support for –

- (a) Adopting a holistic approach to heritage conservation;
- (b) Revising the current assessment and selection process of built heritage;
- (c) Expanding the scope of protection from individual buildings to “streets” and “areas” through creation of “conservation areas/zones”;
- (d) Incorporating built heritage conservation into the overall town planning and urban renewal process;
- (e) Allocating more resources on built heritage conservation through the provision of economic incentives and the establishment of a heritage trust fund;
- (f) Revamping the current Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance and empowering the Antiquities Advisory Board;
- (g) Widening and deepening public participation in heritage conservation matters; and
- (h) Enhancing coordination among Government bureaux and departments and creating a single dedicated heritage conservation authority.

5. However, there have been diverse views on the following fundamental issues –

- (a) Whether we should include collective memory into the assessment criteria, and if so, how should the concept be defined and its weighting relative to other assessment criteria?
- (b) How exactly should we strike a balance between heritage conservation and economic development, given the substantial costs of conserving built heritage, especially through in-situ preservation?
- (c) Whether reconstruction and relocation would be acceptable preservation approaches in cases where historic buildings could not be kept in-situ?

- (d) How should a historic building be put into beneficial adaptive re-use if the building has lost its original function, or keeping its original use is no longer in the interest of sustaining the building? What should be the most appropriate re-uses of historic buildings? Should the re-use be related to the original use? Should commercial elements (e.g. converting historic buildings into tourist facilities) ever come into play? And if so, when and how far?
- (e) Whether the Government should acquire a historic building or resume the piece of land in question under exceptional circumstances despite that a majority of views agree to the principle that we should conserve, but not take over ownership?
- (f) Whether the public are willing to contribute more towards the huge costs involved in built heritage conservation despite the majority wish that more resources should be devoted to this area?
- (g) Whether it would be necessary to introduce and institutionalise some of the proposed economic incentives involving land use (e.g. transfer of development rights and land exchange) for the purpose of built heritage conservation, bearing in mind their complexities and far-reaching implications, as opposed to considering each and every request on a case-by-case basis?

Way Forward

6. As reported to the Members at the meeting on 9 March, we will take into account the results of this round of public engagement in drawing up a package of improvement proposals on built heritage conservation. We expect to be able to announce the proposals and measures on built heritage conservation in the latter half of 2007.

Home Affairs Bureau
April 2007

**Summary of Public Views and Suggestions Received since 2004
on the Built Heritage Conservation Policy Review**

I. What Do We Conserve?

A. Holistic approach

1. There was general support for the formulation of a holistic approach that would enable Hong Kong to take a comprehensive view on what, and how many, heritage items to conserve, and see through the whole conservation process from identification of heritage items for conservation to adaptive re-use and management.
2. Some felt that it would be necessary to clearly define the term “built heritage”, which should not necessarily be confined to the buildings alone, but should cover the settings of the buildings concerned. There were also views that since Hong Kong had a wide range of heritage (including built heritage, traditions, customs, both tangible and intangible, Chinese and Western), efforts should be made to conserve the various types of heritage to showcase the richness and diversity of Hong Kong’s culture. Others however suggested that we should not be too ambitious and should first focus on protecting historic buildings (tangible heritage).
3. There were views that we had to strike a balance between the protection of tangible (e.g. buildings and structures) and intangible heritage (e.g. local traditions, rituals, customs and popular cultures) by including intangible heritage in the review as well. Some raised that “people” and social capital were important factors in considering the preservation of historic buildings. It would be preferable to keep the existing residents living in these buildings so as to preserve the associated social and community networks. On the other hand, a considerable number of residents in these old buildings indicated their wish to improve their living conditions through relocation to other better-equipped buildings.

4. Some considered that development had always been given primary consideration in Hong Kong. In order to make heritage conservation successful, there should be a vision explicitly recognising the social importance of conservation and a framework for identification of heritage buildings/sites.

5. Some suggested that it was incorrect to say that heritage conservation would hinder economic development. Instead, proper conservation of heritage assets should be able to add value to land.

6. There were suggestions that an inventory of Hong Kong's built heritage should be compiled, e.g. by way of a territory-wide survey on built heritage, with a view to facilitating the preservation of these buildings.

7. Some suggested that information about all pre-1950 buildings should be made known to the public while some considered that we should draw up a comprehensive list of all historic buildings regardless of their age, not only restricted to those that were built before 1950.

8. Some favoured that a comprehensive survey should be conducted among the general public, District Councils and stakeholders groups on items to be conserved. Some took the view that the assessment and selection of historic buildings should be dealt with by experts from the various professions.

9. While there was support for compiling a list of historic buildings and consulting the community on the selection and priorities for conservation, some expressed reservations that this would accelerate demolition of these buildings after the list was made available to the public.

10. There were views that we should develop a charter (similar to the Burra Charter) setting out Hong Kong's conservation principles and values on built heritage.

B. Assessment and selection of historic buildings

1. There was general support for improving the transparency of the current assessment and selection process (including weightings of different assessment criteria and grading/scores awarded to individual historic buildings) and enhancing public participation in the system. A clear and transparent assessment system would be essential to facilitating public understanding of what should be selected.
2. The heritage assessment criteria should be expanded from historical significance and architectural merit to include cultural, aesthetic and social factors with reference to international standards. Apart from culture and heritage values which are of prime importance, economic and environmental improvement considerations should also be given due regard.
3. Some suggested that we should set up a grading system, with several (3-5) tiers of graded buildings accorded with different levels of protection. However, those who were against this proposal considered there was no point introducing a revised grading system if it did not come with effective statutory protection for the graded buildings.
4. Many were of the view that the determining criteria of built heritage conservation should not only be restricted to historical significance and architectural merits, but should also include collective memory associated with built structures, areas or places that reflect the traditional ways of life, and cultural and social activities experienced by the common people.
5. While there were calls for including collective memory as one of the heritage assessment criteria, some felt that it would be necessary to define clearly what constituted “collective memory” to avoid abuse and that there was no need to preserve ways of life, which were continuously evolving through time. Many considered the concept of collective memory too vague and not easy to define, concrete examples should be used to illustrate its meaning. Some also doubted if a building, despite its lack of other merits, should be preserved merely because of the collective memory associated with it.

6. Most supported the revised assessment criteria adopted by the expert assessment panel, which included elements of collective memory. But some considered collective memory was subjective in nature and should not be included as one of the assessment criteria.

7. There were suggestions that grading of individual buildings should be reviewed regularly with inputs from the community and professional bodies. Some also suggested that we should review the grading of those historic buildings which were currently on the application list of sites for sale.

C. “Point”, “Line” and “Surface”

1. There was general support for the idea of expanding the scope of conservation from “point” (i.e. individual built heritage) to “line” (i.e. a street) and “surface” (i.e. an area) that possess unique cultural character or reflect traditional ways of life of the community.

2. Many felt that it would be necessary to protect the ambience and setting of a historic building to ensure its compatibility with the surrounding. Tsui Sing Lau Pagoda in Yuen Long was cited as an example on several occasions.

3. Some suggested that the scope of conservation should be expanded from individual buildings to streets and areas with special characteristics, so as to preserve public space and improve cityscape.

D. Specific buildings/streets/areas

1. Buildings/streets/areas which were proposed to be preserved given their unique heritage value and characteristics included but not limited to –

Hong Kong Island

Wan Chai Market, the market area at Tai Yuen Street and Cross Street, Lee Tung Street

Blue Houses, Orange Houses and Green Houses (Wan Chai District)

Star Ferry Pier, Queen’s Pier and City Hall

Hong Kong Island (Cont'd)

Lyemun Barracks

Gough Street

Central Market Central Police Station Compound

Former Police Married Quarters at Hollywood Road

Man Wa Lane

Woodside at Mount Parker Road

Old Meng Tak Primary School building in Chai Wan

Kowloon

Nga Tsin Wai Village

Lui Seng Chun

Temple Street, Fruit Market, Jade Market and Yau Ma Tei Police Station

Sham Shui Po District

Tung Choi Street

New Territories

Historic buildings in Tung Chung, Tai O, Yuen Long and Kwai Tsing Districts

Cheung Chau Fong Pin Hospital

Temples in Sai Kung District

Villages in the New Territories

2. There were divided views on the preservation of the following –

Haw Par Mansion and Tiger Balm Garden

Yau Ma Tei Fruit Market

Yau Ma Tei Theatre

Kom Tong Hall

Old Stanley Police Station

Old Wan Chai Post Office

Lee Tung Street

3. There was a suggestion that the Government House should be converted into a museum and open to the public. Government buildings in the vicinity should also be preserved as a cluster.

II. How Do We Conserve?

A. General

1. The majority of views supported the adoption of different preservation methods ranging from in-situ preservation, façade preservation, to relocation and reconstruction.
2. In-situ preservation was generally preferred while some recognised the high costs required in adopting this approach. Some also argued that façade preservation was not a genuine way of preservation.
3. There were divided views on relocation and reconstruction. Some felt that these were not genuine conservation while others thought that these could help to reduce conservation costs and build up heritage clusters as tourist attractions. The Murray House in Stanley was quoted as an example.
4. More flexibility in terms of alternations, land use and statutory requirements, should be provided to cater for the needs and circumstances of individual historic buildings. There were views that we should not turn all historic buildings into museums.
5. There were suggestions that we should draw up conservation plan, guidelines and standards for each (or each type of) monument / historic building as the basis of planning their future maintenance and management.
6. There was a suggestion that we should formulate a master conservation plan setting out the guiding criteria, priorities and development strategies for the conservation of historic buildings.
7. Regarding the conservation of “line” and “surface”, many felt that we should not prohibit redevelopment as long as the conditions required to retain the special characteristics of a designated area to be protected are satisfied. Town planning and development controls were important tools to enhance successful conservation.

8. Those who took a different view considered that economic development should be accorded with a higher priority than heritage conservation.

9. It was generally accepted that heritage conservation went hand in hand with planning and development and that it should form an integral part of urban planning and renewal. Most preferred redeveloping heritage buildings to reap economic benefits without diminishing its heritage value.

10. Many proposed that planning controls such as new zoning and tightening of the Hong Kong Standard and Guidelines could be effective means of conserving built heritage. New zoning (e.g. “sites of significant historical values”, “heritage conservation zone” or “special design area”) should be introduced into the current land use and planning system to define more clearly the heritage buildings/sites/areas to be protected.

11. Business/economic activities should be allowed in heritage conservation zones to enhance the sustainable development of these areas. New buildings could also be developed along with old buildings.

12. A few also suggested that the existing system of declared monuments and graded buildings could be incorporated into the planning system for better development and conservation planning.

13. Many suggested that we should make reference to internationally recognized standards, charters and principles (e.g. Venice Charter, New Zealand ICOMOS, Burra Charter, Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China) and overseas examples of conservation methods and adaptive re-use (e.g. Australia, Macao, Boston, London, Shanghai and Singapore).

14. Some suggested that photographic records could be conducted for those heritage buildings which could not be physically preserved. Other methods using advanced technologies (e.g. laser scanning) were also suggested for preserving the images and data of historic buildings.

15. A few suggested that the Government should provide interim protection to historic buildings that were under demolition threats before the policy review on built heritage was completed. Similarly, the Government should also put on hold the planning of heritage tourism projects until it had formulated its policy on built heritage conservation.

16. There were views that the viability of various new proposed measures should be tested out through pilot projects.

B. Adaptive re-use

1. The majority of views considered that conserved built heritage should form a functional part of the community and sustainability was the key to success. Apart from sustaining cultural vitality, adaptive re-use should also seek to enhance social ties and economic gains.

2. It was generally agreed that the use of historic buildings depended very much on the buildings themselves (e.g. structural constraints, character and uniqueness in design), their surrounding land uses and historical contexts in the community. Views of the public and the owners (in case of privately owned buildings) should be taken into consideration.

3. Many suggested a flexible approach to adaptive re-use and where it was not feasible to maintain the original use, cultural tourism or commercial uses should also be considered. Public-private partnership should be encouraged in putting conserved built heritage to different uses. The conserved built heritage should, as far as possible, be open to public access.

4. Some felt that the original use or related use of a historic building should be kept as far as possible to reflect its heritage significance (e.g. a post office graded as a historic building should continue to be a post office or be converted into uses that are related to the postal theme, such as a postal museum). Some however felt that instead of retaining the original use, it would be more important that historic buildings could be regenerated through sustainable adaptive re-use.

5. If the original use of historic buildings could not be maintained, a flexible and sustainable approach should be adopted to maximize its benefits brought about to the community. Some suggested injection of commercial elements to turn the buildings into cultural venues, residential flats, boutique hotels and tourist attractions. The private sector should also be encouraged to participate in the projects.

6. On the other hand, some considered that a balance between heritage benefits and economic returns should be maintained to avoid over-commercialization of historic buildings. There were criticisms that the current disposal system for Government historic buildings was largely based on monetary returns and that conservation considerations were neglected. Cases cited included the Old Police Station in Stanley and the Former Marine Police Headquarters in Tsim Sha Tsui.

7. Some suggested that conserved built heritage should be open to the public with enhanced facilities to attract tourists and generate income. Preserved historic buildings should be used to promote heritage tourism with improved supporting facilities.

8. There were views that elements of tourism (e.g. heritage attractions and visitor facilities) should be incorporated into built heritage conservation to generate economic activities and create employment. But some consider it inappropriate to put too much emphasis on economic considerations.

9. There was a suggestion that we should first deal with the adaptive re-use proposals for vacant historic buildings. Public-private/NGO partnership should be encouraged to enhance the viability of adaptive re-use projects. Public participation and support were considered important, and more efforts should be devoted to heritage education and publicity.

10. There was also a suggestion that the adaptive re-use and subsequent management of a historic building should as far as possible be determined before the decision to conserve was made.

11. Some suggested that the Government should start with converting Government historic buildings to beneficial adaptive re-uses. Consideration should be given to relaxing or granting exemptions from relevant statutory requirements to facilitate adaptive re-use of historic buildings.

12. Specifically, there were suggestions that the Government should reform the Buildings Ordinance. We should make reference to overseas experiences and draw up a set of alternative compliance regulations for preservation of heritage buildings and structures covering issues of fire safety, loading, sewage and access for the disabled.

III. How Much, and Who Should Pay?

A. General

1. Most supported that since heritage conservation was for the overall good of the community and future generations, the whole community should contribute and bear the costs collectively. Generally, most felt that heritage conservation could only succeed through concerted efforts of all parties concerned.
2. Most agreed that the Government would need to strike a balance between heritage conservation and economic development. Some felt that the value of heritage was beyond economic considerations and that the long-term benefits brought about by heritage conservation should be taken into account. Cost should not be the overriding factor in considering heritage conservation.
3. While it was generally agreed that the community at large, private sector, tourists and developers/investors should all share the costs of heritage conservation, there was a suggestion that we should keep the public funds spent on heritage conservation to the minimum. Some also considered that they should not pay extra for heritage conservation as they had already contributed to the cause indirectly by paying tax.
4. There was general support for the principles that we should conserve but not take over ownership, give due regard to private property rights, and maintain a balance between conservation needs and economic costs. Yet, a few suggested that the Government should acquire historic buildings and take up their management under exceptional circumstances, and that detailed procedures would need to be established for this option.
5. Some disagreed that we should restrict demolition of historic buildings by legislation. Instead, it was suggested that we should have a more transparent system which could enhance the public understanding of heritage conservation and awareness of its value and significance. Consensus should be reached before committing public funds in purchasing privately owned built heritage.

6. Some suggested that we should come up with a “bill” setting out the total cost required for preserving all the selected historic buildings with the assistance of professionals (e.g. surveyors) and make the figures known to the general public.

7. The existing resources spent on heritage conservation were inadequate. Some felt that self-sustainable heritage conservation was not possible because maintaining historic buildings was very expensive and required special care and techniques. The public resources spent on heritage conservation would either have to be generated anew or some form of redeployment would be required.

8. Some commented that the general public should be made aware of the huge cost involved to make a choice on what to conserve and how to conserve. There were also views that heritage conservation should ideally be self-sustainable. Given the huge resources implications involved, market forces should determine what to conserve and how to conserve.

9. Many considered that Government should allocate more resources for heritage conservation project, while some disagreed to raise tax for conservation. The public should be made aware of the possible conflict between heritage conservation and redevelopment of privately owned graded buildings.

10. The majority considered that the Government should introduce a whole host of effective planning measures and economic incentives to encourage partnership with the owners of private built heritage (e.g. tax incentives, transfer of development rights (TDR), land exchange, etc).

B. Economic/financial incentives

1. There was a suggestion that the private sector should be encouraged to donate historic buildings to the government in exchange for recognition. Yet, the development rights associated with the building donated should not be lost and be transferred to another site at a discount rate.

2. There were suggestions that tax and financial incentives, such as exemption from rates and property tax for conserved built heritage, tax reduction for money donated to heritage conservation causes, should be introduced.

<p>3. Some also proposed that the Government should grant tax reduction for those private property owners who had spent money on maintenance and restoration of their buildings that were open for public enjoyment.</p>
<p>4. Many suggested that financial and technical assistance should be provided to owners of private historic buildings to maintain and restore their built heritage. Other proposed incentives included – utilising funds from the Lotteries Fund to finance heritage conservation initiatives and formulating an adoption scheme of built heritage by business corporations.</p>
<p>5. Some suggested that a flexible compensation mechanism should be formulated by experts to deal with privately owned historic buildings. A few proposed that the Government might consider acquiring built heritage/historic sites under exceptional circumstances.</p>
<p>6. There were views that a special committee to study the issue of compensation should be set up.</p>
<p>7. Many were in favour of TDR while others who took a different view felt that implementation of TDR would require legislative amendments and would be difficult to materialize.</p>
<p>8. There was also a suggestion that the Government could auction the development right of a heritage building as compensation to the original owner. The value of the right to be auctioned should be set with reference to the estimated market value of the re-developed property plus an additional, say, 10%, which would be recovered by Government to fund the cost of conservation.</p>
<p>9. Many suggested that the Government should consider economic incentives, such as bonus plot ratio, in-situ and non in-situ land exchange, land resumption and easement, reduction of land premium, relaxation of planning, land use and building controls, to encourage participation of owners of private built heritage. It was also proposed that the Government should draw up a list of sites which could be used for land exchange.</p>

10. Noting that there was a lot of public open space under Government ownership, there was a suggestion that the Government should consider transferring the development rights of those private owners to these areas.

11. Some felt that land exchange and bonus plot ratio were not appropriate economic incentives, as land was a scarce resource in Hong Kong.

C. Funding sources

1. There were views that given high land value in Hong Kong and the absence of large-scale private conservation bodies, the Government would have to take the leading role in making heritage conservation efforts workable and practical.

2. There were views that a development tax or a tourism tax should be introduced for heritage conservation. However, those from the tourism industry did not agree to the proposed introduction of a tourism tax.

3. Some suggested that a certain percentage of property tax, rates, liquor/tobacco duties, airport tax, Betting Duty or revenue from land sales and the tourism industry should be used for heritage conservation.

4. Other sources of funding for heritage conservation were suggested – (a) individual and corporate adoption of historic buildings with some sort of recognition scheme to encourage donations; (b) rentals generated by letting out historic buildings/sites as tourist attractions and other related incomes, e.g. sale of souvenirs and admission fees; and (c) contribution of part of the income generated by the Foreign Exchange Fund.

D. Heritage trust fund

1. Many were in favour of setting up a statutory heritage trust fund so as to tap resources from the community as well as to cultivate the public's sense of belonging and commitment in heritage conservation work.

2. The proposed heritage trust, funded by the Government, donations from the public, corporations, charitable organizations, as well as proceeds from the Lotteries Fund, should be tasked to purchase, manage, maintain and develop historic buildings. It should also be used to support and match private sector/self-initiated heritage projects or foundations in the acquisition of worthwhile heritage buildings/sites.

3. While most agreed to the establishment of a heritage trust fund, there were some doubts about its ability to attract private donations.

4. There were suggestions that the initial capital injection into the proposed heritage trust fund should come from the unused allocation for infrastructure projects or land sales revenue, and that its recurrent expenditures be funded by hypothecation of part of the Betting Duty, introduction of a development tax or a heritage tax, donations from the private sector and income generated by the trust's business operation.

5. Some recognised the need to achieve proper interface between the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust and the proposed heritage trust fund.

IV. Legislative and Institutional Measures

A. Antiquities and Monuments (A&M) Ordinance

1. Most agreed that the A&M Ordinance, which was enacted some 30 years ago, should be reviewed and amended to catch up with the development and changing needs of heritage conservation. Some also criticised that there was a lack of coordination among the existing legislations for better protection of built heritage. One even suggested that the Ordinance should be repealed because it infringed private property rights.

2. Some suggested that the Ordinance should be amended to provide a clear definition of heritage and statutory protection for graded historic buildings. Flexibility for alternations to monuments or historic buildings should also be provided.

3. Some considered that the Government should work out a new system to protect different categories of declared monuments / graded buildings / historic areas in accordance with their different heritage value and that the various different levels of protection should be set out in the A&M Ordinance.

4. Economic incentives and owners' responsibilities over the preservation, restoration and maintenance of historic buildings should be spelt out in the A&M Ordinance. It was also suggested an appeal mechanism should be provided under the Ordinance.

B. Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)

1. Most considered that the current AMO was under-resourced. There were views that the authority, functions and staff support of AMO should be reviewed for effective discharge of its duties. A few supported that it should be placed under the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau (HPLB) or the Planning Department.

2. Some criticized that the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) and AMO should focus its attention and energy on heritage conservation, but not economic development. Some suggested that the Government should allocate more resources to AMO and AAB and that AMO should be upgraded to a Government department. The performance of AMO should be reviewed to identify areas of improvement, e.g. whether its performance is up to internationally recognised standards.

3. Some commented that there was a lack of coordination among bureaux and departments. Given that heritage conservation was an issue cutting across several sectors, coordination and cooperation among relevant bureaux and departments should be enhanced, say, by setting up an inter-departmental task force. Some proposed that HPLB should be the appropriate bureau for taking up heritage conservation policy and implementation work.

C. Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB)

1. Many agreed that AAB membership should be expanded to comprise more professionals, members of the public and stakeholders and be given more statutory powers. Some suggested that District Councils (DCs) members should be appointed to the AAB.

2. AAB meetings should be open to the public to enhance the transparency of its operation. The communication between AAB and the general public should be further strengthened so that public views could be taken into account.

3. Many supported the setting up of committees under AAB to enhance public participation in heritage conservation matters. There was a suggestion that AAB should be replaced by another powerful statutory board comprising relevant stakeholder groups and professional bodies.

D. Other legislative/institutional measures

1. Many suggested that we should set up a single heritage authority with the necessary power for heritage conservation as well as related controls on town planning, buildings and land development. The single authority might remain with the Home Affairs Bureau or be put under another bureau if deemed more appropriate; it could also be an independent entity with appropriate statutory powers.
2. It was also suggested that this dedicated authority should be tasked to ensure the efficient co-operation among government bureaux/departments and non-governmental conservation organisations, and the on-going provision of funds for the implementation of conservation initiatives and measures.
3. There was a suggestion that a review of each Government department's working practices and their impact on heritage conservation should be conducted, and that regular inter-departmental meetings aimed at coordinating heritage conservation matters should be held.
4. There were views that in the long run, a single conservation authority covering both natural and heritage conservation should be set up, given that there were many areas of convergence between the two.
5. Some also suggested that a new Heritage Impact Assessment Bill should be introduced. This would take heritage impact assessment away from its currently compromised form in the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance and accord it with a proper priority when considering development projects.
6. Apart from revamping the A&M Ordinance, amendments to the Town Planning Ordinance, Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance and Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance should be introduced to establish a proper overall legislative framework for heritage conservation.

E. Public engagement

1. The majority supported that the Government should enhance consensus building by strengthening community participation and involvement in heritage conservation matters. Many criticisms towards the present system stemmed mainly from the inadequate communication between the Government and the general public. It was important that critical information, such as feasible options of conservation based on expert opinions, should be disseminated to the public at an early stage of any public works project affecting built heritage to facilitate discussion.
2. In particular, DCs should be actively engaged in areas such as assessment and selection of historic buildings/sites in respective districts. Some suggested that heritage conservation task forces or working groups should be set up under DCs or other local organizations. Professional bodies should also be actively engaged in heritage conservation work.
3. There was a view that where possible conservation plans should be formulated at the district level to achieve a coherent theme and highlight the characteristics of individual districts. The Government should engage in direct dialogue with local residents instead of relying entirely on the DCs as the consultation channel.
4. A few considered that the Star Ferry Pier incident had shown that the current consultation mechanism failed to capture the voices of certain groups which were not part of the established consultative channels. The Government should be more sensitive to these alternative voices and try to maintain a constructive dialogue with these groups through other channels, e.g. the internet.
5. Some felt that volunteers should be actively engaged in organising educational activities and that proper training should also be provided to heritage tour guides. There was also a suggestion that a recognition system should be put in place to promote the culture of participation in heritage conservation activities by the general public.

6. Many supported that the Government should be more pro-active in promoting the public awareness of heritage conservation through various channels such as publicity programmes, school curriculum, exhibitions and interactive websites. It was believed that this could in turn promote the cultural identity of Hong Kong citizens.

7. Many agreed that the community should be engaged in heritage conservation matters, say by an “Adopt-a- Monument” programme where members of the public would assist in conducting research on historic buildings, helping to promote these buildings, leading guided walks, etc.

8. Some suggested that more resources should be allocated to universities or professional organisations to conduct research on heritage conservation.