

# **Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report: Government Response**

The Culture and Heritage Commission (The Commission), established in April 2000, is a high-level advisory body responsible for advising the government on the policies as well as funding priorities on culture and the arts. After three years of unflinching efforts, the Commission submitted the “Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report” to the government in April 2003, putting forward more than one hundred recommendations which cover overall policies as well as specific implementation strategies.

2. When the Report was received, the government was paying full attention in combating SARS and dealing with related issues. As a result, the response to the report was delayed. After the crisis, the Home Affairs Bureau conducted a detailed study on over a hundred recommendations therein. At the same time, we also made reference to the consultancy reports commissioned by the government on performance venues, libraries and museums, which were submitted to the Bureau in early 2003, mid-2003 and end 2003 respectively after public consultations.

3. The Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report will shape the long-term cultural development in Hong Kong. A table detailing our response to individual recommendations of the Report is at Annex. The main points are summarized as follows:

## **Strategies**

4. We recognise and accept the six strategies put forward by the Commission for promoting the long-term cultural development in Hong Kong: “people-oriented”, “pluralism”, “freedom of expression and protection of intellectual property”, “holistic approach”, “partnership” and “community-driven”.

## **Hong Kong’s Cultural Position**

5. The Commission’s position on the cultural identity, cultural literacy and social environment are crucial to the promotion of long-term cultural development in Hong Kong. We believe that Hong Kong people’s cultural affiliation with China is a process which takes time. The government will facilitate this process through civic education and other means, in order to nurture a strong cultural identity, a sense of belonging and pride towards Hong Kong, and with a view to strengthening our social cohesiveness. We concur that Hong Kong people’s cultural identity should start from local culture, be grounded in Chinese cultural traditions, and possess a global vision.

## **Education in Culture and the Arts**

6. We fully agree that education in culture and the arts for Hong Kong people (in particular the youth) plays a pivotal role in the long-term cultural development in Hong Kong. We are pleased that the Commission has put forward many important policy recommendations in this regard, including:

- a coherent and continuous arts education curriculum to close the gap in arts education beyond the junior secondary level and strengthen visual arts training at the tertiary level;
- a diversified and comprehensive curriculum in culture and the arts;

- strengthening arts teacher training and providing quality support in improving education in culture and the arts; and
- the promotion of arts education among the youth through inducing parents' resources and developing strategic partnerships.

7. We accept the above policy recommendations and have already set up a task force with the Education and Manpower Bureau for follow-up actions. In addition, we agree that the Music Office should assume a more prominent role in arts education. We will conduct an indepth study on the functions and mode of operation of the Music Office with a view to strengthening collaboration with schools and the community. We also recognise the significant influence of the media on education in culture and the arts. We will encourage the media to provide more coverage in culture and the arts, through different means.

### **Cultural Facilities**

8. We agree to the principle of developing the character of cultural venues. As performance venues are also used by non-arts groups and individuals for the purpose of holding activities, we will launch a public consultation on the introduction of "arts groups-in-residence" programme to take into account the views of the community. Meanwhile, we strive to promote the use of venues other than dedicated performance venues for cultural activities, including the encouragement of schools to open up their facilities for cultural activities and the provision of cultural and performance facilities in new school premises. We will also introduce a Private Sector Finance (PSF) pilot scheme, in which the private sector will finance, construct and operate a leisure and cultural facility in Kwun Tong. We intend to submit the proposal to the District Council and the Town Planning Board for consideration in mid-2004.

## **Resource Deployment and Institutional Framework**

9. We agree that recommendations on resource deployment and institutional framework should respond to and affirm the six strategies put forward by the Commission. We recognise that resources have been skewed towards the performing arts in the past. On the premises of not affecting the long-term development of the performing arts, we will gradually deploy more resources to the following five areas: heritage conservation, libraries, museums, promotion at district level and raising professional standard.

10. The Commission has depicted the long-term development of the cultural institutional framework in Hong Kong. We will carefully examine and give due consideration to all relevant factors, including protection of cultural rights of the public, impact on the cultural scene, quality and continuity of public cultural service, retention of cultural professionals, cost effectiveness, interest and legitimate rights of staff, as well as public views.

11. The government has been managing most of the cultural facilities for historical reasons. We agree that we should strengthen the involvement of the community in the management of public cultural facilities to forge partnership with the community. We will set up Libraries Advisory Committee, Museums Advisory Committee and Performing Arts Advisory Committee as soon as practicable, so that we could further solicit public views in managing the facilities and providing the services. These Advisory Committees will be responsible to the Secretary for Home Affairs, providing assistance in following up the government response.

## **Heritage Conservation**

12. We agree that heritage conservation is an essential part of any cultural policy. It is the government's responsibility to make long-term commitment to heritage conservation. Therefore, in 2003, we launched a comprehensive and systematic review on antiquities and monuments in order to examine how heritage conservation could be carried out effectively. We find that the existing policy in built heritage conservation faces the following problems:

- ◆ Public consensus and community support to heritage conservation needs to be enhanced.
- ◆ There is no comprehensive approach to systematically assess and select heritage items for protection.
- ◆ The Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance is rather inflexible in that it provides only one form of conservation (i.e. to declare buildings as monuments).
- ◆ It is difficult to conserve a whole street or an area when some buildings within it do not meet the stringent requirements for declaration.
- ◆ High land price makes the built heritage conservation extremely difficult.
- ◆ Economic incentives are insufficient.

13. We need to formulate a holistic approach that will enable Hong Kong to take a comprehensive view on what and how many heritage items are to be conserved, as well as to see through the whole conservation process from identification of heritage items for conservation to adaptive re-use and management. As the review involves complicated issues like public interest, private property rights and community building, we need social consensus and community support. Accordingly, we will conduct public consultations in stages. We have commenced the first stage consultation in February 2004, which focuses on broad policy concepts and core issues.

14. Following the conclusion of the first stage consultation, we will consolidate the views collected for further consideration, in order to formulate built heritage conservation policy for implementation. Having formulated detailed implementation measures, we will launch the second stage public consultation.

### **Cultural Exchange**

15. We agree to the Commission's strategic suggestions on the role and partners of cultural exchange as well as the importance of "city to city" exchanges for Hong Kong. Therefore, we took the initiative and signed an agreement on Pearl River Delta cultural co-operation with the Guangdong Province and Macao in August 2003. We have held summits and meetings in Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macao respectively to strengthen collaboration and exchanges in the following five areas:

- ◆ exchange and training of talents for performing arts;
- ◆ exchange of cultural information and co-operation on ticketing network;
- ◆ development of museum network and the excavation, conservation and promotion of heritage;
- ◆ co-operation and exchange in digital libraries network; and
- ◆ promotion of Cantonese Opera.

Besides, we also organised the first ever "Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum" in September 2003, and reached consensus with cultural ministers of Asian countries on cultural co-operation.

## **Creative Industries**

16. We agree that under a knowledge-based economy, cultural activities are possible means to give momentum to economic development. Hong Kong remains a remarkably free and open port of cultural exchange. With its unique geographical location and advanced information networks, the city possesses favourable conditions for developing creative industries. The government's overall policy in promoting creative industries is to improve the business environment, safeguard a free economy, induce local and overseas business investments, and forge partnership between "creative talents" and "entrepreneurs". The government will not make direct investment in or provide special privileges to any particular business. The role of the government is to provide a necessary level-playing business environment for creative industries to flourish. All in all, the government's key policies are to strengthen arts education, to enhance co-operation between cultural and business sectors, to foster regional collaborations and to carry out research and development.

## **West Kowloon Cultural District**

17. We agree that the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) development presents an unprecedented opportunity for a new horizon of cultural development in Hong Kong. We also agreed that emphasis should be given to the principles of "people-oriented", "partnership" and "community-driven" in the planning and development of WKCD. We will forge partnerships between developers and the community (particularly the cultural sector) to facilitate community involvement in the planning and operation of the cultural facilities in WKCD.

## **Conclusion**

18. The Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report depicts our future cultural scene, serving as an important reference for the cultural development in Hong Kong. It is imperative that any policy needs to be timely and readily adaptable to the changing social environment. We will follow up on the policy recommendations of the Report. We will also endeavour to foster inter-departmental collaboration, and to induce and consolidate community support for creating an environment conducive to the vibrant development of culture and the arts in Hong Kong.

Home Affairs Bureau  
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