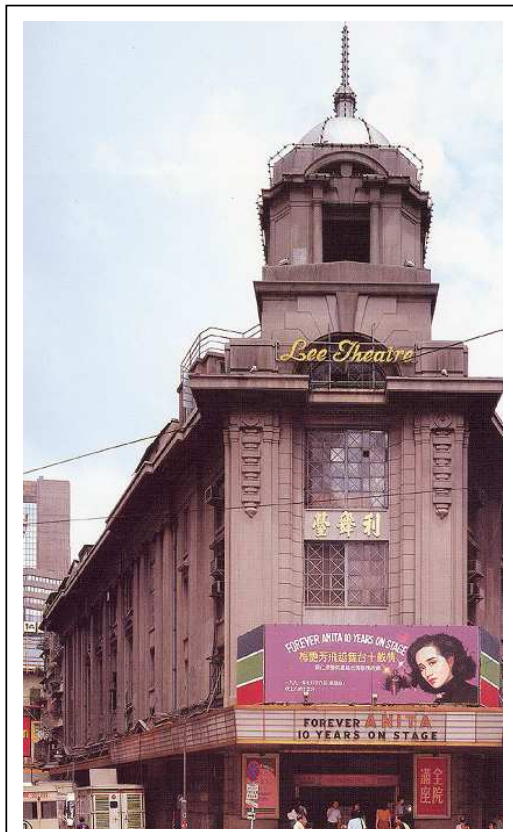




## Report on Heritage Conservation – we all gain



**The Conservancy Association**

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**Sponsored by Lord Wilson Heritage Trust**



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## A. Background

To bridge up the phase one and phase two of the heritage conservation consultation document, The Conservancy Association organized a project called “Heritage Conservation – we all gain” to understand the viewpoint and attitude of the general public towards heritage conservation. This project was made possible under the generous support of Lord Wilson Heritage Trust. The project not only provide a territorial-wide picture of public’s view but also an in-depth view from the focus group and stakeholders on the direction of heritage conservation in Hong Kong.

The project comprised of 6 sessions including, 2 focus group meetings, 4 regional workshops, 11 exhibitions, a 18-district outdoor survey, post questionnaires, and a citizen hearing. Summary of the project’s activities are as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Anticipated No. of Participants</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
18/6/04 -12/7/04	---	<b>Post Questionnaires</b>	---	1000	<b>1012</b>
26/6/04	10am-12pm	<b>Focus Group</b> (HK Island)	City Hall	30	<b>19</b>
26/6/04 -8/7/04	9am –1pm 2pm –6pm	<b>Exhibition</b>	11 spots (see exhibition summary)	4500	<b>5900</b>
29/6/04 - 6/7/04	9am –1pm 2pm –6pm	<b>Outdoor Survey</b>	18 districts (see survey summary)	2250	<b>2250</b>
27/6/04	3-5pm	<b>Workshop</b> (Kowloon)	Hong Kong Scout Centre	80-100	<b>36</b>
3/7/04	10am-12pm	<b>Focus Group</b> (Kowloon)	Hong Kong Scout Centre	30	<b>15</b>
4/7/04	10-12pm	<b>Workshop</b> (HK Island)	Causeway Bay Community Centre	80-100	<b>33</b>
4/7/04	10am-12pm	<b>Workshop</b> (NT West)	Tuen Mun City Hall	80-100	<b>21</b>
11/7/04	3-5pm	<b>Workshop</b> (NT East)	Lung Hang Community Centre	80-100	<b>20</b>
18/7/04	3-5pm	<b>Citizen Hearing</b>	City University	200-300	<b>66</b>
Total				8510	<b>9372</b>

Nearly 10000 people joined the program and expressed their opinions on heritage conservation. Reports were compiled on the Focus Group meetings, outdoor

survey and post questionnaires, Workshops and Citizen Hearing.

## **B. Objectives achieved:**

### **1. Collect People's Views and Comments on Heritage Conservation and the recent Consultation Document on "Review of Built Heritage Conservancy Policy" published by the Government.**

A number of public-view collection programs including 2 focus group meetings, 4 regional workshops, one citizen hearing had been organized from June to July. During these programs, participants were asked about their comments on heritage conservation and the recent consultation document on "review of built heritage conservation policy". Besides, a total of 3262 sets of questionnaires were received from the general public on the attitudes towards heritage conservation. The views collected revealed the public expectation on the direction of heritage conservation. For example, more than half of the people interviewed agreed that they are willing to pay \$35 for heritage conservation every year.

### **2. Understand the most concerned areas in heritage conservation that are identified by the public**

This objective was well achieved through the focus group meetings, workshops and citizen hearing, majority of the participants could readily spell out their most concerned areas in heritage conservation. For example, they showed concern on the funding sources for heritage conservation as well as the usage of such resources in the conserved heritage. The participants also expressed their interest over further conservation work to be done on certain declared heritage monuments in the questionnaires.

### **3. Investigate how much the public would like to give, in terms of economic or non-economic point of views, on heritage conservation**

Through the questionnaires, the economic point of views on heritage conservation were solicited. The respondents were asked as to the amount they would pay for heritage conservation given the GDP of a year. The understanding of this topic is crucial as the results reflected the attitude of the public on heritage conservation issue and the value of heritage conservation. The results acted as a useful reference tool for us and relevant bodies to establish appropriate planning, activities and policies regarding the direction and resources to be invested in heritage conservation.

### **4. Putting Forward the Public's Comments to the Government**

The comments we have collected were put forward to Home Affairs Bureau upon completion of the projects. With the information/views collected from the public, a report will be prepared in which we will summarize the views/suggestions of the public and recommendations will be given. This process is critical as the success of heritage conservation relies on proactive participation of the Government and how the government understand the expectations of the citizens. The report outlined the objectives achieved through the Project, the results from the surveys, interpretations on the public's comments regarding the Consultation document, our evaluation on the project and our recommendations on heritage conservation.

### **5. Strengthen Public's knowledge on heritage conservation, encourage all parties to participate actively in the discussion on conservation policy**

The exhibitions held in 18 districts has served two main purposes: (1) as a good channel to strengthen the public's knowledge and their appreciation on heritage conservation, and (2) to encourage more public participation in the topic, in particular, the policy aspect. Most people were attracted by the beautiful and familiar photos of the heritage, then they started to go into details on the current system in protecting heritage in Hong Kong, the importance of conserving heritage and how to conserve heritage. Apart from the exhibitions in 18 districts, workshops in 4 main regions in Hong Kong were held. Through the workshops, we provided background knowledge on heritage conservation to the layman participants so that we can generate proactive discussions on heritage conservation. As a result, the general public from the 18 districts not only improved their knowledge in their regional and territorial-wise heritage, but also significantly raise their awareness and enhance their attitude on heritage conservation. Finally, they would put this knowledge into actions, contributing in heritage conservation.

## **C. Project Content**

### **1. Focus Group Meeting**

#### **I. Background**

Funding was granted to the Conservancy Association by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust to conduct a project on heritage conservation. The key element of this project is to gather the public's views and opinions on heritage conservation. As part of the Study, two focus group meetings were held in which selected professionals, including town planners, and representatives from the government and the business sector, were invited to participate. The focus group meetings provided a forum for the open exchange of views amongst individuals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds.

Two focus group meetings held on 26 June 2004 and 3 July 2004 at City Hall in Central and the Hong Kong Scout Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui, respectively. Both meetings were well attended with 19 participants in the first meeting and 15 participants in the latter. The participants included representatives from Government, private sector developers and consultants, academics, NGOs as well as individuals concerned with heritage conservation in Hong Kong. A list of attendees is attached in Appendix 1. Each meeting lasted for 2 hours within which participants were first presented a brief power point on current efforts in heritage preservation in Hong Kong and then they were invited to express their views on the following questions:

- What mechanisms for heritage conservation do you think are most appropriate for Hong Kong?
- Who should be responsible for funding heritage conservation?
- How should funds be allocated?
- What long-term uses are appropriate for heritage monuments?

For each of the questions above, a list of non-exhaustive alternatives were displayed to arouse and facilitate discussions. These are provided at Appendix 2. The following is a summary of the different views collected. (please see Appendix 3 and 4 for the sample and the result of the questionnaire.)

## **II. Mechanisms for Heritage Conservation**

As a general principle, it was widely agreed that heritage conservation should not take away private sector rights. However, within this understanding, various differing opinions were discussed.

### **a. Zoning of Private Lots**

It was suggested that Government could expand its coverage of the existing “OU-heritage” zoning (which is currently in very limited use to reflect the AMO declared monuments) as a more proactive means for heritage zoning. The zoning process allow private land owners a chance to object to the zoning, whilst there would also be a list of uses which may be permitted within the zone upon application to the Town Planning Board (TPB). However, the scope of the TPB in relation to existing responsibilities of the AMO would need to be clarified further.

It was also noted that the zoning of heritage sites would require support by other mechanisms, since zoning alone could not ensure that heritage monuments would be maintained in good condition.

Some participants however considered the “OU-heritage zone” to be a down-zoning of sites. This led to debates on whether the transfer of development rights should be associated with the “OU-heritage” zone. There was concern with regard to “fairness” in the planning system whether this transfer of rights be allowed, since many privates sites have been down zoned to other zonings in the past with no redress from Government.

The restriction on private sector rights was also seen as a deterrent to heritage conservation. One participant queried on the incentive for private owners to maintain their sites in good condition, if such efforts (and resources) would mean that the future redevelopment potential of the site is reduced.

### **b. Private Sector Incentives**

It was suggested that the private sector could be encouraged to donate heritage monuments to Government in exchange for permanent recognition. However, the development rights associated with the heritage monument should not be lost. These rights should transferred by means of transfer of GFA or plot ratio elsewhere. One point of concern was that the amount of development rights to be transferred should be determined by the overall development value (e.g. the transfer of development rights to a site in a less valuable location should be reflected in an

increase of GFA or plot ratio.)

It was also suggested that bonus plot ratio may be granted to a developer who undertakes to conserve and maintain the heritage monument is conserved and opens it up for public use. However, the bonus plot ratio suggested is just a concept, not a concrete figure.

### c. Resumption of Private Lands

The need to deal with different sectors of the public was recognized, i.e. those with and without knowledge of heritage conservation. Whilst informed members of the public may play a greater role in conserving and maintaining heritage properties, Government should also derive mechanisms to conserve heritage buildings in deteriorating condition or in danger of ruin.

With reference to the UK system of Stop Purchase Orders, it was suggested that Government should have the right to purchase heritage sites in danger of redevelopment. The value of the site would be based on existing, rather than potential GFA.

## **III. Funding**

### a. Various sources of funding were considered including:

- Land tax or land rates
- A special developer's tax on the heritage site, which could be factored in by the developer as an overall development cost
- Private sector donations of funds or heritage buildings and other resources. This would however require the setting up of an appropriate body to receive and manage such donations.
- Entrance fees to heritage buildings
- Cross funding from the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) or other parties

However, the participants did not indicate the priority of the sources of funding.

## **IV. Allocation of Funds**

### a. Creation of a Heritage Trust

It was broadly agreed that a Heritage Trust should be set up to be able to receive, manage and allocate funds for heritage conservation in Hong Kong. It was suggested that Government heritage sites (such as the Victoria Prison Complex in Central) should be given to the Trust to dispose of. The funds obtained from the sales of such prominent sites would create a large pool of resources to manage



and maintain other heritage monuments throughout Hong Kong. At the same time, the Heritage Trust should consider profit-generating activities from other heritage resources to help finance its operations. Reference was made to the UK system which has experienced a degree of commercial success.

## **V. Long-Term Uses for Heritage Monuments**

### **a. Profit-Generating or Not? Open/Closed to Public?**

The following options were suggested as uses for heritage monuments, although there was no clear conclusion on what was considered to be the most “appropriate” use:

- Museum
- Residential
- Boutique Hotel
- Community Facilities
- Continuation of existing uses

It was generally agreed that the use of a monument depends very much on the monument itself, the surrounding land uses, and its context in society. The party (ies) responsible for the use of the monument should be aware of the elements that are most valued by the public and endeavor to preserve those elements.

Consideration should also be made to the original design and intent of heritage buildings to ensure that the building can withstand the increased load and amount of traffic that may be associated with certain uses. Structural improvements should not adversely affect the heritage value. Therefore, the workshops did not draw any priority in the appropriate uses of heritage.

## **VI. Other Issues Discussed**

### **a. Expanded Role of the Antiques & Monuments Office (AMO)?**

The AMO is the current authority for heritage conservation. However, they only have the resources to list approximately 8 buildings each year and lack the powers to inspect buildings under private ownerships. With over 8,500 buildings built before 1950 in Hong Kong, query was raised whether the AMO should have an expanded role and associated powers. At the same time, since local residents should be most familiar with their own neighborhoods and local history, should the community at large be involved in determining what should be conserved?

## b. What is Heritage?

“Heritage” is a broad term which encompass man-made structures or natural resources to less tangible items like “living heritage” (e.g. traditions and events). Whilst most participants agreed on the need to conserve man-made structures, there was higher uncertainty with regard to preserving the “living heritage”.

## **VII. General Conclusions**

- There is a need for greater heritage conservation in Hong Kong
- Conservation should not be considered on a single project basis, but rather in its overall context
- Government needs to recognize the public benefits of heritage conservation and educate the public on the value of heritage preservation
- There should be recognition and protection of commercial interests when conserving buildings in private ownership
- Heritage conservation should be a win-win situation for all parties involved

## **2. Questionnaires analysis**

### **I. Background**

In June and July, The Conservancy Association randomly sent out 2500 questionnaires to 20 companies, 30 Housing estates, 18 organizations and 20 schools. 1012 questionnaires were returned, the students and their family members contributed to the high returned rate of the questionnaire. In late June, 2 teams of interviewer were sent to 18 districts to survey citizens on their attitude towards heritage conservation. Finally, 2250 questionnaires were resulted. 125 questionnaires were conducted for each of the 18 districts. Together with the 1012 questionnaires mentioned above, a brief analysis of the 3262 results was conducted as below. Details of the figures and findings is attached under questionnaires result section.

Listed below is the background of the respondents for reference:

- 51% of the respondents are male while 49 % are female
- 59% of the respondents are aged between 15-30 while 31% are 31-55 and 10% are above 55 respectively
- 10% of the respondents are primary of school level or below, 43% are secondary graduate and 47% with secondary school education background or above
- 79% earns less than \$10000, 19% earns from \$10000-\$30000 while 2% earns more than \$30000 respectively

### **II. Analysis**

When the respondents were asked about the 4 criteria to conserve a heritage, more than 66% of the respondents agree on all 4 criteria. 79% respondents believed that building with unique structural characteristic such as Kam Tong Hall (甘棠第) should be “an important” or “very important” criterion to conserve the building. 82% of the respondents believed that building with important historical background such as Nga Chin Wei Village (衙前圍 ) should be an important or very important criterion when considering conserving that building. While 66% and 70% of the respondents respectively agreed that local culture or collective memories and traditional rural culture should be deemed as “important” or “very important” criterion to consider.

From question 1 results, it showed that the respondents are of great diversity in the criteria to heritage conservation that 66% of the respondents agreed on all the 4

criteria.

In view of the most appropriate tool to conserve a heritage, 4 options were provided for the respondents' consideration. 75% of the respondents believed that legislation or legal enforcement against the demolition of heritage and heritage trust establishments are the most appropriate tools for heritage conservation. 63% of the respondents thought that offering incentive to the heritage owner for conserving the heritage is an appropriate tool. The least respondents, with still more than half of survey target, 54% agreed that transfer of the development right is the most proper tool for conserving the heritage.

From the response of question 2, we can see that the respondents opt for an integrated approach to conserve the heritage with both a long-term tool: establishing a heritage trust and an immediate tool: legislation or legal enforcement.

When considering what a heritage should become if it is being conserved, 74% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it should become a public facility such as museum or community centre office. While 62% and 60% believed that it should be kept as it is and open regularly for visitor respectively. 54% responded that the heritage should be developed as a self-sustained commercial facility such as a tourist spot.

Regarding the funding to conserve the heritage, almost 2/3 of the respondents agreed that it should come from the Government. It showed that citizen still believed that government should take the responsibility to conserve heritage. A point to note is that more than 1/3 of the respondents thought that to develop the heritage as a self-sustain commercial facility is not a feasible way to conserve the heritage, so they put this option as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> priority.

In view of the Government expenditure to conserve heritage, 61% of the respondents agreed that the Government should use 240 million i.e. 0.1% of the total Government expenditure for heritage conservation. However, 28% of the respondents believed the Government should spend more, around 2.4 billion or 1% of the total Government expenditure. From result of question 5, it is concluded that the Government should spend more to conserve heritage as compare to the small amount \$577 million (including cultural heritage and museum service) in 2002-03 on heritage conservation.

54% of the respondents, are willing to pay \$35 every year for heritage conservation. Around 30% of the respondents will pay more than \$35 for heritage conservation if

they were asked to pay for an amount for heritage conservation. From response of question 6, over 90% of the respondents believed that they are willing to pay for heritage conservation in Hong Kong with minimum 35% every year. Government may consider devote more resources to conserve heritage to meet citizen's expectation.

When the respondents were being asked on the allocation of heritage conservation expenditure, around 80% believed that the money should be used to preserve and protect the declared heritages. 66% thought that the expenditure should be used for education towards heritage conservation while 44% should be used to buy the heritage.

In view of the heritage buildings that had been demolished, the respondents given a list of over 20 heritage which were worth conserving such as Lee Theatre, Tiger and Palm Garden, Tiu Keng Leng village and Diamond Hill Squatter Area. However, there are some heritages such as TST Clock Tower and Star Ferry Pier have not been demolished. It showed that the heritage knowledge of some of the respondents is not very high. However, echoing to the result of question 1, the heritage mentioned in this question are of great diversity including important historical background such as Sung Wong Toi (宋皇台), unique structural characteristic such as the Tiger and Palm Garden, local culture or collective memories such as Bird Market in Hong Lok Street (雀仔街), Lai Chi Kok Amusement Park (荔園), and rural culture such as Yim Tin in Tai O (大澳鹽田).

Regarding the heritage to be conserved, among the 13 options, more than half of the respondents regarded that wishing tree of Lam Tsuen (林村許願樹) and Victoria Harbor are the heritage that they would like to conserve. On the other hand, only around 1/6 respondent believed that the Wanchai Market and the gathering on June 4 is worth conserving.

### **3. Regional Workshop**

#### **I. Background**

A core objective of this project is to gather the current public views on heritage conservation in Hong Kong. Similar like the focus group meetings, the workshops provided a platform where participants' views were exchanged, discussed and meticulously recorded. What sets it apart from the former is that the workshops encompassed individuals from all walks of life who are interested in heritage conservation and are willing to share their thoughts instead of the selected professionals.

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Four 2-hours workshops were organized within a three-week period in four different regions in Hong Kong:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
27/6/2004 am	Kowloon (Jordan)	36
3/7/2004 am	Hong Kong Island (North Point)	33
3/7/2004 pm	NT West (Tuen Mun)	21
11/7/2004 am	NT East (Tai Wai)	20

Each workshop began with a short briefing by the lead facilitator to familiarize participants with the general situation of heritage conservation in Hong Kong. Afterwards, participants were divided into groups of about ten, exchanging views on the four questions that were also discussed in focus group meetings:

- What mechanisms for heritage conservation do you think are most appropriate for Hong Kong?
- Who should be responsible for funding heritage conservation?
- How should funds be allocated?
- What long-term uses are appropriate for heritage monuments?

Two facilitators, trained and well-briefed on the discussion topics, were assigned to each group to record participants' opinions and guide the group in its discussions (see Appendix 5 for the outline of the briefing by the lead facilitators in the regional workshops). Each issue were then discussed within a pre-set amount of time, after which each group reported the discussion outcomes. The following is a summary of opinions collected from the four workshops.

#### **II. Mechanisms for Heritage Conservation**

In each workshop, the Conservancy Association provided a list of six mechanisms to initiate discussions. Participants were then encouraged to comment on the pros and cons of each mechanism, and on any new mechanisms they initiated in the discussion. At the end, participants were allowed to vote for three mechanisms which they think would work best in Hong Kong. On tabulating the votes after the four workshops, TDR and Heritage Trust clearly received, by far, the most votes. It is worth pointing out that participants in general feel reserved about choosing any one of the mechanisms as ‘the best’; rather, the general consensus was that mechanisms work best as a package, and different mechanisms may be appropriate in different situations. The following is a brief digest on the comments.

<b>Mechanisms</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Donated by owner	9%
Maintain by Govt. but open to public	13%
Increase the plot ratio	14%
Demolition restriction by Law	9%
Transfer of Development Right	23%
Independent Heritage Trust	32%

**a. Preferred mechanisms**

*i. Transfer of Development Rights (including Letter B)*

TDR, or the exchange of land at an alternate site to compensate for the development restriction to protect a built heritage at the original site, is widely considered as the most practical mechanism by the participants. Indeed, it has the effect of turning built heritage from a liability to an asset. Having a building declared as a monument will no longer be a disastrous event for the property owner, as the development potential lost by a demolition restriction will be compensated by a development right elsewhere. However, calculating such a fair exchange will not be easy. In addition, TDR requires significant government resources (even though costs may be hidden), as land in Hong Kong is always a precious commodity.

*ii. Independent Heritage Trust*

The idea of the Heritage Trust, an organization independent from the government and which manages and finances heritage conservation activities, was also widely supported by participants. An arrangement already operating successfully in many Western countries (of particular note is UK’s *English Heritage*), Hong Kong can learn much from these cases. Participants see the heritage trust as a more dedicated organization, being established for the sole purpose of heritage

conservation. It is also more capable to do its job, having centralized resources, power and expertise into one entity, which are now scattered among too many government departments. Furthermore, it is also financially more dependable and flexible. It is able to receive donations and use earnings from profitable projects to subsidize the unprofitable ones. At the same time, participants noted that high transparency and public participation in its operations would be crucial for the trust to gain the legitimacy it needs to succeed.

格式化: 字型色彩: 自動

b. Others mechanisms for specific scenarios

Apart from the two mechanisms highlighted above, other mechanisms discussed in the workshops were found to be useful in some specific situations.

*i. When the owner lacks money for maintenance*

If maintenance cost is the problem for the landowner, then it is possible to apply the arrangement where the government takes over maintenance responsibilities while leaving the property use unchanged, but requires the landowner to grant public access to its properties on certain days. This is the mechanism currently utilized to conserve Sheung Shui's Ho Sheung Heung Hau Ku Shek Ancestral Hall. However, for this to be successful, both the property itself and the use involved has to be suitable for public visits.

*ii. When involving large landowners*

If the property owning a structure that requires preservation also owns the surrounding land, the mechanism to allow for the increase of plot ratio on the surrounding land in exchange for preservation of the building will be a useful option. But the resulting overshadowing of the conserved building and densification of built areas may be a problematic trade-off.

*iii. Last resorts*

In case of emergencies, demolition restriction by law can halt demolition until other arrangements are worked out may be useful. Other participants suggested the relocation of buildings to another site as an option when all others fail: at least the building will not be permanently lost.

*iv. To be encouraged at all times*

Finally, donation of the heritage by the property owner is an option that participants feel could be encouraged. While it would be unrealistic to rely on this as the only mechanism for heritage conservation, arguably, instances of property donations can be encouraged with government medals or tax incentives, as participants from various workshops have suggested.



### III. Funding

In the discussion of the source of money to fund heritage activities, suggestions by participants fall roughly in three broad categories.

#### a. Government

There seems to be a broad consensus that any new taxes to fund heritage activities should come from non-essential items and activities not directly related to daily life. Not one participant suggested increasing income tax or establishing sales tax for the purpose of heritage conservation. Options that were frequently suggested include:

- Gambling taxes
- Alcohol/ tobacco tax
- Airport tax, tax on tourists
- Periodic transfer from Mark Six funds

Reducing expenditures in other areas as a method for deriving heritage conservation funds were also **considered unlikely**. Stiff opposition is anticipated from affected sectors.

#### b. Levies along the development process

As it is ultimately the re-development process that leads to demolition of heritage buildings, many participants suggested adding a surcharge on the land development process to contribute to the funding in heritage conservation. Proposals include adding a heritage surcharge on the lot price when developers purchase land from the government.

#### c. Donations and fundraising activities

Donations require the establishment of a heritage trust as a legitimate destination for the funds. Ideas include:

- Public donations
- *Adopt-a-Building* scheme
- Horse-racing Heritage Cup

### IV. Allocation of Funds

In our discussions, participants were asked to decide how the money for heritage conservation should be used (including purchasing buildings, maintenance, and education), assuming that there is a budget for heritage conservation.

Several points are apparent from the workshop discussions.

1. The proportion will shift over time. The right mix of funding allocation for now might not be the right mix in a few years' time. The proportion will be adjusted

constantly to reflect the actual need at the time.

2. The proportion depends on the total amount of funds available. An example is purchasing buildings. The cost of each building is so great that it may be meaningless to allocate a percentage of funds for purchasing, even if it is deemed important, if it means an exhaustion of fundings available.
3. Ranking for importance does not equal the ranking for monetary allocation. For example, while purchasing buildings may not be as high a priority, it may still occupy a disproportionate sum of the fund. Similarly, education may be considered the most important, but a much smaller fund (in comparison to the fund for purchasing buildings) may already suffice.
4. No consensus emerged from the workshops as to how heritage fund should be allocated. Participants' views were quite diverse in this issue, and each use is considered important by at least some participants.

#### a. Purchase first

Participants who believed that purchasing buildings is the most important use of heritage funds argued that purchasing is often the only way to protect a certain structure before it is too late. Even if education efforts are successful and everybody comes to a consensus that old buildings should be preserved, if no funding has been spent on purchases there might be none for educated citizens to visit by that time.

#### b. Maintenance first

Participants who believed that maintenance should be given priority over purchasing buildings as purchasing is too expensive an exercise to be carried out more once or twice a year.. In reality, the conservation of buildings should be left to other less expensive mechanisms and the heritage funding should instead be concentrated in maintaining the buildings already under the government or the trust's ownership.

#### c. Education first

There are also participants who argued that education is the most important, seeing it as a long-term investment that will pay-off eventually even if no immediate results come up. They saw education as a necessary precondition for meaningful public participation, and before citizens can conduct rational discussions on what heritage should be preserved.

#### d. Other ideas

Besides using heritage funds in the three ways listed above, participants also came up with other ideas for allocation. The following are two suggestions. (1) Some

participants believed that the funds, whether as a loan or as a grant, could be used to encourage people to turn heritage buildings into some sort of profitable business. (2) Rather than spending the initial heritage fund, making investment using those fund to build a large financial based would be a priority for the first few years.

## **V. Long-Term Uses of Heritage Building**

As for how the protected buildings should be best put into use, some consensus were gathered from the discussions in the four workshops. First of all, just like the discussion on mechanisms, it is impossible to nominate just one 'best' use that fits all heritage buildings. Instead, decisions on how a building should be best used should be based on the building's character, uniqueness in design, as well as keeping in mind the structure's physical constraints. In addition, successful conservation will also involve supporting infrastructure and comprehensive planning in the surrounding area.

As for the specific uses, the options are quite broad. The decision of how to use a building can rest with the Heritage Fund, which would have a responsibility to actively gather public opinions and make a decision that reflects their suggestions. The following list contains only a selection of different uses that is raised by participants in the various workshops.

### a. Distinct theme

Repackaged a built heritage into a themed destination to attract more tourists. An example is Taipei's former US Embassy, which had been abandoned for decades before the building is renovated and transformed into a films centre, which include classrooms, cafes, cinemas, and a bookstore on its grounds. It is now a popular gathering place in Taipei.

### b. For-profit uses

If making money is an important goal for a particular building, Philadelphia's *Historic Landmark for Living* is a useful example. *Historic Landmark for Living* is a for-profit developer that specialises in purchasing old buildings with distinctive architectural merit, and transforming these buildings into residential units. The result is luxurious apartments that are quite popular. Renovation into hotels is another possibility.

### c. Public access guarantee

If the consensus is that public access to the building should be guaranteed, then a community use for the building might be preferred. The former Tsang Yuk Hospital in Sai Ying Pun is now turned into the Western District Community Centre. Other

communities use that guarantees public access include museums and galleries.

## **VI. General Conclusions**

- TDR and Heritage Trust are two preferred mechanisms for heritage conservation that participants believe are applicable to Hong Kong.
- Flexibility in the approach is essential, whether in choosing the right mechanism in conservation, the right proportion in allocation of heritage funds, or the right use for conserved buildings.
- Public education is a precondition to rational discussion and successful conservation.
- Conservation efforts should make on neighborhoods as the planning unit, and not just individual buildings.  
And consistently raised by participants even though it is not an issue to be discussed in the workshops is this final point:
- Hong Kong still lacks a clear idea of what heritage should represent. It will be fundamental to the successful heritage conservation to develop a shared consensus on what heritage actually is, and what should be conserved.

## **4. Citizen Hearing**

### **I. Background**

The Conservancy Association has been granted funding by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust to conduct a project on heritage conservation. One key part of this project is to gather the public's views and opinions on heritage conservation. To conclude the study, a citizen hearing was carried out to sum up and present the findings in the earlier stages. Participants from various sectors were invited, and they were strongly encouraged to give a short presentation on their views and stance towards the heritage issue.

Citizen hearing provided a channel for professionals to share their expertise and perceptions with the general public, and vice versa.

The citizen hearing was held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2004 at Wei Hing Theatre in City University. There were 66 participants, including representatives from district council, private sector developers and consultants, professional institutes, academics, NGOs and individuals concerned with the heritage conservation in Hong Kong. The citizen hearing lasted for two and a half hours, it consisted of a panel of 3 representatives and a moderator. Summary of the data which drawn from the consultation exercises such as workshop and questionnaires were presented at the beginning. Followed by the presentation from the speakers, and finally the presentation of the citizens. There were 6 speakers in total represented different institutions and organizations in presenting their viewpoints and some of them on their own behalf. Name of the individuals who has given the original opinions were stated in brackets. For others who showed support or concur to opinions given or with slightly different views were not considered as personal opinion and thus were not quoted.

### **II. Views of guest speakers:**

#### **a. What are heritages?**

Heritages include both cultural and building conservation, it is about customs, traditions, festivals and street life, and it can be a collective memory and a cultural identity. Mentioned by Mr. Chan W. K. from the Panel, heritage is a cross-generational topic, and it is one of the sustainability issues.

Some participants think that whether a heritage worth public concern is largely depended on the media (Ada Wong). Wan Chai Market which is the last Bauhaus style building in Hong Kong, is highly recommended by the expert to conserve it.

However, according to the survey conducted by the Conservancy Association, it had the least votes. Furthermore in the survey conducted by HKU (Agenda 21), about 70% of respondents think that Wan Chai Market can be demolished. People concerns about compensation over the value of the heritage, and it is believed that due to the high publicity generated by the media, the issue of King Ying Lei got the highest score among all (Ada Wong). While Wan Chai Market has not been widely reported on its status and features, it is only a wet and dirty old market in citizens' eyes.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, collective memory in the eyes of expert may not be a 'memory' that the public had experienced. There is the discrepancy between the eyes and perception of expert and the laymen. Planners' eyes are idealized, therefore public consultation is needed to draw a consensus between both parties.

*i. The change of heritage conservation*

Hong Kong is unique in its heritage, we have Victorian style buildings and Chinese styles harmoniously. If they were gone, Hong Kong would be no different than any other cities.

The heritage conservation policy was ad-hoc and passive (Mr. Andrew Chan – the former planner of the government). Two international examples are stated, U.S. and Australia. U.S. concerned about heroic-related heritage, and has become more about social history nowadays, while Australia, has a shorter history, therefore it focuses on natural conservation.

b. How to conserve?

Heritage should not be conserved individually by buildings, the surrounding areas should be taken into account. UK is the pioneer to conserve the whole area for heritage.

*i. Points, lines, surfaces*

A holistic approach is suggested to conserve heritage, from points (building) to line (street) and at last the surface (area) (Mr. Roger Tang from HKIP). The example of Chinatown in Singapore illustrates how heritage is being conserved by conserving the whole area. He further suggested that applying this example into Sheung Wan area, by linking the Western Market and the Dry Seafood Street (Mr. Roger Tang from HKIP).

*ii. Inter-departmental cooperation*

Heritage is a cross-sectional issue, inter-departmental cooperation is important and coordination between departments is needed. The current situation in Hong Kong is fragmented, each department solely cares about their own interests. Some think that a clear mechanism should be set with regulation and policy, before talking about private ownership right, and it is suggested to have an inter-departmental unit to manage heritage issues (Mr. Daniel Cheung from CARE).

*iii. Transparency of the mechanism*

The criteria in conserving heritage are unclear, it is not opened to the public and it does not state which kind or type of buildings need to be preserved. A more transparent mechanism and assessment system is necessary to enhance a more comprehensive heritage conservation. Moreover, some think that heritage conservation should be carried out ideological and technically, in which the value of the heritage should not be assessed by the grading system, and collective memory and the cultural identity should be taken into consideration (Mr. Louis Ng).

*iv. Social development and heritage conservation*

In UK, issues of social inclusion and exclusion are highly aware. Participant of the hearing suggested that Hong Kong should pay more attention on the relation between heritage conservation and social development, and it is further advised that Hong Kong could apply the example in UK into the case of Wan Chai, in which community connection is important, and how can heritage conservation facilitate harmonious community and sustain the 'core values' of the district (Mr. Louis Ng).

*v. Management*

Some participants commented that the conservation and use of heritage are fragmented (Ms. Betty Ho). AMO is in charge of assessing and declaration of heritage sites/ buildings but GPA and Lands Department are responsible for future use of the heritage. It is suggested that land use and management should be considered together (Ms. Betty Ho). However, these are often based on monetary return rather than suitability of the use. Integrated approach with inter and intra departmental cooperation and coordination is required. An independent office in charge of both the declaration of heritage and use and management should be set up. Some also agreed that a management plan is needed when declaring a monument or an area, to ensure that the heritage

would turn into a compatible and suitable use (Mr. Andrew Chan).

*vi. Education*

In addition, speakers agreed that education is important in conserving heritage in the long run. By using the case of Wan Chai Market, experts have different angle of views from the citizens, the questions of what, how and which to conserve require a consensus between both parties. Education can help to pave the way for reaching a consensus in the future.

*c. Funding*

*i. Consensus Building on Heritage Trust Fund*

It is required to build consensus to find out how much should the funding be and who should pay for it, to rank the priority of conserving different heritage and to decide how much it needs. The government should extract part of the land sales money into a Heritage Trust Fund to act as a starting point, private donations is highly encouraged and funding can also be drawn from taxes, e.g. development tax.

*ii. Government subsidy*

In order to sustain heritage conservation, government subsidy is essential. Some speakers insisted the important of setting up a Trust to finance the projects (Mr. Daniel Cheung). Some participants tended to think, "If government want to conserve the heritage, he must subsidize the funding, there is no free lunch." (Mr. Daniel Cheung)

*iii. Other issues discussed*

- There must be a good incentive offered for the developers or owners to motivate conservation effort.
- It is suggested that heritage is an asset of Hong Kong, it can be a profit-making tool through tourism. Apart from the revenue from tourism, there are also intangible benefits generated through the heritage (Mr. Wong Wang Tai).
- Mr. Stephen Chan raised a question for audience to think, "How to 'revitalize' the place in consideration of the collective memory, how can the old business and heritages be sustained?" He used "NPH – Nam Pak Hang" as a case to illustrate how the collective memory is lost.
- Some disagrees with the way to use legislation to restrict the demolition of heritage buildings. A more transparent mechanism is expected, which can enhance the understanding of the public towards the heritage and convince them about the value of the heritage (Mr. Felix Chan). Mutual



consensus is important in using taxpayers' money to purchase private properties for preservation. It is further suggested that an independent body funded by donation or contribution from the betting duty could be set up to finance the projects (Mr. Felix Chan). In addition, it is suggested that a two-tier approach in educating the public about heritage, namely youth and adult levels respectively (Mr. Felix Chan). At the youth level, heritage can be included into school curriculum, while in the adult level, electronic media can be used to transmit the message, such as voting exercise carried out by SMS. On one hand it can collect data, on the other hand, charges of the SMS can be put into the funding. "Heritage conservation should be achieved through dialogue and education" (Mr. Felix Chan).

### **III. General conclusion**

In general, speakers agreed that heritage should be conserved with the consideration to the surrounding areas, conservation on individual buildings would neglect the collective memory in the area, and therefore in some cases the whole areas have to be conserved in order to maintain the cultural identity and collective memory.

Coordination and cooperation between different departments is another important issue that raise by most speakers, they agreed that it is essential to have inter-departmental cooperation to facilitate better conservation policies.

In the long run, education is crucial in preparing for a group of citizens to become more aware of the heritage issues before they are gone forever. Some of the speakers strongly agreed that the importance of heritage conservation is lying upon a good foundation of education. Some further emphasized that education is the key to reach mutual consensus on heritage issue, it is important to reinforce 'collective memory' and 'cultural identity', and that heritage should be included into the school curriculum to enhance understanding of heritage in the younger generations (Ms. Betty Ho).

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