

Chairman's Statement



Mr Henry TANG Ying-yen, GBM, GBS, JP
Chairman of the Board of
the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

I am delighted to present the first West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Annual Report.

The West Kowloon Cultural District (“WKCD”) project is a major and unprecedented initiative to meet the long-term infrastructure and development needs of the arts and cultural sector in Hong Kong. It will also help address the acute shortage of performing arts venues. More importantly, it is an important strategic investment to promote a pluralistic civic society and support the development of our creative industry. To emphasise the principles of “people-oriented”, “partnership” and “community-driven” advocated by the then Culture and Heritage Commission, the Government decided that the WKCD should be planned, developed and operated by non-Government bodies.

Establishment of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

On 3 July 2008, the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) passed the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Bill, which was subsequently enacted as the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Ordinance on 11 July 2008. On 4 July 2008, the LegCo Finance Committee approved a one-off upfront endowment of HK\$21.6 billion for the WKCD Authority (“the Authority”) to implement the project.

Since its appointment by the Chief Executive in October 2008, the Authority Board has been moving the project forward in a prudent, step-by-step manner. In just the five months prior to the end of the financial year, it has swiftly established a strong corporate governance structure, including six committees and a Consultation Panel, to tackle important tasks on different fronts. These include strategic planning relating to the WKCD master development and the related public engagement exercise, planning for the core arts and cultural facilities, remuneration and staffing-related policies, and investment and audit matters.

The Board, the committees and the Consultation Panel comprise individuals who possess relevant expertise and distinguished public service records. We are bound by a common goal to maximise this unique opportunity to enrich and develop the artistic and cultural life of Hong Kong in a way that will leave a unique legacy for our city and future generations.

A Cultural District for the People

To plan and develop from scratch an integrated arts and cultural district of the scale and complexity of the WKCD is a real challenge for the Authority, arts and culture professionals, urban planners, architects and other related professionals as well as for the community at large. We strongly believe that to make the WKCD a success, we must make the district a people's district. The key is to bring arts to the people, and people to the arts. The 'people' include not only local residents but also visitors from outside Hong Kong, whom we hope will all find something at the WKCD to enjoy, be it high art, popular art, street performance or simply the vibrant atmosphere and relaxing open space.

In other words, the WKCD should stand for individuality and multiplicity and be a melting pot of different cultural endeavours. The WKCD should not draw boundaries. It must reach out and connect with people and be rooted in the local culture. At the same time, we must keep an open mind and maintain an international dimension. Undoubtedly, the development of a cultural district of this scale has to be sustainable, eco-friendly and allowed to grow organically to adapt to the evolving cultural, social and economic mood in Hong Kong and around the world.

One Foundation and Three Pillars

We are acutely aware that the success of the WKCD hinges on the management and content of the district. Therefore, we will work hard to ensure that the WKCD distinguishes itself not only with first-class architecture and spatial designs, but also with quality, diverse programming. We will accomplish this through the principle of "one foundation" — the participation of the people — and "three pillars"— arts education, audience-building and content-building.

These three pillars are interrelated and will have considerable impact on one another. To educate, schools should advocate the study and appreciation of arts and culture, and specialised institutions should train and nurture artistic talent and administrative skills. To build audiences, we must bring arts to the community. To build content, we must support local arts groups. The Authority will continue to work with the Government on these fronts.

Planning and Public Engagement

We have already made a good start on preparations for the WKCD Development Plan. World-renowned architects and planners with vision and passion for creating cultural facilities are working on this project. The Authority also has a detailed strategy for involving the public throughout the Development Plan process, a crucial part of which is a large-scale public engagement exercise, which will help us better understand the community's expectations for the project.

Based on public and stakeholder feedback from the first stage of this engagement exercise, three conceptual plan options will be released to the public during the second stage. Following this round of feedback, the Authority will choose one conceptual plan option as the foundation for a detailed Development Plan, which will be put to the public and stakeholders once more during the third and final stage of the public engagement exercise. The finalised plan will then be submitted to the Town Planning Board for consideration.

We have great confidence that the final product will lay a robust foundation for developing a cultural district that is truly for the people.

I must thank all members of the Board, committees and the Consultation Panel for their sound advice, strategic thinking, support and hard work during this early phase of the project. I am also grateful for the unrelenting support from colleagues in the Government who supported the day-to-day running of the Authority and helped kick-start a number of urgent tasks. I look forward to an exciting and challenging year ahead that will further advance the WKCD project.



Henry TANG Ying-yen, GBM, GBS, JP

Chairman of the Board
Hong Kong, 20 July 2009