

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

I am pleased to present the Annual Report 2010/11 of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (“WKCDA”).

Development of the West Kowloon Cultural District (“WKCD”) project has accelerated on all fronts during the past year. Notable progress has been made in shaping the positioning and goals of the District, preparing its development plan, and exploring and formulating cultural software to be deployed in the District.

A key strategy in bridging the various elements of our work is: “Engagement”. Stakeholders from the arts and cultural sector and experts in urban planning, engineering, environmental protection and technology fields have all given their views through different platforms together with members of the public whom WKCD will serve. They have provided new ideas, some of which have inspired us to think through some basic questions: What is the nature of WKCD? Who is it for? What does the District mean to Hong Kong?



There are no set answers to these questions. Even the answers given today may have to be adjusted with the passage of time and changing circumstances. But one uncompromising core value I trust for the future District is: “bringing arts to the people, and people to the arts” – a notion the WKCDA has held firm since its inception. The cornerstone of the Cultural District should be the promotion of humanity. Public recognition and support should justify the existence of the WKCD.

Building on this determination, the wide ranging public engagement work conducted by the WKCDA has been instrumental in pulling together many useful ideas and formulating the development direction for the WKCD. The process has seen many people who care deeply about the project debating and exploring together with us ways to best build a Cultural District in which we all have a stake.

It is through this journey that we have set the long-term development plan for the WKCD and we will soon initiate the statutory planning approval process.

The whole planning process has reaffirmed some core principles that the WKCDA insists upon and have subsequently been endorsed by the public, in particular, our people-oriented and forward-looking approach.

Our people-oriented approach means we start from a user’s perspective. That is the reason we plan to put vehicular traffic and other auxiliary facilities underground, freeing up the maximum amount of open space for people to enjoy. We will return the harbour to the public by building a promenade along the waterfront and preserving 23 hectares fronting the harbour as green space. We constantly exchange views with arts and cultural stakeholders on artistic positioning and actual design of core arts and cultural facilities and make adjustments as we proceed.

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

A forward-looking approach means we pay due regard to long-term sustainable development. We will allow sufficient flexibility so that we can make suitable adjustments to the function, positioning and commissioning schedule of facilities. We will try our utmost to create a “green” WKCD that will become a pioneer in championing sustainability in Hong Kong.

In the two years since the WKCDA's inception and through our public engagement activities, we note the community's attention gradually shifting from solely on hardware, to both hardware and software. This is a good sign. Naturally the form is important, but we should strive for excellence in both form and substance.

The immediate task ahead, therefore, is to define the artistic positioning and direction for the District. Arts and cultural groups – of all sizes and areas of expertise – are our important partners. We have been conducting different levels and forms of dialogue on programming, venue facilities and other operating issues with them and taken on board their views in the planning process. This is only a beginning. The two-way dialogue and co-operation will continue.

The WKCD starts now. As we plan for the commissioning of facilities in the first phase, we are also organising a series of temporary activities at the site to encourage people to become familiar with, and accustomed to visiting the area. Staging these activities will also give us valuable experience and reference for future operations of the WKCD.

Promoting cultural education is another important mission for the WKCDA. Through working closely with schools and universities and sponsoring community activities, we aim to groom local arts administrators while opening new doors for the public to experience a variety of local culture and contemporary arts.

Our financial arrangement and the construction costs have been of concern to the public. The WKCDA was established during a period of global financial turmoil and we have been very prudent in the investment strategy of public funds. Rising construction costs over the past few years have exerted pressure on the WKCDA's financial projection. We will critically review our financial arrangement against the final development plan and commissioning timeline of the facilities. While remaining prudent in our investment strategy, we will consider alternative ways to maximise returns and achieve the most effective use of the HK\$21.6 billion endowment.



The resignation of the former Chief Executive Officer earlier this year raised concerns in the community and posed a challenge to the WKCD in managing this period of change. Not only has the WKCD ensured normal operation through a spirit of strong professionalism and team work, important tasks have also been achieved on schedule to move the project forward. The subsequent appointment of Mr Michael Lynch, an internationally acclaimed arts administrator, as Chief Executive Officer, has provided fresh impetus to our work.

The WKCD journey is unique with no precedent elsewhere to follow. We have to find our own way forward by listening and taking on board views from all sides. I wish to thank all members of the Board, the Committees, the Consultation Panel, as well as staff members and my colleagues in the Government but most importantly members of the public who have given us support and encouragement.

Our journey is a long one and we shall stick together and explore the future with open minds. The seeds we sow today will bear fruit for generations to come.

The Honourable Henry TANG Ying-yan, GBM, GBS, JP
Chairman of the Board of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

Hong Kong, 6 September 2011



Photo of Swan Lake
Dancers : Jin Yao, Huang Zhen
Photographer : Gordon Wong
©The Hong Kong Ballet

“ For me, art begins with life, but it goes beyond that. Art provokes thought, but more importantly it creates iconic symbols of our metropolitan city. ”

Jin Yao

“ I live in Tai Kok Tsui. Every day I pass by and wonder when the WKCD would be completed. My wish is to have a performance there as long as I can dance. ”

Huang Lei

