

保 護 海 港 協 會
Society for Protection of the Harbour

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7th February 2012

PRESS RELEASE

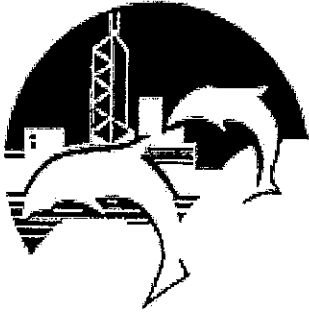
Re: Reclamation & Development of the New Territories

Our Society has just issued the enclosed letter and publications to the Chief Executive-in-Council and we have also brought this matter to the attention of the candidates of the coming election to the post of Chief Executive as well as official bodies, commercial organizations and environmental groups concerned.

Dennis K.W. Li,
Councillor

Harbour Manifesto: *To protect and preserve the harbour and enhance the harbour-front to provide a healthy environment and a good quality of life for the people of Hong Kong*

維港宣言: 保護及保存維港，並優化海濱，為香港市民，提供一個健康及優質的生活環境



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*The Chief Executive-in-Council,
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government,
1/F., No. 1 Tim Ma Avenue,
Tamar, Central, Hong Kong.*

7th February 2012

Chief Executive-in-Council,

Re: Reclamation and Development of the New Territories

In view of the importance of the above matter, our Society respectfully draw your attention to the following recent publications in the South China Morning Post:-

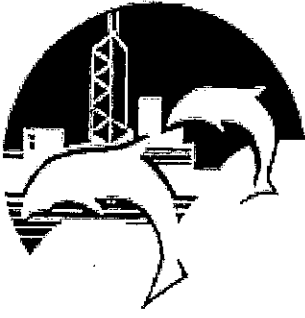
- 1. Our Letter to the Editor published on 17th January 2012.*
- 2. Editorial published on 30th January 2012.*
- 3. Our Letter to the Editor published on 6th February 2012.*

Yours sincerely,

*Christine K.W. Loh,
Chairperson*

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7th February 2012

Dear Friends,

Re: Reclamation & Development of the New Territories

In view of the importance of the above matter, our Society respectfully bring to your attention the following recent publications in the South China Morning Post which have also been brought to the attention of the Chief Executive-in-Council as well as the candidates of the coming election to the post of Chief Executive.

1. Letter to the Editor published on 17th January 2012.
2. Editorial published on 30th January 2012.
3. Letter to the Editor published on 6th February 2012.

Kindly note that copies of the above have also been circulated to official bodies, commercial organizations and environmental groups concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Christine K.W. Loh,
Chairperson

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6th February 2012

With the correct land policies, government could avoid reclamation

Society for Protection of the Harbour fully supports your editorial ("There's no need for land reclamation", January 30).

For the past 17 years, we have been advocating that the government should properly plan the development of the New Territories instead of reclaiming the harbour and our sea to make land. That should be Hong Kong's proper direction of growth.

The government must change its mindset as a land producer and land supplier to raise revenue through land sales.

It ought to remember that its primary responsibility is the administration of Hong Kong.

It should put the interests of the people before its own interests by providing affordable housing and protecting the environment.

The economic policy that the government has adopted over the past half century is outdated.

The policy works in this way. The government acquires and produces land for sale, sells the land to developers, ensures high prices for the housing built thereon by restricting supply and thereby also ensures high land prices. It transfers the land sales proceeds to the Capital Works Reserve Fund and then with this fund pays for more reclamation projects to produce more land. The cycle is then repeated again and again.

This economic policy enriches the government (which now has total reserves of over HK\$1 trillion) as well as the developers but is at the expense of the environment. As a result, Hong Kong almost lost its Victoria Harbour.

The public also pays a heavy price. It has to suffer from very expensive housing, bad living conditions in very small flats and a low quality of life.

Now that Hong Kong enjoys a measure of democracy and the people have a voice, they must stand up and speak out. This system has to change.

Developing the New Territories has three major obstacles. Firstly, there is the village house policy which the government unwisely adopted. Secondly, the various New Territories ordinances give a different legal status to New Territories land. Finally, Article 40 of the Basic Law protects the traditional rights and interests of the indigenous inhabitants of the New Territories.

The government must overcome all these difficulties so that all the land in Hong Kong will be the same and all the people of Hong Kong will be equal with the same rights and duties.

Winston K.S. Chu, adviser, Society for Protection of the Harbour

30th January 2012

South China Morning Post

There's no need for land reclamation



government's job is as much to look to the future as the present. Donald Tsang Yam-kuen's outgoing administration is doing that with its consultation on land supply. But the options put forward – reclaiming land beyond Victoria Harbour, including building artificial islands and use of rock caverns – should be last resorts. While the latter could prove an innovative way of dealing with

unpopular utilities like waste treatment facilities and columbariums, there is more than enough land for tens of decades to come for housing and development in the New Territories.

The suggested options are claimed to be a matter of necessity. Authorities stress that with a limited supply of land and Hong Kong's population expected to increase a quarter to 8.9 million by 2039, there will soon not be enough for housing and economic growth. The existing strategy of rezoning, redevelopment, resumption and making use of old quarries is considered inadequate to meet anticipated demand. Being able to expand beyond the coastline and dig into mountainsides is being put forward as ensuring flexibility.

Scepticism in some quarters is rife. The government has lacked transparency and been wildly optimistic with projections when pushing projects in the past. Hong Kong Disneyland was supposed to reap a 10 per cent return in its first year, but six years later, continues to struggle with breaking even; the HK\$35 billion Airport Express carries one-third fewer passengers than original estimates; and our Mandatory Provident Fund accounts remain pitifully low despite the bullish figures thrown about when it was launched 11 years ago. Concrete was poured and jobs created, but the benefits have not been as assured.

The consultation documents do not suggest how much land should be reclaimed or what specific uses it will be put to. A total of 25 sites were put forward half-way through the process, with the explanation that they would form the basis for eventually choosing a finalised list of 10 mid-year that would be taken to another consultation. The waters around Hong Kong are relatively deep, so reclamation is an expensive proposition. Tsang's last policy address made clear that land supply would have to be boosted to allow for a projected 40,000 new flats a year, 15,000 for public housing. Given the costs, it is unlikely that what would be reclaimed would be for affordable homes.

Hong Kong is not short of land, but the government seems reluctant to free up the greatest supply – in the New Territories – by resolutely taking on the contentious matter of indigenous villagers' property rights. Instead of reclaiming land, we should be sustainably using what we have while formulating long-term policies on housing, population and welfare. Reclamation carries environmental risks. It should be an option, but only when all other choices have been exhausted.

17th January 2012

Develop the New Territories instead of ruining important natural asset

The government should realise that the beauty and attraction of Hong Kong is because it is an archipelago comprising hundreds of islands large and small. Our sea and our shorelines are an invaluable natural asset which should be enjoyed not only by the present but also future generations.

Reclamation to make land by destroying these beautiful islands does not make sense. There is simply no need and it cannot be justified. There is almost 100,000 hectares of land in the New Territories. Although 56,000 hectares are reserved for country parks (which we support), there are still at least 20,000 hectares that are undeveloped or underdeveloped.

According to our research, Kam Tin Valley and Hung Shui Kiu in the western New Territories together can already provide 3,000 hectares. These areas are served by West Rail and Route 3, both of which are very underutilised. The border areas next to Shenzhen can provide another 2,000 hectares. These 5,000 hectares will be enough to satisfy the projected population increase.

The government should properly plan the development of these areas to provide a good living environment while preserving sensitive sites. It should not propose to make land from the sea through the 25 reclamation projects and ignore the huge areas of land we already have.

The engineering works of the proposed reclamations will be very expensive. Unlike Macau, our waters are very deep. In addition, the infrastructures and the transport systems needed will make the reclaimed land prohibitively expensive. Hence any housing built on it will be too expensive for the general public and cannot solve our problem of high housing prices.

The Joint Declaration was signed 28 years ago in 1984 which made the New Territories part of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. This increased Hong Kong's land area 10-fold. Yet now, almost 15 years after the handover, the administration has still not properly planned the development of the New Territories, where the future of Hong Kong's expansion lies. To implement the plan to develop the New Territories, of course, many problems will have to be resolved. Nevertheless, the government should have the wisdom and courage to do the right thing for Hong Kong.

Perhaps an ordinance similar to the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance should be enacted to safeguard our shorelines from excessive and unnecessary reclamation.

Winston K. S. Chu, adviser, Society for Protection of the Harbour