



June 26th 2007

Special Duties Section, Planning Department
15/F, North Point Government Offices,
333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong

Dear Sirs,

HBF's comments on the Stage 1 Public Engagement for the Urban Design Study for the new Central Harbour-front (NCH) held on May 15th

On behalf of the Harbour Business Forum (HBF), I am writing to respond to the Stage 1 Public Engagement for the Urban Design Study for the new Central Harbour-front (NCH) held on May 15th 2007.

On a positive note, we welcome the Planning Department's efforts to engage with the public on the Urban Design for the new Central Harbor-front.

However, we would like to point out that we received very little notice about the NCH public engagement and received limiting supporting materials. For a meaningful public engagement exercise, the supporting material should be as comprehensive, straightforward and illustrative as possible.

The HBF also considers that the engagement process could have been further improved if the public were involved from the outset and in setting the agenda. As you are aware, the Council for Sustainable Development has devised a five stage engagement process as follows:

- Setting the agenda (with involvement of all stakeholders including public and government),
- Preparation of the Invitation for Response (IR) document,
- Public engagement (with a launching event then with forums and workshops led by independent professionals; supported by exhibitions, electronic media, website, chat-room, etc,)
- Preparation and submission of a report to the Government, and
- Government to respond with a policy document and action plan.

HBF agrees with the Council for Sustainable Development's approach for engaging with the public and would like to see the public involved in setting the agenda for all future government public engagement exercises.

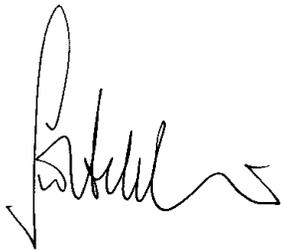
Secondly, HBF found the questionnaire, which formed the basis of the Urban Design Study, to be misleading and was concerned that some of the questions could easily be interpreted in several different ways. We also wonder how the public's views will be evaluated from the questionnaire and we would like to know how the public views will be reconciled into 'design recommendations and refinements'?

Conclusion

For any meaningful public engagement exercise to take place, the consultation process should include all stakeholders from the outset. Any background material provided should be as comprehensive and straightforward as possible, and the questions raised should be clear, with some explanation given into how the questions will be interpreted.

Notably, HBF agrees with the Council for Sustainable Development's approach for engaging with the public and would like to see the public involved from the outset in setting the agenda for all future government public engagement exercises.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Addis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon Addis
Chair of the Executive Committee
Harbour Business Forum