

LCQ13: Statutory monuments and historical buildings

Following is a question by the Hon Albert Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

It has been reported that in certain statutory monuments and historical buildings (such as the Central Police Station Compound and Victoria Prison Compound), water leakage and exposed steel reinforcements have appeared as a result of dilapidation, and the Lui Seng Chun tenement, Yau Ma Tei Theatre, quarters at Yau Ma Tei Pumping Station (commonly known as "Red Brick House"), etc have been left unattended for a long time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the amount of the Government's expenditure on the maintenance, repair and management of statutory monuments in each of the past three years;
- (b) of the current progress of the restoration work for the Central Police Station Compound and Victoria Prison Compound, and whether it will consider opening these buildings for visits by the public on a long-term basis;
- (c) whether it has studied the uses of the Lui Seng Chun tenement, Yau Ma Tei Theatre and quarters at Yau Ma Tei Pumping Station, and whether they will be declared as statutory monuments and open for visits by the public;
- (d) of the government departments currently responsible for the inspection, management and restoration of monuments and historical buildings, as well as the number of officers involved;
- (e) of the statutory monuments and historical buildings which are open for visits by the public at present, as well as those which are not open to the public together with their reasons (please provide the relevant details using the table below); and

| Name of monument/ historical building | Statutory monument/ Grade I historical building/ Grade II historical building/ Grade III historical building | Opening hours/ reasons for not opening to the public |
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(f) whether it has studied the feasibility of opening the monuments and historical buildings which are currently not open to the public, as listed in (e) above, for visits by the public; if so, of the results of the study?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) The restoration, maintenance and management responsibilities of the 81 declared monuments are currently undertaken by various parties including the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO), Architectural Services Department (ArchSD), other user Government departments and private owners. In the past three years, AMO spent \$8.1 million (2004-05), \$10 million (2005-06) and \$8.1 million (from April to November 2006 inclusive) on restoration and maintenance of declared monuments.

(b) Since March 2005, AMO has been conducting monthly inspection on the Central Police Station Compound (the Compound) to ensure that the historical buildings and the special architectural features are in good conditions. Should there be any defects identified, AMO will report to the relevant departments for appropriate follow-up action. ArchSD is planning to carry out maintenance works for the Compound in December 2006. These works include making good the damaged plaster, clearance of blocked drains, and repair to cracked doors and windows. We have received a lot of public views on the future development of the Compound and would take these views into account when formulating the adaptive re-use proposal. At present, non-government organisations may apply to the Government for using the site to organise public activities.

(c) Following ArchSD's completion of basic repair works on Lui Seng Chun in 2005, AMO commissioned a consultancy study on its potential for adaptive re-use and sustainable development. The consultancy study would take into account a series of relevant factors, including its historical background and building structure, district characteristics, transportation and tourism attractiveness etc., when drawing up possible adaptive re-use proposal(s) for Lui Seng Chun. The consultancy study will be completed shortly.

In addition, ArchSD completed basic repair works on the Yau Ma Tei Theatre (Theatre) in late 2005. Repair works are now being undertaken on the ex-Quarters of the Former Pumping Station (ex-Quarters), which are scheduled for completion by next month. We are planning to convert the Theatre into a small-scale Cantonese opera venue with the ex-Quarters as a supporting facility. We consulted the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee who was supportive of the proposed

conversion and facilities. We will soon be consulting the Yau Tsim Mong District Council. If the District Council is also supportive of the proposal, we will identify resources and seek funding for the proposed conversion project through the normal procedures.

(d) Generally speaking, the works departments (e.g. ArchSD) are responsible for the routine maintenance and repair works to Government-owned graded historical buildings, while the management responsibility rests with the user departments (i.e. the Government departments using the buildings). AMO will conduct regular inspections on the 81 declared monuments to ensure that they are properly maintained. At present, AMO has 8 staff members responsible for carrying out this specific duty.

(e) The lists of declared monuments and Government-owned graded historical buildings for which Government is directly responsible for its maintenance and repair are at Appendixes A and B respectively.

(f) As shown in the above Appendices, most of the declared monuments and a substantive number of Government-owned graded historical buildings are already open to the public. The main reasons for not opening to the public those remaining Government-owned graded historical buildings are:- (1) They are being used by Government departments, public or non-government organisations for specific purposes, such as schools, barracks or non-government welfare facilities, etc.; (2) They are not suitable for opening owing to their structural condition or public safety concern; and (3) They are not open for the time being pending completion of repair works or studies on their feasibility for adaptive re-use.

We have been reviewing the use of Government-owned graded historical buildings from time to time. We would consider the structural conditions of these buildings and other relevant factors (e.g. the possible adaptive re-use options) with a view to deciding whether each of them should be opened for public use.

Ends/Wednesday, December 6, 2006

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