

SDEV's opening remarks on works policy areas at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, today (April 19) at the special meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee on works policy areas:

Chairman,

Infrastructure construction is not only the driving force for social development and the prerequisite for increasing the supply of usable land, it is also the main task of the Works Branch of the Development Bureau.

The Government invests over \$80 billion each year to launch a wide range of works projects for major infrastructure and public facilities, covering areas of land supply, transportation, medical care, education, water supply and drainage, so as to meet the development needs of Hong Kong, provide employment opportunities and promote economic growth at the same time.

In the new financial year, besides the ongoing delivery of capital works projects, we will also focus on four priority tasks.

Our first priority task is to encourage innovation and creativity. To help Hong Kong's construction industry accelerate its reform to address the challenges of a shortage of skilled workers and an ageing workforce, the Financial Secretary proposes in the 2018-19 Budget to set up a \$1 billion Construction Innovation and Technology Fund (CITF) to support the industry to harness innovative technology, such as the building information modelling technology, prefabricated steel bar products from local prefabrication yards, modular integrated construction and other advanced construction technologies. The CITF will also support tertiary students and industry practitioners to receive training on innovative construction technologies, and professionals to receive continuing education in innovation and technology.

Our second priority task is to continue to develop Kowloon East into the second core business district of Hong Kong, which includes enhancing connectivity, improving the environment and unleashing development potential. The Chief Executive announced in the Policy Agenda in October last year that the Energizing Kowloon East initiatives would be extended to San Po Kong. We have consulted the District Council on our initial ideas concerning the development of San Po Kong and we are pleased to receive the Council's support. We will take forward the related initiatives progressively including the phased development of the Sze Mei Street District Open Space project so as to use part of the underground space to accommodate a public vehicle park. Moreover, we have just commenced the Feasibility Study on Pedestrian Environment and Traffic Improvement of San Po Kong Business Area.

Our third priority task is cost control for public works. We established the Project Cost Management Office (PCMO) in June 2016 to closely scrutinise the cost estimates of works projects in the planning and design stages, optimise project design based on the principles of “fitness for purpose” and “no frills”, and reduce unnecessary contractual requirements as far as possible, so as to make the projects more cost-effective. Since its establishment, the PCMO has saved some \$27 billion in costs out of the 130-plus projects scrutinised totalling some \$260 billion.

Our fourth priority task is to foster the culture of “safety first”. For the construction industry, we will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to enhance site safety and improve site cleanliness and tidiness as well as the welfare of workers, so as to safeguard the health and safety of workers. Also, we will continue to improve our work on water supply, flood prevention and slope safety, and make the safeguarding of public safety our top priority.

I would also like to brief Members on our work on two issues of public concern. The first is drinking water safety. We launched the Action Plan for Enhancing Drinking Water Safety in Hong Kong in September 2017 to restore public confidence. The Water Supplies Department has enhanced its water quality monitoring programme since December 2017 to collect random water samples from consumers’ taps directly for testing the six metals that could be present in the internal plumbing system, and to collect local water quality data for reviewing the drinking water standards of Hong Kong in compliance with the World Health Organization Guidelines. In addition, we set up the Drinking Water Safety Advisory Committee in January 2018, comprising academics, medical experts and other stakeholders from related fields, to give the Government invaluable advice on various drinking water safety issues.

The other issue is the recent lift incident at Waterside Plaza in Tsuen Wan that has drawn a lot of public attention. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) has requested all registered lift contractors currently responsible for the maintenance of about 380 lifts of the same brand to complete a special investigation within two weeks of the incident, so as to ensure the safe operation of the lifts and ease public concerns. The EMSD is also investigating the cause of the incident and expects to complete the investigation in two to three months.

Chairman, the above is a brief account of the works portfolio. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions that Members may wish to raise. Thank you.

News story: Foreign Secretary expands UK Commonwealth diplomatic network

Today the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson announced the opening of nine new diplomatic posts across the Commonwealth.

The new posts, Lesotho, Swaziland, The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, will extend Britain's global influence.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

As a Commonwealth family of nations, it is in our shared interest to boost prosperity, tackle security issues and clear up the environment.

These new diplomatic posts are in regions which provide huge potential and opportunity post-Brexit for British businesses and will help us to deepen our relationships across the Commonwealth.

After we leave the EU, Global Britain will remain outward facing, open for business and a champion of the rules-based international order.

Britain has one of the largest diplomatic footprints in the world. The UK's overseas network is instrumental in promoting our national interest, particularly post-Brexit. The expanded network puts Britain in peak position to enhance military cooperation, boost trade and provide services to the rapidly expanding middle classes of the developing world.

The UK will also have a greater presence in Europe and in all regions of the world. An increased global footprint will also ensure that Britain and its allies are able to counter the malign influences of countries who seek to undermine the UK. The UK will also use its world-class soft power to continue to win hearts and minds for the global good.

Further information

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Speech: PM's words at opening of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on 19 April 2018

Your Majesty,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Secretary-General, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

□□

I am extremely proud to be welcoming you all to London – the first full Heads of Government meeting here in almost forty years.

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to □Prime Minister Muscat and his team: □thank you for your incredible hard work. You represent a Commonwealth truth, that the size of a country does not limit its ambition and impact.

I hope that over the coming days and □months we can □build on the work you have begun as we forge a future for our common good.

Over many decades this organisation has brought together nations young and old, large and small, to celebrate our common bonds and to work to our mutual benefit.

There have been difficulties, successes, controversies. But I believe wholeheartedly in the good that the Commonwealth can do.

And this week as young people from our many nations gather and contribute their views, our responsibility as leaders is to ensure their voices are heard, and to build a Commonwealth that we can be proud to hand on to the next generation.

For in the Commonwealth we have an incredible opportunity.

An opportunity to show just what can be achieved through co-ordinated action

and co-operation, to seize the possibilities open to us as member countries, and together, to take on some of the 21st century's biggest questions.

How we support our most vulnerable member states as we tackle climate change and improve the health of our oceans, creating a more sustainable Commonwealth?

How we develop through trade, pushing back against protectionism, for a more prosperous Commonwealth?

How we respond to threats to the rules based international order and from cyber-attacks, creating a more secure Commonwealth?

And how, in all this, we advance those common values which our organisation has always stood for – democracy, human rights, tolerance, and the rule of law – so that we establish a fairer Commonwealth?

These are problems nations cannot solve alone. But by working together, we can make a real difference.

Over the past three days, we have seen the power of the Commonwealth in action at the Forums for business leaders, young people, women, and civil society.

These discussions have demonstrated the vibrancy and creativity of our organisation – focusing on issues such as improving trade, youth unemployment, education and health – all of which have the potential to transform people's lives.

And I am looking forward to taking these issues further with the heads of government over the next two days.

Finally, on behalf of all of you assembled here in Buckingham Palace, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty, Head of the Commonwealth.

This week you have opened your homes to us – here in London and in Windsor. Over many years you have been the Commonwealth's most steadfast and fervent champion.

You have been true to the deepest values of the Commonwealth – that the voice of the smallest member country is worth precisely as much as that of the largest; that the wealthiest and the most vulnerable stand shoulder to shoulder.

You have seen us through some of our most serious challenges.

And we commit to sustaining this Commonwealth, which you have so carefully nurtured.

For your service, for your dedication, for your constancy – we thank you.

News story: Sellafield invests £2.6m to create Cumbria business hub

Sellafield Ltd is investing £2.6m to convert a derelict transport exchange in Whitehaven into a £4.1m hothouse for tech, digital, media, and creative start-ups.

The scheme, called the Buzz Station, is being funded by Sellafield Ltd's owner the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

Sellafield Ltd Buzz Station scheme

It is part of a wider £300m regeneration of the town led by BEC and partners including Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners and Copeland Borough Council.

The building will be developed with strategic input from Sellafield Ltd and could be open next year.

Alongside units for fledgling firms, the plan includes:

- conference and meeting space for 75 people
- an artisan food and drink outlet, open to the public
- health and wellbeing facilities

The project is part of Sellafield Ltd's Transformation Programme, which seeks to leverage public and private sector investment to help grow and diversify the West Cumbrian economy.

Jamie Reed, Head of Development and Community Relations for Sellafield Ltd, said:

West Cumbria has always been a crucible of innovation, energy, and ideas.

We pioneered the civil nuclear industry and we're leading the world in decommissioning and waste management.

Now we're positioning ourselves for the next wave of growth in the tech and digital industries.

That means unleashing the energy and ambition of local people to innovate, invent, and inspire.

The Buzz Station will provide the ideal environment for collaboration and creativity, allowing the next generation of tech entrepreneurs to lead our economic renewal.

This is Sellafield transformation in action – creating partnerships, unlocking investment, and helping to build a diverse and sustainable private sector.

Andrew van der Lem, of the NDA, said:

This is fantastic news for Cumbria.

Our investment will not only transform a derelict building but will provide a focal point for local economic growth in key areas like technology, digital, and creative.

The building will work with organisations like the Beacon Museum to provide education opportunities for schoolchildren, college students, and adult learners.

It will be linked to existing regional and national economic growth programmes via the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Rob Miller, Head of Property and Development at BEC, said:

This innovative and exciting development will complement the North Shore regeneration scheme.

It is the start of a major delivery phase for BEC. We are looking forward to opening the doors to ambitious businesses and the public.

Michael Pemberton, BEC Chief Executive, said:

This is a bold social investment by Sellafield Ltd and underpins commitment to economic diversity in our region.

We are delighted to welcome them on board as a strategic partner in the scheme. The overall North Shore plans will be the catalyst for major change in Whitehaven and the Buzz Station will be a valuable asset for the town.

Consumer Programme: New call launched!

Call for tender n° Chafea/2017/CP/02 concerning Multiple Framework Contracts with reopening of competition for the organisation of coordinated activities on consumer product safety (Non-Food) in the EU and EEA/EFTA countries

Chafea intends to award three Framework Contracts for the provision of the services described here below. Potential candidates interested to participate in the procedure are invited to send their offer, in line with the requirements and formalities detailed in the invitation to tender.

The objective of this call is to conclude three Multiple Framework Contracts, with reopening of competition, with the 3 tenderers that are ranked highest in the tender.

For the provision of services related to the coordination of activities on consumer product safety in the EU/EEA/EFTA countries, the contractors will be responsible for:

- The overall coordination and logistical organisation of the product-specific and horizontal activities, including all necessary meetings during the project;
- The overall coordination of the product testing process, including the identification and selection of appropriate laboratories;
- Providing technical expertise and advice to support the work of the national market surveillance authorities; and
- Reporting on, communicating and disseminating the outcome of the activities to all relevant stakeholders.

The **deadline** to submit tenders for this procedure is **28 June 2018**.