

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(W)072

(Question Serial No. 0226)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational Expenses

Programme: (3) Heritage and Museums

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Ms Michelle LI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

At present, the grading assessment of all historic buildings is initially conducted by the Historic Buildings Assessment Panel comprising several members. However, the Panel has on many occasions been criticised by conservation groups or academics for lack of professionalism. Also, when consolidating background information on the same historic building, information gathered by these groups or academics is often more comprehensive. In this connection, will the Government deploy resources and manpower to review the composition of the Panel? Will it examine the possibility of expanding the Panel by including more experts with different background or inviting experts from the relevant sector to join in the assessment on a case by case basis? Will the Government conduct a public consultation for these purposes? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (Member Question No. 416)

Reply:

As recommended by the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), the Historic Buildings Assessment Panel (the Panel) was set up under AAB in 2005 to undertake in-depth assessment of the heritage value of buildings to facilitate AAB's grading assessment. The Panel has access to professional knowledge and experience from the fields of heritage conservation, history, architecture, engineering and town planning when conducting grading assessment on buildings. This is because the Panel comprises a historian and members of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, the Hong Kong Institute of Planners, and the Hong Kong Institute of Engineers (as well as the Executive Secretary of the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)). As per its established practice, the Panel will first conduct grading assessment in accordance with six criteria, namely historical interest, architectural merit, group value, social value and local interest, and authenticity and rarity. It will then recommend a proposed grading for a building to AAB for consideration.

AAB is a statutory body consisting of members with expertise in various relevant fields. With reference to the Panel's assessment and recommendations and other relevant factors, AAB will determine the proposed grading for a building, after which AMO will upload the proposed grading and other relevant information of that building to AAB's website for a one-month public consultation. AAB will then consider the information and views received during the consultation period before confirming the grading. The current multi-tier assessment approach has duly taken into consideration all the information and advice provided by experts and the public before the grading for a building is confirmed.

To maintain the professionalism and consistency of the assessment mechanism, the Government has no plan to change the composition of the Panel for the time being.

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