

**Antiquities Advisory Board**  
**Report on the Policy Review on Conservation of Built Heritage**  
**Executive Summary**

1. The Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) accepted the Administration's invitation to assist in conducting a policy review on the conservation of built heritage and published a consultation document "Respecting Our Heritage While Looking Ahead: Policy on Conservation of Built Heritage" in June 2014. Based on the views gathered from public consultation, engagement sessions and telephone surveys, the Report on the Policy Review on the Conservation of Built Heritage (the Report) was completed in December 2014 and submitted to the Administration.

2. In recent years, heritage conservation has become a matter of increasing interest. Some of these concerns, especially those involving private property rights, allocation and utilisation of public resources and demolition for redevelopment, have sparked controversy in the community. By conducting the review "Respecting Our Heritage While Looking Ahead", the AAB seeks to examine past experiences and understand public expectations on the one hand, and propose principles and directions on key issues for advising the Government and taking forward the policy to cope with social changes on the other.

3. Recommendations of the Report fall into the following three areas:

**(I) Setting up a built heritage fund**

4. The AAB recommends that the Administration should set up a dedicated fund on the conservation of built heritage. The fund should provide funding for public education and publicity activities, academic researches, public engagement and consultation programmes. It should also cover certain government initiatives and activities on built heritage conservation (Sections 3.1, 4.1 and 4.2).

5. The AAB considers that the Government should step up efforts in public engagement and consultation on issues concerning built heritage conservation. On individual conservation projects and issues at district level,

the community could be better consulted through collaboration with partners including District Councils and other non-government organisations (Section 4.2). Building on the existing public education and publicity work, the Administration should enhance the understanding and awareness of the public (including private owners of historic buildings) on the conservation of built heritage (Section 4.1), such as the importance of timely and proper maintenance for historic buildings, through creative means and channels. These public activities should be supported by the aforementioned built heritage fund.

## **(II) Providing additional incentives and facilitation**

6. The AAB understands that alteration and addition works to privately-owned historic buildings must comply with the prescribed standards under the Buildings Ordinance to ensure the safety of users. Nevertheless, in consideration of the views from professional institutes and members of the public, the AAB recommends that the Administration should, without jeopardising building safety and health standards, review the Buildings Ordinance, the relevant Practice Note(s) and the *Practice Guidebook for Adaptive Re-use of and Alteration and Addition Works to Heritage Building 2012* in order to encourage and facilitate private owners of historic buildings to preserve and adaptively re-use their buildings. The Government should promote the adoption of “performance-based” alternative approach in revitalisation works in meeting the requirements under the Ordinance (Section 2.4).

7. Noting that there are diverse views in the community, the AAB considers that public resources should not be used to purchase or resume privately-owned historic buildings (Section 2.2). The AAB also recommended the Government to consolidate and scale up the existing economic incentives and facilitations to encourage private owners to preserve, revitalise and timely maintain their historic buildings (Section 2.1). Prevailing incentives such as relaxation of plot ratio and land exchange should be offered through a more systematic and well-publicised mechanism according to the scale, building conditions and heritage value of the privately-owned historic buildings (Section 3.2).

8. The AAB is of the view that to respect private property rights, public access to historic buildings should not be a prerequisite for receiving financial assistance for maintenance and repair from the public coffers. Instead, the paramount concern is whether the historic buildings are being preserved. For government-owned historic buildings, public access should be provided as far as practicable. As for privately-owned graded buildings, where there is owners' consent, certain form of public access should be ensured, such as access to the physical buildings or through certain records. The Government should allow flexibility on the requirements on public access to privately-owned graded buildings receiving financial assistance from the Government for preservation and maintenance, if it is justified on grounds such as privacy or building stability. The Administration should prepare detailed records of historic buildings with the aid of new technology where appropriate. The records should be easily accessible by the public (Section 4.3).

### **(III) The next step**

9. The AAB recommends the Administration to examine the setting up of a statutory grading system in the longer run for protection of graded buildings while safeguarding private property rights (Section 2.1). In addition, for application of the "point-line-plane" concept, the Administration should as the first step conduct a study to explore the feasibility of conserving and protecting selected building cluster(s) of unique heritage value under the "point-line-plane" approach. In the medium term, the AAB recommends the Administration to arrange thematic surveys or mapping exercises on building cluster(s) of heritage value for drawing up appropriate conservation strategies and protection measures if necessary, and for future planning (Section 2.3).

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