

**MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**DECLARATION OF PRE-WAR WATERWORKS STRUCTURES
AS MONUMENTS**

PURPOSE

To seek Members' advice on the proposal to declare 41 historic waterworks structures within six pre-war waterworks reservoirs, namely Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, Tai Tam Group of Reservoirs, Wong Nai Chung Reservoir, Kowloon Reservoir, Aberdeen Reservoir and Shing Mun (Jubilee) Reservoir as monuments under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53).

BACKGROUND

2. In recognition of the heritage value of the waterworks facilities built before World War II, the Antiquities Advisory Board (the AAB) accorded graded status to a group of pre-war waterworks structures under the grading exercise of the pre-war reservoirs in 1994.

3. The Expert Panel established by the AAB for the 1444 assessment exercise has reviewed these graded items together with other newly identified historic waterworks structures. A total of 41 items scattering over six pre-war reservoirs have been proposed to be Grade 1 historic structures by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) based on the assessment result of the Expert Panel. Of the 41 waterworks structures, except for one item which was not covered by the 1994's grading exercise, all have been graded by the AAB at different times with 23 of them awarded with Grade 1 status. The list of these 41 items is at Annex A.

HERITAGE VALUE

4. Tracing back the development of water supply in Hong Kong before 1860s, water supply mainly relied on primitive sources such as wells and streams. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the continual increase in population and the accompanying city expansion had placed a great pressure on permanent provision of fresh water resources which accelerated the construction of reservoirs.

5. It was not until the time of Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor from 1859 to 1865, that the first water supply scheme was mooted. The first ever-built reservoir in

the territory was completed in 1863 at Pok Fu Lam. In the following decades, to cater for the ever-increasing demands, much larger reservoirs and more complex water supply systems were constructed under the Tai Tam Scheme and Tai Tam Tuk Scheme between 1883 and 1917. With improved water provision brought by the two Schemes through the construction of Tai Tam Upper Reservoir (1888), Tai Tam Byewash Reservoir (1904), Tai Tam Intermediate Reservoir (1907) and Tai Tam Tuk Reservoir (1917) (which are collectively known as Tai Tam Group of Reservoirs nowadays), the forces of urbanization gradually spread from central and western districts to the eastern side of Hong Kong Island, thus expanding the Hong Kong urban area.

6. Wong Nai Chung Reservoir is the third oldest surviving waterworks construction in Hong Kong. Upon its completion in 1899, it served as a supplementary source to Tai Tam Group of Reservoirs and thus further increased the facilities for storing water on Hong Kong Island.

7. Built between 1901 and 1910 as the fourth reservoir of the territory, Kowloon Reservoir was the first reservoir built in Kowloon in response to the growing population of Kowloon Peninsula.

8. The construction of Shing Mun (Jubilee) Reservoir initially commenced in 1923 and took 14 years to complete. The enormous size of the project not only brought water to cater for the needs of people in Kowloon Peninsula, but also helped to relieve pressure on water demand in the densely populated Hong Kong Island via the cross-harbour mains, making it the largest and major reservoir in the pre-war period to supply water for both Kowloon and Hong Kong Island.

9. Aberdeen Reservoir, comprising the Upper Reservoir (1931) and the Lower Reservoir (1932), was built to augment Pok Fu Lam Reservoir for solving the water shortage problem in the western part of Hong Kong Island. It became the last reservoir ever built on Hong Kong Island, after Pok Fu Lam, Tai Tam and Wong Nai Chung.

10. Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, the Tai Tam Group of Reservoirs and Wong Nai Chung Reservoir were the three pioneering waterworks projects that played a significant part in the social development of Hong Kong in the early years of city building. They not only showcased the unprecedented commitment of the Government regarding the provision of permanent water supply system in the early colonial period, but also demonstrated how western expertise in civil engineering was adopted in the local context to overcome the topographical constraints, creating a feat of reservoir engineering unique to Hong Kong. Some of the waterworks elements first introduced at that time even became the standard provision for the future reservoir construction.

11. At the turn of the twentieth century, the waterworks facilities established in the nineteenth century still played an integral role in the provision of water supply to Hong Kong Island. It was only when the government decided to develop the Kowloon Peninsula in the early twentieth century after the lease of New Territories from China that more larger reservoirs and a technically complicated water service related infrastructure were initiated across the harbour, moving the city development further afield.

12. When the first reservoir in Kowloon came into operation in 1910 and subsequently followed by the completion of Shing Mun (Jubilee) Reservoir in 1937 (being the largest reservoir throughout the territory before World War II), the increase in water supply began to overtake population increase. It was a time when severe water shortages finally gave way to an era where the fundamental water needs of the society could be satisfied. Until then, the whole network of water supply for the urban area was basically completed.

13. Nestling in the Hong Kong metropolis, the above reservoirs still remain largely intact today. While Wong Nai Chung Reservoir accomplished its historic mission and has been adaptively reused as a boating park since 1986, the remaining five reservoirs have been continuing their original services and operations since their inception. A brief on the heritage value of the six pre-war reservoirs is at **Annex B**.

GRADING AND DECLARATION

14. The AAB endorsed at its meeting on 26 November 2008 the establishment of a formal relationship between the statutory monument declaration system and the administrative grading system for historic buildings. Under the endorsed arrangements, Grade 1 buildings defined as ‘buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible’ will serve as a pool of highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority as to whether some of these may have reached the ‘high threshold’ of Monuments to be put under statutory protection.

15. Although the proposed grading is yet to be endorsed by the AAB, the AMO has reviewed and assessed all the selected waterworks items and considered that they are of outstanding value and thus have been recommended a high grade. The selected 41 historic waterworks structures have certainly reached the ‘high threshold’ for their significant heritage value as detailed in paragraphs 4-12.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members are requested to advise on whether the 41 historic waterworks structures within the six pre-war reservoirs, namely Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, Tai Tam Group of Reservoirs, Wong Nai Chung Reservoir, Kowloon Reservoir, Aberdeen Reservoir and Shing Mun (Jubilee) Reservoir should be declared as monuments under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance. The boundaries of the items intended for declaration, which are subject to final confirmation by the relevant government departments, are shown at **Annex C**.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
May 2009