

N31

香港堅彌地城新海旁海堤

Seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong

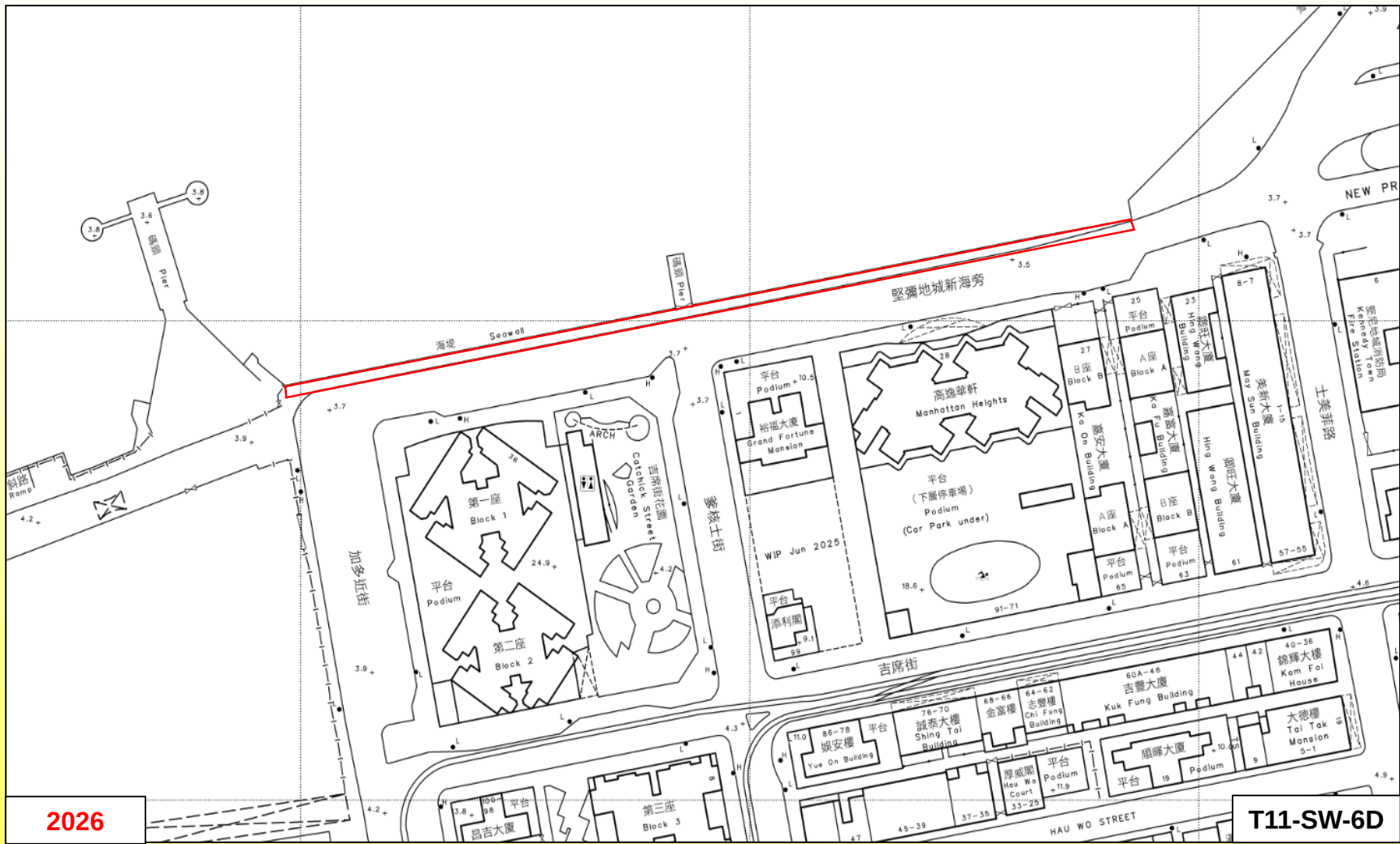
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香港堅彌地城新海旁海堤

Seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong

擬議二級歷史建築
Proposed Grade 2

建於1892年
Built in 1892



— 擬議評級範圍
Proposed grading boundary

只用於識別位置，並非確實範圍 For identification of location only, not exact boundary

香港堅彌地城新海旁海堤 Seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong



朝向東面的堤段
The eastbound section

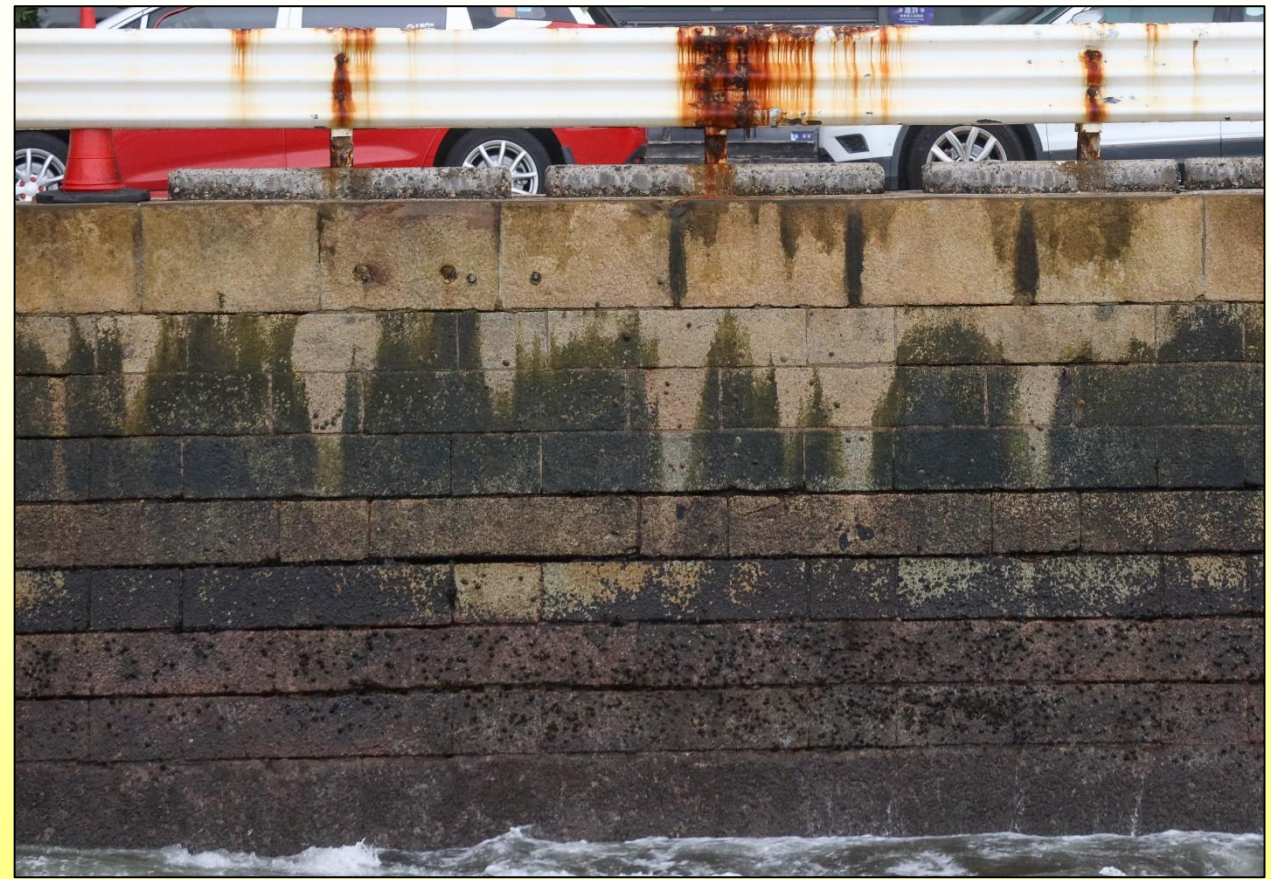


朝向西面的堤段
The westbound section

堅彌地城新海旁海堤全貌
Overview of the entire section of the seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town

2026
(Source: AMO)

香港堅彌地城新海旁海堤 Seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong



堅彌地城新海旁海堤近景
Close-up view of the seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town

2026
(Source: AMO)

Historic Building Appraisal

Seawall in New Praya, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong.

Running along the shore of Belcher Bay, which was originally bounded by a natural coastline,¹ the New Praya, Kennedy Town, was created through successive reclamation works carried out in the late 19th century. The existing seawall along the praya, a legacy of these reclamations, endures as a testimony to the development of Kennedy Town that started over a century ago.

**Historical
Interest**

Reclamation in Kennedy Town can be traced back to the mid-1870s, when the Government resolved to expand the city westward in order to meet the growing demand for land. A reclamation plan was drawn up as early as 1876 for the development of a “new township”, to be named after the then governor Sir Arthur Edward Kennedy, at the western end of Hong Kong Island around Belcher Bay, which was also known locally as Lap Sap Wan.² To proceed, the Government offered marine lots for public auction that were to be created through reclamation, with purchasers required by special clauses in the conditions of sale to reclaim the entirety of their lots, and also to construct strong and substantial granite seawalls along their waterfronts.³ These stringent conditions, however, did not attract any bidders,⁴ and ultimately the Government itself took on the reclamation works and the construction of the seawalls.

Official records indicate that reclamation at Belcher Bay had commenced by no later than 1878.⁵ A map dating from 1885 further reveals that two major streets in

¹ MM-0144, “Plan of Victoria, Hong Kong, 1873 Surveyor General's Department 1873”, 1873.

² Belcher Bay is named after Captain Edward Belcher, a British naval officer who carried out the first hydrographic survey of Hong Kong waters aboard HMS Sulphur. Its earlier local name “Lap Sap Wan” (literally “Rubbish Bay”, “垃圾灣” or “攞撻灣” in Chinese) was derived from the presence of disagreeable or unpleasant premises and activities – notably mortuaries and cemeteries as well as a substantial accumulation of rubbish – that dotted the area prior to the development of Kennedy Town in the late 19th century. See CO129/209. “Enclosure 2: Report by the Surveyor General”, 20 March 1883, *Despatches: 1883 May*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 13 May 2026; CO129/210. “Enclosure: Letter from the Chairman, Sanitary Board to the Colonial Secretary”, 19 June 1883, *Despatches: 1883 June to July*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

³ CO129/177. “Letter from Surveyor General to Colonial Secretary”, 10 October 1876, *Despatches: 1877 January to May*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

⁴ Government Notification No. 207, *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 8 September 1876, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online; “The Judicious Management of Land Sales Is Probably ...”, *The China Mail*, 13 December 1876.

⁵ A government document from 1878 records that expenditure had been incurred for reclamation at Belcher Bay, suggesting that the reclamation works had already commenced. CO129/185. “Supplementary Estimates – Hong Kong, 1878”, *Despatches: 1879 June to December*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

Kennedy Town – Belcher’s Street and Chater Street⁶ (later renamed Catchick Street in 1909) – already existed,⁷ suggesting that the land on which the two streets lie had been formed by that year. About 22 acres of land were reclaimed in total,⁸ and the sanitary conditions of the foreshores were improved through extensive reclamation and embankment works.⁹ The same year, Kennedy Town was also officially designated as one of the districts of the City of Victoria,¹⁰ reflecting that this newly developed area had taken shape.

The site of the present New Praya, Kennedy Town, however, was not developed until November 1887, when the Government entered into a contract with Tsang Keng (曾瓊)¹¹ to undertake further reclamation in front of the land lots on Chater Street, specifically old Marine Lot Nos. 240 to 246. The contract also required Tsang to construct a seawall measuring 1,410 lineal feet, which was necessary to complete the reclamation.¹² Works commenced soon after the contract was signed.¹³ By 1889, three courses of granite footings had been laid while earth filling was progressing steadily.¹⁴ The seawall had been raised to 7 feet 9 inches below quay level by 1890, and the earth filling continued.¹⁵ The reclaimed area

⁶ Originally named after the surname of Sir Catchick Paul Chater, Chater Street (遮打街) was renamed Catchick Street (吉席街) in 1909, adopting Chater’s forename name to avoid confusion with other streets bearing the same name, such as Chater Road (遮打道) in Central, and Chater Street (遮打街) in Tsim Sha Tsui, which was renamed Peking Road in the same year. See Government Notification No.184, *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 3 October 1909, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online; From the Files 25 Years Ago”, *The China Mail*, 30 January 1959.

⁷ HKRS58-1-4-61, “Extension to Inland Lots 244 & 954 – Recommending that the Extra Width of a Certain Bye Street at Kennedy Town be Offered as an –”, 14 December 1885 to 15 December 1885.

⁸ “Hong Kong in History”, *The China Mail*, 20 January 1941.

⁹ CO129/223. “Enclosure 1: Address of Governor Sir G. F. Bowen, G.C.M.G, to the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, December 9th, 1885, with the Address of the Council in Reply”, *Despatches (1885 November-December); Offices (Except Foreign) and Individuals: 1885*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

¹⁰ Government Notification No. 384, *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 9 October 1885, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

¹¹ Tsang Keng (曾瓊, also written Tsang King) arrived in Hong Kong from Canton in the 1860s and worked as a contractor for more than 30 years. Significant projects in which he was involved included the construction of the Government Civil Hospital, the Tai Tam Reservoir and its associated waterworks. See Wright, Arnold. *Twentieth Century Impressions of Hongkong, Shanghai, and Other Treaty Ports of China: Their History* (London: London Lloyd's Greater Britain Pub. Co, 1908), pp. 186-187.

¹² Surveyor General’s Office, “Surveyor General’s Department. Report for the Year 1891” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1892*, 13 January 1892, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

¹³ CO129/244. “Letter from Surveyor General to Acting Colonial Secretary”, 9 January 1890, *Despatches: 1890 January to April*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

¹⁴ Surveyor General’s Office, “Report on Public Works that Have Been Completed to Date” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1889*, 20 November 1889, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

¹⁵ Surveyor General’s Office, “Report on Public Works” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1890*, 10 July

covered approximately 8.55 acres in total at this stage.¹⁶ Although the project subsequently experienced delays due to the influence of monsoons and ongoing settlement at the southern extremity,¹⁷ part of the seawall was completed in 1891 while the remaining section was expected to be concluded shortly.¹⁸ The reclamation works were practically completed by 1892,¹⁹ pushing the coastline of Kennedy Town further northwards and creating additional land for development. This reclaimed area then became the new seafront for Kennedy Town and was known as “New Praya,²⁰ Kennedy Town”.²¹ Leases for the new marine lots were granted in the same year,²² marking the completion of the reclamation works and the construction of the seawall. It is therefore believed that the earliest year that the seawall was completed can be dated to 1892.

As a century-old structure that still stands today, the seawall is closely intertwined with the development of Kennedy Town. It is an example of the early infrastructure project undertaken in Hong Kong as a result of the reclamation initiatives in the late 19th century. A particularly remarkable aspect of the seawall is that it has preserved the same shoreline that was created more than a century ago, while still maintaining much of its original appearance.

1890, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

¹⁶ Surveyor General’s Office, “Report on the Operations of the Public Works for the Year 1890” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1891*, 28 February 1891, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

¹⁷ CO129/242. “Letter from Surveyor General to Colonial Secretary”, 6 August 1889, *Despatches: 1889 August to December*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

¹⁸ Surveyor General’s Office, “Surveyor General’s Department. Report for the Year 1891” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1892*, 13 January 1892, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

¹⁹ Public Works Office, “Report of the Director of Public Works for 1892” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1893*, 7 February 1893, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

²⁰ Derived from the Portuguese word “praia” (literally meaning “beach”), “praya” refers to land by the seafront. In addition to New Praya, Kennedy Town, several streets along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island adopted the word in their English names in the early years, such as Praya East (later Johnston Road and Hennessy Road), Praya Central (later Des Voeux Road Central) and Praya West (later Des Voeux Road West). See 任正全：《灣仔情猶在》（香港：中華書局（香港）有限公司，2025年），頁25；鄭寶鴻：《此時彼刻：港島東百年變遷》（香港：中華書局（香港）有限公司，2015年），頁40。

²¹ Based on an old photo and a number of maps, the reclaimed land of the New Praya, Kennedy Town appears to have been designated primarily for godown use from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. See 08-09-076, “Hong Kong Island: Victoria, Kennedy Town, Looking South-east towards the Sea-wall and Godowns. Note: Pier M. 2 in Middle Has Since Been Demolished.1925-1927”, 1925 to 1927; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Topographic Map, 1:600, Map ref.: 195-SE-5 (Ed 1955-10), October 1955; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Topographic Map, 1:600, Map ref.: 195-SE-6 (Ed 19586), June 1958.

²² Government Lease of Marine Lot No. 242, 24 June 1892; Government Lease of Marine Lot No. 243, 24 June 1892; Government Lease of Marine Lot No. 245, 24 June 1892; Government Lease of Marine Lot No. 246, 24 June 1892; CO129/256. “Report on the Progress of the Public Works During the First Half-year 1892”, 10 August 1892, *Despatches: 1892 August to December*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

Measuring approximately 620 feet in length, the existing seawall at New Praya, Kennedy Town is a typical example of a vertical seawall built in the late 19th century. Its straight and upright face rises vertically from the water along the shoreline, providing marine frontage for vessels to berth and to load and unload cargo.²³ Several mooring rings still remain on its surface. The entire upright face of the seawall above the waterline was constructed with finely dressed granite blocks that were quarried locally and laid in a Flemish bond pattern, in which stretchers and headers are laid alternately in each course.²⁴ Coping stones laid as headers line the top of the seawall, and they are considerably larger than the stones used for the facing. Referencing the cross-sectional drawings of other seawalls built in the same period,²⁵ it is likely that concrete was used as a backing material behind the granite facing to strengthen the structural integrity of the seawall.

**Architectural
Merit**

The foundation of the seawall is believed to have been constructed using the “pierre-perdue” (rubble-mound) technique, a common method adopted for seawalls by the mid to late 19th century. Large irregular rough rocks were heaped into the sea to form a foundation mound, with the interstices filled with rubble to facilitate structural interlocking,²⁶ and hence enhance the seawall’s resilience against the action of the waves. Although it is reported that three courses of granite footings were laid for the seawall in 1889,²⁷ available official correspondence suggests that precast Portland cement concrete blocks might have been laid as a substitute.²⁸ Although it remains

²³ “An Overview of Design of Public Seawalls within Victoria Harbour”, *Civil Engineering and Development Department – Port Works Division*, https://www.hfc.org.hk/filemanager/files/TFWL_20150519_ppt_item_3.pdf, accessed on 1 June 2026.

²⁴ Only the upright face of the seawall above the waterline was constructed with granite blocks. The materials used for the underwater part cannot be verified, as the footing is now covered by the repair works carried out in 2006.

²⁵ CO129/181. “Memorandum to Accompany Detail Drawings of the Praya and Sea Frontage Hong Kong”, 22 January 1878, *Despatches: 1878 January to August*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 25 June 2026; CO129/170. “Memorandum upon the Proposed New Permanent Wall”, *Despatches: 1875 January to June*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 25 June 2026; CO129/254. “Surveyor General’s Department, Report for the Year 1891”, 13 January 1892, *Despatches: 1892 January to April*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 25 June 2026; CO129/183. “Repair and Reconstruction of Praya Wall”, 1 May 1878, *Official and Individuals: 1878*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 25 June 2026.

²⁶ 何佩然：《地換山移 香港海港及土地發展一百六十年》（香港：商務印書館（香港）有限公司，2014年），頁57。

²⁷ Surveyor General’s Office, “Report on Public Works that Have Been Completed to Date” in *Sessional Papers for the Year 1889*, 20 November 1889, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

²⁸ The project experienced severe delays in 1890 due to the influence of monsoons and the thicker soft marine mud layer in the seabed of the area. To expedite progress, the Surveyor General (the post later became known as the Director of Public Works) proposed in January 1890 the use of precast Portland cement concrete blocks to replace the granite for the footings. The theory behind this proposal was that the marine mud layer would be consolidated in advance by the dead weight of the concrete blocks and thus mitigate future settlement. He also proposed setting the concrete blocks undersea

unclear what materials were used in the construction of the submerged portion, the enduring presence of the seawall at New Praya, Kennedy Town demonstrates the durability of the construction methods employed in that era.

When it was originally constructed, the seawall comprised three façades facing the sea that formed a protruding convex shape. Subsequent reclamation works in its vicinity resulted in the realignment of the shore into a linear orientation. Reclamation at the western end of New Praya, Kennedy Town between the 1930s and 1940s subsumed the western façade of the seawall and thus created a continuous alignment with the primary frontage.²⁹ Further reclamation in front of Praya, Kennedy Town and New Praya, Kennedy Town in the mid-1990s led to the reduction of a substantial portion of the seawall, reducing its total length to approximately half of its original extent.³⁰ Additionally, three piers were constructed along the New Praya at one point. While the Davis Street Pier³¹ remains standing, both the unnamed pier near the present-day Catchick Street Garden³² and the Green Island Cement Company Pier³³ have been demolished. Vestiges of the Green Island Cement Company Pier can still be seen on the current facing of the seawall, where the original granite surface has been replaced by concrete patches. Moreover, crash barriers have been fixed onto the granite coping stones at the eastern end of the seawall, hence disrupting part of its fabric.

**Authenticity &
Rarity**

using floating steam derricks. See CO129/244. “Letter from Surveyor General to Acting Colonial Secretary”, 9 January 1890, *Despatches: 1890 January to April*, from China and the Modern World, accessed on 9 April 2026.

²⁹ Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: NHK1-A0003, dated 26 March 1934; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: 681_6-4027, dated 11 November 1945.

³⁰ Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: CN4726, dated 8 October 1993; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: CN12596, dated 7 December 1995.

³¹ The Davis Street Pier was built in 1918. See “Appendix Q: Report of the Director of Public Works for the Year 1918” in *Administrative Reports for the Year 1918*, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online; “Public Works, 1918” in *Hong Kong Blue Book for the Year 1918*, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

³² The pier facing the existing Catchick Street Garden first appeared on a map of 1901. It was probably demolished between 1934 and 1945. See UK National Archives, “Plan of the City of Victoria Ref: 1901.3”, 160 feet to 1 inch, 1901, <https://www.hkmaps.hk/viewer.html>, accessed on 9 April 2026; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: NHK1-A0003, dated 26 March 1934; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: 681_6-4027, dated 11 November 1945.

³³ Built in 1968, the Green Island Cement Company Pier was probably demolished between 1997 and 1998. See “Green Island Cement Co. Ltd. v The Owners of the Ship or Vessel “Sunshine Island” and Another”, 4 June 1992, *Vlex Hong Kong*, <https://vlex.hk/vid/green-island-cement-co-862525401>, accessed on 9 April 2026; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: CN17075, dated 26 May 1997; Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Aerial Photo No.: CN20931, dated 4 August 1998.

Although various works have been carried out on the seawall over the years, including patch repairs, the installation of crash barriers and, most substantially, reclamation works, the overall authenticity of the existing remaining portion has largely remained intact, with a considerable part of its original granite facing retained. This not only provides a tangible trace of Hong Kong's early coastal engineering but also makes it a rare example of a century-old seawall within the developed part of the city.

Although the seawall's main façade faces Belcher Bay and its full extent is not easily visible from the shore, it has steadfastly served as a vital barrier along the seafront, withstanding strong winds and heavy waves to protect road facilities and safeguard residents' lives – particularly during typhoons – for more than a century. Besides, thanks to its unobstructed sea views and the influence of social media in recent years, the praya where the seawall is located has become a popular spot among both locals and tourists to take photos.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

Geographically, the seawall is within walking distance of a number of heritage sites, including Lo Pan Temple (Declared Monument), the Ex-Western Fire Station (Grade 2), No. 9 Ching Lin Terrace (Grade 3) and the S. K. H. St. Luke's Settlement Neighborhood Elderly Center (Grade 3), while gazing out toward the Green Island, which is home to the Green Island Lighthouse compound (Declared Monument).

Group Value

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