



A Framework for Debating the Creation of a Harbour Authority in Hong Kong

The creation of a harbour authority empowered to oversee all matters on and around Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour has long been the subject of debate. It has also been one of the major goals of the Harbour Business Forum (HBF) since our launch in June 2005. At the Harbourfront Commission (HC) meeting on May 17, 2011, the Society for the Protection of the Harbour (SPH) tabled a letter suggesting the establishment of a Central Harbourfront Development Authority. In response to the SPH, Mrs. Carrie Lam, Vice-Chair of the HC and the Secretary for Development, agreed that "it might be opportune to revisit the idea of a statutory harbourfront authority." The HC's Chair, Mr Nicholas Brooke, agreed and said that the establishment of a harbourfront authority would be a natural progress from the HC and the ultimate objective.

Consequently HBF has recently prepared a Harbour Authority Information Paper. The purpose of this Paper is to raise awareness of the key issues that need to be taken into consideration and the key questions that need to be answered such that an ideal form of harbour authority can be determined. More importantly, the Paper provides a framework for future discussion and debate, thereby facilitating a more informed and practical exchange of view.

The Paper has determined the best framework for reviewing alternative harbour authority forms is to use the 3 tier approach (Figure 1). This framework is organized around the three questions below that help set the overall structure of a harbour authority.

- What should be the extent of the harbour authority's **remit**?
- What key **responsibilities** should be handled by the harbour authority within its allotted remit?
- What **resources** should the harbour authority have at its disposal so that it may discharge its responsibilities effectively and efficiently?

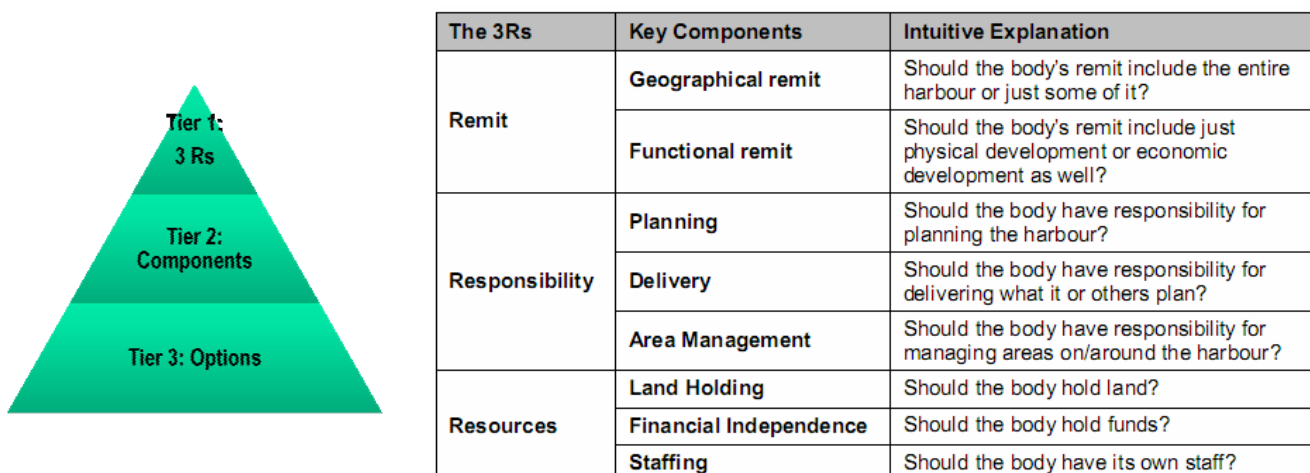


Figure 1: A 3 tier framework for creating a harbour authority.

It is also important to give people a good understanding of the relevance of various models for devising a model that would work for Hong Kong's harbourfront. So the Paper seeks to show the relevance of local and international examples to the unique circumstances of Hong Kong. The following international case studies have been selected to look at how harbourfront governance is handled in other jurisdictions:

- The Boston Redevelopment Authority
- Waterfront Toronto
- Singapore's Urban Development Authority
- Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority

In addition, five local case studies have been identified:

- The Housing Authority
- Hong Kong Science & Technology Park
- West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
- The Urban Renewal Authority
- The Airport Authority

The purpose of these local case studies is to compare how international experience relates to the traditional Hong Kong approach to establishing statutory authorities. The local case studies also show the extent to which the Hong Kong Government has been willing to relinquish and transfer responsibilities to external bodies, thereby setting a precedent for potentially similar transfers to an independent harbour authority.

However, throughout the Paper emphasizes that it is important to bear in mind that there is no a 'one size fits all' solution. Therefore, the last section of the Paper has been devoted to identifying a number of key issues which should be taken into consideration when discussing the creation of a harbour authority in the Hong Kong context.

Government Response...

The HBF's Best Practice Committee (BPC) Chair Mrs. Margaret Brooke presented the Information Paper to the HC at their meeting on December 13 and in general the HC members seemed satisfied with the findings. Mrs. Carrie Lam appreciated the work that HBF had put into this valuable paper, but she had reservations on the name of 'harbour authority' and considered 'harbourfront authority' might be more appropriate. She suggested holding a retreat session to seek the members' views on the framework of a harbour authority for preparation of a recommendation paper that could be put forward for consideration by the Government in the next term.

On December 9, the candidates for Chief Executive gathered at University of Hong Kong and discussed the urban development in Hong Kong. On behalf of HBF, our BPC member Ms. Fiona Waters asked the candidates whether they would support the creation of a harbour authority in Hong Kong. Mr. Leung Chun Ying in general agreed the idea of establishing the harbour authority but raised the need for in-depth discussion while Mr. Henry Tang had reservations about developing a harbour authority. This event was co-hosted by seven organizations and HBF was given the honor of being one of them.



Figure 2: Mr. Leung Chun Ying and Mr. Henry Tang discussed the urban development issues at the event on December 9.

A draft report of the Harbour Authority Information Paper has been delivered, and the final report will be ready and published on the [HBF](#) website by mid-January 2012. [Presentation](#) to the HC and the [draft report](#) are now available.

ULI Ten Principles to Help Guide Large-Scale Integrated Development

by Dr. Sujata Govada

October 12, 2011

(This article is from *Urban Land Institute*)

Hong Kong is known for its high-density, compact development and vibrant street life, especially in the older urban areas. Over the past few decades, the urban landscape of Hong Kong has become increasingly dominated by large-scale podium developments. More recent developments, though commercially successful, often have little or no functional relationship to the urban street grid because of their inward-looking design. These large-scale developments have essentially become isolated pods that are not well integrated with adjacent areas and surrounding districts and detract from the city's vibrant environment.

Among the problems related to this development model include the following:

- Huge isolated podiums create blank perimeter street walls, inward-looking retail uses, and piecemeal developments.
- Walls at street level topped by walled building towers block air ventilation across the urban fabric
- Public open space is often limited to the podium level.
- Where the podium directly abuts the street, narrow, deep street canyons are formed that trap air pollutants and exacerbate the heat-island effect.
- Circulation patterns end at the podium developments and are not integrated, disrupting the urban grid and community connections to adjacent areas.

In the ULI Sustainable Approach to New Development (SAND) study, undertaken to develop a more sustainable approach to large-scale developments, local large-scale projects were analyzed and benchmarked against regional and international case studies. Funding for the study came in part through a community action grant awarded to ULI North Asia by the ULI Foundation.

[Read more...](#)

Harbourfront Commission – At a Glance

Harbourfront Commission (HC) has recently established its fourth Task Force on Land-Water Interface. With this new Task Force, the HC currently has four Task Forces. The section below highlights key issues discussed at the recent meetings of the HC and its four Task Forces.

- ***Proposed Proportionality Principle on Reclamation of Victoria Harbour*** - Society for Protection of the Harbour (SPH) presented the HC the proposed proportionality principle on the reclamation of Victoria Harbour. SPH said they respected the overriding public need test but this principle would make it easier to implement by lowering the threshold for cases where the public and the harbour would benefit. The principle was meant to be permissive, not restrictive, for minor reclamation proposals that would benefit the public and the harbour.

In response to SPH, the Secretary for Development Bureau Mrs. Carrie Lam said that the Administration might consider revisiting the Technical Circular No. 1/04 and guidelines therein with reference to SPH's work. It would however be difficult for the Administration to formally adopt the proportionality principle as the Administration should not tamper with the Court of Final Appeal judgement in terms of legal compliance with reclamation. On the suggestion for the Commission to consider all proposals involving reclamation, she said that this platform could indeed be utilized for wider public consultation on reclamation. Measuring public feedback was both an art and science.

For more details, please refer to the [Discussion Paper](#).

- ***Hong Kong Island East Harbour-front Study*** - Planning Department presented the following recommended enhancement proposals formulated under the HK Island East Harbour-front Study.
 - A comprehensive waterfront promenade linking North Point, Quarry Bay, Shau Kei Wan and Chai Wan
 - Nine major pedestrian corridors as quick-wins for streetscape enhancement to improve the north-south waterfront connectivity.
 - Provision of water taxi service between Central and the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence in Shau Kei Wan
 - North Point Ferry Piers and the adjoining 20m Wide Waterfront Promenade of the ex-NPE Site – Theme: Vibrant Entertainment –themed Waterfront
 - Hoi Yu Street Site in Quarry Bay – Theme: Tourism and Entertainment-themed Waterfront
 - A major indoor entertainment facility (e.g. a multi-purpose performance centre or an IMAX theatre) at the Eastern Harbour Crossing Tunnel Portal site to create an attractive destination spot for visitors and to draw them towards the waterfront.

For more details, please refer to the [Discussion Paper](#), the [PowerPoint Presentation](#) and [Animation](#).

This will be the last newsletter of 2011 from HBF. We would like to wish all our members happy holidays and a happy new year. Many thanks for supporting us all these years!

CONTACT US

To help us develop the newsletter further in the future, please send your feedback to: hbf@bec.org.hk

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