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Hong Kong developer to start revamp of Avenue of Stars next month, despite doubts over expansion plan

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Fanny W. Y. Fung fanny.fung@scmp.com

New World tells councillors Tsim Sha Tsui attraction needs renovation despite questions over the plan to expand it to Hung Hom

Work to revamp Tsim Sha Tsui's Avenue of Stars will begin next month, the developer that manages the attraction says, despite a public outcry that has delayed its ambitious expansion plans.

New World Development informed Yau Tsim Mong District Council's traffic and transport committee of its decision yesterday, despite uncertainty over its scheme to expand the avenue to Hung Hom in return for a new 20-year agreement to run the site.

"For the existing Avenue of Stars, renovation will start later this year. More signs will be put up and the pedestrian path will be diverted," Jeff Tung Jing-kong, senior project director for New World, told councillors.

The Town Planning Board approved the plan, submitted jointly by a non-profit subsidiary of New World and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, a fortnight ago, but the proposed public-private partnership has since experienced two setbacks.



[1]Firstly, two activists

applied for a judicial review of the board's decision. Secondly, the department - faced with outrage over the decision to grant the project to a developer without competitive tendering - said it would launch a public consultation before entrusting the avenue to New World for 20 more years.

Councillor Chan Siu-tong of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong asked whether this would delay the scheme.

Tung sidestepped the question, but said: "We are still in close liaison with the [department] to discuss the designs ... After receiving the planning conditions from the Planning Department, we will commence technical feasibility studies and consult stakeholders as soon as possible."

Speaking after the meeting, he said: "At this moment I can't give you an exact timetable [for the expansion]. But the Avenue of Stars does need renovation and we will start this work in October as scheduled."

New World boss Henry Cheng Kar-shun had, a day earlier, described the expansion as a "thankless task" with no profit, though he admitted it could boost its nearby New World Centre.

Albert Lai Kwong-tak, policy committee convenor of lobby group Professional Commons, said New World was "jumping the gun" by starting work before the consultation.

"The consultation should allow people to have a say on the design of the whole promenade and its management model ... What if the public say in the consultation that they don't like the works?"

Yesterday's committee meeting also approved a plan to change the route of the Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon, which will see runners race up Nathan Road to the heart of Mong Kok.

The organiser, the Hong Kong Amateur Athletic Association, wanted to change the route, which has been used since 2001, because the section near the start in Tsim Sha Tsui was too narrow.

The organiser has long wanted to find a more spectator-friendly route for the race, which crosses many tunnels and bridges. Next year's race takes place on Sunday, January 17.

More on this:

['There is no profit': head of Hong Kong developer New World says extending Avenue of Stars is a 'thankless task' he didn't really want](#) [2]

[Hong Kong government pledges consultation on controversial Avenue of Stars revamp](#) [3]

['It's logical': harbour watchdog defends New World as partner in Avenue of Stars expansion despite lack of bidding](#) [4]

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[1] https://www.scmp.com/sites/default/files/2015/09/04/marathon-route_0509.jpg

[2] <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/economy/article/1855144/there-no-profit-head->

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[4] <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/economy/article/1853601/award-avenue-stars-expansion-current-developer-new-world>