

CHAPTER 7

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Provision of aquatic recreational and sports facilities
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**Audit Commission
Hong Kong
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This audit review has been carried out under a set of guidelines tabled in the Provisional Legislative Council by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on 11 February 1998. The guidelines were agreed between the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Audit and have been accepted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

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PROVISION OF AQUATIC RECREATIONAL AND SPORTS FACILITIES

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 This PART describes the background to the audit on the provision of aquatic recreational and sports facilities.

Background

1.2 Recreation and sports provide opportunities to enrich the quality of lives in Hong Kong. The Government aims to nurture an environment in which the public can enjoy a wide range of recreational and sports activities. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is responsible for promoting and developing recreation and sports at the community level and it:

- (a) provides and manages recreational and sports facilities to foster public participation in recreational and sports activities through close liaison with the 18 District Councils; and
- (b) organises a wide range of recreation and sports programmes through its 18 District Leisure Services Offices to promote the concept of “Sport-for-All”.

Aquatic recreational and sports facilities

1.3 At present, for swimming and water sports activities, the LCSD provides three main types of facilities (i.e. beaches, swimming pool complexes and water sports centres). The swimming season in Hong Kong is from April to October. June, July and August are peak swimming months. April, May, September and October are non-peak swimming months. The winter months are from November to March of the following year.

Beaches

1.4 As at 1 April 2003, the LCSD managed 41 gazetted beaches, of which only 32 were open for swimming. For the safety of swimmers, qualified lifeguards are provided at all gazetted beaches open for swimming. To enhance safety, shark prevention nets are installed at 30 gazetted beaches. In 2002-03, the operating revenue and expenditure for the gazetted beaches were \$4.4 million and \$138.5 million respectively. From 1993 to 2002, the number of gazetted beaches decreased from 42 to 41 and the number of beach goers, based on the records kept by the LCSD, decreased by 31% from 12.72 million to 8.75 million. Details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Number of gazetted beaches and beach goers
(1993 to 2002)

Year	Number of gazetted beaches	Number of beach goers (Million)
1993	42	12.72
1994	42	13.25
1995	43	12.69
1996	41	17.77 (Note)
1997	41	12.30
1998	41	13.23
1999	41	12.45
2000	41	10.51
2001	41	10.53
2002	41	8.75

Source: LCSD records

Note: According to the LCSD, the increase in the number of beach goers might be due to the low rainfall in 1996.

Swimming pool complexes

1.5 As at 1 April 2003, the LCSD operated 36 swimming pool complexes. They are normally open daily in three sessions during the swimming season. For the safety of swimmers, qualified lifeguards are provided at all the swimming pool complexes. In 2002-03, the operating revenue and expenditure for the swimming pool complexes were \$136.5 million and \$758.8 million respectively. From 1993 to 2002, the number of swimming pool complexes increased by 33% from 27 to 36. The number of users increased by 71% from 6.05 million to 10.33 million. Details are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of swimming pool complexes and users
(1993 to 2002)

Year	Number of swimming pool complexes	Number of users (Million)
1993	27	6.05
1994	28	5.67
1995	28	7.17
1996	31	8.22
1997	32	7.28
1998	33	7.92
1999	33	8.47
2000	34	9.01
2001	36	9.57
2002	36	10.33

Source: LCSD records

Water sports centres

1.6 As at 1 April 2003, the LCSD operated four water sports centres for the public to participate in activities such as dinghy sailing, windsurfing and kayaking/canoeing. These centres are open throughout the year (except the centres' weekly closed days and the Lunar New Year holidays). In 2002-03, the operating revenue and expenditure of these centres were \$8.1 million and \$40.4 million respectively. From 1993 to 2002, the enrolment in the day camp activities increased by 15% from 65,225 to 74,694 participants. The enrolment in the tent camp activities increased by 13% from 3,859 to 4,365 participants. Details are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Enrolment at water sports centres
(1993 to 2002)

Year	Day camp	Tent camp
1993	65,225	3,859
1994	66,002	4,081
1995	45,774	4,577
1996	54,157	3,936
1997	53,615	3,923
1998	56,925	4,589
1999	65,764	4,178
2000	69,334	4,727
2001	66,610	4,907
2002	74,694	4,365

Source: LCSD records

Audit review

1.7 The Audit Commission (Audit) has conducted a review on the provision and management of aquatic recreational and sports facilities by the LCSD. Audit has found that there are areas where improvements can be made and has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

PART 2: GAZETTED BEACHES

2.1 This PART examines the management of gazetted beaches and suggests measures to improve their usage and cost-effectiveness.

Designation of gazetted beaches

2.2 As at 1 April 2003, all the 41 gazetted beaches were designated as public pleasure grounds (i.e. bathing beaches) under the Fourth Schedule of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132). The purpose of the designation is to bring them within the statutory management of the Government. A beach is so designated when it becomes so popular that a degree of control is considered necessary and the provision of life-saving service and beach facilities is justified. Of the 41 gazetted beaches, 12 are located on Hong Kong Island, 6 in the New Territories East, 14 in the New Territories West and 9 on the outlying islands. Details are given in Appendix A. Under the management of the District Leisure Services Offices, the gazetted beaches are manned by Amenities Assistants (AAs) and lifeguards during their working hours (Note 1).

Closed gazetted beaches

2.3 The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is responsible for monitoring the water quality of beaches. The LCSD, in conjunction with the EPD, ensures that it is safe to swim at the beaches. When the water quality of a beach is ranked “very poor” (Note 2), it is considered not suitable for swimming by the EPD and is declared closed by the LCSD. Notices are then posted prominently warning people that it is unsafe to swim at the closed beaches. As at 1 April 2003, nine gazetted beaches were closed due to poor water quality or other considerations. Although no life-saving service is available, AAs are stationed at these closed gazetted beaches to provide day-to-day management.

Note 1: *During the swimming season, life-saving service is normally provided from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. On Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays during the peak swimming months, extended hours of life-saving service is provided from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm. During the winter months, life-saving service is provided from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.*

Note 2: *The EPD classifies the water quality of beaches into four ranks (i.e. “good”, “fair”, “poor” and “very poor”). Only those beaches with water quality classified as “good” and “fair” comply with the Water Quality Objective for bathing water established under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (Cap. 358). Beaches with water quality classified as “poor” and “very poor” fail to comply with the established Water Quality Objective for bathing water.*

Audit observations

2.4 Audit has the following observations on the nine closed gazetted beaches:

- (a) ***Rocky Bay Beach in Southern District.*** The Rocky Bay Beach (in the vicinity of the Shek O Beach) has been closed for over 10 years mainly because of poor water quality. Following the commissioning of the Shek O Sewerage Screening Plant in 1999 and the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS — Note 3) in late 2001, the water quality of the beach has improved progressively. Although the water quality of the beach was ranked “fair”, the LCSD considered that it was not cost-effective to reopen the beach in 2003 because:
- (i) the beach water was still susceptible to pollution from the septic tanks and soak-away pit systems of the nearby Shek O Village;
 - (ii) the beach lacked adequate facilities; and
 - (iii) there would be additional operational cost for the provision of shark prevention nets/beach rafts.

Audit noted that a consultant, who carried out a coastal safety audit on the beaches of Hong Kong in 2000, had advised that the beach should be deleted from the list of gazetted beaches because of safety reason and low usage. However, the LCSD considered that de-gazetting beaches was a sensitive issue and decided not to take further action;

- (b) ***Seven closed gazetted beaches in Tsuen Wan District.*** In Tsuen Wan District, because of poor water quality, three gazetted beaches (i.e. the Anglers’ Beach, the Approach Beach and the Ting Kau Beach) were closed in mid-1990s. In early 2003, four other gazetted beaches (i.e. the Casam Beach, the Gemini Beaches, the Hoi Mei Wan Beach and the Lido Beach) were also closed because the water quality of these beaches deteriorated upon the full commissioning of Stage 1 of HATS. According to the EPD, the water quality of the beaches in

Note 3: *At the end of 2001, the full commissioning of Stage 1 of HATS resulted in the diversion of sewage from the Victoria Harbour to the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works (SISTW) for treatment and disposal to the western water of the territory. The water quality of the Rocky Bay Beach improved because sewage generated from Chai Wan and Tseung Kwan O, which had previously been discharged to the Tathong Channel, was diverted to the SISTW for treatment. While the SISTW provided a good level of organic removal, it could only remove 50% of the bacteria. Although major improvement in bacteria level was observed in the central and eastern part of the harbour, elevation in bacteria level was found in the western part of the harbour, affecting the beaches in Tsuen Wan.*

Tsuen Wan District would likely be improved in 2006 at the earliest, when local sewerage was scheduled to be completed. The exact timing of improvements would depend on the rate at which the unsewered properties could be individually connected to the main sewers. Audit noted that in recent years, the daily average numbers of beach goers at these seven closed gazetted beaches were low, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

**Daily average number of beach goers at
the seven closed gazetted beaches in Tsuen Wan District
(2000 to 2002)**

Beach	Daily average number of beach goers		
	2000	2001	2002
Lido	133	158	114
Anglers'	60	82	74
Approach	35	38	29
Casam	26	31	28
Ting Kau	26	24	15
Gemini	2	1	9
Hoi Mei Wan	9	2	3

Source: LCSD records

(c) **Castle Peak Beach in Tuen Mun District.** Since 1981, the Castle Peak Beach has been considered unsuitable for swimming due to poor water quality. The key events about this beach are as follows:

- (i) in July 1998, in response to the request of the then Tuen Mun District Board in November 1994 for developing the beach into a swimming venue with ancillary facilities for water-borne activities (e.g. sampan rowing and water cycling), the then Regional Services Department provided facilities (including a two-storey beach building, kiosks, toilets, changing/shower facilities, barbecue pits and a sitting-out and children's play area) at this beach at the cost of about \$97 million;

- (ii) in November 1999, the redeveloped Castle Peak Beach was handed over to the Regional Services Department. Although the water quality had improved to the “fair” ranking following the operation of several sewage treatment plants in Tuen Mun, the beach was still considered not entirely suitable for swimming because a layer of loose mud mixed with refuse covered the seabed. In May 2000, upon strong public request, the beach facilities (i.e. barbecue pits, sitting-out and children’s play areas) were open for public use;
- (iii) in 2001, the LCSD requested the Civil Engineering Department (CED) to dredge up the mud and refuse from the seabed of the beach before opening it for swimming. Dredging and sand filling works were carried out from December 2001 to August 2002 at a cost of \$1.9 million;
- (iv) in October 2002, the CED reported that:
 - the effectiveness of sand replenishment work might not be long-lasting; and
 - swimming was not suitable unless further improvement works (which could be large in scale and costly) were made. However, other water-borne activities such as rowing and sailing were suitable; and
- (v) in February 2003, in view of the uncertainty of the seabed condition, the LCSD decided that the beach should continue to be closed in 2003.

2.5 Audit noted that in 2002-03, the LCSD provided 35 established posts (6 AA IIIs and 29 Lifeguards) for eight of the nine closed gazetted beaches (i.e. with the exception of the Castle Peak Beach). Details are given in Appendix B. As no life-saving service is required to be provided for these eight beaches, the LCSD has redeployed these 29 lifeguards (3 lifeguards at the Rocky Bay Beach and 26 lifeguards at the seven beaches in Tsuen Wan District) to fill other vacant posts. According to the LCSD, the ancillary facilities of the seven closed gazetted beaches in Tsuen Wan District are still open to the public. These beaches should continue to be designated as gazetted beaches for proper management and control purposes. The eight closed beaches were still manned by 6 AA IIIs at a staff cost of \$1.6 million in 2002-03.

Audit recommendations

2.6 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **consider de-gazetting the Rocky Bay Beach and deleting it from the Fourth Schedule of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (see para. 2.4(a));**
- (b) **consider deleting the 29 established lifeguard posts provided for the eight closed gazetted beaches (see para. 2.5);**
- (c) **critically review the need and cost-effectiveness of deploying AA IIIs at the eight closed gazetted beaches (see para. 2.5); and**
- (d) **for the Castle Peak Beach, promptly decide whether it is still cost-effective to restore it to a bathing beach and consider introducing other suitable recreational and water-borne activities (e.g. sampan rowing, canoeing, water cycling and beach volleyball) to further promote its usage (see para. 2.4(c)).**

Response from the Administration

2.7 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has said that:

- (a) the recommendation to de-gazette the Rocky Bay Beach is in principle agreed as the beach has not been used for swimming for a long time and the adjacent Shek O Beach is providing very comprehensive beach facilities. The demand to retain this gazetted beach is low. The LCSD will consult the Southern District Council before de-gazetting. The LCSD will also seek the Lands Department's agreement to take back the site after de-gazetting;
- (b) the 29 lifeguard posts have already been frozen. The lifeguards originally filling the posts have been redeployed to fill other vacant posts. If these posts are deleted and the beaches are eventually reopened, new posts will have to be separately created. The LCSD does not see the advantage of deleting the posts at this stage;
- (c) the LCSD will review the cost-effectiveness of deploying AA IIIs stationed at beaches with low attendance and primitive facilities. Although the eight gazetted beaches are closed for swimming, the ancillary land-based facilities at the beaches in Tsuen Wan District (such as barbecue pits, beach volleyball courts with spectator stands, bathing sheds, toilets, changing rooms and shower facilities) are still open to the public. To maintain the relevant service to the public, supervisory staff at AA III level are still required to continue proper supervision, daily maintenance and cleansing of facilities, law enforcement and dealing with public enquiries;

- (d) the LCSD will review the need to retain the AA III post at the Rocky Bay Beach. The beach is not provided with any land-based facilities. The AA III concerned has been redeployed to the Shek O Beach to assist in the daily operation of the Shek O Beach which has relatively high attendance. The AA III is also required to supervise the cleansing duties carried out by cleansing contractors at the Rocky Bay Beach; and
- (e) the LCSD will, in consultation with the Tuen Mun District Council, determine the mode of operation of the Castle Peak Beach.

Opening period of urban beaches

2.8 Life-saving service is provided at all gazetted beaches during their opening periods. However, not all gazetted beaches are open throughout the year. The LCSD takes weather and user level into account in determining the opening period. In 2003, 11 gazetted beaches located on Hong Kong Island (hereinafter referred to as urban beaches) and 21 gazetted beaches located in the New Territories and on the outlying islands were open for swimming. For the urban beaches, the Deep Water Bay Beach was open throughout the year and the other 10 beaches were open from March to November 2003. For the beaches in the New Territories and on the outlying islands, the Clear Water Bay Second Beach, the Golden Beach and the Silverstrand Beach were open throughout the year and the remaining 18 beaches were open from April to October 2003. Since 2000, the LCSD had conducted several reviews to realign the opening period of the urban beaches with those beaches in the New Territories and on the outlying islands. However, considering that there might be objections from regular swimmers and the Southern District Council, the LCSD decided that the opening period of the urban beaches should remain unchanged.

Audit observations

2.9 Audit analysed the daily average number of swimmers at the 11 urban beaches in March and November 2002 (Note 4). It was revealed (see Table 5) that:

- (a) the five most popular beaches (i.e. the Deep Water Bay Beach, the Repulse Bay Beach, the Middle Bay Beach, the Big Wave Bay Beach and the Stanley Main Beach) attracted 85% to 93% of the swimmers; and

Note 4: *The attendance records at the urban beaches show a breakdown of beach goers into visitors and swimmers. However, similar breakdown is not provided for the beaches in other areas.*

- (b) the daily average numbers of swimmers of the other six beaches were below the overall average of all beaches.

Table 5

**Daily average number of swimmers at the 11 urban beaches
(March and November 2002)**

Beach	Daily average number of swimmers	
	March 2002	November 2002
Deep Water Bay	450	391
Repulse Bay	111	117
Middle Bay	119	100
Big Wave Bay	32	100
Stanley Main	55	60
Shek O	27	53
St. Stephen' s	7	34
South Bay	5	20
Chung Hom Kok	5	18
Turtle Cove	8	11
Hairpin	2	1
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>
Total	821	905
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>
Average	75	82

Source: LCSD records

2.10 As the 11 urban beaches are all located in Southern District, the need for opening all of them in March and November should be re-examined. **The LCSD should consider closing the less frequently used urban beaches in March and November.** Audit noted that the staff cost of providing life-saving service at the six less frequently used urban beaches for these two months (i.e. those beaches with less than 55 swimmers a day in March and November 2002 —see Table 5) was \$1.9 million in 2002-03.

Audit recommendation

2.11 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider closing the less frequently used urban beaches in March and November each year (see para. 2.10).**

Response from the Administration

2.12 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has, in principle, agreed with the audit recommendation. The LCSD will seek the Southern District Council's support before implementation.

Beaches with low user level

2.13 The user levels at gazetted beaches vary significantly. In 2002, the gazetted beaches recorded 8.75 million beach goers. The 10 most popular beaches had 7.06 million (or 81%) beach goers. Of the 10 least popular beaches, eight are located on the outlying islands (five on Lantau Island, one on Sharp Island in Sai Kung, one in Cheung Chau and one on Lamma Island). Audit has reviewed the user levels at these eight least popular beaches on the outlying islands. The audit observations are described in paragraphs 2.14 to 2.16.

Audit observations

2.14 ***Beaches on Lantau Island.*** Lantau Island has five beaches (i.e. the Silver Mine Bay Beach, the Pui O Beach, the Upper Cheung Sha Beach, the Lower Cheung Sha Beach and the Tong Fuk Beach). In 2002, the daily average number of beach goers ranged from 110 at the Silver Mine Bay Beach to 41 at the Tong Fuk Beach. There is no shower facility at the Tong Fuk Beach. **Audit considers that there is a need for the LCSD to consider providing adequate facilities at the gazetted beaches on Lantau Island.**

2.15 ***Kiu Tsui Beach on Sharp Island in Sai Kung.*** The location of the Kiu Tsui Beach is remote. It can only be accessible by private ferries from Sai Kung. In 2000, the consultant who carried out a coastal safety audit on the beaches of Hong Kong recommended that this beach should be de-gazetted because of its rocky seabed condition. Instead, a neighbouring beach to the south of the Kiu Tsui Beach should be designated as a gazetted beach because many people preferred to swim there. **Audit considers that the LCSD, when planning the future development of Sharp Island as a resort island, needs to examine whether the said “neighbouring beach” should be designated as a gazetted beach, instead of the Kiu Tsui Beach.**

2.16 ***Lo So Shing Beach on Lamma Island and Kwun Yam Beach on Cheung Chau.*** During the non-peak swimming months in 2002, the Lo So Shing Beach had about 42 beach goers daily, whereas 172 beach goers used the Hung Shing Yeh Beach nearby. Likewise, about 300 beach goers used the Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach daily but only 33 went to the Kwun Yam Beach nearby. **The LCSD needs to consider reducing the life-saving service at the Lo So Shing Beach and the Kwun Yam Beach during the non-peak swimming months to reduce management cost.**

Audit recommendations

2.17 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **consider providing adequate beach facilities at all the gazetted beaches on Lantau Island (see para. 2.14);**
- (b) **examine whether the Kiu Tsui Beach should continue to be designated as a gazetted beach (see para. 2.15);**
- (c) **review critically the practicability of providing a full-scale life-saving service only during the peak swimming months and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays during the non-peak swimming months at the Lo So Shing Beach and the Kwun Yam Beach (see para. 2.16); and**
- (d) **ascertain periodically the reasons for the low user level of gazetted beaches with a view to identifying improvement measures.**

Response from the Administration

2.18 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has said that:

- (a) it is the LCSD's objective to provide adequate ancillary facilities at all gazetted beaches. However, due to site constraints at some beaches on Lantau Island (i.e. lack of fresh water supply and proper sewerage system), showering and toilet facilities cannot be provided at this stage. The LCSD will keep in view the water supply and sewerage connections to the nearby areas and initiate improvements to these beaches at opportune time;
- (b) the LCSD will continue to keep in view the private-sector initiative of developing Sharp Island into a resort. A private developer has once shown interest to develop the Kiu Tsui Beach for water sports activities and the adjacent beach, which has a much larger sand area, for swimming. De-gazetting the Kiu Tsui Beach shall be considered in the future development of Sharp Island in one go;
- (c) the LCSD will study the practicability and cost-effectiveness of reducing the life-saving services at the Lo So Shing Beach and the Kwun Yam Beach during weekdays (except public holidays) in non-peak swimming months without compromising the safety standard; and
- (d) the LCSD will continue to monitor and review the user level of beaches periodically and consider measures to boost patronage. In the meantime, the LCSD has introduced other attractions (such as beach volleyball, kite-flying and sand sculpturing) at gazetted beaches during the winter months. The LCSD will explore the need for and the feasibility of introducing more and better ancillary facilities (such as toilet and changing rooms, parking facilities and catering outlets) to enhance patronage.

PART 3: SWIMMING POOL COMPLEXES

3.1 This PART examines the management of swimming pool complexes and suggests measures to improve their patronage and cost-effectiveness.

Alignment of fees and charges

3.2 In August 2000, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (the then Finance Bureau) approved a 14% target for the recovery of the full cost of operating swimming pool complexes. In 2002-03, the LCSD achieved a 18% cost recovery.

3.3 The pricing policy of the LCSD is to ensure a reasonable balance between financial considerations and the affordability of fees in order to maintain high utilisation of its facilities. As the admission fees for swimming pool complexes are set out in the subsidiary legislation of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, revision of the fees is subject to negative vetting of the Legislative Council under section 35 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap. 1).

Audit observations

3.4 Owing to the different policies of the former Urban and Regional Councils, there were disparities in the admission fees and charges for leisure and cultural facilities in the urban areas and the New Territories. In March 2001, the LCSD carried out a review of fees and charges with a view to achieving their alignment. In April 2001, the LCSD extended the concessionary admission fees for swimming pool complexes to the full-time students in the New Territories. However, the fees alignment exercise was put on hold. In view of the financial climate, the LCSD considered that any increase in fees for either the urban areas or the New Territories to achieve the alignment of fee levels would add burden on the general public. The LCSD was also concerned that any reduction in fees as a result of alignment would require a corresponding increase in government subsidies.

3.5 In November 2001, the LCSD proposed to defer the alignment of fees and hiring charges for leisure and cultural facilities and services. The Chief Secretary for Administration agreed to the LCSD's proposal. However, he asked the LCSD to produce a rational basis, in response to impending challenge, for the fees and charges alignment exercise. Despite the fact that the LCSD was unable to conduct the overall fees alignment exercise, it managed to align the different concessionary arrangements for children/toddlers, disabled persons, students, schools and subvented organisations for using various leisure facilities in the urban areas and the New Territories in September 2003.

3.6 Audit notes that for swimming pool complexes, the admission fee in the New Territories for non-peak days (i.e. Mondays to Fridays) is lower than that for peak-days (i.e. Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays). The admission fees in the urban areas are the same for both peak and non-peak days (Note 5). Audit also notes that the review on subsidy levels and cost recovery rates for the different types of leisure and cultural services has not been carried out.

Audit recommendations

3.7 **Audit has recommended that:**

- (a) **the Secretary for Home Affairs should, as soon as practicable, make a policy decision on setting the subsidy levels for the different types of leisure and cultural services (see para. 3.6); and**
- (b) **in carrying out the fees and charges alignment exercise, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should set the admission fees for all swimming pool complexes according to the subsidy levels set by the Secretary for Home Affairs (see para. 3.6).**

Response from the Administration

3.8 The **Secretary for Home Affairs** has said that given the current economic climate, it is not practical to make any fee adjustments. The fees alignment exercise should be withheld for the time being. In addition, the review on the subsidy levels and the cost recovery rates for different types of facilities should be conducted together with the fee alignment exercise as a complete package.

3.9 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has said that:

- (a) the LCSD aims to complete the alignment exercise as soon as practicable and will take into account the overall economic conditions in drawing up a revised timetable for the alignment exercise; and

Note 5: *A concessionary admission fee is granted to children below the age of 14 and senior citizens above the age of 60. For swimming pool complexes in the urban areas, the adult admission fee is \$19 and the concessionary fee is \$9. For swimming pool complexes in the New Territories, the adult admission fees are \$20 for peak days and \$17 for non-peak days, and the concessionary fees are \$9 for peak days and \$8 for non-peak days.*

- (b) as the fees alignment exercise is withheld for the time being, there is no immediate need to draw up guidelines on the subsidy levels and the cost recovery rates. These guidelines should be formulated as a complete package during the fees alignment exercise which would be conducted when the economic situation becomes more favourable. The LCSD will set admission fees for all swimming pool complexes according to the subsidy levels agreed among parties concerned, including the Home Affairs Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and after consulting the Legislative Council.

Swimming during the winter months

3.10 In the 2002-03 swimming season, of the 36 swimming pool complexes, 14 were provided with heated pools and open during the winter months. While the Wan Chai Swimming Pool was mainly used for training, the other 13 complexes (6 provided with indoor heated pools and 7 provided with outdoor heated pools) were open to the public. During the winter months in 2002-03, 1.53 million swimmers used these 13 complexes.

Audit observations

Heavy and concentrated demand for heated pools

3.11 Audit noted that the monthly average patronage for the heated pools during the winter months increased by 13% from 294,160 in 2000-01 to 333,377 in 2002-03. Of the 13 complexes provided with heated pools, the Kowloon Park Swimming Pool, the Morrison Hill Swimming Pool and the Shing Mun Valley Swimming Pool were most popular, which together accounted for 55% of the total patronage during the winter months in 2002-03. This indicated that demand was concentrated at these three complexes during the winter months.

3.12 Audit compared the monthly average patronage of 13 swimming pool complexes during the winter months with that during the non-peak swimming months in 2002-03. To make a fair comparison, Audit excluded the exceptionally high patronage during the peak swimming months in 2002, which covered the school summer holidays. Audit analysis revealed that there were insignificant changes in the monthly average patronage of the three most popular complexes during the winter months (7% increase for the Kowloon Park Swimming Pool, 4% decrease for the Morrison Hill Swimming Pool and 7% decrease for the Shing Mun Valley Swimming Pool —see Appendix C) when compared with that during the non-peak swimming months. On the other hand, the other 10 complexes showed moderate to large decreases in the monthly average patronage during the winter months (ranging from 12% to 69%) when compared with the non-peak swimming months. **The LCSD needs to promote the utilisation of the 10 complexes.**

Higher patronage in indoor heated pools

3.13 During the winter months, the indoor heated pools generally attained a higher patronage than the outdoor heated pools. In 2002-03, of the 333,377 winter swimmers, 218,463 (66%) used the indoor pools and 114,914 (34%) used the outdoor pools (see Appendix C). Moreover, the outdoor heated pools generally recorded a larger decrease in the monthly average patronage during the winter months when compared with the indoor heated pools during the non-peak swimming months. For example, the Tuen Mun Swimming Pool, the Tseung Kwan O Swimming Pool and the Yuen Long Swimming Pool, which were all provided with outdoor heated pools, recorded the largest drop in monthly average patronage of 69%, 65% and 48% respectively (see Appendix C). In January 2002, the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs urged the Administration to expedite the progress of providing more indoor heated pools. Audit notes that the provision of outdoor heated pools is environmentally unfriendly because their heat dissipation is faster than that of indoor heated pools. This has resulted in higher electricity/fuel cost to heat up the water of outdoor pools. In the planning of new swimming pool complexes, the LCSD will provide indoor heated pools instead of outdoor heated pools.

3.14 As the provision of indoor heated pools is more desirable for winter swimming, the LCSD is exploring, on a trial basis, the viability of providing a light-weight cover to convert the outdoor pools of the Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool and the Yuen Long Swimming Pool into indoor pools. **As converting outdoor pools into indoor pools is costly (Note 6), the LCSD needs to examine its cost-effectiveness.**

Low patronage in evening sessions of outdoor heated pools

3.15 During the winter months in 2002-03, the daily average patronage in the evening sessions was much lower than those in the morning and afternoon sessions. Details are shown in Table 6. Of the 13 swimming pool complexes, 9 had a daily average patronage of less than 80 in the evening session, with the lowest of 40 recorded at the Ho Man Tin Swimming Pool. Of these 9 low-patronage complexes, 6 were provided with outdoor heated pools and 3 (including 2 leisure pools with a relatively small capacity) were provided with indoor heated pools. The low patronage of the outdoor pools might be attributable to the cold weather in the evenings of the winter months. **In order to save operating costs, the LCSD needs to consider shortening the opening hours of outdoor heated pools during the winter months.**

Note 6: *The estimated costs of converting the secondary pools of the Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool and the Yuen Long Swimming Pool into indoor heated pools were \$35 million and \$32 million respectively.*

Table 6

**Daily average patronage of
13 swimming pool complexes provided with heated pools
(winter months in 2002-03)**

Swimming Pool	Daily average patronage (Note 1)			
	Morning session	Afternoon session	Evening session	All sessions
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d) = (a)+ (b)+ (c)
Kowloon Park (Note 2)	1,067	710	725	2,502
Morrison Hill (Note 2)	874	615	471	1,960
Shing Mun Valley (Note 2)	588	363	146	1,097
Sham Shui Po Park (Note 3)	443	271	77	791
Sha Tin Jockey Club	290	257	58	605
Fanling	254	273	51	578
Yuen Long	214	196	149	559
Lai Chi Kok Park (Note 3)	298	179	58	535
Hammer Hill Road (Note 2)	257	146	63	466
Tuen Mun	155	236	47	438
Tseung Kwan O	176	167	42	385
Island East (Notes 2 and 4)	182	95	69	346
Ho Man Tin (Notes 2 and 5)	108	61	40	209
Total	<u>4,906</u>	<u>3,569</u>	<u>1,996</u>	<u>10,471</u>

Source: LCSD records

Note 1: Patronage figures for training during the two session breaks were excluded.

Note 2: This swimming pool complex was provided with indoor heated pools.

Note 3: The figures of evening session for the Sham Shui Po Park Swimming Pool and the Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool represented the attendance of block bookings by organisations after the complexes were closed to the public.

Note 4: The Island East Swimming Pool (housed in a sports centre) was a leisure pool with a low capacity of 190 swimmers.

Note 5: The Ho Man Tin Swimming Pool (housed in a sports centre) was a leisure pool with a low capacity of 156 swimmers.

Audit recommendations

3.16 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **make efforts to step up the patronage of the underused swimming pool complexes during the winter months (see para. 3.12);**
- (b) **critically examine the cost-effectiveness of converting existing outdoor heated pools into indoor heated pools (see para. 3.14);**
- (c) **keep hourly user statistics for different sessions of the outdoor heated pools during the winter months (see para. 3.15); and**
- (d) **consider shortening the opening hours of outdoor heated pools where the usage is low to save operating costs (see para. 3.15).**

Response from the Administration

3.17 **The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services has said that:**

- (a) the swimming environment of indoor heated pools is more favourable than outdoor heated pools during the winter months. It is therefore only logical for the swimmers to concentrate in indoor heated pools rather than outdoor ones. However, it is worth noting that the swimmers of both indoor heated pools and outdoor heated pools are on the increase in the past few years, implying that there is demand for outdoor heated pools in winter. The LCSD will liaise actively with the National Sports Associations to divert some of their training programmes from the indoor heated pools to the outdoor heated pools;
- (b) the LCSD will critically review the scope and cost-effectiveness of converting outdoor heated pools into indoor heated pools;
- (c) hourly users statistics for all swimming pool complexes have been kept since the swimming season of 2003 and the LCSD will continue to do so; and

- (d) the LCSD will examine usage and demand when determining future opening arrangements in winter. The LCSD reviews the opening arrangements of all public swimming pools on a yearly basis. The current opening arrangements are made after taking into consideration the needs of morning swimmers and those who swim after work, as well as the availability of alternatives. The outdoor heated pools in the urban areas are now open in two sessions only as the public have the choices of swimming in the other five indoor heated pools in the urban areas which are open in the evening. The outdoor heated pools in the New Territories have to be opened in the evening since there is currently only one indoor heated pool in the New Territories.

Extension of opening period to November in recent years

3.18 Most swimming pool complexes that are not provided with heated pools are closed during the winter months. However, the opening period of five swimming pool complexes (i.e. the Jordan Valley Swimming Pool, the Kennedy Town Swimming Pool, the Kowloon Tsai Swimming Pool, the Pao Yue Kong Swimming Pool and the Victoria Park Swimming Pool) was extended to November in the past few years. The normal opening hours of these complexes were from 6:30 am to 10:00 pm during the swimming season. They were open from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm in November 2002.

Audit observations

3.19 The LCSD's Quality Assurance Section, in its Quality Audit Report of March 2001, recommended that the LCSD's management should consider closing the five swimming pool complexes in November because of the low patronage. However, the LCSD's management considered that there was still a demand in November. Audit found that between 2000 and 2002, the patronage in November had been persistently low (see Appendix D). In March 2003, the LCSD's Working Group on Saving Initiatives for Swimming Pools and Bathing Beaches reported a low usage problem in November 2002 (see Table 7) and suggested that these five complexes should be closed in November.

Table 7

Patronage of the five swimming pool complexes in November 2002

Swimming Pool	Capacity (Note)	Monthly patronage	Daily average patronage
	(Number)	(Number)	(Number)
Jordan Valley	823	1,578	53
Kennedy Town	1,500	4,890	163
Kowloon Tsai	900	4,866	162
Pao Yue Kong	2,000	2,045	68
Victoria Park	1,124	5,038	168

Source: LCSD records

Note: The capacity of a swimming pool complex is the maximum number of swimmers that can be admitted at any time during the opening hours.

3.20 The highest daily average patronage was 168 for the five complexes in November 2002 (see Table 7). This was less than the lowest daily average patronage of 209 of the Ho Man Tin Swimming Pool recorded during the winter months in 2002-03 for the 13 complexes provided with heated pools (see Table 6). **Audit considers that it is not cost-effective to open the five complexes in November.** Apart from staff cost, closing the five complexes in November would result in an annual saving of \$1.5 million in operating costs.

Audit recommendation

3.21 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider closing in November the five swimming pool complexes which are not provided with heated pools (see para. 3.20).**

Response from the Administration

3.22 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has agreed with the audit recommendation and will consult the relevant District Councils before implementation.

Swimming training courses

3.23 In early 2000, the LCSD implemented a progressive swimming scheme to provide more opportunities for people of all ages to enrol in swimming training courses. The scheme, aiming at arousing public interest in swimming, mainly provides the following three-stage progressive swimming courses:

- (a) **Stage I.** The participants are taught to swim by either front crawl or breaststroke. Those who pass the test (i.e. swimming a distance of 20 metres) after completing the course will be awarded a certificate;
- (b) **Stage II.** Upon completing the course, those participants who pass the test (i.e. swimming a distance of 50 metres) will be awarded a certificate; and
- (c) **Stage III.** Upon completing the course, those participants who pass the test (i.e. swimming a distance of 100 metres) will be awarded a certificate.

In addition, the LCSD organises a limited number of high-level swimming courses on backstroke and butterfly stroke for those who have attained the Stage II level. In 2002-03, the 18 District Leisure Services Offices organised 3,313 training courses.

Audit observations

3.24 Audit has found that:

- (a) the fees for the swimming courses could not pay for the cost of hiring the instructors in 2002-03. Furthermore, the course fees were less than the admission fees for the swimming pool complexes. The course fee was \$108 in the urban areas. This was only 57% of the total admission fee of \$190 ($\19×10 admissions). The course fee of \$100 in the New Territories was 50% of the total admission fee of \$200 ($\20×10 admissions). The LCSD needs to recover the instructors' cost and the admission fees;
- (b) the passing rate of Stage I swimming courses varied considerably among the districts, ranging from 44% in Southern District to 82% in Tuen Mun District (see Appendix E); and
- (c) there were insufficient swimming course places for advancement to higher levels. In 2002-03, only 52% of the participants who passed Stage I advanced to Stage II and 69% of the participants who passed Stage II advanced to Stage III and other high-level swimming courses. The LCSD needs to organise more swimming courses to meet the demand.

Audit recommendations

3.25 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **periodically evaluate the achievements and cost-effectiveness of the progressive swimming scheme;**
- (b) **consider increasing the swimming course fees to a more reasonable level (see para. 3.24(a));**
- (c) **investigate the reasons for the different passing rates of Stage I courses among the districts (see para. 3.24(b)); and**
- (d) **consider organising more high-level swimming courses to meet the demand (see para. 3.24(c)).**

Response from the Administration

3.26 **The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services has said that:**

- (a) after the introduction of the progressive swimming scheme in summer 2000, the LCSD conducted evaluation meetings in October 2000 with the staff of 18 districts and the Hong Kong Swimming Teachers' Association. Feedback from participants, instructors as well as venue staff was collected and areas of improvements were identified. As a result, two recommendations were introduced in 2001, including the provision of Butterfly Stroke courses in response to public demand and the new arrangement on assessment for swimming courses for children by recording the distance they could swim, instead of stating "fail" or "pass" in the assessment. After that, the scheme became one of the LCSD's routine district programmes;
- (b) statistics on the scheme (such as subscription rate, attendance rate and passing rate) are collected annually to monitor the progress of the scheme. Feedback from participants and instructors is also collected by staff during class supervisions or at the District Customer Liaison Group Meetings;
- (c) to further understand the response from participants and to raise the quality of the scheme, the LCSD will conduct further survey on participants' satisfaction level on the scheme in 2004;

- (d) the existing course fee remains at the same level as previously set by the two ex-Municipal Councils. As advised by the Home Affairs Bureau, the fee review exercise has been withheld in the light of the prevailing economic climate;
- (e) the fee review exercise will be carried out when the economic situation becomes more favourable. The LCSD will consider increasing the course fee to a level that is affordable to the public and can improve the cost recovery rate of the scheme;
- (f) the instructor fee for swimming courses has been reduced from \$162 per hour to \$122 per hour since 1 August 2003. With this adjustment, the instructor fees can be recovered in full;
- (g) passing rates are affected partly by factors such as the standard/talent of participants, the number of training courses organised for different age groups and the weather condition on the assessment date. To have a thorough investigation on the underlying reasons, more information will be collected from districts for analysis in future; and
- (h) as the high-level swimming courses have to be held in main pools, there is a capacity constraint which limits the flexibility to increase the number of such courses significantly. The LCSD will encourage participants who have acquired basic skills to practise themselves or to join swimming clubs which also provide high-level swimming courses.

PART 4: WATER SPORTS CENTRES

4.1 This PART examines the management of water sports centres and suggests measures to improve their usage and cost-effectiveness.

Services provided by water sports centres

4.2 The LCSD operates four water sports centres. They are the St. Stephen's Beach Water Sports Centre (SSBWSC) in Stanley, the Chong Hing Water Sports Centre (CHWSC) and the Jockey Club Wong Shek Water Sports Centre (WSWSC) in Sai Kung, and the Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre (TMTWSC) in Tai Po.

4.3 All the four water sports centres offer various types of water sports activities including dinghy sailing, windsurfing and canoeing/kayaking. They are open six days a week throughout the year. The SSBWSC and the WSWSC are closed on Tuesdays. The TMTWSC is closed on Wednesdays and the CHWSC is closed on Thursdays. Their normal daily water sports activity hours run from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with one-hour lunch break from noon to 1:00 pm.

4.4 All the four water sports centres provide scheduled training programmes (Note 7). They also organise package training programmes which are tailor-made for organisations, companies and self-organised groups according to their interests and learning pace. Participants of both scheduled and package training programmes, who have passed the required examination/assessment, are awarded water sports certificates. The qualified certificate holders can also hire crafts for practice or pleasure sailing on an hourly basis for six hours per day at any of the four water sports centres. In 2002-03, 77,935 participants, comprising 73,851 day campers and 4,084 tent campers (Note 8), enrolled in the water sports activities. Based on a total annual capacity of 107,192 participants, the overall enrolment rate was 73%.

Usage of water sports centres

4.5 Water sports are seasonal in nature. The high season is from April to November. The low season is from December to March. The usage of water sports centres during peak days (i.e. Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) is normally higher than non-peak days (Mondays to Fridays). Audit has analysed the enrolment figures in 2002-03 by high season and low season with breakdown by peak days and non-peak days as shown in Table 8.

Note 7: *Except the CHWSC which organises scheduled training programmes of elementary level only, the other three centres organise scheduled training programmes from elementary level to advanced level.*

Note 8: *Day campers of all the four water sports centres can enjoy water sports during the normal daily activity hours. They either participate in the training programmes or hire crafts for practice or for pleasure sailing. Only the CHWSC provides tent camping facilities for tent campers to stay overnight from 2:30 pm to 12:30 pm on the next day.*

Table 8

**Enrolment at the water sports centres
(2002-03)**

Water sports centre	Peak days (Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays)			Non-peak days (Mondays to Fridays)		
	Total capacity (Note)	No. of participants	Enrolment rate	Total capacity (Note)	No. of participants	Enrolment rate
(A) High season (April 2002 to November 2002)						
(i) Day camp activities						
CHWSC (100)	7,600	8,606	113%	13,100	5,275	40%
WSWSC (100)	7,420	11,805	159%	13,400	6,552	49%
SSBWSC (50)	3,750	5,808	155%	6,600	5,446	83%
TMTWSC (70)	5,180	7,301	141%	9,380	8,292	88%
<i>Subtotal</i>	23,950	33,520	140%	42,480	25,565	60%
(ii) Tent camp activities						
CHWSC (30)	1,170	1,786	153%	4,200	1,184	28%
(B) Low season (December 2002 to March 2003)						
(i) Day camp activities						
CHWSC (100)	3,600	2,178	61%	6,500	418	6%
WSWSC (100)	3,932	2,698	69%	6,400	1,484	23%
SSBWSC (50)	1,850	2,138	116%	3,200	985	31%
TMTWSC (70)	2,520	3,156	125%	4,900	1,709	35%
<i>Subtotal</i>	11,902	10,170	85%	21,000	4,596	22%
(ii) Tent camp activities						
CHWSC (30)	540	821	152%	1,950	293	15%
Total	37,562	46,297	123%	69,630	31,638	45%

Source: LCSD records

Note: The figure in brackets denotes the daily capacity of each water sports centre in terms of the maximum daily number of participants that could be admitted. The total capacity was the maximum number of participants that could be admitted during the period. The daily capacity of the TMTWSC was reduced from 100 to 70 because renovation works were carried out in 2002-03.

Audit observations

4.6 The enrolment rate of water sports centres was calculated on the basis of the daily capacity whereas the actual enrolment was counted on an hourly basis. Using the daily capacity as a basis to calculate the enrolment rate would overstate the actual enrolment level. For example, the SSBWSC, which has a daily capacity of 50 participants, can accommodate 100 participants if 50 participants hire the crafts for the three-hour morning session and another 50 doing the same for the three-hour afternoon session. The actual enrolment would be 100 participants. However, using the present daily capacity of 50 participants, the centre would record an enrolment rate of 200%. If the daily capacity is changed to 100 participants on a three-hour session basis, the enrolment rate would be 100%. **To provide better management information, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to adopt a fairer basis for assessing the enrolment rate of the water sports centres.**

4.7 Based on the enrolment statistics recorded by the LCSD (see Table 8), Audit noted that in 2002-03:

- (a) during the high season, the enrolment rates for peak days of all the four water sports centres were satisfactory. However, for non-peak days, the enrolment rates of the day camp activities for both the CHWSC and the WSWSC were below 50%, and the enrolment rate of the tent camp activities for the CHWSC was as low as 28%; and
- (b) during the low season, for peak days, while the SSBWSC and the TMTWSC still recorded a high enrolment level, the CHWSC recorded a lower enrolment rate of 61% for its day camp activities. For non-peak days, the enrolment rates of all the four centres were below 40%. In particular, for the two centres located in Sai Kung, the enrolment rates were low. The enrolment rates for the CHWSC were 6% for its day camp activities and 15% for its tent camp activities. The enrolment rate for the WSWSC was 23% for its day camp activities. To improve their usage, Audit notes that in 2003-04, the four water sports centres have planned new programmes such as sailing adventure programmes and marine ecological tours.

Audit paid site visits to the four water sports centres. The audit observations are described in paragraphs 4.8 to 4.14.

CHWSC and WSWSC

4.8 The CHWSC and the WSWSC are in Sai Kung. The CHWSC, with a land area of 53,000 square metres, is situated at the northern end of the West Sea Cofferdam of the

High Island Reservoir in Sai Kung. It offers a magnificent view of the countryside and provides a vast artificial lake for water sports activities. Because of its remote location, the LCSD provides a free shuttle bus service. Alternatively, campers can reach the CHWSC by taxi or private ferry from the Sai Kung Pier. The CHWSC is the only water sports centre that has adjoining land-based facilities including a tent camping site with barbecue pits, a camp-fire area, a basketball field, an archery range, a large playground and a multi-purpose hall that can be used for group activities. On the other hand, the WSWSC, with a land area of 7,300 square metres, located near the Wong Shek Pier, is more convenient because it is directly accessible by public buses. In 2002-03, the WSWSC recorded a higher enrolment level than the CHWSC. This might be partly attributable to the remote location of the CHWSC. **To increase its enrolment level, there is a need to improve accessibility to the CHWSC.**

4.9 During the low season in 2002-03, there was idle capacity in the CHWSC. During that period, the CHWSC recorded enrolment rates of 61% for peak days and 6% for non-peak days, and its tent camp activities during non-peak days were only 15% of its capacity. By comparison, the situation at the WSWSC was better. During the low season in 2002-03, its enrolment rates were 69% for peak days and 23% for non-peak days.

4.10 Of the 719 programmes organised by the four water sports centres during the low season in 2002-03, Audit noted that 42 (6%) programmes were organised by the CHWSC and 235 (33%) programmes were organised by the WSWSC. **In view of the relatively low usage, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to find ways to promote the activities of the CHWSC and the WSWSC during the low season.**

SSBWSC

4.11 The SSBWSC is situated on the Stanley Peninsula in Southern District. In 2002-03, it recorded a high enrolment level. To meet the increasing demand for water sports activities, the LCSD is developing a new Stanley Main Beach Water Sports Centre at an estimated cost of \$51 million. The new centre, with a daily capacity of 80 participants, is targeted for completion in December 2004.

4.12 The SSBWSC was developed by the then Urban Services Department in 1998. With a small site area of 860 square metres, the SSBWSC has a daily capacity of 50 participants only and has been very congested during the peak days. Adjacent to the SSBWSC is the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups' (HKFYG) Stanley Outdoor Activities Centre, which has been operated by the HKFYG since 1975. In December 2000, the HKFYG proposed to relinquish the centre site to the LCSD. At that time, the LCSD intended to integrate the centre with the SSBWSC. In July 2001, the HKFYG repeated

again its proposal to relinquish the centre site. However, since then, the LCSD has not received any further proposal from the HKFYG. **In order to resolve the overcrowding problem in the SSBWSC, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to discuss with the HKFYG with a view to expanding the site area of the SSBWSC.**

TMTWSC

4.13 Following the completion of the Plover Cove Reservoir in 1976, the Government permitted a number of organisations to use the Tai Mei Tuk Recreation Area for developing water sports activities. The TMTWSC, with a site area of 6,820 square metres (Note 9) and a daily capacity of 100 participants, has been operated since 1981. In the same year, the Tai Po Boat Club (TPBC), a private sailing club, was temporarily relocated within the TMTWSC (Note 10). The TPBC occupied an open space area of 1,200 square metres. As at 1 April 2003, apart from the TPBC, there were six other organisations (Note 11) located in the Tai Mei Tuk Recreation Area providing similar but exclusive water sports activities to their members.

4.14 The TMTWSC was congested, especially in peak days because a portion of its site was occupied by the TPBC. In 1990, the then Regional Services Department planned to upgrade the TMTWSC's facilities to meet the increasing demand for water sports activities. However, the project was accorded a low priority due to the continual occupation of the site by the TPBC. Notwithstanding the temporary measures made in July 2003 to generate additional open space area in the TMTWSC, its overcrowding problem persists. **Since the Tai Mei Tuk Recreation Area has been shared among the various organisations for over 22 years, the LCSD needs to reassess its potential for providing water sports activities.**

Note 9: *In July 2003, to improve the supporting facilities of the TMTWSC (such as the toilets, changing rooms and the roof deck of the services building), refurbishment works were completed to generate an additional open space area of 472 square metres.*

Note 10: *The TPBC has been housed within the TMTWSC since 1981. In 1981, due to the coastal land resumption for the construction of the Tolo Harbour Highway, the TPBC was temporarily relocated from its site at Tai Po Kau to the TMTWSC. The TPBC was not allowed to return to the former site due to change in design. Although the Lands Department had attempted to search for a suitable site to permanently relocate the TPBC, several proposals were rejected by the TPBC.*

Note 11: *The six organisations (i.e. the Hong Kong Youth Hostels Association, the Police Adventure Club, the Hong Kong Schools Sailing Association, the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association Leung Shing Tak Sea Activity Centre, the Scout Association of Hong Kong Tai Mei Tuk Activity Centre, and the HKFYG Tai Mei Tuk Outdoor Activities Centre) are located in the vicinity of the TMTWSC.*

Audit recommendations

4.15 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

General

- (a) **adopt a fairer basis for assessing the enrolment rate of the water sports centres to provide better management information (see para. 4.6);**
- (b) **continue to develop new programmes to promote public participation in water sports activities (see para. 4.7(b));**

CHWSC and WSWSC

- (c) **improve accessibility to the CHWSC in order to improve its usage (see para. 4.8);**
- (d) **further promote the CHWSC with its land-based facilities as an outing and camping site in order to improve its usage, especially during the low season (see para. 4.10);**
- (e) **organise more water sports activities at the WSWSC so as to improve its usage during the low season (see para. 4.10);**

SSBWSC

- (f) **discuss with the HKFYG to ascertain its intentions about the Stanley Outdoor Activities Centre site with a view to resolving the overcrowding problem in the SSBWSC (see para. 4.12); and**

TMTWSC

- (g) **to meet the increasing demand for water sports activities, consider the feasibility of cooperating with the cluster of water sports providers at the Tai Mei Tuk Recreation Area to develop the area into a large-scale integrated water sports centre (see para. 4.14).**

Response from the Administration

4.16 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services has said that:

General

- (a) the LCSD has noted Audit's advice and will study if the LCSD can use various indicators such as craft-hour hiring to reflect the usage of the water sports centres;
- (b) the LCSD has developed strategic plans and new programmes to further promote public participation in the water sports centres. New programmes (such as geological and ecological tours and sailing/canoeing trip cum camping activities) have been organised. The programmes have been widely publicised by posting leaflets and posters at all the LCSD's booking outlets. A video compact disc introducing water sports activities and a website on thematic programmes are being prepared to enhance the publicity;

CHWSC and WSWSC

- (c) owing to structural safety reason, the Water Supplies Department imposes a five-tonne restriction to all vehicles passing through the West Dam of the High Island Reservoir which is the only leading way to the CHWSC. Under such restriction, the centre can only make use of the 24-seater vans to transport participants. Since April 2003, the LCSD has increased the frequency of its free shuttle bus service from two trips per day to six trips per day depending on the campers' demand. This improved service has contributed to the increased non-peak usage from 36% to 44%. Besides, the LCSD will further widely publicise the private ferry services that are being provided in Sai Kung District. The LCSD will explore the feasibility of providing public light bus services to attract walk-in users;
- (d) new thematic camping programmes (such as camp fire, hiking, outdoor adventure and astronomy) are being organised to boost up non-peak usage. Besides, camping facilities (such as tents, floor matting, sleeping bags and cooking equipment) have been upgraded;
- (e) ecological tours (such as searching for mangroves and corals, sailing adventure and tailor-made sea expedition programmes) are being organised to boost up non-peak usage. Besides, the centre has liaised with the Geological Society of Hong Kong to jointly organise geological seminars and touring at Chek Chau and Tung Peng Chau;

SSBWSC

- (f) the discussion with the HKFYG about the Stanley Outdoor Activities Centre site is in progress; and

TMTWSC

- (g) the LCSD will continue to maintain the co-operation network within the community and study if there is a need to form a joint committee with the related non-government organisations to further enhance the development of large scale and integrated water sports activities within the area. All along, the TMTWSC pools together and utilises resources of various centres and associations at Tai Mei Tuk in organising large scale programmes. They include Tolo Channel Regatta, Tolo Canoe Race and Tolo Harbour Swimming Competition which are jointly organised within the area regularly with neighbouring organisations or activity centres (such as the HKFYG Tai Mei Tuk Outdoor Activities Centre, the Tai Po Sports Association and the Outward Bound Alumni Association).

4.17 The **Director of Lands** has said that having regard to the varied nature of the organisations and the different forms of documentation held, the practicability of the audit recommendation mentioned in paragraph 4.15(g) requires careful consideration.

Usage of crafts at water sports centres

4.18 The four water sports centres are provided with various types of crafts such as sailing dinghies, windsurfing boards, canoes/kayaks for organising scheduled and package training programmes, and casual hiring on an hourly basis for six hours a day. Audit has analysed the craft hours used for training programmes and hiring in 2002-03 and the audit observations are described in paragraphs 4.19 and 4.20.

Audit observations

4.19 As shown in Table 9, in 2002-03, a large proportion of the craft hours were used for training programmes (i.e. 85% for dinghy sailing, 69% for windsurfing and 92% for canoeing/kayaking). Only a small proportion of craft hours were used for hiring (i.e. 15% for dinghy sailing, 31% for windsurfing and 8% for canoeing/kayaking). The high level of participation in the training programmes might be attributable to the low programme fees covering both the training of water sports and the use of crafts. For example, the programme fee for a sailing dinghy course was at an hourly rate of \$7, representing only 23% of the hourly rate of \$30 for hiring the same.

Table 9

**Craft hours used for
training programmes and for hiring at water sports centres
(2002-03)**

Water sports centre	Sailing dinghy		Windsurfer		Canoe/Kayak	
	Training programme	Hiring	Training programme	Hiring	Training programme	Hiring
	(Hours)	(Hours)	(Hours)	(Hours)	(Hours)	(Hours)
CHWSC	9,720 (91%)	1,010 (9%)	9,464 (81%)	2,200 (19%)	14,146 (73%)	5,109 (27%)
SSBWSC	22,595 (80%)	5,653 (20%)	15,985 (61%)	10,050 (39%)	15,291 (98%)	370 (2%)
TMTWSC	28,620 (82%)	6,336 (18%)	28,587 (70%)	12,346 (30%)	22,593 (99%)	249 (1%)
WSWSC	40,391 (90%)	4,411 (10%)	20,955 (71%)	8,730 (29%)	28,735 (95%)	1,478 (5%)
Total	<u>101,326 (85%)</u>	<u>17,410 (15%)</u>	<u>74,991 (69%)</u>	<u>33,326 (31%)</u>	<u>80,765 (92%)</u>	<u>7,206 (8%)</u>

Source: LCSD records

Note: The figures include craft hours used by both day and tent campers. The percentage in brackets denotes the proportion of craft hours used for the relevant activity at each centre.

4.20 Audit analysis of the usage rates of various types of crafts at the four water sports centres revealed that there were spare craft hours available as shown in Table 10. **To improve the usage of the crafts, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to encourage more qualified certificate holders to hire crafts at the water sports centres.**

Table 10

Usage rates of crafts at water sports centres
(2002-03)

Water sports centre	Sailing dinghy			Windsurfer			Canoe/Kayak		
	Available craft hours	Craft hours used	(%)	Available craft hours	Craft hours used	(%)	Available craft hours	Craft hours used	(%)
CHWSC	38,970	10,730	(28%)	66,708	11,664	(17%)	108,948	19,255	(18%)
SSBWSC	75,768	28,248	(37%)	134,904	26,035	(19%)	68,376	15,661	(23%)
TMTWSC	89,322	34,956	(39%)	83,412	40,933	(49%)	64,044	22,842	(36%)
WSWSC	117,222	44,802	(38%)	155,874	29,685	(19%)	180,288	30,213	(17%)
Total	321,282	118,736	(37%)	440,898	108,317	(25%)	421,656	87,971	(21%)

Source: LCSD records

Note: The available craft hours represented the total number of activity hours of the crafts available for use at the water sports centres in 2002-03.

Audit recommendations

4.21 Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:

- (a) regularly monitor the usage of crafts at the water sports centres so that long-term strategic targets can be set to optimise the split between craft training programmes and craft hiring (see para. 4.19); and

- (b) **periodically conduct user opinion surveys on the usage and hiring charges of the various types of crafts at the four water sports centres with a view to making improvements (see para. 4.20).**

Response from the Administration

4.22 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has said that:

- (a) the LCSD will closely monitor the market demand and maintain an optimum balance on the use of crafts. The LCSD is fully aware of the need to strike a balance between the use of crafts for training programmes and hiring. The LCSD is taking an active role to allocate crafts for training programmes because:
 - (i) it helps train up potential users to acquire relevant skill proficiency by which they can hire the crafts in future; and
 - (ii) it helps boost up non-peak usage by organising special programmes such as sailing adventure and ecological touring programmes; and
- (b) the LCSD will carry out large-scale user surveys on a need basis. Questionnaires have been issued to the participants of the water sports centres regularly with a view to collecting feedback for service improvement. The latest large-scale user survey was conducted in August 2003.

PART 5: PROVISION OF LIFEGUARDS

5.1 This PART examines the provision of lifeguards at beaches and swimming pool complexes and suggests measures to improve the deployment of lifeguards.

Manpower requirements for lifeguards

Manning scale of lifeguards

5.2 For the safety of swimmers, lifeguards are provided at beaches and swimming pool complexes. For beaches, the provision of lifeguards depends on the unique features of each beach, such as the size of the designated swimming area, areas of shallow and deep water, number of swimmers, currents, surf, water and weather conditions, and the life-saving facilities provided at the beach.

5.3 For the LCSD's swimming pool complexes, the number of lifeguards provided is based on a standard manning scale, depending on the types of facilities provided (see Appendix F). The standard manning scale is as follows:

- (a) three lifeguards (two for static look-out posts and one for patrolling) are provided for each main pool and each secondary pool;
- (b) one lifeguard is provided for each diving pool, teaching/training pool, paddling pool and children's pool; and
- (c) one lifeguard is provided for giving first-aid.

However, there is no standard manning scale for the leisure pools. The LCSD's provision of lifeguards is based on the unique features of each leisure pool.

Core to non-core lifeguard ratio

5.4 In 2000, after reviewing the manpower requirements for lifeguards, a working group of the LCSD recommended that:

- (a) a core life-saving workforce, comprising senior lifeguards and lifeguards employed on permanent establishment (PE) or full-year contract terms (hereinafter referred to as core lifeguards), should be maintained. This workforce should be supplemented by temporary lifeguards (hereinafter referred to as non-core lifeguards) employed on non-civil-service contract terms on a monthly or daily basis to cope with additional demand for life-saving service during the swimming season;
- (b) an overall core to non-core lifeguard ratio of no less than 1:1 should be maintained; and
- (c) the LCSD should strike a balance between the requirement for stability and continuity of experience on the one hand, and the need to minimise underemployment of lifeguards during the winter months on the other. This was because most of the beaches and swimming pool complexes are closed during the winter months. **The size of the core life-saving workforce should be kept at half of the full manpower requirement for lifeguards during the peak swimming months. This was considered to be the optimal size of the core life-saving workforce, which would ensure that the core to non-core lifeguard ratio at individual aquatic venues was no less than 1:1 throughout the year.**

The LCSD accepted the working group's recommendations in December 2000.

Audit observations

Number of core lifeguards exceeded the optimal size

5.5 According to the working group of the LCSD, the optimal size of the core life-saving workforce should be kept at half of the full manpower requirement for lifeguards during the peak swimming months. The working group recommended that a core life-saving workforce comprising senior lifeguards and lifeguards should be maintained. In February 2004, the LCSD informed Audit that the computation of core to non-core lifeguard ratio should have excluded the senior lifeguards because their major duties are supervision of lifeguards, mobilisation of lifeguards during accident or rescue cases, checking life-saving equipment and assisting in the maintenance of order. During the peak swimming months from June to August 2003, the highest number of lifeguards employed was 1,887, which comprised 980 core lifeguards (excluding 140 senior lifeguards) and 907 non-core lifeguards. The core to non-core lifeguard ratio was therefore 1.08:1. **Audit considers that in 2003-04, the optimal size of the core life-saving workforce should be 944 (1,887 ÷ 2).**

5.6 The cost of employing a non-core lifeguard during the swimming season (at the most for seven months of a year) was about 40% of that of employing a core lifeguard for a full year (Note 12). If 36 (980 – 944) non-core lifeguards, instead of core lifeguards, had been employed throughout the swimming season in 2003-04, there would have been an annual saving of \$4.8 million in staff cost (Note 13). **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to reduce the number of core lifeguards so as to save operating cost. This would also help address the unsatisfactory situation of underemployment of core lifeguards during the winter months (see PART 6).**

Uneven distribution of core and non-core lifeguards

5.7 Audit analysed the core to non-core lifeguard ratios of all the 18 Type 1 swimming pool complexes (Note 14) during the peak swimming months in 2002-03. It was found that the core to non-core lifeguard ratios varied considerably, ranging from 0.5:1 to 1.9:1. Details are shown in Table 11. The core to non-core lifeguard ratios of the Kwai Shing Swimming Pool, the North Kwai Chung Jockey Club Swimming Pool, the Yuen Long Swimming Pool and the Fanling Swimming Pool were less than the ratio of 1:1. The ratios of the Chai Wan Swimming Pool and the Victoria Park Swimming Pool were 1.9:1 and 1.8:1 respectively. This showed that there was an uneven distribution of core and non-core lifeguards in the swimming pool complexes. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to ensure that the core to non-core lifeguard ratio at each swimming pool complex is no less than 1:1 throughout the year, and that the number of core and non-core lifeguards are more evenly distributed among the complexes.**

Note 12: *Based on the Staff Cost Ready Reckoner No. 2002/1, the annual staff cost of employing a PE lifeguard was \$220,728. The cost of employing a temporary lifeguard for seven months from April to October, including the gratuity and contribution to the mandatory provident fund, was \$87,808. Therefore, the cost of employing a non-core lifeguard for seven months was 40% ($\$87,808 \div \$220,728 \times 100\%$) of that of employing a PE lifeguard.*

Note 13: *The saving in staff cost is calculated as follows:*

$$(\$220,728 - \$87,808) \times 36 = \underline{\underline{\$4,785,120}} \quad (\text{say } \$4.8 \text{ million})$$

Note 14: *Only Type 1 swimming pool complexes have been selected for comparison because there is no standard manning scale for leisure pools which are provided at other types of swimming pool complexes.*

Table 11
Core to non-core lifeguard ratios and lifeguard provisions
of the 18 Type 1 conventional swimming pool complexes
(peak swimming months in 2002-03)

Swimming Pool (Note 1)	Daily no. of core lifeguards (Note 2)	Daily no. of non-core lifeguards (Note 3)	Core to non-core lifeguard ratio	Daily no. of lifeguards provided as per standard manning scale (Note 4)	Daily no. of additional lifeguards provided	Highest average no. of swimmers in a session	Highest average no. of swimmers per lifeguard (Note 5)
	(a)	(b)	(c) = $\frac{(a)}{(b)} : 1$	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g) = $\frac{(f)}{[(a) + (b)] \div 2}$
Kwai Shing (8)	12	16	0.8 : 1	22	6	361	26
North Kwai Chung Jockey Club (4)	8	16	0.5 : 1	14	10	318	27
Pao Yue Kong (8)	21	18	1.2 : 1	24	15	641	33
Sham Shui Po Park (8)	19	20	1 : 1	22	17	666	34
Lei Cheng Uk (7)	21	18	1.2 : 1	20	19	685	35
Kowloon Tsai (3)	18	17	1.1 : 1	18	17	645	37
Lai Chi Kok Park (8)	21	20	1.1 : 1	22	19	795	39
Kennedy Town (4)	19	18	1.1 : 1	18	19	757	41
Tai Wan Shan (9)	20	14	1.4 : 1	22	12	733	43
Chai Wan (10)	23	12	1.9 : 1	22	13	817	47
Sha Tin Jockey Club (8)	20	18	1.1 : 1	22	16	904	48
Kwun Tong (8)	19	17	1.1 : 1	22	14	940	52
Victoria Park (5)	18	10	1.8 : 1	18	10	818	58
Yuen Long (5)	12	14	0.9 : 1	20	6	788	61
Fanling (4)	11	16	0.7 : 1	18	9	850	63
Morse Park (8)	19	15	1.3 : 1	22	12	1,063	63
Morrison Hill (4)	15	13	1.2 : 1	14	14	1,044	75
Tuen Mun (8)	14	14	1 : 1	20	8	1,115	80

Source: LCSD records

Note 1: The figure in brackets denotes the number of swimming pools at the complex.

Note 2: The two senior lifeguards provided for each swimming pool complex and lifeguards for operational relief were excluded.

Note 3: Temporary lifeguards provided for operational relief at complexes in the New Territories were excluded. However, these lifeguards were included for complexes in the urban areas because no breakdown of the number of lifeguards for operational relief was available.

Note 4: The number of lifeguards was based on the standard manning scale for two shifts (i.e. lifeguards for operational relief and session break relief were excluded).

Note 5: Lifeguards worked in two shifts.

Over-provision of lifeguards at underused swimming pool complexes

5.8 Audit has analysed the provision of lifeguards at all the 18 Type 1 swimming pool complexes based on the standard manning scale (see para. 5.3), the patronage level and the handling capability of lifeguards. According to the LCSD, a core lifeguard should be able to watch over a maximum of 150 swimmers and a non-core lifeguard should be responsible for a maximum of 100 swimmers. In determining the optimal level of lifeguards, the LCSD needs to compare the patronage level with their handling capability.

5.9 Audit computed the highest average number of swimmers in a session during the peak swimming months in 2002-03 for all the 18 Type 1 swimming pool complexes. As indicated in Table 11, the highest average number of swimmers per lifeguard varied significantly. For example, a lifeguard at the Kwai Shing Swimming Pool watched over 26 swimmers and a lifeguard at the Tuen Mun Swimming Pool watched over 80 swimmers. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to review the situation and assess whether there is a need to redistribute the provision of lifeguards among the complexes.**

5.10 An audit case study revealed that the provision of 66 lifeguards at the Tseung Kwan O Swimming Pool (Type 2 complex) in 2003 could be reduced to 52 lifeguards based on the standard manning scale, the handling capability of lifeguards and the highest patronage level of 1,600 swimmers. In this connection, Audit noted that the LCSD had reviewed the provision of lifeguards for 2004 at individual swimming pool complexes. According to the LCSD's lifeguard deployment plans for 2004, the LCSD would further reduce the number of lifeguards provided at the Tsueng Kwan O Swimming Pool to 40 lifeguards in 2004.

5.11 **To enhance cost-effectiveness, Audit considers that the provision of lifeguards at a swimming pool complex, mainly based on the standard manning scale of its facilities, should be regularly reviewed and adjusted on the basis of patronage level. Furthermore, the LCSD needs to find out the optimal mix of the core and non-core lifeguards at individual swimming pool complexes.**

Low patronage during non-peak swimming months

5.12 Because of low patronage, the swimming pool complexes were mostly manned by core lifeguards during the non-peak swimming months. Audit analysed the provision of core lifeguards, taking into account the daily average patronage during the non-peak swimming months in 2002-03, for the 11 least frequently used swimming pool complexes (i.e. swimming pool complexes with a higher subsidy level than the approved level of 86%). Audit analysis revealed that during the non-peak swimming months, the daily average patronage of the Mui Wo Swimming Pool (with a subsidy level of 97%) was only 51. For

the Sai Kung Swimming Pool (with a subsidy level of 94%), the daily average patronage was 218. Notwithstanding such low patronage, monthly-rated temporary lifeguards were also employed at these complexes.

5.13 Audit has conducted two case studies by reviewing the situation of the Mui Wo Swimming Pool and the Sai Kung Swimming Pool and has the following observations:

- (a) ***Mui Wo Swimming Pool (Type 5 complex).*** The complex is provided with only one training pool of 275 square metres. It has a maximum capacity of 180 swimmers and is open only during the swimming season. Because of its low patronage, the operating deficit was \$6.5 million in 2002-03. During the non-peak swimming months in 2002-03, it had a daily average of 51 swimmers (i.e. 7 swimmers in the morning session, 35 swimmers in the afternoon session and 9 swimmers in the evening session). However, the provision of 6 core lifeguards (i.e. 2 lifeguards for static look-out posts and 1 lifeguard for patrolling in each of the two shifts) and 1 temporary lifeguard for operational relief was already the minimum according to the standard manning scale. Audit considers that it is not cost-effective to operate a complex with a daily average of 7 swimmers in the morning session and 9 swimmers in the evening session as the subsidy per swimmer was as high as \$513 for the morning session and \$394 for the evening session (Note 15). **The LCSD needs to:**
- (i) **find ways to encourage the public to use the complex in order to improve its usage; and**
 - (ii) **consider reducing the opening hours of the complex during the non-peak swimming months; and**
- (b) ***Sai Kung Swimming Pool (Type 3 complex).*** The complex has a capacity of 800 swimmers and is open only during the swimming season. The operating deficit was \$19 million in 2002-03. **Audit analysis revealed that the provision of 26 lifeguards at the complex during the non-peak swimming months in 2003 could be reduced to 22 lifeguards. According to the LCSD's lifeguard deployment plans for 2004, the LCSD would further reduce the number of lifeguards provided at the complex to 18 lifeguards during the non-peak swimming months in 2004.**

Note 15: *The estimated recurrent cost of a session during the non-peak swimming months in 2002-03 was \$3,730. After taking into account the revenue of \$140 generated from the 7 swimmers in the morning session, the average operating deficit was \$3,590. The subsidy per swimmer for the morning session was \$513. Similarly, after taking into account the revenue of \$180 generated from the 9 swimmers in the evening session, the average operating deficit was \$3,550. The subsidy per swimmer for the evening session was \$394.*

Over-provision of temporary lifeguards for session breaks

5.14 For swimming pool complexes, there are two one-hour session breaks daily. During the session breaks, the complexes are open for training programmes. To meet the service needs during the session breaks, the LCSD provides each complex with one to two additional temporary lifeguards. For providing life-saving service during the session breaks in the swimming season in 2002-03, the LCSD had to employ additional temporary lifeguards amounting to 412 man-months.

5.15 Taking the Sai Kung Swimming Pool as an example, two temporary lifeguards were provided from 11:00 am to 7:30 pm for the two session breaks during the non-peak swimming months in 2002-03. **As the daily average patronage of the complex was 218 during the non-peak swimming months, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to redeploy the lifeguards with more flexibility to meet the service needs during the session breaks.**

5.16 Audit estimates that dispensing with the hiring of additional temporary lifeguards for the only purpose of providing a service during the two session breaks in the non-peak swimming months would result in an annual saving of \$3 million in staff cost.

Audit recommendations

5.17 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

Number of core lifeguards

- (a) **ensure that the overall number of core lifeguards employed is kept close to the optimal size (i.e. equivalent to half of the maximum number of lifeguards employed during the peak swimming months — see para. 5.5);**

Distribution of core and non-core lifeguards

- (b) **review the situation of Type 1 swimming pool complexes and ascertain whether there is a need to redeploy the core and non-core lifeguards among the complexes (see para. 5.7);**
- (c) **ensure that the core to non-core lifeguard ratio at individual aquatic venues is no less than 1:1 throughout the year (see para. 5.7);**

Provision of lifeguards at underused swimming pool complexes

- (d) having regard to the standard manning scale for Type 1 swimming pool complexes, critically review the provision of lifeguards on the basis of patronage level and ascertain whether there is a need to redeploy the lifeguards among the complexes (see para. 5.9);
- (e) regularly review the provision of lifeguards at the swimming pool complexes in order to ascertain the optimal mix of the core and non-core lifeguards and make the necessary adjustments on the basis of patronage level (see para. 5.11);

Patronage during the non-peak swimming months

- (f) review the manpower provision of lifeguards at all swimming pool complexes during the non-peak swimming months, paying particular attention to the employment of temporary lifeguards (see para. 5.12);
- (g) for the Mui Wo Swimming Pool, implement measures to improve the usage of the complex and ascertain whether it is justifiable to reduce the opening hours of the complex during the non-peak swimming months (see para. 5.13(a));
- (h) for the Sai Kung Swimming Pool, reduce the number of lifeguards during the non-peak swimming months (see para. 5.13(b)); and

Provision of temporary lifeguards for session breaks

- (i) during the non-peak swimming months, dispense with the hiring of temporary lifeguards for the session breaks at the swimming pool complexes by redeploying flexibly the existing lifeguards to meet the service needs (see para. 5.15).

Response from the Administration

5.18 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services has said that:

Number of core lifeguards

- (a) the establishment of a minimum core to non-core lifeguard ratio is to ensure that adequate experienced staff are maintained for safety reasons. The number of core lifeguards employed in the past two years was close to the optimal size;

Distribution of core and non-core lifeguards

- (b) the LCSD will keep the matter under constant review and make appropriate redeployment to regulate the ratio whenever suitable opportunities arise;
- (c) the ratio of 1:1 cannot be arbitrarily applied to each and every individual swimming pool complex because of the following practical difficulties:
 - (i) to cope with operational needs due to unique factors, more core lifeguards have to be provided for some venues (e.g. there is difficulty in recruiting temporary lifeguards for swimming pool complexes in remote location such as the Mui Wo Swimming Pool);
 - (ii) the size of core lifeguards can only be adjusted through natural wastage and voluntary retirement. Otherwise, there will be staff redundancy problem;
 - (iii) if the ratio of core to non-core lifeguards down to individual complex level has to be maintained at all times, it will involve frequent and large scale posting of staff. This may generate grievances from lifeguards who need to spend long travelling time to their new work places and other unnecessary disturbances to the operation of the complexes; and
 - (iv) temporary lifeguards with 450 days' working experience in beaches/swimming pool complexes within five years prior to appointment are considered as experienced enough to be regarded as core lifeguards. Based on the LCSD's experience, most of the temporary lifeguards at the aquatic venues are employed on a regular basis (i.e. they work in every swimming season). Therefore, even when the core and non-core lifeguard ratio in individual complexes falls below 1:1, the safety standard will not be jeopardised;

Provision of lifeguards at underused swimming pool complexes

- (d) the LCSD agrees that the provision of additional temporary lifeguards during the peak swimming months at individual swimming pool complexes should be reviewed in accordance with the actual patronage of the complexes. A review on this is in progress;
- (e) the LCSD has since 2003 been reviewing the seasonal requirements for lifeguards based on actual patronage. Following the recommendations of various Working Groups on the swimming safety of the ex-Municipal Councils and the

LCSD, a basic number of lifeguards has to be provided whenever the facility is open for public use irrespective of the number of swimmers present. Additional lifeguards will be provided during the peak swimming months to augment the service;

- (f) proposed lifeguard deployment plans for 2004 for each swimming pool complex in accordance with the actual patronage of swimmers have been drawn up. The LCSD has also taken the opportunity to review the core to non-core lifeguard ratio. Since there are already adequate core lifeguards to meet the requirement in 2004, the LCSD will employ short-term contract lifeguards (i.e. with a contract period of seven months) instead of full-year contract lifeguards to fill vacant posts so as to achieve more saving. Consultation with the operational colleagues is in progress to confirm the practicability of the proposed deployment plans. Subject to the implementation of the deployment plans, effective deployment of lifeguards will be further reinforced;
- (g) the LCSD agrees that regular review on the provision of lifeguards at the swimming pool complexes will be conducted to cope with service needs;

Patronage during the non-peak swimming months

- (h) the LCSD has already reviewed critically the requirements of temporary lifeguards during the non-peak swimming months since 2003. For the swimming season of 2003, the provision of temporary lifeguards was trimmed down by about 23%. The LCSD has further reviewed the lifeguard provisions at all swimming pool complexes for 2004 mentioned in sub-paragraph (f) above;
- (i) the LCSD will critically review the opening hours of the Mui Wo Swimming Pool. Due to the small population of the area, it is difficult to improve the patronage of this complex because its catchment area is confined to Eastern Lantau. The LCSD will consult the local community on the opening arrangement to seek its support;
- (j) the number of lifeguards of the Sai Kung Swimming Pool will be reduced according to the proposed lifeguard deployment plan mentioned in sub-paragraph (f) above; and

Provision of temporary lifeguards for session breaks

- (k) pursuant to the review mentioned in sub-paragraph (f) above, the number of lifeguards for functional purposes during the non-peak swimming months will be reduced to the basic minimum to meet service needs.

Use of volunteer lifeguards

5.19 To provide opportunities for life-saving training and to augment its regular life-saving service, the LCSD has requested the Hong Kong Life Saving Society (HKLSS) to provide voluntary life-saving service at gazetted beaches and swimming pool complexes on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from April to November. Before the start of each swimming season, the LCSD approaches the HKLSS to provide volunteer lifeguards. However, the provision is on a voluntary basis. There is no guarantee that the HKLSS will fully meet the LCSD's requirements. In 2001-02 and 2002-03, the LCSD incurred \$671,000 and \$844,000 for the voluntary life-saving service respectively.

Audit observations

5.20 Audit found that:

- (a) the difference in the daily cost of using one volunteer lifeguard at \$380 (comprising the payment of a daily honorarium of \$260 to each lifeguard and an administration fee of \$120 to the HKLSS) and employing one temporary lifeguard at \$426 was small;
- (b) by comparison, the temporary lifeguards were more experienced. The volunteer lifeguards were usually newly qualified, who had to be accompanied by at least one core lifeguard while on duty. Temporary lifeguards were required to work independently even under inclement weather. Volunteer lifeguards withdrew from duty when a typhoon signal was hoisted or the red/black rainstorm warning signal was issued; and
- (c) the volunteer lifeguards were not employees of the LCSD. Many of them were teenage students and some were 16 years of age. If they were injured while on duty, it was unclear to what extent the Government should be held responsible for compensation.

5.21 Audit analysis of the records of actual turnout of volunteer lifeguards in 2001 and 2002 revealed that their turnout rates were low. During the period from April to November:

- (a) in 2001, of the 12,564 manshifts required by the LCSD, only 3,531 (28%) manshifts were provided. Of the 58 swimming pools and beaches requiring such service, 18 (31%) venues did not receive the required service; and

- (b) in 2002, of the 11,900 manshifts required by the LCSD, only 4,442 (37%) manshifts were provided. Of the 56 swimming pools and beaches requiring such service, 14 (25%) venues did not receive the required service.

In view of the low turnout rates, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to examine the cost-effectiveness of using the volunteer lifeguards.

Audit recommendations

5.22 Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should, in conjunction with the HKLSS:

- (a) **evaluate the LCSD's role in providing practical life-saving training to newly qualified lifeguards (see para. 5.20(a) and (b));**
- (b) **ascertain the reasons for the low turnout rates and take action to improve the turnout rate of volunteer lifeguards (see para. 5.21); and**
- (c) **determine the responsibilities and liabilities of the Government in case a volunteer lifeguard is injured while on duty (see para. 5.20(c)).**

Response from the Administration

5.23 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services has said that:

- (a) the LCSD will conduct an overall review on the volunteer lifeguard system in consultation with the HKLSS;
- (b) the issues on reasons for the low turnout rates of volunteer lifeguards and on action to improve the turnout rates will be evaluated in the overall review; and
- (c) the responsibilities and liabilities of the Government in case of an injury of a volunteer lifeguard while on duty will also be addressed in the overall review.

PART 6: DEPLOYMENT OF SURPLUS STAFF DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

6.1 This PART examines the deployment of surplus staff during the winter months and suggests measures to monitor more closely the implementation of the LCSD's winter works programme.

Monitoring of winter works

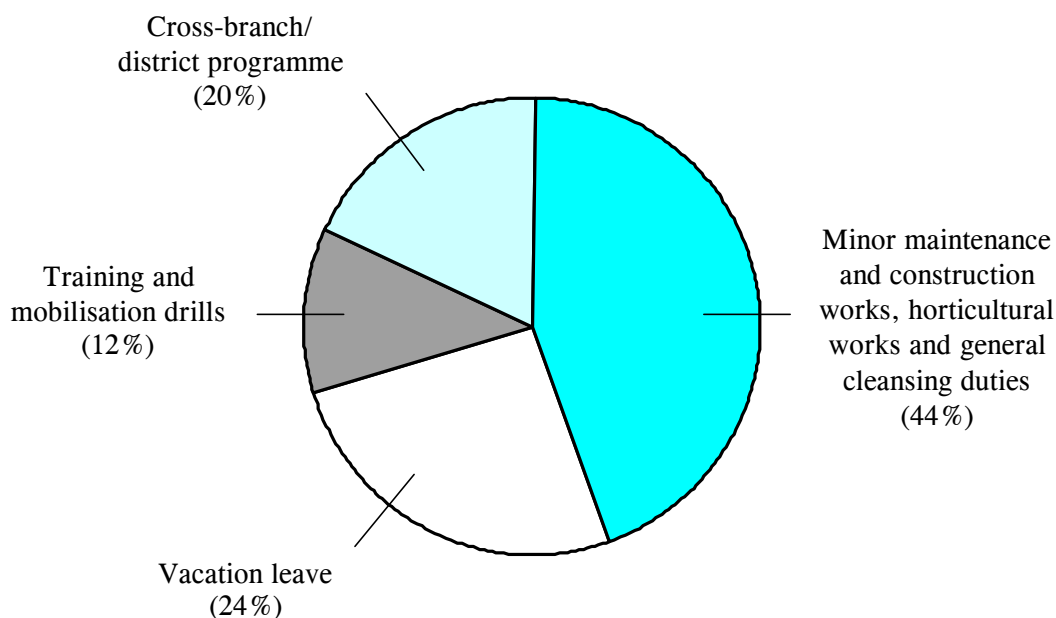
6.2 According to the LCSD, for the 22 beaches and swimming pool complexes which were open during the winter months in 2002-03 (Note 16), the total number of lifeguards required during the winter months was 485. As there were 1,006 lifeguards employed as at 31 March 2003, 521 (1,006 – 485) lifeguards were surplus to requirements during the winter months in 2002-03.

6.3 The LCSD devised a winter works programme (WWP) to ensure that 521 surplus lifeguards were fully and gainfully employed in winter. Sixty-six filtration plant artisans, who were responsible for water hygiene at swimming pool complexes, also participated in the WWP. The staff costs of the 521 surplus lifeguards and 66 surplus filtration plant artisans for the winter months in 2002-03 were \$45 million and \$6 million respectively. During the winter months, the lifeguards and artisans took vacation leave, undertook life-saving training programmes and mobilisation drills, participated in a cross-branch/district programme, and remained in their original districts to carry out minor maintenance and construction works, horticultural works and general cleansing duties. Details are shown in Figure 1.

Note 16: *Excluding the Island East Swimming Pool which had been contracted out, 4 beaches and 13 swimming pool complexes were open throughout the winter months in 2002-03. In addition, 5 swimming pool complexes were also open in November 2002.*

Figure 1

**Proportion of mandays spent by lifeguards and artisans in the WWP
(winter months in 2002-03)**



Source: *Audit analysis of LCSD records*

Note: *This analysis was based on the available records of 24 beaches and 19 swimming pool complexes. No work records were maintained for other beaches and swimming pool complexes.*

Audit observations

Inadequate monitoring procedures

6.4 There was inadequate assurance that the surplus lifeguards and artisans were gainfully employed during the winter months. Audit noted that work records of the mandays spent on individual tasks in 2002-03 were not properly maintained in some districts (i.e. Eastern, Southern, Islands, Kowloon City, Kwai Tsing and Tai Po). The LCSD had no laid down monitoring procedures on the WWP. Work standards were not set for individual tasks of the WWP to gauge the cost-effectiveness of the tasks performed. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to ensure that the surplus staff are gainfully employed during the winter months.**

Unsatisfactory participation in cross-branch/district programme

6.5 In conjunction with the WWP, the LCSD launched a cross-branch/district programme for the lifeguards and the filtration plant artisans so as to provide branches/districts with additional manpower resources to meet their ad-hoc manpower requirements. A surplus staff could participate in the programme on a voluntary basis by indicating his preferences on the application form. During the winter months in 2002-03, only 109 of the 521 surplus lifeguards applied for the 88 temporary posts identified in the programme. Of these applicants, 71 lifeguards were subsequently offered placements according to their preferences. The remaining 38 lifeguards participated in the WWP in their own districts. For the filtration plant artisans, only 2 of the 66 surplus staff had applied and were allocated placements. **In the event, 28 temporary posts under the cross-branch/district programme could not be filled by the surplus lifeguards and filtration plant artisans.** Details are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

**Deployment of lifeguards and filtration plant artisans
under the cross-branch/district programme
(November 2002 to March 2003)**

	Lifeguard	Filtration plant artisan	Total
Number of temporary posts provided (a)	88	13	101
Number of applicants (b)	109	2	111
Number of applicants allocated with placements (c)	71	2	73
Number of applicants not allocated with placements (d) = (b) - (c)	38	0	38
Number of unfilled posts (e) = (a) - (c)	17	11	28

Source: LCSD records

6.6 Although the LCSD had devised the cross-branch/district programme for its lifeguards and filtration plant artisans, the participation rate was unsatisfactory. Some applicants were not allocated with placements and some posts were left unfilled. **The LCSD needs to improve the effectiveness of the cross-branch/district programme.**

Underemployment of AA grade staff

6.7 The AA grade staff are mainly responsible for the day-to-day management of the gazetted beaches and swimming pool complexes (Note 17). When most of the gazetted beaches and swimming pool complexes were closed during the winter months in 2002-03, 140 AA grade staff were surplus to requirement. They mainly remained at their own venues to supervise the lifeguards and filtration plant artisans who took part in the WWP. Audit noted that because of the much reduced workload at their venues, the AA grade staff might also be underemployed during the winter months. For example, the pool deck supervisors at the AA II or AA III ranks had no specific duties when the swimming pool complexes were closed. They needed to be redeployed to perform other duties. **As the cost of the 140 AA grade staff is about \$21 million during the winter months in 2002-03, the LCSD needs to ensure that they are fully and gainfully employed during the winter months.**

Audit recommendations

6.8 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

Monitoring of the WWP

- (a) **in implementing the WWP, establish proper procedures for keeping of records of work carried out and of the time spent by different staff (see para. 6.4);**
- (b) **establish work standards to ensure that all surplus staff are gainfully employed during the winter months (see para. 6.4);**

Participation in cross-branch/district programme

- (c) **encourage all surplus staff to participate in the cross-branch/district programme for improving their working skills (see paras. 6.5 and 6.6); and**

Note 17: *The duties of AAs mainly include: (a) ensuring the smooth operation of beaches and swimming pool complexes; (b) supervising staff; (c) ensuring the provision of prompt rescue and first-aid services; (d) ensuring the maintenance of facilities and safe custody of revenue collected; and (e) planning WWP for staff.*

Deployment of AA grade staff

- (d) include the AA grade staff in the WWP and the cross-branch/district programme so as to ensure that they are also gainfully employed during the winter months (see para. 6.7).

Response from the Administration

6.9 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** has said that:

Monitoring of the WWP

- (a) the LCSD will standardise the practices and establish a system to monitor the implementation of the WWP to ensure that proper records are kept and work programmes are accomplished up to the required standard;

Participation in cross-branch/district programme

- (b) the LCSD will, in the overall review of the WWP, examine ways to encourage surplus lifeguards to participate in the cross-branch/district programme to ensure their gainful employment during the winter months;

Deployment of AA grade staff

- (c) the LCSD will review further the practicability to set up a system to monitor the gainful employment of AAs during the winter months;
- (d) AAs working in swimming pool complexes/beaches are responsible for liaising with works departments to ensure that the annual overhaul and improvements during the winter months are completed smoothly and on time before the facilities are reopened in the next swimming season; and
- (e) most of the AAs will attend training courses, clear up their earned vacation leave, serve as leave relief for other posts in the districts as well as to assist in the preparation and be on duty at the annual Hong Kong Flower Show in March. There will not be much time left for effective redeployment across districts or branches.

6.10 The **Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury** has said that he generally supports the audit recommendations relating to better staff deployment in the LCSD.

Forty-one gazetted beaches in Hong Kong
(1 April 2003)

Hong Kong Island (12 beaches)	New Territories East (6 beaches)	New Territories West (14 beaches)	Outlying islands (9 beaches)
<i>Southern District</i>	<i>Sai Kung District</i>	<i>Tsuen Wan District</i>	<i>Cheung Chau</i>
Big Wave Bay	Clear Water Bay First	Anglers' *	Cheung Chau Tung Wan
Chung Hom Kok	Clear Water Bay Second	Approach *	Kwun Yam
Deep Water Bay	Hap Mun Bay	Casam *	
Hairpin	Kiu Tsui	Gemini *	<i>Lamma Island</i>
Middle Bay	Silverstrand	Hoi Mei Wan *	Hung Shing Yeh
Repulse Bay	Trio	Lido *	Lo So Shing
Rocky Bay *		Ma Wan Tung Wan	
Shek O		Ting Kau *	<i>Lantau Island</i>
South Bay			Lower Cheung Sha
St. Stephen's		<i>Tuen Mun District</i>	Upper Cheung Sha
Stanley Main		Butterfly	Pui O
Turtle Cove		Cafeteria New	Silver Mine Bay
		Cafeteria Old	Tong Fuk
		Castle Peak *	
		Golden	
		Kadoorie	

Source: LCSD records

Note: * denotes a closed beach that was not suitable for swimming.

Annual staff cost of eight closed gazetted beaches in 2003-04

Beach	Number of established posts (Annual staff cost per staff)				Total annual staff cost (\$)
	AA III (\$268,452)	Senior lifeguard (\$252,732)	Lifeguard (\$220,728)	Full-year contract lifeguard (\$164,427)	
(A) Southern District					
Rocky Bay	1	0	0	3	761,733
(B) Tsuen Wan District					
Anglers'	1	0	0	0	268,452
Casam	1	1	3	0	1,183,368
Gemini	1	1	3	0	1,183,368
Hoi Mei	1	1	2	1	1,127,067
Lido	1	1	10	1	2,892,891
Approach/Ting Kau	0	0	2	0	441,456
Total	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7,858,335</u>
(say \$7.9 million)					

Source: LCSD records

Note: The AA IIIs provide day-to-day management at the beaches. As no life-saving service is available, the lifeguards have been redeployed to fill other vacant posts in 2003-04. The computation of the annual staff cost was based on the Staff Cost Ready Reckoner No. 2002/1.

Monthly average patronage of
13 swimming pool complexes provided with heated pools
(non-peak swimming months and winter months in 2002-03)

Swimming Pool	Monthly average patronage		Percentage increase/(decrease) $(c) = \frac{(b) - (a)}{(a)} \times 100\%$
	Non-peak swimming months	Winter months	
	(a)	(b)	
Complexes with high patronage			
Kowloon Park (Note 1)	75,378	81,011	7%
Morrison Hill (Note 1)	68,803	66,296	(4%)
Shing Mun Valley (Note 1)	39,788	36,897	(7%)
	<i>Subtotal</i>	183,969	184,204 (55%)
Other complexes			
Island East (Note 1)	14,410	12,731	(12%)
Sham Shui Po Park/ Lai Chi Kok Park (Note 2)	47,247	39,928	(15%)
Ho Man Tin (Note 1)	8,810	6,500	(26%)
Fanling	26,630	17,959	(33%)
Sha Tin Jockey Club	30,384	18,683	(39%)
Hammer Hill Road (Note 1)	24,922	15,028	(40%)
Yuen Long	27,455	14,378	(48%)
Tseung Kwan O	36,187	12,660	(65%)
Tuen Mun	37,002	11,306	(69%)
	Total	437,016	333,377 (100%)

Source: LCSD records

Note 1: This swimming pool complex is provided with indoor heated pools. Of the 333,377 winter swimmers, 218,463 (66%) used indoor heated pools and 114,914 (34%) used outdoor heated pools.

Note 2: In Sham Shui Po District, the Sham Shui Po Park Swimming Pool was open for two months and the Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool was open for three months during the winter months.

**Patronage of five swimming pool complexes in November
(2000 to 2002)**

Swimming Pool	Number of swimmers		
	November 2000	November 2001	November 2002
Jordan Valley	1,598	1,847	1,578
Kennedy Town	2,763	4,119	4,890
Kowloon Tsai	3,775	5,549	4,866
Pao Yue Kong	743	1,306	2,045
Victoria Park	4,612	5,436	5,038

Source: LCSD records

Passing rate of Stage I swimming courses
(2002-03)

District	Number of participants	Number of participants who attended the assessment	Number of participants who passed the assessment	Passing rate
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d) = $\frac{(c)}{(b)} \times 100\%$
Tuen Mun	1,552	1,149	947	82%
Kwun Tong	2,040	1,360	1,102	81%
Sai Kung	885	657	493	75%
North	1,591	1,272	903	71%
Wan Chai	862	516	360	70%
Kwai Tsing	1,276	1,108	707	64%
Yuen Long	2,391	1,632	993	61%
Eastern	2,125	1,532	929	61%
Yau Tsim Mong	1,704	1,190	710	60%
Tsuen Wan	1,094	825	478	58%
Sham Shui Po	1,939	1,444	813	56%
Tai Po	1,457	1,170	643	55%
Kowloon City	2,052	1,494	816	55%
Sha Tin	1,733	1,595	880	55%
Central and Western	1,181	856	442	52%
Islands	271	137	71	52%
Wong Tai Sin	2,053	1,562	785	50%
Southern	1,429	1,129	498	44%
Total	<u>27,635</u>	<u>20,628</u>	<u>12,570</u>	61%

Source: LCSD records

Types of swimming pool complexes

Type	Description of facilities
Type 1	Complex of conventional type with a 50-metre main pool, a secondary pool, a diving pool, training/teaching pools and children pools
Type 2	Complex with a 50-metre main pool, training/teaching pools, children pools and a leisure pool with large-scale water slides and/or extensive adventurous play features
Type 3	Complex with leisure pool of small scales and/or less extensive adventurous play features
Type 4	Complex with leisure pools only
Type 5	Complex with a non-standard pool

Source: LCSD records

Acronyms and abbreviations

Audit	Audit Commission
AA	Amenities Assistant
CED	Civil Engineering Department
CHWSC	Chong Hing Water Sports Centre
EPD	Environmental Protection Department
HATS	Harbour Area Treatment Scheme
HKFYG	Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups
HKLSS	Hong Kong Life Saving Society
LCSD	Leisure and Cultural Services Department
PE	Permanent establishment
SISTW	Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works
SSBWSC	St. Stephen's Beach Water Sports Centre
TMTWSC	Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre
TPBC	Tai Po Boat Club
WSWSC	Jockey Club Wong Shek Water Sports Centre
WWP	Winter works programme