

Report No. 47 of the Director of Audit – Chapter 7

IMPLEMENTATION OF MINOR WORKS PROJECTS BY THE HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Summary

1. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) carries out minor works projects (costing not more than \$15 million each) in the rural and urban districts under three works programmes, namely: (a) the Rural Planning and Improvement Strategy Minor Works Programme; (b) the Rural Public Works Programme; and (c) the Urban Minor Works Programme. The HAD has set up Steering Committees and District Working Groups for administering these works programmes. The Audit Commission (Audit) conducted a review of minor works projects implemented under these programmes and found that there were areas for improvement in the administration of four projects (see paras. 2 to 17).

Construction of a footpath on Peng Chau

2. ***Need to strengthen works monitoring.*** This project, proposed in November 1995, involved the construction of a 1.2-kilometre footpath along the north coast of Peng Chau. The HAD employed a consultant for the design and supervision of this project. Construction works commenced in June 1999. In October 1999, the HAD found that the contractor had not followed the contract design in excavation works. In February 2001, the HAD forfeited the contract and re-entered the site.

3. Subsequently, the HAD appointed another consultant to review and redesign the footpath, and appointed another contractor for completing the footpath based on the revised design. The HAD took over the supervision of the new contract using its in-house resources. The footpath was completed in March 2005, four years and nine months after the target completion date of June 2000. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should take measures to strengthen the HAD monitoring of the implementation of minor works projects.*

4. ***Need to strengthen financial monitoring of project.*** In progress reports submitted to the District Working Group and the Steering Committee, the HAD only showed the updated project estimate. The HAD did not show the original estimate for comparison, and did not give reasons for the cost increase of the footpath project. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should keep the District Working Groups and Steering Committees informed of any significant project cost increase and the reasons thereof.*

5. ***Need to provide important and relevant information in project proposal.*** The purpose of constructing the footpath was to provide a direct access to three beaches and a pier. During a field inspection in May 2006, Audit found that: (a) the three beaches were unattended and covered with debris; (b) the pier was in a dilapidated state; and (c) there was an existing footpath on the hilltop in the area providing access to the pier and two of the beaches. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should provide full, relevant and significant information in a project proposal, including the expected utilisation of the proposed facility and the availability of similar facilities in the nearby area.*

Improvement to a pier in Sham Tseng

6. ***Need to ensure safe navigation and berthing at new pier.*** This project, proposed in November 1995, originally involved improvement works to increase the berthing capacity of the Sham Tseng Pier (the old pier) at Anglers' Beach. In February 1997, due to the need to close the old pier for one year for the proposed works, it was decided that a new pier would be constructed instead. In March 2002, the new pier was completed. In May 2002, the HAD found that the minimum water depth (i.e. water depth at lowest tide) around the new pier was only 1.35 metres, which was less than the design minimum water depth of 2.09 metres. As such, the water depth was too shallow for safe navigation and berthing of large kaitos (small motorised boats providing ferry services).

7. In March 2004, after two rounds of dredging, the new pier was open for public use, two years after its completion. Based on the results of the sounding survey carried out by the Marine Department (MD) in April 2006, Audit noted that the minimum water depth of some areas around the pier head was less than the design minimum water depth. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should, in consultation with the Director of Civil Engineering and Development and the Director of Marine, take remedial measures to achieve the required minimum water depth around the pier.*

8. ***Need to pay attention to water depth in new pier project.*** After noting the shallow water depth around the new pier in May 2002, the HAD conducted a review and found that: (a) the original water depth at the location was too shallow for pier construction; (b) the siltation rate there was high; and (c) the seabed would be covered again by sedimentation some time after dredging works. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should, during the design of a pier, conduct an assessment of the water depth and siltation at the proposed site, and take appropriate action, such as seeking expert advice from the MD and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), to ensure that the selected site is suitable.*

9. ***Need to take into account expected pier utilisation.*** In the pier project proposal, the HAD considered that there was a high demand for marine traffic from Sham Tseng to Lantau Island. However, when the new pier was completed in March 2002, marine traffic

in Sham Tseng had already decreased significantly. This was due to: (a) the completion of the major infrastructure projects on Lantau Island; and (b) the opening of the Lantau Link in May 1997 providing road transport between Lantau Island and the urban area. Furthermore, with the availability of new ferry and bus services between Ma Wan and the urban area, the kaito service between Sham Tseng and Ma Wan ceased in May 2005. Since then, there have been no ferry or kaito services operating at the two piers at Anglers' Beach. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should, in consultation with the Commissioner for Transport, critically assess the justifications for constructing a new pier, taking into account anticipated future traffic and other planned transport services in the area.*

10. ***Need to review future maintenance.*** In June 2001, the CEDD advised the HAD that the old pier had severely deteriorated and was beyond economic repair. In October 2003, the HAD requested the CEDD to continue maintaining the old pier for two years (until the new pier could properly serve its functions), before taking action to demolish it. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should, in consultation with the Director of Civil Engineering and Development and the Commissioner for Transport, review the need to maintain both piers at Anglers' Beach.*

Construction of a pier on Lamma Island

11. ***Need to critically assess site constraints and seek confirmation of need.*** This project, proposed in March 1995, originally involved the construction of a pier at Shek Pai Wan on Lamma Island. In February 1997, the MD advised the HAD that it was hazardous to navigate at Shek Pai Wan which was covered with submerged rocks. In October 1997, the HAD changed the project to constructing a loading platform for refuse collection by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). However, the HAD had not sought confirmation from the FEHD regarding its need for the facility. In January 2002, the loading platform was completed.

12. During a field inspection in June 2006, Audit observed that the FEHD staff did not use the loading platform for refuse collection. The FEHD also confirmed that the loading platform was not required for refuse collection. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should, when submitting a project proposal, critically assess the site constraints which would affect the viability of the project, and seek the user department's confirmation of its operational needs for the proposed facility.*

13. ***Need to provide full justifications in project proposal.*** In the project proposal, the HAD stated that there was no public pier at Shek Pai Wan and local villagers requested one for kaito berthing. However, the project proposal did not disclose the estimated number of users and the likelihood of a kaito service at the proposed pier. Based on the information of the Census and Statistics Department, there were only 8 to 14 people living at Shek Pai Wan between 1991 and 2001. Given the small population, Audit considers it

doubtful whether a kaito service would have been provided, even if a pier had been constructed. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should provide full justifications for a project proposal by disclosing the target population to be served by the proposed facility and, for pier construction, the likelihood of a kaito or ferry service using the pier.*

Construction of a footpath on Lamma Island

14. ***Need to consider wave impact and underground utilities.*** This project, proposed in November 1995, involved the construction of an elevated footpath at Shek Pai Wan. During a typhoon in October 1999, the footpath foundation was severely damaged by strong waves. The HAD's review found that the footpath design had not taken into account the impact of waves. The HAD then implemented measures to strengthen the footpath foundation and installed protection structures. In November 1999, the HAD revised the alignment of the footpath to keep it away from underground electricity cables and watermains. The footpath was completed in September 2000. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should take into account existing underground utilities or the impact of waves in designing a footpath project, especially if the footpath is near the sea.*

15. ***Need to review project when a significant justification no longer existed.*** One of the justifications for constructing the footpath was to provide access to a proposed pier for kaito berthing. However, in October 1997, the HAD decided to construct a loading platform instead of a public pier (see para. 11). Therefore, the need for a footpath for kaito users no longer existed. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should conduct a review of the need for a minor works project when a significant justification for it no longer exists.*

16. ***Need to maintain the condition of the footpath.*** The footpath was built for use by pedestrians and emergency vehicles. During a field inspection in June 2006, Audit found that there were thick sand deposits on some parts of the footpath, covering the drainage channel and significantly narrowing the path's width. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Home Affairs should take measures to ensure that the footpath at Shek Pai Wan is cleared of sand deposits for safe passage of pedestrians and emergency vehicles.*

Response from the Administration

17. The Administration has accepted the audit recommendations.

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