



Middle Island Development

It is time to provide members with an update on the progress of our work for the development of Middle Island.

The work which was undertaken in 2019 to reinstate and improve the facilities of Middle Island following the destruction caused by Typhoon Mangkhut has provided a significant enhancement to the infrastructure and until the onset of the Covid-19 restrictions, the patronage by members had notably increased. Nonetheless the Development Committee is conscious that progress on the overall development has not been as fast as was originally envisaged and that members will be understandably disappointed not to see any visible work being undertaken. There are good reasons for this which have not been within our control but which have had a direct impact on proceeding through the mass of Government approvals upon which the construction work is dependent. The delay to our original programme for the development now amounts to 3 years arising primarily from substantial additional approval requirements and extended review periods. This article will recap on our vision for Middle Island and the current status of the complex approval process.

In 2008 the General Committee considered the long-term strategy for development and concluded that the next major logical expansion

of the Club should be based at Middle Island. This was primarily driven by the philosophy of the Club being based on boating activities, the significant expansion of dinghy participation over the previous decade and increasing general leisure use of Middle Island by members. A Development Committee was established in 2011 to manage all aspects of the proposed development. Following consultation on budgetary estimates and the affordability of such a development the General Committee introduced a Building Development Levy at the end of 2011.

The conceptual design was developed to provide all the functionality considered necessary to serve the best interests of the Club for the foreseeable future and to provide the following key features:

- Upgrading of existing power and water supplies
- Increased on-shore boat storage area
- New clubhouse
- Essential accommodation for sail training
- Kitchen
- Bar and restaurant
- Workshop
- Pontoon berthing

The scheme was presented to Home Affairs Bureau in May 2015 and was well received, particularly in respect of its alignment with the major policy objective of enhancing sport in Hong Kong by providing expanded facilities for hosting

local and international events. Home Affairs Bureau subsequently stated that it would endorse the scheme once all impact assessments were agreed. This important support from Home Affairs Bureau allowed Development Committee to move to the detailed phase of design development and proceed with the required impact assessments.

By the end of 2016 the majority of the technical submissions had been prepared and submitted to various Government Departments for their review. The general response from Government on the technical details of the scheme was favourable but in 2017 we were advised that more work was needed to verify the robustness of the design of the new sea wall and the impact on the environment. This necessitated the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report which is a major piece of work requiring specialist input to respond to a Project Brief prepared by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). This work was undertaken throughout 2019 but the results of the ecological survey of the seabed in November 2019 found the presence of amphioxus. Amphioxus is a small lancelet type fish up to 5 cm in length which lives in shallow sand habitats and is a protected species in Hong Kong, China and Japan. Because it is present in the work site it requires mitigation measures to be presented to Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD).

An alternative piled deck design has been submitted to AFCD and we will shortly be discussing the details of the new design with AFCD to obtain their endorsement for inclusion in the EIA. This is an unexpected problem which has to be resolved for the EIA report to be submitted and allow the overall approval process to proceed.

The estimate for the development is now subject to review following the redesign required to satisfy the new requirements of AFCD and EPD. Development Committee will be preparing a full assessment of the financial status of the development proposal to account for the latest requirements for General Committee approval of the budget for the financial year July 2020 to June 2021.

In conclusion Development Committee wish to assure members that we will continue to expedite the approval process within the constraints laid down by the Government Departments. It is planned to hold a Town Hall Meeting later this year to provide a further update on all aspects of the development proposals.

Barry Hill
Chairman
Development Committee
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