

Progress Report on the Government's Follow-up Action on the Equal Opportunities Commission's Formal Investigation Report on Accessibility in Publicly Accessible Premises

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress of the Government's follow-up action as at 31 March 2011 on the Equal Opportunities Commission's Formal Investigation Report on Accessibility in Publicly Accessible Premises (EOC Report).

Background

2. Released on 7 June 2010, the EOC Report made recommendations on the improvement of accessibility, connectivity and interface with surrounding environment and user-friendly management practices for publicly accessible premises. In response, the Government set up a Task Force to examine not only the Government and Housing Authority (HA) premises identified by EOC, but also about 3 900 premises and facilities under the management of the Government departments and HA which have a frequent public interface and made prompt response and follow-up action to the recommendations.

3. The Government has undertaken to provide, starting from April 2011, a quarterly progress report of the retrofitting programme for upgrading the barrier-free facilities in existing Government and HA premises and facilities.

Retrofitting Programme

4. To speed up the progress for upgrading the barrier-free facilities in existing Government premises and facilities which have a frequent public interface to the latest design standards, the Government has undertaken to implement a major retrofitting programme covering about 3 700 Government premises and facilities and targeting to complete works in around 90% of these premises and facilities by June 2012 (Class A) and the remainder by June 2014 (Class B). A breakdown of all the premises and facilities to be retrofitted by type and their managing departments is at **Annex A**.

5. While the additional funding for the retrofitting works will only be in place in the 2011-12 financial year, the works departments including the

Architectural Services Department, the Highways Department (HyD) and the Civil Engineering and Development Department, in collaboration with the managing departments of these premises and facilities, have proceeded with the preparation work for over 24% of the premises and facilities while retrofitting works on a few premises and facilities have already commenced. In brief, among all Class A items, we have completed site survey at 870 premises/facilities (26%) and completed both site survey and feasibility study at 731 premises/facilities (22%), while works at 72 premises/facilities (2%) have commenced. A full list of the venues covered by the retrofitting programme under Class A and their respective progress is at **Annex B**. For Class B items, we have completed site survey at 26 premises/facilities (7%) and completed both site survey and feasibility study at 10 premises/facilities (3%). A full list of the venues covered by the retrofitting programme under Class B and their respective progress is at **Annex C**.

6. In tandem, HA has also devised a retrofitting programme to improve the accessibility of the properties under its management. Most of the improvement works at 155 public rental housing estates, 23 commercial centres and 72 car parks will be implemented by 30 June 2012. To strike a balance between the progress of improvement works and service interruption and nuisances to tenants, HA will schedule some of the improvement works for completion by 30 June 2014. To tie in with HA's lift modernisation programme, a small proportion of improvement works will be completed by 2016. Progress of HA's retrofitting programme is at **Annex D**. In brief, site survey and feasibility study for all premises/facilities have been completed, while works have commenced at 40 sites.

7. Meanwhile, HyD will also accelerate its retrofitting programme for the provision of barrier-free access (lift or ramp) at public footbridges, subways or elevated walkway structures without such access or alternative at-grade crossings, where technically feasible. Up to now, out of a total of 295 such facilities, HyD has completed investigation of 123 facilities, of which 67 were found feasible for lift/ramp retrofitting works. Amongst these 67 facilities, the retrofitting works for 22 have been completed so far and the retrofitting works for 12 are in progress or under active planning. As regards the remaining footbridges, subways or elevated walkway structures, HyD has already commenced planning and investigation for retrofitting works. In order to further shorten the time of project delivery, retrofitting works for all remaining feasible items would be taken forward in phases with the majority of works scheduled for completion by around

2016-17 and the rest (e.g. those involving public objections or are technically complex) by around 2017-18. In this regard, the Administration will seek approval for funding of about \$280 million from the Legislative Council in this financial year for the design of barrier-free facilities at 180 public pedestrian footbridges and subways, as well as the first phase of retrofitting works. Progress of the relevant retrofitting works is at **Annex E**.

Appointment of Access Co-ordinators and Access Officers

8. With effect from 1 April 2011, the Government has appointed Access Co-ordinators in individual bureaux and departments to co-ordinate accessibility issues within the bureau and department to facilitate Government-wide collaborative efforts in enhancing the accessibility of Government and HA premises and facilities. Individual bureaux and departments have also appointed an Access Officer for each venue under their management to improve day-to-day management, raise venue staff's awareness of accessibility issues and follow up the needs of persons with disabilities on barrier-free facilities effectively.

9. A set of contact lists of all Access Co-ordinators and Access Officers appointed by individual bureaux and departments has been uploaded to the Labour and Welfare Bureau's website. Contact information on Access Co-ordinators and Access Officers of individual bureaux and departments is also available on their website or displayed at the venues.

Way Forward

10. It is the Government's established policy objective to provide a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities with a view to enabling them to access to premises and make use of the facilities on an equal basis with others, thereby facilitating them to live independently and integrate into society. We will continue to work closely with EOC, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the rehabilitation sector and the community in building towards a barrier-free and inclusive society.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
April 2011