

Making Progress

Hong Kong surveyors generally welcomed Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying's annual Policy Address but felt it lacked a specific focus on buildings. Some predict troubles ahead for the city's construction industry if it fails to put preparations in place.

Kit M Yip



Sr Thomas Ho
President of the HKIS



Sr C K Lau
Immediate Past President of the HKIS and Chairman of the HKIS Land Policy Panel



Sr Vincent Ho, JP
Past President of the HKIS and Chairman of the HKIS Building Policy Panel



Sr C K Chan
Chairman of the HKIS Housing Policy Panel

香港2030+ 概念性空間框架



Photo: SCMP/Felix Wong

An artist illustration is pictured during the press conference on the public engagement exercise on "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" in Central.

“ [The Policy Address] advocates that Hong Kong’s construction management model, now being practised on a trial basis in Qianhai, be extended to Nansha and Hengqin. ”

While the Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Address on January 18 covered a number of important land, building and housing issues that will affect the surveying profession over the coming years, it also raised a number of questions ranging from the achievability of targets set to construction costs and labour shortages.

Sr Thomas Ho, President of the HKIS, welcomes the Policy Address in general and believes that it will open up more opportunities in China and beyond for Hong Kong’s surveyors. He explained that the Address reiterated the 13th National Five-Year Plan’s emphasis on deepening Mainland-Hong Kong cooperation, and also advocated that Hong Kong’s construction management model, which is now being practised on a trial basis in the Qianhai economic zone, be extended to the New Areas of Nansha and Hengqin.

“We hope that the model will be extended to entire provinces in the future as it is more appealing and achievable for Hong Kong’s surveyors,” Ho says. The model, he adds, is an improvement on existing CEPA arrangements which, though allowing Hong Kong professionals to register and practise in China, nevertheless requires them to be employed by qualified Mainland firms.

The Address also boosted the Belt and Road Initiative with a HK\$200 million Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme designed to support exchange and cooperation between professional sectors in Hong Kong and Belt and Road markets. Ho is excited that the scheme will help surveyors explore cooperation with target Southeast Asian countries and beyond by offering learning support on relevant laws and regulations.

The Address also mentioned relaxing visa requirements for nationals of Belt and Road countries to work in Hong Kong. Whereas the local surveying profession in general does not have an urgent need for overseas professionals, Ho believes there may be some benefits in the future for certain surveying divisions facing talent shortages.

However, Ho expresses concerns that the housing and land targets outlined in the Address will

encounter significant challenges. The Address acknowledges in relation to the “Hong Kong 2030+” plan that another 1,200 hectares of land need to be identified to meet the 4,800 hectare requirements by 2046. “Yet Hong Kong’s land which can be developed is basically used up,” Ho says. “New land development ranging from brownfield sites, land acquisition and resumption, new towns, and new development areas to rock caverns, artificial islands and reclamation all come with significant challenges.” In particular is the potential for soaring construction costs, he says, especially in the event of labour shortages.

Ho’s concerns are echoed by Sr Lau Chun-kong, Immediate Past President of HKIS and current Chairman of the Land Policy Panel. “Public housing targets rely very much on whether land in areas like Tung Chung and the North East New Territories can become available. This is a complicated process involving land resumption, compensation, and rehousing. Some sites are currently brownfield sites that are in use. Equally critical is timely approval of government funds at LegCo, a process much prolonged in recent years.”

Lau adds that to increase land supply, a team of professionals specialised in land premium assessment and lease modification should be set up within the Lands Department to deal with private land, along with town planning, land exchange and development. “It would be beneficial if this could ultimately contribute to some 15 per cent of Hong Kong’s private residential units supply, thereby giving an increase of 3,000 units per year,” he says.

Despite the concerns of some regarding further land reclamation, Lau believes it is necessary for Hong Kong’s development. He also suggests that storage units in urban industrial buildings be moved to remote areas in the New Territories, making way for the buildings to be converted to other uses including cultural and recreational use. “With ‘Hong Kong 2030+’, I have high hopes that the public will provide valuable feedback and together with us find solutions to living, work and recreational space for the next generation.”

“ Different kinds of Stamp Duty measures should be reviewed to see if they can deal with the causes of high property price effectively. ”

Sr Vincent Ho, Chairman of the Building Policy Panel, says that because the Address did not place a strong focus on building issues, there may be adverse effects on the building surveying profession in the long run.

“General building owners seldom go to surveyors for matters relating to building inspection, repair and maintenance, which in fact involve extensive surveying expertise,” he says. “The Address did not mention building-related issues or regulatory mechanisms, thus perpetuating the problem of non-professionals dominating the market and undermining the prestige and morale of building surveyors.” Government efforts, he adds, are necessary to educate the public and help re-establish proper practices.

Neither did the Address attempt to resolve important issues regarding building preservation, maintenance and enhancement, or the acceleration of vetting and approval processes, Ho says. Without proper building control, users or property owners continue to have no peace of mind. On the other hand, an earlier suggestion by the HKIS that the government combat bid-rigging by establishing a Building Maintenance and Repair Authority has seen very little progress albeit some measures and actions are being considered by Urban Renewal Authority.

Though the Address proposed enhanced enforcement of regulations to combat subdivided units in industrial buildings and ensure safety, Ho thinks it does not provide proper solutions or corresponding mechanisms to rehouse their dwellers. Other unresolved issues include unauthorised building works in village houses, an ageing labour force and a shortage of new labour, which may affect building quality and safety in the long term.

“These complex issues need to be tackled as a priority with determination and dedication by a centralised body which can coordinate efforts among government departments,” Ho says. “We hope they will be brought up in the next Address.”

Sr C K Chan, Chairman of the Housing Policy Panel, says that while the Address projected 94,500 public housing units over the next five

years, it did not say how extra land will be acquired to create a total of 280,000 units over the next 10 years, or how to handle local objections to new housing development in the neighbourhood for reasons such as traffic aggravation, inadequate social facilities, etc. He notes that there are suggestions to re-introduce Temporary Housing which he thinks worth considering in order to cope with the subdivided flats problem. He further comments that the Address tended to focus on quantity rather than quality. This is undesirable as once built, it is difficult to reverse.

While the Chief Executive acknowledged the issue of high property prices, Chan says that different kinds of Stamp Duty measures should be reviewed to see if they can deal with the causes of high property price effectively.

Chan also notes that, with the elderly population set to make up 30 per cent of Hong Kong’s total population by 2034, “ageing-in-place” has not been addressed through measures like elderly housing schemes, elderly-friendly design accommodation and communities or by modification of existing stocks. “Without new measures, the elderly can grow old only in institutionalised elderly nursing homes that have increasingly longer waiting lists like those for public housing. HKIS proposes that an Elderly Affairs Committee led by the Chief Secretary be established to spearhead the provision of dedicated elderly-friendly accommodation through administrative means such as imposing requirements in the land sale conditions. In the long run, a bureau has to be set up.”

Regarding the surveying profession, Chan hopes that the government can help surveyors in both public and private sectors “do less for more” by simplifying procedures and requirements which fall behind the times. “The landscaping proposal required in leases, for example, significantly lengthens approval time for matters that are not the expertise of surveyors,” he says. “Since property developers are already required by building ordinances, and additionally incentivised by awards and buyer preferences, to enhance landscaped building designs, such kind of lease conditions can be done away with.”

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「(施政報告) 提議將現時在前海試行的本港工程管理模式擴展至南沙和橫琴的項目。」

循序漸進

本港測量師大致歡迎行政長官梁振英今年施政報告的內容，但認為報告並無著墨樓宇政策，憂慮本港建築業若欠缺周詳計劃將面臨難題。

Kit M Yip

行政長官於 1 月 18 日發表 2017 年施政報告，內容雖提及多個土地、樓宇及房屋議題，而這些議題在未來數年將持續影響測量行業，但同時亦有聲音質疑當局是否能達到報告所訂目標，以及是否有考慮到建造成本及勞工短缺的問題。

香港測量師學會會長何國鈞測量師整體上歡迎這份施政報告，相信有助本港測量師發掘更多中國內地以至全球的發展機遇。他指施政報告重申國家「十三五」規劃有關深化內地與香港合作的重點，並提議將現時在前海試行的本港工程管理模式擴展至南沙和橫琴的項目。

何國鈞表示：「隨著這個模式吸引更多本港測量師北上，我們期望日後將之推廣至其他省份。」他續說，這個模式改善了《內地與香港關於建立更緊密經貿關係的安排》(CEPA)。CEPA 允許本港專才於中國內地註冊並執業，但他們必須受僱於合資格的內地企業。」

施政報告亦提及「一帶一路」，推出兩億港元的專業服務協進支援計劃，促進香港與「一帶一路」市場的專業交流和合作。這計劃支援專才了解相關法律及規定，有助測量師與計劃內的東南亞國家及其他地區開拓合作機會，何國鈞歡迎當局推行計劃。

此外，施政報告提出放寬「一帶一路」國家的民眾在本港工作的簽證規定。雖然本地測量業整體上並無迫切需要引進海外專才，但何國鈞認為長遠對部分人才短缺的測量範疇可能有所裨益。

然而，何國鈞憂慮施政報告提出的房屋及土地政策目標會面臨重大挑戰。報告引述「香港 2030+」計劃，指本港仍需物色 1,200 公頃土地才能滿足 2046 年 4,800 公頃的土地需求。何國鈞稱：「但本港可發展土地基本上已用盡，新的土地發展計劃，如棕地、土地收購及收回、新市鎮、新發展地區、岩洞、人工島及填海，都面對重重考驗。」他還特別提到，

勞工短缺的問題可能令建造成本急升。

香港測量師學會上任會長兼土地政策小組主席劉振江測量師同意何國鈞。「能否達到公共房屋的興建目標，很大程度需要視乎東涌及新界東北等土地的開發情況，當中涉及土地回收、賠償及安置問題，過程相當複雜。部分土地目前屬於使用中的棕地。立法會適時通過政府撥款亦是關鍵所在，而近年立法會花了更多時間討論撥款。」

為增加土地供應，劉振江認為政府可成立一個由專業人士組成的團隊，隸屬地政總署，專責補地價估算及契約修訂等事宜，集中處理私人土地、城市規劃、土地交換及發展問題。他說：「這部分的土地工作若做得好，最終可供應約 15% 的本港私人住宅單位，每年可多建 3,000 個單位。」

儘管填海問題引起公眾關注，但劉振江認為香港發展無可避免需要填海。他亦提議將市區工業大廈的儲物倉遷至新界偏遠地區，再將這些樓宇改作其他用途包括文化及康樂用途。「我期望公眾對『香港 2030+』提供有用意見，各方一起尋找方法，增加下一代的居住、工作和康樂空間。」

建築政策小組主席何鉅業測量師表示，施政報告並未特別針對樓宇方面的措施，長遠而言可能對建築測量業有不良影響。

他說：「普遍業主很少找測量師處理樓宇檢查和維修的事宜，實際上這些工作涉及專業測量知識。施政報告沒提及樓宇相關議題或監管機制，任由非專業人士主導市場，繼而損害建築測量師的聲譽和士氣。」他亦謂，政府需要教育公眾，幫助重新建立正確的行業規範。

何鉅業指，施政報告亦未提出有關樓宇保護、維修及改善等重要問題的解決方法，或如何加快有關工程項目的批核程序。沒有適當的樓宇規管，物業使用者或業主便無法安心。另一方面，香港測量師學會早前建議政府成立樓宇維修工程監管局以打擊圍標。雖然市建局已研究採納部份「監管局」建議的內容作為一些短期處理措施，但總體而言，政府針對這問題的工作仍是乏善足陳。

雖然施政報告提議加強執法，遏止工業大廈的「劊房」問題，保障樓宇安全，但何鉅業認為報告並未提出適當方法或相應機制安置「劊房」住戶。其他尚未解決的問題包括村屋僭建、勞動人口老化及新增勞動力短缺，長遠而言可能影響樓宇的質量和安全。

何鉅業說：「這些複雜問題需要由一個中央機構優先專責處理，同時協調各政府部門，我們希望下一份施政報告會有相關建議。」

政府應審視不同的印花稅措施，是否能有效地針對導致高樓價的成因。

房屋政策小組主席陳昌傑測量師表示，施政報告預計未來五年推出 94,500 個公營房屋單位，但沒說明如何取得額外土地，於未來 10 年興建共 28 萬個單位，或如何應對當地居民在附近興建房屋的反對聲音，反對原因包括加劇交通擠塞問題、社區設施不足等。對於有人建議重新引入臨時房屋以應付「劏房」問題，陳昌傑認為建議值得考慮。另外，他說：「施政報告對房屋重量不重質，這並非好現象，因為房屋一旦建成便難以推倒重來。」

雖然行政長官有意解決樓價高企的問題，但陳昌傑指出政府應審視不同的印花稅措施，是否能有效地針對導致高樓價的成因。

陳昌傑指出，長者人口預計於 2034 年佔本港總人口 30%，但施政報告缺乏「居家安老」措施如長者房屋計劃、便利長者的居所和社區等措施以及如何改善現有房屋設計。「若缺

乏新措施，長者便只能在護老機構安老，這些護老中心的輪候名單跟公屋的輪候冊一樣會不斷加長。香港測量師學會建議成立長者事務委員會，由政務司司長率領，以行政方法推出專為長者而設的居所，例如於賣地條款加入有關規定。」

就測量行業而言，陳昌傑希望政府精簡不合時宜的程序及規定，以協助公私營機構的測量師減輕繁瑣工作，於一定時間內完成更多項目。他說：「舉例而言，地契對園境的要求大大增加審批時間，而涉及的工作並非測量師的專業所在。由於建築物條例已規定發展商提升園林建築設計，加上相關獎項和買家意向亦推動這方面的提升，所以這類地契條款可以刪除。」

本文由《Classified Post》撰文。



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