

Preserving history

There has been a greater interest in the conservation of historic buildings in Hong Kong in recent years, with a rise in the number of architects and surveyors trained in the field. Despite the efforts of government at protecting Hong Kong's historical fabric, obstacles remain, particularly as conservation efforts generally rely on the will of private owners.

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Photo: Dickson Lee/SCMP

Despite a public outcry over the fate of Ho Tung Gardens, a Grade I listed historic building, it was demolished in 2013.

“As a prevailing practice, private historic buildings can become declared monuments only with the owner’s consent, which makes it more difficult.”

The conservation of Hong Kong’s built heritage has become a hot topic in recent years. From the Star Ferry and Queen’s Pier to King Yin Lei and Ho Tung Gardens, there is increasing public concern about heritage issues, which were once primarily the domain of industry players, owners and dwellers. In this article, representatives from the surveying, planning, antiquities and monuments-related professions will elaborate on Hong Kong’s heritage conservation, its opportunities, challenges, and future from professional viewpoints.

Sr Vincent K Y Ho, JP, Past President of the HKIS, Building Policy Panel Chairman and Managing Director of Freevision Limited; Mr Andrew S L Lam, JP, Chairman of Antiquities Advisory Board and Past President of Hong Kong Institute of Planners; and Sr Idi Chan Mei Kuen, Council Member of the HKIS’ Building Surveying Division, spoke to *Surveyors Times* about Hong Kong’s heightened awareness of heritage conservation, especially since the turn of the millennium.

Though the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance was enacted in 1976, both Mr Lam and Sr Chan note that many heritage buildings such as temples and ancestral halls in the New Territories and colonial buildings in urban areas had already been demolished before this time. Those demolitions made it difficult for Hong Kong to preserve entire areas of heritage like Macau or London have done.

Since the early 2000s however, the HKSAR government has revamped an overall heritage strategy which includes public consultation. Government efforts, such as the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Revitalisation Scheme) launched by the Commissioner for Heritage’s Office under the Development Bureau, have enabled many government-owned historic buildings to be adaptively reused through partnership with non-profit-making organisations. Some successful cases which have been awarded UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation include Lui Seng Chun (now Baptist University’s School of Chinese Medicine), the old Tai Po and Tai O police stations (now Green Hub and Tai O Heritage Hotel respectively), Mei Ho House (now a youth hostel) and Whitfield Barracks (now Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre).

As well as repairing and restoring declared monuments and items deemed by the government

to be monuments under private ownership, since 2008 the Revitalisation Scheme has been expanded to cover privately owned graded historic buildings to carry out repairs and regular maintenance works, thereby giving more incentives to owners to preserve historic buildings.

Whereas all interviewees speak positively about the government’s move to involve private owners, they acknowledge that conservation of private heritage remains relatively rare.

“The majority of Hong Kong’s 1,400-plus historic buildings are privately owned. Private owners face issues such as responsibility for possible accidents caused by deteriorating conditions of buildings, high maintenance costs, an inability to modify or demolish buildings if they become declared monuments, and potential loss of commercial gain if the building is not demolished or redeveloped,” says Sr Ho, who hopes the government can provide more incentives for privately owned buildings to be conserved.

Sr Chan adds, “Private historic buildings can become declared monuments only with the owner’s consent, which makes it more difficult.”

In addition to the current Revitalisation Scheme, Sr Ho thinks that the government can also consider breaking down policy barriers with regards to land grants as well as development approvals by Buildings Department, Planning Department and Lands Department to facilitate conservation. Some regulations regarding fire and structural safety for new building construction could be relaxed appropriately under a pragmatic approval to enable a certain degree of adaptive re-use such as commercial use. These measures, initially explored in the Practice Guidebook for Adaptive Re-use of and Alteration and Addition Works to Heritage Buildings, need following up.

Moreover, topics such as the revitalisation of factory buildings may help open up discussions to relax the restrictive use of land grants, thereby facilitating adaptive re-use of heritage buildings. Another viable solution is allowing use of residual plot ratio, released by a low-rise heritage building within a much bigger site of interest to a developer, to be used in the rest of the huge site – in that case, the developer may build a new high-rise while at the same time assuring the conservation and maintenance of the preserved heritage building.

“ Whether preservation is worth it or not depends on the mentality of the public. If members of the public become more positive towards preservation, the perceived value related to preservation will increase. ”

Both Mr Lam and Sr Chan think that preservation has a lot to do with popular opinion. “Whether preservation is worth it or not depends on the mentality of the public. If members of the public become more positive towards preservation, the perceived value related to preservation will increase. In many European countries for instance, owners of heritage buildings are proud of their historic estates. When that happens in Hong Kong, it would be desirable to re-evaluate once controversial issues and let the public make decisions about heritage preservation. By then, self-initiated preservation may be more effective than laws and regulations,” says Mr Lam.

Sr Chan elaborates, “In the United Kingdom, there is a big market for conservation, which in turn encourages the availability of material and human resources such as materials suppliers and craftsmen. In Hong Kong’s small market, skilled craftsmen with conservation knowledge have had problems finding young people who are willing to be trained.”

Mr Lam advocates a common-sense approach, rather than an overly rigid or idealistic one. Even in historic cities like London and Prague, it is difficult to preserve characteristics of the past with 100 per cent integrity. With regard to Hong Kong, Lam says it is impossible to “freeze” in time an area such as Sheung Wan to preserve it, or expect residents to continue living in units with no washrooms. Conservation involves a social price to be paid, such as heritage building staking up potential lots for new public housing. It is thus necessary to strike a balance among the interests of different stakeholders.

“It is possible, however, to organise the original historic fabric of built heritage despite constant and inevitable change. We have tried to preserve heritage on the ‘dot, line or plane’ levels, such as the Central and Western Heritage Trail covering heritage related to Dr Sun Yat Sen and the 1911 Revolution,” Mr Lam notes. Hong Kong has been abiding by international standards regarding minimal intervention during preservation.

On the positive front, Sr Chan thinks that certain areas in Hong Kong still have conservation potential, such as Yim Tin Tsai in relatively remote Sai Kung.

Chan also notices a new trend, and says many more

architects and surveyors with conservation training have entered the market in recent years. “Whereas in the past there were only a handful of conservation professionals, in recent years the master’s and postgraduate diploma programmes in conservation at the University of Hong Kong have trained up many conservation professionals. Private professional consulting firms are increasingly involved in heritage conservation, providing more jobs, which in turn encourages professionals to equip themselves with conservation knowledge.”

Sr Ho elaborates on the roles played by the surveying profession in heritage conservation. Surveyors are involved in initial surveys and record-keeping of existing forms and shapes with the aid of 3D laser scanning, as well as the recording of construction materials and so on. They then come up with detailed design diagrams using 3D design software, enabling Building Information Modelling (BIM). This is followed by the strengthening of building structures through enhanced support and the implementation of fire-safety designs. During the works process, there is close monitoring of the existing building against movement or vibration to minimise the risk of accidental damage.

Surveyors with different specialisations work together towards heritage preservation. Whereas building surveyors do inspection, monitoring, repair work and alteration, land surveyors are involved in 3D scanning of entire complexes and changes in terrain and so forth. Quantity surveyors evaluate construction costs, taking into consideration comprehensive risk factors. When work is completed, facility management surveyors manage the buildings. General surveyors evaluate their commercial values where applicable.

Looking to the future, Sr Ho hopes that the government will provide more incentives, leading to more privately owned heritage buildings being conserved, thereby providing more cases for surveyors to refer to regarding the implementation of relevant industry practices. Sr Chan and Mr Lam note that the culture is changing towards the positive, and they look forward to the day when this positive attitude helps facilitate Hong Kong’s heritage preservation.

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保育歷史

近年港人愈加重視保育歷史建築，有相關培訓經驗的測量師和建築師相繼投身這項工作。雖然政府致力保留香港原有歷史面貌，但保育工作仍面對不少挑戰，不少項目都要顧及私人業主的意願。

葉潔明

近年歷史建築保育成為城中熱話。由滿載港人集體回憶的天星碼頭和皇后碼頭，以至私人擁有的景賢里和何東花園，都引起公眾對保育歷史文物的關注。這個議題過往只會觸及保育人士、業主和住戶的神經。來自測量、規劃、古物古蹟界別的代表將從專業角度出發，細說香港歷史文物保育的大小事，探視未來發展的種種機遇和挑戰。

香港測量師學會前會長、建築政策小組主席及富匯測量師有限公司董事總經理何鉅業測量師太平紳士、古物諮詢委員會主席及香港規劃師學會前任主席林筱魯太平紳士，以及香港測量師學會建築測量組委員陳美娟測量師，分別向《測量師時代》抒發己見，討論自千禧年以來港人日漸提高的保育歷史文物意識。

香港早於 1976 年已頒佈《古物及古蹟條例》，但林筱魯和陳美娟測量師認為，很多新界的歷史建築（例如廟宇和祠堂）以及市區的殖民地建築早在法例頒佈前已被清拆。這些早期清拆行動令香港難以仿效澳門或倫敦打造歷史城區。

然而，自 21 世紀初起，特區政府就整體歷史文物保育策略進行改革，具體措施包括加入公眾諮詢。政府牽頭推動的項目包括由發展局轄下文物保育專員辦事處推行的《活化歷史建築伙伴計劃》（活化計劃）。透過與非牟利機構合作，活化計劃成功保育多棟屬政府擁有的歷史建築。其中不少個案更獲頒「聯合國教科文組織亞太區文物古蹟保護獎榮譽獎」，包括雷生春（現為香港浸會大學中醫藥學院）、舊大埔警署和舊大澳警署（現分別成為綠匯學苑和大澳文物酒店）、美荷樓（現為青年宿舍）和威菲路軍營（現為香港文物探知館）。

除了對已成為或將會成為法定古蹟的私人物業進行維修及修復外，活化計劃自 2008 年起擴大範圍，協助已評級的私人歷史建築的業主開展修葺和定期保養工程，藉以鼓勵業主更積極保育歷史建築。

各受訪者都歡迎政府鼓勵私人業主參與保育項目，但他們承認保育私人歷史文物的案列不多。

何鉅業測量師表示：「香港逾 1,400 座歷史建築中，絕大部分屬私人擁有。私人業主在處理這些物業時有多重考慮，例如因建築物失修引致意外所涉及的責任問題、保養成本高、建築物成為法定古蹟後無法改動或清拆，以及不清拆、不重建建築物所引致的潛在商業利益損失。」他期望政府能夠為相關業主提供更多誘因，推動私人建築物的保育工作。

陳美娟測量師補充指：「要將任何私人歷史建築列為法定古蹟，事前需要徵得業主同意。這無疑對相關保育工作構成一定阻力。」

何鉅業測量師認為，除了現有的活化計劃，政府亦可嘗試打破政策限制，從批地以及屋宇署、規劃署和地政總署的發展審批入手。當局可改革審批機制，適度放寬若干適用於新落成建築的防火和結構安全規定，令這類歷史建築物可以得到一定程度的活化再用（例如用作商業用途）。《文物歷史建築的活化再用及改動及加建工程實用手冊》曾探討這些措施，現在正是再跟進的時候。

「公眾取態決定保育工作的價值。若市民能夠以更正面的態度看待保育工作，可提高保育的感知價值。」

此外，活化工廈等議題或有助引發社會對放寬地契用途限制的討論，從而推動歷史建築的活化工作。另一可行方案是容許發展商使用在大型地盤內的低樓層歷史建築剩餘地積比率，配合較大地段的發展計劃。發展商可按計劃興建一座新的高樓大廈，但同時承擔保育和維修相關歷史建築的責任。

林筱魯和陳美娟測量師同樣認為，保育工作是否成功，關鍵是民意取態。林筱魯指出：「公眾取態決定保育工作的價值。若市民能夠以更正面的態度看待保育工作，可提高保育的感知價值。在很多歐洲國家，業主會為自己擁有歷史建築感到自豪。若同一情況在香港發生，較理想的做法是重新評估具爭議的保育項目，讓公眾作決定。屆時自發性的保育行動可能較依賴法規推動的工作更具成效。」

陳美娟測量師補充指：「英國有龐大的保育市場，讓物料供應和工匠的市場能得以維持。反觀市場規模細小的香港，由於少有年輕人入行，具備保育知識的資深工匠亦難以培育新血。」

林筱魯建議當局彈性處理有關個案，避免制度過分僵化或理想化。即使是倫敦和布拉格等歷史城市，也難以百分百地保留所有歷史特色。反觀香港的情況，林筱魯認為要保育如上環等有歷史的地區，不可能完全「凍結」這些地區的發展，亦不能要求居民生活在沒有洗手間的單位內。社會需要為保育付出一定代價，保留歷史建築放棄可興建公共房屋的土地。因此，保育工作有必要平衡不同持份者的利益。

林筱魯表示：「雖然社會發展必然會帶來轉變，但有系統地保留歷史建築的原有面貌並非無可能。我們曾經嘗試按『點、線、面』的理念保育歷史文物，例子有講述孫中山先生和辛亥革命的中西區文物徑。」香港按照國際標準，將保育工作對社會造成的影響減至最低程度。

從正面的角度看，陳美娟測量師認為香港有部分地方仍然具備保育潛力，例如位置相對較偏遠的西貢鹽田仔。

陳美娟測量師也留意到一個新趨勢，指近年越來越多具保育培訓經驗的建築師和測量師投身相關工作。「過往市場上的保育專才寥寥可數，但近年香港大學的保育碩士和深造文憑課程已培育出許多這方面的人才。私人專業顧問公司不但更積極參與歷史文物保育工作，亦提供更多相關工作，變相鼓勵保育專才好好裝備自己，進修保育知識。」

何鉅業測量師亦剖析了測量業界在歷史文物保育上所扮演的角色。測量師一般會參與初步勘測工作，利用三維激光掃描記錄建築物的現有形態和形狀，並會記錄建築材料等。接著再以三維設計軟件繪製詳細設計圖，用於設計建築資訊模型（BIM）。其後在維修活化設計過程中，提供改善樓宇結構及防火安全的建議，並且從長遠保養角度上提出設計建議。在工程進行期間，測量師需緊密監察現有建築物有沒有移位或震動，把意外損毀的風險降至最低。

保育歷史文物時，不同界別的測量師會攜手合作：建築測量師負責檢測、監察、修繕和改動；土地測量師參與整個建築群的三維掃描、監測地勢的轉變等；工料測量師負責評估建造成本，並考慮所有風險因素。工程完成後，物業設施管理測量師負責管理建築物。產業測量師則會在有需要時評估建築物的商業價值。

展望將來，何鉅業測量師期望政府可提供更多誘因，讓更多私人歷史建築得到適當保育。這樣便可為測量師提供更多參考個案，執行業內的作業方式。陳美娟測量師和林筱魯認為保育文化正朝著正面方向發展，期望這種正面的態度推動香港未來的歷史文物保育工作。

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活化計劃成功保育多棟屬政府擁有的歷史建築，其中舊大澳警署現已改建為大澳文物酒店。
圖片來源：Dickson Lee/SCMP