

Public reminded to give views on operation of HK tourism sector  
before consultation ends

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Members of the public are reminded to give their views on the review of the operation and regulatory framework of Hong Kong's tourism sector on or before July 15, a spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said today (June 28).

The Government issued a consultation paper on April 29 to invite views on the operation and the regulation of the tourism sector from the trade and the public. The consultation paper sets out four reform options, including the respective merits and drawbacks, the estimated implementation timeframe and financial implications of each option.

"The Bureau will consider the views collected carefully before deciding on the most viable option that could best forge a consensus. We will work out the substantive reform proposals and announce them in due course," the spokesman said.

The four reform options are outlined below (the details of the options are set out at annex):

Option 1: Retain the existing two-tier regulatory regime, reform the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (the TIC) and specify its role as a public association. This option proposes to revamp the composition of the TIC Board of Directors (TIC Board) and committees, thereby further enhancing the participation of non-trade members. The Government would also amend the Travel Agents Ordinance to set out clearly the role of the TIC as a public association in the regulatory framework.

Option 2: Transfer certain regulatory functions from the TIC to a government department. In addition to adopting the proposals in Option 1 to revamp the composition of the TIC Board and committees, Option 2 also proposes to review the functions, powers and responsibilities of the TIC. Under this option, the TIC should continue to draw up codes of conduct and directives, but these must be approved by the Government before implementation. Moreover, to further strengthen the appeal mechanism and afford better protection for travellers, it is proposed that an independent appeal committee(s) be set up outside the TIC, and channels for travellers to appeal against the TIC's decisions be introduced. The independent appeal committee(s) would be responsible for handling appeals against the TIC's decisions

lodged by trade members and travellers.

Option 3: Establish an independent statutory body to regulate travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts. Licensing work could either be entrusted to the independent statutory body, or be carried out by the Government as the ultimate licensing authority. The TIC would retain its trade organisation status to promote industry development.

Option 4: A government department would take over the overall tourism regulation from the TIC, including handling the licensing and regulation of travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts. The TIC would retain its trade organisation status to promote industry development, and represent the trade in offering advice to the regulator.

The consultation paper also invites views from the public on whether a licensing system for tourist guides, and different licences for regulating outbound and inbound tourism should be introduced.

The consultation paper can be obtained from the public enquiry service centres of district offices or downloaded from the Tourism Commission website at [www.tourism.gov.hk](http://www.tourism.gov.hk). Members of the trade, stakeholders and the public may send their views to the Tourism Commission by post (2/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices, Lower Albert Road, Central, Hong Kong), fax (2801 4458), or email ([tourism\\_review@cedb.gov.hk](mailto:tourism_review@cedb.gov.hk)).

Ends/Tuesday, June 28, 2011

Issued at HKT 11:10