

Friends of Sai Kung - Briefing by District Office SK 3 March 2010

Present:

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(to be replaced by Mr. Wilson TSANG on 8 th March; farewell Kimmie ☹, welcome Wison ☺)			
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FSK (15 members)

Briefing

The DO welcomed FSK and then his staff briefed us on the structure and responsibilities of the DO using a power point presentation, the relevant (to FSK) highlights of which include:

Main Tasks includes “communication between Government and the public”.

Tripartite Cooperation involves DO, DMC and Govt Depts with SKDC with “Local Organisations & Groups”.

Functions of SKDC includes the “reflection of residents’ views” and being a “communication channel between the Government and the residents”.

SKDC comprises “23 Elected members, 5 Appointed Members and 2 Ex-officio members (Chairmen of RCs)”

Community Involvement Projects includes “promoting public participation in community affairs and district activities”. (NGOs can apply for funding.)

Questions

Guy Shirra gave apologies for the unavoidably absent FSK committee and thanked the DO for agreeing to give this first ever briefing to FSK (a registered HK society).

He said that FSK believed that the DO was aware of all Government and departmental plans for SK and could discover such plans if it was not aware of them. FSK was concerned that there did not appear to be an overall master plan for SK and that departmental activities, particular those of TD and CEDD, seemed to be at variance with the PDs vision of SK (with which FSK agrees) as the “Garden of HK”.

Hiram’s Highway was a case in point. He then asked for the DO’s input/response on: The SKDC Tourism Study, plans for the Old Town, Harbour, Beach and Promenade, the proposed MOS to SK Cycle Track.

Peter Mann raised the issue of the Small House Policy and in particular how it affected villages inside country park boundaries where outside developers were acquiring villagers’ ‘dings’. He stressed the need for a review.

Paul Zimmerman raised three points 1. Residents not living in listed villages are not represented (listed villages have 2 VRs to represent them) 2. Government departments ignoring OZPs and riding roughshod over public need (e.g. CEDD in respect of TKO water sports centre) 3. SK needs someone like the DO to take charge

Denise Tong raised the issue of the ugly concrete stalls recently constructed on 40% (not 5% as claimed) of the grass area of the Promenade for a weekend only “green market/boutique tourism” without any warning or consultation. She provided plans (attached) and photographs.

Judy Love Eastham stated for the record that the TDC (of which she is a member) had agreed to this project as part of “green living”. How did it morph into a junk market instead of a green market?

Clare Benson stated that the concrete stalls had been poorly constructed without drainage and were now breeding grounds for mosquitoes. None of her SK restaurant customers, local, expat, visitors or residents had a good word to say about the project.

(the DO revealed that it also was not particularly happy with the outcome and that the construction had been carried out by “volunteers” to save money. It would be reviewed in the light of adverse comments from elsewhere as well.)

Gillian Humphries (a Ho Chung village house owner) raised the question of the cutting of vehicular access/egress to a large number of houses. She mentioned wire fences, marooned private cars, lack of advance notice, the complicated Emergency Vehicle Access (EVA) for

which emergency services have to rely on watchmen to provide a key and asked who was responsible? She highlighted the case of a resident who had failed to secure emergency egress for her car needed to urgently take her child to a doctor. (An EVA is currently for police etc to urgently access, not for anyone to access or egress in an emergency). She stated that when she was sold the property, she had seen a map showing a proposed new road into the village. What has happened to it?

(DO responded that DOSK had arranged for emergency meetings of all government departments concerned (TD, LD, DSD, HKP, FSD) and villagers and that some compromise had been reached. Chairman SKDC was now chairing a “case conference” to try to reach a more permanent solution. In respect of the new road (shown on the OZP), this was a long term plan.)

(Note: FSK’s submission to TD/HD on Hiram’s Highway proposes just such a road, part of a one-way system in Ho Chung obviating much of the need for the Phase 1 dual carriageway).

Paul Zimmerman questioned the appropriateness of the DOSK surrendering executive power to the chairman of the consultative SKDC in this matter.

(the DO assured that this was not the case. That the DO was exploring all possible avenues to resolve the issue and that this was just one of them.)

Concluding Remarks

Guy Shirra then summed up for FSK:

Consultation between DO and SK residents and groups (other than SKDC, RC, listed village representatives, Kai Fongs, MACs etc already consulted) needs to be improved. FSK is “a not-for-profit community organization and Registered Society) which seeks to preserve and improve the quality of life of Sai Kung people and to protect the unique environment of Sai Kung for the benefit of Hong Kong and its visitors.” FSK would welcome regular meetings of this nature, being consulted on local issues and being invited to participate in working groups.

Notification. In addition to consultation, early notification of proposed projects in the form of advance publicity and on-site notices/plans would give residents the chance to comment or object before work commences, avoiding unnecessary criticism/confrontation.

Representation. HAD should consider that NT residents who do not reside in listed villages have no representatives (and that even non-indigenous representative posts were often filled by indigenous villagers). Although they are thus in a similar position to urban residents, they are disadvantaged in comparison with listed village residents who can vote for an additional voice. Should they not at least be consulted (through the FSK, for instance)?

Small House Policy. It was apparent that all present agreed that the SHP was the root cause of much of the conflict and disagreement between indigenous villagers (many no longer resident in HK) and NT residents and that it needed to be urgently reviewed before all village and

overflow government land ran out and there was nothing to differentiate the NT from urban Kowloon other than isolated and threatened country parks.

The Role of the District Officer. FSK had a vision of the DOSK as the Champion of Sai Kung in all matters where residents broadly agreed or had reached a consensus and that where not, he should honestly reflect opposing views to the Government and propose imaginative alternatives which might satisfy all parties. It was understood that many district problems were political in nature.

Explore Sai Kung. Judy, the owner of what is now an exclusively on-line SK magazine, suggested that the DO (who has regularly briefed Explore on district matters) rather than just report news, use Explore to notify residents in advance of plans and projects which might concern them.

Thanks FSK thanks the DO and his staff for taking the time to brief us and provide answers where possible and for the offers of future consultation and meetings. This was reiterated by Peter who saw such contact as a means of strengthening liaison between the DO and residents generally.

GSS 03March10 PM Amended 06Mar10

(Guy Shirra, former Committee FSK, at request of Chairman FSK)