

Edwin Rainbow  
Chairman Hillgrove VOC  
Discovery Bay

Commissioner for Transport  
Transport Department  
41st floor, Immigration Tower,  
7 Gloucester Road,  
Wan Chai,

30th March 2022

Dear Sirs,

I write on behalf of the Hillgrove Village Owners Committee to complain about an unexpected and alarming invasion of blue and red taxis in the proximity of Hillgrove Village, Discovery Bay.

Mr Edwin Rainbow (Chair)

Ms Janice Fung (Vice Chair)

Ms Alice Li

Mr Martin Keen (recent VOC member)

Mr Edmund Fan

Mr Chung Kwok Wah

Ms Lo Yuk Shan Connie

Mr Nigel JH Re

Mr Edwin Tam (PLG representative)

John Antweiller

We knew that " Designated Taxis" displaying a blue banner would be allowed for transporting Covid patients, including people going for tests and supported this practical solution given the challenges connected to the pandemic.

However, what we see is completely outside the spirit of what was happily tolerated.

Is the temporary lifting of the prohibition for all taxis (19:02:2022) (- which we could only confirm by reference to the TD website after the surprise invasion), something different from the arrangement for the "Designated Taxis"? (Please note that we could only confirm by reference to the TD website after we were invaded by taxis not carrying a blue banner)

Thankfully we can look forward to temporary lifting of the prohibition on the 1st. April?

It has been suggested that this was not a mistake relating to "Designated Taxis" but this an exercise for the purposes of making a traffic impact study. Is this because HKR have submitted a proposal to permanently lift the prohibition?

I can state that the VOC and owners that have contacted me understand that the taxis will be attractive to some residents, and doubtless HKR will solicit their approval, however the majority of owners and residents disapprove.

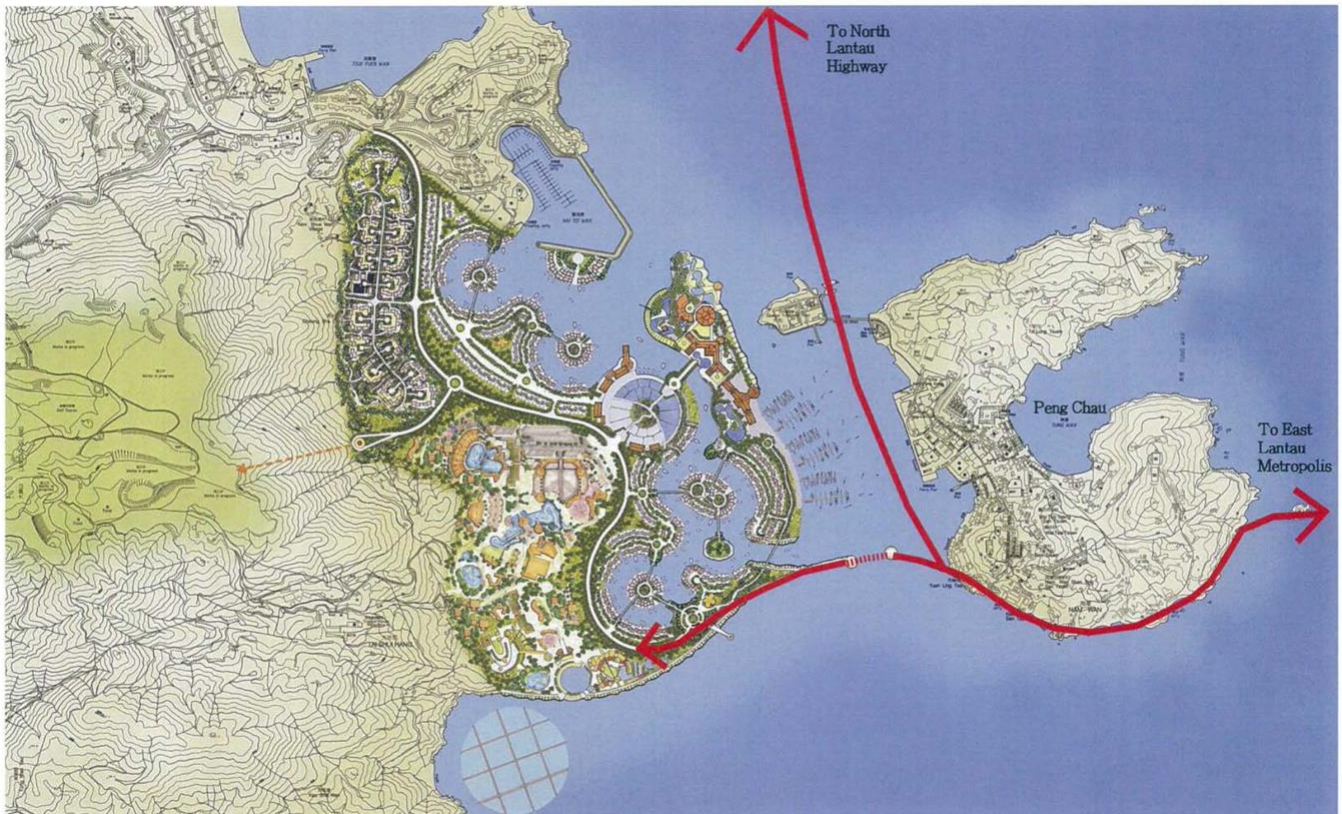
This has been shown clearly in the past (Amy Yung survey) and nothing has changed. Visitors to Discovery Bay and some tenants with short-term interest, business associates and staff of HKR must not

be allowed to decide in favour of the Registered Owner something which is against the wishes of the 8000 village owners, most of whom are long-term residents investing in the DB lifestyle.

We know that HKRI has an agenda to drive a highway through Discovery Bay . HKRI presented this new vision to Legco stating *"its disappointment that DB resident's needs were totally neglected"* in "The Proposed Strategy for Lantau" dated 1st April 2016. Again there was absolutely no consultation with the residents. The push to bring taxis into DB is not coming from residents. It is from HKRI and we fear that your traffic impact assessment is already a thin edge of a wedge to change the character of DB, with no concern for preserving the original vision that was so successful and should not be destroyed.

**HKRI**

Appendix 8 Plan



Tourism Hub Between Peng Chau and Lantau Island

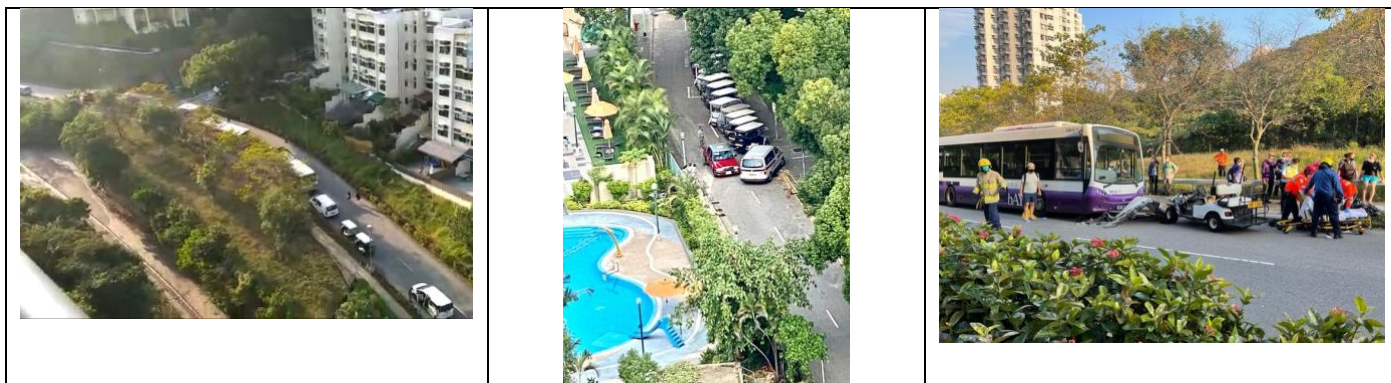
You are aware of the special character of Discovery Bay and the fact that it offers an option which can draw and even hold skilled people needed in Hong Kong. This attraction has been achieved through its quirky ferries and golf carts and the provisions of the Discovery Bay DMC that still apply. i.e., that Discovery Bay continues to be primarily vehicle free therefore, further taxi access, beyond the hotel, must not be granted.

For the record, VOC members and owners have asked me to add some further points of concern against the introduction of taxis into the calm environment of Discovery Bay:

Taxis inevitably speed and this has been witnessed in the last few days, so there will inevitably be accidents as taxi drivers expect people to be alert and streetwise. We tend to be relaxed in Discovery Bay, especially our children.

The Vice Chair points out that any extra traffic will increase pollution.

In this respect I would personally hope that the City Owners Committee could be interested in a complete revision of the way we move people in and out and around Discovery Bay. Exciting, state of the art options could be tested in Discovery Bay. Hop on / hop off self-drive electric vehicles could possibly replace both our buses and our hire cars - pollution free, safe, quiet. The introduction of taxis as we know them today would be a retrograde step.



Finally:

Mr Peter Crush of Parkvale Village has kindly shared with me a letter he wrote to TD last year. I take this opportunity of sharing Mr Crush's letter with the Hillgrove VOC herewith and endorsing the additional points he makes.

Dear Sir

**Taxi Access to Discovery Bay – Misuse of the Discovery Bay Transport Services Passenger Liaison group for the promotion of further taxi access into Discovery Bay**

At a meeting of the Passenger Liaison Group held by Discovery Bay Transportation Services on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021, at the request of certain members, a topic headed "Taxis" was placed on the meeting agenda for discussion.

When this topic came up for discussion a few members of the group used this opportunity to advocate opening up Discovery Bay to further taxi access including to the South Plaza commercial centre and to the villages located in the southern peninsula.

I intervened during this presentation to remind the Chair of the meeting (Hong Kong Transportation Services management) that it is not within the remit of the PLG to discuss items relating to road traffic matters which are unconnected with the companies own ferry, bus and hire cars services. I also mentioned that during recent Transport Advisory Committee addresses to the Legislative Council it was stated that function of Passenger Liaison Groups is *to liaise, communicate and receive opinions of the public for the purpose of assessing and improving standards of the respective licensed ferry or bus operators.*<sup>1</sup>

I have been sitting as a PLG representative of Parkvale Village for many years and the chair of these meetings has hitherto always disallowed discussions about other traffic issues which are a matter for Discovery Bay City Management and the City Owner's Committee. Discussion at these meetings were always confined to services provided by the Discovery Bay ("DB") public transport companies. However, the presentation advocating more taxi access was permitted to continue.

One member of the PLG, representing Siena 2 Village, passionately arguing for additional taxi access, suggested that Discovery Bay was not intended to be "car free" as is evidenced by the construction of double garages for private cars in Headland Village. In response, I pointed out that the Outline Zoning Plan for Discovery Bay specifically makes reference to the development being primarily car free and in a recent High Court appeal judgment involving the Town Planning Board, the judgment preamble reaffirmed this principle.

This gentleman stood for election in the District Council election of 2015. As the convenor of the DB "We Deserve Better" Action Group,<sup>2</sup> and a key part of his election manifesto at that time was to promote the entry of taxis into DB. He however lost this election to the incumbent district councillor Ms. Amy Yung whose independent survey had indicated that a majority of residents opposed this idea. Later, succumbing to the developer's pressure, Exco authorized taxis and private coaches to be permitted through the Discovery Bay Tunnel Link primarily to provide taxi services to the new hotel. However, because of the overwhelming concern of the many residents who opposed taxis venturing into DB, the access was limited to the hotel area and the North Plaza with strict controls to segregate golf carts from taxis and prevent the latter from venturing to the south areas of the development. In



2011 a passenger Coach and Taxi Liaison Group was established to advise on taxi and coach control and road safety issues and I was invited to be traffic adviser to this group which met regularly from 2011-2012.

Taxis are actually the equivalent of chauffeur-driven cars, which are hired and charged by meter for each journey. To allow taxis into DB in general would be a breach of this car free principle. Some other members of the PLG also supported my concerns indicating that this issue is still very divisive and that there are still thousands of residents who moved here to live in a car-free environment.

It has also come attention that the South Islands District councillor for Peng Chau ("PC") is simultaneously advocating a desire for PC island residents to have taxi access to Nim Shue Wan ferry pier to connect with 'kaitio' services between DB and PC. There are very few services from this pier. Furthermore, the PC kaitio docks at the DB Service Area, an area within a private development governed by a DMC and the Conditions of Exchange and neither of these legal agreements allow the Lot to be used to provide taxi services for the residents of Peng Chau.

I therefore appeal to you to intervene and point out to Hong Kong Resorts that it is not within the remit of the Passenger Liaison Group to kickstart another campaign for further taxis access. This will be divisive and cause disharmony once again in this community. Those who bought and invested in property or chose to move here did so all along knowing that this is car-free environment and it is not "progress" (a word much banded around by the taxi proponents) to destroy this concept. In this age European cities are all progressively moving to the elimination of private cars within their downtown areas and to encourage the public to use buses, railways and tramways etc.

The timing of this renewed push for more taxi access immediately follows the recent opening of a new shopping mall and an ice rink in DB south plaza. In addition, Lands Department has recently approved the construction of large new housing development in the vicinity of exit from the Discovery Bay Tunnel Link. This raises the suspicion that the developer is driving this renewed campaign for further taxis access for the enhancement of property sales.

I should have no need to remind you that the Discovery Bay main road is whole unsuited for taxi access and briefly summarise the reasons for this :-

- a) A considerable number of Hong Kong's taxis drivers are notorious for poor driving standards and with above average accident rates. The interaction with some 500 golf cars, which are registered as Village Vehicles, on Discovery Bay Road would be an invitation for encouraging serious accidents.
- b) Some golf carts are poorly maintained and driven by inattentive drivers. The slower speeds of these vehicles encourage the drivers of larger faster vehicles to become impatient and take risks, overtaking the slower moving golf carts by crossing the double white lines in the road centre. This single carriageway road to the south of D.B has very few locations for safe overtaking.
- c) There is no permanent police traffic branch presence existing within Discovery Bay and therefore there are no traffic enforcement measures other than limited parking controls conducted by private security guards who lack statutory powers for enforcing Road Traffic Ordinance regulations.
- d) There is insufficient space and infrastructure in the vicinity of Discovery Bay South Plaza for a taxi rank. There is already a critical shortage of parking space for the many commercial delivery vehicles visiting the expanded commercial complex as well as for the many additional Discovery Bay vehicle registration vehicle plates granted by City management.

#### Conclusion

This renewed campaign by Taxi advocates, Hong Kong Resorts and others should be curtailed by a reminder that the provisions of the Discovery Bay DMC and Conditions of Exchange still apply. i.e., that Discovery Bay continues to be primarily car free and, therefore, further taxi access should not be granted.

Thank you for your attention

Ed Rainbow

Chairman Hillgrove VOC