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Office of The Ombudsman



主動調查行動報告
Direct Investigation Operation Report

政府對斜坡維修責任的鑑辨及對私人斜坡的風險管理
Government's Determination of Slope Maintenance Responsibility and Risk Management of Private Slopes

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Government's Determination of Slope Maintenance Responsibility and Risk Management of Private Slopes

Introduction

In recent years, extreme weather has brought torrential rains at times that increases the risk of severe landslides, threatening people's daily living, as well as their lives and property. The proper repair and maintenance of man-made slopes is crucial to the prevention of landslides. Currently, there are around 61,000 man-made slopes across Hong Kong, including around 38,600 government slopes, 15,800 private slopes and 6,300 slopes involving mixed responsibilities of the Government and private property owners. Under the Lands Department ("LandsD"), the Systematic Identification of Maintenance Responsibility of Slopes in the Territory Unit ("SIMAR Unit") of the Estate Management Section is tasked with determining the maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes.

2. Private property owners are responsible for the regular maintenance of private man-made slopes. To manage the risk of private man-made slopes, the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD") has implemented the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme (1977 to 2010) and the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme (2010 to present) in succession. Under the Programme, a specified number of private man-made slopes are selected under a risk-based approach for safety screening studies every year to assess whether their condition meets safety standards. Where *prima facie* evidence of distress or potential danger is observed on private slopes, CEDD will recommend that the Buildings Department ("BD") serve dangerous hillside orders[1] on private property owners, requiring them to carry out investigation and necessary remedial or preventive works. To follow up on compliance with the orders, BD will vet the slope works proposals submitted by registered professionals appointed by owners, monitor the works progress, and instigate prosecutions against non-compliance cases. Depending on circumstances, BD carries out works on behalf of defaulting owners and recovers the costs from them upon completion.

3. Our investigation has revealed inadequacies that require improvements to increase efficiency, in LandsD's determination of maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes, handling of disputes, and granting of permission letters to carry out works

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[1] Generally, a dangerous hillside order has two stages. Stage 1 dangerous hillside order requires private property owners to appoint registered professionals within a specified period to carry out ground investigation works, and submit a slope works proposal to BD for approval based on the investigation results. Stage 2 dangerous hillside order requires private property owners to appoint registered professionals within a specified period to coordinate, supervise and complete remedial or preventive works according to the proposal approved by BD.

on government land; as well as BD's issuance and follow-up of dangerous hillside orders and carrying out of default works. As for the inadequate maintenance of private slopes, CEDD can strengthen education and support to private property owners through safety screening studies. Moreover, there is still substantial room for improving inter-departmental collaboration in the risk management of private slopes and enforcement. During this investigation, all three departments responded positively to our findings and proactively proposed improvement measures. We truly appreciate the departments for their efforts. Our specific comments on each area are as follows.

Our Findings and Comments

(I) LandsD's Determination of Maintenance Responsibility for Man-made Slopes

Lengthy Determination Process

4. Between 2019 and 2024, LandsD took longer than one year to complete the determination in around 70% of cases and over two years in about 50% of cases. As at the end of April 2025, there was even a backlog of around 1,830 cases with maintenance responsibility not yet determined. In our view, it is unreasonable to take years just to determine which party should be responsible for slope maintenance. An excessively long time for determination is detrimental to slope safety because it defers the assumption of responsibility by the maintenance party.

5. Since the launch of our investigation and in response to our concern, LandsD has required its consultants to submit a determination report within two months for priority cases, thereby enabling LandsD to advise BD within the specified timeframe (i.e. 3.75 months). We are also pleased to learn that LandsD has drawn up target timeframes for determination cases of different complexity and implemented an internal monitoring mechanism. We recommend that LandsD continue to monitor the implementation of these improvement measures, striving to complete all cases within reasonable timeframes. Separately, LandsD should conduct systematic analysis of determination cases requiring a long completion time to examine the common causes and formulate corresponding measures, so as to facilitate the speedy completion of cases by the department and its consultants.

6. Apart from monitoring the completion time of cases, the quality of consultants' work is equally important. We recommend that LandsD analyse the common issues requiring attention and speedier handling in determination cases, and provide consultants with reminders and guidance.

7. We are pleased to learn that in order to clear backlog cases, LandsD has implemented a series of improvement measures. All backlog cases were cleared before the end of 2025.

Streamlining Inter-departmental Workflow for Determination Process

8. A newly-formed or modified slope is first handled by CEDD for delineation of slope boundary or area and registration. LandsD will then determine the maintenance responsibility. Moreover, LandsD will determine the maintenance responsibility again in the event of any change to a man-made slope's cadastral records. During the determination process and depending on the circumstances of the case, LandsD needs to obtain information and advice from relevant departments. We recommend that LandsD and CEDD jointly explore how to streamline the workflow and inter-departmental exchange of information, so as to enhance the efficiency of the determination process.

Failure to Inform Maintenance Parties of Determination Results

9. Upon completion of the determination process and before uploading the results to the Slope Maintenance Responsibility Information System, LandsD never notified the parties considered to have maintenance responsibility. We are concerned that some private property owners might have neglected their responsibility due to unawareness of it, resulting in slope deterioration. If private property owners only become aware of their responsibility upon receiving a dangerous hillside order issued by BD, not only have they already missed the opportunity for routine inspections and maintenance, but more importantly, the slope's structure may have become unstable or even dangerous by that time. Addressing potential disputes over maintenance responsibility at this stage is far too late from a public safety perspective.

10. In our view, LandsD should notify the maintenance parties of its determination results to ensure that they are fully aware of and fulfil their responsibility as soon as possible. Any disputes over maintenance responsibility can also be addressed early. We are pleased to note that our findings and recommendations are positively received by LandsD with relevant work already commenced.

Strengthening Inter-departmental Collaboration for Resolving Disputes over Maintenance Responsibility

11. Resolving disputes over maintenance responsibility often involves inter-departmental exchange of a vast amount of information and opinions. Where a department is requested to assist, its proactive cooperation is crucial for speedy resolution of disputes. In one case, LandsD requested CEDD to confirm whether adjustment was required for the boundary of a slope, which was the subject in dispute. As the dispute involved complex boundary issues, the boundary of the slope was revised twice. As a result, the entire review process took one year and five months from the initial enquiry to the final reply.

12. Meanwhile, should private property owners contest their maintenance responsibility or even lodge a statutory appeal with the Appeal Tribunal (Buildings) after BD has issued a dangerous hillside order, BD, as the respondent, will play a

coordinating role. It will seek information and professional advice from LandsD and CEDD to resolve the dispute. In one case where a private property owner contested his maintenance responsibility after receiving an order, BD attempted to enlist LandsD's assistance with surveying to delineate the lot boundary, but LandsD cited resource constraints and declined. Only after BD escalated the matter to the Development Bureau ("DEVB") did LandsD provide assistance. We consider that even after BD had issued a dangerous hillside order, LandsD remained obliged to make every effort to provide assistance, rather than stay aloof. LandsD's performance was unsatisfactory in this case but we are pleased to note that improvement has been made.

13. We recommend that the three departments establish a monitoring mechanism for cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility to ensure timely information exchange and consultation among them. They should also step up staff training to ensure proactive assistance to other departments as required for speedy resolution of disputes.

14. While disputes cannot be entirely avoided, we note that in many cases LandsD revised its determination results after receiving information and grounds from the disputing party (with some archival records and information not kept by the Government). In fact, BD observed that in certain cases, the slope maintenance responsibility left room for dispute. We recommend that the three departments, through the regular inter-departmental coordination meetings and the database established by LandsD, carefully analyse past cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility, particularly those where LandsD revised its determination results upon review or even the private property owners successfully appealed. The departments should exchange views and share experience to enhance the robustness of determination results at source. We consider that LandsD should take the lead in this exercise, with CEDD and BD actively supporting.

Maintaining Data on Cases Involving Disputes over Slope Maintenance Responsibility

15. At present, LandsD and BD do not maintain data on cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility. Specialised solutions are needed to address these complex and time-consuming cases. In the absence of data, it is difficult to conduct objective analysis to fully understand the actual circumstances of these cases or their impact on the overall slope safety work. We recommend that the two departments establish a communication mechanism for maintaining the number and relevant data (such as processing time) of cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility for analysis and monitoring purposes.

(II) BD's Issuance and Follow-up of Dangerous Hillside Orders

Issuing Dangerous Hillside Orders Promptly

16. Between 2021 and 2025, BD took an average of 4.9 months to issue a dangerous hillside order upon CEDD's referral, which is shorter than its target timeframe of 8 months. Yet, we consider that the overall processing time is still rather long. We recommend that BD, for complex cases, further review and explore any scope to streamline the workflow before issuing a dangerous hillside order and rationalise the consultation process with CEDD and LandsD, with a view to adopting a more ambitious target to issue orders as soon as possible.

17. We are pleased to learn that BD has included the issuance of dangerous hillside orders in the "to-do" list of its Building Condition Information System for better monitoring and reminding staff to follow up in a timely manner. We recommend that senior staff continue to make good use of the system to closely monitor the progress of issuance of orders by staff and ensure smooth operation.

Lengthy Time for Compliance

18. Of the dangerous hillside orders issued between 2016 and 2025, as of December 2025, about 40% of the stage 1 orders took over five years to comply with, and over 35% of the stage 2 orders took over three years to comply with. The Office's analysis revealed that the lengthy time taken for compliance was attributable to multiple issues.

<u>Owners Delaying Appointment of Registered Professionals</u>

19. Data show that after receiving stage 1 dangerous hillside orders, private property owners had serious delays in appointing registered professionals. In a case we studied, BD served a reminder on the owners after the order was due, but the owners ultimately took 22 months since the issuance of the order to appoint registered professionals. BD had considered prosecution but decided against it subsequently as registered professionals had been appointed and the slope works proposal had been approved. In our view, this might send a wrong message to private property owners that they could delay compliance with impunity.

20. The appointment of registered professionals is merely the initial step in compliance. If this first step has already taken years to complete, subsequent actions would only be further delayed. Moreover, in cases where the owners have not yet appointed registered professionals and the appeal process or prosecution by BD is ongoing, BD will engage consultants to monitor the safety of the slopes regularly, effectively shifting the relevant costs onto the Government. We recommend that for cases where private property owners have delayed appointing registered professionals, BD fully utilise the new function of the Building Condition Information System for timely follow-up, by issuing reminders and warning letters as required and stepping up the support for owners who face difficulties despite their willingness to comply with the

orders. On the other hand, it should take decisive enforcement action against those who show no intention of complying.

Failing to Offer Assistance Early

21. A case shows that after BD issued a stage 1 order in October 2014, it took a full decade before compliance was confirmed in October 2024. Having analysed the case, we found that there were practical challenges as well as other problems. No doubt, the feasibility of the design of the remedial or preventive works and construction method were affected by site constraints, thereby increasing the complexity of the case. Nevertheless, the registered professionals appointed by the private property owners had clearly expressed the difficulties they faced and requested the deployment and assistance of BD's Social Services Team, but BD provided assistance at a rather late stage to resolve the problem. Had BD stepped in and coordinated earlier, the process could have been expedited. We recommend that BD classify complex cases, such as those subject to consent from owners of adjacent lots or site constraints, and strengthen its follow-up mechanism with proactive intervention, coordination and support for owners in difficulties to facilitate their early compliance.

Repeated Submission and Vetting of Slope Works Proposals

22. To comply with stage 1 orders, registered professionals appointed by owners should submit proposals of remedial or preventive works to BD upon completing slope investigation. Meanwhile, BD needs to consult relevant departments on the proposals received. From case studies, we note that registered professionals often need to resubmit proposals time and again as the proposals could not meet the requirements stipulated in the Buildings Ordinance or the technical details were not agreed by CEDD. This process of repeated submission and vetting could drag on for years, leading to delays in compliance. We recommend that BD conduct systematic analysis of the slope works proposals submitted by registered professionals and collate opinions from relevant departments (including CEDD and LandsD), with a view to drawing up a list of common issues and difficulties encountered in complex cases for better communication with industry practitioners. This would help to avoid hindrance to the efficiency due to repeated rejections and submissions of proposals. Meanwhile, BD can compile a checklist of reports and documents to be submitted by registered professionals at different stages of the approval process for their compliance.

23. Currently, depending on circumstances, registered professionals appointed by owners may need to approach CEDD, LandsD and other departments directly to seek advice or approval when preparing slope works proposals. To strengthen inter-departmental communication and progress monitoring, we recommend that BD require registered professionals to copy all their correspondence with other departments regarding dangerous hillside orders to BD, so as to enable the department to have a better grasp of the compliance status and step in where necessary.

To Strengthen Enforcement Efforts

24. Where owners show no intention of complying with dangerous hillside orders, BD should take decisive enforcement action to cause them to pay the price. We note that in many cases where the deadline for compliance had expired, BD issued multiple reminders and warnings before considering prosecution. Prosecution was often initiated years after the specified deadline for compliance, not to mention cases that required repeated prosecutions against owners who remained unwilling to comply even after conviction. We are pleased to note that since the launch of this investigation, BD has commenced a review on the procedures for repeated prosecutions, including the reissuance of reminders and warning letters, prosecution criteria and target processing time. We recommend that BD complete the revision of guidelines as soon as possible to further enhance the enforcement efficiency and increase deterrence.

Failing to Fully Meet Targets for Handling Dangerous Hillside Orders

25. Each year, BD sets targets for handling outstanding dangerous hillside orders issued in different years. In 2025, BD exceeded or met seven of the ten targets, but failed to meet the remaining three. With improvement measures introduced in various areas, we expect improvements in BD's performance in handling outstanding orders. We recommend that BD continue to monitor the compliance status stringently, conduct timely review of the effectiveness of improvement measures and refine them to ensure the targets can be met.

(III) LandsD's Approval of Permission Letter to Carry Out Works on Government Land

26. In many cases, the remedial or preventive works of private slopes involve soil nailing on adjacent government land, or extension from private land to government land. Private property owners need to apply to LandsD for permission letters before carrying out such works. Our case studies reveal that LandsD's approval process took a relatively long time. Different problems were involved, including complex land issues and applicants' delay in replying. While the approval process was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and part of the delay was attributed to the failure of owners or their registered professionals to provide timely responses to the department's requests or views, we consider that on the whole LandsD's efficiency was still unsatisfactory. A lengthy approval process not only discourages owners from compliance, but also directly impacts on the commencement of works and harms slope safety. As the Government encourages owners to comply with dangerous hillside orders promptly, it is even more important for the regulatory authorities to lead by example by processing applications speedily.

27. We are pleased to learn that, since the launch of our direct investigation operation, LandsD has implemented a series of improvement measures. We recommend that LandsD continue to review the progress of vetting applications and the

implementation of newly established target processing times. LandsD should also continue to review the implementation of the reporting and monitoring mechanism to ensure proper supervision of subordinates by senior staff. All complex cases should be promptly escalated to senior management to ensure completion within a reasonable timeframe. Furthermore, we recommend that LandsD explore further enhancing the application and approval procedures to expedite the granting of permission letters to registered professionals appointed by owners. We also recommend that LandsD provide, via BD, private property owners subject to dangerous hillside orders and their registered professionals with a list of required documents and application forms. Through the implementation of the above improvement measures, LandsD expects to complete processing within four months from the date of receiving an application with relevant documents and plans.

(IV) Default Works Carried Out by BD

Timely Decision of Default Works

28. According to BD's guidelines, where an owner has passed away, has not been found or has been prosecuted for a second time, or where the case involves numerous owners and difficulty in compliance, BD will consider, within three months upon the expiry of the deadline for compliance of the dangerous hillside order or within three months upon the latest conviction, engaging consultants and contractors to carry out works on behalf of the owners. From a safety perspective, BD's undertaking of default works is practically necessary in cases where the owners are unable to comply with the order for various reasons, and such decisions should be made and implemented at the earliest. While there were records in case files, in the absence of holistic data, we are unable to ascertain BD's overall performance in this area. Accordingly, we recommend that in respect of dangerous hillside orders meeting the criteria for default works, BD properly maintain data on the actual times of deciding to carry out default works and works commencement for analysis and monitoring purposes, so as to avoid delay in decision-making.

Extremely Long Time for Carrying out Default Works

29. Between 2015 and 2025, BD completed default works for 256 cases. The annual average time for completion of default works ranged from 57 to 132 months, far exceeding BD's target timeframe of 44 months for simple default works. Among them, only 12% was completed within 44 months. Our case studies also reveal very long time taken for certain default works. We are pleased to note that BD has acknowledged the need to significantly improve the progress of default works at present, and to this end has introduced a series of measures to streamline procedures and clear the backlog. The implementation of default works has improved. To achieve systemic improvement, we recommend that BD further review its workflow for default works, and carefully examine potential areas for streamlining at each and every stage, so as to expedite completion.

30. Moreover, BD should address the problem of repeated submissions of reports and proposals for default works by its consultants due to non-compliance with requirements. We recommend that BD conduct a comprehensive analysis of such reports and proposals in the past as well as the feedback given by BD, CEDD and LandsD, with a view to consolidating common issues and areas for improvement for sharing with consultants, providing guidance and enabling lessons to be learned. Separately, in over 30% of default works, LandsD's permission was required for carrying out works on government land. In the past, the application and approval process again took years. Since the launch of our investigation, BD has reached out to LandsD to discuss measures for streamlining the approval process. According to BD's initial observation, the new procedures operate smoothly and shorten the processing time significantly. We recommend that BD and LandsD review the new procedures after implementation for a period, and jointly explore and discuss room for further refinement to enhance efficiency.

Setting More Ambitious Target for Completing Default Works

31. Currently, BD's target timeframe for completing simple default works is 44 months. Even after excluding the 7 months for the maintenance period and discharging of consultant's duties, the target processing time is still over 30 months. By contrast, BD allows only 14 months for private property owners to comply with both stage 1 and stage 2 orders. In practice, BD may exercise discretion to grant extensions to owners in difficulties. At the same time, it is likely that BD encounters more resistance and constraints when carrying out default works and more coordination efforts are required. Nevertheless, it calls into question whether BD is too conservative in setting a significantly longer time for itself to complete default works.

32. As the authority for regulating the safety of private slopes, BD should carry out default works efficiently to set an example for private property owners. We recommend that BD further review the target timeframe for each stage of default works, striving to set a more ambitious target where feasible. Depending on needs, BD may set corresponding target timeframes for cases of varying complexity.

(V) CEDD'S Safety Screening Studies for Private Man-made Slopes

Improper Maintenance of Private Slopes

33. Under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme, CEDD selects 100 private man-made slopes under a risk-based approach for safety screening studies every year. If problems are found in slope maintenance, CEDD will, depending on actual circumstances, consider issuing advisory letters to private property owners advising on the required repair works. Between 2020 and 2024, CEDD found maintenance problems in an average of about 69% of slopes selected for safety screening studies each year, and the department issued advisory letters to about 60% of these slopes.

34. We consider that while cases not warranting advisory letters involve relatively minor maintenance problems, CEDD can step up publicity and education on the relevant owners to ensure their awareness of the importance of proper maintenance of slopes. For such cases, we recommend that CEDD step up publicity and education, such as through posting information leaflets about slope maintenance, to encourage private property owners to carry out maintenance regularly. Furthermore, CEDD should explore setting a target timeframe for the issuance of advisory letters and information leaflets, with a view to swiftly relaying any problems identified in safety screening studies to private property owners.

Timely Follow-up on Private Slope Maintenance after Issuing Advisory Letters

35. The main objective of safety screening studies is to assess whether private slopes are dangerous or liable to become dangerous, with a view to making referrals to BD for issuance of dangerous hillside orders. In the past, for private slopes found to have minor maintenance problems only, CEDD generally would not follow up on the cases after issuing advisory letters. We are pleased to note that since the launch of our investigation, CEDD has enhanced its follow-up actions after issuing advisory letters and set a target timeframe to conduct timely inspection to monitor whether private property owners have properly carried out maintenance as advised. We recommend that CEDD continue to diligently follow up on all cases issued with advisory letters and provide support to private property owners in need.

Continue to Ensure the Efficiency of Safety Screening Studies

36. CEDD has proposed to gradually raise the annual targets under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme within three years from 2025, including increasing the number of private man-made slopes selected for safety screening studies from 100 to 130. It is commendable for CEDD to introduce forward-looking measures to strengthen the capability to cope with extreme weather. We recommend that CEDD ensure that the gradual increase of the target of safety screening studies would not affect the efficiency and, through extensive use of technology, select private man-made slopes more precisely and conduct safety screening studies more efficiently.

(VI) Publicity and Education

Enhancing Role of Property Management Companies

37. When providing property management services for clients, property management companies are often involved in managing private slopes associated with the property. Given their vital role in managing private slopes, we recommend that CEDD and BD strengthen cooperation with the Property Management Services Authority ("PMSA") to promote a more proactive role of property management companies in the maintenance of private slopes, thereby facilitating the arrangement and coordination of routine maintenance and compliance with dangerous hillside orders by property owners.

Enriching Publicity and Educational Materials

38. CEDD is responsible for the safety screening studies of private slopes, while BD is the authority for the enforcement of dangerous hillside orders. Given their experience accumulated over the years, we recommend that CEDD and BD continue to systematically consolidate experience, identify common problems and bottlenecks encountered by private property owners in routine slope maintenance and compliance of dangerous hillside orders, and incorporate corresponding solutions into publicity and education materials, so as to enhance private property owners' capability to carry out routine maintenance and comply with orders.

(VII) Overall Risk Control for Private Slopes

Analysing Correlation Between Issuance of and Compliance with Dangerous Hillside Orders and Occurrence of Landslides

39. CEDD maintains data on landslides occurring on private slopes, while BD maintains data related to dangerous hillside orders. However, the extent of data analysis is limited as these two datasets are not organised. We are pleased to learn that CEDD targets to complete rollout of the Smart Slope Catalogue in 2026, gradually expanding the monitoring and management data, such as records of landslides and dangerous hillside orders. We recommend that CEDD and BD utilise the Smart Slope Catalogue for systematic analysis of the correlation between the issuance of and compliance with dangerous hillside orders and the occurrence of landslides. For instance, they should examine whether the selection of private slopes for issuance of the orders enabled timely prevention of hazards, and whether compliance with the orders adequately addressed the increasing risk of landslides. We believe that such data will provide an important basis for departments to assess the effectiveness of the entire mechanism for dangerous hillside orders.

Establishing Standing High-level Inter-departmental Working Group and Escalation Mechanism

40. The risk management of private slopes involves inter-departmental collaboration at various stages. There is no lack of complex cases concerning risk control of private slopes. For instance, the maintenance responsibility is often subject to disputes or even legal proceedings. Owners may have difficulty preparing and arranging for works. Also, BD is frequently required to undertake default works. Thorough discussion and careful rationalisation are essential for inter-departmental collaboration at each stage. Consequently, we recommend that LandsD join the regular coordination meetings between CEDD and BD, which should function as a standing high-level inter-departmental working group for the risk control of private slopes. The working group will provide a platform for the three departments to raise matters of concern, discuss solutions for swift resolution of complex cases, exchange information and share experience, so as to enhance regulation continuously. At the

same time, the three departments can take forward the various measures to enhance inter-departmental collaboration proposed above through the new platform.

41. Currently, the routine monitoring of private slopes by the three departments involves substantial information exchange and consultation among them at the case level. To ensure effective control and smooth operation, we recommend that the three departments compile case lists for different categories of work setting out cases pending information or advice from other departments. Any outstanding cases should be discussed and resolved promptly through the working group proposed above.

42. Furthermore, any disagreements remaining unresolved after discussion among the three departments should be escalated to a higher level without delay. DEVB should be a suitable platform for such purposes as all three departments are subordinate to it. We recommend that the three departments make good use of the existing mechanism[2] for escalation of inter-departmental disagreements to DEVB to achieve speedy resolution.

Recommendations

43. Overall, the Ombudsman makes the following recommendations to LandsD, BD and CEDD:

LandsD

(1) continue to monitor the implementation of target timeframes for the determination of slope maintenance responsibility cases of different complexity and the internal monitoring system, striving to complete all cases within reasonable timeframes;

(2) conduct systematic analysis of determination cases requiring a long completion time to examine the common causes and formulate corresponding measures, so as to facilitate the speedy completion of cases by LandsD and its consultants;

(3) analyse the common issues requiring attention and speedier handling in determination cases and provide consultants with reminders and guidance, thereby ensuring their proper handling and avoidance of repeated revisions and submissions of reports;

[2] A mechanism is established under the Inter-departmental Meeting on Slope Matters, whereby departments can escalate disputes over slope maintenance responsibility to DEVB for handling by a Principal Assistant Secretary.

(4) for determination cases involving newly-formed slopes and re-determination cases involving changes in cadastral records, notify the maintenance parties immediately upon completion or revision of the determination results;

(5) for determination cases already completed in the past, issue notifications in batches to inform private property owners of their maintenance responsibility based on the latest situation of slopes and review the progress regularly;

(6) continue to review the progress of vetting applications for permission letters to carry out works on government land under dangerous hillside orders, and the implementation of newly established target processing times;

(7) continue to review the implementation of the reporting and monitoring mechanism to ensure proper supervision of subordinates by senior staff. All complex cases should be promptly escalated to senior management to ensure completion within reasonable timeframes;

(8) explore further enhancing the application and approval procedures to expedite the granting of permission letters to registered professionals appointed by owners, thus enabling timely commencement of remedial or preventive works;

(9) provide, via BD, private property owners subject to dangerous hillside orders and their registered professionals with a list of required documents and application forms, so as to further expedite processing of applications;

BD

(10) for complex cases, further review and explore any scope to streamline the workflow before issuing a dangerous hillside order and rationalise the consultation process with CEDD and LandsD, with a view to adopting a more ambitious target to issue orders as soon as possible;

(11) continue to make good use of its Building Condition Information System to closely monitor the progress of issuing dangerous hillside orders by staff and ensure smooth operation;

(12) for cases where private property owners have delayed appointing registered professionals, fully utilise the new function of the Building Condition Information System for timely follow-up, by issuing reminders and warning letters as required and stepping up the support for owners who face difficulties despite their willingness to comply with the orders. On the other hand, it should take more decisive enforcement action against those who show no intention of complying;

(13) classify complex cases, such as those subject to consent from owners of adjacent lots or site constraints, and strengthen its follow-up mechanism with proactive intervention, coordination and support for owners in difficulties to facilitate their early compliance;

(14) conduct systematic analysis of the slope works proposals submitted by registered professionals appointed by owners and collate opinions from relevant departments (including CEDD and LandsD), with a view to drawing up a list of common issues and difficulties encountered in complex cases for better communication with industry practitioners, so as to avoid hindrance to the efficiency due to repeated rejections and submissions of proposals;

(15) compile a checklist of reports and documents to be submitted by registered professionals at different stages of the approval process for their compliance;

(16) require registered professionals to copy all their correspondence with other departments regarding dangerous hillside orders to BD, so as to enable the department to have a better grasp of the compliance status and step in where necessary;

(17) complete the revision of guidelines on repeated prosecutions (including the reissuance of reminders and warning letters, prosecution criteria and target processing time) as soon as possible to further enhance the enforcement efficiency and increase deterrence;

(18) continue to monitor the compliance status of dangerous hillside orders stringently, conduct timely review of the effectiveness of improvement measures and refine them to ensure the targets can be met;

(19) in respect of dangerous hillside orders meeting the criteria for default works, properly maintain data on the actual times of deciding to carry out default works and works commencement for analysis and monitoring purposes, so as to avoid delay in decision-making;

(20) further review the workflow for default works, and carefully examine potential areas for streamlining at each and every stage, so as to expedite completion;

(21) conduct a comprehensive analysis of the reports and proposals prepared by its consultants for default works in the past, as well as the feedback given by BD, CEDD and LandsD, with a view to consolidating common issues and areas for improvement for sharing with consultants, providing guidance and enabling lessons to be learned;

(22) further review the target timeframe for each stage of default works, striving to set a more ambitious target where feasible;

CEDD

(23) for private slopes found to have minor maintenance problems in safety screening studies, step up publicity and education on the relevant owners to encourage them to carry out maintenance regularly to reduce the risk of landslides;

(24) explore setting a target timeframe for the issuance of advisory letters and information leaflets, with a view to swiftly relaying any problems identified in safety screening studies to private property owners;

(25) continue to diligently follow up on all cases issued with advisory letters and provide support to private property owners in need;

(26) ensure that the gradual increase of the target of safety screening studies would not affect the efficiency and, through extensive use of technology, select private man-made slopes more precisely and conduct safety screening studies more efficiently;

Inter-departmental Collaboration

(27) LandsD and CEDD jointly explore how to streamline the workflow and inter-departmental exchange of information, so as to enhance the efficiency of the determination process;

(28) the three departments establish a monitoring mechanism for cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility to ensure timely information exchange and consultation among them, and step up staff training to ensure proactive assistance to other departments as required for speedy resolution of disputes;

(29) the three departments, through regular inter-departmental coordination meetings and the database established by LandsD, carefully analyse past cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility, particularly those where LandsD revised its determination results upon review or even the private property owners successfully appealed. The departments should exchange views and share experience to enhance the robustness of determination results at source. LandsD should take the lead in this exercise, with CEDD and BD actively supporting;

(30) LandsD and BD establish a communication mechanism for maintaining the number and relevant data (such as processing time) of cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility for analysis and monitoring purposes;

(31) in respect of applications for permission to carry out default works on government land, BD and LandsD review the new application and approval procedures after implementation for a period, and jointly explore and discuss further room for further refinement to enhance efficiency;

(32) CEDD and BD strengthen cooperation with PMSA to promote a more proactive role of property management companies in the maintenance of private slopes, thereby facilitating the arrangement and coordination of routine maintenance and compliance with dangerous hillside orders by property owners;

(33) CEDD and BD continue to systematically consolidate experience, identify common problems and bottlenecks encountered by private property owners in routine slope maintenance and compliance of dangerous hillside orders, and incorporate corresponding solutions into publicity and education materials, so as to enhance private property owners' capability to carry out routine maintenance and comply with orders;

(34) CEDD and BD utilise the Smart Slope Catalogue for systematic analysis of the correlation between the issuance of and compliance with dangerous hillside orders and the occurrence of landslides;

(35) LandsD join the regular coordination meetings between CEDD and BD, which should function as a standing high-level inter-departmental working group for the risk control of private slopes, to strengthen synergy;

(36) the three departments compile case lists for different categories of work, setting out cases pending information or advice from other departments. Any outstanding cases should be discussed and resolved promptly through the working group mentioned in **paragraph 43(35)**; and

(37) the three departments make good use of the existing mechanism for escalation of inter-departmental disagreements to DEVB to achieve speedy resolution.

Office of The Ombudsman
March 2026

We will post the case summary of selected investigation reports on social media from time to time. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to get the latest updates.

Facebook.com/Ombudsman.HK

Instagram.com/Ombudsman_HK

1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1 Hong Kong is characterised by its hilly terrain and scarcity of flat land, with around 60% of land area covered by natural hillsides, together with a significant number of man-made slopes. During adverse weather, particularly torrential rains, landslides may occur on the slopes, threatening people's daily living, as well as their lives and property.

1.2 As at the end of December 2024, there were around 61,000 man-made slopes across Hong Kong, including around 38,600 government slopes, 15,800 private slopes and 6,300 slopes involving mixed responsibilities of the Government and private property owners. The duty to monitor and regulate slope safety falls within the ambit of multiple government departments. The Lands Department ("LandsD") is responsible for determining which parties are responsible for maintenance of man-made slopes. Every year, the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD") selects natural hillside catchments and government man-made slopes with higher potential risks and impacts for upgrading or risk mitigation works according to a risk-based approach. It also conducts safety screening studies for private man-made slopes and recommends the issuance of dangerous hillside orders by the Buildings Department ("BD") to the owners of relevant lots for remedial or preventive works where potential hazards are identified.

1.3 A lack of slope maintenance is one of the major causes of landslides. Government information showed that landslides occurred on both government and private man-made slopes in the past. Private property owners are responsible for inspecting and maintaining private man-made slopes. However, our preliminary inquiry revealed that private property owners often dispute their maintenance responsibility. Furthermore, a considerable number of dangerous hillside orders issued by BD have not been complied with to date for various reasons.

1.4 Against this background, The Ombudsman announced on 14 November 2024 the launch of a direct investigation operation pursuant to section 7(1)(a)(ii) of The Ombudsman Ordinance to examine the Government's monitoring and regulation of slope safety. Given the extent and complexity of the topic, we decided to initiate two operations under a series approach to focus on the different aspects involved.

Following our first report on "Government's Work on Landslide Prevention and Mitigation and Management of Government Slopes" announced on 8 January 2026, this second report of the series focuses on the Government's determination of slope maintenance responsibility and risk management of private man-made slopes.

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

1.5 This direct investigation operation covers:

- LandsD's determination of maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes;
- LandsD's handling of disputes over the maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes;
- CEDD's monitoring of risks posed by private man-made slopes;
- BD's regulation of private man-made slopes, including the issuance of dangerous hillside orders and subsequent enforcement;
- BD's carrying out of default works on behalf of non-compliant owners;
- LandsD's approval of permission letter to carry out works on government land; and
- inter-departmental collaboration among the above three departments in various aspects of work.

PROCESS OF INVESTIGATION

1.6 During the investigation, we have:

- scrutinised information provided by the three departments, including policy documents, guidelines, enforcement and operational data and case files;
- conducted site inspections with BD;
- met with the senior management of the three departments for in-depth discussion;
- scrutinised information and views submitted by the public; and
- reviewed related complaint cases and media reports.

1.7 On 11 February 2026, we issued a draft investigation report to LandsD, BD and CEDD for verification of information and comment. After receiving their replies between 4 and 19 March 2026, we completed this final report on 31 March 2026.

2

DETERMINATION OF MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAN-MADE SLOPES

SYSTEMATIC IDENTIFICATION OF MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY OF SLOPES IN THE TERRITORY PROJECT

2.1 Man-made slopes refer to slopes or retaining walls constructed during land formation or other works by cutting back hillsides or filling platforms with soil and rock. Additionally, CEDD classifies facilities (mainly flexible and rigid barriers) constructed as part of risk mitigation works for natural hillside catchments as man-made slopes.

Figure 1: Flexible barrier (Photo taken by our staff)



Figure 2: Rigid barrier (Photo taken by our staff)

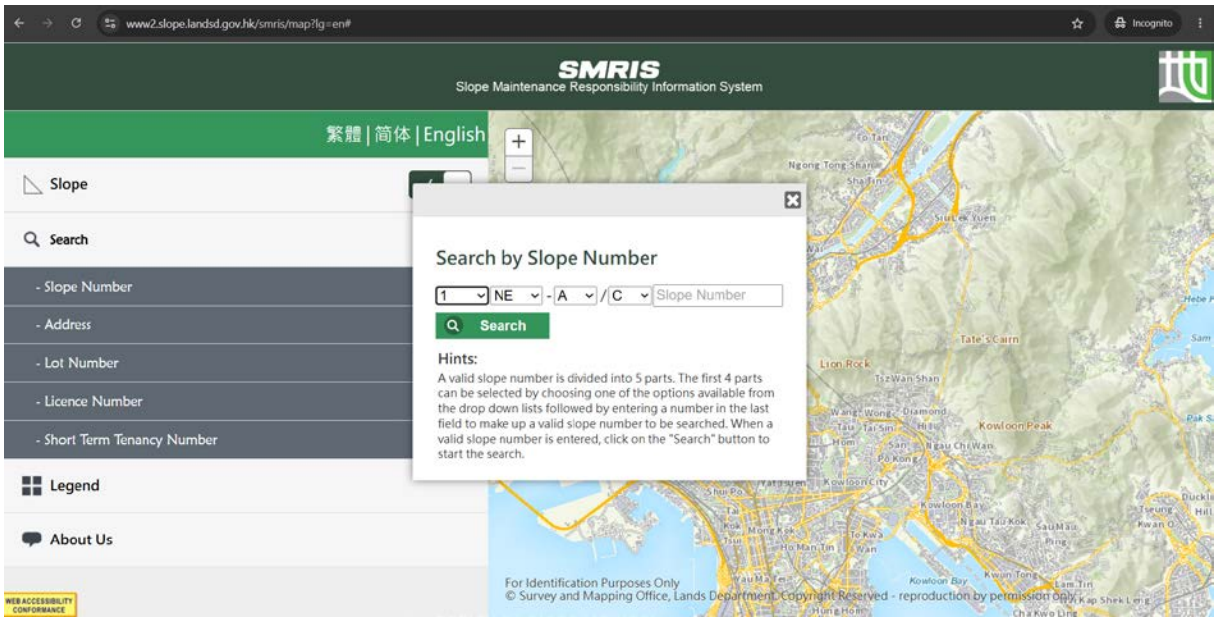


2.2 According to the Development Bureau ("DEVB") Technical Circular (Works), all newly-formed or modified man-made slopes must be registered in CEDD's Catalogue of Slopes. After registration, CEDD will pass the registration records to the Systematic Identification of Maintenance Responsibility of Slopes in the Territory Unit ("SIMAR Unit") under LandsD's Estate Management Section for preliminary investigation to determine which parties are responsible for slope maintenance. Determination results are uploaded to the Slope Maintenance Responsibility Information System ("Slope Information System")[1]. LandsD's Estate Management Section, headed by a Chief Estate Surveyor, comprises several units responsible for various aspects of land administration. Of these units, the SIMAR Unit, comprising one Senior Estate Surveyor, three Estate Surveyors and three technical officers, is responsible for handling day-to-day matters relating to the determination of slope maintenance responsibility and relevant enquiries.

2.3 Information provided by the Slope Information System includes slope location, slope number, responsible parties (private property owners or government departments), slope boundary, basic technical information (such as dimensions, gradient and materials), and map of the vicinity. It provides the public with quick and convenient reference on maintenance responsibility.

[1] Website: https://www2.slope.landsd.gov.hk/smris/disclaimer?lg=en

Figure 3: LandsD's Slope Maintenance Responsibility Information System website (Source: LandsD website)



2.4 The slopes listed in the Slope Information System mainly include the following three types:

(1) **Government man-made slopes:** The Government is responsible for the maintenance of the entire slope. Among them, some slopes could be maintained by more than one government department, each responsible for its respective sections;

(2) **Private man-made slopes:** Private property owners are responsible for the maintenance of the entire slope. Among them, some slopes could be maintained by more than one private lot owner, each responsible for their respective sections; and

(3) **Mixed responsibility slopes:** The Government and private property owners are jointly responsible for slope maintenance. A slope is divided into different sections according to its land lot and land grant provisions, with government departments and private property owners responsible for maintaining their respective sections.

2.5 As at the end of December 2024, the numbers of the three types of registered slopes in the Slope Information System were as follows:

Table 1: Numbers of three types of registered slopes in the Slope Information System

Types of registered man-made slopes	No. of slopes (As at end of Dec 2024)
Government man-made slopes	38,656
Private man-made slopes	15,878
Mixed responsibility slopes	6,319
Total	**60,853**[2]

LEASE CLAUSES RELATED TO MAINTENANCE OF PRIVATE MAN-MADE SLOPES

2.6 For the land leases granted in the past, lot owners were responsible for maintenance of slope on adjacent government land primarily in accordance with the General Maintenance clause and the Cutting Away clause. To establish that a lot owner was responsible for slope maintenance, evidence of slope cutting or relevant geotechnical opinions was required. As regards land leases newly granted nowadays, in addition to the standard maintenance clauses above, LandsD consults relevant departments, including CEDD and BD, depending on case merits and according to established procedures when preparing land documents (such as leases and short-term tenancies) for land grants, lease modifications and land exchange applications. Based on the comments received, lease clauses related to slope investigation and maintenance are incorporated to ensure that lot owners and short-term tenants are fully aware of their responsibility. The lease clauses applicable to slope investigation and maintenance primarily include:

(1) Green-hatched-black Area clause: related to geotechnical investigation and maintenance of adjacent slopes; and

(2) Natural Terrain clause: related to geotechnical investigation of adjacent natural hillside catchments and construction and maintenance of hazard mitigation measures.

2.7 The above two clauses are intended to set out the slope investigation and maintenance responsibility of owners (including maintenance responsibility for sections of natural hillside catchments where risk mitigation works have been carried out), with the area covered by these two clauses clearly indicated on the allocation plan. LandsD will forward the slope inspection reports and works proposals submitted by private

[2] As at the end of December 2024, CEDD had registered a total of 61,241 man-made slopes, of which the determination process for 388 slopes was still ongoing. As slopes with maintenance responsibility not yet determined are not displayed in the Slope Information System, it showed a total of 60,853 registered man-made slopes.

property owners under these clauses to relevant professional departments for review to ascertain their propriety. Furthermore, LandsD will generally issue a certificate of compliance permitting formal property transactions only after fulfilment of relevant requirements under the land lease.

2.8 All granted land leases are registered at the Land Registry ("LR"). Where the land lease contains a Natural Terrain clause, the owners concerned must also carry out geotechnical investigation as required under the clause and, depending on the investigation results, any risk mitigation works required for the natural hillside catchments. The approved plans for relevant works are to be registered at LR. The land lease and approved plans are available for public inspection at LR to ascertain the responsibility of owners under the above two clauses (if any).

2.9 Separately, since the Residential Properties (First-hand Sales) Ordinance (Cap. 621, Laws of Hong Kong) came into effect in 2013, the sales brochure for first-hand residential properties must set out the land grant clauses related to slope maintenance responsibility and a plan showing the slopes and retaining walls as required under the Ordinance.

2.10 According to LandsD's data, 104 and 16 of the land leases (excluding New Territories exempted houses) granted between September 2020 and December 2024 contained the Green-hatched-black Area clause and the Natural Terrain clause respectively.

DETERMINATION OF MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAN-MADE SLOPES

2.11 According to the DEVB Technical Circular (Works), LandsD generally adopts two main principles, i.e. "owner-maintains" and "beneficiary-maintains", for determining the maintenance responsibility of man-made slopes. The maintenance responsibility of slopes within private land rests with its owners. For man-made slopes on unallocated government land outside a lot, it depends on whether the lot's lease clauses or land documents specify the maintenance responsibility (for example, if the land lease contains a Green-hatched-black Area clause, owners will be responsible for geotechnical investigation and long-term maintenance of the man-made slope within the specified area even though it is located on government land outside the private lot). If the land lease only contains a General Maintenance clause or a Cutting Away clause, it is necessary to collect slope cutting evidence to prove that the slope was formed by private land developments, or consult geotechnical opinions to ascertain whether the slope affects the private land.

2.12 Upon receiving cases referred by CEDD about newly-formed or modified man-made slopes, or change of boundaries or areas of existing man-made slopes, the SIMAR Unit will first verify the cadastral records and examine land documents (such as land leases). Where necessary, it will obtain further information and evidence, such

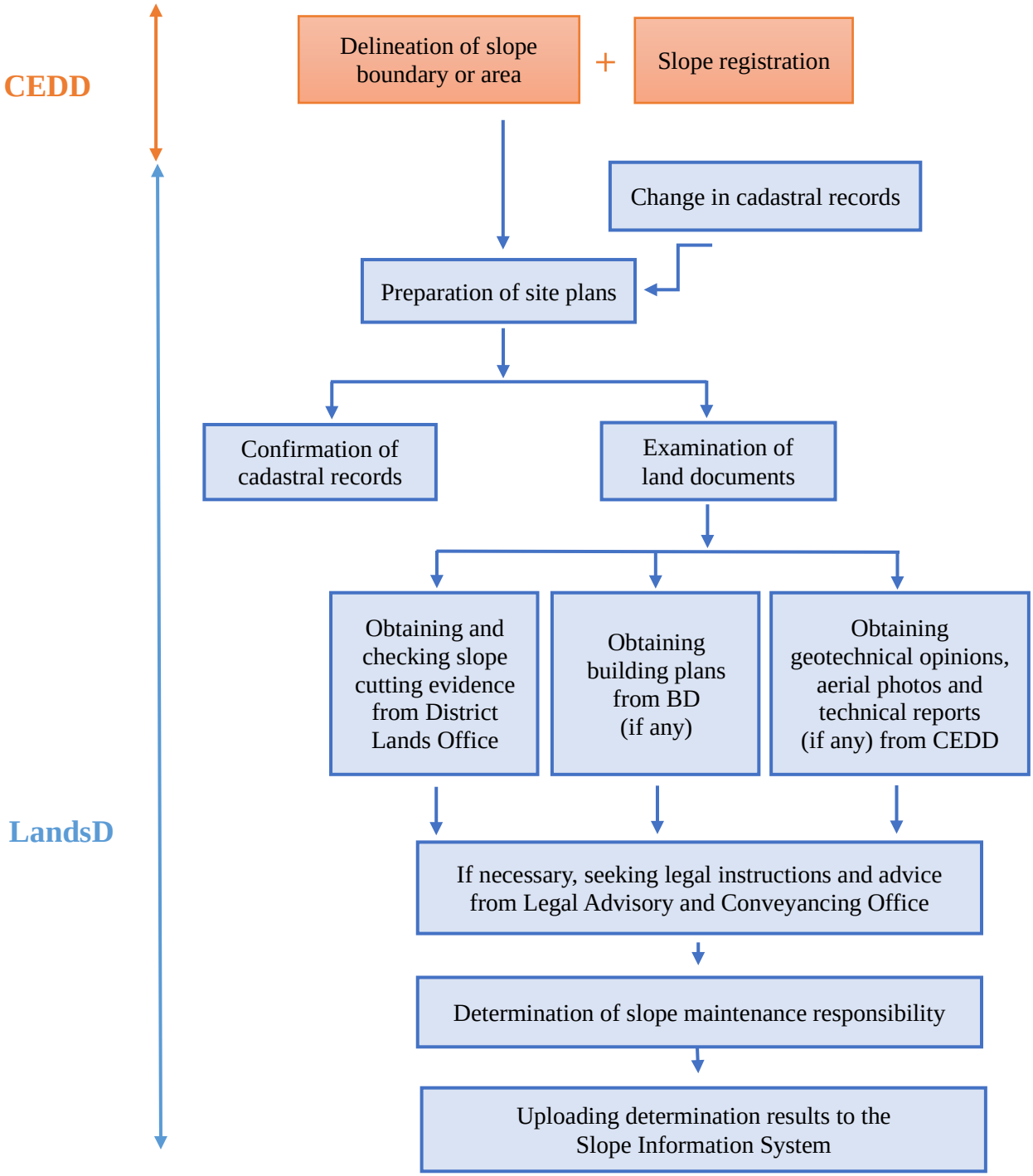
as building and works plans, legal advice, etc., from relevant District Lands Offices or professional departments to determine the slope maintenance responsibility. Depending on case circumstances and resource allocation, the SIMAR Unit may engage outsourced consultants to determine slope maintenance responsibility in suitable cases.

2.13 For mixed responsibility slopes, the SIMAR Unit applies the same principles and procedures above to determine maintenance responsibility. Where more than one party is considered to be responsible, the SIMAR Unit will, where genuinely necessary, divide a man-made slope into sections to clearly delineate the scope of maintenance responsibility for each party. Based on the determination results, the slope sections and areas are clearly displayed in tables and on maps in the Slope Information System.

2.14 Upon completing the determination process, the SIMAR Unit will upload the results to the Slope Information System. Members of the public can search this website for information on maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes. Where necessary, they may contact LandsD for enquiries or giving comments. The SIMAR Unit will also update the Slope Information System's database in light of the latest determination results or, if accepted, the views of responsible parties or private property owners.

2.15 Furthermore, the Slope Information System incorporates an automated programme to detect changes in cadastral records (including land lots, land licences, tenancy agreements, government land allocation, etc.) and identify the man-made slopes affected. Whenever a change in cadastral records is detected (e.g. due to the execution of new land documents), the Slope Information System will indicate that the status of the slope has changed. The SIMAR Unit will then consider any need to re-determine its maintenance responsibility.

Figure 4: Workflow for determination of maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes



Processing Time for Determination Cases

2.16 LandsD pointed out that the complexity of each determination case and the processing time required are different because the location, area, backgrounds and cadastral records vary from slope to slope.

2.17 **Table 2** shows that between 2019 and December 2024, LandsD completed 8,922 determination cases (including cases requiring re-determination after LandsD's preliminary review of updated cadastral records, lot boundaries and other technical information). Of these cases, 33% took one year or less, 20% took one to two years, and the remaining 47% took more than two years.

2.18 LandsD explained that due to the implementation of anti-epidemic measures, including special work arrangements of the Government, the overall processing time for determination of maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes was longer with fewer cases completed during the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2021 onwards, the Government's work arrangements gradually resumed normal. Consequently, more cases were completed between 2021 and 2023 than before, including some cases that took two years or longer because the progress was affected by the reasons mentioned above. Most cases (60%) completed in 2024 took less than six months. LandsD pledged to continuously streamline internal workflow and strengthen monitoring of consultants. For instance, it has held regular internal meetings around every half month since 2025 to identify potential issues at an early stage.

2.19 To address the backlog, LandsD has implemented a clear reporting mechanism since mid-2025 for the directorate to supervise case progress. As at the end of April 2025, there was a backlog of around 1,830 cases with maintenance responsibility not yet determined. Between 2021 and 2023, LandsD completed an average of around 160 cases per month. After the introduction of improvement measures, the average number of cases completed per month has increased to over 200. Between May and December 2025, LandsD also cleared the backlog of 1,830 determination cases. Since June 2025, it has set the targets to complete simple cases within 3 to 6 months and complex cases within 6 to 12 months. These targets were met among cases received between May and December 2025.

Table 2: Number of cases and processing time for determination of slope maintenance responsibility by LandsD

Year	Deter-mination cases completed within the year^	No. of slopes involved	Processing time* (Figures in brackets indicate percentage of total cases completed within that year)				
			Less than 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 months to 1 year	1 to 2 years	More than 2 years
2019	923	901	47 (5.1%)	98 (10.6%)	123 (13.3%)	268 (29.0%)	387 (41.9%)
2020	735	729	28 (3.8%)	32 (4.4%)	136 (18.5%)	251 (34.1%)	288 (39.2%)
2021	2,128	2,106	221 (10.4%)	184 (8.6%)	242 (11.4%)	686 (32.2%)	795 (37.4%)
2022	2,003	1,999	275 (13.7%)	19 (0.9%)	49 (2.4%)	279 (13.9%)	1,381 (68.9%)
2023	1,955	1,946	343 (17.5%)	174 (8.9%)	206 (10.5%)	219 (11.2%)	1,013 (51.8%)
2024	1,178	1,157	412 (35.0%)	292 (24.8%)	71 (6.0%)	101 (8.6%)	302 (25.6%)
Total	**8,922**	**8,838**	**1,326 (14.9%)**	**799 (9.0%)**	**827 (9.3%)**	**1,804 (20.2%)**	**4,166 (46.7%)**

^ As case processing may straddle two years, cases completed within a year may not correspond to cases received from CEDD or known to have updated cadastral records, boundaries and other technical information during that year.

* Processing time refers to the period from when LandsD received a case from CEDD or updated cadastral records, lot boundaries and other technical information, through to the time when LandsD confirmed that the case required a review, processed it directly or engaged a consultant to do so, submitted it to the SIMAR Unit for a decision, and finally uploaded the results to the Slope Information System.

Consultants

2.20 Depending on case circumstances and resource utilisation, the SIMAR Unit may engage outsourced consultants to determine slope maintenance responsibility in

suitable cases. According to LandsD's existing contracts for the appointment of consultants, they are required to complete a specified number of determination cases assigned during the contract period, and submit determination reports in batches. LandsD holds working group meetings with relevant departments regularly (around every month) to vet the determination reports completed by consultants, and to discuss the complex cases they raised. LandsD also closely monitors the working progress of consultants, such as reviewing the progress reports they submitted regularly (around every quarter), and assigns directorate officers to hold working meetings with consultants regularly.

2.21 If a consultant's performance is unsatisfactory, such as submitting substandard determination reports or slow progress, LandsD will issue advisory or even warning letters urging for improvement. If the underperformance persists, its appointment may be terminated. LandsD explained that consultants are remunerated based on the number of completed cases after approval by the Department. Therefore consultants generally complete the determination process in a timely manner within the contract period.

2.22 For instance, a consultant under an existing contract granted by LandsD is required to handle 750 determination reports of man-made slopes within 27 months. The consultant's performance was as follows:

Table 3: Performance of one of LandsD's consultants

Time taken from taking up a case to submitting determination report	No. of cases (Figures in brackets indicate percentage)
Less than 6 months	344 (46%)
6 to 12 months	274 (37%)
More than 12 months	132 (18%)

2.23 LandsD noted that the above consultant had submitted nearly half of its determination reports within 6 months and over 80% within 12 months.

2.24 Since the launch of our investigation and in response to our concern, LandsD has drawn up target timeframes for determination cases of different complexity. For effective use of limited resources, LandsD considered that the targets should be set under a risk-based approach, whereby consultants are required to prioritise and examine high-risk slopes more promptly. One of its improvement measures is to require its consultants to submit a determination report within two months for priority cases (such as cases to be reviewed before BD's issuance of dangerous hillside orders), thereby enabling LandsD to advise BD within the specified timeframe (see **para. 2.27**). LandsD has incorporated relevant terms in the consultancy contracts newly granted in February 2026.

DISPUTES OVER DETERMINATION RESULTS

2.25 Generally, anyone who disagrees with matters relating to the maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes or the determination results displayed in the Slope Information System can make enquiries with LandsD directly and provide reference materials and evidence for review. To ensure that the review is comprehensive and thorough, the SIMAR Unit will arrange for another or a more senior officer to reconsider the case where feasible. If the SIMAR Unit accepts the reference materials and evidence, it will update the information in the Slope Information System. It is noteworthy that LandsD's determination results are not legally binding, nor is there a statutory appeal mechanism. If the Building Authority (i.e. the Director of Buildings) issues a dangerous hillside order to the owners of private slope pursuant to the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123, Laws of Hong Kong), an appeal mechanism is provided under the Ordinance for the owners to challenge the decision before the Appeal Tribunal (Buildings). LandsD will update the information in the Slope Information System according to the Appeal Tribunal's decision.

2.26 As regards government man-made slopes, any government department disputing its slope maintenance responsibility may request a review from the SIMAR Unit. Before the completion of review, the department concerned is still responsible for slope maintenance in accordance with the original determination results until they are revised by LandsD.

2.27 Following the issuance of dangerous hillside orders by BD, LandsD might be requested to review the slope maintenance responsibility in some cases where it is in dispute. After communication with BD, LandsD implemented improvement measures for such cases in July 2023, shortening the target timeframe for completing the review of priority cases from the original 9.5 months to 3.75 months. To meet this timeframe, LandsD has included a clause in newly awarded consultancy contracts, requiring consultants to submit a determination report within two months of receiving such cases (see **para. 2.24**).

2.28 LandsD pointed out that when dealing with disputes over maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes, the public or private property owners might not fully understand the lease clauses related to slope maintenance. Particularly, in cases following a change of ownership, the new owner might not be fully aware of the relevant lease clauses or have comprehensive information on the works previously carried out on the lot, and hence might contest the slope maintenance responsibility of the lot. The SIMAR Unit will explain to allay their concerns and suggest seeking independent professional advice if necessary.

2.29 LandsD explained that where the determination process involves disputes over lot and slope boundaries, or even legal disputes (such as about the interpretation of private contracts and land lease clauses), or where the registered slope boundaries differ from the actual topography, the SIMAR Unit often needs more time to consult relevant

professional departments and seek legal advice, as well as to liaise with and obtain information from various parties, in order to resolve disputes over maintenance responsibility. Consequently, the processing time for such cases is longer.

PUBLICATION OF DETERMINATION RESULTS

2.30 Upon completion of the determination process and before uploading the results to the Slope Information System, the SIMAR Unit never notified the parties considered to have maintenance responsibility, nor did it seek their consent. LandsD explained that the Slope Information System aims to provide the public with quick and convenient preliminary reference on maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes. The website's disclaimer also specifies that the Register does not by itself impose any liability for slope maintenance upon the responsible parties noted in the Register and should not be solely relied upon as such. The disclaimer further specifies that the Slope Information System's users should consult relevant documents and their own advisers for independent advice to ascertain the accuracy or correctness of the contents of the Register.

2.31 During our preliminary inquiry, LandsD remarked that if it needs to seek confirmation and consent from each party regarding their maintenance responsibility before compiling the data and uploading the determination results to the website, it might give rise to numerous disputes, preventing the determination results from being uploaded promptly. This would defeat the objective of publishing information on man-made slopes and the determination results about the maintenance parties as early as possible for public reference. This in turn would prevent relevant parties from swiftly discussing and deciding on the actions to be taken by themselves or by other maintenance parties in the event of potential risks or incidents involving man-made slopes.

2.32 While understanding LandsD's concern regarding the need to obtain consent from the maintenance parties before uploading the determination results, we are concerned that under the current practice of not notifying the responsible parties of the result upon completion of the determination process, private property owners might have neglected their responsibility due to unawareness of it, resulting in slope deterioration.

2.33 The Office is pleased to note that LandsD has accepted our comment and agreed that it should provide the maintenance parties identified in determination cases with the reference information after it is uploaded to the Slope Information System. Specifically:

(1) LandsD plans to prioritise determination cases completed relatively recently, including those relating to newly-formed slopes and re-determination cases involving changes in cadastral records. It will notify the maintenance parties of private slopes (excluding cases subject

to dangerous hillside orders) in parallel as it uploads the determination results to the Slope Information System to ensure that they are aware of the reference information on maintenance responsibility at an early stage and fulfil their responsibility. In the consultancy contracts newly awarded in February 2026, LandsD required consultants not only to upload the determination results upon case completion, but also to notify the private parties responsible for maintenance in parallel.

(2) For determination cases already completed in the past which involve around 22,000 private and mixed responsibility slopes, given their vast number, geographical spread and the fragmented ownership in some private lots, LandsD needs to make detailed arrangements and preparations before notifying the maintenance parties in an orderly manner. LandsD plans to issue notifications in orderly batches based on the latest situation of slopes, and to handle any enquiries that private property owners may raise upon receiving the notification. LandsD will also regularly review the progress of the above work.

3

GOVERNMENT MECHANISM FOR MONITORING RISKS OF PRIVATE MAN-MADE SLOPES

PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS' RESPONSIBILITY FOR SLOPE INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE

3.1 Private property owners are responsible for slope inspection and maintenance. They should regularly inspect slopes and carry out any necessary maintenance in accordance with the Guide to Slope Maintenance (see **fig. 5**) compiled by CEDD. The main provisions set out in the Guide are as follows:

(1) Private property owners should arrange for Routine Maintenance Inspections at least once a year to establish the need for routine maintenance works. These inspections can be carried out by non-professionals, such as property management staff. It is advisable to complete recommended works before the onset of the wet season. Typical maintenance works are illustrated in **figure 6**;

(2) Private property owners should appoint a professionally qualified geotechnical engineer to carry out Engineer Inspections for Maintenance at least once every five years. The inspecting engineer will advise on the maintenance conditions of the slope, any inherent design or construction deficiencies (e.g. surface drainage channels with insufficient capacity), any need for stability assessment, and the extent and details of required improvement works. Private property owners should fully implement the inspecting engineer's recommendations; and

(3) For slopes with buried water-carrying services (such as sewers, stormwater drains and water supply mains), private property owners should arrange for regular checks of buried water-carrying services according to the intervals recommended in the Code of Practice on Monitoring and Maintenance of Water-Carrying Services Affecting Slopes.

Figure 5: Guide to Slope Maintenance
(Source: CEDD website)

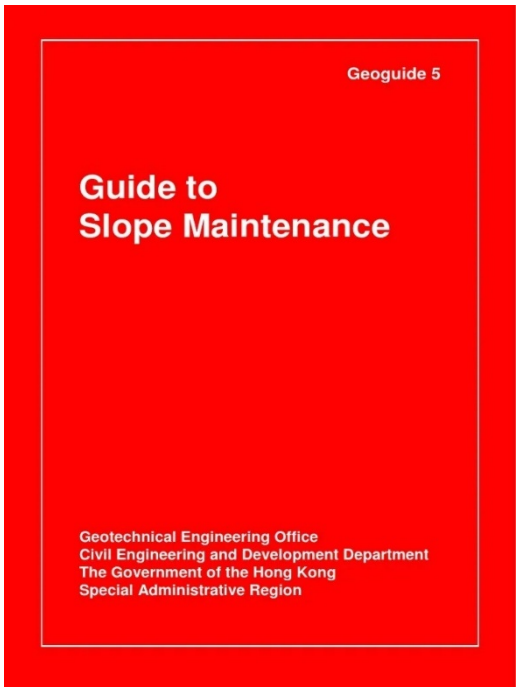
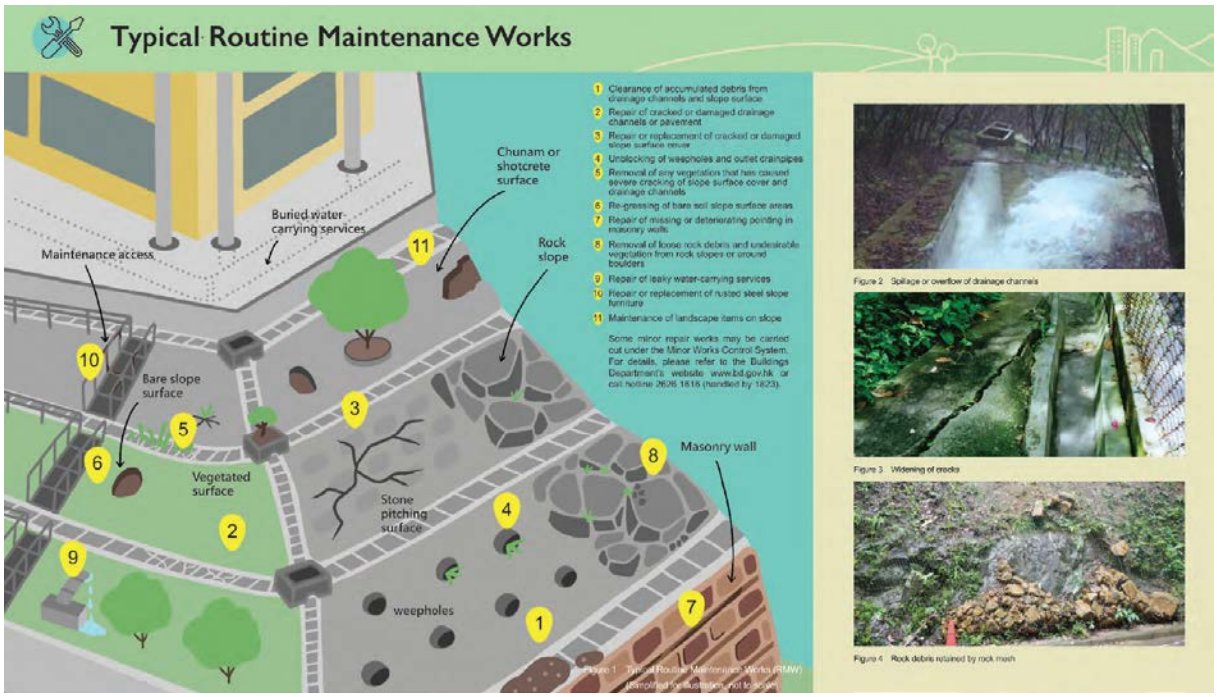


Figure 6: Typical slope maintenance works
(Source: CEDD website)



CEDD's MONITORING OF RISKS OF PRIVATE MAN-MADE SLOPES

Regarding Existing Private Man-made Slopes

3.2 Since its establishment in 1977, the Geotechnical Engineering Office ("GEO") of CEDD has set standards for the design and construction of geotechnical works and established a comprehensive slope safety system. In particular, the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme was implemented between 1977 and 2010, under which government and private man-made slopes were selected systematically, according to a risk-based approach, for upgrading works and safety screening studies respectively. As man-made slopes constructed before the establishment of GEO might not meet the standards it set, the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme had to handle a vast number of slopes.

3.3 Consequently, the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme initially focused on government and private man-made slopes registered in the Catalogue of Slopes that posed a higher potential impact. When the Programme was completed in 2010, CEDD had carried out upgrading works for some 4,600 government slopes and safety screening studies for some 5,200 private slopes; all man-made slopes posing a higher potential impact[3] had been properly handled.

3.4 Since April 2010, CEDD has been implementing the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme to handle the remaining man-made slopes (mainly those posing a moderate potential impact or affecting squatter dwellings[4]), and has expanded the Programme to cover natural hillside catchments.

3.5 Under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme, CEDD continues to select systematically every year, according to a risk-based approach, 150 government slopes and 30 natural hillside catchments that pose higher potential impact for upgrading or risk mitigation works, and 100 private slopes for safety screening studies. CEDD appoints consultants to carry out safety screening studies on private slopes for assessing any *prima facie* evidence of existing or potential danger. The consultants will assess whether the slopes meet safety requirements by scrutinising slope data and aerial photographs, conducting site inspections and analysing stability.

3.6 Where *prima facie* evidence of distress or potential danger is observed on private slopes, CEDD will recommend that the Building Authority (i.e. the Director of Buildings) serve dangerous hillside orders on the private property owners concerned pursuant to the Buildings Ordinance, requiring them to take necessary action in accordance with the law. The safety screening study reports for the slopes will be provided to the owners for reference when BD issues the dangerous hillside orders.

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[3] Slopes posing higher potential impact are old man-made slopes (constructed before 1977) which affect residential buildings, hospitals, schools, etc.

[4] Slopes posing moderate potential impact are old slopes affecting major infrastructure, frequently used roads, pedestrian walkways or public waiting areas; and slopes built with former techniques between 1977 and the late 1980s that relied primarily on slope flattening to improve stability, without the use of structural support.

3.7 If the consultant has difficulty conducting the studies, such as still being unable to gain access to private land for site inspection despite repeated attempts to contact the owner, it will write to request the slope owner to make proper arrangements. If repeated correspondence remains unanswered, CEDD will issue a notice to the owner, stating that the safety screening study cannot be completed due to inaccessibility to the private land for inspection. The notice will advise the owner to appoint a qualified professional geotechnical engineer to carry out a maintenance inspection of the slope in accordance with the requirements set out in CEDD's Guide to Slope Maintenance, and, where necessary, to conduct a stability assessment and carry out the required remedial or preventive works. CEDD indicated that it will, based on actual circumstances, select these private slopes again for safety screening studies in due course.

3.8 When reporting the results of safety screening studies, if the consultant finds that a private slope shows no signs of distress or potential danger, but there are deficiencies in its maintenance, it will record and submit these cases to CEDD. The Department will then consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether to issue an advisory letter to the owner, setting out the problems with the slope and the necessary maintenance. If CEDD confirms that the deficiencies are of a minor nature and do not affect the long-term stability of the slope (for example, debris in drainage channels or withered vegetation), it is not inclined to issue an advisory letter to the owner.

Regarding Newly-formed Private Man-made Slopes

3.9 In addition, CEDD is responsible for vetting the designs and construction of new man-made slopes to ensure compliance with current standards. Under the Buildings Ordinance, BD is responsible for approving the engineering designs of private development projects; CEDD regulates new man-made slopes in private development projects through the statutory powers of BD. Upon receiving design drawings for new man-made slopes in private developments referred by BD, CEDD will generally assign a geotechnical engineer to vet the drawings first, followed by a review by a senior geotechnical engineer, and will reply within one month to provide its results and relevant recommendations. During the construction of slopes, CEDD will also carry out surprise site inspections to ensure that the works are being supervised in accordance with regulations.

BD's REGULATORY ROLE OVER PRIVATE MAN-MADE SLOPES

3.10 BD regulates the safety of private slopes under the Buildings Ordinance. The duties are performed by its Slope Safety Section, which currently comprises 49 professional and technical staff led by a Chief Building Surveyor.

3.11 Upon receiving a case referred by CEDD recommending that a dangerous hillside order be issued to the owner of a private slope under the Buildings Ordinance, BD will liaise with LandsD and CEDD to confirm the boundaries of the relevant lots and features, obtain a Land Status Plan from LandsD, inspect LandsD's Geospatial

Information Hub and Slope Information System to examine geospatial data and ascertain the slope maintenance responsibility. BD will also obtain information from LR on the ownership of relevant lots to confirm the identify of the lot owners, and carry out site inspections.

3.12 Having considered the relevant information and the condition of the slope, BD will issue a dangerous hillside order to the owner pursuant to section 27A of the Buildings Ordinance[5]. In normal circumstances (i.e. excluding cases with incomplete information or pending clarification), BD has set the target processing time at eight months from receiving CEDD's referral to issuing the dangerous hillside order. In isolated cases, BD might not issue a dangerous hillside order after assessment for various reasons, including that the slope was within the ambit of a government department after maintenance responsibility was clarified, or the private slope was in fact an unauthorised structure and the owner was ordered to demolish it.

3.13 In addition, BD will follow up on reports concerning private man-made slopes made by members of the public and referred by other departments, deploy staff to carry out inspections, and, depending on the actual circumstances and the recommendations of CEDD, issue dangerous hillside orders to the owners of private slopes. In accordance with BD's performance pledges, for emergency reports (such as landslides), an inspection will be carried out within 1.5 to 3 hours; for non-emergency reports (such as dilapidated slopes), an inspection will be carried out within 10 days.

3.14 In certain special circumstances or where necessary — for example, at remote locations or where access to premises or slope areas is difficult — BD will use drone systems to inspect the condition of slopes.

Dangerous Hillside Orders

3.15 Generally, a dangerous hillside order has two stages. Upon receiving a **stage 1 dangerous hillside order** ("stage 1 order"), private property owners must:

(1) within the period specified in the order, i.e. generally within two months from the date of its issue, appoint an authorised person and a registered geotechnical engineer (and, if the works involve structural elements, a registered structural engineer as well) (hereinafter collectively referred to as "registered professionals") to carry out the investigation specified in the order;

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[5] Section 27A(1) of the Buildings Ordinance stipulates that where in the opinion of the Building Authority (i.e. the Director of Buildings) any natural, formed or man-made land, or any earth-retaining structure, has due to any cause been rendered so dangerous or liable to become so dangerous that it will collapse, or be likely to collapse, either totally or partially, and thereby will cause, or will be likely to cause, a risk of injury to any person or damage to any property, the Building Authority may by order in writing served on the owner of the land or structure, or on the person who under the terms of a government lease is under an obligation to maintain the land or structure, declare the land or structure to be dangerous or liable to become dangerous. Section 27A(2) stipulates that the order may require the relevant person to carry out investigation and remedial works.

(2) also within the period specified in the order, i.e. generally seven months from the date of its issue, carry out investigation and analysis of the slope referred to in the order, submit a report, and propose remedial or preventive works based on the investigation results for BD's approval.

3.16 BD will consult CEDD on the results of ground investigation and proposals for remedial or preventive works; where the proposals involve government land adjoining private slopes (such as soil nailing[6] on government land (see **fig. 7**)), it will also consult LandsD. In the letter of approval or rejection issued to the registered professionals, BD will set out the departments' comments for information and follow-up by them and the owners.

Figure 7: A slope with soil nailing
(Source: CEDD website)



3.17 Upon BD's approval of the proposed remedial or preventive works, the stage 1 order is regarded as having been complied with and will be discharged by BD.

3.18 With effect from January 2021, in order to urge owners to carry out the remedial or preventive works as soon as possible, BD will issue a **stage 2 dangerous hillside order** ("stage 2 order")[7] to the owners in parallel with discharging the stage 1 order. Upon receiving a stage 2 order, private property owners must:

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[6] According to CEDD's information, a soil nail is a relatively slender component, usually made of steel, which can improve the stability of slopes, retaining walls and excavations. Soil nailing is a common soil reinforcement technique used in the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme.

[7] Before January 2021, after compliance with the stage 1 order, BD would require the owners to carry out the approved remedial or preventive works by themselves. Only if the owners failed to commence the relevant works within a reasonable period would BD consider issuing a stage 2 order requiring the owners to carry out the necessary works.

(1) appoint registered professionals within the period specified in the order, i.e. generally two months from the date of its issue, to coordinate and supervise the remedial or preventive works with BD's approval and consent;

(2) also within the period specified in the order, i.e. generally seven months from the date of its issue, carry out and complete the necessary remedial or preventive works as approved by BD under the coordination and supervision of registered professionals.

Figures 8 and 9: Examples of private man-made slopes before and after maintenance (Courtesy of BD)

Figure 8 (Before maintenance)



Figure 9 (After maintenance)



3.19 If the investigation results in stage 1 indicate that no remedial or preventive works are required, BD will also consult CEDD. Provided that it is satisfied with the investigation results, BD will regard the stage 1 order as having been complied with, and will not issue a stage 2 order.

3.20 Pursuant to section 44 of the Buildings Ordinance, owners may appeal to the Appeal Tribunal (Buildings) against a dangerous hillside order. In the interim, BD shall not enforce the order unless an emergency exists, until the appeal has been disposed of, withdrawn or abandoned.

BD's Monitoring of Orders after Issuance

3.21 Should private property owners have any queries regarding a dangerous hillside order, BD will actively explain the requirements of the order and the procedures for compliance, including arranging site inspections and briefings with the owners or their appointed registered professionals, as well as attending meetings with the owners or the owners' corporation, to facilitate their compliance on their own. If the owners fail to comply with an order within the specified time limit, BD will issue a reminder and, where necessary, a warning letter, urging the owners for compliance on their own before the Department initiates prosecution. Should the owners have difficulty arranging for the works, BD may grant an extension of the time limit based on the actual circumstances of each case. BD will consider prosecuting the owners who fail to comply with the order without reasonable excuse.

Follow-up on Stage 1 Orders

3.22 In accordance with BD's enhanced procedures in place since May 2021:

(1) If, two months after the stage 1 order was issued, no notification has been received from the owners regarding the appointment of registered professionals, a reminder will be sent to the owners;

(2) If there is still no progress, a warning letter will be sent to the owners within one month of the expiry of the deadline for compliance of the order (or the expiry of the extended time limit); and

(3) If no reply is received from the owners within one month after the date of the warning letter, prosecution may be considered within two months of that date.

3.23 If the owners have appointed registered professionals but the latter have still not carried out the investigation works after six months without reasonable cause, BD will:

(1) issue a reminder to the appointed registered professionals (with a copy to the owners), requesting that proposals for remedial or preventive works be submitted within two months;

(2) if no proposals for remedial or preventive works are received within two months after the date of the reminder, issue a warning letter to the owners (with a copy to the appointed registered professionals); and

(3) if no reply is received from the owners within one month after the date of the warning letter, consider prosecution within two months of that date.

Follow-up on Stage 2 Orders

3.24 If the owners have appointed registered professionals but no reasonable progress has been made on the required remedial or preventive works by the expiry of the deadline for compliance of the stage 2 order (or the expiry of the extended time limit), BD will:

(1) issue a reminder to the appointed registered professionals (with a copy to the owners);

(2) if no reply has been received within two months after the date of the reminder, issue a warning letter to the owners (with a copy to the appointed registered professionals); and

(3) if no reply is received from the owners within one month after the date of the warning letter, consider prosecution within two months of that date.

Monitoring Slope Safety

3.25 In cases where private slopes are subject to BD's dangerous hillside orders but the owners have not appointed registered professionals to carry out works by the deadline specified in the order, including appeal cases already filed by the owners and prosecution cases initiated by BD, BD will engage consultants to monitor the safety of these slopes with regular inspections and assessments of their condition, and submit reports to the Department. The monitoring will continue until the owners appoint registered professionals, or until BD engages consultants to carry out the works on behalf of the defaulting owners pursuant to section 27A(3) of the Buildings Ordinance.

3.26 Furthermore, while a dangerous hillside order remains outstanding, if BD discovers that a private slope poses an immediate danger and remedial action must be taken without delay, the Department will, on the advice of CEDD and pursuant to section 27A(4) of the Buildings Ordinance, arrange for the necessary emergency works and subsequently recover the costs from the owners.

3.27 Furthermore, in response to the increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions, BD implemented a new action plan in March 2025 to address these challenges more proactively and ensure public safety:

(1) Before the onset of the typhoon and rainy season, in addition to issuing notices reminding owners and their appointed authorised persons to carry out site inspections and take preventive measures, BD will arrange for consultants to assess the condition of slopes involving outstanding dangerous hillside orders where the owners have not yet appointed authorised persons, or cases currently under appeal or prosecution, to ensure public safety;

(2) Once a typhoon or black rainstorm warning has been lifted, BD will send an email reminding the authorised persons and registered contractors appointed by owners to carry out site inspections as soon as possible and rectify any defects caused by the typhoon or heavy rain; and

(3) In accordance with a risk-based approach, once a typhoon or black rainstorm warning has been lifted, BD will, in the case of high-risk slopes involving outstanding dangerous hillside orders where the owners have not yet appointed registered professionals, proactively arrange for inspections and follow-up by its staff, consultants or government contractors.

Since the implementation of the new action plan and up to September 2025, BD (including its staff, consultants and government contractors) carried out more than 800 inspections of slopes involving outstanding dangerous hillside orders.

Monitoring Mechanism

3.28 Since February 2006, BD has established a Dangerous Hillside Orders Monitoring Committee chaired by the Deputy Director of Buildings to monitor the follow-up and progress of cases involving outstanding dangerous hillside orders, with a view to resolving complex cases as soon as possible. The Committee has set targets for handling outstanding dangerous hillside orders (see **para. 4.48**). BD has also established other committees to monitor the outstanding dangerous hillside orders and progress of default works, as well as the performance of consultants and government contractors.

3.29 In addition, BD holds regular coordination meetings with CEDD, chaired by the Deputy Head of Geotechnical Engineering Office, to monitor progress in the completion of dangerous hillside orders and to discuss solutions to complex cases. These meetings are held every six months or more frequently as required. Furthermore, BD and CEDD maintain close communication and cooperation in day-to-day operations and case handling.

Prosecution

3.30 Any person failing to comply with a dangerous hillside order without reasonable excuse is liable to prosecution by BD pursuant to section 40(1B)(b) of the Buildings Ordinance. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a fine of $50,000 and to imprisonment for one year, and to a further fine of $5,000 for each day during which the failure to comply with the order has continued. To strengthen the deterrent effect, the Government has proposed amendments to the Buildings Ordinance to raise the penalties, with a target to introduce a bill to the Legislative Council in the second half of 2026.

3.31 In accordance with its prosecution policy, BD will prioritise cases where the owners have committed the same offence twice or more. After conviction, if there is still no progress on the case, BD will issue further reminders and warning letters regarding the delay, and will consider further prosecutions in cases without any progress. BD has included the task of initiating prosecutions in the "to-do" list of the Building Condition Information System to remind case officers to initiate prosecutions in a timely manner.

DEFAULT WORKS CARRIED OUT BY BD

3.32 Pursuant to sections 27A(3) and 27A(3A) of the Buildings Ordinance, depending on circumstances, such as where an owner has passed away, has not been found or has been prosecuted for a second time[8], or where cases involve numerous owners and practical difficulty in compliance, BD will consider, within three months upon the expiry of the deadline for compliance of the dangerous hillside order or within three months upon the latest conviction, engaging consultants and government contractors to carry out the works specified in the order on behalf of the defaulting owners, and recover the costs of the works, supervision fees and surcharges from the owners upon completion.

3.33 Given the large number of cases and manpower constraints, BD generally prioritises the default works based on the date of issuing dangerous hillside orders and the level of risks involved.

3.34 After a consultant appointed for default works has submitted a proposal for remedial or preventive works, BD will consult the relevant government departments (including CEDD and LandsD) on the proposal. BD will then notify the consultant to proceed. If the remedial or preventive works involve government land adjoining a private slope, BD will apply to LandsD for permission.

3.35 According to BD's guidelines, for remedial or preventive works of simple designs, cases with no disputes over ownership or maintenance responsibility, and cases where access to the premises is not difficult, its target timeframe from engaging a consultant to the completion of default works (including the maintenance period and the time to discharge the consultant) is around 44 months. The workflow and target completion time for default works are as follows:

[8] Generally, after the legal proceedings have been concluded, if the owners have practical difficulty or remain unwilling to comply with a dangerous hillside order, BD will carry out the default works after initiating a second prosecution.

Table 4: Workflow and target completion time for default works

Workflow for default works	Target completion time (months)	Cumulative time (months)
Preliminary preparations		
Tendering process to appoint a consultant	5	5
Consultant to submit works schedule and a list of professionals	1	6
Study and works design		
Investigation, preliminary and detailed design stages[#]	12	18
Maintenance works-in-progress		
Construction stage	19	37
After completion of works		
Maintenance period	6	43
Discharge of consultant	1	**44**

[#] Upon completion of ground investigation and study, consultants are required to submit a preliminary design report covering various design options. BD will then decide on the final option for detailed design based on the technical feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the various options.

3.36 Upon completion of default works, the relevant dangerous hillside order will be regarded as having been complied with, and BD will recover the costs of the works from the owners. BD stated that although it has previously set the target completion time at 44 months, after deducting the seven months of maintenance period and discharge of consultant, and taking into account the measures to streamline the appointment of consultants implemented since August 2024 (see **para. 4.43**), the actual time taken to complete default works is now only around 37 months.

3.37 During this direct investigation operation, BD further revised the relevant guidelines in January 2026 in response to our comments. It has further streamlined the workflow for default works and shorten the time taken for simple cases (such as those with no site constraints and not requiring to obtain consent from owners of adjacent lots to carry out the works): the time taken for the tendering process to appoint a consultant is shortened from five months to four months; and the construction stage is shortened from 19 months to 10 months. Overall, the target completion time for simple default works has been significantly shortened from the above-mentioned 37 months to 27 months.

4

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

CEDD's SAFETY SCREENING STUDIES

Execution of Safety Screening Studies

4.1 Under the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme (1977 to 2010), CEDD completed safety screening studies on around 5,200 private man-made slopes. Based on the results of safety screening studies, CEDD referred around 2,100 slopes to BD for issuing dangerous hillside orders; together with around 500 slopes referred due to occurrence of landslides or instability, it referred a total of around 2,600 private man-made slopes to BD. Accordingly, BD issued a total of around 2,900 dangerous hillside orders to private lot owners (as some slopes fall under the responsibility of more than one private lot owner).

4.2 In line with the target set under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme (2010 to present) to complete safety screening studies on 100 private man-made slopes with moderate potential impact each year, CEDD completed safety screening studies on 100 to 110 slopes each year between 2011 and 2024. By the end of 2024, CEDD had completed safety screening studies on a total of 1,434 private man-made slopes.

4.3 Over the past few decades, CEDD has completed safety screening studies on more than 6,600 private man-made slopes. CEDD pointed out that the purpose of safety screening studies is to assess the safety condition of private man-made slopes; this does not imply that the selected slopes have become unstable or are likely to pose a hazard. The slopes selected for studies in recent years had higher stability with lower potential risks; only a small number of these slopes required referral to BD for issuing dangerous hillside orders.

4.4 In response to a series of landslides triggered by the extreme rainfall in September 2023, CEDD has completed a systematic landslide investigation and study with a number of recommendations made in 2025. The recommendations include gradually increasing the annual targets under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme. Specifically, from 2025 onwards, the annual target for safety screening studies is to increase by 33%, from 100 to 130 private man-made slopes, which is expected to take around three years to implement.

Notices Issued Due to Inaccessibility to Private Land and Advisory Letters on Slope Maintenance

4.5 According to data from CEDD, between 2020 and 2024, it issued notices to the owners of 13 private man-made slopes due to inability to gain access to the land for inspection. The figure represents only about 2.6% of the private man-made slopes selected for safety screening studies (see **table 5**), indicating that consultants could complete studies on most of the selected slopes.

4.6 Between 2020 and 2024, a total of 501 private man-made slopes were included in safety screening studies. Consultants found that 348 of these slopes had maintenance deficiencies despite showing no signs of distress or potential hazards. The figure represents 69% of the slopes selected for safety screening studies, with the annual figures ranging from 50% to 78% (see **table 6**).

4.7 **Table 6** also shows that as at 31 December 2024, CEDD had issued advisory letters on slope maintenance regarding 220 of these private slopes after considering the circumstances of each case. CEDD explained that these cases mainly involved damage to drainage channels and slope surface cover, or blockage of drainage channels by vegetation; it was necessary to issue letters reminding owners to carry out maintenance works to prevent the situation from worsening. The remaining cases for which no advisory letters were issued mostly concerned general maintenance problems, such as debris in drainage channels, withered vegetation or other minor maintenance deficiencies, which owners should be able to rectify through routine maintenance works without the need for government intervention.

Table 5: Number of notices issued by CEDD to owners of private man-made slopes due to inaccessibility to private land for inspection

Year	No. of notices issued[#]	No. of private slopes involved	No. of private slopes included in safety screening studies	Percentage of slopes involved out of total no. of slopes studied
2020	2	2	100	2%
2021	0	0	100	0%
2022	0	0	100	0%
2023	15	5	100	5%
2024	9	6	101	5.9%
Total	**26**	**13**	**501**	**2.6%**

[#] The number of notices may exceed the number of slopes because a slope may be divided into different sections with several private lot owners having maintenance responsibility.

Table 6: Number of advisory letters on slope maintenance issued by CEDD to owners of private man-made slopes

Year	(a) No. of private slopes included in safety screening studies	No. of slopes in column (a) identified as having maintenance deficiencies (Figures in brackets indicate percentage of total no. of slopes studied)	As at 31 Dec 2024	
			(b) No. of advisory letters issued[#]	No. of private slopes involved in column (b)
2020	100	50 (50%)	62	48
2021	100	76 (76%)	111	62
2022	100	78 (78%)	164	54
2023	100	74 (74%)	95	44
2024	101	70 (69%)	19	12
Total	**501**	**348 (69%)**	**451**	**220**

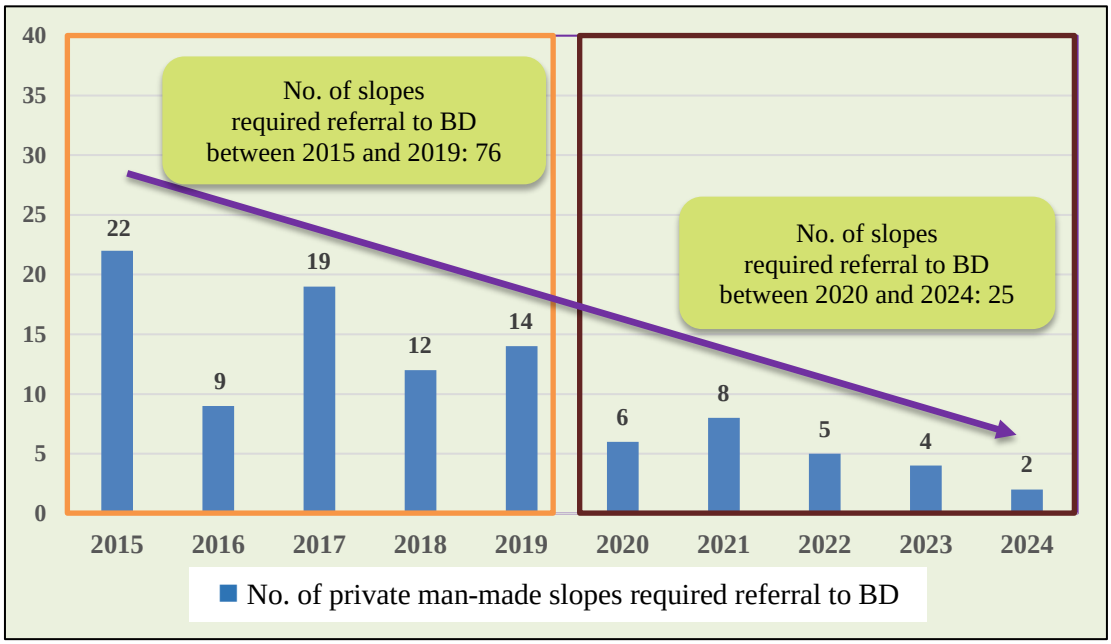
[#] The number of advisory letters may exceed the number of slopes because a slope may be divided into different sections with several private lot owners having maintenance responsibility.

4.8 To better assist private property owners in ensuring slope safety, during this direct investigation operation, CEDD revised its operational guidelines for issuing advisory letters: it will conduct site inspections regularly to ascertain that private property owners follow up on and complete the necessary maintenance works as specified in the advisory letters. Should the situation deteriorate, CEDD will consider issuing a further advisory letter to the owners or, where necessary, recommend that BD issue a dangerous hillside order to the owners.

Referral to BD for Issuing Dangerous Hillside Orders

4.9 According to the data of CEDD (see **fig. 10**), the number of private man-made slopes identified through safety screening studies as requiring referral to BD for issuing dangerous hillside orders has shown a downward trend in recent years, from 22 slopes in 2015 to 2 in 2024. Between 2020 and 2024, a total of 25 private man-made slopes required referral to BD, nearly 70% (or 67% more precisely) less than the 76 slopes between 2015 and 2019. The trend is consistent with CEDD's remarks in **paragraph 4.3** that the slopes included in safety screening studies in recent years had higher stability.

Figure 10: Number of private man-made slopes identified by CEDD through safety screening studies as requiring referral to BD



4.10 For all the above cases (101 cases), the time taken from the completion of safety screening studies by consultants (including the determination of slope maintenance responsibility) to the referral of the case to BD was within six months, of which 90 cases (89%) were processed within three months.

BD's ENFORCEMENT WORK

Follow-up on Reports Concerning Slope Safety

4.11 Between 2020 and 2025, BD received 4 to 29 emergency reports on slope safety from members of the public and other departments each year, as well as 260 to 515 non-emergency reports. In recent years, the number of reports (both emergency and non-emergency) received by BD has shown an upward trend, rising by 83% from 272 reports in 2020 to 498 in 2025. BD met its performance pledges in the response times for all reports (see **para. 3.13**).

Table 7: Number of reports on slope safety received by BD

Year	No. of emergency reports[#]	No. of non-emergency reports[#]	Total no. of reports
2020	12	260	272
2021	5	278	283
2022	4	271	275
2023	29	515	544
2024	7	466	473
2025	13	485	498

[#] Including reports made by members of the public and referred by other departments. If a report mentions an emergency, such as a landslide, BD will classify it as an emergency report.

Our Site Inspection

4.12 In September 2025, our officers shadowed BD and CEDD staff on an inspection following a complaint about slope safety. The complaint involved a leaning tree on a slope at the rear of a housing estate (see **fig. 11**); the complainant was concerned that the tree posed a risk of collapse which might trigger a landslide (see **fig. 12**).

Figures 11 and 12: Tree and private man-made slope involved in a complaint received by BD (Photos taken by our staff)

Figure 11



Figure 12



4.13 On the day of the inspection, BD and CEDD staff inspected the retaining wall and weepholes at the foot of the slope, and also went up the slope to inspect the slope surface cover and drainage channels, amongst other things. CEDD staff confirmed that the slope posed no immediate danger, but that there were maintenance deficiencies, including:

(1) blockage of weepholes and outlet drainpipes on the retaining wall;

(2) withered trees on the slope (see **fig. 13**);

(3) cracks on parts of the slope surface cover (see **fig. 14**); and

(4) debris in the drainage channels on the slope.

Figures 13 and 14: Situation of the man-made slope in question (Photos taken by our staff)

Figure 13



Figure 14



4.14 Following the inspection, CEDD issued an advisory letter on slope maintenance to the estate's property management agent, recommending that maintenance works be carried out, including repairing cracked or damaged drainage channels, repairing or replacing cracked or damaged slope surface cover, clearing blocked weepholes and drainage channels, removing vegetation causing severe cracking of the slope surface cover and drainage channels, and clearing debris accumulated in the drainage channels and on the slope. CEDD also enclosed the leaflet "Keep Your Slopes Safe" it compiled, and provided the link to its slope safety webpage for reference to publications such as the Guide to Slope Maintenance and the Layman's Guide to

Slope Maintenance.

Follow-up on Cases Referred by CEDD

4.15 Between 2016 and 2025, BD received a total of 276 cases referred by CEDD, including cases referred following safety screening studies under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme, as well as cases referred by CEDD in response to reports from members of the public or other departments concerning private slopes. The relevant statistics are as follows:

Table 8: BD's follow-up on cases referred by CEDD (As at December 2025)

Year	(a) No. of cases referred by CEDD	In column (a)		
		As at Dec 2025, no. of cases with dangerous hillside orders issued by BD	As at Dec 2025, no. of cases with assessment completed and concluded by BD that issuance of order was unnecessary	As at Dec 2025, no. of cases with BD's assessment or preparatory work prior to issuing an order still ongoing
2016	52	36	16	0
2017	26	21	5	0
2018	39	23	16	0
2019	29	25	4	0
2020	21	16	5	0
2021	19	14	5	0
2022	14	9	5	0
2023	28	22	6	0
2024	28	16	12	0
2025	20	13	0	7[#]
Total	**276**	**195 (70.7%)**	**74 (26.8%)**	**7[#] (2.5%)**

[#] These seven cases received between August and October 2025 were still being followed up as at December 2025.

Issuance of Stage 1 Orders

4.16 Upon receiving CEDD's referral, BD needs to clarify the lot and slope boundaries and maintenance responsibility, assess the condition of the slope and obtain details of the owners before it can issue a dangerous hillside order. **Table 9** shows that, compared with BD's target processing time of eight months (see **para. 3.12**), between 2016 and 2019, BD took more than nine months in 26 cases (27%) to issue a stage 1 order after receiving CEDD's referral.

4.17 BD had discussed with CEDD on how to shorten the processing time. With effect from April 2020, CEDD agreed that prior to referring cases to BD, it would first arrange for topographical surveys and clarify the maintenance responsibility with LandsD, thereby reducing the need for BD to clarify the lot and slope boundaries and maintenance responsibility after receiving the referral. To better monitor follow-up work, BD included the issuance of dangerous hillside orders in the Building Condition Information System's "to-do" list in January 2023. It not only reminds staff to issue dangerous hillside orders in a timely manner, but also facilitates supervision of work and progress. Over the past five years (2021 to 2025), the average processing time from receiving CEDD's referral to issuing a stage 1 order was shortened to 4.9 months; the percentage of cases taking more than nine months to issue a dangerous hillside order was slashed to around 2.6%. During this direct investigation operation, in response to our observations and after consulting CEDD, BD further revised the guidelines in February 2026. For simple cases, such as those where the slope is located within a private lot, the maintenance responsibility is clear, and the necessary ownership records are available, BD will issue a dangerous hillside order within three months of receiving CEDD's referral. BD will continue to discuss and review the relevant procedures with CEDD, exploring ways to further shorten the time required to issue dangerous hillside orders for complex cases, such as those involving private or government land outside a private lot. BD expects to complete the review and make relevant recommendations or amendments by the third quarter of 2026. BD stressed that to ensure public safety, it will immediately arrange for government contractors to carry out the necessary emergency works on any private slope found to pose an immediate danger.

Table 9: Time taken by BD from receiving cases referred by CEDD to issuing stage 1 orders

Year	(a) No. of stage 1 orders issued	(b) Excluding superseding orders in column (a)	Time taken from receiving cases referred by CEDD to issuing stage 1 orders[#]				
			3 months or less	3 to 6 months	6 to 9 months	9 to 12 months	More than 12 months
2016	74	33	18 (54.5%)	2 (6.1%)	2 (6.1%)	3 (9.1%)	8 (24.2%)
2017	26	24	3 (12.5%)	3 (12.5%)	5 (20.8%)	0 (0%)	13 (54.2%)
2018	31	28	9 (32.1%)	4 (14.3%)	13 (46.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (7.1%)
2019	15	12	3 (25.0%)	5 (41.7%)	4 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
2020	24	22	2 (9.1%)	8 (36.4%)	8 (36.4%)	4 (18.2%)	0 (0.0%)
2021	8	8	3 (37.5%)	2 (25.0%)	3 (37.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
2022	16	13	1 (7.7%)	6 (46.2%)	6 (46.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2023	9	8	2 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (50.0%)	0 (0%)	2 (25.0%)
2024	29	29	6 (20.7%)	12 (41.4%)	11 (37.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
2025	22	20	14 (70.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (30.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	**254**	**197**	**61 (31.0%)**	**42 (21.3%)**	**62 (31.5%)**	**7 (3.6%)**	**25 (12.7%)**

[#] Only counting the number of dangerous hillside orders in column (b).

Issuance of Stage 2 Orders

4.18 As regards stage 2 orders, owners are required to submit proposals for remedial or preventive works based on the findings of investigation carried out by registered professionals to BD for approval. BD explained that no target timeframe has been set for issuing a stage 2 order because the timing depends on the nature and complexity of each case.

Compliance with Dangerous Hillside Orders

Appointment of Registered Professionals

4.19 Generally, a stage 1 order issued by BD requires private property owners to appoint registered professionals within two months of the date of issuing the order. **Table 10** shows that between 2016 and 2025, BD issued a total of 254 stage 1 orders, of which in 159 orders the owners had appointed registered professionals. Of these 159 orders, only 27% took less than two months to appoint registered professionals as required, and as many as 31% took more than one year. BD explained that the main reasons for the prolonged time taken for appointment of registered professionals included the need for convening owners' meetings to proceed with tendering and appointment of consultants, formation of owners' corporations, appeals lodged by owners, requests by owners for clarification of slope maintenance responsibility, and owners only beginning to arrange for compliance after being prosecuted.

Table 10: Time taken by slope owners to appoint registered professionals in response to stage 1 orders (As at December 2025)

Year	No. of stage 1 orders issued	Time taken by owners to appoint registered professionals						No. of cases with appoint-ment still pending as at Dec 2025[#]
		2 months or less	2 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years	More than 2 years	Total	
2016	74	8	11	5	4	3	31	0
2017	26	4	4	3	1	5	17	2
2018	31	5	3	4	5	8	25	0
2019	15	4	2	1	2	3	12	0
2020	24	12	1	1	6	2	22	0
2021	8	0	3	2	1	1	7	0
2022	16	4	2	5	0	1	12	0
2023	9	2	1	0	2	0	5	2
2024	29	2	4	5	5	0	16	13
2025	22	2	8	2	0	0	12	10*
Total	**254**	**43 (27.0%)**	**39 (24.5%)**	**28 (17.6%)**	**26 (16.4%)**	**23 (14.5%)**	**159 (100%)**	**27***

[#] Excluding dangerous hillside orders involving default works in progress or already completed, orders superseded (e.g. due to a change of ownership) and orders withdrawn.

* Including nine orders the deadline for compliance of which had not yet expired as at December 2025.

4.20 BD stated that it has been actively following up on dangerous hillside orders where registered professionals have not yet been appointed, including by instigating prosecutions. As at December 2025, out of the 17 orders issued between 2017 and 2024 where the owners had still not appointed registered professionals, BD had prosecuted the owners in 6 cases and issued warning letters to the owners in 7 cases. BD was following up on the remaining 4 cases, including arranging for its Social Services Team to assist the owners with compliance.

4.21 BD also updated the Building Condition Information System in January 2023. For dangerous hillside orders where the owners have not appointed registered professionals within the prescribed time limit, the system generates a "to-do" list automatically at regular intervals, alerting BD's case officers to issue reminders and warning letters to the owners concerned; supervisors can also use this function to monitor staff performance.

4.22 Furthermore, following a review of its information technology systems and services in 2023, BD proposed the development of a new case management and reporting platform within the existing Building Condition Information System. The platform can generate reminders and warning letters automatically upon the expiry of the deadline for compliance of dangerous hillside orders, replacing manual letter drafting and thereby enhancing enforcement efficiency. The platform was launched in November 2025.

Compliance with Stage 1 Orders

4.23 Generally, private property owners are required to comply with a stage 1 order within seven months by carrying out slope investigation and submitting proposals for the necessary remedial or preventive works. **Table 11** shows that between 2016 and 2025, BD issued a total of 254 stage 1 orders. As at December 2025, 169 (67%) had been complied with, while 82 (32%) remained outstanding upon expiry of the deadline for compliance. Of these 82 orders, 26 (32%) were issued in 2022 or earlier, including 7 cases where the owners had appointed registered professionals to follow up (including cases with proposals for remedial or preventive works already submitted or ground investigation underway), while BD was carrying out default works in 9 cases and had initiated prosecution or repeated prosecution in 6 cases. For the remaining 4 cases, warning letters had been issued and BD was actively following up (including initiating prosecution or arranging for default works).

Table 11: Compliance with stage 1 orders

Year	No. of stage 1 orders issued	As at Dec 2025	
		No. of orders having been complied with	No. of orders remaining outstanding upon expiry of the deadline for compliance
2016	74	67	7
2017	26	21	5
2018	31	28	3
2019	15	12	3
2020	24	23	1
2021	8	6	2
2022	16	11	5
2023	9	0	9
2024	29	1	28
2025[#]	22	0	19
Total[#]	**254 (100%)**	**169 (66.5%)**	**82 (32.3%)**

[#] Including three stage 1 orders issued in 2025 the deadline for compliance of which had not yet expired as at December 2025.

4.24 **Table 12** shows that as at December 2025, of the 169 stage 1 orders that had been complied with, only 14% were complied with within a year, 67% took more than three years, and as many as 39% took more than five years. BD explained that the main reasons for the longer time required for compliance included the need for convening owners' meetings to proceed with tendering and appointment of consultants, formation of owners' corporations, appeals lodged by owners, requests by owners for clarification of lot boundaries and maintenance responsibility, owners only beginning to arrange for compliance after being prosecuted, and a relatively time-consuming design and approval process for works involving adjacent private lots or government land. Furthermore, BD carried out default works in some cases, and hence the stage 1 orders were only regarded as having been complied with after completion of the works (i.e. not merely upon completion of investigation and approval for the proposed remedial or preventive works).

Table 12: Time required to comply with stage 1 orders
(As at December 2025)

Year	No. of stage 1 orders issued in that year and complied with	Time required to comply with stage 1 orders					
		1 year or less	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 4 years	4 to 5 years	More than 5 years
2016	67	19	1	3	2	6	36
2017	21	0	2	1	3	2	13
2018	28	0	0	2	2	11	13
2019	12	1	0	2	4	1	4
2020	23	0	15	1	3	4	0
2021	6	0	1	0	3	2	0
2022	11	3	2	2	4	0	0
2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2024	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
2025	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**169 (100%)**	**23 (13.6%)**	**22 (13.0%)**	**11 (6.5%)**	**21 (12.4%)**	**26 (15.4%)**	**66 (39.1%)**

Compliance with Stage 2 Orders

4.25 Generally, private property owners are required to comply with a stage 2 order within seven months by completing the remedial or preventive works approved by BD. **Table 13** shows that between 2016 and 2025, BD issued a total of 237 stage 2 orders. As at December 2025, 137 (58%) had been complied with, while 96 (41%) remained outstanding upon expiry of the deadline for compliance. Of these 96 orders, 41 (43%) were issued in 2022 or earlier, including 31 cases where the owners had appointed registered professionals to follow up (including cases with proposals for remedial or preventive works under revision, required permission from LandsD, or with slope works already commenced), and 6 cases where the owners had lodged appeals and legal proceedings were still ongoing. For the remaining 4 cases, reminders or warning letters had been issued and BD was actively following up (including arranging for default works or initiating prosecution).

Table 13: Compliance with stage 2 orders

Year	No. of stage 2 orders issued	As at Dec 2025	
		No. of orders having been complied with	No. of orders remaining outstanding upon expiry of the deadline for compliance
2016	11	10	1
2017	14	11	3
2018	11	10	1
2019	28	15	13
2020	35	33	2
2021	37	30	7
2022	19	5	14
2023	36	17	19
2024	22	4	18
2025[#]	24	2	18
Total	**237 (100%)**	**137 (57.8%)**	**96 (40.5%)**

[#] Including four stage 2 orders issued in 2025 the deadline for compliance of which had not yet expired as at December 2025.

4.26 **Table 14** shows that as at December 2025, of the 137 stage 2 orders that had been complied with, only 10% were complied with within a year, 55% took 1 to 3 years, 31% took 3 to 5 years, and around 5% took more than 5 years. BD explained that the reasons for the longer time required for compliance included the need for convening owners' meetings to proceed with tendering and appointment of consultants, site constraints (such as impact on underground public utilities); technical difficulties (such as difficulties in delivering materials and insufficient space for works); and the works process was prolonged by the need for obtaining the consent of all owners of adjacent lots and their cooperation with actual works schedules. Furthermore, BD needed to carry out default works in some cases, which involved additional design and approval procedures, and the stage 2 orders were only regarded as having been complied with after completion of works.

Table 14: Time required to comply with stage 2 orders (As at December 2025)

Year	No. of stage 2 orders issued in that year and complied with	Time required to comply with stage 2 orders					
		1 year or less	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 4 years	4 to 5 years	More than 5 years
2016	10	1	5	1	2	1	0
2017	11	0	2	0	3	3	3
2018	10	0	4	0	1	5	0
2019	15	1	9	2	2	1	0
2020	33	1	4	6	15	3	4
2021	30	1	15	10	2	2	0
2022	5	0	0	3	2	0	0
2023	17	4	9	4	0	0	0
2024	4	3	1	0	0	0	0
2025	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**137 (100%)**	**13 (9.5%)**	**49 (35.8%)**	**26 (19.0%)**	**27 (19.7%)**	**15 (10.9%)**	**7 (5.1%)**

Our Site Inspection

4.27 In November 2025, our officers shadowed BD and CEDD staff on an inspection regarding a case where private property owners had reported the completion of remedial or preventive works on a slope (see **fig. 16**). A stage 1 order was issued in June 2012 regarding the private man-made slope in question (see **fig. 15**). Following investigation by registered professionals appointed by the owners, BD approved in July 2019 the proposal for remedial or preventive works submitted. BD subsequently issued a stage 2 order in September 2020, requiring the owners to commence remedial or preventive works in accordance with the approved proposal.

Figures 15 and 16: Condition of the slope in question before and after the works (Courtesy of BD and taken by our staff)

Figure 15 (Before the works)



Figure 16 (After the works)



4.28 In May 2024, remedial or preventive works commenced, including the installation of steel piles and shotcrete surfacing on the slope. At the end of October 2025, the registered professionals notified BD that the works had been completed. BD then conducted a site inspection jointly with CEDD. The inspection covered such items as measuring the width of and spacing between weepholes and the condition of slope surface cover to verify whether the works had been completed in accordance with the approved plans (see **figs. 17 and 18**). Following the site inspection, BD would further verify whether the findings were consistent with the approved proposal and consult CEDD regarding whether the order had been complied with.

Figures 17 and 18: Inspection of the slope in question by BD and CEDD (Photos taken by our staff)

Figure 17



Figure 18



Prosecuting Private Property Owners for Non-compliance

4.29 BD may prosecute any person who fails to comply with a dangerous hillside order without reasonable excuse. Generally, before considering prosecution, BD will first issue a warning letter urging the owners to comply with the order, and then decide whether to prosecute depending on the circumstances. Between 2016 and 2025, BD instigated a total of 144 prosecutions (see **table 15**).

4.30 BD explained that the main reasons for not prosecuting non-compliant owners included: the owners had responded positively, indicating that they would comply with the orders or take concrete action, such as arranging to engage consultants or contractors; cases involving many owners but no owners' corporation had been formed, where reasonable excuses were put forward by some cooperative owners and there were practical difficulties in locating uncooperative owners for prosecution. Between 2020 and 2023, the progress of cases was also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in some cases the owners applied for extension of time due to the pandemic, or were unable to convene residents' meetings in a timely manner. BD remarked that it has strengthened publicity and education with CEDD in recent years with significant results. Owners have now been more aware of the importance of compliance with dangerous hillside orders. Moreover, BD pointed out that in certain circumstances, prosecution may not be the most suitable means to compel compliance. For instance, where an owner has passed away, cannot be found, or has failed to respond positively even after a second prosecution, or in cases involving many owners, BD, within three months of the expiry of the deadline for compliance of the order or within three months of prosecution, will consider engaging consultants and contractors to carry out default works, and recover the costs of the works, supervision fees and surcharges from the owners upon completion. In cases where a second prosecution has been brought or where many owners are involved, BD may initiate further prosecution while considering carrying out default works.

4.31 Where the owners have been prosecuted and convicted but there is still no progress on the case, BD will issue further reminders and warning letters to the owners regarding the delay, and will consider further prosecution in respect of cases without any progress.

4.32 **Table 15** shows that for all prosecution cases relating to dangerous hillside orders, the average fine for convicted cases was $8,464. **Table 16** shows that for repeated prosecutions resulting in conviction, the average fine was $10,112. Consolidating **tables 15** and **16**, if only first-time convictions are counted, the average fine was $7,978. The average fine for repeated convictions was around 27% higher than that for first-time convictions. All convicted cases were sentenced to fines only; none were sentenced to imprisonment.

Table 15: Overall statistics of prosecutions instigated by BD

Year	No. of prosecutions instigated in that year*	No. of cases convicted#	No. of cases acquitted#	No. of cases with summons issued and pending hearing#	Total amount of fines (Figures in brackets indicate average fine per convicted case)
2016	6	5	0	0	$39,926 ($7,985)
2017	17	11	0	0	$96,278 ($8,753)
2018	0	0	0	0	Not applicable
2019	26	22	0	0	$221,684 ($10,077)
2020	4	1	0	0	$6,400 ($6,400)
2021	14	11	0	0	$152,635 ($13,876)
2022	21	19	1	0	$122,524 ($6,449)
2023	18	8	0	0	$40,562 ($5,070)
2024	24	20	0	2	$138,220 ($6,911)
2025	14	4	1	8	$36,610 ($9,153)
Total	**144**	**101**	**2**	**10**	**$854,839 ($8,464)**

* The charges in some cases were withdrawn because of compliance after prosecution.

\# Prosecution cases listed in these three columns were instigated in the same year.

Table 16: Statistics of repeated prosecutions instigated by BD

Year	(a) No. of prosecutions instigated in that year*	(b) No. of cases convicted	(c) No. of repeat prosecutions in column (a)#	(d) No. of repeat prosecutions in column (b)#	Total amount of fines in column (d) (Figures in brackets indicate average fine per convicted case)
2016	6	5	1	1	$8,748 ($8,748)
2017	17	11	0	0	Not applicable
2018	0	0	0	0	Not applicable
2019	26	22	16	16	$133,100 ($8,319)
2020	4	1	0	0	Not applicable
2021	14	11	3	3	$60,000 ($20,000)
2022	21	19	1	1	$12,650 ($12,650)
2023	18	8	0	0	Not applicable
2024	24	20	1	1	$11,085 ($11,085)
2025	14	4	1	1	$7,000 ($7,000)
Total	**144**	**101**	**23**	**23**	**$232,583 ($10,112)**

* The charges in some cases were withdrawn because of compliance after prosecution.
# The prosecution cases listed in these three columns were instigated in the same year.

4.33 BD indicated that it is reviewing the situation of repeated prosecutions and considering amendments to its guidelines, including the re-issuance of reminders, warning letters, prosecution criteria and target processing times.

DEFAULT WORKS CARRIED OUT BY BD

4.34 **Table 17** shows that of the 597 stage 1 and stage 2 orders issued between 2015 and 2025, as at December 2025, BD had completed or was carrying out default works for a total of 68 orders. Most of these orders were issued in earlier years (primarily in 2015 and 2016) and related to more complex cases. Furthermore, of the 3,516 stage 1 and stage 2 orders issued in or before 2014, BD had completed or was

carrying out default works for a total of 549 orders, including 502 completed cases and 47 cases in progress. BD noted that the main reasons why these default works were still ongoing included that it needed to first coordinate with all responsible owners and obtain their cooperation. For example, it needed their consent to allow consultants and government contractors to access the premises and to arrange for works space; prior to investigation and maintenance works, frequent communication and explanations were required to ensure that the owners understood the works plan and arrangements; it also needed to match the owners' schedule before commencing default works on the slope of private land. Moreover, some cases involved site constraints (such as underground public utilities or narrow space for works), technical difficulties (such as difficulties in delivering materials or insufficient space for works), and the need to obtain the consent of all owners of adjacent lots and their cooperation with actual works schedules.

Table 17: Number of completed and ongoing default works

Year	(a) No. of stage 1 and stage 2 orders issued that year	No. of default works completed as at Dec 2025 for orders in column (a)	No. of default works in progress as at Dec 2025 for orders in column (a)
2015	106	20	5
2016	85	26	6
2017	40	5	1
2018	42	1	0
2019	43	1	0
2020	59	0	2
2021	45	0	0
2022	35	0	1
2023	45	0	0
2024	51	0	0
2025	46	0	0
Total	**597**	**53**	**15**

4.35 **Table 18** shows that as at December 2025, BD was carrying out default works in a total of 62 cases. Similarly, the dangerous hillside orders involved were issued in earlier years and related to more complex cases: around 35% of these orders were issued between 2005 and 2010; 58% between 2011 and 2016; and 6% between 2017 and 2022.

Table 18: Number of dangerous hillside orders with default works in progress (As at December 2025)

Year in which dangerous hillside orders were issued	No. of orders with default works in progress *
2005	2
2006	1
2007	4
2008	5
2009	4
2010	6
2011	2
2012	3
2013	14
2014	6
2015	5
2016	6
2017	1
2018	0
2019	0
2020	2
2021	0
2022	1
2023	0
2024	0
2025	0
Total	**62[#]**

* Over 80% of these default works were carried out after BD had engaged more consultants between 2017 and 2019, either to speed up the clearance of backlog by way of default works or to commence default works as subsequently decided.

[#] Including default works in relation to seven orders not carried out under BD's internal five-year plan (see **para. 4.37**).

4.36 Of the 62 cases of default works listed above, as at March 2026, 14 had been completed, 44 were in progress, 3 were relatively complex (involving the need to clarify lot boundaries and maintenance responsibility), and 1 was the subject of an appeal.

4.37 In order to expedite the processing of dangerous hillside orders that had remained outstanding upon expiry of the deadline for compliance, BD engaged more consultants between 2017 and 2019 to speed up the clearance of backlog by way of default works. Furthermore, in July 2022, BD set an internal five-year plan target for the processing of default works, with a priority to complete within five years the 191 cases that had already commenced as at January 2022. As of December 2024, BD had completed the default works in 92 (48%) cases. By December 2025, the number of completed cases had increased to 136 (71%). BD aims to complete all ongoing default works by the end of 2026, half a year ahead of the original internal target set under the five-year plan.

4.38 BD noted that the number of decisions to arrange for default works has fallen in recent years because its joint efforts with CEDD to step up publicity and education have led to higher awareness among private property owners of the importance of compliance. Moreover, progress has been made in most cases of dangerous hillside orders following BD's support and reminders. To further expedite the processing of long-outstanding dangerous hillside orders and to ensure public safety, BD has reviewed and implemented its revised guidelines with effect from November 2025. If a dangerous hillside order has been in force for more than five years but no substantial progress has been made despite repeated persuasion, assistance, reminders and warnings from BD, or where the case involves numerous owners and difficulty in organising for compliance, BD will consider carrying out default works while pursuing prosecution in parallel.

<u>Our Site Inspection</u>

4.39 In September 2025, our officers shadowed BD staff on an inspection of default works carried out by the Department. The dangerous hillside order was issued in 2012 against the private man-made slope concerned, which is a retaining wall approximately 70 metres long (see **fig. 19**). The default works commencing in July 2025 involved repairing the retaining wall and installing more than 140 soil nails.

Figure 19: Condition of the man-made slope concerned prior to commencement of default works (Courtesy of BD)



4.40 BD stated that its staff generally carry out multiple site inspections for each case of default works, and it planned to inspect this case once every two months. On the day of inspection (see **figs. 20 and 21**), testing of soil nails was carried out at the site. BD staff (including a geotechnical engineer seconded from CEDD) were on site to verify the identities of the site personnel, examine site conditions and safety matters, and inspect the site's data records and various forms. Monitoring equipment (see **fig. 22**) was also set up to monitor any signs of tilting or settlement of the retaining wall.

Figures 20 and 21: Condition of the man-made slope concerned on day of inspection (Photos taken by our staff)

Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22: Monitoring equipment on site
(Photo taken by our staff)



Figures 23 and 24: Condition of the man-made slope concerned after maintenance (Courtesy of BD)

Figure 23



Figure 24



Processing Time

4.41 **Table 19** shows that between 2015 and 2025, the annual average time for completion of default works undertaken by BD ranged from 57 to 132 months, which is around 13 to 88 months longer than BD's target processing time of 44 months for simple default works (see **para. 3.35**). Of these, 31 (12%) cases were completed within 44 months.

Table 19: Average processing time for default works

Year	No. of default works completed in the year	Average processing time (months)[#]
2015	12	57
2016	16	98
2017	12	91
2018	24	121
2019	15	69
2020	25	132
2021	30	69
2022	31	83
2023	18	86
2024	29	124
2025	44	99
Total	**256**	**--**

[#] Processing time refers to the time taken from the decision to commence default works until completion.

4.42 BD explained that private property owners are responsible for the safety and maintenance of their private slopes. Before 2017, BD adopted a strategy of persuasion, assistance, reminders and warnings. Generally, it would first issue reminders and warning letters and initiate prosecutions to urge private property owners to comply with dangerous hillside orders. In cases where owners have practical difficulties (such as cases involving numerous owners and difficulty in organising for compliance), BD would only consider arranging for default works if prosecution is not the most effective means of enforcement. When BD is required to carry out default works, it needs to first coordinate with all responsible owners and obtain their cooperation. For example, it needs their consent to allow consultants and contractors to access the premises and to arrange for works space; prior to investigation and maintenance works, frequent communication and explanations are required to ensure that the owners understand the works plan and arrangements; it also needs to match the owners' schedule before commencing default works on the slope of private land. Consequently, default works generally take longer to complete. BD stated that it engaged more consultants between 2017 and 2019 to speed up clearance of backlog by way of default works. The longer time required for default works completed between 2022 and 2025 was primarily due to the processing of more complex cases accumulated in previous years under the five-year plan.

4.43 To expedite the processing of default works, BD has taken the following measures:

(1) From August 2024, the tendering process has been streamlined. Once it has decided to carry out default works for a case, the quotation process will be initiated immediately without the need to combine the case with others, thereby shortening the time taken to appoint a consultant.

(2) From August 2024, for simple cases, the preliminary and detailed design stages are combined. Consultants are required to submit detailed designs for remedial or preventive works directly, thereby shortening the time taken to approve their proposals.

(3) For complex cases, from the third quarter of 2023, BD staff will provide consultants with feedback earlier at the preliminary design stage for follow-up as soon as possible.

(4) From the third quarter of 2023, a confirmatory method is adopted for ground investigation in suitable cases. Assumptions regarding ground conditions are made during the design stage, followed by ground investigation carried out concurrently with slope remedial works to ensure that the actual conditions align with the design assumptions, thereby reducing the number of site visits and the time spent on site.

(5) From April 2024, ground investigation works are incorporated into government contracts, which directly require government contractors to carry out ground investigation. Separate tendering or engagement of CEDD's contractors to undertake such works is no longer required.

(6) From December 2024, the checklists for preliminary and detailed design reports submitted to BD by consultants of default works have been optimised. The checklists serve as an advance reminder to consultants of the matters to be considered and the documents to be submitted when preparing and submitting design proposals for remedial or preventive works, thereby reducing the need for amendments and saving processing time.

(7) From January 2026, the guidelines on the processing of default works have been revised to further streamline the procedures and shorten the time required. The target timeframe for simple cases (such as those with no site constraints and not requiring to obtain consent from owners of adjacent lots) is significantly shortened to 27 months to speed up compliance.

(8) BD is currently exploring the feasibility of extending the Electronic Submission Hub's functionality to process the plans submitted by its consultants, including those relating to default works on private slopes.

4.44 BD stated that the above measures have expedited the carrying out and completion of default works. The number of default works commenced by BD increased from 22 in 2023 to 40 in 2024 and 66 in 2025. It also completed 44 default works in 2025, which exceeds the output in previous years. The number of default works in progress has been reduced to 62 as at December 2025 (see **table 18**).

Inter-departmental Collaboration

4.45 **Table 20** shows that of the 256 cases of default works completed between 2015 and 2025, BD sought professional advice from CEDD for almost all these cases. Furthermore, around 37% of the cases involved government land and required permission letter from LandsD. These figures demonstrate that default works frequently involve inter-departmental collaboration.

Table 20: Number of default works involving inter-departmental collaboration

Year	No. of default works completed in that year	No. of default works for which application for permission letter was made to LandsD	No. of default works for which professional advice was sought from CEDD
2015	12	4	12
2016	16	6	16
2017	12	7	12
2018	24	10	24
2019	15	5	12
2020	25	7	23
2021	30	4	27
2022	31	9	30
2023	18	11	18
2024	29	14	29
2025	44	18	43
Total	**256**	**95 (37.1%)**	**246 (96.1%)**

4.46 BD stated that to expedite the approval process, from May 2024, where the revised reports of detailed design submitted by consultants do not involve geotechnical engineering (such as solely relating to structural or drainage design), BD will not consult CEDD on the revised reports, but will instead arrange for its own professional staff (including geotechnical engineers) to handle the reports directly.

4.47 On the other hand, default works may involve government land adjacent to private slopes (such as soil nailing on government land), and hence require permission

letter from LandsD. Following the launch of this direct investigation operation, BD took the initiative to further discuss with LandsD on measures to simplify the approval process. From May 2025, LandsD has simplified the granting of temporary government land allocations to BD by way of block approval. Previously, BD was required to apply for LandsD's permission letter for each case of default works (which was a time-consuming process involving extensive liaison because BD had to obtain the consent of all defaulting owners on two occasions, including their consent to submit the application for permission letter, and subsequently their consent to accept the conditions approved by LandsD). Under the new process with block approval already received, BD only needs to notify LandsD of the details of works two weeks before commencement, thereby slashing the processing time. Between May and December 2025, 15 cases of default works involving government land were processed through the simplified process. Moreover, BD has requested LandsD to further streamline the approval process for applications for permission letter submitted by registered professionals appointed by owners to carry out works on government land.

OVERALL SITUATION OF OUTSTANDING DANGEROUS HILLSIDE ORDERS

Annual Targets for Handling Dangerous Hillside Orders

4.48 Each year, BD sets targets for handling outstanding dangerous hillside orders issued in different years. **Table 21** shows that in 2025, BD completed the handling (i.e. compliance) of 107 dangerous hillside orders, exceeding the original target of 102. Of the 10 sub-targets set for that year, its actual performance exceeded or nearly met seven of the targets; it fell short of the remaining three targets.

Table 21: BD's targets and actual performance in January to December 2025 for handling outstanding dangerous hillside orders

Targets (2025)	No. of orders issued	Performance as at 31 Dec 2025: cumulative no. and percentage of orders handled
Handling 98% of orders issued in 2015 or before	3,630	3,558 (98.0%)
Handling 90% of orders issued in 2016	85	77 (90.6%)
Handling 85% of orders issued in 2017	40	32 (80.0%)
Handling 75% of orders issued in 2018	42	38 (90.5%)
Handling 70% of orders issued in 2019	43	27 (62.8%)

Targets (2025)	No. of orders issued	Performance as at 31 Dec 2025: cumulative no. and percentage of orders handled
Handling 65% of orders issued in 2020	59	56 (94.9%)
Handling 65% of orders issued in 2021	45	36 (80.0%)
Handling 45% of orders issued in 2022	35	16 (45.7%)
Handling 40% of orders issued in 2023	45	17 (37.8%)
Handling 20% of orders issued in 2024	51	5 (9.8%)

4.49 **Table 22** shows that as at December 2025, a total of 249 stage 1 and stage 2 orders had remained outstanding upon expiry of the deadline for compliance. The status of these orders was as follows:

Table 22: Progress on outstanding dangerous hillside orders upon expiry of the deadline for compliance (As at December 2025)

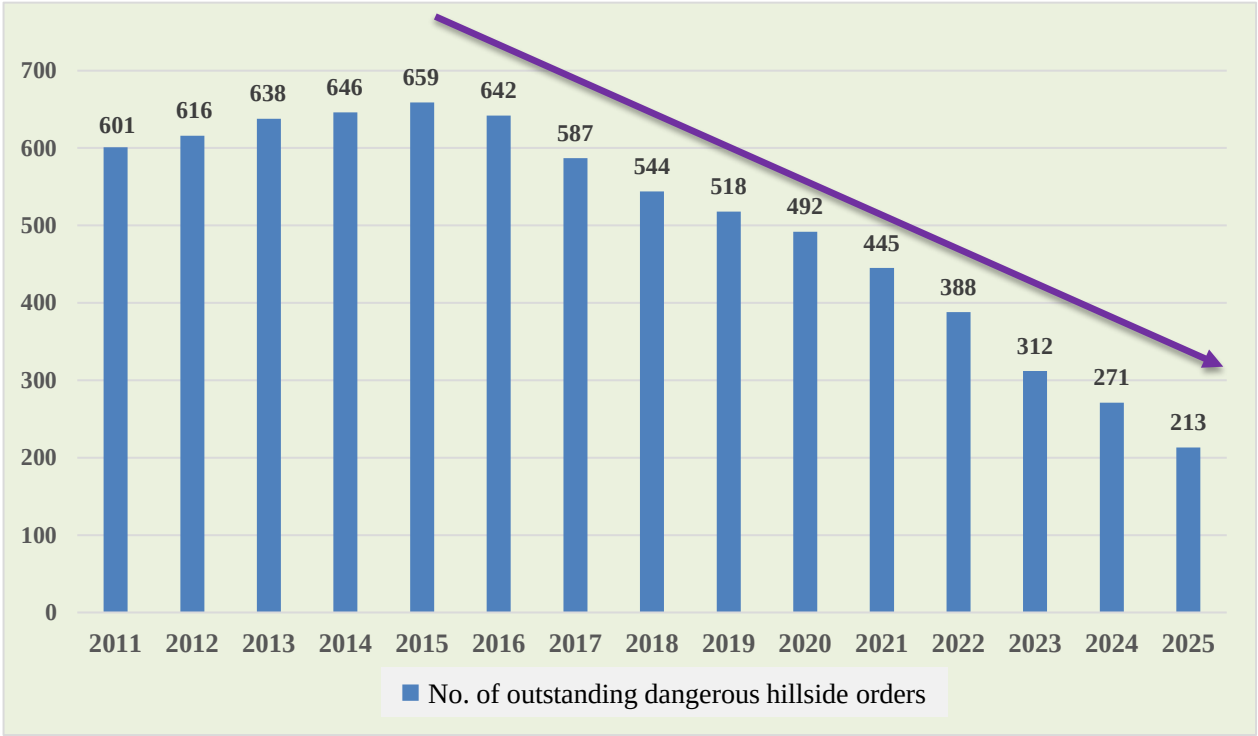
Status of outstanding dangerous hillside orders upon expiry of the deadline for compliance	No. of stage 1 and stage 2 orders concerned
Owners had lodged an appeal with legal proceedings still ongoing	14
Pending appointment of authorised persons by owners	18
Owners had appointed authorised persons, and investigation or works proposals were being prepared	97
Owners had appointed authorised persons and registered contractors, and remedial or preventative works were in progress	36
BD was initiating prosecution*	22
BD was carrying out default works#	62
Total	**249**

* Generally, BD will carry out default works following a second prosecution.

\# BD had already engaged consultants and the default works were in progress.

4.50 BD stated that in recent years it has strived to clear the backlog of outstanding dangerous hillside orders. In July 2022, it drew up a five-year plan as an internal target for handling default works. **Figure 25** shows that the number of outstanding orders dropped by around 68% from a peak of 659 in 2015 (excluding new orders issued that year) to 213 in 2025 (excluding new orders issued that year).

Figure 25: Number of outstanding dangerous hillside orders



4.51 Of the 213 orders that were still outstanding by the end of 2025, 150 (70%) were issued between 2015 and 2024, 41 (19%) between 2010 and 2014, and 22 (10%) in 2009 or before. In other words, around 30% of the outstanding dangerous hillside orders were issued in 2014 or before. Except for 14 orders (7%) which were subject to appeal proceedings, all these orders were either in the compliance stage or subject to enforcement proceedings.

CHALLENGES FACING BD

4.52 BD pointed out that the dangerous hillside orders which are long outstanding all involve complex cases. In particular, where the slope is situated in a common area under joint ownership, the co-owners need to spend a lot of time discussing and agreeing on matters relating to the investigation and maintenance works, including the appointment of professionals, specific works proposals, cost estimates and the apportionment of costs.

4.53 Furthermore, remedial or preventive works on slopes involve technical requirements and administrative complexities. Taking slopes in rural areas of the New Territories as an example, New Territories exempted houses, under the Buildings Ordinance (Application to the New Territories) Ordinance, are exempt from certain provisions of the Buildings Ordinance and its subsidiary regulations, including the requirement to obtain approval and consent from BD before construction. As a result, BD has no relevant building or construction records, nor does it possess information on the site conditions. When carrying out preliminary investigation or preparing for maintenance works, BD staff are required to first address any unauthorised structures involved and any objections from villagers. They are also required to respond to any concerns of local stakeholders regarding how the works might affect their access or usage. In cases where road access is unavailable or entry is not permitted, they must find solutions such as initiating legal proceedings to apply for a warrant. Environmental constraints at the location of the slope, such as a lack of direct access by road, obstruction by existing facilities, or being too narrow for the entry of works vehicles, will further increase the difficulty of designing and carrying out the works. Moreover, while soil nailing is a common and effective method of slope upgrading, prior consent must be obtained from other private lot owners or LandsD if the works need to extend onto adjacent private or government land. This will further increase the complexity and the time required for administrative procedures.

4.54 When following up on dangerous hillside orders, BD is also frequently confronted with disputes over maintenance responsibility. Resolution of such disputes often involves legal proceedings and takes time. Some owners claimed that they were unaware of their maintenance responsibility prior to receipt of a dangerous hillside order. In cases where the owners lodged statutory appeals against the maintenance responsibility after receiving the order, the appeal process may span several years. Pursuant to section 27A(1) of the Buildings Ordinance, BD serves dangerous hillside orders on the owners of the land or structure, or on the persons who under the terms of a government lease are under an obligation to maintain the land or structure (**note 5** in **para. 3.12**). In other words, based on LandsD's determination results (**para. 2.11**), BD may require private property owners to comply with a dangerous hillside order in respect of slopes situated on government land outside private lots.

4.55 According to BD, disputes over maintenance responsibility are more common in relation to slopes situated on government land adjacent to private lots. BD stated that some cases are situated in rural areas of the New Territories, where lot boundary may be unclear and the interpretation of lease clauses may be disputed. Furthermore, as the private buildings in question may have been completed several decades ago, relevant records are incomplete or even non-existent. Accordingly, it is difficult to prove that the slopes on government land were formed as a result of the development of the private land. Faced with such disputes, BD can only rely on the professional judgement of LandsD and CEDD to provide the Appeal Tribunal (Buildings) with the Government's justification as to why the slope maintenance responsibility lies with the private property owners for consideration.

4.56 Even when BD carries out works on behalf of defaulting owners, it still has a significant amount of follow-up work to do, including conducting procurement and tendering in accordance with government procedures; coordinating works plans and progress with consultants and contractors; maintaining communication with occupiers of the relevant lots; applying to LandsD for temporary land allocation for the temporary storage of materials or soil nailing; and coordinating with various government departments (such as coordinating traffic arrangements during the works with the Transport Department and the Highways Department).

4.57 BD stated that the above circumstances all affect the progress of compliance with dangerous hillside orders. Nevertheless, BD has proactively reviewed the situation and continued to introduce enhancement and improvement measures in recent years. By streamlining procedures and strengthening collaboration and communication with other departments, it aims to clear the case backlog with due care as soon as possible.

5

SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS, PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION

5.1 Private property owners are responsible for regular inspection and maintenance of their man-made slopes; upon receiving the dangerous hillside orders issued by BD, they should also comply in a timely manner. Apart from supporting private property owners by various means, CEDD, BD and LandsD also carry out publicity and education.

CEDD

5.2 CEDD facilitates proper maintenance of slopes by private property owners through publications. It also actively organises public education activities to promote slope safety and raise public awareness of the risk of landslides. The Department considered that public education not only reminds private property owners to carry out regular slope maintenance to reduce the risk of landslides, but also minimises the consequences of landslides by promoting personal precautionary measures to be taken during heavy rainfall. Since 2018, CEDD has established an Advisory Committee on public communication strategy for slope safety to review the Government's publicity and education work regarding slope safety and to advise the Government.

Publications

5.3 To facilitate proper maintenance of slopes and retaining walls by private property owners, CEDD has compiled the Geoguide 5 – Guide to Slope Maintenance. Aimed at the engineering profession, the guide presents recommended standards of good practice for the maintenance of man-made slopes, retaining walls and natural terrain hazard mitigation measures. The Layman's Guide to Slope Maintenance, on the other hand, provides a simple and easy summary to educate private property owners and management agents on how to maintain man-made slopes and natural terrain hazard mitigation measures; it also offers useful information to assist them in discharging their

maintenance responsibility as stipulated under the aforesaid code of practice.

5.4 Since the Geoguide 5 and the Layman's Guide to Slope Maintenance were first published in 1995, the maintenance of man-made slopes in Hong Kong has gradually become more systematic. With more experience accrued, CEDD regularly reviews the standards and requirements for slope maintenance and updates the Geoguide 5. The latest edition of Geoguide 5 published in late 2023 is available on CEDD's website.

5.5 In addition, CEDD has worked closely with the Property Management Services Authority ("PMSA"). In 2024, it assisted PMSA in formulating the Code of Conduct entitled "Slope Management Work" and the related Best Practice Guide to raise awareness within the property management sector about the regular maintenance of slopes related to properties.

Community Advisory Unit

5.6 CEDD has set up the Community Advisory Unit to provide private property owners with free advice on how to comply with dangerous hillside orders (Tel: 2760 5800). The Unit also organises slope safety seminars and talks from time to time, offers an in-person meeting service and advise the public on slope maintenance and dangerous hillside orders.

Thematic Activities

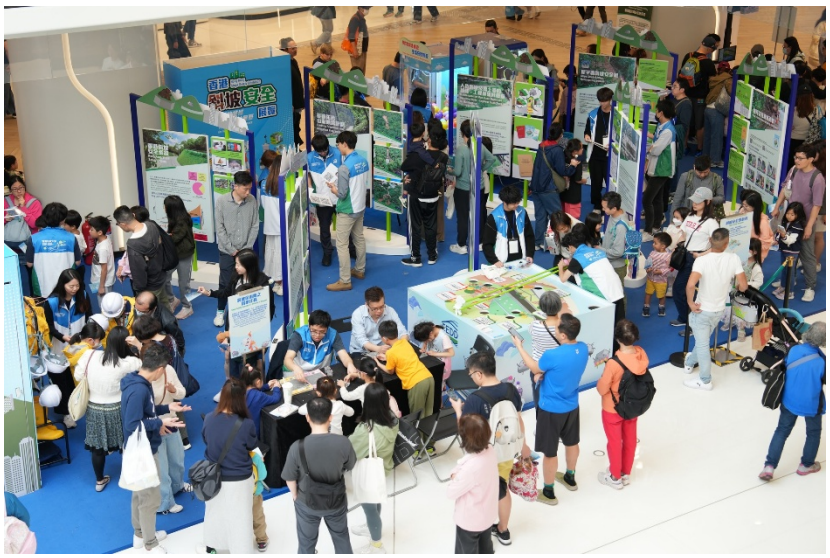
5.7 In 2022, CEDD organised a series of commemorative and public education activities entitled "Remembrance and Reflection: 50 Years after the Tragic Landslides on 18 June 1972'' to mark the tragedy's 50th anniversary. By reflecting on the two severe landslides that occurred in Sau Mau Ping, Kowloon, and Po Shan Road, Hong Kong Island, these activities aimed to remind the public to remain vigilant against the risk of landslides.

Figure 26: Poster of "Remembrance and Reflection: 50 Years after the Tragic Landslides on 18 June 1972" thematic exhibition (Source: CEDD website)



5.8 In February and March 2025, CEDD organised a themed exhibition entitled "Proper Slope Maintenance for Worry-free Life", focusing on the key points of private slope maintenance. In addition to a geotechnical engineer answering questions about slope safety and maintenance from the public at the venue, BD and LandsD representatives (including building surveyors, structural engineers and senior estate officers) were also invited to participate and provide the public with more comprehensive information.

Figure 27: Thematic Exhibition – Proper Slope Maintenance for Worry-free Life (Source: CEDD website)



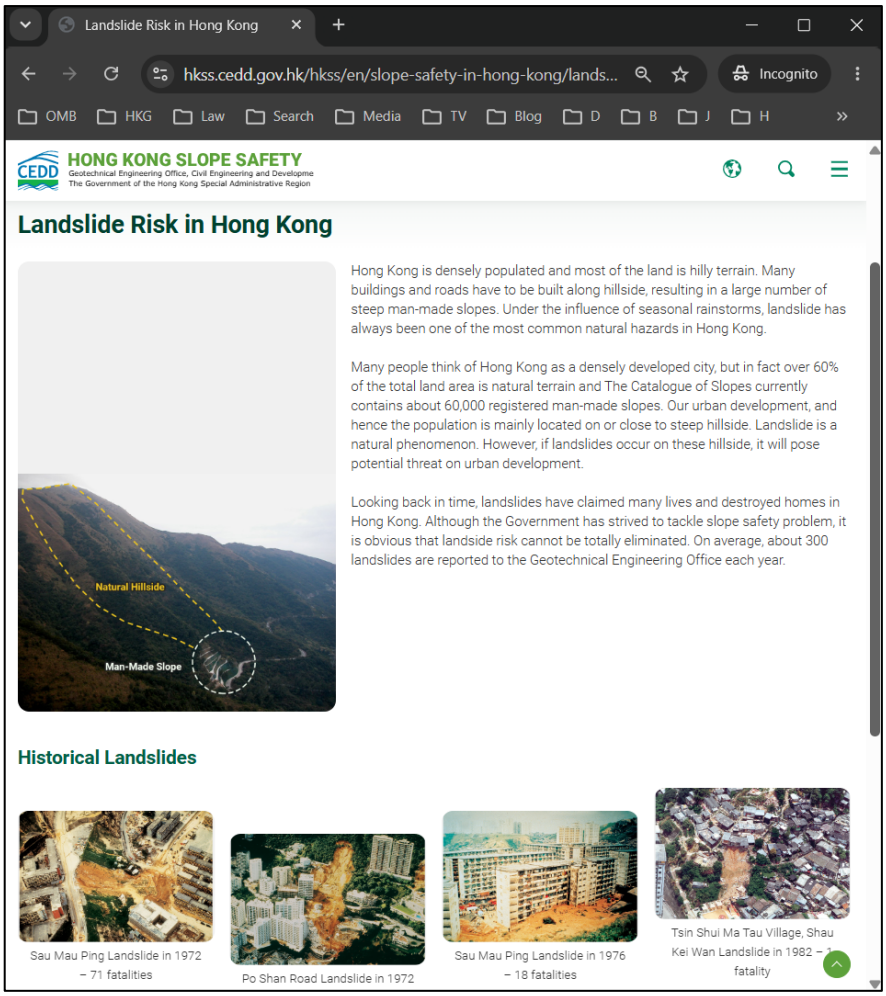
Ongoing Initiatives

5.9 In addition to thematic activities, CEDD also has in place ongoing public education initiatives to widely disseminate information on slope safety to society.

Hong Kong Slope Safety Thematic Website

5.10 The Hong Kong Slope Safety thematic website[9] set up by CEDD is a one-stop gateway to provide the public with information on slope safety measures, databases, publications and educational materials, event information, promotional videos and more.

Figure 28: Screenshot from Hong Kong Slope Safety website (Source: CEDD website)



[9] Website: https://hkss.cedd.gov.hk/hkss/en/home/index.html

Exhibitions and Seminars

5.11 CEDD regularly organises seminars, talks and training courses, as well as conducts slope safety talks and exhibitions in schools. Between April and July 2025, CEDD held a territory-wide Slope Maintenance Drawing Competition for primary schools to raise awareness among students.

5.12 CEDD and PMSA have continued to strengthen their collaboration. In addition to assisting PMSA in drawing up the Best Practice Guide on slope maintenance, it also organised a series of thematic seminars to brief private property owners on slope maintenance issues to provide them with more effective support. For example, CEDD organised in August 2024 a seminar under the theme "Safeguarding Building Safety" to brief over 2,000 property management practitioners on slope safety management and maintenance. The seminar included an introduction to the latest Geoguide 5 – Guide to Slope Maintenance, enabling frontline staff to understand specific methods for identifying risks, arranging regular inspections and following up on remedial works. In May 2025, CEDD organised another seminar under the theme "Enhancing Capabilities to Address Extreme Weather Conditions". More than 2,800 property management practitioners joined the seminar in person or online. They were briefed on the landslides that may be triggered by extreme weather, with an analysis of the key areas the industry should focus on when responding to such conditions.

Production of Announcement in the Public Interest

5.13 CEDD regularly broadcasts Announcement in the Public Interest ("API") on television and radio. In March 2025, a new API (see **fig. 29**) was launched to urge private property owners to remember to regularly maintain their private slopes, educate the public on using the Slope Information System to check who is responsible for the maintenance of man-made slopes or retaining walls, and remind the public to refrain from unauthorised earthworks, construction or cultivation on slopes.

Figure 29: Screenshot from API "Maintain Your Slopes, Secure Your Home" (Source: CEDD website)



Organising Guided Tours

5.14 In the wake of the catastrophic landslide in 1972 on Po Shan Road, Mid-Levels, CEDD designed an innovative and sustainable groundwater regulation system, known as the Po Shan Drainage Tunnel, to regulate the groundwater level on the hillside and reduce the risks of major landslides. A Landslide Sci-Tech Chamber was established within the tunnel, where guided tours are organised to raise public awareness of the importance of slope safety.

Figure 30: Po Shan Drainage Tunnel – Landslide Sci-Tech Chamber (Source: CEDD website)



5.15 CEDD has also launched public education initiatives, namely the Bowen Road Slope Study Trail and the Ho Man Tin Slope Study Trail, to showcase the upgrading works and landscaping measures along the trail, including rigid barriers, flexible barriers and soil nailing. Guided visits are provided for the public.

Figure 31: Screenshot of Bowen Road Slope Study Trail (Source: CEDD website)



Figures 32 and 33: Displays along Bowen Road Slope Study Trail (Photos taken by our staff)

Figure 32



Figure 33



BD

Support for Private Property Owners Who Have Received Dangerous Hillside Orders

5.16 When issuing a dangerous hillside order, BD will provide private property owners with the contact details of its case officer and CEDD's Community Advisory Unit in the cover letter to facilitate communication and enquiries. It will also enclose "A Simple Guide to Comply with Dangerous Hillside Order" published jointly by BD and CEDD. The Guide provides concise, step-by-step instructions for private property owners to comply with the order as speedily and effectively as possible.

5.17 BD has recently introduced an array of measures to further promote and assist private property owners in complying with dangerous hillside orders. In January 2026, BD launched a study to enhance its website's search functions for private property owners to search more easily for suitable registered professionals and contractors to handle slope maintenance, and facilitate their access to relevant information and appointment of registered professionals at an early stage to follow up on dangerous hillside orders. On the dangerous hillside orders issued since January 2026, BD has provided a QR code for viewing its promo video "How to Comply with a Dangerous Hillside Order", such that private property owners can understand the process and available support.

5.18 Furthermore, in cases where there are site constraints, where the consent of owners of adjacent lots is required, or where owners need assistance, BD will not only provide technical assistance, but also deploy its Social Services Team to strengthen coordination, explanation and liaison. BD will also notify the local District Office of the Home Affairs Department to assist in communicating with owners of adjacent lots and to help owners in need to establish owners' corporations.

5.19 After compliance of a dangerous hillside order, either by works carried out by the owners themselves or by default works, BD will remind owners of the need to inspect the slope regularly in the completion letter.

To Support and Facilitate Performance of Duties by Registered Professionals Appointed by Owners

5.20 In its reply to the notification of appointment of registered professionals, BD encourages them to contact the Department's case officer directly before preparing proposals for remedial or preventive works. It can arrange a joint meeting with CEDD to discuss any uncertainties in advance and explore solutions.

5.21 Where remedial or preventive works on a private slope involve adjacent government land (such as soil nailing on government land), registered professionals appointed by owners have to submit an application directly to LandsD. BD will actively provide technical advice and coordination to support registered professionals. To further strengthen coordination and monitor case progress, from 2024 onwards, BD regularly compiles and provides LandsD with a list of cases involving remedial or preventive works on government land for which LandsD has not yet approved the permission letters, urging the latter's early action (see **para. 5.30**).

5.22 BD has fully implemented the Electronic Submission Hub to receive and process plans and related applications submitted by registered building professionals under the Buildings Ordinance, including plans for remedial or preventive works on private slopes. Electronic submission and processing can dispense with paper documents and streamline the workflow. Together with BD, a total of 35 government departments and organisations, including CEDD and LandsD, can receive all types of building plans and documents instantly and simultaneously via the electronic system. As departments and organisations no longer need to exchange paper plans and documents, their workflows are streamlined and efficiency is enhanced.

Website and Social Media

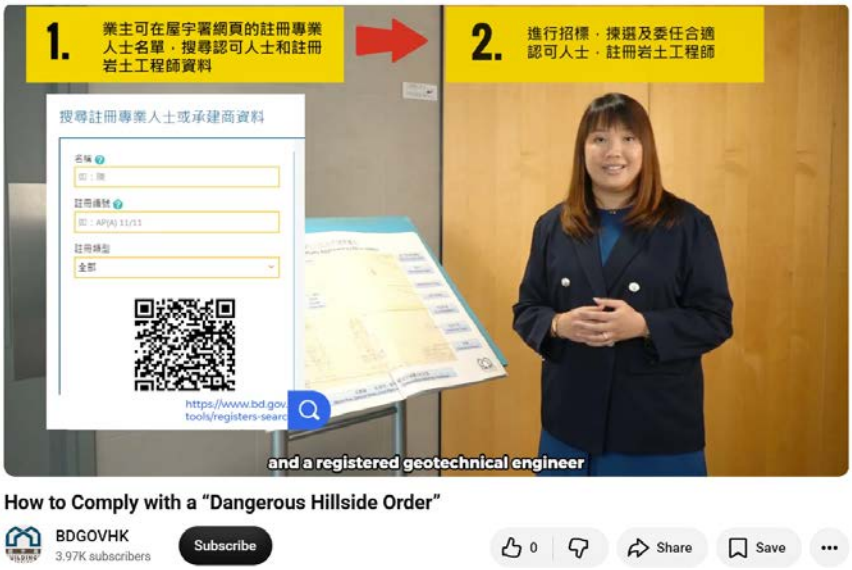
5.23 BD has updated its web pages[10] on slope safety for the public to understand more easily the key steps for compliance with dangerous hillside orders, the assistance

[10] Website: https://www.bd.gov.hk/en/safety-inspection/slope-safety/index.html

schemes[11] operated by BD and the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA"), and the penalties for non-compliance. BD has also carried out publicity and education via social media.

5.24 BD has produced four promo videos on slope safety, which were uploaded to its website and social media platforms in October 2024. The topics covered by the videos include the responsibility for maintenance and repairs of private slopes, the key steps for compliance with dangerous hillside orders, and Routine Maintenance Inspections and Engineer Inspections for Maintenance of private slopes.

Figure 34: Screenshot from promo video
"How to Comply with a Dangerous Hillside Order" (Source: BD website)



5.25 In September 2025, BD enhanced the search functions on its website to include records of the issuance of and compliance with dangerous hillside orders, enabling prospective buyers and tenants to search for relevant information easily and quickly, thereby incentivising owners to comply.

Assisting Other Organisations in Drawing up Guidelines

5.26 Between April and July 2024, BD provided PMSA with advice on private slope safety and maintenance responsibility to assist PMSA in drawing up the Code of Conduct entitled "Slope Management Work", which was published in July of the same year.

5.27 Between April and August 2024, BD provided URA with advice on private slope safety and the points to note for slope maintenance, assisting URA in drawing up

[11] BD has launched the Building Safety Loan Scheme, under which private property owners may apply for loans to carry out slope maintenance or improvement works. In addition, the Integrated Building Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme operated by URA also provides financial assistance for eligible owners.

the Guidelines and Templates for Preparing Maintenance Manual for Residential and Composite Buildings.

LANDsD

5.28 LandsD will participate in exhibitions organised by CEDD and assist in the production of API to inform the public on how to use the Slope Information System to ascertain who is responsible for slope maintenance. Furthermore, should LandsD receive cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility, it will endeavour to explain to the private property owners raising the disputes the rationale behind its determination results, and recommend that they seek independent professional advice if necessary.

5.29 With regard to works on private slopes that involve soil nailing on government land, LandsD has since 2022 incorporated new provisions related to soil nailing into its letters of consent. These provisions define more clearly private property owners' responsibility regarding such works. With better understanding of their maintenance responsibility, private property owners can make informed decisions and obtain the Department's approval more speedily.

5.30 During this direct investigation operation, LandsD has also strengthened its communication with BD. Since 2024, it has established a database covering cases where BD has issued dangerous hillside orders to private lot owners, and the remedial or preventive works involve applications for permission letter to carry out works on government land. Upon reviewing the list of cases provided by BD, LandsD will immediately distribute it to the relevant District Lands Offices for follow-up. The list will also be submitted to senior management for review, monitoring and timely guidance on complex cases.

5.31 For lots with multiple co-owners, LandsD has since 2025 streamlined the approval process for works on government land by waiving the requirement for all owners to sign a letter of consent, and has set target processing times. LandsD has also drawn up a checklist of documents for applications of permission letter, and has liaised with BD to distribute it to private property owners who have been served with dangerous hillside orders. The checklist can assist private property owners who need to carry out works on government land in submitting a complete set of documents to LandsD as soon as possible after receiving an order, thereby shortening processing times.

6

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERALL COMMENTS

6.1 In recent years, extreme weather has brought torrential rains at times that increase the risk of severe landslides, threatening people's daily living, as well as their lives and property. The proper repair and maintenance of man-made slopes is crucial to the prevention of landslides. Currently, there are around 61,000 man-made slopes across Hong Kong, including around 38,600 government slopes, 15,800 private slopes and 6,300 slopes involving mixed responsibilities of the Government and private property owners. LandsD is tasked with determining the maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes.

6.2 Private property owners are responsible for the regular maintenance of private man-made slopes. To manage the risk of private man-made slopes, CEDD has implemented the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme (1977 to 2010) and the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme (2010 to present) in succession. Under the Programme, a specified number of private man-made slopes are selected under a risk-based approach for safety screening studies every year to assess whether their condition meets safety standards. Where *prima facie* evidence of distress or potential danger is observed on private slopes, CEDD will recommend that BD serve dangerous hillside orders on private property owners, requiring them to carry out investigation and necessary remedial or preventive works. To follow up on compliance with the orders, BD will vet the slope works proposals submitted by registered professionals appointed by owners, monitor the works progress, and instigate prosecutions against non-compliance cases. Depending on circumstances, BD carries out works on behalf of defaulting owners and recovers the costs from them upon completion.

6.3 During this direct investigation operation, we reviewed a large amount of data and around 50 cases of different types, including cases requiring LandsD's determination of maintenance responsibility, cases involving disputes over responsibility, cases with dangerous hillside orders issued by BD (complied with by private property owners or with default works carried out by BD), etc. We selected ten

of these cases for in-depth studies. Further details are in the **Appendix**.

6.4 Our investigation has revealed inadequacies that require improvements to efficiency in LandsD's determination of maintenance responsibility for man-made slopes, handling of disputes, and granting of permission letters to carry out works on government land; as well as BD's issuance and follow-up of dangerous hillside orders and carrying out of default works. As for the inadequate maintenance of private slopes, CEDD can strengthen education and support to private property owners through safety screening studies. Moreover, there is still substantial room for improving inter-departmental collaboration in the risk management of private slopes and enforcement. During this investigation, all three departments responded positively to our findings and proactively proposed improvement measures. We truly appreciate the departments for their efforts. Our specific comments on each area are as follows.

(I) LANDsD's DETERMINATION OF MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAN-MADE SLOPES

Lengthy Determination Process

6.5 Between 2019 and 2024, LandsD took longer than one year to complete the determination in around 70% of cases and over two years in about 50% of cases (see **para. 2.17 and table 2**). As at the end of April 2025, there was even a backlog of around 1,830 cases with maintenance responsibility not yet determined. In our view, it is unreasonable to take years just to determine which party should be responsible for slope maintenance. Even factoring in the impact of COVID-19, we still consider LandsD inefficient at determination work.

6.6 We understand that determination cases vary in nature and complexity, leading to different lengths of time required. Yet, an excessively long time for determination is detrimental to slope safety because it defers the assumption of responsibility by the maintenance party.

6.7 Since the launch of our investigation and in response to our concern, LandsD has required its consultants to submit a determination report within two months for priority cases, thereby enabling LandsD to advise BD within the specified timeframe (i.e. 3.75 months) (see **paras. 2.24 and 2.27**). We are also pleased to learn that LandsD has drawn up target timeframes for determination cases of different complexity and implemented an internal monitoring mechanism (see **para. 2.19**). We recommend that LandsD continue to monitor the implementation of these improvement measures, striving to complete all cases within reasonable timeframes. Separately, LandsD should conduct systematic analysis of determination cases requiring a long completion time to examine the common causes and formulate corresponding measures, so as to facilitate the speedy completion of cases by the department and its consultants.

6.8 Apart from monitoring the completion time of cases, the quality of consultants' work is equally important. In **case 1**, LandsD had doubt about the results in the determination report submitted by the consultant, and so suggested that the consultant seek geotechnical advice from CEDD. The entire determination process took over a year. We recommend that LandsD analyse the common issues requiring attention and speedier handling in determination cases, and provide consultants with reminders and guidance, so as to ensure proper handling of determination work by consultants and avoid repeated revisions and submission of reports.

6.9 We are pleased to learn that in order to clear backlog cases, LandsD has implemented a series of improvement measures, including a reporting mechanism and strengthening supervision of consultants. All backlog cases were cleared before the end of 2025.

Streamlining Inter-departmental Workflow for Determination Process

6.10 A newly-formed or modified slope is first handled by CEDD for delineation of slope boundary or area and registration. LandsD will then determine the maintenance responsibility. Moreover, LandsD will determine the maintenance responsibility again in the event of any change to a man-made slope's cadastral records. During the determination process and depending on the circumstances of the case, LandsD needs to obtain information and advice from relevant departments.

6.11 We recommend that LandsD and CEDD jointly explore how to streamline the workflow and inter-departmental exchange of information, so as to enhance the efficiency of the determination process. We are pleased to note that LandsD has set up a new inter-departmental online platform in December 2025 for consultants to upload their determination reports. Through this platform, departments can give comments and view comments given by others on a real-time basis, thereby expediting the exchange of comments and information.

Failure to Inform Maintenance Parties of Determination Results

6.12 Upon completion of the determination process and before uploading the results to the Slope Information System, LandsD never notified the parties considered to have maintenance responsibility. BD noted that some owners were unaware of their maintenance responsibility before receiving the dangerous hillside orders; some even filed a statutory appeal against their responsibility after receiving the orders.

6.13 Given that LandsD never informed the maintenance parties of the determination results in the past, we are concerned that some private property owners might have neglected their responsibility due to unawareness of it, resulting in slope deterioration. If private property owners only become aware of their responsibility upon receiving a dangerous hillside order issued by BD, not only have they already missed the opportunity for routine inspections and maintenance, but more importantly, the slope's structure may have become unstable or even dangerous by that time.

Addressing potential disputes over maintenance responsibility at this stage is far too late from a public safety perspective.

6.14 In our view, LandsD should proactively notify the maintenance parties of its determination results to ensure that they are fully aware of and fulfil their responsibility as soon as possible. Any disputes over maintenance responsibility can also be addressed early. Specifically, for determination cases involving newly-formed slopes and re-determination cases involving changes in cadastral records, LandsD should notify the maintenance parties immediately upon completion or revision of determination results. As for determination cases already completed in the past, given the vast number of slopes involved, LandsD may issue notifications in batches to inform private property owners of their maintenance responsibilities based on the latest situation of slopes and review the progress regularly. We are pleased to note that our findings and recommendations are positively received by LandsD with relevant work already commenced (see **para. 2.33**).

Strengthening Inter-departmental Collaboration for Resolving Disputes over Maintenance Responsibility

6.15 Resolving disputes over maintenance responsibility often involves inter-departmental exchange of a vast amount of information and opinions. Where a department is requested to assist, its proactive cooperation is crucial for speedy resolution of disputes. In **case 2**, LandsD requested CEDD to confirm whether adjustment was required for the boundary of a slope, which was the subject in dispute. As the dispute involved complex boundary issues, the boundary of the slope was revised twice. As a result, the entire review process took one year and five months from the initial enquiry to the final reply.

6.16 Meanwhile, should private property owners contest their maintenance responsibility or even lodge a statutory appeal with the Appeal Tribunal (Buildings) after BD has issued a dangerous hillside order, BD, as the respondent, will play a coordinating role. It will seek information and professional advice from LandsD and CEDD to resolve the dispute. In **case 3** where a private property owner contested his maintenance responsibility after receiving an order, BD attempted to enlist LandsD's assistance with surveying to delineate the lot boundary. However, LandsD cited resource constraints and declined, countering that BD should engage a land surveyor itself. Only after BD escalated the matter to DEVB did LandsD provide assistance. Eventually, the determination results were revised after a review of the information and grounds submitted by the owner. BD then revoked the original order and issued a new one to another private property owner based on LandsD's revised determination results.

6.17 Undeniably, LandsD's SIMAR Unit is tasked with determining the slope maintenance responsibility. LandsD is duty bound to handle any dispute over its original determination results. Even though BD played a coordinating role upon order issuance, LandsD remained obliged to make every effort to provide assistance, rather than stay aloof. LandsD's performance in **case 3** was unsatisfactory but we are pleased

to note that improvement has been made. In particular, its Survey and Mapping Office has provided bureaux and departments with land boundary consultation service since December 2020 to better support their performance of statutory duties and enforcement actions.

6.18 Consolidating the above observations, we recommend that the three departments establish a monitoring mechanism for cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility to ensure timely information exchange and consultation among them. They should also step up staff training to ensure proactive assistance to other departments as required for speedy resolution of disputes.

6.19 While disputes cannot be entirely avoided, we note that in many cases LandsD revised its determination results after receiving information and grounds from the disputing party (with some archival records and information not kept by the Government). In fact, BD observed that in certain cases, the slope maintenance responsibility was unclear and left room for dispute (see **para. 4.55**). We recommend that the three departments, through the regular inter-departmental coordination meetings and the database established by LandsD, carefully analyse past cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility, particularly those where LandsD revised its determination results upon review or even the private property owners successfully appealed. The departments should exchange views and share experience to enhance the robustness of determination results at source. We consider that LandsD should take the lead in this exercise, with CEDD and BD actively supporting. We are pleased to note that in the second quarter of 2026, LandsD will organise internal training on determination of slope maintenance responsibility and risk management for private slopes to strengthen inter-departmental collaboration.

Maintaining Data on Cases Involving Disputes over Slope Maintenance Responsibility

6.20 At present, LandsD and BD do not maintain data on cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility. Specialised solutions are needed to address these complex and time-consuming cases. In the absence of data, it is difficult to conduct objective analysis to fully understand the actual circumstances of these cases or their impact on the overall slope safety work. We recommend that the two departments establish a communication mechanism for maintaining the number and relevant data (such as processing time) of cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility for analysis and monitoring purposes. We are pleased to note that relevant preparation work is underway.

(II) BD's ISSUANCE AND FOLLOW-UP OF DANGEROUS HILLSIDE ORDERS

Issuing Dangerous Hillside Orders Promptly

6.21 In recent years, BD has significantly improved in the time required to issue a dangerous hillside order upon CEDD's referral (see **paras. 4.16, 4.17 and table 9**). Between 2021 and 2025, BD took an average of 4.9 months, which is shorter than its target timeframe of 8 months.

6.22 Yet, we consider that the overall processing time is still rather long. CEDD recommends the issuance of dangerous hillside orders due to potential danger on private slopes, hence BD should act on the referrals as soon as possible, ordering private property owners to carry out investigation and necessary remedial or preventive works. We are pleased to note that after consulting CEDD, BD has revised its guidelines in February 2026, which now specify that for straightforward cases, BD will issue a dangerous hillside order within three months upon CEDD's referral (see **para. 4.17**). We recommend that BD, for complex cases, further review and explore any scope to streamline the workflow before issuing a dangerous hillside order and rationalise the consultation process with CEDD and LandsD, with a view to adopting a more ambitious target to issue orders as soon as possible.

6.23 We are pleased to learn that BD has included the issuance of dangerous hillside orders in the "to-do" list of its Building Condition Information System for better monitoring and reminding staff to follow up in a timely manner (see **para. 4.17**). We recommend that senior staff continue to make good use of the system to closely monitor the progress of issuance of orders by staff and ensure smooth operation.

Lengthy Time for Compliance

6.24 Both stage 1 and stage 2 of a dangerous hillside order often take years to comply with (see **paras. 4.23 to 4.26, and tables 11 to 14**). The Office's data analysis and case studies revealed that the lengthy time for compliance was attributable to the following issues.

<u>Owners Delaying Appointment of Registered Professionals</u>

6.25 Data show that after receiving stage 1 dangerous hillside orders, private property owners had serious delays in appointing registered professionals (see **table 10 and para. 4.19**). The same problem is revealed in our case studies. In **case 5**, BD served a reminder on the owners after the order was due (i.e. after seven months) according to the workflow and guidelines at that time, but the owners ultimately took 22 months since the issuance of the order to appoint registered professionals. BD had considered prosecution but decided against it subsequently as registered professionals had been appointed and the slope works proposal had been approved. In our view, this might send a wrong message to private property owners that they could delay

compliance with impunity. Subsequently, BD revised its guidelines in May 2021 to specify that a reminder is to be issued earlier: BD will issue a reminder if no notification of appointing registered professionals is received after two months of issuing the order.

6.26 For cases with delays in appointing registered professionals, BD will follow up proactively, including offering support for owners, initiating publicity and education, and instigating prosecution against those owners with no intention to comply. It has also launched the electronic case management and reporting platform of the Building Condition Information System in November 2025, which can enhance enforcement efficiency by automatically generating reminders and warning letters upon expiry of the deadline for compliance of orders, replacing the manual process of issuing letters.

6.27 The appointment of registered professionals is merely the initial step in compliance. If this first step has already taken years to complete, subsequent actions would only be further delayed. Moreover, in cases where the owners have not yet appointed registered professionals and the appeal process or prosecution by BD is ongoing, BD will engage consultants to monitor the safety of the slopes regularly, effectively shifting the relevant costs onto the Government. We recommend that for cases where private property owners have delayed appointing registered professionals, BD fully utilise the new function of the Building Condition Information System for timely follow-up, by issuing reminders and warning letters as required and stepping up the support for owners who face difficulties despite their willingness to comply with the orders. On the other hand, it should take decisive enforcement action against those who show no intention of complying.

Failing to Offer Assistance Early

6.28 In **case 4**, after BD issued a stage 1 order in October 2014, it took a full decade before compliance was confirmed in October 2024. Having analysed the case, we found that there were practical challenges as well as other problems. First, the private property owners spent nearly a year appointing registered professionals, then no progress was made for another year after the registered professionals submitted an initial ground investigation report. Subsequently, the registered professionals submitted the design drawings for improvement works time and again. BD rejected their proposals three times due to non-compliance with the Buildings Ordinance, including that the designs affected the fire escape routes and drainage facilities of the adjacent building, or the designs of soil nailing extended into an adjacent private lot without the consent of relevant owners.

6.29 In December 2018, the registered professionals had informed BD of the difficulties they faced. In July 2021, they again explicitly requested assistance from BD's Social Services Team, but BD replied that it was unable to intervene as the request fell outside the scope of the Team's services. To expedite progress and address the situation of the owners of the adjacent lot, BD proactively contacted the Home Affairs Department in December 2023 to facilitate their formation of an owners' corporation, and arranged for BD's Social Services Team to handle the liaison work. In the same

month, BD also contacted CEDD and the registered professionals appointed by the owners to hold a meeting to discuss solutions regarding the improvement works designs. Finally, the proposal for remedial or preventive works was approved by BD in October 2024.

6.30 No doubt, the feasibility of the design of the remedial or preventive works and construction method were affected by site constraints, thereby increasing the complexity of the case. Nevertheless, the registered professionals appointed by the private property owners had clearly expressed the difficulties they faced and requested the deployment and assistance of BD's Social Services Team, but BD provided assistance at a rather late stage to resolve the problem. Had BD stepped in and coordinated earlier, the process could have been expedited. We recommend that BD classify complex cases, such as those subject to consent from owners of adjacent lots or site constraints, and strengthen its follow-up mechanism with proactive intervention, coordination and support for owners in difficulties to facilitate their early compliance. BD replied that it is exploring upgrades of the Building Condition Information System to facilitate classification of cases. It will also monitor progress through regular meetings and various committees, and has reminded staff to deploy the Social Services Team to assist owners in need. BD will continue to explore with CEDD and LandsD to establish a mechanism for regular sharing of information and follow-up, and discuss further actions in the coordination meetings.

Repeated Submission and Vetting of Slope Works Proposals

6.31 To comply with stage 1 orders, registered professionals appointed by owners should submit proposals of remedial or preventive works to BD upon completing slope investigation. Meanwhile, BD needs to consult relevant departments on the proposals received. Comments from all departments are listed in the approval or rejection letter issued to registered professionals for reference and follow-up.

6.32 From case studies (such as **case 4**), we note that registered professionals appointed by owners often need to resubmit proposals time and again as the proposals could not meet the requirements stipulated in the Buildings Ordinance or the technical details were not agreed by CEDD. This process of repeated submission and vetting could drag on for years. Not only does it take a lot of time and efforts of the owners, the registered professionals and the staff of various departments, but it also leads to delays in compliance, which is an issue to be addressed. We recommend that BD conduct systematic analysis of the slope works proposals submitted by registered professionals and collate opinions from relevant departments (including CEDD and LandsD), with a view to drawing up a list of common issues and difficulties encountered in complex cases for better communication with industry practitioners. This would help to avoid hindrance to the efficiency due to repeated rejections and submissions of proposals. Meanwhile, BD can compile a checklist of reports and documents to be submitted by registered professionals at different stages of the approval process for their compliance. BD expected to complete the compilation of relevant checklists by the third quarter of 2026.

6.33 Currently, depending on circumstances, registered professionals appointed by owners may need to approach CEDD, LandsD and other departments directly to seek advice or approval when preparing slope works proposals. We note that BD often needs to enquire about the progress of other departments, which is time-consuming. To strengthen inter-departmental communication and progress monitoring, we recommend that BD require registered professionals to copy all their correspondence with other departments regarding dangerous hillside orders to BD, so as to enable BD to have a better grasp of the compliance status and step in where necessary. In response to our recommendation, BD has revised the relevant standard reply, in which registered professionals are explicitly required to copy all their correspondence with other departments regarding dangerous hillside orders to BD.

To Strengthen Enforcement Efforts

6.34 Where owners show no intention of complying with dangerous hillside orders, BD should take decisive enforcement action to cause them to pay the price. We note that in many cases where the deadline for compliance had expired, BD issued multiple reminders and warnings before considering prosecution. Prosecution was often initiated years after the specified deadline for compliance, not to mention cases that required repeated prosecutions against owners who remained unwilling to comply even after conviction.

6.35 We are pleased to note that since the launch of this investigation, BD has commenced a review on the procedures for repeated prosecutions, including the reissuance of reminders and warning letters, prosecution criteria and target processing time. We recommend that BD complete the revision of guidelines as soon as possible to further enhance the enforcement efficiency and increase deterrence.

Failing to Fully Meet Targets for Handling Dangerous Hillside Orders

6.36 The Office recognises the challenges faced by BD in following up on dangerous hillside orders (see **paras. 4.52 to 4.56**), and acknowledges its efforts and achievements over the years in clearing the backlog of cases (see **fig. 25 and para. 4.50**), particularly the ongoing introduction of enhancement and improvement measures in recent years to streamline procedures and strengthen collaboration and communication with other departments. Faced with the challenges of ageing slopes and extreme weather, BD must continue its unremitting efforts to ensure public safety.

6.37 Each year, BD sets targets for handling outstanding dangerous hillside orders issued in different years. We are pleased to note that in 2025, BD completed handling of 107 outstanding orders (i.e. with compliance confirmed), exceeding the original target of 102. BD exceeded or met seven of the ten targets set for that year, but failed to meet the remaining three (see **table 21 and para. 4.48**). With improvement measures introduced in various areas, we expect improvements in BD's performance in handling outstanding orders. We recommend that BD continue to monitor the compliance status stringently, conduct timely review of the effectiveness of improvement measures and

refine them to ensure the targets can be met.

(III) LANDsD's APPROVAL OF PERMISSION LETTER TO CARRY OUT WORKS ON GOVERNMENT LAND

6.38 In many cases, the remedial or preventive works of private slopes involve soil nailing on adjacent government land, or extension from private land to government land. Private property owners need to apply to LandsD for permission letters before carrying out such works.

6.39 Our case studies reveal that LandsD's approval process took a relatively long time. Different problems were involved, including complex land issues and applicants' delay in replying. In **case 8**, the registered professionals appointed by owners applied to LandsD in October 2021 for permission letter to carry out soil nailing on government land. LandsD did not approve it until March 2024, while 15 requests to expedite the process were received from BD in the interim. LandsD explained that as part of the government land involved in the application was held under a short-term tenancy, negotiation with the tenant was required to reclaim part of the land to facilitate the works. It was only after signing an agreement with the tenant in February 2024 to reclaim the relevant government land that the permission letter could be approved the following month.

6.40 In **case 6**, after BD issued a stage 2 order in January 2014, the registered professionals appointed by owners submitted a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works in October 2014. As the proposed works designs involved soil nailing extended into adjacent government land, the registered professionals applied to LandsD in January 2015 for permission letter to carry out works on government land. The works concerned a residential site that the Government planned to sell in 2016. Hence, LandsD needed to consult relevant departments regarding the implications and clarify the boundaries of the works area with the registered professionals, so as to ascertain the boundaries of the site for sale and carry out a land survey. Following the sale of the site in October 2016, LandsD consulted relevant departments regarding the application in February 2017. During the processing of the application, the registered professionals appointed by owners, CEDD and BD repeatedly requested LandsD to expedite approval so that works can commence promptly to ensure public safety. Subsequently, LandsD notified the owners in August 2019 that the application had been approved. The entire process took around four years and seven months from the date of submission. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, the owners did not sign the documents and pay fees until 24 months after the approval.

6.41 In **case 7**, the registered professionals appointed by owners applied for permission letter in September 2017. In February 2018, LandsD requested the registered professionals to amend the designs and scope of the works because the proposed works would affect footpaths and structures on government land, and other private lots. However, the registered professionals did not respond. Subsequently,

the registered professionals twice resigned from the project, only to be re-appointed each time after a gap of several months. In the interim, BD issued multiple reminders, but LandsD indicated in March 2021 that it did not support the application. In response to LandsD's comments, the registered professionals, in July 2022, submitted a revised proposal which would still affect nearby slopes and public facilities, and so LandsD advised them to consider further revisions or other viable options. In July 2023 (one year later), LandsD reiterated that it would only consider approving the application if no viable alternatives were available. The registered professionals subsequently provided further information for LandsD's consideration in September 2023 and March 2024. In August 2024, LandsD conveyed to the registered professionals its views and the views of other departments regarding the application, and in September 2024, repeatedly urged the registered professionals to respond. That same month, a landslide occurred on the slope in question; fortunately, there were no casualties. The application process spanned a full seven years. While there were delays on the part of the registered professionals, LandsD equally needed to improve its efficiency in handling the matter. There was also a lack of inter-departmental coordination: BD approved the remedial or preventive works proposal submitted by the registered professionals, but LandsD required revisions to the proposal, ultimately resulting in a landslide due to the failure to carry out timely maintenance on the slope.

6.42 While the approval process in the above cases was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and part of the delay was attributed to the failure of owners or their registered professionals to provide timely responses to the department's requests or views, we consider that on the whole LandsD's efficiency was still unsatisfactory. A lengthy approval process not only discourages owners from compliance, but also directly impacts on the commencement of works and harms slope safety. As the Government encourages owners to comply with dangerous hillside orders promptly, it is even more important for the regulatory authorities to lead by example by processing applications speedily.

6.43 We are pleased to learn that, since the launch of our direct investigation operation, LandsD has implemented a series of improvement measures, including a monitoring mechanism to submit case lists to senior management for review; setting target processing times; and streamlining the application process by waiving the previous requirement for all owners to sign a consent form (see **para. 5.31**). LandsD stated that these improvement measures have begun to yield positive results, with the processing time from receipt of an application to approval having been significantly reduced to eight months since January 2024.

6.44 We recommend that LandsD continue to review the progress of vetting applications and the implementation of newly established target processing times. LandsD should also continue to review the implementation of the reporting and monitoring mechanism to ensure proper supervision of subordinates by senior staff. All complex cases should be promptly escalated to senior management to ensure completion within a reasonable timeframe. Furthermore, we recommend that LandsD explore further enhancing the application and approval procedures to expedite the

granting of permission letters to registered professionals appointed by owners, thus enabling timely commencement of remedial or preventive works. We also recommend that LandsD provide, via BD, private property owners subject to dangerous hillside orders and their registered professionals with a list of required documents and application forms to further expedite the application process. Through the implementation of the above improvement measures, LandsD expects to complete processing within four months from the date of receiving an application with relevant documents and plans.

(IV) DEFAULT WORKS CARRIED OUT BY BD

Timely Decision of Default Works

6.45 According to BD's guidelines, where an owner has passed away, has not been found or has been prosecuted for a second time, or where the case involves numerous owners and difficulty in compliance, BD will consider, within three months upon the expiry of the deadline for compliance of the dangerous hillside order or within three months upon the latest conviction, engaging consultants and contractors to carry out works on behalf of the owners.

6.46 We note that in some cases (such as **case 9** and **case 10**) where the conditions for carrying out default works were met, BD did not actually reach a decision on whether to proceed until one to two years later. BD explained that prior to 2017, it generally adopted a strategy of persuasion, assistance, reminding and warning, under which it would compel owners to comply with the orders by means of reminder letters, warning letters and prosecution; in cases where owners faced practical difficulties (such as where organising compliance was difficult due to numerous owners involved), BD would only consider carrying out default works if prosecution was not the most effective means of enforcement. Subsequently, following the allocation of resources and the enhancement of operational strategies, BD engaged more consultants between 2017 and 2019 to speed up the clearance of the backlog through carrying out default works. **Case 9** is one such example. On the other hand, we are pleased to note that during our investigation, BD has reviewed and revised its guidelines to broaden the criteria for arranging default works, including cases where a dangerous hillside order has been issued for more than five years but no substantial progress has been made, despite repeated persuasion, assistance, reminding, warning and prosecution; or where cases involve numerous owners, making it difficult to organise compliance. In such cases, BD will consider arranging default works while pursuing prosecution. BD will also further review its follow-up actions after owners have been prosecuted for a second time.

6.47 From a safety perspective, BD's undertaking of default works is practically necessary in cases where the owners are unable to comply with the order for various reasons, and such decisions should be made and implemented at the earliest. While there were records in case files, in the absence of holistic data, we are unable to ascertain BD's overall performance in this area. Accordingly, we recommend that in respect of

dangerous hillside orders meeting the criteria for default works, BD properly maintain data on the actual times of deciding to carry out default works and works commencement for analysis and monitoring purposes, so as to avoid delay in decision-making.

Extremely Long Time for Carrying out Default Works

6.48 Between 2015 and 2025, BD completed default works for 256 cases. The annual average time for completion of default works ranged from 57 to 132 months, far exceeding BD's target timeframe of 44 months for simple default works (see **para. 4.41 and table 19**). Among them, only 12% were completed within 44 months.

6.49 Our case studies also reveal very long time taken for certain default works. In **case 9**, BD decided in January 2016 to carry out default works. Following such procedures as inviting tenders and appointing a consultant, vetting and approving the survey, assessment and design reports submitted by the consultant at various stages, and applying to LandsD for simplified temporary land allocation, a works order was finally issued in May 2022 (i.e. six years and four months later), and the works were completed in November 2023.

6.50 In **case 10**, BD had decided to carry out default works as early as December 2010. However, due to the complexity of the case, the consultant appointed by BD needed to carry out additional ground investigation works in response to comments from departments, and to revise the design report and the remedial or preventive works proposal for approval based on the investigation results. The entire process took nearly six years. Subsequently, BD applied to LandsD for temporary land allocation, which took over a year. At long last, BD issued the works order in February 2020 (i.e. more than nine years later), and the works were completed in November 2021.

6.51 While we recognise the complexity of default works in certain cases, it is worth noting that slopes subject to dangerous hillside orders have been identified as structurally unstable. Given that default works often commence several years after the deadline for compliance of the order has expired, the slopes have remained structurally unstable for an extended period, and their condition may have even deteriorated. Hence, default works must not be delayed. Apart from the above cases, data shows that in some years, the average processing time for default works exceeded ten years. Even taking into account the complexity and technical difficulties involved, as well as the extensive inter-departmental coordination required for the process, we consider the handling of default works too inefficient. BD explained that those cases with longer processing times were part of a backlog from earlier years and relatively complex. Among the 44 cases of default works completed by BD in 2025, six were undertaken after the five-year plan (i.e. after January 2022). The average processing time from the decision to commence works to completion was 40 months, indicating that its actual situation of handling default works has improved in recent years.

6.52 We are pleased to note that BD has acknowledged the need to significantly improve the progress of default works at present, and to this end has introduced a series

of measures to streamline procedures and clear the backlog. The implementation of default works has improved (see **paras. 4.37, 4.43 and 4.44**). To achieve systemic improvement, we recommend that BD further review its workflow for default works, and carefully examine potential areas for streamlining at each and every stage, so as to expedite completion. Given that BD often needs to consult CEDD and LandsD regarding default works, the two departments should proactively support BD's review.

6.53 Moreover, BD should address the problem of repeated submissions of reports and proposals for default works by its consultants due to non-compliance with requirements. We recommend that BD conduct a comprehensive analysis of such reports and proposals in the past as well as the feedback given by BD, CEDD and LandsD, with a view to consolidating common issues and areas for improvement for sharing with consultants, providing guidance and enabling lessons to be learned.

6.54 Separately, in over 30% of default works, LandsD's permission was required for carrying out works on government land (see **para. 4.45**). In the past, the application and approval process again took years. Since the launch of our investigation, BD has reached out to LandsD to discuss measures for streamlining the approval process (see **para. 4.47**). According to BD's initial observation, the new procedures operate smoothly and shorten the processing time significantly. We recommend that BD and LandsD review the new procedures after implementation for a period, and jointly explore and discuss room for further refinement to enhance efficiency.

Setting More Ambitious Target for Completing Default Works

6.55 Currently, BD's target timeframe for completing simple default works is 44 months. Even after excluding the 7 months for the maintenance period and discharging of consultant's duties, the target processing time is still over 30 months. By contrast, BD allows only 14 months for private property owners to comply with both stage 1 and stage 2 orders. In practice, BD may exercise discretion to grant extensions to owners in difficulties. At the same time, it is likely that BD encounters more resistance and constraints when carrying out default works and more coordination efforts are required. Nevertheless, it calls into question whether BD is too conservative in setting a significantly longer time for itself to complete default works. In response to our comments, BD has revised the guidelines in January 2026, which significantly shorten the target timeframe to 27 months for completing simple default works (e.g. with no site constraints and not requiring to obtain consent from owners of adjacent lots) (see **para. 3.37**).

6.56 As the authority for regulating the safety of private slopes, BD should carry out default works efficiently to set an example for private property owners. We recommend that BD further review the target timeframe for each stage of default works, striving to set a more ambitious target where feasible. Depending on needs, BD may set corresponding target timeframes for cases of varying complexity.

(V) CEDD's SAFETY SCREENING STUDIES FOR PRIVATE MAN-MADE SLOPES

6.57 Under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme, CEDD selects 100 private man-made slopes under a risk-based approach for safety screening studies every year. Where evidence of distress or potential danger is observed, CEDD will refer those slopes to BD for issuing dangerous hillside orders. In addition, if problems are found in slope maintenance, CEDD will, depending on actual circumstances, consider issuing advisory letters to private property owners advising on the slope problems and required repair works.

Improper Maintenance of Private Slopes

6.58 Between 2020 and 2024, CEDD found maintenance problems in an average of about 69% of slopes selected for safety screening studies each year, and the department issued advisory letters to about 60% of these slopes (see **table 6**).

6.59 We consider that while cases not warranting advisory letters involve relatively minor maintenance problems, CEDD can step up publicity and education on the relevant owners to ensure their awareness of the importance of proper maintenance of slopes. For such cases, we recommend that CEDD step up publicity and education, such as through posting information leaflets about slope maintenance, to encourage private property owners to carry out maintenance regularly and mitigate the risk of landslides. Furthermore, CEDD should explore setting a target timeframe for the issuance of advisory letters and information leaflets, with a view to swiftly relaying any problems identified in safety screening studies to private property owners.

Timely Follow-up on Private Slope Maintenance after Issuing Advisory Letters

6.60 Following the issuance of advisory letters, we consider it more important for CEDD to properly follow up on the private property owners to ensure their timely action to mitigate the potential dangers.

6.61 The main objective of safety screening studies is to assess whether private slopes are dangerous or liable to become dangerous, with a view to making referrals to BD for issuance of dangerous hillside orders. In the past, for private slopes found to have minor maintenance problems only, CEDD generally would not follow up on the cases after issuing advisory letters. We are pleased to note that since the launch of our investigation, CEDD has enhanced its follow-up actions after issuing advisory letters and set a target timeframe to conduct timely inspection to monitor whether private property owners have properly carried out maintenance as advised. We recommend that CEDD continue to diligently follow up on all cases issued with advisory letters and provide support to private property owners in need.

Continue to Ensure the Efficiency of Safety Screening Studies

6.62 CEDD has proposed to gradually raise the annual targets under the Landslip Prevention and Mitigation Programme from 2025, including increasing the number of private man-made slopes selected for safety screening studies from 100 to 130. It is commendable for CEDD to introduce forward-looking measures to strengthen the capability to cope with extreme weather. We recommend that CEDD ensure that the gradual increase of the target of safety screening studies would not affect the efficiency and, through extensive use of technology, select private man-made slopes more precisely and conduct safety screening studies more efficiently.

(VI) PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION

Enhancing Role of Property Management Companies

6.63 CEDD, BD and LandsD provide private property owners with support via various channels. Their extensive publicity and education campaigns cover such information as how to properly maintain private man-made slopes, comply with dangerous hillside orders and obtain information on maintenance responsibility (see **chapter 5**).

6.64 When providing property management services for clients, property management companies are often involved in managing private slopes associated with the property. PMSA has formulated a Slope Management Work – Best Practice Guide for the industry, which clarifies the slopes for which private property owners are responsible for maintenance, and reminds owners and owners' organisations of their maintenance responsibility and the need to put in place proper slope management. Given the vital role of property management companies in managing private slopes, we recommend that CEDD and BD strengthen cooperation with PMSA to promote their more proactive role in the maintenance of private slopes, thereby facilitating the arrangement and coordination of routine maintenance and compliance with dangerous hillside orders by property owners.

Enriching Publicity and Educational Materials

6.65 CEDD is responsible for the safety screening studies of private slopes, while BD is the authority for the enforcement of dangerous hillside orders. Given their experience accumulated over the years, we recommend that CEDD and BD continue to systematically consolidate experience, identify common problems and bottlenecks encountered by private property owners in routine slope maintenance and compliance of dangerous hillside orders, and incorporate corresponding solutions into publicity and education materials, so as to enhance private property owners' capability to carry out routine maintenance and comply with orders.

(VII) OVERALL RISK CONTROL FOR PRIVATE SLOPES

Analysing Correlation Between Issuance of and Compliance with Dangerous Hillside Orders and Occurrence of Landslides

6.66 CEDD maintains data on landslides occurring on private slopes, while BD maintains data related to dangerous hillside orders. However, the extent of data analysis is limited as these two datasets are not organised. For example, whether and when dangerous hillside orders have been issued for the private slopes where landslides occurred each year, and when the orders were complied with. Furthermore, whether landslides or similar incidents still occurred after the remedial or preventive works required by the orders had been carried out on private slopes.

6.67 Undoubtedly, the issuance of dangerous hillside orders is intended to improve slope safety, with the ultimate goal of preventing landslides. We are pleased to learn that CEDD targets to complete rollout of the Smart Slope Catalogue in 2026, gradually expanding the monitoring and management data, such as records of landslides and dangerous hillside orders. We recommend that CEDD and BD utilise the Smart Slope Catalogue for systematic analysis of the correlation between the issuance of and compliance with dangerous hillside orders and the occurrence of landslides. For instance, they should examine whether the selection of private slopes for issuance of the orders enabled timely prevention of hazards, and whether compliance with the orders adequately addressed the increasing risk of landslides. We believe that such data will provide an important basis for departments to assess the effectiveness of the entire mechanism for dangerous hillside orders.

Establishing Standing High-level Inter-departmental Working Group and Escalation Mechanism

6.68 As shown above, the risk management of private slopes involves inter-departmental collaboration at various stages. Effective communication among departments is crucial to effective regulation. We note that an inter-departmental communication platform [12] has been established for overall slope safety, but the platform has a very broad remit and involves numerous departments, such that it may not focus on inter-departmental collaboration regarding the risk control of private slopes. There is no lack of complex cases concerning risk control of private slopes. For instance, the maintenance responsibility is often subject to disputes or even legal proceedings. Owners may have difficulty preparing and arranging for works. Also, BD is frequently required to undertake default works. Thorough discussion and careful rationalisation are essential for inter-departmental collaboration at each stage.

[12] CEDD has established an Inter-departmental Meeting on Slope Matters chaired by the Head of GEO. Its members include representatives from DEVB, the seven departments primarily responsible for the maintenance of government slopes, and BD, with a view to promoting inter-departmental collaboration on monitoring and ensuring slope safety.

6.69 We recommend that LandsD join the regular coordination meetings between CEDD and BD, which should function as a standing high-level inter-departmental working group for the risk control of private slopes. The working group will provide a platform for the three departments to raise matters of concern, discuss solutions for swift resolution of complex cases, exchange information and share experience, so as to enhance regulation continuously. At the same time, the three departments can take forward the various measures to enhance inter-departmental collaboration proposed above through the new platform.

6.70 Currently, the routine monitoring of private slopes by the three departments involves substantial information exchange and consultation among them at the case level. To ensure effective control and smooth operation, we recommend that the three departments compile case lists for different categories of work setting out cases pending information or advice from other departments. Any outstanding cases should be discussed and resolved promptly through the working group proposed above.

6.71 Furthermore, any disagreements remaining unresolved after discussion among the three departments should be escalated to a higher level without delay. DEVB should be a suitable platform for such purposes as all three departments are subordinate to it. As shown in **case 3**, the intervention of DEVB could expedite resolution of disputes among departments. We recommend that the three departments make good use of the existing mechanism[13] for escalation of inter-departmental disagreements to DEVB to achieve speedy resolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.72 Overall, The Ombudsman makes the following recommendations to LandsD, BD and CEDD:

LandsD

(1) continue to monitor the implementation of target timeframes for the determination of slope maintenance responsibility cases of different complexity and the internal monitoring system, striving to complete all cases within reasonable timeframes (see **para. 6.7**);

(2) conduct systematic analysis of determination cases requiring a long completion time to examine the common causes and formulate corresponding measures, so as to facilitate the speedy completion of cases by LandsD and its consultants (see **para. 6.7**);

[13] A mechanism is established under the Inter-departmental Meeting on Slope Matters, whereby departments can escalate disputes over slope maintenance responsibility to DEVB for handling by a Principal Assistant Secretary.

(3) analyse the common issues requiring attention and speedier handling in determination cases and provide consultants with reminders and guidance, thereby ensuring their proper handling and avoidance of repeated revisions and submissions of reports (see **para. 6.8**);

(4) for determination cases involving newly-formed slopes and re-determination cases involving changes in cadastral records, notify the maintenance parties immediately upon completion or revision of the determination results (see **para. 6.14**);

(5) for determination cases already completed in the past, issue notifications in batches to inform private property owners of their maintenance responsibility based on the latest situation of slopes and review the progress regularly (see **para. 6.14**);

(6) continue to review the progress of vetting applications for permission letters to carry out works on government land under dangerous hillside orders, and the implementation of newly established target processing times (see **para. 6.44**);

(7) continue to review the implementation of the reporting and monitoring mechanism to ensure proper supervision of subordinates by senior staff. All complex cases should be promptly escalated to senior management to ensure completion within reasonable timeframes (see **para. 6.44**);

(8) explore further enhancing the application and approval procedures to expedite the granting of permission letters to registered professionals appointed by owners, thus enabling timely commencement of remedial or preventive works (see **para. 6.44**);

(9) provide, via BD, private property owners subject to dangerous hillside orders and their registered professionals with a list of required documents and application forms, so as to further expedite processing of applications (see **para. 6.44**);

BD

(10) for complex cases, further review and explore any scope to streamline the workflow before issuing a dangerous hillside order and rationalise the consultation process with CEDD and LandsD, with a view to adopting a more ambitious target to issue orders as soon as possible (see **para. 6.22**);

(11) continue to make good use of its Building Condition Information System to closely monitor the progress of issuing dangerous hillside orders by staff and ensure smooth operation (see **para. 6.23**);

(12) for cases where private property owners have delayed appointing registered professionals, fully utilise the new function of the Building Condition Information System for timely follow-up, by issuing reminders and warning letters as required and stepping up the support for owners who face difficulties despite their willingness to comply with the orders. On the other hand, it should take more decisive enforcement action against those who show no intention of complying (see **para. 6.27**);

(13) classify complex cases, such as those subject to consent from owners of adjacent lots or site constraints, and strengthen its follow-up mechanism with proactive intervention, coordination and support for owners in difficulties to facilitate their early compliance (see **para. 6.30**);

(14) conduct systematic analysis of the slope works proposals submitted by registered professionals appointed by owners and collate opinions from relevant departments (including CEDD and LandsD), with a view to drawing up a list of common issues and difficulties encountered in complex cases for better communication with industry practitioners, so as to avoid hindrance to the efficiency due to repeated rejections and submissions of proposals (see **para. 6.32**);

(15) compile a checklist of reports and documents to be submitted by registered professionals at different stages of the approval process for their compliance (see **para. 6.32**);

(16) require registered professionals to copy all their correspondence with other departments regarding dangerous hillside orders to BD, so as to enable the department to have a better grasp of the compliance status and step in where necessary (see **para. 6.33**);

(17) complete the revision of guidelines on repeated prosecutions (including the reissuance of reminders and warning letters, prosecution criteria and target processing time) as soon as possible to further enhance the enforcement efficiency and increase deterrence (see **para. 6.35**);

(18) continue to monitor the compliance status of dangerous hillside orders stringently, conduct timely review of the effectiveness of improvement measures and refine them to ensure the targets can be met (see **para. 6.37**);

(19) in respect of dangerous hillside orders meeting the criteria for default works, properly maintain data on the actual times of deciding to carry out default works and works commencement for analysis and monitoring purposes, so as to avoid delay in decision-making (see **para. 6.47**);

(20) further review the workflow for default works, and carefully examine potential areas for streamlining at each and every stage, so as to expedite completion (see **para. 6.52**);

(21) conduct a comprehensive analysis of the reports and proposals prepared by its consultants for default works in the past, as well as the feedback given by BD, CEDD and LandsD, with a view to consolidating common issues and areas for improvement for sharing with consultants, providing guidance and enabling lessons to be learned (see **para. 6.53**);

(22) further review the target timeframe for each stage of default works, striving to set a more ambitious target where feasible (see **para. 6.56**);

CEDD

(23) for private slopes found to have minor maintenance problems in safety screening studies, step up publicity and education on the relevant owners to encourage them to carry out maintenance regularly to reduce the risk of landslides (see **para. 6.59**);

(24) explore setting a target timeframe for the issuance of advisory letters and information leaflets, with a view to swiftly relaying any problems identified in safety screening studies to private property owners (see **para. 6.59**);

(25) continue to diligently follow up on all cases issued with advisory letters and provide support to private property owners in need (see **para. 6.61**);

(26) ensure that the gradual increase of the target of safety screening studies would not affect the efficiency and, through extensive use of technology, select private man-made slopes more precisely and conduct safety screening studies more efficiently (see **para. 6.62**);

Inter-departmental Collaboration

(27) LandsD and CEDD jointly explore how to streamline the workflow and inter-departmental exchange of information, so as to enhance the efficiency of the determination process (see **para. 6.11**);

(28) the three departments establish a monitoring mechanism for cases involving disputes over slope maintenance responsibility to ensure timely information exchange and consultation among them, and step up staff training to ensure proactive assistance to other departments as required for speedy resolution of disputes (see **para. 6.18**);

(29) the three departments, through regular inter-departmental coordination meetings and the database established by LandsD, carefully analyse past cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility, particularly those where LandsD revised its determination results upon review or even the private property owners successfully appealed. The departments should exchange views and share experience to enhance the robustness of determination results at source. LandsD should take the lead in this exercise, with CEDD and BD actively supporting (see **para. 6.19**);

(30) LandsD and BD establish a communication mechanism for maintaining the number and relevant data (such as processing time) of cases involving disputes over maintenance responsibility for analysis and monitoring purposes (see **para. 6.20**);

(31) in respect of applications for permission to carry out default works on government land, BD and LandsD review the new application and approval procedures after implementation for a period, and jointly explore and discuss further room for further refinement to enhance efficiency (see **para. 6.54**);

(32) CEDD and BD strengthen cooperation with PMSA to promote a more proactive role of property management companies in the maintenance of private slopes, thereby facilitating the arrangement and coordination of routine maintenance and compliance with dangerous hillside orders by property owners (see **para. 6.64**);

(33) CEDD and BD continue to systematically consolidate experience, identify common problems and bottlenecks encountered by private property owners in routine slope maintenance and compliance of dangerous hillside orders, and incorporate corresponding solutions into publicity and education materials, so as to enhance private property owners' capability to carry out routine maintenance and comply with orders (see **para. 6.65**);

(34) CEDD and BD utilise the Smart Slope Catalogue for systematic analysis of the correlation between the issuance of and compliance with dangerous hillside orders and the occurrence of landslides (see **para. 6.67**);

(35) LandsD join the regular coordination meetings between CEDD and BD, which should function as a standing high-level inter-departmental working group for the risk control of private slopes, to strengthen synergy (see **para. 6.69**);

(36) the three departments compile case lists for different categories of work, setting out cases pending information or advice from other departments. Any outstanding cases should be discussed and resolved promptly through the working group mentioned in **paragraph 6.72(35)** (see **para. 6.70**); and

(37) the three departments make good use of the existing mechanism for escalation of inter-departmental disagreements to DEVB to achieve speedy resolution (see **para. 6.71**).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.73 The Ombudsman thanks CEDD, LandsD and BD for their full cooperation in the course of this investigation, and members of the public with a concern about this topic for submitting their valuable opinions.

Office of The Ombudsman
Ref: DI/480
March 2026

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Appendix

Appendix

Case Studies

Cases (1), (2) and (3): Determination of slope maintenance responsibility

Case (1)

Date	Actions taken by departments
Jun 1997	• The slope concerned comprises Slope Section No. 1 located within Rural Building Lot No. A ("Lot A"), and Slope Section No. 2 within Garden Lot No. B ("Lot B"). In accordance with the "owner-maintains" principle, the Systematic Identification of Maintenance Responsibility of Slopes in the Territory Unit ("SIMAR Unit") under the Lands Department ("LandsD") determined that Slope Section No. 1 and No. 2 shall be maintained by the owners of Lot A and Lot B respectively.
Apr 2022	• The automated programme to detect changes in cadastral records within the Slope Maintenance Responsibility Information System ("Slope Information System") identified a change concerning the slope and its vicinity, namely that Lot B had been re-classified as unleased and unallocated government land. Accordingly, the SIMAR Unit had to re-determine the maintenance responsibility for the slope. • The SIMAR Unit's preliminary assessment found that the determination process for the case would be complex. Apart from reviewing cadastral records and land documents, the process also required examining evidence of slope cutting from the District Lands Office, analysing building plans provided by the Buildings Department ("BD"), and seeking geotechnical advice from the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD"). The case was therefore assigned to a consultant.
Oct 2022	• After gathering information, the consultant submitted to the SIMAR Unit, the Legal Advisory and Conveyancing Office and the Survey and Mapping Office of LandsD, BD and CEDD a preliminary report recommending that the owners of Lot A remain responsible for Slope Section No. 1, while LandsD take responsibility for Slope Section No. 2 situated on unleased and unallocated government land.

Case (1)

Date	Actions taken by departments
Dec 2022	• The SIMAR Unit considered the slope's formation probably related to Lot A's development and advised the consultant to seek geotechnical advice from CEDD.
Feb 2023	• After obtaining CEDD's advice, the consultant submitted a revised report on slope maintenance responsibility. • As CEDD advised that the slope formation was indispensable to the construction of buildings on Lot A, the consultant recommended that the owners of Lot A be responsible for the entire slope's maintenance.
Feb to Apr 2023	• The SIMAR Unit, BD and CEDD had no comments on the revised report.
May 2023	• The revised recommendations on slope maintenance responsibility were accepted.
Aug 2023	• The determination results were consolidated and uploaded to the Slope Information System.

Case (2)

Date	Actions taken by departments
Mar 2004	• According to the Slope Information System, maintenance responsibility for the slope concerned was determined in 2004: the northern section (Slope Section No. 1) within Section A of the Rural Building Lot concerned to be maintained by its owner; and the southern section (Slope Section No. 2) within the Remaining Portion of the lot to be maintained by its owner.
Apr 2022	• The owner of the Remaining Portion requested LandsD to review the maintenance responsibility for Slope Section No. 2. • He contended that based on the land boundary survey plans and report prepared by an authorised land surveyor in 2018, of which LandsD's District Survey Office acknowledged receipt in the same year, the slope was located outside the Remaining Portion. Hence, he should not be responsible for its maintenance.
May 2022	• As the problem concerned the slope's actual boundary, the SIMAR Unit requested CEDD to examine and confirm whether adjustment was required for the boundary. CEDD replied that no update was made.
Jul 2022	• Upon the request of the owner of the Remaining Portion, the SIMAR Unit requested that CEDD re-examine the slope's boundary.
Oct and Nov 2022	• CEDD informed the relevant owners that the slope's boundary had been updated, and replied to the SIMAR Unit.
Jan 2023	• As the SIMAR Unit considered the slope boundary inconsistent with the lot boundary, it requested further review and adjustment of the slope boundary by CEDD.
Mar and Apr 2023	• CEDD notified the owner of the Remaining Portion that the records relating to the slope's boundary had been updated again, and replied to the SIMAR Unit.

Case (2)

Date	Actions taken by departments
Aug 2023	• The revised slope area was within Section A and Section B of the Rural Building Lot concerned, while the Remaining Portion was not involved. After review, the SIMAR Unit revised the maintenance responsibility for the slope: the owners of Section A and Section B were respectively responsible for Slope Section No. 1 and No. 2.
Sep 2023	• The records in the Slope Information System were updated accordingly, and the SIMAR Unit notified the owner of the Remaining Portion of the results.

Case (3)

Date	Actions taken by departments

Feb 2014	• According to the land status plan at the time, the slope concerned was located within three areas:
	  • Slope Section No. 1: Lot No. A in the Demarcation District concerned ("Lot A");
	  • Slope Section No. 2: Section i of Lot No. B in the Demarcation District concerned ("Lot B(i)"); and
	  • Slope Section No. 3: Section ii of Lot No. B in the Demarcation District concerned.
	• It was determined that each lot's owner was responsible for maintaining their own slope section.

Jan 2016	• BD issued a dangerous hillside order to the owner of Lot B(i) regarding Slope Section No. 2.
Feb 2018	• The owner of Lot B(i) wrote to BD, claiming that the slope was outside Lot B(i). In 2015, he engaged an authorised land surveyor to survey the boundary and submitted a boundary re-establishment report to the District Survey Office of LandsD. The report claimed that the slope was within Lot A.
Feb to Aug 2018	• BD consulted LandsD (including the District Lands Office, the District Survey Office and the SIMAR Unit) and CEDD on the boundary dispute raised by the owner of Lot B(i), with an aim to clarify the boundary and slope maintenance responsibility. • LandsD replied to the owner of Lot B(i) that it had no obligation to review and no authority to approve the boundary re-establishment report submitted by the owner and prepared by his authorised land surveyor. In response to BD's request to clarify the boundary, LandsD asked BD to appoint an independent authorised land surveyor to conduct boundary survey in connection with the dangerous hillside order.
Mar to Apr 2019	• BD escalated the case to the Development Bureau, requesting LandsD's services in land boundary survey to support the enforcement of dangerous hillside order.

Case (3)

Date	Actions taken by departments
Aug to Sep 2019	• Upon reviewing the boundary survey report prepared by the authorised land surveyor engaged by the owner of Lot B(i), the District Survey Office of LandsD confirmed with BD that Slope Section No. 2 was located outside Lot B(i) and within Lot A. Accordingly, BD requested the SIMAR Unit to review the maintenance responsibility for the slope. • The SIMAR Unit determined that as the entire slope was located within Lot A, the maintenance responsibility rested with the owner of Lot A, and it notified BD of its determination results in September 2019.
Apr 2020	• Having regard to the slope's condition, CEDD revised its recommendation on the issuance of dangerous hillside order.
Aug 2020	• BD issued a dangerous hillside order to the owner of Lot A for the slope and revoked the order issued to the owner of Lot B(i) in January 2016.
Mar 2021	• As Lot A's owner challenged the boundary revision and submitted another survey report, BD consulted CEDD and LandsD (including the District Lands Office, the District Survey Office and the SIMAR Unit).

Case (3)

Date	Actions taken by departments
Mar 2021 to Nov 2024	• Regarding the boundary revision and slope construction, Lot A's owner repeatedly wrote to BD and LandsD with justification and information, and met with both departments time and again for discussions. • Based on the registered slope boundary data from CEDD and the relevant lot boundaries, the SIMAR Unit concluded that the slope was within Lot A and the maintenance responsibility rested with its owner. Based on this conclusion, BD upheld the decision to serve a dangerous hillside order on Lot A's owner. The owner was repeatedly reminded to comply with the order and warned of the consequences of delay. • In December 2021, BD considered prosecuting Lot A's owner and issued a summons in September 2023. As legal advice noted that the maintenance responsibility for the slope remained in dispute and the owner had a reasonable defence for non-compliance, BD discontinued the prosecution in November 2024.
Feb 2025	• As the slope maintenance responsibility remained in dispute, BD, after considering legal advice and obtaining CEDD's consent, revoked the dangerous hillside order served on Lot A's owner in August 2020, noting that a new order could be issued if circumstances warranted. • CEDD asked its newly appointed consultant to re-examine the case with the latest boundary data.

Cases (4) to (8): Dangerous hillside orders

Case (4)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan and Apr 2013	• CEDD recommend that BD issue a dangerous hillside order to the lot owner responsible for maintaining the slope concerned. • In response to BD's request for clarification of the relationship between the adjoining lot and the slope, CEDD replied to BD with relevant information on the slope.
Oct 2014	• BD issued a stage 1 dangerous hillside order to the lot owner.
Dec 2014 and Jan 2015	• The consultant appointed by the owner submitted a geotechnical assessment report on the slope. • The consultant informed BD that it had advised the owner to appoint registered professionals for the design and improvement works required under the order.
Jul 2015	• BD issued a reminder to the owner as no notification was received from him regarding the appointment of registered professionals.
Sep 2015	• The owner appointed registered professionals (i.e. an authorised person, a registered geotechnical engineer and a registered structural engineer).
May 2016	• The owner appointed another authorised person, while the geotechnical engineer previously engaged was also appointed as a registered structural engineer.
Sep 2016	• The registered professionals submitted a ground investigation report to BD.
Sep and Oct 2017	• The registered professionals re-submitted to BD an application to commence ground investigation works along with the ground investigation report.

Case (4)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Dec 2017, Feb and Mar 2018	• The registered professionals submitted, subsequently withdrew and re-submitted the detailed design report and improvement works plans.
May 2018	• BD rejected the improvement works plans submitted by the registered professionals in March 2018 for non-compliance with the Buildings Ordinance because the design affected the means of escape and drainage facilities of the adjoining building.
Jul 2018	• BD issued a reminder to the owner requiring submission of a proposal for remedial or preventive works within two months, otherwise the Department would consider prosecution.
Aug and Sep 2018	• The registered professionals re-submitted the detailed design report and improvement works plans. • BD rejected the plans on the grounds that the technical details was without CEDD's consent, and for non-compliance with the Buildings Ordinance because the design affected the drainage facilities of the adjoining building.
Oct 2018	• BD issued a reminder to the owner requiring submission of a proposal for remedial or preventive works within two months, otherwise the Department would consider prosecution.
Dec 2018	• The registered professionals informed BD that given the site constraints (only 1.5 metres wide with many underground drainage pipes), it would be technically necessary to extend soil nailing into the adjoining private land. Upon obtaining the consent of the adjoining lot's owners, they would re-submit the improvement works plans.
Oct and Dec 2019	• The registered professionals re-submitted the detailed design report and the improvement works plans.

Case (4)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan 2020	• BD rejected the improvement works plans submitted by the registered professionals in December 2019 for non-compliance with the Buildings Ordinance again because the design still affected the drainage facilities of the adjoining building.
May 2021	• Given the unsatisfactory progress, BD issued a warning letter to the owner, specifying that as the registered professionals appointed by the owner had still failed, without reasonable excuse, to make acceptable and visible progress in commencing works required under the dangerous hillside order, the Department was considering prosecution.
Jun and Jul 2021	• The registered professionals further explained to BD the difficulties in the design of the improvement works and in obtaining the consent of all adjoining lot owners, and stated that they had sought assistance from District Council members. • The registered professionals informed BD that they had tentatively obtained the consent of some owners and requested assistance from BD's Social Services Team.
Oct and Nov 2021	• The registered professionals reported progress to BD and applied for a six-month extension of the deadline for compliance with the order. BD extended the deadline to May 2022. • BD replied to the registered professionals that its Social Services Team could not provide assistance because their request fell outside the scope of the Team's services.
May 2022	• The registered professionals reported progress to BD and applied for a further six-month extension of the deadline for compliance with the order. BD extended the deadline to November 2022.

Case (4)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Nov and Dec 2022	• The registered professionals reported progress to BD and applied for a further six-month extension of the deadline for compliance with the order. BD extended the deadline to May 2023. • The registered professionals submitted a ground investigation report to BD, showing that the slope was associated with the adjoining lot, and requested BD to review the maintenance responsibility. BD subsequently consulted CEDD on the review of the order.
Jun and Jul 2023	• The registered professionals reported progress to BD and applied for a further six-month extension of the deadline for compliance with the order. BD extended the deadline to December 2023. • CEDD replied to BD, confirming that the order remained unchanged and was still in force.
Sep 2023	• The registered professional (authorised person) submitted a notice of resignation to BD.
Nov to Dec 2023	• BD issued a letter to the consultant engaged by the owner, stating that CEDD had confirmed that the order remained in force and requesting the consultant to provide a report on the latest situation and appoint a new registered professional (authorised person). • BD also called the consultant to discuss providing assistance in liaising with the owners of the adjoining lot. • The owner appointed a new registered professional (authorised person).
Dec 2023	• BD decided to deploy its Social Services Team to assist with liaison work of the case. • BD sought assistance from the Home Affairs Department in liaising with the owners of the adjoining lot and in forming an owners' corporation. • BD contacted CEDD and the consultant to discuss solutions regarding the design of the improvement works.

Case (4)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan 2024	• The registered professionals applied to BD for an extension of the deadline for compliance with the order, such that they could have time to obtain the adjoining lot owners' consent to the works and prepare a proposal for remedial or preventive works. BD extended the deadline to July 2024.
May and Jul 2024	• The registered professionals submitted a preliminary schedule for improvement works and a proposal for remedial or preventive works to BD.
Aug to Sep 2024	• With inter-departmental support, the registered professionals submitted to BD a letter of no objection from the owners' corporation of the adjoining lot regarding the slope works. • BD consulted CEDD and the Drainage Services Department ("DSD") on the proposal for remedial or preventive works. • BD met with representatives of the registered professionals to provide comments on the structural and drainage designs of the proposal for their follow-up. • CEDD and DSD had no objection to accepting the works proposal. • BD approved the works proposal.
Oct 2024	• BD notified the owner that the stage 1 order had been complied with.

Figures 1 to 4: Photos from BD showing the slope in case (4) before and after maintenance

Figure 1: Slope before maintenance



Figure 2: Slope before maintenance

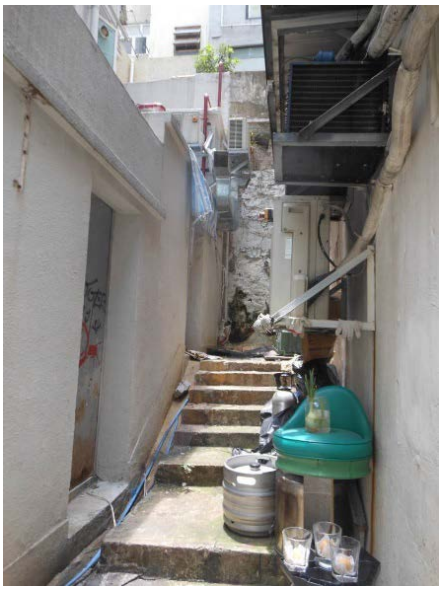


Figure 3: Slope maintenance largely completed



Figure 4: Slope maintenance largely completed



Case (5)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jul 2015	• BD issued a stage 1 dangerous hillside order to the lot owner responsible for maintaining the slope concerned.
Feb and Apr 2016	• BD issued a reminder and a warning letter to the owner for having not received notification of his appointment of registered professionals. BD also indicated in the warning letter that it was considering prosecution.
Nov 2016	• BD considered instigating prosecution.
May 2017	• The registered professionals submitted to BD notices of appointment and commencement of ground investigation works.
Aug to Sep 2017	• BD confirmed completion of the ground investigation works and requested the registered professionals to submit a works schedule and comply with the order promptly.
Oct 2017	• The registered professionals submitted to BD a works schedule, according to which an improvement works plan was to be submitted in mid-November 2017.
Jan 2018	• Having noted that the registered professionals had not carried out the works as scheduled, BD immediately issued a letter, pointing out their deviation from the schedule and requiring submission of a revised schedule. • The registered professionals submitted an updated works schedule to BD and indicated that a remedial or preventive works proposal would be submitted in late February 2018 for BD's approval.
Mar and May 2018	• The registered professionals submitted to BD forms and plans of the remedial or preventive works proposal . BD approved the proposal as compliant with the Buildings Ordinance.

Case (5)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Aug 2018	• As the owner had shown clear intention to comply and had appointed registered professionals to follow up on the order, while BD had approved the remedial proposals and plans submitted, BD decided not to prosecute at this stage.
Oct 2018	• BD noted that the works had not commenced and again reminded the owner and the authorised person to commence promptly in accordance with the approved plans. • The registered professionals submitted a revised works schedule to BD, indicating that the works would commence in February 2019.
Jan and May 2019	• The registered professionals submitted to BD an application for consent to commence works and subsequently a notice of commencement. The works officially commenced.
Jul and Sep 2019	• The revised plans submitted by the registered professionals were approved by BD to ensure the effectiveness of the remedial works.
Aug and Sep 2022	• The registered professionals submitted a certificate of completion to BD, but subsequently withdrew it. • Despite the pandemic, BD continued to monitor progress and approved the registered professionals' submission of a notice of commencement based on the latest revised plans.
Mar 2023	• The registered professionals submitted a certificate of completion to BD.
May 2023	• Following inspection, BD staff identified deficiencies in the works and notified the registered professionals that the certificate of completion was rejected. BD also specified the deficiencies identified.

Case (5)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Nov 2023	• BD issued a further letter urging the registered professionals to rectify the deficiencies and complete the remedial works. • The registered professionals informed BD that the works were expected to be completed in late December 2023.
May and Jul 2024	• The registered professionals submitted a certificate of completion to BD, but subsequently withdrew it. • BD approved the revised plans submitted by the registered professionals.
Aug 2024	• The registered professionals re-submitted the certificate of completion to BD.
Oct 2024	• Following inspection, BD staff again identified deficiencies in the works and notified the registered professionals that the certificate of completion was rejected. BD also specified the deficiencies identified.
Nov 2024	• Upon completion of all rectification works, the registered professionals re-submitted the certificate of completion to BD.
Mar 2025	• BD notified the registered professionals that the certificate of completion had been accepted and the owner that the order had been complied with.

Figures 5 and 6: Photos from BD showing the slope in case (5) before and after maintenance

Figure 5: Slope before maintenance



Figure 6: Slope after maintenance



Case (6)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan 2014	• BD issued a stage 2 dangerous hillside order to the owner, requiring completion of remedial or preventive works within seven months, i.e. by August 2014, in accordance with the proposal approved by BD on 5 March 2012.
Oct and Nov 2014	• BD accepted the revised proposal for remedial or preventive works submitted by the registered professionals.
Jan and Feb 2015	• As the approved design involved the extension of soil nailing into adjacent government land, the registered professionals applied to LandsD for permission letter to carry out works thereon and submitted the relevant works plans.
Feb to Sep 2015	• As the slope works and the proposed soil nailing were within a residential site scheduled for sale in 2016/17, LandsD consulted the relevant departments on the implications and, after discussions, amended the boundary of the site for sale to exclude the area affected by the slope works. • In September 2015, LandsD confirmed the boundary of the slope works with the registered professionals to finalise the boundary of the site for sale, and conducted a survey.
Apr 2016	• The registered professionals enquired with LandsD about the progress of their application for permission letter, and the Department replied that it was under processing.
Jul to Oct 2016	• The Government invited tenders for the residential site, and sold it in October.
Feb 2017	• LandsD consulted relevant government departments on the application for permission letter.

Case (6)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jun 2017	• LandsD informed the registered professionals of comments made by the relevant departments (including recommendations from the Planning Department ("PlanD") and DSD), and requested their follow-up.
Nov 2017	• The registered professionals replied to LandsD, noting that the relevant departments raised no objection to slope works on government land, and requested LandsD to consider whether its permission letter was necessary.
Mar 2018	• The registered professionals enquired with LandsD about the progress of their application for permission letter.
Apr 2018	• LandsD requested the registered professionals to respond to the comments made by DSD and PlanD in June 2017 to facilitate consideration of their application for permission letter.
Jun to Aug 2018	• The registered professionals replied to LandsD on the departments' comments, enclosing plans as supplementary information. • LandsD consulted DSD and PlanD on the registered professionals' reply. • BD and LandsD requested DSD to expedite its review of the registered professionals' reply.
Mar to May 2019	• The registered professionals informed LandsD that soil nailing was the only feasible solution for repairing the slope. • In response to LandsD's enquiry, CEDD confirmed that the slope works approved by BD in 2014 were appropriate, and advised expediting the approval of permission letter for the registered professionals to commence works promptly to ensure public safety.

Case (6)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jul 2019 to Jan 2020	• BD repeatedly requested LandsD to expedite the processing of the application for permission letter. • In August, LandsD notified the owner that a permission letter had been approved and issued an invoice for the fees of excavation permit under the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance. LandsD would issue the documents for signing upon payment of fees. • Following several reminders, the owner paid the fees in December 2019. In January 2020, LandsD issued the permission letter for carrying out works on government land for signature by the owner.
Apr 2020	• LandsD replied to BD that it had requested the owner to sign the documents for carrying out works on government land. The owner explained that the remedial works could not proceed as the site was leased to a residential care home for the elderly; due to the pandemic and government advice, access to the premises had been prohibited since February 2020. LandsD noted that it had not received the documents signed by the owner.
Apr 2020 to Jun 2021	• BD repeatedly enquired with the owner, who replied that due to the pandemic, the remedial works had not commenced, nor had he signed the documents required by LandsD. • LandsD repeatedly urged the owner, in writing and by telephone, to promptly sign and return the documents for entry into government land.
Jun 2021	• After the Department of Health relaxed guidelines for residential care homes for the elderly in May 2021, BD issued a reminder to the owner.
Sep 2021	• Upon receiving the documents signed by the owner for entry into government land, LandsD signed them in the same month.

Case (6)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan 2022	• BD issued a reminder to the registered professionals. • The registered professionals submitted a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works, and BD approved it the following month. • In response to BD's enquiry regarding the application for permission letter, LandsD replied that it had been issued to the owners in September 2021.
May 2022	• BD approved the application for consent to commence works submitted by the registered professionals.
Dec 2022 and Jan 2023	• The registered professionals submitted a certificate of completion to BD. • BD inspected the site to verify completion of the works.
Jul 2023	• BD informed the owner that the order had been complied with.

Figures 7 to 10: Photos from BD showing the slope in case (6) before and after maintenance

Figure 7: Slope before maintenance



Figure 8: Slope before maintenance



Figure 9: Slope after maintenance

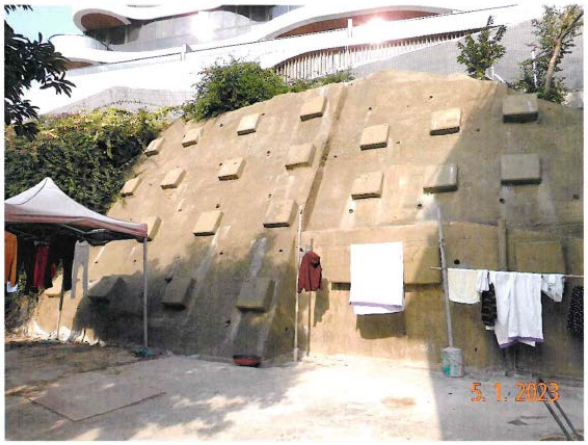
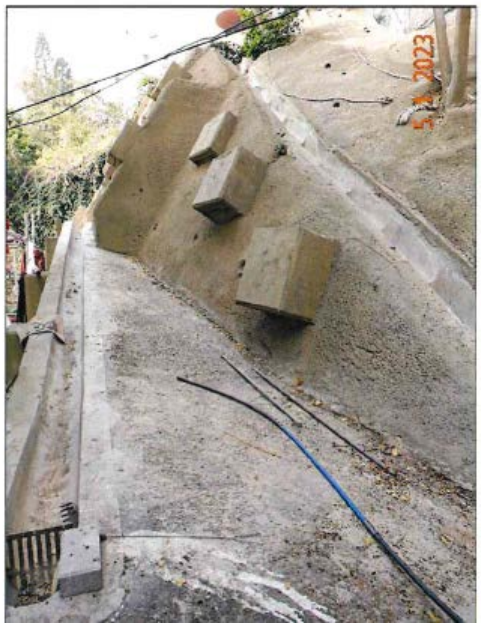


Figure 10: Slope after maintenance



Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Oct 2016	• BD issued a stage 2 dangerous hillside order to the owner, requiring completion of remedial or preventive works within seven months, i.e. by May 2017, in accordance with the proposal approved by BD on 9 August 2010.
Jul and Aug 2017	• The registered professionals submitted a proposal for slope works to BD, involving the extension of soil nailing into government land. In this regard, BD consulted LandsD. LandsD replied that it had no objection to the proposal, but that the registered professionals must seek the consent of LandsD and the owners of the adjacent lots.
Sep 2017	• BD approved the proposal. • The registered professionals applied to LandsD for permission letter to carry out works on government land.
Nov 2017 to Jan 2018	• LandsD required the registered professionals to submit supplementary information (including plans delineating the scope of the proposed works, letters of authorisation from owners, etc.) • After receiving supplementary information from the registered professionals, LandsD conducted a site inspection.
Feb to Mar 2018	• LandsD requested the registered professionals to revise the proposed works area because the works would affect the footpaths on government land, a considerable number of structures and other private lots. The registered professionals agreed to revise the proposed works area, but subsequently failed to reply to LandsD.
Jul 2019 to Jan 2020	• BD repeatedly enquired with LandsD about the status of the application for permission letter. • Although the registered professionals had not responded regarding the impact of the proposed works on public utilities and structures on adjacent government land, LandsD carried out public consultation in advance to facilitate future consideration of the application.

Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan 2020	• After learning that the registered professionals would revise the works proposal, LandsD requested them to submit updated works plans, to discuss the matter with the owner, and to confirm that the owner agreed to assume responsibility for future maintenance and repairs of the relevant areas. • The registered professional (authorised person) submitted a notice of resignation to BD.
Apr and May 2020	• BD noted that the owner had not re-appointed a registered professional and immediately issued a reminder and a warning letter to the owner, stating that the registered professional had resigned but the Department had not yet received notification of the re-appointment of registered professional or the completion of works required under the order as scheduled. In the warning letter, BD indicated that it was considering prosecution. • LandsD contacted the registered professional to follow up on the revised proposal for works, whereupon he stated that he had resigned. LandsD subsequently enquired with BD and requested that it inform the newly appointed registered professional (if any) of the need to re-submit the application to LandsD.
Sep 2020	• The owner re-appointed the same registered professional (authorised person).
Nov and Dec 2020	• Regarding the application for permission letter to carry out works on government land, the registered professionals confirmed with LandsD that they would adopt the proposal approved by BD in September 2017 and would submit supplementary information.

Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Feb 2021	• BD replied to LandsD, stating that the registered professionals had revised the works plans approved by BD in September 2017, and that the revised plans had been approved by BD in February 2021. BD also confirmed that the location and extent of the government land affected by the revised plans remained the same as in the 2017 plans.
Mar 2021	• LandsD informed the registered professionals that it did not support their application for permission letter because the proposal involved the extension of soil nailing beneath a temporary structure situated on government land. • The registered professionals alleged that the temporary structure in question was an unauthorised building works item and requested that LandsD remove it to process their application for permission letter. • BD requested that LandsD notify it as soon as possible of the outcome regarding the handling of the temporary structure. • After consulting the relevant departments (including CEDD), LandsD was informed that the required slope works could technically be carried out without encroaching upon the adjacent government land where the temporary structure was situated.
May and Jul 2021	• BD enquired with LandsD regarding the progress.
Oct 2021	• LandsD replied to the registered professionals, explaining that unless there are specific technical reasons relating to geotechnical engineering, the Government generally would not grant permission for private property owners to carry out site formation and slope works on government land outside their own private land. LandsD also stated that as there were other feasible solutions for remedial or preventive works within the private land, the application for permission letter would not be approved.
Dec 2021	• The registered professional (authorised person) submitted a notice of resignation to BD.

Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan and May 2022	• BD noted that the owner had not re-appointed a registered professional and immediately issued a reminder and a warning letter to the owner, stating that the registered professional had resigned but the Department had not yet received notification of the re-appointment of registered professional or the completion of works required under the order as scheduled. In the warning letter, BD indicated that it was considering prosecution.
Jun to Sep 2022	• The owner re-appointed the same registered professional (authorised person), who submitted to LandsD a revised proposal with the use of shorter soil nails to avoid the temporary structure. • The registered professional twice urged LandsD to respond to his revised proposal as soon as possible.
Oct 2022 to May 2023	• BD repeatedly enquired with LandsD regarding the status of the application for permission letter and requested that a reply be given to the registered professional as soon as possible. • After confirming with the registered professional the extent of government land affected by the proposed works, LandsD pointed out that the revised proposal would still affect nearby registered slopes and public utilities, and advised the registered professional to consider further revisions to the proposal or other feasible solutions.
May and Jun 2023	• The registered professional wrote twice to urge LandsD to approve his revised proposal as soon as possible. He also mentioned that BD had expressed concern about the works progress, and considered LandsD's delay unreasonable as his application had been submitted as early as September 2017.

Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jul 2023	• LandsD replied to the registered professional, reiterating its earlier position that it would not consider approving the extension of slope works onto government land unless there were no other feasible alternatives. LandsD requested that he provide the works schedule and submit the revised proposal to BD for approval first.
Aug 2023	• BD approved the revised works proposal (using shorter soil nails) submitted by the registered professional.
Sep 2023	• The registered professional responded to LandsD's comments of July 2023 and re-submitted the application for permission letter to carry out works on government land.
Nov and Dec 2023	• The registered professional enquired with LandsD about the progress of the application. • BD twice requested LandsD to expedite the processing of application.
Jan 2024	• LandsD notified the registered professional that it was consulting other departments on his application and revised works proposal. • LandsD carried out district consultations.
Feb 2024	• In response to CEDD's comments, the registered professional submitted a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works to BD. BD consulted LandsD on the proposal. • BD approved the proposal.
Mar 2024	• The registered professional submitted the revised proposal approved by BD to LandsD for consideration of his application for permission letter.

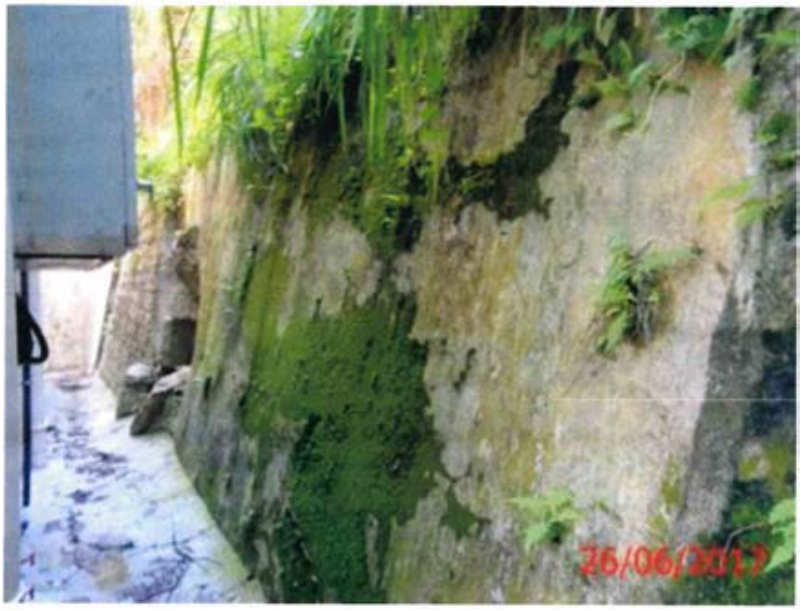
Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
May and Jul 2024	• BD enquired with LandsD regarding the status of the application for permission letter. LandsD replied that it was consolidating the views of government departments and reviewing the revised proposal, and that further referrals to the relevant departments might be necessary.
Aug 2024	• LandsD informed the registered professional of its views and comments from other departments regarding his application for permission letter, and requested his follow-up and response.
Sep 2024	• BD and LandsD urged the registered professional to address the departments' comments as soon as possible. • A minor landslide occurred on the slope concerned. Several days before BD receiving report of the landslide, Hong Kong had experienced heavy downpours, with the Hong Kong Observatory issuing the Red Rainstorm Warning; during those several days, rainfall of over 100 millimetres was recorded across the territory. • The registered professional (authorised person) submitted a notice of resignation.
Oct 2024	• BD's contractor completed emergency slope works to eliminate the immediate danger. • BD issued a reminder to the owner, requesting the re-appointment of registered professional (authorised person) as soon as possible. • LandsD wrote to the registered professional; as no reply was received, the application for permission letter was deemed to have been withdrawn.
Jan 2025	• BD issued a warning letter to the owner, stating that it had not yet received notification of the appointment of registered professional, and that it was considering prosecution.

Case (7)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Feb 2025	• LandsD issued a letter reminding the owner to apply for permission letter to carry out slope works on government land, but the Department subsequently received no further reply from the owner.
Mar and Oct 2025	• BD decided to instigate prosecution. • The owner pleaded guilty and was fined $18,230 by the court.
Nov and Dec 2025	• BD issued a reminder to the owner, requesting that he re-appoint registered professionals as soon as possible. • BD issued a warning letter to the owner, stating that it had not yet received notification of his appointment of registered professionals, and that it was considering prosecution.
Feb 2026	• The private property owner appointed registered professionals. BD would continue to closely monitor the progress of this case.

Figure 11: Photo provided by BD showing the slope in case (7) before maintenance



Case (8)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Feb 2013	• BD issued a stage 1 dangerous hillside order to the owner concerned.
Mar 2013 to Jul 2019	• The owner appealed against the dangerous hillside order before the Appeal Tribunal (Buildings). Pursuant to section 44(2)(b) of the Buildings Ordinance, BD shall not enforce the order while the appeal proceedings are ongoing, unless an emergency exists. The statutory proceedings took 76 months. Ultimately, the Appeals Tribunal confirmed that the owner had withdrawn the appeal, whereupon enforcement could resume.
Aug 2019	• The owner appointed registered professionals.
Dec 2019	• BD reminded the registered professionals to submit a works proposal.
Apr 2020	• The owner appointed a new authorised person, while retaining the original registered structural engineer and registered geotechnical engineer.
Aug and Sep 2020	• BD urged the registered professionals to submit a works schedule and notify the commencement date for ground investigation. • The registered professionals submitted a works schedule and a notice of the date to commence ground investigation.
Feb 2021	• BD urged the registered professionals to submit proposals for remedial or preventive works.

Case (8)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
May to Aug 2021	• The registered professionals submitted a certificate of completion for the ground investigation to BD. • The registered professionals submitted a proposal for remedial or preventive works to BD, which involved the extension of soil nailing into government land. BD referred the proposal to CEDD, LandsD and other relevant departments for comments. • LandsD replied to the registered professionals, stating that the owners should apply to LandsD for permission letter to carry out soil nailing on government land before commencement of works. CEDD raised no objection to the proposal.
Sep 2021	• BD approved the proposal for remedial or preventive works.
Oct 2021	• The registered professionals applied to LandsD for permission letter to carry out soil nailing on government land.
Dec 2021 to May 2022	• BD repeatedly enquired with LandsD regarding the status of the application for permission letter and requested that LandsD expedite its processing.
May 2022	• LandsD replied to BD that it would affix notices regarding the works carried out on government land.
Jun to Jul 2022	• LandsD enquired with BD and requested copies of the letters of appointment for the registered professionals; it also asked the registered professionals to clarify matters relating to the owners' authorisation to carry out works. BD and the registered professionals responded accordingly and provided the information.

Case (8)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Oct 2022	• LandsD replied to the registered professionals, stating that the government land involved in the application had been leased under short-term tenancy; the application could only be approved after LandsD reclaimed part of the leased land by signing an agreement with the short-term tenant to amend the boundary of short-term tenancy. • LandsD commenced the relevant work to amend the boundary of short-term tenancy, including conducting a rent assessment for the area of the new short-term tenancy and having its Survey Office prepare the plans to be attached to the supplementary agreement.
Oct 2022 to Jan 2023	• BD made four enquiries with LandsD regarding the status of amending the boundary of short-term tenancy. • LandsD informed BD that it would prioritise the case.
Mar 2023 to Jan 2024	• During this period, BD made eight enquiries with LandsD regarding the status of amending the boundary of short-term tenancy, and requested that LandsD expedite the process.
Feb 2024	• LandsD issued a supplementary agreement to the short-term tenant, who signed it in the same month.
Mar 2024	• LandsD granted permission letter to the owner to carry out soil nailing on government land.
Mar to Apr 2024	• As BD prepared to issue a stage 2 dangerous hillside order, it asked LandsD for the latest land status plan and report on slope maintenance responsibility, and asked the Land Registry ("LR") for the latest land registration records. • LandsD and LR provided the relevant information. • LandsD stated that in view of changes to land status, it needed to review the slope maintenance responsibility, which would be assigned to a consultant for priority processing.

Case (8)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
May and Aug 2024	• BD enquired with LandsD regarding the status of the review of slope maintenance responsibility. • LandsD provided BD with the latest report on slope maintenance responsibility.
Oct 2024	• The registered professionals applied to BD for consent to commence slope works. • As the registered professionals failed to provide sufficient information required for the application, BD was unable to approve the application for consent to commence slope works.
Nov 2024	• BD approved the revised proposal for remedial or preventive works submitted by the registered professionals.
Dec 2024	• The registered professionals applied to BD for consent to commence slope maintenance works.
Aug 2025	• The registered professionals submitted a certificate of completion to BD.
Dec 2025	• BD notified the owner that the dangerous hillside order had been complied with.

Figures 12 to 15: Photos provided by BD showing the slope in case (8) before and after maintenance

Figure 12: Slope before maintenance



Figure 13: Slope before maintenance

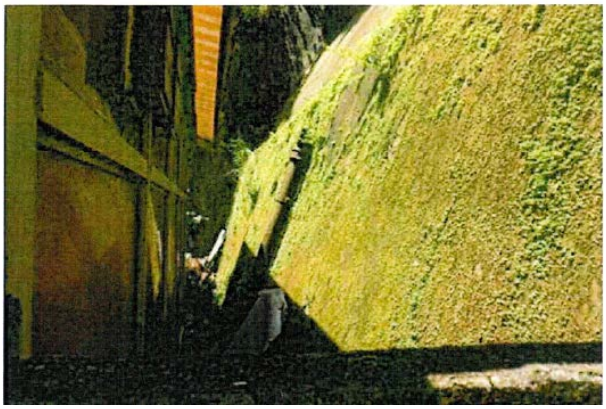


Figure 14: Slope after maintenance



Figure 15: Slope after maintenance



Cases (9) and (10): Default works

Case (9)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan 2014	• BD issued a stage 1 dangerous hillside order to the owner concerned.
Apr and Aug 2014	• BD issued a reminder and a warning letter to the owner for having not received notification of his appointment of registered professionals. The warning letter further stated that as BD had not yet received notification of the appointment of registered professionals or the completion of works required under the order, it was considering prosecution.
Dec 2014	• BD issued a further warning letter to the owner. • BD was unable to reach the owner (an overseas company registered in the British Virgin Islands), and the Companies Registry had no record of the company. As BD could not instigate prosecution, it considered carrying out default works.
Jun 2015	• BD sought legal advice from the Department of Justice ("DoJ").
Jan 2016	• Based on legal advice from DoJ, BD decided to arrange for default works.
Nov 2016	• To speed up the clearance of the backlog of outstanding dangerous hillside orders and increase the number of default works, BD adopted for the first time the Engineering and Associated Consultants Selection Board procedures. Under the procedures, BD invited tenders and appointed a consultant to carry out default works under a single consultancy contract for 15 cases, including this one, thereby clearing the backlog more quickly.
May 2017	• BD awarded a consultancy contract.
Jun to Jul 2017	• BD accepted the draft proposal submitted by the consultant.

Case (9)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Jan to Nov 2018	• The consultant submitted, in succession, the topographical survey plans, the preliminary design report and the geotechnical assessment proposal, all of which were accepted by BD.
May 2019 to Oct 2020	• The consultant submitted the detailed design report and the option assessment report, both of which were accepted by BD.
Sep 2020 to May 2021	• CEDD carried out ground investigation and laboratory tests on another slope ("adjacent slope") within the same lot, which was adjacent to the slope concerned.
July to Oct 2021	• BD accepted the detailed design report on the adjacent slope submitted by the consultant.
Oct 2021	• BD applied to LandsD for simplified temporary land allocation to carry out works. The application was approved in December 2021.
Jan to Mar 2022	• LandsD granted an extension to the simplified temporary land allocation.
May 2022	• BD issued a works order to commence slope upgrading works, which would be carried out in conjunction with works on the adjacent slope.
Dec 2022 to Apr 2023	• BD accepted, on two separate occasions, the revised detailed design reports submitted by the consultant.
Jun 2023	• The consultant submitted the as-built drawings and documentation.
Nov 2023	• BD notified the owner of the completion of default works.

Figures 16 to 19: Photos provided by BD showing the slope in case (9) before and after maintenance

Figure 16: Slope before maintenance



Figure 17: Slope before maintenance



Figure 18: Slope after maintenance



Figure 19: Slope after maintenance



Case (10)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Feb 2008	• BD issued a stage 1 dangerous hillside order to the multiple owners of the lot concerned.
May 2008	• The owners raised their difficulties and asked BD to carry out default works for them.
Jan and Mar 2010	• BD issued a reminder and a warning letter to the owners for having not received notification of their appointment of registered professionals. The warning letter further stated that BD had not yet received notification of the appointment of registered professionals or the completion of works required under the order, and reminded the owners of their responsibility to monitor and maintain the safety and stability of the slope in question.
Dec 2010	• Having considered the circumstances of the case, BD decided to carry out default works.
Feb and Jul 2011	• BD invited tenders for the consultancy contract. In July, it formally appointed a consultant and notified the owners that a consultant had been arranged to carry out default works.
Sep and Oct 2011	• The consultant submitted the ground investigation proposal, the topographical survey report and the preliminary study report to BD. BD forwarded the ground investigation proposal to CEDD for comments. • The consultant submitted a revised ground investigation proposal to both BD and CEDD.
Nov 2011	• BD engaged CEDD to carry out the ground investigation works. In February 2012, CEDD notified BD that the ground investigation works had been completed.
Jun 2012	• The consultant submitted the preliminary design report.

Case (10)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Aug to Sep 2012	• BD's geotechnical engineer commented on the consultant's preliminary design report, stating that the scope of the corresponding ground investigation report was insufficient to support the basis of the preliminary design. • The consultant submitted a revised ground investigation proposal to BD, suggesting that additional ground investigation works be carried out. BD engaged CEDD to carry out the additional ground investigation works. • BD held a site meeting with the consultant, CEDD and the contractor to discuss the proposed additional ground investigation works.
Jan 2013	• CEDD notified BD that a works order had been issued to the contractor for the additional ground investigation works. In March 2013, CEDD notified BD that the additional ground investigation works had been completed.
Jun 2013	• CEDD provided BD with laboratory test reports for the samples taken during additional ground investigation works. BD requested the consultant to submit a revised preliminary design report based on these test reports as soon as possible.
Sep 2013	• The consultant submitted a revised preliminary design report.
Dec 2013 to Jan 2015	• In response to the comments made by BD, the consultant replied and re-submitted a revised preliminary design report. In the interim, the relevant departments provided BD with comments on the preliminary design. • BD accepted the preliminary design report in January 2015.
Feb to Apr 2015	• The consultant submitted a proposal for remedial or preventive works. • After receiving comments from the relevant departments on the proposal for remedial or preventive works, BD accepted the proposal in April.

Case (10)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Aug 2015 and Mar 2016	• The consultant submitted a proposal for remedial or preventive works (draft revision) and a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works (including revisions to the drainage design for the slope surface).
Apr to Jul 2016	• After receiving comments from the relevant departments on the revised proposal for remedial or preventive works, BD accepted the revised proposal in July.
Aug 2016	• BD's geotechnical engineer commented on the cost estimate submitted by the consultant; BD requested the consultant to follow up on the matter. • In November 2016, the consultant submitted a draft of alternative design.
Jan to Nov 2017	• In response to BD's comments, the consultant re-submitted a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works in October (the revisions included modifications to the design of soil nailing and the scope of soil replacement due to site constraints); BD accepted the proposal in November.
Jun 2018	• As the works would encroach upon government land, BD applied to LandsD for simplified temporary land allocation.
Dec 2018 to Mar 2019	• BD repeatedly requested LandsD to process the simplified temporary land allocation application as soon as possible. • LandsD informed BD that the application was opposed by the local community. In light of local opposition, BD decided not to proceed with the application for simplified temporary land allocation.
May and Aug 2019	• BD submitted another application for simplified temporary land allocation, which was approved by LandsD in August.
Feb and Mar 2020	• BD issued a works order and notified the owners that it had arranged for a consultant to carry out default works.

Case (10)

Date	Follow-up actions taken by departments
Apr to May 2020	• BD exchanged views with the consultant and explored solutions to the problems encountered with the works.
May 2020	• The consultant submitted a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works. BD held a meeting with the consultant in this regard.
Jun to Aug 2020	• The consultant re-submitted a revised proposal for remedial or preventive works. • CEDD provided BD with comments on the proposal. BD also consulted CEDD on whether the proposal for remedial or preventive works complied with the requirements under the dangerous hillside order. CEDD indicated that it had no objection to the proposal. • BD accepted the proposal for remedial or preventive works in August.
Feb 2021	• The consultant confirmed that the contractor had completed the remedial works in December 2020 (the maintenance period ran from December 2020 to June 2021).
May to Nov 2021	• The consultant submitted documentation regarding the completion of remedial works. • CEDD had no objection to deem the remedial works as completed.
Nov 2021	• BD notified the owners of the completion of default works.

Figures 20 to 23: Photos provided by BD showing the slope in case (10) before and after maintenance

Figure 20: Slope before maintenance



Figure 21: Slope before maintenance



Figure 22: Slope after maintenance



Figure 23: Slope after maintenance

