Airport & ports must stay afloat for HK to keep its status as a global trade hub

80 airports worldwide will be underwater at 1m of sea level rise (SLR); 44 airports worldwide will be submerged at 0.5m of SLR. HK’s airport cannot operate in isolation.

US$49bn is the estimated cost to adapt 53 of APAC’s largest ports to ~1m of SLR by 2100. Protection against multi-metre SLR will cost more.

Source: CWR analyses based on IPCC AR6 & astronomical high tide in Hong Kong; Digital Terrain Model (5m) from the Lands Department of Hong Kong; 3D photo-realistic model based on the Planning Department of Hong Kong; ESR; World Resource Institute 2020, Asia Research & Engagement 2018.
Safeguard HK’s critical infrastructure

Hong Kong plays an important role in global trade ranking 6th in terms of total merchandise trade in 2020. To safeguard global and Greater Bay Area (GBA) connectivity and a thriving trade network, Hong Kong must shore up resilience of its Airport City and Smart Port. While the Airport Authority has considered the impact of multi-metre sea level rise in its Climate Resilience Study, the SAR’s port operator has recognised sea level rise risk but made no mention of any resilience studies. As both the airport and port are critical infrastructure for Hong Kong’s continued prosperity, holistic low-regret adaptation actions that consider road connectivity, storage, food security as well as energy security should be implemented.

Rising seas will impact the low-lying airport, ports and other key links with the Mainland, disrupting trade. The stakes are high: in 2020, imports & exports amounted to HK$8.2trn. This is 320% of HK’s GDP. Moreover, the import/export trade sector had over 391,000 employees in 2020.

Import & Export = 320% of GDP

It’s not just trade, other key sectors such as property and finance will also be affected as will revenues from land sales. Sea level rise is an existential threat that demands a dedicated coastal threat defence task force to ensure HK adapts and thrives in a changing climate.

Source: CWR analyses based on The Chief Executive’s 2021 Policy Address; Airport Authority of Hong Kong Sustainability Report 2020/21; Hutchison Ports Sustainability Report 2020 & 2021; Airport Cargo Volume Statistics & Port Cargo Throughput Statistics – various sources; Census & Statistics Department - Hong Kong in Figures 2022.