

RISK FACTORS

The Group's businesses, financial conditions, results of operations or growth prospects may be affected by risks and uncertainties directly or indirectly pertaining to the Group's businesses. The risk factors set out below are those that could result in the Group's businesses, financial conditions, results of operations or growth prospects differing materially from expected or historical results. Such factors are by no means exhaustive or comprehensive, and there may be other risks in addition to those shown below which are not known to the Group or which may not be material now but could turn out to be material in the future. In addition, this Annual Report does not constitute a recommendation or advice to invest in the shares of the Company and investors are advised to make their own judgment or consult their own investment advisors before making any investment in the shares of the Company.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS

The global economy remains uncertain since the global financial crisis in 2008. The European sovereign debt crisis that followed, the slowdown of the Mainland China economy, volatility in commodity prices and the timing of the U.S. monetary normalisation continue to pose risks to the global recovery. The slowdown in world economic growth could lead to economic contractions in certain markets, commercial and consumer delinquencies, weakened consumer confidence and increased market volatility. The Group is a diversified infrastructure investment company with businesses in Hong Kong, Mainland China, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Any adverse economic conditions in those countries and places in which the Group operates may potentially impact on the Group's financial position or potential income, asset value and liabilities.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND INTEREST RATES

The industries in which the Group operates are affected by the economic conditions of the various places where the Group's investments or operations are located, the population growth of these places, mark to market value of securities investments, the currency environment and interest rates cycles. There can be no assurance that the combination of the above factors the Group experiences in the future will not adversely affect its financial conditions or results of operations.

In particular, income from finance and treasury operations is dependent upon the capital market, interest rate and currency environment, and the worldwide economic and market conditions, and therefore there can be no assurance that changes in these conditions will not adversely affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations. The volatility in the financial markets may also adversely affect the income to be derived by the Group from its finance and treasury activities.

HIGHLY COMPETITIVE MARKETS

The Group's waste management and off-airport car park businesses face significant competition across the markets in which they operate. New market entrants and intensified price competition among existing market players could adversely affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations. Competition risks faced by the Group include (a) possible restrictions on the access by the shuttle buses operated by the Group's off-airport car park businesses as imposed by the airport authorities who operates the on-airport car park businesses; (b) the availability of rail link services from city centre to airport which may reduce the usage of the off-airport car park; and (c) significant competition and pricing pressure from other competitors attempting to capture a higher level of market share. Such risks may adversely affect the financial performance of the Group's operation.

INFRASTRUCTURE MARKET

Some of the investments owned by the Group (for example, water, gas and electricity) are subject to regulatory pricing and strict adherence must be made to the licence requirements, codes and guidelines established by the relevant regulatory authorities from time to time. Failure to comply with these licence requirements, codes or guidelines may lead to penalties, or, in extreme circumstances, amendment, suspension or cancellation of the relevant licences by the authorities. Infrastructure projects are capital intensive, and with only a few major players in the market, there is no assurance of ready buyers on disposal.

The distribution and transmission networks of the Group's utilities investments are also exposed to supply interruptions. If a severe earthquake, storm, flood, fire, sabotage, terrorist attack or other unplanned event interrupts service, the loss of cash flow resulting from the interruption and the cost of recovery from network damage could be considerable and potentially cause poor customer perception and may also lead to claims and litigations. Moreover, some losses from events such as terrorist attacks may not be recoverable. Increases in the number or duration of supply interruptions could result in material increases in the costs associated with the operation of the distribution and transmission networks, which could have a material adverse effect on the businesses, financial conditions and results of operations of the Group.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

A significant amount of capital expenditure is required for the Group to acquire new investments and to maintain the assets of its existing businesses. While the relevant asset companies have their own asset management plans, there is a risk that due to unforeseen events, capital expenditure required for the replacement of assets could exceed budgeted amounts and hence affect the businesses, financial conditions and results of operations of the Group.

CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS

The results of the Group is recorded in Hong Kong dollars but its various subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures may receive revenue and incur expenses in other currencies. Any currency fluctuations on translation of the accounts of these subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures and also on the repatriation of earnings, equity investments and loans may therefore impact on the Group's performance. Although currency exposures have been managed by the Group, a depreciation or fluctuation of the currencies in which the Group conducts operations relative to the Hong Kong dollar could adversely affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Some of the businesses of the Group are conducted through non wholly-owned subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures in which the Group shares control (in whole or in part) and strategic alliances had been formed by the Group with other strategic or business partners. There can be no assurance that any of these strategic or business partners will continue their relationships with the Group in the future or that the Group will be able to pursue its stated strategies with respect to its non wholly-owned subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures and the markets in which they operate. Furthermore, the joint venture partners may (a) have economic or business interests or goals that are inconsistent with those of the Group; (b) take actions contrary to the Group's policies or objectives; (c) undergo a change of control; (d) experience financial and other difficulties; or (e) be unable or unwilling to fulfill their obligations under the joint ventures, which may affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations.

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MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

The Company has undertaken mergers and acquisitions activities in the past and may continue to do so if there are appropriate acquisition opportunities in the market. Although due diligence and detailed analysis are conducted before these activities are being undertaken, there can be no assurance that these can fully expose all hidden problems, potential liabilities and unresolved disputes that the target company may have. In addition, valuations and analyses on the target company conducted by the Company and by professionals alike are based on numerous assumptions, and there can be no assurance that those assumptions are correct or appropriate or that they will receive universal recognition. Relevant facts and circumstances used in the analyses could have changed over time, and new facts and circumstances may come to light as to render the previous assumptions and the valuations and analyses based thereon obsolete. Some of these mergers and acquisitions activities are subject to regulatory approvals in overseas countries and there can be no assurance that such approvals will be obtained, and even if granted, that there will be no burdensome conditions attached to such approvals. The Company may not necessarily be able to successfully integrate the target business into the Group and may not be able to derive any synergy from the acquisition, leading to increase in costs, time and resources. For merger and acquisitions activities undertaken overseas, the Company may also be exposed to different and changing political, social, legal and regulatory requirements at the local, national and international level. The Company may also need to face different cultural issues when dealing with local employees, customers, governmental authorities and pressure groups.

IMPACT OF LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS

The local business risks in different countries and cities in which the Group operates could have a material impact on the financial conditions, results of operations and growth prospects of the businesses in the relevant market. The Group has investments in different countries and cities around the world and the Group is, and may increasingly become, exposed to different and changing political, social, legal, tax, regulatory and environmental requirements at the local, national or international level. Also, new policies or measures by governments, whether fiscal, tax, regulatory, environmental or other competitive changes, may lead to an increase in additional or unplanned operating expenses and capital expenditures, increase in market capacity, reduction in government subsidies, pose a risk to the overall investment return of the Group's businesses and may delay or prevent the commercial operation of a business with resulting loss of revenue and profit.

IMPACT OF NEW ACCOUNTING STANDARDS

The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants ("HKICPA") has from time to time issued a number of new and revised Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards ("HKFRS"). HKICPA may in the future issue new and revised standards and interpretations. In addition, interpretations on the application of the HKFRS will continue to develop. These factors may require the Group to adopt new accounting policies. The adoption of new accounting policies or new HKFRS might or could have a significant impact on the Group's financial position or results of operations.

OUTBREAK OF HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS DISEASE

The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ("SARS") in 2003 had a significant adverse impact on the economies of the affected areas. The spread of Influenza and other communicable diseases from time to time have also affected many areas of the world. The latest outbreak of the Ebola virus disease also poses a significant threat to global industries. Additional outbreaks of other epidemic diseases could negatively affect the operations, results of operation and financial performance of the Group.

CONNECTED TRANSACTIONS

Hutchison Whampoa Limited (“Hutchison”) is also listed on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited. Although the Group believes that its relationship with Hutchison provides it with significant business advantages, the relationship results in various connected transactions under the Rules Governing the Listing of Securities on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited (the “Listing Rules”) and accordingly any transactions entered into between the Group and Hutchison, its subsidiaries or associates are connected transactions, which, unless one of the exemptions is available, will be subject to compliance with the applicable requirements of the Listing Rules, including the issuance of announcements, the obtaining of independent shareholders’ approval at general meetings and disclosure in annual reports and accounts. Independent shareholders’ approval requirements may also lead to unpredictable outcomes causing disruptions to as well as increase the risks of the Group’s business activities. Independent shareholders may also take actions that are in conflict with the interests of the Group.

THE GROUP’S FINANCIAL CONDITIONS OR RESULTS OF OPERATIONS ARE AFFECTED BY THOSE OF THE POWER ASSETS GROUP

Following the spin-off by Power Assets Group of its Hong Kong electricity business in January 2014, the Group owns approximately 38.87 per cent of Power Assets Holdings Limited (“Power Assets”) which has investments in different countries and places and holds 49.9 per cent of HK Electric Investments, a fixed single investment trust, which in turn holds 100 per cent of The Hongkong Electric Company, Limited (“HEC”) whose operations comprise the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity to Hong Kong Island and Lamma Island. Hence the financial conditions and results of operations of Power Assets may be affected by the local market conditions and the economy of Hong Kong as well as the places where its investments are located. The Group’s financial conditions and results of operations are materially affected by the financial conditions and results of operations of Power Assets.

Besides, the operations of HEC are subject to a scheme of control (“SCA”) agreed with the Hong Kong Government which provides for a permitted level of earnings based principally on a return on their capital investment in electricity generation, transmission and distribution assets. The scheme of control was renewed for a term of ten years commencing 1st January, 2009 with an option for the Government to extend the new SCA for a further term of five years. There can be no assurance that changes to or abolition of the scheme of control in the future will not adversely affect HEC’s and the Power Assets’ (and hence the Group’s) financial conditions and results of operations.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Some of the Group’s assets and projects, and many of the Group’s customers and suppliers are located in areas at risk of damage from earthquakes, floods, fire, frost and similar events and the occurrence of any of these events could disrupt the Group’s business and materially and adversely affect the Group’s financial conditions and results of operations.

Although the Group has not experienced any major structural damage to infrastructure projects or assets from earthquakes to date, there can be no assurance that future earthquakes or other natural disasters will not occur and result in major damage to the Group’s infrastructure projects or assets, which could adversely affect the Group’s financial conditions and results of operations.

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PAST PERFORMANCE AND FORWARD LOOKING STATEMENTS

The performance and the results of operations of the Group during the past years as contained in this Annual Report are historical in nature and past performance can be no guarantee of future results of the Group. This Annual Report may contain forward-looking statements and opinions that involve risks and uncertainties. Actual results may differ materially from expectations discussed in such forward-looking statements and opinions. Neither the Group nor the Directors, employees or agents of the Group assume (a) any obligation to correct or update the forward-looking statements or opinions contained in this Annual Report; and (b) any liability in the event that any of the forward-looking statements or opinions does not materialise or turns out to be incorrect.