

23 March 2026

BY POST AND EMAIL

The Commissioner for Digital Policy
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau
20/F, Wanchai Tower
12 Harbour Road
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Dear Commissioner,

Re: Proposal to Amend the Electronic Transactions Ordinance (Cap. 553) to Permit Electronic Signatures for Land and Property Transactions and Stamp Duty Documents

On behalf, the Hong Kong REITS Association (“HKREITA”), its members and the H-REIT industry, we write to respectfully urge the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer to consider initiating legislative amendments to the Electronic Transactions Ordinance (Cap. 553) (the “ETO”) to allow for the use of electronic signatures in land and property transactions, and in documents governed by the Stamp Duty Ordinance (Cap. 117) (the “SDO”).

By way of introduction, HKREITA is an industry association of Real Estate Investment Trusts (“REITs”) in Hong Kong, with Link REIT, SF REIT and Yuexiu REIT as our co-founding corporate members. As such, HKREITA represents the interests of our members as well as our respective unitholders, being both institutional investors as well as the general public.

Currently, pursuant to section 3 and Schedule 1 of the ETO, sections 5, 5A, 6, 7, 8 and 17 of the ETO do not apply to certain categories of documents, including those related to land and property, and those requiring stamping under the SDO. We believe this exclusion can create a significant barrier to digital transformation in Hong Kong, particularly with respect to commercial leasing (in which many of our members are interested).

We note that the Government has already made substantial progress in digital transformation, including the enactment of the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Ordinance 2024, which expanded the scope of electronic service for government documents. Furthermore, the passing of the Registration of Titles and Land (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2025 to implement an electronic title registration system for newly granted land demonstrates the Government’s commitment to modernizing the conveyancing process. However, without corresponding amendments to permit electronic execution of property documents, the benefits of these initiatives will remain limited.

Key Arguments for Reform:

1. Modernization and Efficiency

The exclusion of land and property transactions from e-signature recognition hinders the modernization of Hong Kong's conveyancing and property sectors. Allowing e-signatures would streamline processes, reduce administrative burdens, and increase the speed of transactions. These are benefits already realized in other jurisdictions.

2. Global Best Practice

Jurisdictions such as Singapore, the United Kingdom, and Australia have already adopted frameworks that permit electronic execution of property-related documents under strict authentication and security protocols. Notably, as of August 2025, the UK accepts deeds signed using Qualified Electronic Signatures ("QES") without the need for a physical witness. Singapore has also introduced the *Electronic Conveyancing and Other Matters Bill* which, once fully implemented, will enable electronic execution of property contracts and deeds, including remote witnessing, via a secure national portal. Australia's major states have also adopted laws allowing electronic deeds and remote witnessing, including via the PEXA platform. Hong Kong risks falling behind these jurisdictions in digital competitiveness if it does not adopt similar practices.

3. Security and Trust

The ETO already provides a robust framework for recognized digital certificates and certification authorities. The Hong Kong Government's iAM Smart platform and Hongkong Post's e-Cert infrastructure offer secure digital identity and signing capabilities. Extending this framework to property transactions could ensure secure, verifiable, and legally binding electronic signatures.

4. Environmental and Economic Benefits

Reducing reliance on paper-based documentation clearly supports Hong Kong's sustainability goals and lowers transaction costs for businesses and individuals alike.

5. Legal Certainty and Risk Reduction

The current exclusion creates ambiguity and risk for parties engaging in digital transactions. By explicitly allowing e-signatures for property and stamp duty documents, the law would provide clear legal certainty, reducing the risk of disputes over the validity of electronically signed documents.

6. Alignment with the Government's Digital Strategy

The Hong Kong Government has emphasized digital transformation through initiatives like the Smart City Blueprint and iAM Smart. The 2024 Policy Address also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to full digitalization of public services. Amending the ETO would align with these goals by removing barriers to digital adoption in legal and commercial processes.

7. Enhanced Accessibility and Inclusion

Electronic signing enables remote participation in property transactions, which is especially beneficial for:

- elderly or disabled individuals;
- overseas investors; and
- residents in rural or outlying areas.

This promotes greater inclusivity in the property market.

8. Reduced Fraud and Improved Audit Trails

Modern e-signature platforms offer tamper-evident technology, multi-factor authentication, and detailed audit trails, which can enhance security and reduce fraud compared to traditional paper-based signatures.

9. Economic Competitiveness

Hong Kong's property market is a major economic driver. Streamlining property transactions through digital means can boost market liquidity, reduce transaction costs, and attract foreign investment, reinforcing Hong Kong's status as a global financial centre.

We propose that the ETO be amended to remove the exclusions under Part IV, or alternatively, that the Permanent Secretary be empowered to issue orders permitting the use of electronic signatures for specified categories of property-related documents under controlled conditions. We also recommend that corresponding amendments be considered to the SDO, and any subordinate legislation (as applicable) to ensure that electronically signed instruments can be duly stamped and enforced.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further with your office and relevant stakeholders to explore the technical and legal safeguards necessary to implement this reform responsibly.

Yours sincerely,



Kenneth WONG
Secretary General
Hong Kong REITS Association Limited