

For information

Legislative Council
Panel on Environmental Affairs

Further Information on Water Quality at Shing Mun River

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting on Environmental Affairs on 7 November 2000, Members were briefed on the current environmental conditions of the River and consulted on our proposal to seek Finance Committee's approval to upgrade part of Public Works Project Item 5051DP, namely "Environmental improvement of Shing Mun River – Stage 1", to Category A at an estimated cost of \$70.0 million in money-of-the-day (MOD) prices.

2. During the meeting, Members requested the Administration to provide the following information-

- (a) details of the 41 convictions for non-compliance with the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO), such as nature of offence and penalty level; and
- (b) an estimate of the volume of accumulated pollution load on the riverbed of the River and the annual waste to be discharged into the River in coming years.

The following paragraphs set out the required information.

Details of the 41 convictions for non-compliance with the WPCO, such as nature of offence and penalty level

3. Under the WPCO, a person who commits an offence is liable to a fine of \$200,000 and to imprisonment for 6 months. Between January 1999 to June 2000, there were 41 convictions for non-compliance with the WPCO within the catchment of Shing Mun River. The fine level ranges from \$1,000 to \$40,000. The total and average fines for the 41 convictions were \$537,000 and \$13,000 respectively.

4. A breakdown of the nature of offence for these 41 convictions is as follows-

- (a) 25 convictions were concerned with discharges of polluted water to stormwater drains which lead to Shing Mun River;
- (b) 15 convictions were concerned with discharging effluents not complying with the stipulated standards specified in the discharge licences; and
- (c) the remaining conviction was concerned with obstructing authorized officers in carrying out their enforcement activities.

5. A breakdown of the business nature concerned with the 41 convictions in question is as follows-

- (a) 21 were related to food business;
- (b) 12 were related to construction activities;
- (c) 6 were related to industrial activities; and
- (d) the remaining 2 were related to domestic discharges.

An estimate of the volume of accumulated pollution load on the riverbed of the River and the annual waste to be discharged into the River in coming years

6. The pollution problem of the riverbed sediment is a result of the accumulation of around 9,000 kg of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) pollutants discharged per day for over a decade. This is equivalent to an accumulated pollution loading of 33,000 tonnes of BOD discharged to the River. The amount of BOD to be discharged from the remaining unsewered villages after the completion of the bioremediation works in 2002 would be around 600 kg per day, or 220 tonnes per year, which is around 0.7% of the pollution load accumulated. We do not expect that this small amount of discharge will undermine the benefits brought about by the implementation of Stage 1 of the proposed bioremediation of riverbed sediments at Shing Mun River. The Stage 2 works to be carried out from 2003 to 2005, the proposed long-term maintenance programme and the on-going village sewerage programme are intended to ensure that beneficial change to water quality is maintained.

