

Friends of the Earth 地球之友

Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong)'s submission to LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Landfill Charging

24 June 2002

Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong) would like to give our full support to the SAR Administration regarding the implementation of landfill charging which should have been implemented some years ago in 1995.

I Landfill charging is a matter of urgency

The market condition of the use of landfills has been skewed seriously for long. Disposal of waste at landfills has been free of charge. This has resulted in no economic incentive to minimize waste generation, or to maximize waste recovery.

In 2001, the construction and demolition waste (C&D waste) amounted to 38,840 tonne per day in total, in which about 17% (6410 tonne per day) went to landfills. If there were better waste sorting and recycling programmes, the amount of C&D waste need landfilling could be further minimized.

Worldwide, emphasis of waste management has shifted to the minimization of waste and the recovery of materials for re-use or recycling. Hong Kong is no exception and introducing landfill charges for C&D waste will help Hong Kong become more sustainable in waste management in the following ways:

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1. Provide economic incentive to minimize waste

Implementing landfill charging, which recognizes full environmental costs will put a price tag on waste disposal activities and helps rectify the biased market. It provides a direct economic incentive for waste producers to minimize waste generation and to recover recyclable materials from the waste stream.

2. Boost the shrinking recycling industry

The landfill charging also encourages maximum resource recovery as under-pricing of waste disposal discourages the search for profitable improvements in waste management and recovery of resources. Once the waste producers are required to pay for waste disposal, they will be willing to pay and invest in waste separation and recycling.

3. Observe the polluter pays principle

The Polluter Pays Principle requires that those who cause pollution should pay for the cost of treatment or cleaning up. It is a matter of fairness that the polluters should bear the costs incurred by their acts.

II Practicality

1. fly-tipping

Landfill charging might worsen the problem of fly-tipping, which could not be effectively forestalled by ticket system that is commonly adopted in environmental monitoring and audit programmes of designated environmental impact assessment projects. Hence, the monitoring of fly-tipping should be intensified and tightened.

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2. concerns of truck-drivers

We are of the view that the proposed charging mechanism by the Administration is reasonable and justifiable. To help minimize the potential dispute between the truck drivers and their clients, we urge the Administration to step up public education programmes to enhance public awareness on the detailed arrangements of the landfill charging scheme and the individual's responsibility to uphold the polluter-pays principle.

III Conclusion

The proposed \$125/tonne landfill charging is a good start for the increasing application of polluter pays principle. Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong) urges the Administration to work strenuously to extend the landfill charging programme to other waste producers since the proposed programme is designed only for construction and demolition waste.

Whilst the Administration is putting considerable effort into implementing a landfill charging scheme, we urge the Administration to step up efforts to assist the recycling industry simultaneously.

END