

立法會
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**Panel on Housing and
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works**

**Minutes of Joint meeting held on
Friday, 16 May 2003, at 8:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Members of the Panel on Housing

Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP (Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon NG Leung-sing, JP
*Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon SZETO Wah
*Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
*Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
*Hon WONG Sing-chi
*Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP (Chairman)
#Hon LAU Ping-cheung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Action

Non-Panel Member attending : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan

Members absent : Members of the Panel on Housing

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

Members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP

(* Also members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works)
(# Also members of the Panel on Housing)

Public officers attending : Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau

Mr Parrish C M NG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Planning & Lands)³

Buildings Department

Mr Marco M H WU, JP
Director

Mr K M MO
Assistant Director / New Buildings 1

Housing Department

Mr Vincent W S TONG, JP
Deputy Director (Construction)

Mr WONG Bay
Assistant Director (Estate Management) 2

Action

Attendance by invitation : The Association of Consulting Engineers of Hong Kong

Mr Augustine LI
Chairman

Mr Vincent TSE
Council Member

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

Mr John WONG
President

Mr Vincent NG
Chairman of Planning & Lands Committee

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers

Dr LAU Ching-kwong
President

Mr Victor CHEUNG
Council Member

The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors

Mr Kenneth CHAN Jor-kin
President

Mr Raymond CHAN Yuk-ming
Building Surveying Division Chairman

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Ms Cindy CHENG
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)4

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant 4

Action

I. Election of Chairman

Mr CHAN Kam-lam was elected Chairman of the joint meeting.

II. Design of sewerage system of residential buildings in Hong Kong

Meeting with the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE)

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1679/02-03 (02) — Submission from HKIE (English version only)

2. Dr LAU Ching-kwong said that the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Amoy Garden was more prone to direct and indirect contact, pest infestation and environmental contamination rather than the design of building drainage system, which in HKIE's view was up to international standards. However, there were certain problems, including dried up U-trap of bathroom floor drains, improper modification of the drainage system and faulty pipework, which should be addressed. There was also need for regular inspection and maintenance of the building drainage system. In this connection, the Administration should publish a Code of Practice for design, installation and maintenance of drainage systems for buildings. Consideration should also be given to putting in place legislation on the licensing of drainage workers, statutory approval for post-occupation modification work and mandatory inspection of building drainage systems.

Meeting with the Association of Consulting Engineers of Hong Kong (ACEHK)

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1679/02-03(01) — Submission from ACEHK (English version only)

3. Mr Augustine LI said that the real problems of building drainage systems in Hong Kong lied in the misuse of floor drains, illegal installation and modification of U-traps and drainage installations as well as improper maintenance. To this end, measures such as replacing floor drain by floor trap, requiring all drainage installations to be carried out by licensed workers, enforcing periodic building drainage inspection for all new and old buildings and promulgating standard design guidelines and Code of Practice on drainage installations should be put in place.

Meeting with the Hong Kong Institute of Architects

4. While the existing design of building drainage system was up to international standards, Mr John WONG pointed out that there were problems of inadequate repair and maintenance. Mandatory inspection of drainage systems by owners would be a long-term measure to ensure effective disposal of soil and waste from buildings in a sanitary manner. To facilitate inspection and repair of drainage systems which were quite difficult now given the narrow re-entrant, consideration should be given to amending the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations (BDR) so that working platforms could be provided on certain floors of high-rise buildings. Mr WONG added that HKIA had recently conducted a seminar on building maintenance and was in the process of compiling a report which might serve as a useful reference for the Government.

Action

Meeting with the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS)

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1655/02-03(01) — Submission from HKIS (English version only)

5. Mr Kenneth CHAN briefed members on the submission from HKIS. He stressed the need for regular inspection of the above-ground drainage systems. Given that a large number of buildings in Hong Kong did not have an owners' committee, assistance from the Administration was required to help owners concerned to carry out the first inspection of these buildings. A long-term solution would be the introduction of a mandatory inspection and maintenance scheme to be funded by the Building Safety Loan Scheme (BSLS), if necessary.

Meeting with the Administration

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1655/02-03(02) — Paper provided by the Administration)

6. The Principal Assistant Secretary (Planning & Lands)³ said that according to the report of investigation on Block E of Amoy Garden, no one single factor could account for the outbreak which was likely to have been the result of a combination of factors, including a minor crack in a horizontal air vent, combined with the presence of a highly infectious index patient. The presence of empty water seal traps could also have facilitated the transmission of the disease. In the light of the Amoy Garden report, the Administration had reviewed the relevant provisions of BDR and concluded that these provisions were adequate in preventing drainage systems from causing environmental or health problems. Apart from the review of the statutory provisions, the Administration had taken a series of actions to promote proper maintenance of drainage systems. All owners' corporations (OCs) of private buildings as well as major property management companies had been requested to check the drainage systems of their buildings or the buildings under their management to ensure that the systems were well maintained. For buildings without OCs or not under the management of property management companies, the Buildings Department (BD) would conduct a walking survey on the drainage systems of these buildings. In public housing estates, the Housing Department (HD) had inspected all drainage installations located in common areas and external walls. Notices had been put up in every block to encourage tenants to report on drainage defects. In the long term, HD would liaise with professionals and the industry with a view to continuously improving the drainage design for new public housing estates to facilitate system maintenance and repair.

Discussion session

7. On *inspection and maintenance of drainage systems*, Mr Fred LI asked how BD could prevent improper modifications of drainage installations such as removal of U-traps which were hard to detect. The Director of Buildings Department (DB) agreed with Mr LI's observation. In this connection, legislative amendments would be introduced to control minor works, including drainage works, on private buildings. Under the proposed regime, minor building works would be carried out by registered contractors. Depending on the scale and complexity of works, owners might be required to engage Authorized Persons (APs) to supervise certain categories of works.

Action

It was believed that the proposed system would enhance quality of building works on the one hand and compliance with the law on the other.

8. As regards the need for a mandatory inspection and maintenance scheme, DB advised that the proposal was mooted a few years ago but was not pursued further because of lack of consensus in the community. As an alternative, a voluntary Co-ordinated Maintenance of Buildings Scheme (CMBS) was implemented to encourage building owners to carry out maintenance and improvement works to prevent dilapidation and extend the habitable life of the ageing buildings in Hong Kong. Building owners who needed financial assistance could apply for loans under the BSLS to engage professionals to carry out inspection and repair works on their buildings. Mr Fred LI remarked that the Administration might take this opportunity to re-visit the need for a mandatory inspection and maintenance scheme.

9. Noting that only \$160 million out of \$700 million under BSLS had so far been granted to building owners, Dr TANG Siu-tong expressed concern about the low utilization rate. He urged the Administration to step up publicity on BSLS. Consideration should also be given to relaxing the eligibility criteria for BSLS to encourage more building owners to make use of the loans to improve the conditions of their buildings. DB advised that the amount remaining in BSLS was not an indicator on the utilization rate as repayment from loan recipients would be ploughed back to BSLS to finance other applications. In fact, the utilization rate of BSLS had surged in recent years consequent upon the stepping up of enforcement actions against unauthorized building works.

10. As BSLS would only apply to repair/renovation to the entire building, Dr LO Wing-lok enquired about the situation where owners could not reach a consensus on inspection and repair of their buildings, particularly those without OCs. DB clarified that owners could apply for loans individually. He added that at present, there were about 12 000 private buildings without OCs or not under the management of property management companies. BD would undertake a walking survey on the drainage systems of these buildings. So far, more than 4 600 of these buildings were inspected. Remaining buildings would be covered in the coming few weeks. Up to the end April 2003, BD had issued orders to owners in 70 cases to repair the defective drainage works. In six emergency or blatant cases, BD had carried out necessary repair works in the first instance and would recover the costs from the owners concerned. Mr Albert HO opined that the Administration should map out a long-term strategy to deal with inspection and repair of these buildings with priority given to those of dilapidated conditions. Mr SIN Chung-kai added that consideration might be given to setting up a mandatory sinking fund for buildings to alleviate the financial burden of owners in the event that major repair and maintenance works were required in future.

11. Given that about half of the population in Hong Kong resided in public housing estates, Mr WONG Sing-chi stressed the need to ensure proper maintenance and cleanliness of these estates to prevent large-scale outbreak of infectious disease. The Assistant Director (Estate Management)2 (AD(EM)2) advised that HD had stepped up cleansing of public housing estates consequent upon the outbreak of SARS.

Action

Contractors were required to use diluted household bleach to clean all corridors, lift lobbies, refuse rooms and public areas every two weeks, lift cars four times a day and recreational facilities twice a day. In light of the Amoy Garden report, HD had also inspected all drainage installations located in common areas as well as external walls and repaired any defects detected. Notices had also been put up in every block to encourage tenants to report on drainage defects. Tenants could report drainage defects through the hotline in their respective estates. A dedicated team with 500 professionals and technical members had been established since 17 April 2003 to conduct emergency checks and repairs within 24 hours of reporting. As at end of April 2003, over 4 000 requests for inspection and drain repairs had been received. Follow-up actions on 3 500 cases had been completed.

12. As some tenants might not have sufficient technical knowledge, Mr WONG pointed out that it might be difficult for them to ascertain the defects and report to HD. By way of illustration, elderly tenants in Wing Shui House of Lek Yuen Estate were not able to detect any problems with the drainage pipes inside their flats until serious leakage was found nor did they know how to deal with the problems. He asked if HD would carry out regular inspections and repair work for all drainage installations located inside public housing units. Consideration could also be given to involving voluntary organizations to assist elderly tenants in reporting any defects relating to drainage pipes. AD(EM)2 advised that consequent upon the recent outbreak of SARS in Wing Shui House, HD had set up a technical team to help elderly tenants to inspect the drainage installations inside their flats. Where necessary, similar arrangements would be extended to other public housing estates in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department or other voluntary agencies.

13. Apart from domestic buildings, Mr LAU Ping-cheung enquired if the Administration would also check the drainage systems of non-domestic buildings, particularly hospitals given that cracks were found in sewer vent pipes of the United Christian Hospital. DB reiterated that it was the responsibility of owners and OCs to inspect and maintain their buildings, both domestic and non-domestic buildings alike. As regards hospitals, the Hospital Authority would deal with problems arising from hospital premises.

14. On *design and standards of drainage systems*, Ms Cyd HO expressed concern about the lack of working platforms in high-rise buildings to facilitate proper maintenance and repair of pipework located outside the buildings. She asked if the problem of accessibility would be further aggravated if pipework was located inside the premises say in enclosed bathrooms. Mr John WONG/HKIA agreed that repair of pipework could be better undertaken if working platforms were provided. He said that architects might be reluctant to arrange pipes to be installed inside buildings as this might lower the plot ratio. Mr Raymond CHAN/HKIS remarked that enclosed bathroom was a common design adopted in hotels and many overseas countries. This would not give rise to problem of accessibility since access panels would be provided in the corridor of each floor to facilitate maintenance and repair. The important point was to ensure quality of maintenance and repair works. In this connection, consideration should be given to having separate contracts for estate management and estate maintenance to avoid conflict of interest on the one hand and ensure a proper

Action

check and balance on the other. Through the chair, the Assistant Director of Building/New Buildings 1 (ADB/NB1) said that flexibility was allowed for designers to arrange the pipes either inside or outside buildings. Where drain pipes were fixed in a duct within a building, such pipe duct would be excluded from the calculation of gross floor area as an incentive, if adequate access was available to facilitate proper maintenance. He added that the non-provision of windows in toilets was acceptable as long as sufficient lighting and ventilation were provided.

15. Dr TANG Siu-tong asked whether the one-pipe system was commonly adopted in other overseas countries. Mr Vincent TSE/ACEHK advised that while the system was widely used in Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, efforts should be made to improve the design with a view to resolving the problem of drying up U-traps. Mr Victor CHEUNG/HKIE echoed that U-trap of bathroom floor drain had to be filled with water to avoid foul smell and insects in the soil stack from entering the bathroom. To this end, consideration should be given to slightly modifying the design of drainage system so that U-trap of floor drain was automatically and continuously primed. One possible solution was to connect the wash basin discharge pipe in between the floor drain grating and its U-trap as illustrated in Figure I of HKIE's submission. Through the chair, ADB/NB1 said that the design standards under BDR were compatible with those adopted in many other parts of the world such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia. Notwithstanding, BD would not object to the use of any new design so long it could meet the statutory requirements.

16. Mr LAU Ping-cheung noted with concern that not all sanitary fitments in public housing estates were provided with U-traps. He cautioned that the foul air from the drainage system might be able to escape into the living area. DD(C) confirmed that in some older public housing units, wash basins were not provided with U-traps but connected to floor drains to serve the same purpose but this was in compliance with the requirements under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap.123).

17. On *detection of seepage of drain pipes*, Mr Albert HO asked if the use of infra-red test an accurate means to detect the source of seepage. Mr Kenneth CHAN/HKIS replied that infra-red test could only detect the presence of seepage but not the source which was hard to identify if owners in the upper floors refused the entrance of professionals to investigate the problem of seepage. Through the chair, ADB/NB1 advised that the Administration was also concerned about seepage problem. In this connection, professionals had been advised not to embed water-borne pipes in structural floors.

18. Given the prevalence of seepage problem in both new and old buildings alike, Mr Albert CHAN opined that all parties concerned, including Government departments, developers as well as professionals such as architects and APs, should be held liable for failure to ensure building quality. It was unfair that innocent owners had to bear the dire consequences and substantial cost incurred from rectifying the problem. Mr John WONG/HKIA cautioned that without any concrete evidence, Mr CHAN's allegation was a libel on the professionals. The Chairman agreed that Mr CHAN should provide relevant cases to substantiate his allegation against the Administration and professionals. To express his dissatisfaction against the Chairman's ruling, Mr CHAN walked out of the meeting at this juncture.

Action

19. On *materials for drain pipes*, Mr Fred LI enquired if the use of UPVC was a better alternative than cast iron for soil and waste pipes. If so, whether HD would consider replacing all cast iron pipes in public housing estates with UPVC pipes. Mr Victor CHEUNG/HKIE advised that the use of UPVC for soil and waste pipes was recommended to avoid pinhole and rusting problem of cast iron pipes. However, there might be circumstances such as the need to meet statutory fire safety requirements where cast iron pipes were preferred. In any case, iron cast pipes with an epoxy coating would be a better choice than ordinary iron cast pipes. Through the chair, DD(C) informed members that UPVC drain pipes were used in about 80% of the public housing estates. HD would set up a task force to inspect the pipes and would carry out repair and replacement if necessary, when defects were detected. As to whether the increased use of diluted household bleach for disinfection might cause corrosion to drain pipes in the long run, Mr Victor CHEUNG/HKIE answered in the negative. However, the improper use of bleaching agent might cause health hazards to residents.

20. On *licensing of workers for drainage installations*, Mr Fred LI considered that a licensing system should be set up for drainage workers. The existing registration system for building contractors should also be reviewed to include drainage contractors. Given the various licensing systems for workers in the construction industry, Mr LAU Ping-cheung agreed that the same should apply to drainage workers. Dr TANG Siu-tong remarked that apart from APs, licensed plumbers should be allowed to undertake drainage installations. Mr Augustine LI/ACEHK agreed with members on the need to set up a licensing system for drainage workers to ensure quality and safety of drainage installations. Through the chair, DB informed members that the Administration was looking into the licensing system for construction workers, including drainage workers.

III. Any other business

21. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:35 am.