

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(1) 958/04-05  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

**Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Minutes of special meeting held on  
Friday, 21 January 2005, at 9:35 am  
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon CHOY So-yuk (Chairman)  
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, S.B.St.J., JP  
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP  
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP  
Hon LEE Wing-tat  
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Members attending** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP  
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
- Members absent** : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP
- Public officers attending** : Dr Sarah LIAO  
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
- Mr K K KWOK  
Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and  
Works (Environment)
- Mr Roy TANG  
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works  
(Environment) 2

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Mrs Teresa WONG  
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works  
(Environment) 1 (Acting)

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

**Staff in attendance :** Ms Pauline NG  
Assistant Secretary General 1

Mrs Mary TANG  
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Miss Mandy POON  
Legislative Assistant (1)4

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**I. Briefing by the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works on relevant policy initiatives in the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2005**

(The 2005 Policy Address

LC Paper No. CB(1) 712/04-05(01) — 2005 Policy Agenda - Policy Initiatives of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

LC Paper No. CB(1) 759/04-05(01) — Submission from the WWF Hong Kong (English version only))

The Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (SETW) briefed members on the initiatives affecting the environmental portfolio of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) in the 2005 Policy Agenda by highlighting the salient points in the information paper.

Greening policy

2. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted with concern that although a number of departments, such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Highways Department and Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, were involved in the planting of trees, there was a lack of a comprehensive greening policy on the protection and planting of trees. He hoped that greening policy would be included as one of the policy initiatives in the coming year. In reply, SETW clarified that greening policy fell under the purview of the works portfolio rather than the environment portfolio. Notwithstanding, she was pleased to take this opportunity to brief members on the progress in the implementation of greening policy. An inter-departmental Greening Master Plan Committee was established for the formulation of a comprehensive greening framework and broad strategy, including planting themes and green corridors for individual districts. The overall planning on

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the greening of commercial districts such as Central and Tsim Sha Tsui would be implemented in phases in the middle of this year for completion next year. Greening for other districts would be proceeded with in parallel. Meanwhile, about 16 million plants were provided last year with the efforts of the steering committee on greening. The Chairman invited Mr WONG to follow up the issue with the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works.

Sewage treatment

3. Dr KWOK Ka-ki enquired about the policy initiatives on the protection and conservation of the harbour. He was concerned that reclamation under Central reclamation phase III and Wanchai development phase II would further aggravate the pollution to the harbour. SETW said that reclamation works were subject to stringent environmental control, and that mitigating measures would be implemented to reduce the impact of reclamation on the harbour. Besides, the implementation of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS) could improve the water quality of the harbour to bring about a better marine environment. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned that the contractual arrangement for HATS Stage 2 would have an impact on the sewage charge which was determined in accordance with the “polluter-pays” principle. In reply, SETW agreed that sewage treatment was very expensive having regard to the high capital and recurrent costs involved. To reduce the increasing subsidy to be borne by taxpayers, the Administration would review the existing sewage services charging scheme according to “polluter-pays” principle with a view to achieving an equitable sharing of the funding responsibility in respect of the provision of sewage services.

4. Mr Albert CHAN expressed grave concern about the problem of polluted beaches, which in his view was a result of poor management and negligence on the part of the Administration. By way of illustration, the Peng Chau beach had become dumping grounds for waste while the beaches in New Territories West had to be closed due to poor water quality. He enquired if there were plans to improve the situation so that the polluted beaches could be open for public use and if so, when improvements could be seen. SETW said that measures, including control of sewage discharge from pig and poultry farms as well as the implementation of HATS for treatment of sewage, had been made to improve the harbour water quality as a whole. It was expected with the provision of disinfection under HATS Stage 2, further improvements to the harbour water quality would be achieved by 2008.

Air quality

5. In view of the deteriorating air quality in Hong Kong, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the progress being made with the Guangdong Provincial Government in improving the regional air quality. He also sought elaboration on Administration’s commitments in imposing ceilings on the total emissions of local power companies and requiring them to maximize the use of natural gas in power generation and develop renewable energy.

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6. SETW noted that air quality was of great concern to the public. However, there was no quick fix to the problem, in particular the deteriorating regional air quality having regard to the high demand for energy from the Pearl River Delta Region (PRD) as a result of rapid economic development. To this end, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) and the Guangdong Provincial Government (GPG) jointly drew up the PRD Region Air Quality Management Plan with a view to achieving by 2010 the emission reduction targets agreed by both governments in April 2002. During her recent meeting with the Vice Minister of the State Environmental Protection Administration (VMSEPA) to discuss energy policy and its relation to air pollution, VMSEPA strongly advocated the control of air pollution. A number of measures had been implemented to control emissions from power stations. For instance, installation of flue gas desulphurization systems in Shenzhen Xibu Power Plant (Units 5 and 6), Dongguan Shajiao Power Plant A (Unit 5) and Taishan Power Plant (Units 1 and 2) was completed. Retrofitting works for Shenzhen Mawan Power Plant, three power plants in Shajiao of Dongguan, Guangzhou Huangpu Power Plant, Zhujiang Power Plant and Zhuhai Power Plant were expected to complete in 2005-06. Preparation for retrofitting other power plants in the region was underway. The target was to retrofit all coal-fired power generation units with flue gas desulphurization systems. Apart from prohibiting the operation of a number of polluting power plants and imposing stringent licensing conditions on polluting activities, all new power plants were required to operate on natural gas. It was hoped that upon the completion of new natural gas power plants in 2007 and the replacement of the coal-fired power plants, the regional air quality could be improved. However, as these emission control measures would take time, the quality of air would be at its worst in the next two years. On the part of Hong Kong, SETW said that emission control would be set out as part of the licensing conditions for the two power companies. As regards the use of natural gas in power generation, ETWB would coordinate with the Economic Development and Labour Bureau in setting the energy policy as the use of natural gas would have implications on electricity costs. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was disappointed that the Administration could tolerate the use of coal in electricity generation by the two power companies which was major source of air pollution in Hong Kong.

7. Mr LEE Wing-tat expressed grave concern on the slow progress made by the Mainland authorities in tackling the regional air problem. He asked if it would be most cost effective to use the resources earmarked for improving air quality in Hong Kong to assist the Mainland, particularly those small cities, which might not have sufficient financial means to implement emission reduction measures. SETW said that this was in fact the concept of emission trading to provide financial incentive to encourage the adoption of emission reduction measures. However, regulatory regime was required to facilitate emission trading. She added that while approval had already been sought from the State Council on the implementation of emission trading between Hong Kong and Guangdong, details of implementation had yet to be worked out having regard to the disparity in environmental legislation between the two places. Emission trading was targeted at highly polluting industries such as cement factories and power plants in cities under the same air shed as Hong Kong. The Chairman noted that a number of cement factories in Dongguan had since been closed down.

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8. Mr Jeffrey LAM cautioned that the deteriorating air quality would dampen foreign investment in Hong Kong. Referring to the incentive scheme to encourage replacement of diesel light buses with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) or electric light buses, Mr LAM noted with concern that there were still many diesel light buses which had not been replaced with LPG ones after introduction of the scheme in 2002. He enquired if this was due to the inadequate provision of LPG filling stations and if so, whether the scheme could be completed as scheduled. SETW said that the incentive scheme had been extended following the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome to allow more time for light bus owners to replace their vehicles. Experience showed that owners would tend to optimize the life span of their vehicles before replacement. Besides, it was not uncommon for owners to replace their vehicles towards the end of the scheme in late 2005. On the provision of LPG filling stations, SETW said that while it was Government's intention to increase the number of these stations to facilitate the switch, there were safety concerns and land constraints in identifying suitable sites for use as filling stations. Nevertheless, the Administration would endeavour to identify suitable sites and to retrofit existing petrol stations for use as LPG filling stations as far as possible to meet the demand.

Renewable energy

9. Ms Miriam LAU enquired about the progress in promoting the wider application of renewable energy, particularly the pilot production-scale wind energy projects undertaken by the two power companies. SETW said that the power companies had made progress in setting up the pilot production-scale wind turbine for public demonstration and evaluation purposes. After making reference to the wind data collected in the past, the Hong Kong Electric proposed to build a production-scale wind turbine of 800 kilowatt on Lamma Island. Meanwhile, the China Light and Power Company was evaluating the feasibility of a pool of sites and would monitor the wind data at the short listed sites. She added that the Administration was also actively exploring the feasibility of energy from waste as another source of renewable energy. One example was the utilization of methane gas from landfills and sewage treatment plants for generation of electricity. If feasible, this could be inter-connected to the electricity grid.

10. Ms LAU then sought elaboration on the plans on utilization of landfill gas to generate electricity and the amount of energy that could be produced. SETW advised that it was the Administration's policy to make beneficial use of the landfill gas. However, not all landfills were suitable for conveying their gases for electricity generation. Landfill gas produced from landfills which were in close proximity to industrial sites could be used as fuel. As a start, small-scale demonstration projects were adopted to ascertain the feasibility of using landfill gas for electricity generation. A review would be conducted to identify the landfills where gases could be used for electricity generation since the amount of gas to be produced would decrease with time. As such, there were no statistics on the amount of energy that could be generated from landfill gas.

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Waste management

11. While appreciating that greater emphasis was placed on environmental protection in this year's Policy Address, Ms Audrey EU held the view that more needed to be done to protect the environment. Referring to the initiative to promote and facilitate the development of the recycling industry, she enquired how priorities were set in determining the types of recycling industries which should be provided with financial assistance by the Government. According to the Administration's paper, focus was now placed on waste tyres and waste papers, instead of used batteries, computers and plastic bags. SETW said that reference had been made to overseas experience in working out the recycling policy on different types of materials. Assessment studies had been conducted on the recycling of waste tyres, plastic bags, batteries and waste papers, taking into account their size, pace of biodegradation and levels of toxic emissions during the degradation process. As waste tyres were difficult or uneconomical to recycle, a large volume of the waste tyres was disposed of in landfills. To this end, the Administration intended to introduce a Product Responsibility Scheme (PRD) for waste tyres to provide an incentive for stakeholders to reuse or recycle waste tyres, thereby reducing the volume of tyres to be disposed of at landfills. It was the Administration's intention to implement mandatory product responsibility schemes to ensure the recovery and recycling of the products concerned. In the long term, consideration would be given to enacting legislation on recycling to build a circular economy.

12. As for batteries, SETW said that the Consumer Council had conducted a study on the toxicity of batteries. It was found that instead of using toxic cadmium and mercury, most of the batteries were now made from non-toxic materials such as zinc, manganese and alkaline. Hence, the disposal of batteries would no longer give rise to safety hazard. However, rechargeable batteries which contained toxic materials such as cadmium and nickel were a cause of concern. To this end, reference had been made to overseas experience in introducing a pilot scheme for the recycling of these batteries in the first quarter of this year, with the help of the commercial sector and the recycling industry. As regards plastic bags, SETW said that while the Administration had encouraged retailers to provide plastic bags only upon request of customers in an attempt to reduce the use of plastic bags, it was difficult to control their use, particularly with the prevalence of wet markets in Hong Kong. She further pointed out that the measures adopted by overseas countries in reducing the use of plastic bags might not be suitable for Hong Kong as most people in Hong Kong would use plastic bags as garbage bags which would in turn reduce the number of garbage bags to be disposed of at landfills. It was also worth to note that retailers in London had reverted to the use of plastic bags which were once banned. The Administration was trying to find out the rationale behind such a change.

13. Ms Audrey EU held the view that more could be done in reducing the use of plastic bags, and that the public and the trades should be consulted in this respect. She then enquired about the progress of the Recovery Park which would help in resolving problems associated with storage of recyclables. SETW said that the purpose of the Recovery Park was meant to provide opportunities for developing value-added recycling industries. As recycling operations were land demanding and

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were more effective if they were situated near the source of waste, cooperation had been sought from the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau on the provision of space within housing estates/developments for storage of recyclables, the area of which would be exempted from the calculation of gross floor area under the plot ratio.

14. While welcoming the policy to assist in the development of the recycling industries with a view to fostering a recycling culture, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong questioned the efficacy of such a policy. He pointed out that very often, schools participating in the recycling of waste materials were unable to find an outlet for these products. This had led to the accumulation of large amount of recyclables which were eventually disposed of at landfills. There was also concern that the Recovery Park to be built in Tuen Mun would be used for processing imported waste rather than facilitating local recycling operations. He then emphasized the need to ensure the practicability of the recycling mechanism so that recyclables could be put to proper use.

15. SETW said that a recycling mechanism was essential in fostering a circular economy. She clarified that the Recovery Park was not only a sorting and recycling centre but also an integral part of the recycling mechanism to promote value-added industries and provide the needed economic incentive for recycling. By way of illustration, recyclables from plastic bottles could be transformed into useful materials for the textile industries. To ensure adequate supply of recyclables, it was not uncommon for the recycling industries to import these materials when the local supply was not sufficient to meet demand. The two successful waste paper recycling plants in Hong Kong would need to import waste materials from paper manufacturers to support their operations. Such importation was permissible as long as customs requirements were met.

Public awareness on environmental protection

16. Mr Martin LEE considered it necessary to promote public awareness on environmental protection, with particular emphasis on the improvements which could be achieved through small changes in the daily habits, such as reducing the use of plastic bags and switching off light which was not required. The subject of environmental protection should also be included as part of liberal studies for the benefit of the younger generation. SETW said that the Administration had been keen on promoting public awareness on environmental protection. Through the efforts of the Environmental Campaign Committee, a number of publicity programmes on environment issues, such as waste sorting and recycling, had been launched, some of which were targeted at the young. At the request of Mr LEE, SETW agreed to increase the number of Announcements on Public Interest on environmental protection.

Green procurement

17. While supporting the adoption of a green procurement policy by the Government, the Chairman asked if this was in compliance with the restrictions under the World Trade Organizations (WTO) Agreement on Government Procurement.

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The Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment) replied that the green procurement policy would not be in conflict with the WTO Agreement. He added that the Government had commissioned a consultancy study in 2002 to update the green specifications of products. The findings would be useful for future reviews of the product specifications.

**II. Any other business**

18. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:40 am.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
25 February 2005