

NOTE FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

Supplementary Information on expediting sewerage and drainage improvement projects

INTRODUCTION

In considering PWSCI(2006-07)11 on “Forecast of submissions for the 2006-07 Legislative Council (LegCo) session” at the Public Works Subcommittee meeting on 25 October 2006, a Member requested the Administration to provide details on the efforts taken to expedite sewerage and drainage improvement projects of the Drainage Services Department (DSD), particularly in relation to projects in the Northern New Territories (NNT).

THE ADMINISTRATION’S RESPONSE

Drainage Improvement

2. We have either completed or have been implementing more than 20 drainage improvement projects in stages (at total project estimates of about \$4 billion) to alleviate flooding in NNT. We have significantly reduced the flood risk in most of the flood prone areas in NNT upon completion of river training works along major rivers including Shenzhen River, Ng Tung River, Sheung Yue River and Ping Yuen River. The remaining drainage improvement works in NNT yet to be started involve mainly upstream areas of major rivers for further resolving local flooding problems. DSD plans to start construction of most remaining works in 2007.

Sewerage Improvement

3. Apart from the sewerage constructed for the new towns by the then Territory Development Department, DSD has been implementing 7 sewerage improvement projects in stages (at total project estimates of about \$1.6 billion) to upgrade existing sewage collection and treatment facilities in the North District, in

order to cater for the projected level of development and abate water pollution problem arising from unsatisfactory private sewage treatment facilities. DSD has completed most of the downstream trunk sewers and sewage treatment plants in NNT. Most of the projects currently under planning and design are related to construction of upstream village sewerage works, necessitating completion of various gazettal and land resumption procedures under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance, Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance and Lands Resumption Ordinance. These gazettal/land resumption procedures together with the associated handling of local objections usually require considerable time.

Measures Taken to Expedite Drainage and Sewerage Improvement Projects

4. To expedite drainage and sewerage improvement works in NNT, DSD has adopted the following measures:

- (a) **Close liaison with the local communities** - DSD has been closely liaising with relevant District Council (DC) members, Rural Committee members and village representatives to solicit their support during the planning and design stages, and to deal with any local objections and interfacing issues arising from project implementation. If objections are received upon gazetting under statutory procedures, DSD aims to complete the resolution of all objections within four months from the expiry of the objection period for medium size projects. In some major objection cases, we have solicited assistance from relevant LegCo and Heung Yee Kuk members to resolve the problems. Furthermore, during last year and early this year, directorate staff of DSD and other relevant departments, such as the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) also attended various DC and village consultation meetings (including those in the North District) to explain in detail Government's policy on sewerage projects.
- (b) **Minimising resumption of land** – At times, resumption of private land faces resistance from the lot owners. In addition, the lead time to go through statutory procedures required for land resumption has a significant impact on the time of project delivery. DSD has been avoiding resumption of private land as far as possible to minimise possible objections from the locals, and to achieve timely project delivery.

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- (c) **Repackaging of works** – Where resumption of extensive areas and a large number of private lots is unavoidable for certain drainage and sewerage improvement works in the New Territories, DSD would repackage the works for phased implementation so as to minimise the lead time for commencement of works. For example, **118CD** “Drainage improvement in Northern New Territories – package B” involves the resumption of about 300 lots in Kwu Tung, Ma Tso Lung, Sha Ling and Fu Tei Au. To allow an earlier start to some of the channels included in the project, DSD has agreed with Lands Department (LandsD) to split the project into three phases so that the resumed private land can be made available in smaller parcels spread out in time. The first phase started construction in December 2005, the second phase in July 2006, and the last phase is expected to start works in mid-2007.
- (d) **Parallel action under different statutory procedures** – Apart from land resumption, our drainage and sewerage improvement projects are often designated projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance and require gazettal of the roadworks under the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance. Depending on the complexity of a project, the time taken for completing the procedures under each of these two Ordinances would be around six to 12 months (excluding the time required for the design and preparation of the EIA report). It has been DSD’s practice to embark on the studies and procedures required under different statutes in parallel so as to save a few months’ time in the implementation of projects that involve more than one Ordinance.
- (e) **Tender Invitation before funding approval** – To expedite the project implementation in NNT and other districts, DSD would duly consider the possibility of early tendering by assessing the merits and risks involved, and would initiate the tender process before funding is approved by the Finance Committee. By so doing, DSD can start the construction contract up to four months earlier as tender invitation and assessment would normally take four months to complete. Such approach has been adopted in a number of projects in NNT, such as **147CD** “Drainage improvement in Kwu Tung South and Fu Tei Au, Sheung Shui”.

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- (f) **Working closely between Government departments** – DSD has been working closely with relevant District Offices, District Lands Offices, District Survey Offices and Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, and other Government departments to ensure smooth implementation of projects at all stages. We have also established regular liaison meetings at Headquarters level amongst DSD, EPD and LandsD to monitor the progress of project implementation and land resumption for major drainage and sewerage projects.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
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