

Product Eco-responsibility Bill

The Administration's Response to Views and Questions Raised at the Bills Committee Meeting on 13 March 2008

Recycling of Plastic Shopping Bags

The Administration considers that the best solution to our waste problem is to avoid and reduce waste at source. Insofar as plastic shopping bags are concerned, the public can easily reduce their use by adopting a green lifestyle and bringing their own reusable shopping bags at all time. Hence, the primary policy objective of the Administration is to reduce the indiscriminate use of plastic shopping bags at source. In line with this objective, the environmental levy on plastic shopping bags aims to discourage the public from using plastic shopping bags through a *direct economic disincentive*.

2. Aside from reduction at source, it is environmentally more desirable that plastic shopping bags should first be *reused* as many times as possible before they are recycled. In this connection, the Administration notes that the public have mostly been reusing plastic shopping bags as garbage bags. In fact, plastic shopping bags can also be reused as packaging bags or as shopping bags again. Recycling of plastic shopping bags should only follow after all possible means for their reduction and reuse have been exhausted, and the most effective means to encourage the public to recycle their used plastic shopping bags is to provide easily accessible points for their collection. The Administration is therefore continuing to roll out the Source Separation of Domestic Waste Programme to facilitate the recovery of used plastic shopping bags. The Administration will also launch a new Announcement of Public Interests (API) shortly to further promote the reuse and recycling of plastic shopping bags.

3. As a complementary measure, the Administration is liaising with major retail chains on possible measures to promote reuse and recycling of plastic shopping bags. In this regard, a major retail chain has recently launched a deposit-and-refund scheme for reusable shopping bags, whereby a customer can borrow a reusable shopping bag for a deposit, which will be refunded upon the return of the bag. Such a scheme would be *more environmentally desirable* than, say, offering refund of the environmental levy for returning used plastic shopping bags for the purpose of recycling. A refund or partial refund of environmental levy would also not be conducive to encouraging the public to bring their own

bags.

Measures to Support Recycling Industry

4. In 2007, more than 2.75 million tones of municipal solid waste were recovered in Hong Kong. The recycling rate of 45% is on par with other advanced economies. Most of the recovered materials are exported for recycling.

5. To foster the development of the local recycling industry, the Administration has embarked on the establishment of the EcoPark in Tuen Mun to provide long-term land for the high value-added operations of the local recycling industry. The Administration has also earmarked 36 pieces of conveniently located short-term tenancy sites of over 7.4 hectares for the recovery operations of the local recycling industry. Regarding recycling activities at public cargo working areas (PCWA's), we understand that some 90% of waste paper recovered in Hong Kong is exported to the Mainland via Kwun Tong PCWA, Chai Wan PCWA and Tuen Mun PCWA. In anticipation of the planned closure of Kwun Tong PCWA in 2011, the Administration has proposed to relocate the recyclers concerned to Cha Kwo Ling PCWA from 2011 onwards. This should promote synergy and economy of scale in the operation of the recyclers.

6. Aside from the provision of suitable land, the Administration also provides funding support for research and development projects on waste recycling through the Environment and Conservation Fund, the Innovation and Technology Fund and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund. To underline the Administration's commitment, a further injection of \$1 billion has been made to the Environment and Conservation Fund to support, inter alia, research and technology demonstration projects on environmental protection.

7. To provide market outlets for recycled products, the Administration has long been adopting a green procurement policy. The Stores and Procurement Regulation requires all bureaux and departments to take into account green considerations, including recycled content, energy efficiency, minimal packaging and low emission, in their procurement. In addition, the Administration has adopted mandatory green specifications for some 40 commonly-used items. In 2007, the Administration purchased over \$100 million worth of such green products. The Administration also encourages the commercial and industrial sector to adopt green procurement. To this end, the Environment and Conservation Fund is supporting a green procurement

project, which encompasses green procurement guidelines, seminars and experience-sharing workshops for the private sector.

Three-coloured Waste Separation Bins

8. Currently, there are some 28 000 three-coloured waste separation bins throughout the territory. These waste separation bins are placed at public places (including roadside, parks, sport venues, leisure and cultural facilities, country parks, hospitals and clinics), schools, housing estates and government quarters. The distribution of the bins is as follows:

Location	Number of Waste Separation Bins
Public places	6 560
Schools	3 090
Public housing estates and government quarters	8 830
Private housing estates	9 520
Total:	28 000

The locations of waste separation bins at public places and schools by district are further set out at **Annex**.

9. The Administration has contracted out the collection service of recyclables from the waste separation bins at public places and schools. The total value of the collection contracts (covering the period from May 2007 to April 2008) is \$2.62 million. Under the collection contracts, recyclables collected from the waste separation bins become the property of the contractors, and hence proceeds arising from the sale of the recyclables will be accrued to the contractors. As for public and private housing estates, the management of the waste separation bins and the collection of recyclables are arranged by the property management companies or the cleansing service contractors of the housing estates concerned. The cost of the 28 000 waste separation bins is approximately \$14 million.

Amendments to Schedules

10. Schedules 1, 2, 3 and 4 to the Bill set out the details of the proposed environmental levy on plastic shopping bags. These Schedules are introduced as part of the overall regulatory framework under the Bill, which will be subject to the scrutiny and approval of the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the first place.

11. The Administration proposes that the Secretary for the Environment (Secretary) be empowered to amend the contents of these Schedules in future by order published in the Gazette after consultation with the Advisory Council on the Environment. The provisions in the main body of the Bill set out the parameters within which the Secretary has to be guided in exercising the proposed power to amend the Schedules. The Administration considers it appropriate to subject such amendments to the Schedules to the negative vetting procedure provided in section 34 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap. 1). In addition to a statutory requirement provided in the Bill for the Secretary to consult the Advisory Council on the Environment on any proposed amendments to the Schedules, the Administration would like to assure Members that, as with all legislative proposals in the arena of environmental protection, the Administration would consult the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs before the introduction of any amendments to the Schedules.

Environmental Protection Department
March 2008

Waste Separation Bins at Public Places and Schools by District

Districts	Public Places	Schools
1. Wan Chai	400	130
2. Central & Western	450	100
3. Eastern	420	160
4. Southern	320	120
5. Kowloon City	230	250
6. Yau Tsim Mong	370	120
7. Sham Shui Po	290	170
8. Wong Tai Sin	180	180
9. Kwun Tong	230	230
10. Tai Po	590	150
11. Yuen Long	320	230
12. Tuen Mun	380	270
13. North	350	170
14. Sai Kung	530	150
15. Sha Tin	520	270
16. Kwai Tsing	150	220
17. Tsuen Wan	500	110
18. Islands	330	60
Total:	6 560	3 090