



Advisory Council on the Environment

Views on the Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation

The Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) fully supports the implementation of the environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags (the Scheme) to be introduced under the Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation, which is in line with the polluter-pays principle. The ACE also urges the Government to roll out the Scheme as soon as possible with a view to reducing the indiscriminate use of plastic shopping bags through a direct economic disincentive.

The ACE has deliberated the environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags on various occasions and the Council's views are as follows –

- (a) the Council considers that the producer responsibility schemes (PRSs) have been long overdue and the environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags should be implemented as soon as possible as the first step. The scope of the PRSs should also be extended to other products as soon as possible;
- (b) the Council noted that the Administration has taken into account the views of the trade and conducted site visits in working out the implementation details of the environmental levy scheme so that the administrative arrangements would not impose undue burden to the prescribed retailers;
- (c) the Council considers that the Scheme should not cause undue hardship to the general public as customers could bring their own shopping bags at all time so that there is no need to pay the levy. In the long run, the burden on the tax payers would be reduced for containing the increasing amount of waste;
- (d) the Council considers that the Scheme is not a means to raise public

revenue and the opportunity should be captured to step up public education with a view to changing habits and behaviour on waste disposal and educating the public on their “eco-responsibility”;

- (e) the Council suggests that the promotion of the Scheme should be put into the broader picture of the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)” for a common goal of waste reduction;
- (f) the Council encourages the Administration to review the Scheme in a year’s time. Consideration then should be given to extending the Scheme to other retail outlets so as to realize more environmental benefits and foster a level-playing field in the affected business sector;
- (g) the Council suggests that the review to be conducted should include both qualitative and quantitative assessment, not only to evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme, but also to provide concrete data and information on the way forward in extending the Scheme to other retail outlets; and
- (h) the Council considers that the Administration should continue with the voluntary effort on plastic shopping bag reduction, especially at retailers not yet covered by the Scheme.