

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Friday, 22 October 2010, at 11:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan (Chairman)
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
- Members attending** : Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
- Member absent** : Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP
- Public officers attending** : **For item I**
Mr Edward YAU
Secretary for the Environment

Ms Anissa WONG
Permanent Secretary for the Environment

Dr Kitty POON
Under Secretary for the Environment

Miss Vivian LAU
Deputy Secretary for the Environment

Mr Benny WONG
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (1)

Mr Albert LAM
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)

Mr Carlson K S CHAN
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3)

Mr Alan WONG
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

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

Staff in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)4

Action

- I. Briefing by the Secretary for the Environment on relevant policy initiatives in the Chief Executive's 2010-2011 Policy Address**
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 41/10-11(01) — Administration's paper on 2010-2011 Policy Address and Policy Agenda - Policy Initiatives of the Environment Bureau)

Relevant papers

The 2010-2011 Policy Address – “Policy Agenda”

Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 13 October 2010

Waste management

Extension of landfills

Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the way forward on the landfill extension schemes, including that on the South East New Territories (SENT) Landfill, following the repeal of the Country Parks (Designation) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Order 2010 (the Order). Miss Tanya CHAN also enquired about the follow-up actions to be taken by the Administration to address, inter alia, the legal effect brought about by the repeal of the Order, particularly in view of the difference in legal opinions between the Legislative Council (LegCo) and the Administration. The Secretary for the Environment (SEN) said that the legal aspects of the repeal of the Order and the policy on landfill extension were two separate issues. The difference in legal opinions would have to be resolved through legal channels and this would be followed up by the Department of Justice. The Administration would not proceed with the proposed landfill extension without the approval of LegCo. Miss CHAN opined that the extension of landfills was a political decision. She pointed out that the five hectares of the Clear Water Bay Country Park (CWBCP) could still be used for landfill purpose under the approved map unless the Administration withdrew the amendments to excise the area from the approved boundary of CWBCP to form part of the proposed SENT Landfill Extension. SEN said that waste disposal was an imminent environmental problem rather than a political one. The landfill extension proposal was also subject to town planning processes.

2. Ms Miriam LAU said that waste management was not a political issue but a livelihood issue. When she visited the residents of Tseung Kwan O to gauge their views on the 2010-2011 Policy Address, their main concern was the odour nuisance from the SENT Landfill. They considered that a more scientific method should be adopted to treat waste rather than relying on landfills. The extension of landfills would only give rise to further objection and confrontation from affected residents. She therefore urged the Administration to shelve the landfill extension schemes and consider other scientific technologies, such as incineration and gasification, to treat waste. The public should be apprised of these waste treatment options before a decision was made. In addition to the proposed waste charging scheme, other

practical measures should also be worked out to reduce and recycle waste. Expressing similar concerns, Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned that more waste would be disposed of at the other two landfills (i.e. the North East New Territories Landfill and the West New Territories Landfill) following the repeal of the Order, thereby shifting the environmental problems to other parts of the New Territories.

3. In response, SEN said that as discussed at the second last meeting of the Subcommittee on Country Parks (Designation) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Order 2010, measures had been implemented to abate the odour problem associated with the operation of the SENT Landfill and these had been proven to be effective. With regard to the way forward on waste management, SEN said that this was explained at the Council meeting on 13 October 2010. Apart from the continuous efforts in promoting waste reduction and recycling, the Administration was developing the first phase of the large-scale Integrated Waste Management Facilities (IWMF). The engineering and Environmental Impact Assessment study for the two potential sites were reaching the final stage. After the completion of these studies, the Administration would confirm the site selection for IWMF and proceed to take forward the project as expeditiously as possible. It was hoped that the provision of IWMF would have Members' support. In addition, the construction of a sludge treatment facility would start soon in the Tuen Mun District.

4. Mr IP Wai-ming noted that the extension of the three strategic landfills formed part of the policy initiatives of the Environment Bureau in the 2010-2011 Policy Address. Given the controversy over the extension of the SENT Landfill, and the increase in the amount of waste generated despite that over 70% of the population had joined the source separation of waste programme, there was a need to rethink about the waste management strategy with emphasis on waste reduction. He enquired about the measures taken to reduce waste. SEN said that the increase in the amount of waste generated was mainly due to the growth in population and tourism as well as the increase in commercial activities. However, it was worth noting that the amount of waste deposited at landfills had decreased from 3.42 million tonnes in 2006 to 3.27 million tonnes in 2009. This was partly attributed to the successful implementation of the source separation of waste programme in housing estates and residential buildings, covering about 77% of the population, which had improved the recycling rate for domestic waste to about 35%. Since the beginning of 2010, three-coloured segregation bins had been placed in the village-type refuse collection points to facilitate the collection of recyclable waste from villagers. Continuing efforts would be made to reduce and recycle waste, including commercial and industrial waste such as plastic bottles and waste glass, the latter of which could be used in the manufacture of paving blocks. Pending the development of the new producer responsibility scheme

on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), social enterprises were already engaged in the recycling of WEEE at the EcoPark. Ms Miriam LAU opined that more should be done to foster environmental industries, and that the EcoPark should be put to better use by commercial recycling operations rather than solely by social enterprises.

5. Professor Patrick LAU said that instead of exporting inert construction and demolition (C&D) materials to Taishan for reclamation purposes, consideration should be given to recycling these materials for use in Hong Kong. SEN said that excavated materials and C&D materials were not waste and could be re-used in construction projects. C&D materials were stored in the public fill banks in Hong Kong for future use and there were guidelines on the re-use of these materials by construction contractors. While the amount of C&D materials had been reduced following the implementation of the charging scheme on C&D waste, there was a need to identify outlets for the surplus fill materials as no reclamation projects were being carried out in Hong Kong. As such, some of these fill materials were delivered to Taishan for reclamation purposes.

6. Mr Vincent FANG noted that in addition to the injection of \$1 billion in 2008, \$500 million had been earmarked for injection into the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) in 2010-2011. He also noted that of the 1 342 ECF projects (with a total commitment of \$722 million) approved since 2008, most of them were of an educational nature. He enquired if there was any project which had facilitated the development of a recycling chain, as in the case of turning waste glass into paving blocks. Given that most recyclables were for export purpose, Mr FANG asked if this had helped reduce the amount of waste to be deposited of at landfills. He also enquired if the Administration was prepared to provide the needed incentives and assistance, say collection and delivery of recyclable wastes, to facilitate the development of a recycling chain. The Permanent Secretary for the Environment said that ECF was established to assist non-profit organizations to undertake environmental education and improvement projects. These projects mainly involved waste recycling and segregation, nature conservation and energy efficiency. Apart from funding a number of educational projects, ECF had also assisted in the provision of facilities in schools, such as the installation of renewable energy systems (including photovoltaic and wind system) and on-site meal portioning facilities. ECF had also been used to support energy-cum-carbon audits and energy efficiency projects under the Building Energy Efficiency Funding Schemes. To promote recycling, ECF had provided funding for two projects on recycling of waste plastic and WEEE at EcoPark. Members were welcomed to visit EcoPark to observe its latest progress.

7. Given the impact of environmental policies, in particular waste management policies, on the community at large, Ms Cyd HO said that a holistic approach should be adopted in implementing these policies. Apart from working out all the policy initiatives from the public perspective, the Administration should also apprise the public of the pros and cons of these initiatives. It should take more proactive measures to reduce and recycle waste in the light of the repeal of the Order. Ms Audrey EU said that a package of measures was needed to address the problem of waste management. Mr Albert CHAN echoed that a comprehensive review of the waste management strategy should be carried out in the light of the bitter experience on extension of landfills. A holistic approach emphasizing on waste separation and recycling should be worked out in consultation with the public before proceeding with incineration. SEN agreed to the need for a comprehensive review of the waste management strategy and he hoped that Members would lend their support in formulating the strategy.

Climate change

8. Ms Audrey EU noted with concern that the Administration had, without consulting the public, set out in the 2010-2011 Policy Address the proposed fuel mix for power generation, inter alia, the increase in the share of imported nuclear energy to about 50% of the fuel mix by 2020. To allay public concern about the safety and cost implications associated with the proposed increase in imported nuclear energy for power generation, there was a need for the Administration to explain the proposal in more detail. Mr KAM Nai-wai shared the concern about the announcement on the change in fuel mix in the Policy Address when the public consultation on Hong Kong's Climate Change and Action Agenda was still underway. It appeared that the public consultation was not a genuine one as the decision on the fuel mix had been a foregone conclusion. He was also concerned about the treatment of nuclear waste if the share of nuclear power in the fuel mix was to be increased to 50%.

9. In response, SEN said that the Administration had prepared a paper on the "Proposal to increase the share of nuclear power in the fuel mix" which was tabled at the meeting. He added that the public consultation on Hong Kong's Climate Change Strategy and Action Agenda was to gauge public views on both demand and supply side measures to mitigate carbon emission, including the proposal to revamp the fuel mix for power generation. On the treatment and disposal of nuclear waste, SEN said that the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station (DBNPS) had its own waste processing facilities. The construction and operation, including the handling of nuclear waste, of DBNPS had met the international requirements. Besides, the National Nuclear Safety Administration, a regulatory body under the Ministry of Environmental Protection, was responsible for overseeing the safety of DBNPS. He would be

pleased to discuss with Members and experts on the safety and operation of DBNPS.

(Post-meeting note: The paper on the "Proposal to increase the share of nuclear power in the fuel mix" was circulated vide CB(1) 168/10-11(03).)

10. Ms Cyd HO enquired if the proposed increase in the share of nuclear power to 50% of the fuel mix for local power generation was a national policy, a Government policy, or a proposal made by commercial enterprises. She shared the concerns about the lack of consultation on the proposal and internationally accepted treatment for nuclear wastes. Referring to the Consultation Document on Hong Kong's Climate Change Strategy and Action Agenda (the Consultation Document), SEN said that there was a need to change the fuel mix to increase the share of cleaner fuels as it would not be sustainable in the long run to rely on the use of fossil fuels for power generation. In optimizing the change in fuel mix, factors such as safety, reliability of supply as well as cost implications would be taken into account. With the commissioning of Phase II of the West-to-East Natural Gas Pipeline, the share of natural gas in the fuel mix could be significantly increased to 40% by 2020. On the other hand, imported nuclear energy had been a stable and reliable electricity supply to Hong Kong since the commissioning of DBNPS in 1994, comprising 23% of fuel mix. With the development of more new nuclear plants in the Mainland, Hong Kong could take advantage of the trend to revamp its fuel mix.

11. Noting that the proposal to increase the share of nuclear energy for power generation was meant to reduce carbon emissions, Mr LEE Wing-tat wished to point out that this could be achieved by enhancing energy efficiency and conservation. With the energy savings from the implementation of voluntary and mandatory measures to improve building energy efficiency, there might not be a need to increase the share of nuclear energy in the fuel mix. SEN agreed that there was room for enhancing energy efficiency. With the expansion of scope and tightening of requirements under the Building Energy Codes (BECs), it was expected that major electrical equipment in all new commercial buildings would be up to 50% more energy efficient by 2020 as compared with the 2005 building stock. The Buildings Energy Efficiency Bill, which was presently under scrutiny by the Legislative Council, had provided the legislative framework for the mandatory implementation of BECs. In addition, funding in the order of \$450 million had been provided for the Building Energy Efficiency Funding Schemes to subsidize building owners to carry out energy-cum-carbon audits and energy efficiency projects. So far, about 4 000 applications had been approved while another 4 000 were awaiting approval. While energy efficiency measures were able to reduce emissions, there remained a need to change the fuel mix to increase the share of cleaner

fuels for power generation.

12. Ms Audrey EU asked when the report on the consultancy study commissioned in 2008, which formed the basis of the proposals in the Consultation Document, could be released. SEN said that this would be made available upon completion of the consultancy study.

Air quality

Air Quality Objectives

13. Ms Audrey EU enquired about the progress of the Review of Air Quality Objectives (AQOs), the public consultation on which had ended in November 2009. SEN said that preparatory work for introducing the proposed new AQOs was underway. It was worth noting that some of the 19 emission control measures set out in the Consultation Document on the Review of AQOs had been implemented over the last two years. The Administration had also submitted a report on the outcome of consultation to Members.

Improving the environmental performance of buses

14. Ms Miriam LAU said that it would take a long time to realize the two environmental initiatives under the 2010-2011 Policy Address, namely funding for the procurement six hybrid buses for use by franchised bus companies and trial for the retrofitting of Euro II and Euro III buses with catalytic reduction devices. This was because the performance of these hybrid buses, which were being used in London, had yet to be tested in Hong Kong. There was also question on the cost-effectiveness of these hybrid buses which cost two times more than Euro IV and Euro V buses but could only bring about 20% improvement in environmental performance. Besides, a trial had yet to be carried out on the effectiveness of the selective catalytic reduction (SCR) devices. She opined that more concrete measures to improve roadside air quality should be worked out. These might include buying out the more polluting Euro I and Euro II commercial vehicles so that these could be completely removed from the roads in Hong Kong. Noting that a local bus company had imported an electric bus similar to those used in the World Expo 2010 Shanghai, she suggested that funding should be provided to test out the feasibility of electric buses on busy roads in Hong Kong. Expressing similar views, Ms Audrey EU said that she had no objection to the provision of public funding for the procurement of six hybrid buses for use by the franchised bus companies. However, she was concerned about the long lead time for the replacement programme given that the service lives of some 2 500 Euro II buses were due to expire in 2019. She enquired about the timeframe for the replacement of the bus fleet with zero emission buses or the most

environment-friendly buses, which would also need to take into account the feasibility and affordability of bus operators and passengers. She also enquired about the trial on retrofitting of Euro II and Euro III buses with SCR devices to meet Euro IV emission standards.

15. In reply, SEN stressed that the ultimate policy objective was to have zero emission buses running across the territory. Given that 60% of the franchised buses were Euro II and Euro III vehicles, it would be difficult to replace them in one go. A more practical and cost-effective approach was to conduct a trial on retrofitting of Euro II and Euro III buses with SCR devices to meet Euro IV emission standards. Subject to satisfactory trial results, the Administration would provide funding for the retrofit which would assist in the implementation of low emission zones. In addition, the full cost for procuring the six hybrid buses would be funded by the Administration for use by franchised bus companies along busy corridors to ascertain the operational efficiency and performance of these buses under Hong Kong conditions. If the bus companies wished to test other green buses, such as electric buses, the Administration was prepared to provide them with the same financial support.

16. Mr Jeffrey LAM welcomed the environmental initiatives under the 2010-2011 Policy Address. He said that Members belonging to the Economic Synergy had provided their views on the retrofitting of Euro II and Euro III buses with SCR devices, which were commonly used in Europe and very effective in reducing emissions. He therefore welcomed the trial on retrofitting of Euro II and Euro III buses with SCR devices, and enquired about the duration of the trial. SEN said that the trial would initially last for about six months to ascertain the operational feasibility of SCR devices for use in Hong Kong. To reduce the impact on bus fares, the Administration would fund the cost of the retrofit while the bus companies would bear the subsequent operational and maintenance costs.

Low emission zones

17. Referring to the proposed target of having only low-emission franchised buses running in busy districts by 2015, Mr KAM Nai-wai enquired about the latest progress of the proposal and whether arrangements had already been worked out with the franchised bus companies. SEN said that while there were general improvements in ambient air quality, the concentration level of nitrogen dioxide at the roadside was on the rise. To reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides, the Administration was prepared to fund the retrofit of Euro II and Euro III buses with SCR devices to meet Euro IV emission standards, subject to satisfactory trial results. It was hoped that with the improved environmental performance of buses through retrofitting and replacement programmes, the target of having low-emission buses running in low emission

zones could be achieved by 2015.

Replacement of aged commercial vehicles

18. Mr WONG Yung-kan asked if the Administration was prepared to subsidize fishermen to replace their vehicles with more environment-friendly models. SEN said that the one-off grant schemes to encourage early replacement of aged diesel commercial vehicles were applicable to all trades, including the fishing trade.

Marine ecology

19. Mr WONG Yung-kan pointed out that the seabed in many parts of Hong Kong, like Tolo Harbour and North East New Territories, had already been heavily polluted. This was by no means caused by trawling activities of the fishing trade as claimed by the Administration. He considered it necessary for the Administration to conduct a comprehensive study on the marine ecology of Hong Kong. SEN stressed the need to protect the marine environment and ex-gratia allowance would be provided to fishermen affected by the ban on commercial fishing. The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (DAFC) said that staff of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department had been closely monitoring the biodiversity of the local marine environment.

Cross-border cooperation

20. Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the latest achievements under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation (the Framework Agreement) in terms of environmental protection and ecology conservation. The Under Secretary for the Environment said that Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau authorities had been working closely in drawing up a strategy to transform the Pearl River Delta Region into a green and quality living area.

Management of country parks

21. Mr Albert CHAN questioned why cycling tracks were not provided within country parks. He hoped that relevant departments could study the feasibility of providing cycling tracks within country parks with a view to promoting mountain biking. DAFC said that country parks were meant to provide a tranquil environment for the enjoyment of the public. As most of the 13 million visitors to the country parks were hikers, vehicular traffic or activities which would pose a potential risk to them would not be allowed within the parks. Notwithstanding, mountain biking was allowed in certain

areas such as Kap Lung and Hung Fa Leng. Consideration would be given to providing more cycling tracks at Lantau Island in the light of requests from cycling associations. Mr CHAN said that cycling tracks which were separate from the footpaths should be provided to ensure safety of hikers.

Greening

22. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the wider use of vertical greening as noise barriers, as in the case of Yeung Uk Road, Tsuen Wan. While acknowledging vertical greening had been applied in many public and private housing estates, SEN said that the use of vertical greening as noise barriers had to be considered taking into account technical feasibility. He agreed to follow up the issue with relevant departments. Mr WONG remarked that SEN should visit the noise barriers at Yeung Uk Road.

II. Any other business

23. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.