

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 422/11-12
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 20 October 2011, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon CHAN Hak-kan (Chairman)
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon Tanya CHAN

Members attending : Dr Hon Margaret NG
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou

Members absent : Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip

**Public officers
attending**

: For item I

Mr Edward YAU
Secretary for the Environment

Ms Anissa WONG
Permanent Secretary for the Environment
Environment Bureau

Miss Vivian LAU
Deputy Secretary for the Environment
Environment Bureau

Mr Benny WONG
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (1)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr Albert LAM
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Environmental Protection Department

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

Ms Katharine CHOI
Administration Assistant to Secretary for the
Environment

Mr Alan WONG
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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

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

Miss Jacqueline CHUNG
Council Secretary (1)1

Action

- I. Briefing by the Secretary for the Environment on relevant policy initiatives in the Chief Executive's 2011-2012 Policy Address**
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 41/11-12(01) — Administration's paper on 2011-2012 Policy Address and Policy Agenda - Policy Initiatives of Environment Bureau)

Relevant papers

The 2011-2012 Policy Address – "Policy Agenda"

Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 12 October 2011

The Secretary for the Environment (SEN) briefly took members through the environment-related policy initiatives of the Environment Bureau in the 2011-2012 Policy Agenda.

(Post-meeting note: A copy of SEN's speaking note was circulated to members under LC Paper No. CB(1) 147/11-12 on 21 October 2011.)

Improving air quality

Air Quality Objectives (AQOs)

2. Noting that the Chief Executive (CE) had pledged to introduce a new set of AQOs within his term of office, Ms Audrey EU enquired about the time frame for promulgation of the new AQOs. SEN said that CE had undertaken in his 2011-2012 Policy Address that the Administration would draw up the final recommendations for updating AQOs, and make a proposal to the Legislative Council (LegCo). To bring early improvement to air quality, the Administration was actively pursuing emission reduction measures that had the general support from the community.

3. Given that the present AQOs were established in the 1980s and were clearly outdated, Mr KAM Nai-wai emphasized the need for a new set of AQOs for Hong Kong. Therefore, he was disappointed at the lack of commitment on the part of the Administration in promulgating the new AQOs. He urged the Administration to introduce a set of new AQOs in parallel with the

implementation of emission reduction measures without further delay. Sharing similar concerns, Professor Patrick LAU enquired about the feasibility of introducing the new AQOs under a phased approach. SEN said that AQOs were statutory standards which formed the scientific basis for development of air quality policies and management strategies. The Administration had put forward a new set of AQOs which comprised interim targets and ultimate targets under World Health Organization's Air Quality Guidelines for public consultation. The Administration would draw up the final recommendations for updating AQOs and make a proposal to LegCo. However, it was worth noting that in formulating the new AQOs, care had to be taken to ensure that the emission reduction measures could be effectively implemented in tandem to meet the new AQOs.

Environment-friendly buses

4. Referring to the proposed provision of \$180 million for franchised bus companies to purchase 36 electric buses for trial runs on a number of routes to assess their performance in different conditions, Ms Audrey EU enquired whether the 36 electric buses would be additional to the usual replacement schedule of franchised bus companies. She also enquired about the routes to be tested and the duration of the trials. Given that franchised bus companies should have a corporate responsibility to protect the environment by using more environment-friendly buses, Mr WONG Kwok-hing held the view that the said provision was unfair to other transport operators who did not receive any assistance for their trials. SEN agreed that franchised bus companies had a corporate responsibility to contribute to improvement in air quality. When the current bus franchises expire in the coming few years, additional requirements would be imposed in the new franchises for bus companies to switch to zero emission buses or the most environment-friendly buses when replacing existing ones, subject to the feasibility and affordability for bus operators and passengers. To encourage the transport sector to test out green and low-carbon transport means and technology, the Administration had set up a \$300 million Pilot Green Transport Fund in March 2011 for application by the transport trades, including taxis and light bus operators. So far, about \$50 million worth of grants had been approved and continued efforts were made to identify suitable models for trials.

5. Mr Andrew CHENG opined that if the Administration confirmed that franchised bus companies had a corporate responsibility to improve the emission performance of their buses, there might not be a need to use public money to subsidize bus companies to purchase new electric buses or retrofit existing Euro II and III buses with selective catalytic reduction (SCR) devices. SEN said that the purchase of 36 electric buses was meant to provide a start-up on the trial use of electric buses to assess their performance in a number of routes under different conditions. Meanwhile, the retrofitting of existing

Euro II and III buses with SCR devices aimed at reducing nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions from existing Euro II and III buses pending replacement. Ms Audrey EU however pointed out that despite the measures to improve roadside air quality, the level of roadside NO_x was on the rise. There were also studies indicating that the use of SCR devices might increase the level of NO_x. She held the view that instead of retrofitting Euro II and Euro III franchised buses with SCR devices, consideration should be given to expediting the replacement of these buses with more environment-friendly models.

Early replacement of Euro II diesel commercial vehicles

6. Mr CHAN Kin-por noted that of the \$540 million one-off grant scheme to encourage early replacement of Euro II diesel commercial vehicles, only \$160 million had been approved since the 36-month scheme was launched in July 2010. Given the lukewarm response, he enquired if the Administration was prepared to gauge the views of the transport trades with a view to enhancing the scheme. Expressing similar concern on the low subscription rate, Ms Miriam LAU held the view that the vast majority of applicants might be owners of heavier commercial vehicles as only 7% of vehicles were eligible for the grants. To identify the reasons for the low subscription rate with a view to working out a more enhanced arrangement, she requested the Administration to provide a breakdown on the number and capacity of Euro II diesel commercial vehicles which had applied for the one-off grant. SEN said that similar to other previous incentive schemes, the subscription rate was initially low as vehicle owners would tend to apply towards the later stage of the scheme. While the present subscription rate had turned out as expected, it was hoped that vehicle owners would make timely replacement of their Euro II diesel commercial vehicles.

Admin

Enhancing vehicle maintenance

7. Noting that Administration would set aside \$150 million to provide a one-off subsidy to owners of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) taxis and light buses for replacing catalytic converters in their vehicles to improve emission performance, Ms Miriam LAU enquired about the details of and the time frame for implementing the replacement scheme. The Permanent Secretary for the Environment said that the proposal was part of the overall package of proposed measures to strengthen the control of emissions from LPG and petrol vehicles by remote sensing. Public consultation on these proposals would be launched in November 2011. Subject to the funding support from the Finance Committee, the Administration intended to implement the replacement scheme in late 2012.

Provision of LPG filling facilities

8. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that operators of LPG taxis and light buses had all along been complaining about the inadequate supply of LPG filling facilities, which had not only resulted in long queuing time for refills but also traffic congestion. He enquired about the measures which the Administration would take to improve the situation. Ms Miriam LAU echoed that the problem of long queuing time was particularly acute at dedicated LPG filling stations as the LPG price at these stations was lower than that of non-dedicated filling stations. She enquired about the feasibility of providing a dedicated LPG filling station at the Tai Po Industrial Estate and if not, whether there were any suitable sites nearby for such purpose. SEN explained that at present, the LPG filling network had 62 LPG filling stations, including 12 dedicated filling stations and 50 non-dedicated filling stations, providing 442 LPG filling nozzles in total. The number had increased about threefold from December 2000. To make LPG filling facilities more convenient, efforts would be made to expand the LPG filling network by identifying new sites suitable for use as petrol-cum-LPG filling stations.

Fuel mix for power generation

9. While welcoming the Administration's decision to take into account the impact of the Fukushima incident in formulating the future fuel mix for power generation, Mr KAM Nai-wai enquired if the public would be further consulted on the fuel mix, particularly on the earlier proposed share of 50% of nuclear energy. SEN said that the current fuel mix of about 50% coal, 25% natural gas and 23% imported nuclear energy for power generation would need to be changed in order to reduce carbon emission and combat climate change. While there was general support for taking concrete measures to meet the challenge of climate change, there were concerns about the safety of nuclear energy following the Fukushima incident. The Administration would take into account the impact of the Fukushima incident as well as the latest nuclear development in formulating the fuel mix for future power generation.

Waste management

10. Ms Audrey EU enquired about the progress of the Producer Responsibility Scheme (PRS) for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), and the extension of the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags. Miss Tanya CHAN also enquired about the timeframe for discussion of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging. Expressing similar concerns, Ms Cyd HO considered it necessary for the Administration to work out the way forward on various environmental schemes within the current term of Government. SEN said that as there were dissenting views on the need for MSW charging, the Administration would engage the community, including

Members, in discussing possible options for MSW charging to provide a direct economic incentive to reduce waste. The tentative timing for discussion of various subjects would be worked out with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Panel on Environmental Affairs in due course.

Landfill extensions

11. Given that the extension of landfills had aroused much controversy, Mr IP Wai-ming emphasized the need for more efforts to reduce and recycle waste to reduce the reliance on landfills. SEN said that as opposed to the targets of 45% by 2009 and 50% by 2014 for MSW recovery rate as set out in the Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014), the current recovery rate of MSW had already reached 50%. In this connection, the Administration had raised the MSW recovery target to 55% by 2015. While continued efforts would be made to reduce and recycle waste, there would still be a need for landfills as the final repositories for residual waste. To reduce the pressure on landfills, advanced treatment technologies, including the Sludge Treatment Facilities and Integrated Waste Management Facility, had been or would be adopted to reduce the volume of waste before disposal at landfills.

12. Ms Miriam LAU said that she had all along opposed to the extension of landfills. Noting that the Southeast New Territories Landfill would cease to accept MSW, the food waste generated in urban areas would have to be disposed of at other landfills and the first phase of the Organic Waste Treatment Facilities (OWTF) in Siu Ho Wan, North Lantau, to be commissioned in 2014. As the transportation of food waste to OWTF might create environmental nuisances, she enquired about the measures to be adopted by the Administration to abate these nuisances. She also enquired about the feasibility of public-private partnership in the recycling of organic waste. Expressing similar views, Mr IP Wai-ming enquired about the progress of recovery and treatment of food waste. SEN said that the proper treatment of food waste was an integral part of the waste reduction plan. Efforts were being made to solicit cooperation from estate management companies on the collection and recycling of food waste into compost. Funding from the Environment and Conservation Fund could be sought in undertaking food waste treatment schemes.

13. Professor Patrick LAU was of the view that more could be done to reduce and separate waste. For example, separate refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) could be used to collect different types of waste to facilitate segregation. SEN said that much improvement had been made in the segregation and recycling of waste. By way of illustration, more than 80% of housing estates in Hong Kong were equipped with three-colour segregation waste bins. The recovery rate in particular, commercial and industrial waste, had reached 65%. The recycling of waste glass in the manufacture of bricks was also underway.

Meanwhile, efforts had been made to reduce the environmental impact associated with the transport of waste. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department had required its contractors to upgrade their RCVs.

Nature conservation

14. Miss Tanya CHAN expressed concern about the slow progress in the conservation of country park enclaves as pointed out by the Ombudsman. SEN said that efforts were being made to protect country park enclaves from development pressure by first designating these areas as Development Permission Areas, while the long-term planning of these enclaves would either be effected in Outline Zoning Plans under the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) or by incorporating into country parks in accordance with the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208) as appropriate in the light of merits of the enclaves concerned. Assistance as appropriate would also be provided to landowners in the conservation of country park enclaves. The Ombudsman had, in his recent report, recognized the work of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) in conserving and protecting country park enclaves.

Environmental impact assessment

15. Noting that the Airport Authority (AA) was in the process of compiling a report on the development of the third runway following the completion of the relevant public consultation exercise, Miss Tanya CHAN expressed concern about the possible conflict of interest on the part of AA which had a keen economic interest in the development of the third runway. She enquired about the actions to be taken by the Administration in the event that the report failed to address the environmental concerns. As the Environment Bureau (ENB) was responsible for protecting the environment, she asked if consideration could be given to conducting a second round of public consultation on the development of the third runway in collaboration with ENB and other concerned departments. SEN said that EPD was responsible for enforcing the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. As the development of the third runway was a designated project, it would be required to undergo the EIA process during which EPD would be involved. EPD would examine the EIA reports to be submitted by the project proponent as part of the statutory EIA process.

Environmental industries

16. Mr CHAN Kin-por welcomed the policy initiative to support local environmental industries to participate in environmental exhibitions, trade missions and related events to promote the development and business opportunities in the Mainland and overseas. He enquired about the types of environmental industry to be promoted and the means of assistance. SEN said

that many overseas enterprises were interested in doing businesses in the Mainland through Hong Kong, and many Mainland enterprises would also like to launch their businesses in Hong Kong. Many of these business opportunities involved environmental industries which were not limited to wastewater management and sewage treatment systems, but included development and application of new technologies such as electric cars and energy efficient installations. The Eco Expo Asia - International Trade Fair on Environmental Protection, which would be held in Hong Kong in October 2011 for the sixth year, was expected to attract over 300 participants from over 20 countries. Over 10 000 visitors, including 250 Mainland officials, would participate in the event. This would help promote the development and business opportunities of the environmental industries in Hong Kong. Similar exhibitions had also been held in Beijing, Guangzhou and Macau.

17. In response to Professor Patrick LAU's further enquiry about the provision of supporting facilities to encourage the development of recycling industries in Hong Kong, SEN said that the Administration's latest procurement policies had allowed for the procurement of products made from recyclable materials. Moreover, good progress had been made in the development of a wider market for recyclable materials, such as waste papers, plastics and glass. It was worthy for members to visit the EcoPark to see for themselves the progress made in the recycling of waste.

Light pollution

18. Ms Cyd HO enquired if the Guidelines on Industry Best Practices for External Lighting Installations were ready for promulgation. SEN said that the major stakeholders had been consulted, and the Administration would promulgate the Guidelines by the end of 2011.

II. Any other business.

19. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:32 pm.