

Introduction

1. The Chamber has long been a supporter of the polluter-pay principle and a strong advocate of a comprehensive package of waste management measures, including landfill charging, legislation and incentives for waste reduction at source, recycling and supporting facilities, producer responsibility schemes, building rehabilitation, alternatives to demolition, incentives for life-cycle costing and a vigorous community education campaign.

Addressing the need for bulk reduction

2. In addition to the demand for a more aggressive waste reduction and recycling programme, there is a need to develop effective large-scale integrated waste management facilities to treat and dispose massive volumes of residual waste in Hong Kong. More than 80% of waste in Japan is currently being treated through incineration. With the advance of modern technology, “green” incinerators with minimal impact to air quality and human health could be utilized to achieve the goal of “zero landfill waste”, as well as providing energy to supplement conventional and non-renewable fuels. The Chamber believes that such clean and efficient “green” incinerators should be an option to be actively explored. In the Chamber’s Annual Business Survey conducted last year, over 60% of the respondents supported and less than 15% opposed the construction of waste incinerators.

3. With a dearth of available land and future land sterilisation and restoration issues, clearly, incineration for Hong Kong may be a cost-effective way of managing solid waste. Through education, discussion and demonstration of the stringent emission standards and safety of modern integrated waste management facilities, combined with the support of the business community, there will be a successful outcome to the incineration debate including waste to energy schemes as part of the process.

Circular economy

4. The Chamber envisions that Hong Kong requires the development of a circular economy to resolve the waste issues and - perhaps more importantly - to capture opportunities in building up a green manufacturing supply chain in partnership with the Pearl River Delta (“PRD”) region. A consultancy study was commissioned by us in 2010 to look at possible models for a circular economy in the region, and a copy of the study report was submitted to the Government.

5. We believe that the study report provides a much-needed perspective for the discussion on waste management and the wider challenge of working with the PRD to improve the environment and develop green industries. Harnessing the recycling network and industrial capacity of the PRD with Hong Kong's management expertise, a possible partnership for a regional circular economy could be developed.

6. For such a circular economy to work, it requires efficient trans-boundary supply chains, well-organized mechanisms for waste matching, introduction of Producer Responsibility Schemes and Design for Environment products, supply of incentives for remanufactured, reconditioned or recycled goods, further R&D in clean technologies for recycling businesses, a collection network for waste sorting and segregation, public education programmes to encourage consumers to consider re-use and recycle options as well as reducing waste, and green procurement policies to increase demand for recycled goods, as well as attractive locations conducive to the recycling industry.

7. Substantial investment and adequate space are needed for a modern recycling plant to handle collection, sorting, treatment, packaging, etc. Therefore, the Government should allocate land lots of sufficient size and long-term leases for operators to cover their capital investment.

Conclusion

8. Waste management is a long-term policy issue requiring long-term vision; it should not be driven by short-term political agenda. We urge the Government and the Legislative Council to work together to muster the political will to adopt concrete actions to deal with the mounting waste problem of Hong Kong.