

政府總部  
發展局  
工務科  
香港添馬添美道2號  
政府總部西翼



Works Branch  
Development Bureau  
Government Secretariat  
West Wing, Central Government Offices,  
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

本局網址 Our Website: <http://www.devb.gov.hk>  
本局檔號 Our Ref.: (2) *in* DEVB(GLTM) 1-55/1/1 Pt.4  
來函檔號 Your Ref.:

電話 Tel No.: 3509-8272  
傳真 Fax No.: 2536-9732

9 April 2018

Panel on Development  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms Doris LO)

Dear Ms LO,

**Legislative Council Panel on Development  
Meeting on 27 February 2018**

**Long Term Issues on Tree Management in Hong Kong**

Thank you for your e-mail of 27 February 2018. Our response to the motion moved by the Honourable HUI Chi-fung and passed at the meeting of the Panel on Development on 27 February 2018 is set out in the following paragraphs.

**(1) Legislation on Tree Management**

The Government is cautiously open-minded on the proposal to introduce legislation on tree management. We have undertaken a preliminary review of the tree management regimes in six overseas and Mainland cities. Amongst them, New York City in the United States, London in the United Kingdom, and Melbourne in Australia do not have dedicated legislation on tree management. Instead, trees are managed through a combination of statutes and administrative measures such as policies, guidelines, and urban forestry strategies; while Guangzhou in China, Singapore, and Vancouver in Canada have specific legislation governing trees and greening. Of the six cities, only Vancouver regulates the removal of trees on private land through tree legislation with the objective of maintaining the canopy coverage of the city.

The current practice in Hong Kong is similar to that of New York City, London, and Melbourne, where Government departments follow the requirements and regulations for tree management and maintenance promulgated through policies, relevant ordinances, technical circulars, guidelines, codes of practice, etc. For trees on private land, the Government imposes tree protection clauses through other legal binding instruments such as land leases.

As tree management legislation may have implications on private property management. Private property owners might have concerns about additional financial burden and insufficient capacity within the industry for tree inspection and maintenance work, etc. As a result, they may not choose trees for new planting, which defeats the legislative intention. Further deliberation is therefore necessary. Of key concern at present is the insufficient capacity of tree management practitioners. The Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) under the Development Bureau is actively working with the industry to enhance the knowledge and professionalism of practitioners, to train tree managers at different levels and to increase the number of qualified personnel to meet the demand through a systematic approach. The GLTMS will continue to provide various types of activities to enhance the awareness of property owners and property management companies on tree management, and review the effectiveness of the current tree management requirements and arrangements put in place primarily through technical circulars, guidelines, codes of practice, lease conditions and promotion.

## **(2) Creation of Arborist Grade**

In deciding whether to create a new grade, the Government has to carefully and comprehensively consider various factors, including the job nature of the proposed grade, professional and skills requirements, impact on the existing grades, and promotion prospects and development of the proposed grade. Under the existing “integrated approach”, tree management departments deploy officers of different grades (including Forestry Officers and Field Officers of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), Leisure Services Managers and Amenities Assistants of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and Landscape Architects of various Works departments) to take charge of tree management and other tasks, having regard to their operational needs. The Government will arrange training for them to obtain the requisite professional knowledge and qualifications. Taking the LCSD as an example, more than 200 Leisure Services Managers and Amenities Assistants are Certified Arborists (CAs) of the International Society of Arboriculture, and have sufficient practical experience and knowledge to handle tree work. Besides, in the grades of Landscape Architect, Forestry Officer and Field Officer, there are also more than 100 CAs. Given that the existing grades in the Government already have several

hundreds of officers with CA qualification, and tree management requires the collaboration of different professional domains (such as tree biology and physiology, soil science, etc.), the current approach for the GLTMS to coordinate and facilitate officers in different departments to acquire CA qualification through attending horticulture maintenance or arboriculture training courses organised by the Government and external organisations is effective in enabling tree management staff to discharge their duties in a professional manner. There is no need to create a new Arborist Grade.

### **(3) “Important Trees”**

The Government has promulgated the Register of Old and Valuable Trees (OVT Register) since 2004 to protect old trees and trees of particular significance on Government land or tourist attraction spots. OVTs must satisfy one or more of the following prescribed criteria, including large size; precious or rare species; particularly old age; cultural, historical or memorable significance; and outstanding form. The AFCD or the LCSD will undertake a detailed assessment on its conditions before including a tree into the OVT Register. The assessment criteria include tree health and physical conditions, life expectancy, location, etc.

“Important trees” include trees already listed in the OVT Register as well as trees that meet at least one of the prescribed criteria set out above but have not gone through assessment by the AFCD or the LCSD. When works departments embark on projects, they will identify “important trees” within the project boundary to facilitate the formulation of tree management plans at an early stage. Without detailed assessment, some old trees with serious health and structural problems may be included as “important trees”. If certain “important trees” are considered suitable for inclusion in the OVT Register, works departments can nominate these trees for thorough assessment under the current arrangements.

### **(4) Progress of Development of Qualifications Framework for Arborists**

In October 2016, the Education Bureau (EDB) set up the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Training Advisory Committee (A&H ITAC) to facilitate the development of Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) and Recognition of Prior Learning Mechanism for the industry, and promote the Qualifications Framework within the industry. In September 2017, the EDB appointed a professional writer for drafting the SCS, which will set out the knowledge, competency requirements and outcome standards required for practitioners to perform various tasks in the industry.

The SCS development work consists of five stages, including reviewing the current profile and prospect of the industry, analysing and identifying key tasks under each functional area, drawing up the specification of the competencies required for individual tasks, drafting individual “Units of Competency”, and consulting the industry and conducting moderation of SCS. The development process will last 18-24 months and is expected to be completed in the second half of 2019.

The professional writer and a subcommittee of the A&H ITAC completed the first-stage drafting in January 2018, setting out the key functional areas of the industry. The draft has been submitted to the A&H ITAC for detailed review and deliberations. The professional writer has already commenced the second and third stages of the work. He will consult and visit practitioners in different organisations and positions in the industry to understand the business operation, so as to analyse and identify different key tasks under each functional area and draw up the specification of the competencies required for individual tasks.

The GLTMS will closely liaise with education and training institutions, and encourage them to organise more training programmes to meet the needs of the industry with a view to enhancing professionalism, improving service quality and the prospects of practitioners in the long run. The GLTMS would report progress to the Panel on Development in due course.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information. I can be reached by phone on 3509-8272, or by e-mail at [joeylam@devb.gov.hk](mailto:joeylam@devb.gov.hk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joey Lam', written in a cursive style.

(Joey LAM)  
for Secretary for Development