

SSDS Expert Group recommends option for sewage outfall

The Expert Group on Sewage Disposal formed between Hong Kong and the Mainland agreed at a meeting held in Shenzhen today (Monday) that the option with Chemically Enhanced Primary Treatment plus disinfection with discharge to East Lamma outfall is the scheme which they will recommend to the HKSAR Government for final decision.

The Expert Group also agreed that when this option is implemented, there should be a quantitative monitoring and analysis programme to check the actual impact on the marine ecological system and suggest any further mitigation measures that might be required.

This was the Expert Group's second meeting which was led from the HK side by Acting Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Patrick Lau Lai-chiu, and the Mainland side, Director, Hong Kong Economic Affairs Department, Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Mr Zhang Liangdong.

Both sides reviewed the successful and effective work in the past few years; examined the work report of the Technical Group covering the preceding period; considered the comments received during the public consultation; and confirmed and accepted the findings of the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Phase 1 study by the joint consultants.

From the perspective of protecting the marine environment and ecosystem and the long term socio-economic development of the whole region, both sides reached the consensus, after comprehensive discussions, to recommend the first of the four SSDS options for the HKSAR Government to consider.

Both sides considered that the methodology used in the SSDS EIA Study carried out by the joint consultants is scientific; the findings are technically sound; and the four options identified are acceptable.

Both sides agreed that the selected option should not be seen necessarily as the final arrangement. In the long term, due to the possible changes in marine conditions as a result of development both in HK and the surrounding areas, and the demand for higher environmental standards that may arise as a result of further socio-economic development, the above option may need to be further improved or refined.

To cope with the continued development of the economy of the two sides and to ensure the sustainable utilization of their marine resources, it is prudent to consider the long term planning, based on the above option, such as the possible future need for upgrading the treatment level or constructing a longer outfall.

In this regard, both sides agreed to carry out preliminary studies for the long term planning as soon as possible. The Technical Group will further discuss the scope and implementation plan for the preliminary studies.

Both sides would continue to strengthen co-operation to ensure that the issue of SSDS is discussed and tackled in a timely manner so as to help protect regional water quality.

End/Monday, November 30, 1998

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