

ETWB(E) 55/07/65

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16 May 2003

Ms Pauline Ng
Clerk to Finance Committee
Finance Committee
Legislative Council

Dear _____,

I refer to the Conservancy Association's (CA) letter of 16 May concerning the proposed Ngong Ping Sewage Treatment Works (NPSTW).

At present, there are neither public sewers nor sewage treatment works at Ngong Ping. Sewage generated from Ngong Ping is either tankered away or disposed of through the privately owned septic tank and soakaway systems. As Ngong Ping is in a water gathering ground, the proposed NPSTW is essential to meet the long term development needs of Ngong Ping. Since the Tung Chung Cable Car Project, which is one of the major tourism projects in Hong Kong, is expected to increase the visitors to Ngong Ping from the present 12 000 to some 47 000 eventually, the need of building the proposed NPSTW to serve both local residents and tourists is very imminent. We now aim to complete the proposed NPSTW by July 2005 in order to tie in with the target commissioning of the Cable Car system.

Turning to the issues raised by the CA, we would like to respond to them in the same order as follows –

1. Contrary to what have been quoted in the CA's letter, the design capacity of NPSTW is 2900 m³ per day instead of 5100 m³ per day. Moreover, we have only assumed an average of 30 litres per capita per day in our design instead of 107 litres per capital per day as claimed in the letter. Given that the CA's allegation is based on some overstated figures, there is no question of an over-design of two times or more than the actual capacity required.
2. We have already adopted a modular design to build the NPSTW in stages. Although we will complete all the land formation and civil works by the

time of commissioning, we will only install three treatment tanks out of a total of four initially. The three tanks include one as the standby facility.

3. The capital expenditure for the proposed NPSTW is more expensive than a STW of a similar scale because of the remote location of the site and the higher costs involved in site formation and excavation. You may wish to refer Members to our information note provided to the Panel on Environmental Affairs for more detailed cost breakdown.
4. The capacity of the proposed effluent export pipeline is 2900 m³ per day, in line with the treatment capacity of NPSTW, instead of the grossly overstated figure of 5400 m³ per day in your letter. The export pipeline is important for contingency purpose as we must protect the sensitive water gathering ground for Shek Pik Reservoir which is the most important source of water supply for Lantau Island and other outlying islands. The pipeline is also necessary for discharging the effluent in excess of the reuse demand during normal operation.
5. We have already included an emergency/buffer tank in our design to ensure that the treated effluent generated during the peak flow can be reused as much as practical. However, since it is impossible to reuse or store all the treated effluent, we still need an effluent export pipeline for discharging the unused effluent under normal circumstances.

I wish to reiterate that the Government is fully committed to the principle of sustainable development. Therefore, we have taken the initiative to make best use of the high quality effluent produced by the proposed NPSTW by implementing the first treated effluent reuse pilot scheme in Hong Kong. We are also very willing to share any findings in the feasibility study report for the project with members of the public. Unfortunately, such requests have never been raised during our consultation with various stakeholders, including the Conservancy Association. We wish to assure Members that the proposed NPSTW is well justified on both cost-effectiveness and environmental grounds and hope that Members will continue to support our funding request.

Yours sincerely,

(Raistlin Lau)

for Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works