

For information
on 14 January 2003

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs
The 2003 Policy Address – Environmentally Responsible Development

PURPOSE

This paper outlines the key environmental initiatives of the Government in the next eighteen months.

BACKGROUND

2. The “Policy Agenda” Booklet issued on 8 January 2003 sets out the key policy initiatives of the Government formulated under five guiding principles to take Hong Kong forward. Under the principle of “Environmentally Responsible Development”, we have drawn up a number of initiatives to further improve the quality of our environment. Details are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

Improving Air Quality

3. We have set up an expert group under the Hong Kong- Guangdong Joint Working Group on Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection to take forward the consensus reached between Hong Kong SAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government. The expert group is now considering in detail the enhanced air pollution control measures recommended by joint study of the air quality in the Pearl River Delta Region to reduce the regional emissions of four major air pollutants as well as planning to set up enhanced systems to assess changes to regional air quality and the effectiveness of the additional control measures to be implemented.

4. As part of our effort to achieve the reduction targets, we are working with Guangdong Provincial Government on introducing a pilot emissions trading

scheme among power plants in Hong Kong and Guangdong to optimize the use of resources in the reduction of emissions in the same air shed.

5. We will continue our effort to encourage replacement of diesel taxis and light buses with ones that run on LPG. We will also continue to promote the installation of particulates removal devices on pre-Euro heavy diesel vehicles through provision of financial assistance, and will soon put forward draft legislation for the compulsory installation of such devices on pre-Euro diesel light vehicles.

Waste Management

6. In accordance with the polluter pays principle, we plan to introduce as a first step a landfill charge for the disposal of construction and demolition (C&D) waste in landfills so as to create economic incentive for waste producers to reduce/recycle such waste. We aim to introduce the relevant Bill to the Council for examination in mid-2003 and implement the charging scheme in 2004. We will consider levying landfill charge on other waste types at a later stage.

7. To further our efforts in domestic waste reduction, we will introduce a pilot scheme on wet/dry waste sorting in several housing estates so as to experiment its feasibility and to examine the logistics and economics involved. The scheme is expected to commence early this year and last 12 months. A review will be carried out upon completion of the pilot scheme. If the scheme is successful, it can be extended into large-scale domestic waste recycling. Separately, we will also make reference to experience and information in waste prevention and recovery in other economies, so as to establish a benchmark for our work in waste reduction.

8. Local construction activities generate around 14 million tonnes of C&D materials. Most of these materials are inert materials (e.g. broken concrete, rock, soil, sand, etc.) which are suitable for reuse in reclamation, and some of them can also be recycled for use in construction works. Various measures have already been taken to reduce these materials and to recycle/reuse inert materials in works projects. However, due to the lack of local reclamation projects, we expect that there will still be over 24 million tonnes of inert C&D materials without permanent outlets in the next three years. We are now examining the feasibility of reusing inert C&D materials in reclamation projects outside Hong Kong. In the meantime, we are stockpiling some of them at temporary fill banks.

Protecting Water Quality

9. In order to bring further improvement to the entire Victoria Harbour, particularly the western waters which are still receiving untreated effluent from Hong Kong Island, we will continue to press ahead with the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme related trials and studies as recommended by the International Review Panel. The studies and trials are progressing according to our schedule and we aim to conclude them by the end of this year and then consult the public on the way forward in early 2004.

Promoting Renewable Energy

10. Government is supportive of the development of renewable energy (RE) resources so as to preserve the resources of our planet and promote sustainable development. The Stage 1 of the “Study on Potential Application of Renewable Energy in HK” has just been completed and Government will provide consultant’s findings and recommendations to the Panel on Environmental Affairs for preliminary discussion in early February. As for the Stage 2 of the Study which is a design-and-build project involving the installation of building integrated photovoltaic (PV) panels of different types in the Wanchai Tower to assess their performance under Hong Kong’s weather conditions, installation works were completed in December 2002. We will monitor the performance of the various types of panels installed until early 2004. The Government will also continue to make wider use of RE in future Government works projects to provide power supply.

Nature Conservation

11. Despite its small size and rapid development over the years, about 43% of the total land area of Hong Kong has been put under statutory protection for nature conservation purpose, and Hong Kong still enjoys a rich biodiversity. Nevertheless, we are conducting a review of the existing nature conservation policy and mechanisms with the objective of identifying areas for improvement and practicable measures which will enable us to better conserve sites of ecological importance, in particular those under private ownership. We are also developing a scoring system to assess the ecological value of individual sites. The system will provide a more objective mechanism for assessing and

determining the relative ecological importance of different sites, and thereby facilitate a decision to be made on sites that deserve conservation and their priority.

12. Effectiveness of nature conservation initiatives relies on public support and participation. We will aim to establish a partnership with the key stakeholders to jointly pursue our nature conservation objective, and will consult the public on the review in the coming months.

CONCLUSION

13. Environmental protection will continue to be on the top of the Government's agenda. We will seek your advice and support when drawing up effective policies and measures to better protect our environment.

**Environment Branch
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January 2003**