

For Information  
on 31 October 2002

**Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs**  
**Environmental Protection: Work Priorities**

**PURPOSE**

This paper outlines the future directions on and priority areas of our work on environmental protection for the 2002/03 legislative session.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

2. Protecting the environment is our continual task and remains high on the Government agenda. Our environment continues to face mounting development pressure and pollution threats brought about by population growth, economic activities, infrastructure development, etc. The existing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) mechanism plays a significant role in striking a balance between development needs and the need to protect the environment. It has worked satisfactorily over the years. Up to 30 September 2002, 64 EIA reports including road and railway projects have been approved involving a total project cost of over \$300 billion. We will continue to uphold the EIA process vigorously and will continue to implement measures to further improve the process.

3. While Government will continue to strengthen our efforts to educate the public and solicit their support in this respect, it is important to complement such efforts by adhering to the polluters-pay principle as far as practicable. In line with this spirit and with a view to relieving the pressure faced by our landfills, we will shortly put forward our legislative proposals for the landfill charging scheme for C&D materials for Members' consideration.

4. In the coming years, we will need to decide on the way forward for key environmental projects like the remaining stages of HATS and the large-scale waste management facilities. It is important for members of the public to offer their views on the level of treatment that they consider appropriate to protect our environment, having regard to the cost that they would be paying either directly

through fees and charges or indirectly from the Government's coffer. We will consult the public in due course before deciding on the way forward.

5. Given the proximity of Hong Kong with other Mainland cities in the Pearl River Delta region, we will continue to strengthen cooperation between the two sides to tackle regional pollution problems. The consensus we have reached with the Guangdong Provincial Government to improve regional air quality is an example.

## **WORK PRIORITIES**

### **Improving Air Quality**

6. As we have briefed Members before, we will soon put forward draft legislation for the compulsory installation of particulate removal devices on pre-Euro diesel light vehicles to take effect around mid-2003 and start a new retrofit programme for pre-Euro diesel heavy vehicles around December 2002.

7. In accordance with the consensus reached between Hong Kong SAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government to improve regional air quality, we will consider in detail the enhanced control measures recommended in the report of a joint study of the air quality in the Pearl River Delta Region. An expert group has been set up under the Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Working Group on Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection to take this forward. The expert group's work includes studying the feasibility of implementing a pilot scheme for emissions trading among some of the power stations in the Pearl River Delta Region.

### **Waste Management**

8. We plan to submit two legislative proposals to the Council for examination within this legislative session. These include one on a landfill charging scheme for C&D waste to give economic incentive to their waste producers to reduce dumping of such waste in our landfills. The other one is on the clinical waste control scheme and the associated charging framework to regulate the handling, collection and disposal of clinical waste so as to safeguard the public from potential hazards associated with improper handling of clinical

waste. We also plan to seek funding approvals from the Finance Committee to put in place relevant facilities e.g. sorting facilities for implementing the landfill charging scheme and modifying the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre to receive the clinical waste.

9. We have received 59 submissions in response to our invitation for expression of interest in providing large-scale waste management facilities in Hong Kong. An Advisory Group comprising mainly non-officials is now evaluating them and aims to make recommendations to the Government in 2003 on technologies that should be adopted. We will consult the public on the recommended technologies/facilities before making the final decision.

10. On waste prevention and recovery, we are working on a pilot trial to carry out wet/dry waste sorting in several housing estates in early 2003 so as to experiment its feasibility and to examine the logistics and economics involved. We will commence the detailed feasibility and environmental impact assessment studies for the proposed Recovery Park and will continue to make available more short-term tenancy sites for the recycling trade.

11. We estimate that by the end of 2005, more than 20 million tonnes of inert materials will have no outlets. In addition to imposing the landfill charging scheme, we have already commissioned the first temporary fill bank at Tseung Kwan O in October 2002 for stockpiling inert C&D materials for reuse in future reclamation projects. Another fill bank would also be made available in the first half of 2003 at Tuen Mun. We have commissioned a pilot recycling plant for C&D materials in Tuen Mun in July 2002 to produce recycled aggregates for use in public works projects.

### **Protecting Water Quality**

12. In order to bring further improvement to the entire Harbour, particularly the western waters which are still receiving untreated effluent from Hong Kong Island, we will continue to press ahead with the HATS related trials and studies recommended by the International Review Panel. We aim to conclude them by the end of 2003 as planned and then consult the public on the way forward.

### **Protecting and Conserving Our Nature**

13. 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 high ecological value, in particular those under private ownership. We are also working on a mechanism to assess the ecological value of different sites in a more objective manner in order to facilitate the formulation and implementation of appropriate conservation measures for different sites. We hope to establish a partnership with the key stakeholders including green groups, academics and landowners to jointly pursue our nature conservation objective. We will consult the public on the review early next year.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE FORTHCOMING CUT IN OPERATING EXPENDITURE**

14. The Financial Secretary has required Directors of Bureaux to achieve a saving of 1.8% in the operating expenditure on the existing and new or improved services as planned in 2003-04, and an additional saving of 1% each year from 2004-05 to 2006-07. We together with the departments under our purview, are still reviewing our work to decide how the savings are to be achieved. We will try to meet the target without compromising the quality of our services. Measures such as re-engineering of work processes and re-prioritizing of work items will be considered.

## **CONCLUSION**

15. The Government has a heavy agenda on environmental protection, particularly air and waste, in this legislative session and we look forward to receiving Members' views and support as and when we submit our proposals to this Panel.

**Environment Branch**

**Environment, Transport and Works Bureau**

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