

**Extracts from the minutes of the meeting
of the Environmental Affairs Panel held on 5 June 2001**

X X X X X

IV Management of construction and demolition materials

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1414/00-01(03))

8. DSEF highlighted the salient points in the information paper which set out the measures to tackle the problem related to the management of construction and demolition (C&D) materials between mid-2002 and end 2005.

Sorting of mixed C&D materials

9. Noting that the sorting and the recycling facilities were separately located at the Southeast New Territories Landfill and the Shek O and Anderson Road quarries respectively, Mr LAW Chi-kwong questioned the effectiveness of such an arrangement since it would be more convenient if these facilities were centrally located near the landfill. He said that the centralization of sorting and recycling facilities would facilitate the waste recovery process, particularly with the implementation of the landfill charging scheme which provided an added incentive. The Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food (B)2 (PAS/EF(B2)) clarified that the Shek O and Anderson Road quarries would only be used as sites for processing the highest quality excavated rocks into aggregates for concrete/asphalt production. Arrangements were in place for transporting to the quarries the highest quality excavated rocks generated from identified project sites such as the Jordan Valley project where a vast amount of quality rocks would be excavated during site formation works. The other sorting facilities at Tseung Kwan O and Tuen Mun were sufficiently close to landfill areas. In addition, the Administration planned to co-locate permanent sorting facilities with recycling facilities or barging points. It was also examining whether sorting facilities could be set up within the Northeast New Territories Landfill and the Western New Territories Landfill.

Recycling of C&D materials

10. Mr WONG Yung-kan enquired about the latest developments in the recycling of C&D materials. PAS/EF(B2) said that the Administration was experimenting the technical viability of using broken concrete and lower quality rocks for concrete production or as road sub-base and drainage bedding layers through a

series of performance tests. It would be setting up temporary recycling plants at Kai Tak and Tuen Mun in late 2002/early 2003.

11. Miss CHOY So-yuk noted that there were provisions in the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) which prevented the use of recycled materials in building works. As a result, recyclable materials of good quality could only be used for road works rather than for large-scale building construction works. PAS/EF(B2) advised that if the performance tests of the experiment referred to in the preceding paragraph indicated that the concrete produced would be of good quality and could be used on a wide scale in building construction works, necessary actions which included legislative amendments would be taken to put these into use.

12. Given the lack of reference to the reuse/recycling of wood and plastic materials, Miss CHOY expressed concern that these materials had to be disposed of at landfills. She pointed out that there were industries that could make use of these recycled materials. PAS/EF(B2) advised that if the wood and plastic materials were not contaminated, these could be reused and recycled. The useful materials should best be sorted out at the construction sites for reuse to obviate the need for transport to sorting facilities.

Establishing temporary fill banks

13. Noting the large amount of inert C&D materials to be produced between mid-2002 and end 2005 which were said to be able to fill the Happy Valley Racecourse to a multi-storey height, Mr Henry WU queried the practicability of stockpiling these materials at any district since there were bound to be strong objections from District Councils against the establishment of temporary fill banks in their respective districts. Sharing similar concern, Mr WONG Yung-kan asked if there were other alternatives to the two identified fill bank sites if these were rejected by the residents. PAS/EF(B2) advised that Tseung Kwan O Area 137 and Tuen Mun Area 38 were identified as suitable temporary fill bank sites because of their sizes and locations which were far away from residential/commercial developments. In fact, the Tseung Kwan O site was adjacent to the existing landfill site. The proximity of the sites to the seafront would enable ready transport of the inert C&D materials by sea, thereby minimizing the traffic and environmental impact associated with land transport. The Administration would explain to the District Councils the need to establish fill banks and the mitigation measures that would be implemented. According to the Civil Engineering Department, the two sites were able to stockpile inert C&D materials to a height of about 20 metres.

14. Mr LAW Chi-kwong was concerned that stockpiling large amount of inert C&D materials at the temporary fill banks might give rise to ground settlement problems. PAS/EF(B2) advised that since the fill bank site at Tseung Kwan O Area 137 was a reclaimed land, the proposed stockpiling would have the added benefit of expediting the settlement process. The Chief Engineer/Port Works, Civil Engineering Department confirmed that as formation of surcharge mounds was required to speed up settlement before installation of pipes and other underground facilities, the stockpiling of inert C&D materials would not pose a problem at the reclaimed land.

15. Noting that residents of Tseung Kwan O had already been affected by the environmental nuisances associated with the landfill which was swarmed with mosquitoes, Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed worries that the problem would be further aggravated with the stockpiling of C&D materials at the proposed fill bank site at Tseung Kwan O Area 137. PAS/EF(B2) explained that the C&D materials to be stockpiled at the fill banks were inert materials and would not create the aforementioned nuisance at the landfill. Nevertheless, measures would be adopted to minimize possible disturbance to residents. On the Chairman's enquiry about when the temporary fill banks would cease operation, PAS/EF(B2) advised that the fill bank sites had been earmarked for other uses. It was hoped that these sites could be reverted to their original usage in 2005-06 when outlets for inert C&D materials were identified in the reclamation projects.

16. Mr Henry WU asked how the Administration could deal with the problem related to the management of C&D materials beyond 2005. Sharing similar concern, Ms Cyd HO said that as the capacity of landfills would soon be exhausted, there was a need to identify outlets for the C&D materials generated. PAS/EF(B2) advised that the situation from 2006 onwards remained very fluid because the scopes of many large-scale reclamation projects were being reviewed. A study to examine the long-term arrangements to accommodate inert C&D materials had been commissioned. She assured members that the Administration would continue to closely monitor the situation and explore alternatives in managing C&D materials in the light of developments of planned reclamation works and the outcome of the study.

Introducing landfill charging

17. Ms Emily LAU said that she noted from the waste management plans of public works projects that there were great fluctuations in the percentage of C&D materials being disposed of at landfills. She asked if there was any monitoring on the disposal of materials and the percentage of materials that would be disposed of at landfills. Given the imminent depletion of landfills, Ms LAU considered that there was an urgent need to introduce the landfill charging scheme, as in the case of overseas countries.

18. In response, PAS/EF(B2) made reference to paragraph 3 of the information paper which set out the typical composition of C&D materials in recent years and their reuse/recycling value. The composition of C&D materials generated from projects differed according to the nature of works. On average, about 16% of C&D materials were contaminated waste and had to be disposed of at landfills. The waste management plans of public works projects were monitored by the Administration and actions were taken to step up sorting of mixed C&D materials for reuse and recycling. She added that while reference had been made to overseas experiences in considering the landfill charging scheme, they were not entirely applicable to the Hong Kong situation. The Administration agreed with members that the imposition of landfill charges would provide the necessary incentive to reduce waste and would be formulating a comprehensive landfill charging scheme to be introduced in the near future. DSEF supplemented that the Administration had been working on a landfill charging scheme with the concerned sectors, including the construction industry, the property management industry and the waste haulers associations. However, as in most new charging schemes, there were mixed reactions from the community on the proposed imposition of landfill charges. Strong objections had been received from the affected trades who were worried about the cost implications of the scheme.

19. Ms Emily LAU opined that consideration should be given to including landfill charges in the construction costs. Mr Henry WU however expressed concern that the proposal would increase the property prices which would in turn affect the general public. PAS/EF(B2) said that as property prices were dependent on market conditions, construction costs were seldom a deciding factor. She assured members that the Administration would provide an updated progress report on the landfill charging scheme when the charging arrangements had been worked out. Miss CHOY So-yuk suggested that landfill charges should be levied according to the weight of materials to be disposed of at landfills, and that no landfill charges should be imposed on materials which were sorted out for reuse/recycling. PAS/EF(B2) took note of Miss CHOY's views which would be dealt with in the context of the landfill charging scheme.

X X X X X