

ETWB(E) 55/07/70

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Mr Markus Shaw
Chairman
The World Wild Fund for Nature Hong Kong
1 Tramway Path
Central
Hong Kong
(by fax: 2526 1011)

Dear Mr Shaw,

I refer to your earlier submission to the Panel on Environmental Affairs expressing the views of the World Wild Fund Hong Kong (WWF) on Stage 2 of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS). The Panel Secretariat has referred your letter to the Administration for response.

We welcome WWF's support for the polluter pays principle and will take into account WWF's view when reviewing the sewage charges in due course. Regarding conservation of fresh water resources, the Government has announced the Total Water Management Policy in the 2002 Policy Agenda to promote water conservation and effluent reuse. As a pilot scheme, we will try out different options of effluent reuse by recycling the treated effluent from the Ngong Ping Sewage Treatment Works after its completion. In the light of the experience to be gained from the pilot scheme and the findings of other ongoing studies, we will consider wider scale application of effluent reuse in other parts of the territory.

Turning to our proposal to implement HATS Stage 2 in two phases, we would like to stress that we have formulated this recommendation after very careful evaluation of the environmental, financial, operational and programme interface implications. The Government is fully committed to the provision of biological treatment in the long term as its need has been clearly established according to the findings of the series of trials and studies undertaken to map out the way forward for HATS Stage 2. However, the biological treatment facilities of the scale in question are extremely complicated and we need more time to plan

the system such that it could fully meet our long term needs. Moreover, based on our water quality modeling results, the completion of HATS Stage 2A alone will be sufficient to ensure the compliance of most of our water quality objectives/criteria in most parts of our harbour. Therefore, as a responsible Government, we also need to optimize the commissioning of these very costly and complicated biological treatment facilities to ensure that we only spend the money when the actual population and sewage build-up rates justify the decision. The above considerations, together with the fact that we need to secure the land for the facilities under Stage 2B, conduct site investigation and environmental impact assessment etc, clearly point to the conclusion that implementing Stage 2 in two phases will be environmentally sound and financially prudent. In this light and in order not to delay the commencement of Stage 2A which is urgently required for further improving the condition of our harbour, we therefore recommend proceeding with Stage 2A as quickly as possible while undertaking the preparatory works for Stage 2B concurrently.

I hope the above has clarified the Administration's position on the issues raised. We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming technical briefing sessions to exchange further views on HATS Stage 2.

Yours sincerely,

(Raistlin Lau)

for Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

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