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**Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Meeting on 27 October 2003**

**Background brief on management of  
construction and demolition materials**

**Background**

Construction and demolition (C&D) materials are a mixture of inert materials and wastes arising from construction, excavation, renovation, demolition and road works. Local construction activities produce about 14 million tonnes of C&D materials a year. The composition of these materials are as follows -

- (a) about 59% are soft inert materials comprising soil, earth and slurry that cannot be recycled and can only be reused as fill materials in reclamation and earth filling works;
- (b) about 25% are hard inert materials comprising rocks, broken concrete and bricks. Some of them can be reused for seawalls in reclamation while others can be recycled as aggregates for concrete production or as granular materials for road sub-base and drainage bedding layers; and
- (c) the remaining 16% are C&D wastes comprising metal, plastic, timber and packaging waste. Some of them can be recycled if they are not contaminated while the contaminated ones can only be disposed of at landfills.

2. In the past, most of the inert C&D materials were reused at reclamation projects. As there are no approved reclamation projects beyond mid-2002, problem arises as to how to absorb the estimated 69 million tonnes of inert materials to be generated over the period between mid-2002 to end-2005. If nothing is done, all these materials will have to be disposed of at landfills, thereby shortening the life of the existing three landfills by 10 years. To this end, the Administration has taken a number of measures to manage C&D materials, namely -

- (a) avoiding and minimizing C&D materials;

- (b) sorting of mixed C&D waste;
- (c) reusing inert C&D materials in reclamation projects;
- (d) processing/recycling hard materials;
- (e) establishing temporary fill banks;
- (f) introducing landfill charging; and
- (g) other measures.

The Panel on Environmental Affairs has held three meetings on 7 November 2000, 5 June 2001 and 20 December 2002 to discuss with the Administration the efficacy of these measures.

### **Sorting of mixed C&D waste**

3. While welcoming the setting up of sorting facilities to help separate inert materials from mixed waste, members have pointed out that it will be more convenient if these facilities are centrally located near the landfills. The Government should also encourage the private sector to actively take part in sorting and separation of C&D materials to avoid dumping in the landfills.

### **Processing/recycling hard materials**

4. Members generally support the setting up of a temporary recycling plant in Tuen Mun to process hard materials. However, concern has been raised on the provisions in the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) which prevent the use of recycled materials in building works. As a result, recyclable materials of good quality can only be used for road works rather than large-scale building works. It is also pointed out that contractors and dumpers may not frequent the recycling plant due to its remote location. According to the Administration, it is experimenting the technical viability of using broken concrete and lower quality rocks for concrete production or as road-base and drainage bedding layers through a series of performance. If the performance tests indicate that the concrete produced will be of good quality and can be used on a wide scale in building construction works, necessary actions which include legislative amendment will be taken to put the concrete into use.

### **Establishing temporary fill banks**

5. As there are bound to be strong objections from District Councils against the establishment of temporary fill banks in their respective districts, members question the practicability of stockpiling inert C&D materials until new reclamation projects are

available for accommodating them. By way of illustration, the stockpiling of large amount of inert C&D materials in the proposed temporary fill bank in Tseung Kwan O (TKO) may further aggravate the problem of ground settlement. It may also give rise to environmental nuisance. The Administration's explanation is that the fill bank site at TKO is a reclaimed land, the proposed stockpiling will have the added benefit of expediting the settlement process. Furthermore, as the C&D materials to be stockpiled at the fill banks are inert materials, these would unlikely cause any environmental nuisance.

### **Introducing landfill charging**

6. The proposal to introduce a landfill charging scheme (LCS) has been a major discussion item of the Panel over the years. When the detailed proposals for LCS were discussed at the Panel meeting on 28 April 2003, the Administration made it clear that it had no intention to introduce LCS when the community was devoted to the fight against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. It would also take time to complete the consultation and legislative processes before the implementation of LCS. While agreeing that the Administration should further consult the trades with a view to resolving their operational difficulties, particularly on the charging arrangements, members held the view that the drafting of the legislation on LCS should proceed in parallel with the consultation to avoid further delay. According to the Administration, the drafting of the legislation had commenced and hopefully it could be introduced into the Legislature within this year for implementation in 2004.

### **Other measures**

7. On the feasibility of exporting C&D materials in Hong Kong to other places for reclamation for other purposes, the Administration's response is that it has begun dialogue with authorities outside Hong Kong and information on the types of materials to be exported has been given to these authorities for consideration. It undertakes to inform the Panel on the progress of talks and the action to be taken.

### **Way forward**

8. To examine the long-term arrangements to accommodate inert C&D materials in the next three decades, the Administration has initiated a study which is expected to be completed in 2003. It will report the findings of the study to members in due course.