For discussion on 18 March 2008

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Proposed Additional "Designated Areas" Under the Noise Control Ordinance (Cap. 400)

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to update the "Designated Areas" under the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO).

### **BACKGROUND**

- 2. Noisy construction activities conducted in populated built-up areas would affect more people than conducted in less populated areas. The NCO provides for the Secretary for the Environment to establish certain populated built-up areas as "Designated Areas" by notice published in the Gazette.
- 3. Under the NCO, construction works using powered mechanical equipment can be carried out between 7 pm and 7 am, or at any time on a general holiday ("the restricted hours") only with a valid Construction Noise Permit (CNP). However, for CNP applications to conduct construction works using the five kinds of "specified powered mechanical equipment" (i.e. handheld breaker, bulldozer, handheld vibratory poker, dump truck and concrete lorry mixer) in the "Designated Areas", the noise limits required will be 15dB(A) more stringent than those required in "non-Designated Areas". For a list of "prescribed construction work" such as hammering, erection or dismantling of formwork or scaffolding, etc., they can be conducted during the restricted hours in the "Designated Areas" only with valid CNPs which normally can be obtained only with the use of quiet construction methods or substantial barriers to protect the affected noise sensitive receivers from construction noise.

4. The "Designated Areas" were first established in January 1996. In 2001, taking into account the developments over the years, the then Secretary for the Environment and Food expanded the "Designated Areas" to the existing coverage marked red on the maps at **Annex**.

### THE PROPOSAL

- 5. In view of the developments in Hong Kong since 2001, it is appropriate now to further expand the coverage of the "Designated Areas" to include newly developed populated built-up areas; areas where development has been actively taking place and population intake is expected to commence within the coming few years; and other populated built-up areas in the territory not yet covered. Some areas adjoining the existing "Designated Areas" which form parts of the communities have also been identified for inclusion.
- 6. We propose that the locations marked blue on the maps at **Annex** be established as "Designated Areas". The proposal will provide communities in the new "Designated Areas" with the same protection against construction noise under the NCO as those in the existing "Designated Areas".

#### CONSULTATION

- 7. We have consulted the trades concerned (including trade associations, public utility companies and railway operators) and professional bodies on the proposal. They were generally supportive.
- 8. The Hong Kong Construction Association Ltd (HKCA) had no objection to the proposed additional "Designated Areas" but suggested that construction works in the new "Designated Areas" should be exempted if the contracts involved had already been awarded or tenders closed before the implementation date. The Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC), while expressing support for a quiet environment, sought clarification on the methodology and demarcation for "Designated Areas". MTRC also considered it premature to establish as "Designated Areas" those locations where active development was only expected to take place in the next few years. The Hong Kong Institution of

Acoustics (HKIOA) welcomed the proposal, but expressed concern over the impact on ongoing construction works.

- 9. We have carefully considered these views and have responded separately to the concerns/suggestions raised. We propose that the new "Designated Areas" will come into effect from 1 January 2009 so as to allow time for the construction industry to get prepared. Moreover, to address the concerns raised by some stakeholders with regard to new developments, we have only included as new "Designated Areas" those locations where the population intake of new residential blocks has already taken place or is expected to take place in the next few years.
- 10. We consulted the Advisory Council on the Environment on our proposal on 14 February 2008 and obtained their support.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

11. The proposal will provide residents in the new "Designated Areas" with the same protection as those in the existing "Designated Areas". It is estimated that more than 280,000 residents will benefit from the implementation of the proposal.

## **PUBLIC REACTION**

12. As the proposal will mitigate construction noise impact on residents, the community at large is expected to welcome the proposal.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

13. We aim to introduce the proposed additional "Designated Areas" to the Legislative Council by way of a subsidiary legislation within this current session.

#### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

14. Members' views are sought on the proposal in paragraph 6.

# **Environmental Protection Department March 2008**

















