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Advisory Council on the Environment Waste Management Subcommittee

Views on the Extension of the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags

The Advisory Council on the Environment Waste Management Subcommittee (WMSC) has deliberated the Extension of the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags at its Waste Management Subcommittee Meeting. The Subcommittee's views are as follows –

- (a) The WMSC noted that the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags (the Scheme) was well-received by the community and has achieved remarkable results. The number of plastic shopping bags (PSBs) distributed by the registered retailers was estimated to have fallen by about 90%. More people practice “Bring Your Own Bags” (BYOB) in their daily lives.
- (b) Nevertheless, the WMSC also noted the increase in PSB disposal under those retail categories outside the scope of the current scheme, and agreed that the Scheme should be fully extended to cover all retailers so as to further address the indiscriminate use of PSBs.
- (c) The WMSC discussed the mainstream proposals as contained in the consultation document. Members generally agreed that exemptions should be granted for those PSBs used on food hygiene grounds and noted that the Government would take into account the views collected from the public consultation and draw up a more specific scope of exemption at a later stage. Members also generally agreed that the current compliance system could be too burdensome to small and medium-sized enterprises and that retailers should be allowed to retain the PSB charge (as in the Mainland and Taiwan) so as to obviate the administrative burden, thereby making the proposed extension feasible.
- (d) Members considered that public education was important when the Scheme was to extend to all retailers. It welcomed the Government's continued effort on publicity and public education. In addition, Members suggested the Government to conduct suitable surveys or researches to look into our people's behaviour in respect of BYOB and the use of PSBs.