



## Glass Recycling on Lamma

### Background

Living Lamma was formed in May 2009 in response to dumping on agricultural land in the community – the incidences of which have increased since government introduced charging for the disposal of construction waste. Despite numerous meetings and submissions of reports to government and Legco, no action was taken. Living Lamma has continued to push for environmental improvement in other areas by highlighting the problems (see our reports:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vw7vcnkpyuuz4gp/LalQ6-yGCe>) and by voluntarily cleaning up areas as necessary. Unfortunately, as there is little support from government, even in terms of enforcing the law, we have seen scant result for our efforts – areas that we clean up soon become littered again as this 90 second video demonstrates: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICUSZyZdZxY>

### Pilot Recycling Scheme

1. The recycling booths began on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012. In Yung Shue Wan, they were held twice a week on Friday and Saturday afternoons from 1pm – 4pm.

**2. The pilot scheme was a great success, taking 50 tonnes of glass out of landfill in the last 8 months.**

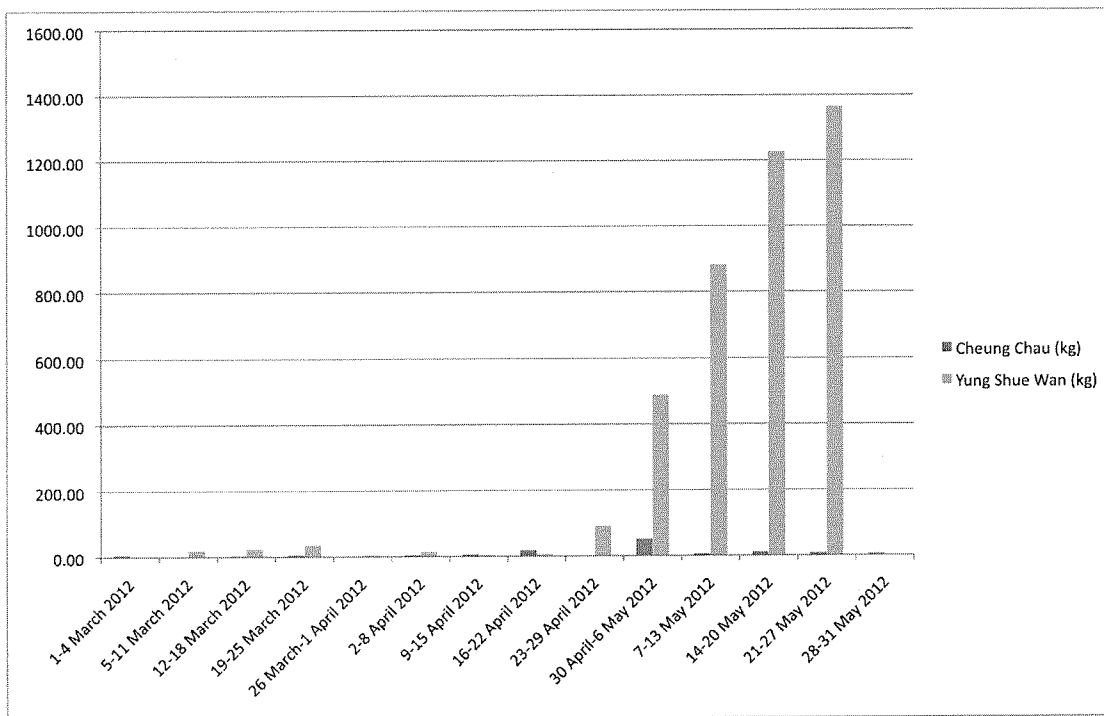
3. In the first 6 weeks, Living Lamma provided feedback to EPD to improve the uptake of the scheme. The limited operational hours made it difficult for people to participate. Bar and restaurant owners stated that a pick up on Monday or Tuesday, would be preferable to Friday and Saturday, as storing 6 days of glass was problematic in some cases.

There was no apparent plan to maximize community uptake through a meaningful communications strategy (it took 3 weeks and a tremendous amount of badgering for EPD to put up a single poster to inform people about the booth). There was a launch ceremony, but residents and green groups, including Living Lamma, were not invited to attend. Booth staff appeared untrained in promotion/community engagement and nearby businesses remained unaware of glass recycling even a month after the start of the programme.



4. On 27<sup>th</sup> April, Living Lamma became “ambassadors” to the scheme. In the first 8 weeks, the booths on Lamma had collected 108.8 kgs or an average of 13.6 kgs per week. In the 9th week, (the first week of Living Lamma’s involvement), the booth collected 90.28 kgs. On the Wednesday of the following week, one of the bars phoned and asked if we could pick up its glass - 160 kgs of it. We bought a trolley and moved the glass to the booth on Friday. Another resident brought down 180 kgs that he had been storing in his garden because "it is wrong to throw glass into landfill," and a few more residents brought their glass giving a total of 488.72 kgs. Thereafter, all the bars and restaurants started to separate their waste and in the third week we collected 882 kgs, then 1.23 tonnes in the fourth week, and 1.3 tonnes in the 5th week of our involvement. (We still couldn't get EPD to put a simple notice on the bins to tell people not to throw glass into landfill.)

Here is the chart for the first 13 weeks of glass recycling, with data for Cheung Chau, where a similar booth was in operation:



5. The Lamma glass recycling experience should have been a success story of government and the community working together to reduce Hong Kong’s landfill and support local recycling businesses. Living Lamma members spearheaded the effort, bringing in other volunteers as needed. Lamma kids wrote school reports on glass recycling and the four main bin areas serving Lamma Main Street were much improved, since we reduced the waste that they needed to handle. We also made a connection between the waste produced and the user, since the glass from each bar/restaurant was weighed (otherwise waste charging is very difficult to implement in a rural context, as all waste is currently deposited anonymously). However,.....



6. The glass recycler told us that they had to wait until September to receive any glass for recycling from Lamma. This was because government wanted to fill a 20 ft container before distributing glass to the recyclers. Thanks to the efforts of Living Lamma and the community, the recyclers starting getting glass after 6 months of the booth operations. Had the Lamma booth continued to collect glass as it was in the first 8 weeks, we estimate that it would have taken 3 years and 10 months for the recyclers to receive their first glass.

7. The booth operations ended as of 29<sup>th</sup> December 2012. EPD lost their STT for the booths, though the contract with SITA to operate the booths continued to the end of February 2013. We objected to the alternative location suggested by EPD (outside the Post Office) because though it was feasible from a bureaucratic standpoint, it was too small, difficult to access, and therefore potentially dangerous.

8. We suggested providing bins to participating businesses and a pick up service according to need (this is currently been done for food waste). Government cannot provide this because of bureaucratic constraints.

8. EPD suggested that people bring the glass to the Waste Transfer Station. This is as practical as suggesting to residents of Mongkok and Shatin that they bring their glass to Central or Wanchai – see Parks & Walkways on: [https://www.wastereduction.gov.hk/en/community/community\\_public\\_loc.htm#islands](https://www.wastereduction.gov.hk/en/community/community_public_loc.htm#islands).

9. An interim solution was found with the help of FEHD making use of an existing Refuse Collection Point to collect glass until the end of February. Since then, EPD has taken over the collection of glass on Lamma. The community is delighted to see the presence of glass recycling bins. Though bureaucratic convenience has dictated their location, rather than what would make sense to the community, this is nonetheless a significant step forward. For many years we have been told that we must reduce waste and practice recycling, but have not been given the means to do this. Equally, the way in which recycling is organized means that the public has little faith in it. We often hear that people do not bother to separate their waste because they see the same black plastic bags being used for recycling and landfill and all waste being taken away together.

10. We made recommendations to EPD in a separate paper (see [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vw7vcnkpyuuz4gp/Pmgz8H8D8a/2012OCT24LL\\_Joint\\_VisitReportWaste.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vw7vcnkpyuuz4gp/Pmgz8H8D8a/2012OCT24LL_Joint_VisitReportWaste.pdf)) before the end of the pilot recycling scheme. At a very minimum we would like to see:



- A clear statement of the government's intention with regard to glass recycling on Lamma. Living Lamma's goal is "zero glass to landfill" from Yung Shue Wan. We believe this is achievable with the provision of appropriate facilities and with proper communication. As a first step, a large and prominent sticker on every regular bin would remind people to separate their glass.
- A competition to redesign the bin areas of Yung Shue Wan to make them clean and attractive, and to encourage a change in behaviour so that people are responsible with their waste. Presently, the bin areas are so dirty and overflowing that even those members of the community who are otherwise responsible tend to throw their waste in the general direction of the bin, instead of placing it in the bin. The recycling bins have recently been changed, but the design is standard for the whole of Hong Kong and does not take into consideration the needs of the community. With good design, our bin areas should enable residents and businesses to dispose of their waste in a way that reduces waste to landfill and keeps our villages clean and tidy. This transformation has taken place in other countries. Where refuse used to be collected at "tips," there are now community recycling or resource recovery centres.
- Hong Kong needs good examples (rather than banners and slogans) and Lamma, with its relatively environmentally aware international community, is a good place to pilot doing things differently – as was proven with the pilot recycling scheme for glass. Unfortunately, Hong Kong's system of government has so far proven itself to be change adverse and unwilling or unable to experiment. We hope that the time has come to explore new ways of doing things so that we may improve.

10. Living Lamma continues to do all we can to clean up our environment and support the development of modern waste facilities focusing on waste reduction and recycling. All our work is carried out by unpaid members of the community with jobs and busy lives, who are committed to improving our environment for the benefit of all.

For more information, call Jo Wilson, Chairperson of Living Lamma: [redacted] or email [livinglamma@yahoo.com](mailto:livinglamma@yahoo.com).

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