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Panel on Environmental Affairs

Meeting on 24 June 2013

**Background brief on "External lighting in Hong Kong"
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on external lighting in Hong Kong, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by Members on the subject.

Background

2. External lighting in Hong Kong exists in many different forms and some typical examples include signs (either internally illuminated or externally illuminated), lighting for facades and features, lighting outside buildings (including those for shops), lighting for sports fields and playgrounds, and external video structures (e.g. video walls, display panel). In recent years, there has been increased public awareness about the impact of external lighting, as reflected by the increasing number of complaints against light nuisance from advertisement signboards, decorative lightings, and spot lights on the external wall of buildings.

3. To address the energy wastage and light nuisance problems that may be caused by excessive external lighting, the Government issued the Guidelines on Industry Best Practices for External Lighting Installations ("the Guidelines") on 26 January 2012 to provide a reference for the trade and relevant parties in planning external lighting projects and their daily operation. The Guidelines, which are hyperlinked in the **Appendix**, suggest some best practices on external lighting installations that government departments and the private sector should observe.

4. Apart from promulgating the Guidelines, a Task Force on External Lighting ("the Task Force") has been set up to advise the Government on the way forward to deal with external lighting issues in Hong Kong. As mentioned in the 2013 Policy Address, the Task Force is looking into the various issues relating to external lighting and will submit its recommendations to the Government for taking follow-up actions to address public concerns on external lighting.

Deliberations by the Panel on Environmental Affairs

5. At its meeting on 28 March 2011, the Panel on Environmental Affairs ("the Panel") noted the findings of the consultancy study on external lighting commissioned by the Environment Bureau ("ENB") in 2009, and discussed the way forward to minimize energy wastage and light nuisance.

6. While supporting in principle the promulgation of the Guidelines, some members questioned the effectiveness of the Guidelines in regulating external lighting. These members considered the Guidelines not only vague and incomprehensive in the absence of standards on light intensity, but also toothless and non-enforceable without a mechanism to handle disputes. They were skeptical that the Administration was merely using the Guidelines as an excuse to procrastinate statutory control on external lighting. In their view, the Administration should solicit cooperation from the trades to adopt the voluntary measures in the Guidelines, and to closely monitor the effectiveness of those measures. To demonstrate its commitment, the Administration should also introduce control measures, such as licensing control on the intensity and duration of animated lighting, and provision of shields for spotlights etc.

7. Some members held the view that light pollution was a result of poor planning to allow intermingling of residential and commercial buildings. Given that neon lights were one of the tourist attractions in Hong Kong, the proposal to switch off external lights after 11 pm might affect the night life of Hong Kong. In assessing the problem of light nuisance in Hong Kong, members suggested that reference should be made to experiences in cities like Las Vegas and Macau where neon lights were used to attract tourists. Consultation should be held with the affected trades, including the tourism trades. Meanwhile, appropriate assistance should be given to those who were affected by external lighting but could not afford to move to residential districts, such as dwellers of bedspace apartments.

8. On the imposition of statutory control on external lighting, some members enquired about the timeframe for introducing legislative control if the Guidelines turned out to be ineffective in regulating external lighting. To expedite the legislative process, consideration should be given to setting

standards for appropriate lighting levels which were acceptable to existing local circumstances.

9. On 28 January 2013, the Panel had a deliberation on light pollution when it was briefed on the environmental initiatives as set out in the 2013 Policy Address. Members expressed support for the early introduction of legislation to regulate external lighting on account of its nuisances to affected residents, and enquired whether the Administration would be prepared to introduce relevant legislation within the current legislative session. There were also views that the Guidelines were not effective in regulating external lighting and a system of control by district, similar to that of noise control, could be applied to regulate external lighting in the territory.

10. Noting that there was no legislation controlling the light pollution arising from the reflection from glass curtain walls, it was suggested that studies should be made on the means to regulate the reflected glare from glass curtain walls. The Administration had responded that existing legislation did not regulate reflected glare from buildings. ENB's current work on external lighting was focused on energy wastage and light nuisances, but not reflected glare from glass curtain walls. This notwithstanding, the Administration considered that the subject was worth studying and as a start, consideration could be given to including green specifications in the design of buildings to prevent the glaring effect of glass curtain walls.

Council questions

11. Hon IP Kwok-him and Hon James TO raised questions relating to external lighting at the Council meetings on 7 January 2009 and 14 December 2011. Details of the Council questions are hyperlinked in the **Appendix** for ease of reference.

Relevant papers

12. A list of relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Appendix

List of relevant papers

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Environmental Affairs	3 March 2009*	Information note on "Light pollution and the regulation of outdoor lighting in selected places" prepared by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. IN08/08-09) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/sec/library/0809in08-e.pdf
Panel on Environmental Affairs	5 November 2009*	Referral arising from the meeting between Legislative Council Members and Yau Tsim Mong District Council members on 4 June 2009 regarding the light pollution problem in urban area (Restricted to Members) (LC Paper No. CB(1)271/09-10(01))
Panel on Environmental Affairs	19 May 2010*	Referral arising from the meeting between Legislative Council Members and Wan Chai District Council members on 29 April 2010 regarding the noise and light nuisance from outdoor television wall screens (Chinese version only) (Restricted to Members) (LC Paper No. CB(1)1956/09-10(01))

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Environmental Affairs	28 March 2011	<p>Administration's paper on "External Lighting in Hong Kong" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1673/10-11(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0328cb1-1673-3-e.pdf</p> <p>Paper on supplementary information on the regulation of outdoor lighting in selected places prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Fact sheet) (LC Paper No. FS16/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/sec/library/1011fs16-e.pdf</p> <p>Referral arising from the meeting between Legislative Council Members and Wan Chai District Council members on 13 January 2011 regarding the noise and light nuisances generated by outdoor video walls (Chinese version only) (Restricted to Members) (LC Paper No. CB(1)1708/10-11(02))</p> <p>Administration's paper on "External Lighting of The ONE and Hopewell Centre" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1719/10-11(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0328cb1-1719-1-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2191/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20110328.pdf</p>
Panel on Environmental Affairs	Tabled in the Legislative Council on 13 July 2011	<p>Report of the Panel on Environmental Affairs for submission to the Legislative Council (LC Paper No. CB(1)2546/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ea/reports/ea0713cb1-2546-e.pdf</p>

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Environmental Affairs	28 January 2013	Administration's paper on "2013 Policy Address – Policy Initiatives of Environment Bureau: Environmental protection" (LC Paper No. CB(1)431/12-13(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0128cb1-431-2-e.pdf Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)732/12-13) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20130128.pdf

* Date of issuance of papers

Hyperlinks to relevant Council Questions:

Date	Council Question
7 January 2009	Council question raised by Hon IP Kwok-him http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200901/07/P200901070137.htm
14 December 2011	Council question raised by Hon James TO http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201112/14/P201112140182.htm

Hyperlink to relevant document:

Government bureau/department	Document
Environment Bureau	Guidelines on Industry Best Practices for External Lighting Installations issued on 26 January 2012 http://www.enb.gov.hk/en/resources_publications/guidelines/files/guidelines_ex_lighting_install_eng.pdf