

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1949/13-14
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

Panel on Environmental Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 23 June 2014, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon Charles Peter MOK
Hon CHAN Han-pan
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Dennis KWOK
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP

**Public Officers
attending : For item IV**

Ms Christine LOH, JP
Under Secretary for the Environment

Mr Howard CHAN, JP
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Environmental Protection Department

Dr Ellen CHAN, JP
Assistant Director (Environmental Infrastructure)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr Francis WONG
Officer-in-charge(Waste Transfer & Development)
Environmental Protection Department

For item V

Ms Christine LOH, JP
Under Secretary for the Environment

Mr Andrew LAI, JP
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr MOK Wai-chuen, JP
Assistant Director (Air Policy)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr FONG Kin-wa
Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Mobile Source)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr YAM Yat-shing
Senior Environmental Protection Officer
(Mobile Source) 4
Environmental Protection Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Miranda HON
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Miss Lilian MOK
Senior Council Secretary (1)1

Ms Mandy LI
Council Secretary (1)1

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)1

Action

In the absence of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman chaired the meeting for the discussion of agenda items I to IV. The Chairman subsequently took the chair for the discussion of agenda items V and VI.

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1616/13-14 — Minutes of the special meeting held on 13 March 2014

LC Paper No. CB(1)1654/13-14 — Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2014)

2. The minutes of the special meeting and the regular meeting held on 13 and 24 March 2014 respectively were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since last meeting

3. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1634/13-14(01) — List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(1)1634/13-14(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Wednesday, 23 July 2014, at 2:30 pm –

Action

- (a) District Cooling System at the Kai Tak Development;
- (b) Collaboration with Guangdong in improving air quality in the Pearl River Delta region; and
- (c) Administration's response to the Report on the Subcommittee on Issues relating to Air Noise and Light Pollution.

5. The Deputy Chairman reminded members that that the Panel would hold the following two special meetings respectively on –

- (a) Wednesday, 25 June 2014, at 8:30 am to discuss the "Impact of construction works on important species, marine ecology and the fisheries industry"; and
- (b) Thursday, 17 July 2014, at 2:30 pm to discuss the "Measures to promote the recycling industry and establishment of the Recycling Fund".

IV. Restored Landfill Revitalization Funding Scheme

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1634/13-14(03) — Administration's paper on "Restored Landfill Revitalization Funding Scheme")

6. With the aid of a power-point presentation, the Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Environmental Infrastructure) ("ADEP(EI)") introduced the proposed Restored Landfill Revitalization Funding Scheme ("the Funding Scheme"), which was established to expedite the development of recreational facilities or other innovative proposals at restored landfills and proposed to be opened to applications from non-profit-making organizations ("NPOs") and national sports associations ("NSAs"). She also sought members' support for making a submission to the Finance Committee ("FC") for the non-recurrent funding of \$40 million to meet the starting costs and initial operating deficits of projects under the Funding Scheme.

(Post-meeting note: A set of the power-point presentation materials was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1664/13-14(01) on 23 June 2014.)

Action

Afteruses of restored landfills

7. Mr Steven HO said that the agricultural and fisheries industry was supportive of the Funding Scheme which would provide funding support to NPOs to develop new forms of agriculture and rural activities at restored landfills. To facilitate NPOs and NSAs to expedite the development of gainful afteruses at restored landfills, the Administration should set out the areas of various restored landfill sites (particularly flat areas) that were available for development. Mr Frankie YICK also expressed support for the Funding Scheme and urged the Administration to provide detailed particulars of individual restored landfill sites (e.g. the loading requirements and technical constraints of individual sites) for prospective applicants to ascertain the feasibility and sustainability of their proposed projects.

8. The Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") advised that a total of seven restored landfills were available for application under the Funding Scheme. Excluding the area of slopes, there remained about 20 to 21 hectares of flat land available for development of compatible uses. ADEP(EI) supplemented that the Administration had organized two briefing sessions on the proposed Funding Scheme in January and February 2014 and three site visits to restored landfills in March 2014. Subject to the approval of FC, the Steering Committee on the Funding Scheme ("the Steering Committee") planned to invite applications for the first batch of restored landfill sites by the fourth quarter of 2014. To tie in with the application process, briefings and site visits for all interested parties would be arranged in late 2014 and a dedicated website introducing the Funding Scheme would be launched shortly. Resource kits in the form of Guide to Application and Site Information Sheets would also be prepared for applicants' reference.

9. Ms Claudia MO enquired whether restored landfill sites were suitable for land farming or setting up flea markets and holiday bazaars to create local employment opportunities. In view of the sentiment of the community towards the northeast New Territories development plan recently, she urged the Administration to consider resuming the land granted to the golf courses in Fanling and then relocating the facilities to restored landfill sites so as to release the land occupied by the facilities for residential use.

10. DDEP(2) responded that according to overseas experience, restored landfills were in general suitable for recreational uses or passive amenities (e.g. football pitch) but not for large-scale construction or industrial activities due to technical constraints. Since restored landfills might contain hazardous and contaminated substances, they might not be suitable for agricultural use. Nevertheless, the Steering Committee would adopt an open mind in considering funding applications submitted subject to detailed planning and engineering studies. On the suggestion of setting up flea markets and holiday bazaars at

Action

restored landfill sites, DDEP(2) advised that all approved projects under the Funding Scheme should be of non-profit-making nature. Given that most of the restored landfill sites were located far from populated areas, even if flea markets and holiday bazaars were set up in such sites, they might not be attractive to tourists and visitors. Moreover, the flat areas were scattered with lots of slope areas within these sites which would render such uses difficult.

11. Mr Gary FAN criticized the Administration for leasing valuable land at a nominal land premium, or even with a waiver of land premium, to private clubs for operating recreational/sports facilities. He shared Ms Claudia MO's views that the Administration should proactively consider resuming the land granted to different private clubs (e.g. Kowloon Cricket Club) for other uses of higher demand in the community. He also opined that cross-bureaux and inter-departmental collaboration should be enhanced to expedite the development of restored landfills, thereby ensuring the effective use of valuable land resources.

12. USEN responded that one of the specific objectives of the Funding Scheme was to promote active public participation in the development of suitable facilities at restored landfills. In this connection, NPOs/NSAs were strongly encouraged to apply for the Funding Scheme if they planned to relocate their facilities to restored landfills. While the decision of making funding applications would rest with NPOs/NSAs, the Administration welcomed proposals from members on how to make more gainful afteruses at restored landfills. In response to Mr Gary FAN's further enquiry about the proposal put forward by the Hong Kong Football Association to develop and operate a football training centre on the former Tseung Kwan O Stage I Landfill, DDEP(2) said that his understanding was that the proposal had yet to be taken forward due to the lack of adequate capital works funding support.

13. Mr Albert CHAN said that he did not support the Funding Scheme. He commented that the Hong Kong Cycling Association's development of the former Gin Drinkers Bay Landfill into a BMX Park was a failure as the facility did not fit in with the neighbouring environment. In his view, the afteruses of restored landfills should not be limited to recreational purpose. Rather, the afteruses should match in harmony with the surroundings and meet the various needs of the local communities. The Administration should take a proactive role to promote the diversified development of restored landfills. Mr CHAN also expressed concern about the problem of fly infestation in Ha Pak Nai in Yuen Long. DDEP(2) assured members that the Administration welcomed innovative proposals for the development of restored landfills. It would adopt an open mind in considering funding applications and would consult relevant District Councils and local residents on proposed projects. The benefits of individual project proposals and acceptance by the community would be one of the four criteria for assessing funding applications.

Action

Assessment of funding applications

14. Noting that most of the restored landfills had been developed into recreational or sports facilities, Mr Steven HO expressed concern as to whether other innovative proposals would be considered favourably under the Funding Scheme. Mr Tony TSE also sought elaboration on the criteria for assessing funding applications and the respective weightings of different criteria.

15. DDEP(2) advised that at a preparatory meeting, the Steering Committee had agreed on the overall modus operandi of the Funding Scheme including the application procedures and assessment criteria. Generally speaking, the Steering Committee would assess and examine all applications received based on four criteria, namely, engineering and environmental feasibility of the project, project's benefits and acceptance by the community, management capability of the applicant and financial viability and sustainable of the project. Each criterion would be important in the assessment process and a project proponent would be required to demonstrate sufficient merits in all of the major criteria. The Administration would set out the details of the assessment criteria for applicants' reference later.

16. Ms Claudia MO enquired whether the Administration would engage independent individuals to take part in the assessment of funding applications to enhance the objectivity and fairness of the assessment process. DDEP(2) responded that the Steering Committee was broadly representative, comprising members from different professions and backgrounds. To ensure the proper governance of the Funding Scheme, the Administration would seek the advice of the Independent Commission Against Corruption on the assessment criteria and procedures to be adopted as well as other matters related to the operation of the Funding Scheme as appropriate. He assured members that there would be no question of improper or indiscriminate vetting of applications in the assessment process.

Financial viability and sustainability of proposed projects

17. Mr Tony TSE expressed concern that some projects under the Funding Scheme might not be financially sustainable and viable in the long run. DDEP(2) responded that the Administration would provide funding support to successful applicants at various stages to take forward their projects. For example, successful applicants would be provided with capital grant to cover the cost for the capital works and related matters of their projects. Besides, a time limited subsidy might also be provided to successful applicants to meet the starting costs and initial operating deficits (if any) of their projects for a maximum of the first two years of operation, if justified. However, all approved projects under the Funding Scheme should be self-sustainable after the initial period. The Steering Committee would take into account the financial viability

Action

and sustainability of proposed projects before granting approval to applications.

18. Mr WU Chi-wai queried how the approved projects under the Funding Scheme could be self-sustainable if they could not be profit-making. In reply, DDEP(2) clarified that while all the projects approved under the Funding Scheme should be non-profit-making in nature, successful applicants were allowed to earn revenue such as levying charges on users of the facilities or services under their proposed projects. Any revenue earned from the proposed projects had to be ploughed back to a dedicated account of the project, and any surplus, if available, upon completion of the project or on expiry of the land licence, should be returned to the Government where applicable. DDEP(2) added that some NPOs/NSAs were interested in developing recreational/sports facilities on restored landfill sites but they did not have adequate capital works funding for their projects. The establishment of the Funding Scheme was therefore essential for these NPOs/NSAs to take forward their innovative proposals.

19. Mr Steven HO enquired whether the Administration would take back the land granted to successful applicants if their projects were not implemented in compliance with the approval conditions recommended by the Steering Committee. ADEP(EI) explained that the subsidy granted to successful applicants would be paid in instalments subject to the satisfactory performance or progress of their projects, including the applicants' due compliance with the terms and conditions set out in the land licences or the approval conditions recommended by the Steering Committee in implementing their projects. In case of non-compliance, the Steering Committee would advise on appropriate actions to be taken. The Administration would also prepare guidelines on the monitoring of approved projects.

Management capability of applicants

20. Mr Kenneth LEUNG was concerned about the management capability of applicants. He pointed out that some local NPOs/NSAs might lack experience in business operation, resulting in their inability to implement the projects as originally envisaged in the business plans. DDEP(2) responded that applicants who received funding approval in principle would be provided with the necessary funding to bring forward the preparatory work for their projects to the next stage. With the grant, applicants could engage consultants to conduct detailed planning and engineering studies to ascertain the technical feasibility and viability of their projects before formal approval and implementation. DDEP(2) reiterated that two briefing sessions on the operation of the Funding Scheme had been organized in early 2014. More than 80 participants from around 40 NPOs, NSAs and other interested parties attended the briefing sessions and welcomed the setting up of the Funding Scheme. The Administration expected that most of the local NPOs/NSAs should not have

Action

difficulties in implementing relatively straight-forward or smaller-scale projects.

21. Mr Kenneth LEUNG remained unconvinced and considered it more practicable for the Administration to expedite the afteruses of restored landfills by itself through the public works programme. Noting that the development potential of restored landfills was limited as the sites were in general not suitable for large-scale construction or industrial activities and could only be used for recreational purposes, Mr WU Chi-wai shared Mr LEUNG's views that the Administration should undertake the development of restored landfills while inviting NPOs/NSAs to run the projects afterwards.

22. USEN reiterated that the Funding Scheme aimed to promote active public participation in the development of suitable facilities at restored landfills and would provide an opportunity for NPOs/NSAs to take forward their innovative proposals. Many local NSAs had indicated interest in applying for the Funding Scheme to develop sports facilities at restored landfills. DDEP(2) supplemented that a much longer lead time would be required for implementing projects under the public works programme through the annual resource allocation mechanism due to competing priorities. The Administration therefore considered it more desirable to establish the Funding Scheme to fund the development of recreational facilities or other innovative proposals at restored landfills by NPOs/NSAs so that the community would benefit from them at the earliest opportunity.

Grant of land licences

23. Mr Tony TSE and Mr Frankie YICK sought elaboration on the grant of land licences to successful applicants of the Funding Scheme to occupy restored landfill sites for the implementation of their proposed projects. ADEP(EI) explained that land licences would be granted to successful applicants (now became "the licensee") for a period of five to 20 years subject to the complexity and scale of different projects. The Administration would consider on a case-by-case basis whether licensees should be required to clear and reinstate the restored landfill sites granted to them to their original state before the expiry of the grant period. The rental arrangement for restored landfill sites would be in line with the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Cap. 28A).

24. Noting that some NPOs were charitable organizations which did not have stable income and funding sources, Mr Frankie YICK expressed concern that such organizations might not have adequate funding to support the operation of their proposed projects if they were granted a land licence of 20 years for the proposed uses. At the same time, it would not be useful if the duration was too short given the investment cost incurred. DDEP(2) explained that it would be up to the applicants of the Funding Scheme to propose a suitable duration of their projects in their applications having regard to the nature of such afteruses

Action

and the applicants' overall plans. The Steering Committee would consider whether the proposed duration tied in with the nature and operation of the proposed projects and decide the period of land licences to be granted to successful applicants accordingly.

25. Mr WU Chi-wai asked if the Administration would consider granting restored landfill sites on short-term tenancies to NPOs/NSAs for recreational use or sports training. ADEP(EI) said that different NSAs had indicated interest in developing new training grounds at restored landfills during the briefings and site visits organized by the Administration. Some social welfare organizations were also interested in developing recreational activities at restored landfill sites. For the overall and long-term development of the restored landfill sites, the Administration considered it not desirable to grant the sites to NPOs/NSAs on short-term tenancies.

Decisions of the Panel

26. The Deputy Chairman put to vote the Administration's proposal to make a submission to FC for the non-recurrent funding of \$40 million to meet the starting costs and initial operating deficits of projects under the Funding Scheme. Three members voted in favour of the proposal, five voted against it and no one abstained. The Deputy Chairman declared that the proposal was negated. He urged the Administration to take heed of members' views and refine the Funding Scheme as appropriate.

27. The Deputy Chairman then referred members to the following two motions moved by Mr Gary FAN at the meeting –

The first motion –

"本委員會促請政府考慮將市區可用作興建住宅的私人會所土地收回，然後用已修復的堆填區土地去重置那些私人會所。"

(Translation)

"That this Panel urges the Government to consider resuming the urban land granted to private clubs that can be used for building domestic premises and then relocating such private clubs to restored landfills."

Action

The second motion –

"本委員會促請政府考慮將三個粉嶺高爾夫球場的其中一個收回，以用作興建住宅，然後用已修復的船灣堆填區去重置三個粉嶺高爾夫球場的其中一個。"

(Translation)

"That this Panel urges the Government to consider resuming the land granted to one of the three golf courses in Fanling for building domestic premises and then relocating one of the three golf courses to the restored landfill in Shuen Wan."

28. The Deputy Chairman suggested and members agreed that the motions could be moved and voted on separately. The Deputy Chairman put the first motion to vote. Mr Gary FAN claimed a division of the votes. The Deputy Chairman announced that four members (Mr Albert CHAN, Mr WU Chi-wai, Mr Gary FAN and Ms Claudia MO) voted for the motion, eight members (Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Mr Vincent FANG, Mr CHAN Kin-por, Mr Steven HO, Mr Frankie YICK, Mr CHAN Han-pan, Mr Christopher CHUNG and Mr Tony TSE) voted against it and no one abstained. The Deputy Chairman declared that the motion was negated.

29. The Deputy Chairman then put the second motion to vote. Mr Gary FAN claimed a division of the votes. The Deputy Chairman announced that four members (Mr Albert CHAN, Mr WU Chi-wai, Mr Gary FAN and Ms Claudia MO) voted for the motion, eight members (Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Mr Vincent FANG, Mr CHAN Kin-por, Mr Steven HO, Mr Frankie YICK, Mr CHAN Han-pan, Mr Christopher CHUNG and Mr Tony TSE) voted against it and no one abstained. The Deputy Chairman declared that the motion was negated.

V. Strengthened emission control of petrol and liquefied petroleum gas vehicles

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1634/13-14(04) — Administration's paper on "Strengthened emission control of petrol and liquefied petroleum gas vehicles"

LC Paper No. CB(1)1634/13-14(05) — Updated background brief on "Measures to strengthen the emission control of petrol and liquefied petroleum gas

Action

vehicles" prepared by the
Legislative Council
Secretariat)

(The Chairman arrived at this juncture and took over the chair.)

30. USEN briefed members that with the completion of the replacement programme on catalytic converters and oxygen sensors for liquefied petroleum gas ("LPG") and petrol taxis and light buses, the Administration planned to launch a strengthened emission control programme on 1 September 2014 for petrol and LPG vehicles. Under the programme, petrol and LPG vehicles which were found to be emitting excessively by roadside remote sensing equipment would be required to pass an emission test done with the aid of a chassis dynamometer ("the dynamometer-based emission test") within 12 working days.

Strengthened emission control

31. Mr Frankie YICK pointed out that vehicles which had passed the vehicle annual examination of the Transport Department ("TD") might still fail in the dynamometer-based emission test conducted by the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") as TD's vehicle annual examination could only identify the excessive emission of smoke, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide but not nitrogen oxides ("NOx"). While privately-run Car Testing Centres ("CTCs") would upgrade their vehicle annual examination to include the dynamometer-based emission test and some of them might be ready for operation in 2016 or 2017, Mr YICK expressed concern that if a large number of vehicles were required to undergo the dynamometer-based emission test, it might not be practicable for all of them to go through the test within 12 working days as only a few CTCs offered the test in the initial period. Mr YICK further opined that the Administration should widely promote the details of the strengthened emission control programme and the dynamometer-based emission test to prepare vehicle owners and the vehicle repair trade for the new requirements.

32. The Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Air Policy) ("ADEP(AP)") responded that EPD was offering free dynamometer emission tests for owners of petrol vehicles, LPG taxis and light buses at the moment as part of the publicity drive for the new emission control initiative, to assess the emission levels of their vehicles and TD would upgrade the emission test in its vehicle annual examination to the dynamometer-based emission test to check the emission of NOx. In the meantime, TD was discussing with privately-run CTCs about upgrading their equipment for conducting the dynamometer-based emission test as part of the vehicle annual examination. ADEP(AP) assured members that EPD would be assisting vehicle owners and the relevant trades to familiarize with the strengthened emission control programme. On the promotion front, EPD would hold seminars for owners of petrol vehicles, LPG

Action

taxis and light buses and continue to engage the related maintenance trade to enhance their knowledge in proper maintenance of vehicles. It would also step up the publicity about the strengthened emission control programme.

33. The Chairman noted the Administration's plan to set up remote sensing equipment at up to three locations concurrently for emission checking in the first year of implementation and to increase the number of check points to up to five, subject to the operational experience of the first year. Referring to some media reports that two sets of remote sensing equipment would be set up in each check point to spot vehicles with excessive emissions, the Chairman expressed concern about the accuracy and reliability of the equipment.

34. ADEP(AP) explained that remote sensing equipment was a mature technology for the detection of excessive vehicle emissions and its design conformed to international standards. The equipment would also conduct regular self-checks to ensure its accuracy and integrity. To uphold the credibility of the check results, the Administration would place two sets of remote sensing equipment at each check point to screen out petrol and LPG vehicles with excessive emissions. Owners of vehicles who were found to have excessive emissions would be notified by an emission testing notice issued by EPD and their vehicles would then be required to pass the dynamometer-based emission test at a designated vehicle emission testing centre within 12 working days to rectify the problem.

35. In response to the Chairman's further enquiry about petrol quality and the legislative amendment to effect the strengthened emission control, ADEP(AP) acknowledged that vehicles filled with substandard petrol could be a cause of excessive emissions. He added that the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) ("the Ordinance") had already provided for the issue of emission testing notices and the Commissioner for Transport had set out in a code of practice issued under the Ordinance the emission limits of different classes of vehicles.

36. Mr CHAN Kin-por queried whether it was reasonable to require petrol and LPG vehicles which were found to be emitting excessively by remote sensing equipment to pass an emission test within 12 working days. In reply, ADEP(AP) advised that the testing arrangement was in line with that of the Smoky Vehicle Control Programme, under which vehicles emitting excessive dark smoke were also required to pass a smoke test within 12 working days or otherwise vehicle owners would have their vehicle licences cancelled. A mechanism was also in place to handle complaints lodged by vehicle owners against the emission measurements conducted by remote sensing equipment.

Action

LPG filling stations

37. Mr Albert CHAN noted with concern that there were often long queues of LPG taxis waiting at LPG filling stations for refilling services. ADEP(AP) advised that the Administration had recently conducted an on-site visit with some taxi trade representatives to a popular dedicated LPG filling station to observe its operation. The visit concluded that as long as the filling station had sufficient manpower to operate all the filling nozzles, the waiting time for refilling services would be acceptable. Since the visit, the two dedicated LPG filling station operators undertook to deploy sufficient manpower at their dedicated LPG filling stations with a view to operating all the filling nozzles during shift-changing periods, and to arrange preventive maintenance for these stations to minimize disruption to the refilling services.

38. In response to Mr Albert CHAN's further enquiry about the LPG filling network, ADEP(AP) advised that currently, the LPG filling network had a total of 63 LPG filling stations, comprising 12 dedicated stations and 51 non-dedicated stations distributed in all 18 districts across the territory. Since the queuing of LPG vehicles for refilling services at dedicated LPG filling stations often occurred during shift-changing periods while vehicles did not need to wait for long time for refilling outside such periods, the Administration considered the existing filling network generally sufficient to meet the filling demand of all LPG taxis and light buses and had been urging the taxi trade to refill their taxis outside shift-changing periods. It therefore did not have a plan to set up additional dedicated LPG filling stations. Nevertheless, the Administration had required all new petrol filling stations to provide LPG filling facilities subject to fulfilment of the necessary safety and space requirements, so as to make LPG refilling more convenient.

Replacement of catalytic converters and oxygen sensors

39. Mr Frankie YICK enquired whether the engine stalling problem of some petrol and LPG taxis and light buses was attributable to the replacement of catalytic converters and oxygen sensors and how the Administration would resolve the problem.

40. ADEP(AP) responded that the replacement of catalytic converters and oxygen sensors should not lead to the engine stalling problem. Rather, according to EPD's study done in collaboration with the taxi trade, regular replacement of catalytic converters and oxygen sensors of petrol and LPG vehicles would reduce the chance of engine stalling, enhance the reliability of vehicles, lower fuel consumption by up to about 15% on average and reduce emission significantly. Vehicle owners were advised to undertake proper vehicle maintenance, including the timely replacement of catalytic converters, oxygen sensors and other mechanical parts of their vehicles, which would wear

Action

out over use to enhance driving performance.

Environmental performance of petrol, LPG and electric vehicles ("EVs")

41. Mr Albert CHAN sought comparison about the environmental performance (in particular the emission of air pollutants and cost-effectiveness) of petrol vehicles, LPG vehicles and EVs. ADEP(AP) advised that the Administration had been watching closely the development of vehicle technology. From an environmental perspective, the emission level of petrol vehicles was similar to that of their LPG counterparts. If the use of LPG vehicles was further promoted, the overall provision of LPG filling facilities would need to be enhanced and the coverage of the existing filling network should also be extended. However, given that Hong Kong was densely populated, it would be difficult for the Administration to identify sites meeting the relevant requirements (particularly safety) for setting up LPG filling stations.

Use of EVs

42. Referring to the chapter on "Implementation of air-quality improvement measures" in the Director of Audit's Report No. 59, Mr Kenneth LEUNG noted that catalytic converters were the key emission reduction devices of petrol and LPG vehicles but they would be worn out with use over time and would need to be replaced regularly. In general, LPG taxis and light buses should have their catalytic converters replaced every 18 months. If not, the exhaust emissions (including NOx) of the vehicles could exceed their normal levels by 10 or more times. In 2012, the emissions of LPG taxis and light buses accounted for about 40% of the total vehicular NOx at busy roads in urban areas. Since EVs had become increasingly popular in some European cities, Mr LEUNG sought elaboration on the Administration's long-term plan to promote the wider use of EVs for public transportation, including electric taxis, light buses and buses, in Hong Kong to improve roadside air quality.

43. USEN responded that while the public transport trade was conducting trials on electric taxis, a comprehensive switch of different types of vehicles, including taxis, light buses and buses, to electric ones would largely depend on the technology available, the operational efficiency and capital costs of EVs. ADEP(AP) supplemented that while the use of electric taxis would have environmental benefits, there were practical limitations to their wider use in Hong Kong as the technology stood, which included in particular the long time for charging the battery to support its daily operation. Nevertheless, the Administration had been promoting the use of EVs and had established the Pilot Green Transport Fund for application by transport operators and NGOs to try out innovative green and low carbon transport technologies, including EVs. In addition, up to some 50 quick charging points would also be set up by electric taxi suppliers at six car parks administered by TD to facilitate the charging of

Action

electric taxis.

Use of diesel vehicles

44. Noting that some people were using Euro V diesel vehicles as private cars in Hong Kong, Mr WU Chi-wai expressed concern about the emission performance of these vehicles. He opined that diesel vehicles should be required to meet more stringent emission standards than their petrol and LPG counterparts as the concessionary duty for diesel was tantamount to granting a higher tax concession to diesel vehicles. ADEP(AP) responded that diesel vehicles emitted large quantities of respirable suspended particulates ("RSP") and NOx as compared with their petrol and LPG counterparts. To improve roadside air quality, EPD had required that the emission performance of newly registered diesel private cars in respect of RSP and NOx should be on a par with their petrol counterparts since 1998. With the advancement of technology in recent decades, the emission levels of some Euro VI diesel private cars could meet the emission standards for Euro V petrol private cars and were allowed to register in Hong Kong.

45. Mr WU Chi-wai further enquired whether the Administration would consider afresh the introduction of diesel taxis in Hong Kong which had been improved to become more environmentally friendly, so as to provide the market with an additional choice. Mr Frankie YICK urged the Administration to decide whether diesel taxis would be re-introduced before owners of LPG taxis replaced their serving vehicles with new models in the near future.

46. ADEP(AP) advised that under the Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standards) (Emission) Regulations, taxis registered since August 2001 had been required to be fuelled by LPG or petrol. Although the emissions of diesel vehicles had been reduced, the emission performance of LPG taxis still outstripped that of diesel taxis. Moreover, the maintenance cost of diesel taxis would be much higher than that of petrol and LPG taxis. The Administration therefore had no plan to re-introduce diesel taxis at this stage. Nevertheless, it adopted an open mind in considering the re-introduction of diesel taxis and would continue to closely monitor the development of vehicles with a view to facilitating the introduction of environment-friendly taxis by the trade. The Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3) supplemented that the emission performance of new LPG taxis had met Euro V level which was the statutory standard for first registration of new vehicles.

47. The Chairman said that emission performance should be the prime consideration in deciding whether or not to re-introduce diesel taxis in Hong Kong. Since the environmental performance of new diesel vehicles was comparable to that of their petrol and LPG counterparts as a result of technological advancement, the Administration should consider providing

Action

flexibility in legislation to allow for the re-introduction of diesel taxis. In response, USEN advised that while the Administration had been communicating closely with the taxi industry on the operational performance of petrol and LPG taxis, it did not have any plan to relax the ban on new registration of diesel taxis at this stage. Mr Frankie YICK undertook to inform the Panel of the progress of re-introducing diesel taxis in Hong Kong as he had been involved in the relevant discussion between the Administration and the taxi industry.

VI. Any other business

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:31 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
28 August 2014