

# Hong Kong Outdoors

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Hong Kong

**Written Submission to the Panel on Environmental Affairs  
Special meeting on  
Saturday, 22 March 2014, at 9:30 am**

**Dr Martin Williams  
Director, Hong Kong Outdoors**

Cyd Ho  
Panel Members  
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation.

However, none of us should be here today.

After all, the Panel already rejected the Shek Kwu Chau incinerator plan, requesting the Environmental Protection Department to implement various measures.

The EPD has instead done almost nothing; indeed, together with the Environment Bureau it is incapable of even producing a Plan B.

I live on Cheung Chau, so have been accused of a Not in My Backyard approach to the Shek Kwu Chau incinerator.

At first, I was against the project because of the location being beautiful and home to wildlife including endangered finless porpoises.

But I quickly became convinced incineration should not be considered for anywhere in Hong Kong, because of the poison emissions, toxic ash, expense, and sheer wastefulness.

I also learned that I was wrong to consider our environmental officials trustworthy people who have high regard for science and Hong Kong people.

There is too much bias; too many untruths have been spoken and written.

Several times, the EPD has claimed incineration will destroy all organic pollutants. This was highlighted as if important. But is not true.

Other untruths range from supposed main wind directions, to ideas an incinerator will help tourism: on Cheung Chau, we laugh at this idea. Promises

that there will be open discussions of technology have proven false.

You know Hong Kong shut down our incinerators by the 1990s because EPD officials were concerned of massive pollution, including particulates. Listen to today's officials, and incinerators seem miraculously clean.

But that's not true. There are still huge amounts of particulates. When I asked Elvis Au why not site the incinerator in Central, he said no, as the air quality objectives would be exceeded. So it's okay to pollute the air in southwest Hong Kong, is it?

Recent research tells of health issues like cancers, premature births, children with stunted growth. The EPD ignores this, just as it fails to mention Holland's Afval incinerator is among the top 500 polluters in Europe.

Chemicals cleaned from the chimney – including dioxins and heavy metals – will go into the ash. And there are ideas for dumping this in a landfill island, copying Singapore.

In doing so, we would create a toxic time bomb for future generations.

People have suggested alternatives to incineration and expanding landfills. All are being implemented worldwide. Yet for each, the EPD comes up with supposed failings.

There are places moving towards Zero Waste to landfills or incineration, such as in Italy, and San Francisco, which is set to ban plastic bottled water. Is Hong Kong really so backwards we can't achieve great progress here?

I'm among those who have pushed for plasma arc gasification, which has almost no emissions, no toxic ash, and can even be used to produce jet fuel, and mine landfills. I helped with and fully support the plan from the New Territories Concern Group.

Plasma arc waste treatment is expanding rapidly. Air Products has invested over US\$1 billion in the technology, and just completed a major facility in England. Oddly, the recent Environmental Bureau failed to visit this facility during the Europe trip early this month. It was considered more important to see plans for an incinerator with a ski slope, which won't be ready for 3 years.

Food waste treatment is worthwhile, too. But the north Lantau plant will supposedly cost an enormous HK\$1.5 billion. That's eight times the price for a similar sized plant in the UK! Perhaps panel members can ask: where will the excess HK\$1.3 billion go?

Where I'm from in the UK, there's a saying: Where there's muck, there's brass. If there's waste, there's money to be made.

It does seem that the main supporters of the government's plan including the Big

Crazy Bonfire are those who are benefiting and will benefit financially.

With construction costs, and landfill extensions and so forth, measures discussed here today look set to cost over HK\$40 billion.

This is an outrageous figure.

But hopefully, panel members will again reject the government's appalling waste plans.

In the spirit of accountability, perhaps you can also consider calling for the removal and replacement of officials who have proven incapable of leading or conducting flexible, science based planning that meets community aspirations. If so, you might put Anissa Wong high on your list.

In making your decision regarding the waste plans, please avoid being swayed by scaremongering about waste piling up on the streets.

Instead, note that alternative plans can be implemented more quickly and far more cheaply than the incinerator plus landfill expansions. With a can-do attitude, coupled with science and wisdom, we can make Hong Kong a role model for waste treatment and environmental protection.