



Environment Panel Special Meeting 22 and 28 March 2014

John Schofield to:

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Dear Members of the Environment Panel,

I was very concerned to hear that the "Meeting with the Administration" to discuss the so-called "3+1" proposal for handling Hong Kong's waste situation, originally scheduled for April 1st has been cancelled.

During the hearings, I believe that the 3+1 policy has been thoroughly exposed as the most expensive and environmentally damaging method of dealing with the problem. If it is accepted it means that yet again the Administration will be able to put off taking urgent action on waste reduction, separation and recycling. The attached article from today's South China Morning Post is another valuable contribution to the debate which should not be ignored, this time from the Dutch Chamber of Commerce.

I noted that Environment Secretary K S Wong failed to respond to any of the excellent and innovative ideas put forward by a number of deputations to improve HK's waste management infrastructure in a more efficient, timely and cost-effective manner. Even though your panel rejected the same plan nearly two years ago, there have been no changes in the administration's approach and Hong Kong's recycling effort has been shown to be a sham. In fact, our recycling levels have DECLINED recently from 3,600 tonnes in 2010 to 2,100 tonnes in 2012 according the EPD's own statistics. I believe this conclusively demonstrates the Administration's lack of sincerity in tackling waste at source and commitment merely to a "dump and burn" policy.

I urge you to vote NO to the 3+1 plan in tomorrow's hearing, assuming you are given the opportunity to do so.

Yours Sincerely,
John C L Schofield

Mui Wo, Lantau Island,
NT

Building incinerators at landfill sites a better waste solution

Daniël van Scheltinga says HK should look at cheaper, greener alternative

Waste is a problem that will not go away; indeed, the world will produce more and more as prosperity levels continue to rise. Hong Kong is no exception, and the present method of dealing with municipal solid waste, namely by dumping it in landfills, will no longer work in the near future.

Hong Kong's three landfills, in the New Territories, are nearing their maximum capacity and will be full in 2015, 2017 and 2019 respectively. The administration recognises this, and is on the right track in its multipronged approach to educate the community, change people's behaviour and invest in infrastructure.

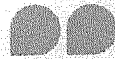
We are keen to assist in formulating the most realistic, environmentally friendly solutions with a proven track record, and at the best value for the taxpayers' money. This is based on a wealth of experience in the Netherlands, which also lacks space, has a vocal population and a strong sense of environmental protection.

The government is proposing to extend the capacity of the three landfills while also building an integrated waste management facility, which would reduce the volume of waste as well as produce electricity during the incineration process. Thanks to advances in technology, these facilities have state-of-the-art pollution and odour control equipment, preventing harmful emissions from being released. The government proposes that the single facility be built on an

artificial island near Shek Kwu Chau.

Landfills do pose significant environmental risks, including the leaching of toxic chemicals into the groundwater and the release of methane emissions from decomposing trash. Therefore, these extensions need to be temporary bridging solutions.

In the Netherlands, landfilling is only used for 2 per cent of the waste, with recycling (60 per cent) and waste-to-energy (38 per cent) used for the rest. Hong Kong must aim to



In the Netherlands, landfilling is only used for 2 per cent of the waste

reduce the landfills significantly through a combination of recycling and waste-to-energy facilities.

While the government's broad strategy seems sensible, the tactical execution could be reconsidered. So, instead of building one waste-to-energy facility (with a 3,000-tonnes-per-day capacity) in an environmentally sensitive area, with significant infrastructure constraints, three smaller facilities (each with a 1,500-tonne capacity) should instead be built at the existing landfill

sites. Advantages to this approach include:

- The three landfills already have the infrastructure in place for transporting the waste, saving money;
- Tendering for three facilities instead of one will increase competition and ensure better bargaining power for the government;
- Construction of three smaller facilities simultaneously on existing land would be 18-24 months faster than building one larger facility on a still-to-be-built artificial island with no infrastructure in place;
- It is much easier to link electricity generated through the facilities to the grid than from an artificial island, (or alternatively it can be used for recycling facilities at the same locations);
- Having multiple facilities ensures a continuous incineration process even if maintenance renders one facility inactive;
- Building three new facilities next to the existing landfills will avoid a negative environmental impact on the areas and waters around Shek Kwu Chau.

Over time, the three landfills could be shrunk, with a very significant reduction of the environmental risks and impact.

Daniël de Blocq van Scheltinga is a board member of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

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