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6 May 2016

Clerk to Panel
Panel on Environmental Affairs
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms. Angel SHEK)

Dear Ms. Shek,

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs
Alleged malpractices at the Pillar Point Valley Restored Landfill

Thank you for the letter dated 18 April 2016 on the captioned matter, requesting the Environmental Protection Department (EPD)'s response to the two letters dated 15 April 2016 from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN and Hon Cyd HO respectively. Our consolidated reply is given below.

The EPD attaches great importance to the media reports and has commenced a thorough investigation into the case. The Director of Environmental Protection has directed the investigation team to submit a preliminary report within two months. In the case of any illegal act or breach of contract by the landfill contractor, the EPD will strictly take enforcement action and hold the contractor accountable according to the contract.

On supervision of the landfill operation, our on-site staff conduct regular monitoring and sampling tests to ensure the landfill is operated in accordance with the contract requirements. Separately, the Environmental Compliance Division of the EPD also conducts water sampling tests in accordance with the licence issued under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) to monitor the operation of

the leachate treatment plant. The results of recent water sampling tests conducted by the EPD all comply with the discharge standards.

According to the restoration contract of Pillar Point Valley Landfill, the contractor should maintain a temperature of 1,000 degree Celsius for the flaring of landfill gas. As the contractor has admitted that the minimum temperature requirement (i.e. 1,000 degree Celsius) as set out in the contract has not been met for a short period of time, the EPD will, in accordance with the relevant provision in the contract, deduct \$200,000 from this month's payment for the non-compliance.

Members are concerned that a lower landfill gas flaring temperature may lead to excessive nitrogen content in the treated leachate discharge. In fact, a temperature below 100 degree Celsius should already be able to remove ammonium (NH_4^+) in the treatment process and reduce the total nitrogen in the treated leachate to a level that meets the statutory discharge standards for waste water. Therefore, even if the landfill gas flaring temperature had not fully complied with the contractual requirements, this would not lead to a non-compliance of the treated leachate discharge standard. Moreover, the treated leachate will be discharged through public sewers to the Pillar Point Sewage Treatment Works operated by the Drainage Services Department (DSD) only after treatment and meeting the statutory requirements in respect of total nitrogen removal. Such treated leachate will be further treated and disinfected together with domestic sewage collected from the vicinity, and then discharged to the sea through a submarine outfall. Sampling test results of the effluent of the DSD's Pillar Point Sewage Treatment Works have also been found to have met the requirements of the licence issued under the WPCO.

Having examined the monitoring data collected by the marine monitoring stations near the Pillar Point Valley landfill from 2014 to the first two months of this year, the EPD found no abnormality in the concentrations of inorganic nitrogen and unionised ammonia nitrogen, and that the nearby coastal water and ecological condition have all along been normal.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department's monitoring results at marine monitoring stations of Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park also indicated that there was no abnormality in the concentrations of inorganic nitrogen and unionised ammonia nitrogen from November 2015 to February 2016. These results were similar to the average concentrations in 2014 and 2015. Also, no abnormality was found in the ecological condition at the Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park.

Nevertheless, the Department will continue with the thorough investigation on the captioned matter and will release the investigation results when available.

Yours sincerely,



(Davie C. T. KAN)
for Director of Environmental Protection