



香港特別行政區政府 The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
渠務署 Drainage Services Department

香港灣仔告士打道5號稅務大樓43樓 43/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

來函檔號 Your Ref : CB4/PAC/R67  
本署檔號 Our Ref : DSD CRC 4/35/1/14  
電話 Tel : (852) 2594 7007  
傳真 Fax : (852) 2827 0287

3 January 2017

**(Urgent by fax: 2543 9197)**

Public Accounts Committee  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

(Attn : Mr Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr CHU,

**Public Accounts Committee**

**Consideration of Chapter 8 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 67**

**Sewerage systems in rural areas**

I refer to your above referenced letter dated 20 December 2016.

Please find attached our responses (both Chinese & English versions) to the issues mentioned in your letter.

Yours faithfully,

( Michael FONG )  
for Director of Drainage Services

c.c. Secretary for the Environment	(fax no. 2537 7278)
Director of Environmental Protection	(fax no. 2891 2512)
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene	(fax no. 2524 1977)
Director of Lands	(fax no. 2525 4960)
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury	(fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit	(fax no. 2583 9063)

**Questions and Request for Information in respect of  
Chapter 8 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 67 Sewerage systems in rural areas**

**Questions to be responded by Drainage Services Department**

**Part 2: Pollution control in unsewered areas**

**1. Problems of septic-tank-and-soakaway (“STS”) systems**

- (a) Please explain the situation mentioned in Note 12 to paragraph 2.19. What were the details of the 24 projects mentioned in paragraph 2.19(c) and their respective project estimates? Can the Administration provide the project estimates of similar works for reference and comparison?

**Reply:**

The total Approved Project Estimates (APEs) for the 24 projects under the Village Sewerage (VS) Programme is about \$8 billion (in money-of-the-day prices). Apart from the works inside the individual villages, the APEs also included costs for constructing trunk sewers, sewage pumping stations and sewage treatment works outside the villages, as well as other general expenditures such as site staff salary and consultancy fees etc. As these projects involved about 40 work contracts, it would require substantial amount of resources and time to separate the costs solely related to the VS works from the APEs. Hence, having discussed with the Audit Commission (AC), DSD did not provide the APEs solely related to VS works as per AC’s request. Please refer to **Table 1** for details of the 24 projects and the related APEs. Besides, since the scope, nature, works areas, construction time and requirements for each individual project are different, it is impracticable to provide the project estimates of similar works for reference and comparison.

**2. Requirements for some STS systems not on par with the Environmental Department (“EPD”) practice note**

- (a) In connection with paragraph 2.38(i), can the Administration advise on the time required for completing the whole application process under normal circumstances? What were the respective numbers of successful and unsuccessful applications in the past? Had the Administration reviewed the administrative work involved in the whole application process to see if any parts of the process could be dispensed with so that the applications could be handled more promptly and efficiently?

**\*Note by Clerk, PAC: Please see Appendix 36 of this Report for Table 1.**

**Reply:**

EPD is responsible for vetting those applications of development / redevelopment of village houses involving submission of percolation test results certified by building professionals.

Lands Department will refer the application for development / redevelopment of village houses to DSD to provide comments from drainage point of view. In general, DSD would reply to Lands Department in about 2 to 4 weeks' time upon receiving the concerned referral.

**Part 3: Planning and implementation of village sewerage programmes**

**3. Slippages in implementing village sewerage projects**

- (a) Regarding the situation mentioned in Table 2 in paragraph 3.15 and paragraph 3.16, do EPD and Drainage Services Department ("DSD") agree that the long delays in completing the village sewerage programmes did not only delay improvements to be made to village sewerage in rural areas, and the hygiene and environment problems caused by the less-than-satisfactory sewerage systems in these areas would persist? If so, how will the departments improve the situations?

**Reply:**

DSD will work in collaboration with EPD proactively for implementing the VS programmes. We will liaise with various stakeholders including the locals and the affected villagers regarding the technical design issues in a timely manner and to solicit their support. Upon funding being approved for the concerned works, we will commence the works as soon as possible and complete the works as scheduled.

- (b) Can DSD advise on the time spent on dealing with the land resumption problems in respect of Project A in paragraphs 3.23 to 3.25? Was re-tendering required for the relevant sewerage works because the works were completed later than the scheduled completion dates? If so, what were the details?

**Reply:**

In July 2008, DSD received objections relating to the resumption of 17 private land lots. After rounds of liaison and consultation, DSD reached consensus with the concerned

stakeholders on the alternative sewer alignments and related land resumption areas in July 2012, and the works under Project A immediately commenced thereafter. Re-tendering for the concerned works was not needed.

- (c) Can the Administration advise which department was responsible for managing the underground utilities under Project B as mentioned in paragraphs 3.28 and 3.29, why such utilities were unrecorded, and whether any administrative loopholes had been involved? If so, how will the Administration solve the problem concerned? As DSD indicated that it was not uncommon for village sewerage works to encounter unrecorded underground utilities during works excavation, will DSD assess the risks of significant delays or cost overruns in future works arising from unrecorded underground utilities?

**Reply:**

During the planning and design stages, DSD would obtain the latest underground public utilities records / drawings from relevant utility undertakers, as well as carrying out site investigations so as to identify existing underground public utilities within the works areas. However, it is still possible to find out during the construction stage that the locations of individual underground public utilities within the works areas are different from those shown on the record plans. Notwithstanding this, DSD will strive to take all necessary and practicable measures to identify the affected existing underground utilities as far as possible during the design stage, in order to reduce the risk of delay or over-budget in future construction works arising from obstruction of unrecorded underground public utilities.

- End -