

**Report No. 70 of the Director of Audit
Chapter 1: Management of Restored Landfills
Public Accounts Committee (Public Hearing)
14 May 2018**

Opening Speech by the Secretary for the Environment

Chairman,

Introduction

With regard to the investigation conducted by the Legislative Council Public Accounts Committee and the Audit Commission on the management of restored landfills, we generally accept the recommendations of the Audit Commission and believe that this public hearing will help different sectors of the community to have a better understanding of the difficulties and challenges encountered in the management of restored landfills as well as their development after restoration. This will help us further improve the management of restored landfills.

2. First of all, I would like to briefly introduce the Government's work on the management of restored landfills:

A brief introduction of restored landfills

3. There are currently 13 restored landfills in Hong Kong. Formerly used as waste disposal facilities, restored landfills are of a special nature and substantially different from ordinary land pieces as restored landfills consist of numerous waste slopes and are subject to continuous ground settlement. Therefore, the development of afteruse projects in restored landfills has to overcome very challenging constraints and technical difficulties, such as restrictions on ground loading in the landfills and protection of aftercare facilities etc. Also, technical risk management including risk assessments on slope, natural terrain and landfill gas hazards is necessary to ensure that a few suitable land pieces in restored landfills will be made available for beneficial uses without affecting the aftercare work.

4. Over the years, the Environment Bureau (ENB) and Environmental Protection Department (EPD) have been endeavouring to develop these restored landfills into various recreational facilities, such as recreational ground, sports facility and park, etc. Currently, there are 16 projects of different uses having completed development or under planning for construction. These projects represent about 35% of the total area of restored landfills (i.e. about 112.6 hectares), and a predominant portion of the remaining land (about 90%) is slopes formed by landfilled solid waste or has been designated for specific use, such as Tsing Shan Firing Range, sites of special scientific interest and MTR sites, and used as restoration facilities and access roads for the landfills, etc. Trees have been planted for slope stabilisation and landscaping on slopes which could hardly be used for other development purposes. We estimate that there are now a total of about 12.9 hectares of remaining land which is an easier part to develop (i.e. flat ground and platform, etc., representing about 6% of the remaining land or about 4% of the total area of restored landfills) and yet to be designated for specific use. We launched Batch 1 of the Restored Landfill Revitalisation Funding Scheme in 2015, under which interested non-profit-making organisations or sports associations may apply for funding to develop four sites with an area of a total of 8.4 hectares in three restored landfills into recreational facilities or for other innovative use. Of these, 3.5 hectares of land will be developed by two non-profit-making organisations later. We will continue to proactively identify suitable uses for the remaining 9.4 hectares of land (i.e. representing about 2.9% of the total area of restored landfills) in conjunction with other relevant departments and consult the community.

5. I would like to make the following initial response to the contents of the Audit Report:

Government's work on the aftercare of restored landfills

6. The ENB and EPD attach great importance to the management and supervision of contractors of the facilities under their purview. The EPD conducted a comprehensive review of the monitoring system for waste treatment facilities in 2016. A number of improvement measures including increasing irregular inspections, enhancing training for EPD staff stationed at waste treatment facilities and installing more monitoring equipment were introduced subsequently. We will actively implement the recommendations made in the Audit Report and further strengthen the monitoring and management of restored landfills and the respective contractors.

Development of recreational facilities or other afteruse facilities in restored landfills

7. I have just mentioned that various development constraints and technical difficulties must be overcome before afteruse projects may be developed in restored landfills. As recommended in the Audit Report, when developing government recreational facilities in restored landfills in future, the EPD will continue to work closely with relevant government departments to provide professional advice, assist in overcoming various constraints and difficulties, and avoid any possible conflict arising from interfacing of existing restoration facilities.

8. Meanwhile, we also strive to encourage non-governmental organisations to put restored landfills to various beneficial uses on a self-financing basis. These include the temporary golf driving range opened at the restored Shuen Wan Landfill, the temporary shooting range at the restored Pillar Point Valley Landfill, the international bicycle motocross park opened and the temporary cricket grounds under construction at the restored Gin Drinkers Bay Landfill, and the football training centre to be opened at the restored Tseung Kwan O Stage 1 Landfill.

9. Moreover, I would like to point out that currently all the licensees of the land licences granted for the development and operation of the above five afteruse projects develop and operate the projects on a self-financing basis, without requiring funding provided by the Government, to better utilise the land resources of restored landfills. Our priority is to ensure that these licensees can continue to carry out construction works of the afteruse facilities or maintain the normal operation of the relevant facilities for the general public or users. The inclusion of overly stringent licensing conditions is likely to discourage the existing licensees from continuing to provide such facilities. Nonetheless, we will collaborate with the relevant bureaux and departments to study the implementation of the recommendations on stepping up monitoring of land licence conditions in the Audit Report.

Restored Landfill Revitalisation Funding Scheme

10. In implementing the Restored Landfill Revitalisation Funding Scheme, we hope to gain recognition from and share the outcomes with the community, in addition to achieving the objective of better utilising the land resources of restored landfills. Therefore, we enhanced the consultation with the relevant District Councils during the process. Despite a longer time required for the Scheme, we consider such consultation and discussion necessary as the Government can have a thorough

understanding of the opinions of the relevant District Councils and residents before making decisions. We will continue to actively take forward the revitalisation projects under the Funding Scheme, and invite applications from the relevant organisations for the use of the remaining restored landfills.

Conclusion

11. Looking ahead, we will actively follow up on the implementation of various recommendations in the Audit Report, so as to further enhance our work on the restored landfills.

[Besides, we understand that the public wish to know more about the land uses of the restored landfills. Hence, President, I would like to invite my colleague, Ms. Cheung Miu-han, Betty, the Assistant Director of Environmental Protection, to briefly introduce the land use situation of the 13 restored landfills with the aid of slides to help you all better understand the difficulties and challenges encountered in the development of afteruses.]