

**For discussion
on 28 May 2019**

Legislative Council Panel on Development

Urban Forestry Support Fund

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to establish a \$200 million Urban Forestry Support Fund (the Fund) to uplift the professional standards of arboriculture and horticulture practitioners and to strengthen public education and promotion on proper tree care with a view to improving the quality of our urban forest, protecting public safety and enhancing liveability.

BACKGROUND

2. The arboriculture and horticulture industry is young and evolving in Hong Kong. Building up its strength and capability is of utmost importance to ensure quality arboriculture service to keep our urban forest healthy and minimise tree failure risks, thereby protecting public safety.

3. Over the past nine years since its establishment, the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) of the Development Bureau has been working closely with the arboriculture and horticulture industry to develop an adequate and quality workforce. For instance, we have been in discussion with academic and training institutions to organise more training programmes, uplift the quality of these programmes and ensure continuous enhancement. To nurture a professional workforce capable of providing quality service, in collaboration with the Qualifications Framework Secretariat of the Education Bureau, GLTMS assisted the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Training Advisory Committee to draw up a set of Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) for the industry. The SCS, which will be completed in late 2019, will set out the skills, knowledge, workplace requirements and outcome standards expected of practitioners for various tasks of different complexities.

4. In 2015, GLTMS commissioned a study on the Human Resources and Competences Survey and Analysis of the Arboriculture, Horticulture and Landscape Management and Maintenance Industry (the Study) to assess the training and supply of manpower against market demand. The Study projected

that there would be a shortage of some 750 qualified tree management personnel, comprising 350 arborists, 150 tree workers (climbing) and 250 tree workers (other than climbing) in 2018. There is a pressing need to build up an adequate and quality workforce to support tree management work in Hong Kong.

PROPOSAL

5. In the 2019-20 Budget, the Financial Secretary has set aside \$200 million for the establishment of the Fund for the implementation of the following initiatives —

- (a) ***Study Sponsorship Scheme***: to provide financial incentives to encourage more people to undertake arboriculture, tree management and tree works programmes offered by local vocational, tertiary and training institutions;
- (b) ***Trainee Programme***: to enable arboriculture and tree management graduates to receive on-the-job training to acquire practical working experience;
- (c) ***International Urban Forestry Conferences***: to keep local practitioners abreast of the latest international best practices, research and development and technical advances in urban forest management and to provide a platform for the sharing of experience and expertise in tree management and conservation work among government authorities, professional bodies, academics and practitioners; and
- (d) ***Public Education and Promotion Campaigns***: to enhance public appreciation of trees and understanding of proper tree care and to raise youngsters' interest in arboriculture.

Study Sponsorship Scheme

6. Amongst different jobs in the arboriculture and horticulture industry, frontline arborists and tree workers, who are respectively responsible for tree inspection and various tree works, are the two most important and needed ones. The quality of our tree management work hinges on the service performance of these professionals.

7. To encourage youngsters to join the industry as arborists and tree workers, we propose to provide study sponsorships to persons aged 30 and below who are interested to pursue a career in tree management to complete recognised

training programmes on arboriculture. Participants of programmes at Level 2 to Level 5 of the Qualifications Framework (QF) offered by vocational, tertiary and training institutions in Hong Kong will be eligible for these incentives. Programmes already covered by existing government subsidy schemes, such as the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professionals/Sectors (SSSDP), Engineering Training Subsidy Scheme (ETSS) and sponsorship and allowance schemes under Employees Retraining Board (ERB) will be excluded to avoid double sponsorship. Separately, for some of these recognised programmes, we will consider offering scholarships to attract calibre students. The existing arboriculture and tree management programmes and tree works programmes at QF Level 2 to Level 5 are at **Annexes A and B** respectively.

Trainee Programme

8. The relatively unattractive remuneration for newcomers may deter young people from pursuing a career in the arboriculture industry. Moreover, since the industry is still new and evolving, arboriculture and landscape contractors do not have strong incentive to engage and train inexperienced young practitioners. To address these issues, the Fund will be used to set up a trainee programme to offer formal on-the-job training to graduates of arboriculture, tree management and tree works programmes at QF Level 2 to Level 5. Under the proposed programme, established arboriculture, tree management and landscape companies as well as Government's tree management departments will be invited to take in trainees at agreed salary levels paid by them. They are also required to provide structured training meeting stipulated requirements. The Fund will provide monthly training allowance to the trainees as well as a bonus upon their acquisition of arborist or tree worker qualifications. The duration of training will last one to three years depending on the qualifications to be acquired. We will continue to work out the implementation details in consultation with stakeholders.

9. The proposed trainee programme is similar to the Construction Tradesman Collaborative Training Scheme¹ implemented by the Construction Industry Council (CIC). Since many arboriculture and landscape contractors are also in the construction industry, and in view of CIC's extensive experience in administering structured on-the-job training in collaboration with contractors for various trades in the construction industry, we will commission CIC to administer the trainee programme. Specifically, CIC will assist GLTMS in implementing the programme in aspects of developing training plan, liaising with companies and trainees, monitoring training progress, checking payment records, and

¹ CIC provides a wide range of training programmes for construction workers. The Construction Tradesman Collaborative Training Scheme targets trades in severe labour shortage. Under this Scheme, trainees are recruited and trained on-site on a first-hire-then-train basis. In support of the Scheme, CIC provides subsidy to employers and trainees.

instituting a feedback mechanism on participating companies, etc. The expenses incurred by CIC will be met by the Fund.

International Urban Forestry Conferences

10. Many landscape and tree management problems facing us today are common to other tree management jurisdictions in the region, e.g. tree senescence and resilience, impacts of extreme weather, blue-green eco-balance, pests and diseases attack, conflict with trees during urban development, etc. Over the past years, we have accumulated knowledge and experience in tackling some tree management issues (some of which are unique to Hong Kong), e.g. risk management of trees in areas of high traffic and pedestrian flow, management of Brown Root Rot Disease, stonewall tree management, intensive care of Old and Valuable Trees, use of technology, management of trees on slopes, preparation for rainy and typhoon seasons, etc. To build up a platform for local and overseas arboriculture and horticulture experts, academics and practitioners to exchange experience and latest development in urban forest management practices, research and development and technical advances, we will organise international conferences on urban forestry with the support of the Fund. Local tertiary institutions, professional bodies and tree management departments will be invited to participate in the organisation of the conferences. Through sharing of knowledge, experience and insights with counterparts in other jurisdictions, we hope to grow our industry and uplift the level of expertise and standing of local practitioners.

11. The international conference will be organised biennially from 2020 to 2024 tentatively. Internationally renowned experts in arboriculture, urban forestry and related fields as well as those from neighbouring cities with similar weather and planting conditions will be invited to attend as speakers and panellists. Workshops and site visits will be organised to allow opportunities to showcase Hong Kong's precious tree assets. Subject to the approval by the Legislative Council Finance Committee, the first international urban forestry conference will be held in early 2020.

Public Education and Promotion Campaigns

12. The community plays a significant role in helping to protect trees in Hong Kong. Like other living organisms, trees undergo the life cycle of growth, ageing, sickness and death. The health and stability of trees are affected by many internal physiological and external environmental factors. As different factors interact with each other, the outcome is highly unpredictable. As trees are ubiquitous, we need the community's support in reporting any problematic trees

in their neighbourhood to the Government for prompt follow-up action. Private property and facility owners should also play their part in properly managing their tree assets.

13. Through various tree management departments, GLTMS has been organising a wide range of public education and promotion activities for different groups in the community, including seminars, talks, training, roving exhibitions, newspaper articles and advertorials, to promote the awareness and understanding of proper tree care. A list of promotion activities organised in 2018 is at **Annex C**.

14. We will strengthen promotion to enhance public appreciation of landscape and trees, to educate the public on proper tree care and to strengthen community involvement through an annual “People • Trees • Harmony” campaign. The campaign will comprise thematic guided tours, media campaign and publications to raise public awareness and appreciation of landscape and trees. Education activities including tree identification seminars, training in tree monitoring, workshops on proper tree care and field demonstrations will be arranged. There will also be targeted training for uniform groups, school talks and teaching kits for schools to develop students’ knowledge and interest in landscape and trees. A tentative programme is at **Annex D**.

CONSULTATION

15. We are consulting tertiary institutions, professional bodies, industry associations and practitioners on various schemes and initiatives. We will take into account stakeholders’ views and suggestions when drawing up the implementation details.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members’ views are invited on the proposal set out in paragraphs 5 to 14 above. Subject to Members’ comments, we will seek funding approval from the Finance Committee. Our aim is to roll out the Fund in the last quarter of 2019.

Development Bureau
May 2019

**List of Arboriculture and Tree Management Programmes
at QF Levels 2 to 5²**

Institution / Association / Organisation	Course	QF Level	Course Duration	Mode of Study	Tuition Fee in 2018/19 (HK\$)
Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi) Vocational Training Council	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Horticulture and Landscape Management ³	5	4 years	Full-time	51,030/year
	Professional Diploma in Horticulture and Landscape Management ⁴	4	1 year	Part-time	18,000
College of International Education (CIE) Hong Kong Baptist University	Associate Degree in Tree Management	4	2 years	Full-time	51,150/year
HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE)	Advanced Diploma in Tree Management and Conservation	4	1 year	Part-time	44,850
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) Vocational Training Council	Professional Certificate in Arboriculture and Tree Work Supervision	4	24 weeks	Part-time	11,900
	Higher Diploma in Conservation and Tree Management	4	2 years	Full-time	31,570/year

² Based on market research as at 30 April 2019.

³ Subsidised by SSSDP.

⁴ Subsidised by ETSS.

Institution / Association / Organisation	Course	QF Level	Course Duration	Mode of Study	Tuition Fee in 2018/19 (HK\$)
	Certificate in Basic Arboriculture and Tree Work Practices	3	10 weeks	Part-time	6,000
Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional and Continuing Education (LiPACE) The Open University of Hong Kong	Certificate in Professional Tree Management	3	1 year	Part-time	13,200
School of Continuing and Professional Studies (CUSCS) The Chinese University of Hong Kong	Diploma in Arboriculture	3	1.5 years	Part-time	29,000
	Certificate in Horticulture Management	3	1 year	Part-time	18,000
Employees Retraining Board (ERB)	Certificate in Tree Preservation and Risk Assessment ⁵	3	41 hours	Part-time	4,250
	Certificate in Basic Arboriculture ⁵	3	32 hours	Part-time	3,250
	Foundation Certificate in Plant Identification and Planting ⁵	2	12 hours	Part-time	750

⁵ “Normal Subsidised Fee” under ERB’s subsidy schemes.

List of Tree Works Programmes
at QF Levels 2 to 5⁶

Institution / Association / Organisation	Course	QF Level	Course Duration	Mode of Study	Tuition Fee in 2018/19 (HK\$)
Tree Climbing Hong Kong (TCHK)	Certificate in Integrated Tree Climbing	3	80 hours	Part-time	8,700
	Certificate in Petrol Chainsaw Use and Maintenance and Tree Trimming	2	80 hours	Part-time	2,400

⁶ Based on market research as at 30 April 2019.

Public Education and Promotion Activities in 2018**(A) Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section of Development Bureau**

Public Education and Promotion Activities in 2018	No. of Activities	No. of Participants
School Talks	12	2 729
Seminars on Urban Forestry	5	287
Pre-wet Public Talks	3	519
Seminar for Green Volunteers and Green Ambassadors	1	184
Training Activities for Street Cleaners	11	130
Training Activities for Private Property Owners and Management Personnel	11	950
Workshops for Uniform Groups	2	80
Roving Exhibitions	1	2 314
Publications – Leaflets	1	Not Applicable
Newspaper Advertorials	4	Not Applicable
Advertisement in MTR	1	Not Applicable
Total	52	7 193

(B) Core Tree Management Departments

Core Tree Management Departments	Public Education and Promotion Activities in 2018	No. of Activities	No. of Participants
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Workshops, Hiking and Planting Days	2	15 380
Architectural Services Department	Workshops, Guided Tours and Exhibitions	6	311
Civil Engineering Development Department	Workshops and Guided Tours	2	110
Drainage Services Department	Planting Days and Exhibitions	2	19 096
Highways Department	Guided Tours, Planting Days and Exhibitions	6	7 767
Housing Department	Community Garden and Planting Days	44	4 923
Leisure and Cultural Services Department	Community Garden Schemes, Planting Days and Exhibitions	84	755 236
	Training Courses and Greening Promotion Programmes	2 144	435 926
	Funding Support Projects and Green Volunteer Schemes	1 382	241 919

Promotion Campaign for 2020

Tentative Programme				
2020	Promotion Events	Promotion Activities		Public Education Activities
January	International Conference	Roving Exhibition on Pre-wet Tree Management	Publications – Leaflets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar on Basic Horticultural Maintenance Skill • Seminar on Proper Tree Care before Wet Season
February	Mascot Design and Naming Competition			School Talk
March	Participation in Flower Show		Radio Programme	Training for Private Property Management Personnel
April	Guided Tour on “Flowering Trees in Hong Kong”			Seminar on Proper Tree Care before Wet Season
May	Guided Tour on “Flowering Trees in Hong Kong”		Roving Exhibition on Proper Tree Care and Tree Appreciation	Publications – Pictorial Guides
June	Guided Tour on “Tree Species Identification”	Newspaper article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for Private Property Management Personnel • Seminar on Proper Tree Care before Wet Season • School Talk

Tentative Programme				
2020	Promotion Events	Promotion Activities		Public Education Activities
July		Roving Exhibition on Proper Tree Care and Tree Appreciation	Newspaper article	
August				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Kits • Workshop for Green Volunteers • Training for Private Property Management Personnel
September	Guided Tour on “Tree Species Identification”		Publications – Tree and Landscape Map	Seminar on Tree Management
October	Guided Tour on “Old and Valuable Trees in Hong Kong”			Workshop for Green Volunteers
November	Guided Tour on “Tree Species Identification”		Advertorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Talk • Workshop for Green Volunteers
December				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for Private Property Management Personnel • Seminar on Tree Management • School Talk • Workshop for Green Volunteers • Training for Uniform Groups