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Replies to supplementary questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2022-23

Director of Bureau : Secretary for the Environment

Session No. : 7

Consolidated e-file name : ENB-2S-e1.docx

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-ENB001

(Question Serial No. S020)

Head: (22) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Nature Conservation and Country Parks

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Dr LEUNG Siu-fai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question:

1. Are the relocated wild pigs microchipped to monitor their whereabouts and the population of those which have returned to urban areas? If yes, what is the expenditure involved? If not, will the Government consider microchipping wild pigs to strengthen the study on the behaviours and whereabouts of wild pigs in Hong Kong as well as to formulate effective management and control measures?
2. Has the Government conducted any research to explore ways to keep the relocated wild pigs confined to the relocation sites? If yes, what are the details? If not, will such research be conducted?
3. Has the Government undertaken research projects in collaboration with universities or concern groups to study the conservation of local wild pigs and the control of their population? If yes, what were the research projects undertaken over the past 3 years and the expenditure involved? If not, will the Government allocate resources to conduct relevant researches?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wai-keung

Reply:

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) launched the Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) in late 2017 to vaccinate or sterilise wild pigs caught and relocate them to the countryside where condition permitted. During the CCRP, the AFCD staff would microchip the captured wild pigs for record purpose before relocating them to the countryside, which enabled checking on their capture history and whether contraception treatment or sterilisation had been administered according to the microchip number when these wild pigs were recaptured. The price of each microchip was about \$30. The total expenditure involved in the purchase of microchips was about \$24,000 throughout the period of the CCRP. In addition, the AFCD collaborated with the Ocean Park Conservation Fund between 2017 and 2021 to undertake a research on the effectiveness of the contraceptive vaccine for wild pigs as well as to develop and apply an endoscopic contraception technique on wild pigs. The total expenditure of the relevant research was about \$5.2 million.

The expenditures involved in the CCRP (including the research expenditure on the relevant contraceptive vaccine and the endoscopic contraception technique) over the past 3 years are tabulated as follows:

| Year | Expenditure involved in the CCRP (\$ million) |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 2019-20 | 7.2 |
| 2020-21 | 9.4 |
| 2021-22 (revised estimate) | 8.6 |

However, the progress of contraception and sterilisation was far from catching up with the reproduction rate of wild pigs. The AFCD's investigation also reveals that once wild pigs are accustomed to being fed by people, they will continually return to urban areas to seek food and cause nuisance even if they have been relocated to the countryside. In view of this and to cope with the festering nuisance of wild pigs, under the premises of safeguarding public safety and maintaining public hygiene, the AFCD announced new measures on 12 November 2021 to conduct regular wild pig capture operations, during which veterinary officers will use dart guns to capture target wild pigs for humane dispatch through medicine injection.

Furthermore, the AFCD commenced a study in collaboration with the University of Hong Kong in 2020 to analyse the reasons for members of the public to feed wild pigs in order to formulate more targeted promotion and education strategies. The study is expected to be completed by the end of 2022 and the expenditure involved is about \$1.35 million.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-ENB002

(Question Serial No. S019)

Head: (44) Environmental Protection Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Waste

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection (Janice TSE)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question:

The Secretary for the Environment listed out a series of odour reduction measures for the landfill. However, the odour still exists and some measures may have been ostensibly followed. While one of the measures is to stop receiving waste at the landfill after 6 p.m., according to the inspections conducted on an irregular basis, it was found that the landfill was still operating after 6 p.m.

Secondly, regarding the infestation of flies, mosquitoes and pests, while the written reply has set out various pest control actions, experience shows that the situation may improve after complaints are lodged but will relapse very soon. What are the criteria adopted? Is there any mechanism for effective pest control in the long term?

Lastly, regarding the speeding problem of refuse collection vehicles, it is stated in your reply that 3 cases of suspected leachate dripping have been detected. However, in February this year, there was an accident in which a refuse collection vehicle overturned due to speeding, with refuse spilled out all over the highway. Is there any measure with deterrent effect available?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Yuet-ming (LegCo internal reference no.: 19)

Reply:

To enhance the level of operation and mitigate the impacts of the operation of the North East New Territories (NENT) Landfill on residents nearby, the landfill contractor has implemented a number of improvement measures, including shortening the time for receiving waste at the NENT Landfill by 1 hour, i.e. stop receiving waste after 6 p.m. every day. As the contractor still needs to cover the tipping area operating on that day with a layer of clean soil and apply a durable stucco layer (Posi-shell cover) on the soil capping at the end of the daily operation, certain environmental improvement works will still be conducted at the landfill after it stops receiving waste to ensure environmental hygiene and reduce odour emission.

In addition, there were severe manpower shortages due to a large number of landfill contractor staff members being infected or put under home quarantine during the fifth wave of the epidemic. At the same time, the landfill had to receive additional construction waste due to the construction of isolation facilities and hospitals. Under such critical situation, the landfill had indeed extended its operating hours for several days to ensure that all the collected wastes can be handled promptly and properly at the landfill for maintaining environmental hygiene.

As for the infestation of flies, mosquitoes and pests, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has requested the contractor to step up their pest control efforts inside the landfill, and to conduct fly monitoring at various locations inside and in the vicinity of the landfill, and submit the reports to the EPD on a regular basis. The EPD will maintain contact with the Ta Kwu Ling District Rural Committee and continue to install mosquito killers in the villages as appropriate. In addition, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will keep close monitoring the situation of mosquito, fly and other pest infestations and strengthen the pest control and prevention works in the Ta Kwu Ling area. Liaison with the local residents and different stakeholders will be continued, and the FEHD will enhance the public education to contain the breeding of mosquito, fly and other pests within the area.

We are also very concerned about speeding of vehicles, as well as the respective road use and safety issues. Regarding the recent accidents involving speeding of refuse collection vehicles in the district, the EPD will refer the issue to the Hong Kong Police Force and request them to strengthen the enforcement actions. In addition, the EPD will also remind the trade of the importance of safe driving and the statutory requirements through landfill liaison meetings.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-ENB003

(Question Serial No. S021)

Head: (44) Environmental Protection Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Waste

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection (Janice TSE)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question:

1. The number of Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) is expected to be increased progressively from the current 60 to 120 in 2022. Would the Authority place these additional RVMs mainly at public and private housing estates for the convenience of the public?
2. Has the Authority set a time requirement to the contractors on offloading the bottles inside the RVMs? For example, if a RVM is 95% loaded, it should be offloaded in 24 hours. If yes, what are the details? If no, would such requirement be introduced at the next stage of the scheme?
3. The Scheme on Regulation of Disposable Plastic Tableware has proposed the control of disposable expanded polystyrene (EPS) tableware in the first place. Is there a specific implementation timetable? As there is no regulation on EPS tableware so far, would the Authority examine at the earliest opportunity the methods of handling EPS products, including immediate introduction and application of new technologies to recycle and reuse EPS products?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wai-keung (LegCo internal reference no.: 21)

Reply:

1. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is preparing to launch Stage 2 of the Reverse Vending Machine (RVM) Pilot Scheme in the second quarter of 2022 to increase the number of RVMs progressively to 120. Making reference to the experience of Stage 1 of the RVM Pilot Scheme, we will consider placing more RVMs at suitable public housing estates and shopping centres near residential estates to make it more convenient for members of the public to use RVMs for returning plastic beverage containers (PBCs) with a view to further assessing the operational performance of RVMs.
2. Under the current contract (for Stage 1 of the RVM Pilot Scheme), the contractor is required to collect PBCs regularly from RVMs for no less than twice a week or within 4 hours whenever a RVM reaches its storage threshold to ensure the smooth operation

and service of RVMs. Besides, a real-time monitoring system is equipped in each RVM so that when its storage reaches 95% of the capacity, the system will automatically alert the contractor to arrange for collection of PBCs from the RVM. To further enhance the RVM service, the number of routine collection of PBCs will be increased to no less than 3 times a week and the contractor will need to provide collection service within 3 hours whenever a RVM reaches its storage threshold under the contract of Stage 2 of the RVM Pilot Scheme.

3. During the period between July and September 2021, the EPD conducted the public consultation on the phased Scheme on Regulation of Disposable Plastic Tableware. The Regulation Scheme has proposed the control of disposable expanded polystyrene (EPS) tableware in the first place by banning the local sale of disposable EPS tableware and the provision of such tableware by catering premises. A total of over 8 000 submissions had been received during the consultation period, among which over 90% of the comments supported in principle the introduction of legislation to regulate disposable plastic tableware progressively. Regarding the timetable for implementing the Regulation Scheme, there were quite some views that there was room to consider advancing the implementation of the first phase of the Regulation Scheme before 2025 as suggested in the consultation document. We understand that there are currently a number of suppliers in the market that can provide various kinds of non-plastic alternatives to the types of takeaway disposable plastic tableware that are covered by the first phase of the Regulation Scheme. Having considered the urgency of the problem arising from disposable plastic tableware and the overall positive feedbacks from the community on the proposed scheme, the EPD is actively considering advancing the implementation of the first phase of regulation so as to reduce the disposal of disposable plastic tableware at source as soon as possible and help ease the burden on the environment. In addition, the EPD has all along been supporting local EPS recovery and recycling projects through various means, including the Environment and Conservation Fund and the Recycling Fund.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-ENB004

(Question Serial No. S022)

Head: (44) Environmental Protection Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (2) Air and Climate Change

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection (Janice TSE)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question:

1. The Green Tech Fund (GTF) has approved a total of 14 projects from local higher education institutions and private enterprises, involving a total grant of around \$70 million. Among them, how many projects have been commercialised or utilised in the market?
2. Apart from providing funding support, are there any other policies/measures in place to encourage the commercialisation of GTF project deliverables for utilisation?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wai-keung (LegCo internal reference no.: 22)

Reply:

The Government set up the new Green Tech Fund (GTF) in 2020 to provide better and more focused funding support for the research and development (R&D) and application of decarbonisation and green technologies, so as to expedite low-carbon transformation and enhance environmental protection in Hong Kong. The first round of applications for the GTF was open in December 2020 and a total of 14 projects from local higher education institutions and private enterprises were approved, involving a grant of around \$70 million. The approved R&D projects mainly concern the development of applied technology or products, and cover a wide range of topics, including the promotion and development of new energy and renewable energy, promotion of transport electrification, turning of waste into resources, low-carbon waste management technologies, smart waste management, and smart air quality monitoring, etc. All the technologies developed under the approved projects are of high application potential.

Funding approval for the projects in the first round of GTF applications had just been given between October and December last year. The projects will commence progressively and the outcomes of these research projects are not yet available.

The GTF places great emphasis on practical application. We will continue to encourage R&D institutes to apply for the GTF to develop low-carbon technologies with high application and commercialisation potential that cater for the specific needs of Hong Kong's environment and market. The technologies to be developed should be specific to Hong

Kong's circumstances and challenges, and have clear prospect for commercialisation/application in local context. We will also share and promote project outcomes on the GTF website to encourage further development and practical application.

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