

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Digest of notes of meeting held on 30 October 2009

- Date** : 30 October 2009
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : Conference Room, 33/F, Revenue Tower, Wanchai, Hong Kong
- Chairman** : Mr Bernard Chan, GBS, JP
- Members** : Ms Christine Fang, BBS, JP
Mr Chan Siu-hung
Mrs Miranda Leung
Mr Victor Li
Dr Lo Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
Mr Tai Hay-lap, BBS, JP
Ms Iris Tam, JP
Professor Wong Siu-lun, SBS, JP
Mr Edward Yau, Secretary for the Environment
Ms Florence Hui, Under Secretary for Home Affairs
Miss Shirley Yuen, Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 2
- Apologies** : Professor Ho Kin-chung, BBS
Mr Benjamin Hung
Professor Lam Kin-che, SBS, JP
Mr Michael Lai, MH, JP
Professor Poon Chi-sun
Mr Sin Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Dr Andrew Thomson
Mrs Carrie Lam, Secretary for Development
- In attendance** : Ms Anissa Wong, Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Environment Bureau (ENB)
Mr Roy Tang, Deputy Secretary for the Environment, ENB
Mr Eric Chan, Administrative Assistant to Secretary for the Environment, ENB

Ms Esther Li, Principal Information Officer, Environmental Protection Department (EPD)

Mr Wang Yuen, Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Sustainable Development), ENB

Miss Alice Liu, Senior Town Planner (Sustainable Development), ENB

Mr Damian Chan, Assistant Secretary (Sustainable Development)1, ENB

Ms Elisa Leung, Assistant Secretary (Sustainable Development)2, ENB

Miss Karen Lee, Executive Officer (Sustainable Development), ENB

For agenda item 1 only

Mr Carlson Chan, Deputy Director of Environmental Protection(3), EPD

Mr Mok Wai-chuen, Assistant Director (Air Policy), EPD

Mr Pang Sik-wing, Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Air Policy), EPD

For agenda item 2 only

Mr Elvis Au, Assistant Director (Water Policy), EPD

Mr Chung Chi-hoi, Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Water Policy and Science), EPD

Mr Louis Leung, Senior Administrative Officer (Water Policy Division), EPD

Prof Rudolf Wu, Hyper-CPS (Consultant)

Dr Jason Yang, Hyper-CPS (Consultant)

Secretary : Ms Jennifer Chan, Principal Assistant Secretary (Sustainable Development), ENB

Item 1 – Review of air quality objectives (Paper No. 11/09) [Open session]

The Chairman said as an attempt to enhance transparency, the Council for Sustainable Development (the Council) would open those Council meetings that the Administration would make a briefing or presentation on selected sustainable development topics to Members as a start.

At this first open meeting of the Council, EPD would brief Members on the review of the air quality objectives (AQOs) and the marine water quality objectives (WQOs).

Members were given an introduction on the background and key proposals of the AQOs review, followed by a powerpoint presentation on the detailed proposals. Members were then invited to give their views and comments, a gist of which is as follows –

- Supported adopting the World Health Organization (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines by a staged approach with a view to protecting public health.
- Suggested that the use of renewable energy (RE) should be explored and promoted on top of natural gas, the latter being a fossil fuel due to be exhausted in some 70-100 years according to some scientists.
- The Administration should take the lead in promoting light-emitting diode (LED) and the pace of using LED for traffic signal and street lighting should be accelerated.
- Supported a pragmatic approach and considered that moving targets could be set for periodically reviewing the AQOs at an interval of three to five years. Cooperation between governments of the HKSAR and Pearl River Delta (PRD) region to tackle the problem of cross-boundary pollution should be enhanced so that interim targets could be set at a higher level.
- Enquired about the implementation timetables of Phase I measures and of measures of all three phases and whether any air quality alert systems would be put in place.
- Suggested that the District Councils (DCs) should be consulted on measures regarding transport management.
- Suggested that more specific implementation plans should be drawn up taken

into account public's views and related emission control measures in the PRD. Also suggested that ratio of cost sharing among the Government, consumers and service providers etc, with reference to practices in other countries, should be included in the parameters for consultation.

- While some of the measures were for the medium or long term, early planning might be necessary. For instance, consideration might be given to planning/providing the supporting facilities in new developments to promote/support the use of electric vehicles.
- Suggested that the number of car parks in a particular district might be reduced through the requirement/action of Transport Department for more immediate improvement if the local air pollution was serious.
- Suggested that consideration/planning be given to extending the district cooling system to beyond the Kai Tak Development to other areas such as Kwun Tong for their seaside location.
- Opined/reminded that the long-term choice of energy between natural gas and RE should not be based solely on the present price level as the price of natural gas among the fossil fuels was expected to rise remarkably in future, though currently RE was more expensive than natural gas.
- Hoped that with the consultation the Administration would be able to prioritize the Phase I measures and identify those which could be implemented in the first instance for more immediate improvement.
- Suggested that the Government should explain to the public and address the deterioration in visibility notwithstanding the emission of pollutants had continued to decrease in the past decade. Suggested that more greening be considered and providing information to the public on the effectiveness of greenery on improving air quality.
- While people would support the review, the challenge was with agreeing on the execution and the details of implementation. Citizens might also expect the Government to take a leading role and make the necessary financial commitment to make things happen.

A gist of the Administration's response to Members' questions and comments is as follows –

- The purpose of the consultation was to seek the public views on the proposed measures, the pace at which these measures should be taken forward and the

price the community was willing to pay, so that an agenda for action to achieve the new AQOs could be set.

- The proposed new AQOs were in line with the WHO guidelines with a view to better protecting public health; the Phase I measures were proposed to be implemented as a basket in the first instance and the Administration had already put in resources for taking forward quite a number of these measures. As regards cooperation with the Mainland authorities, both sides had been working together to reduce air pollution and cooperation would continue.
- The Administration and the Mainland authorities were embarking on studies for reducing emissions from 2010 onwards and there was also cooperation with the authorities in the Guangdong Province for green and quality living in the PRD region including conducting relevant thematic studies.
- Notwithstanding the constraints on application in Hong Kong, the Administration supported and promoted the use of RE, which could be more extensive in future with the development of the technologies. There was already plan to make use of LED in traffic lights, and the use of LED in street lighting was being studied by the relevant departments.
- The Administration would further consult the DCs in due course when it came to the actual implementation of transport management measures such as bus route rationalization in individual districts given their impact on people's daily lives.

It was suggested and agreed that the views and comments of the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) be also sought on the review for forwarding to EPD. The Secretariat would also check with Council Members who could not attend the briefings today to see if they had any comments to provide. (Note: Comments subsequently received from an SSC member has been incorporated in the gist of comments at the **Annex**.)

Item 2 – Review and development of marine water quality objectives (Paper No. 12/09)

Members were briefed on the public engagement on 'Review and Development of Marine Water Quality Objectives' and invited to give their views and comments, a gist of which is as follows –

- As a user of the water body for amenities, observed that water quality in Hong Kong had seen some improvements in recent years.
- Expressed concern on whether a review of the WQOs in the light of overseas experience would result in any significant changes/deterioration to the compliance situation for WQOs in some water bodies.
- As some cases of incompliance with the local WQOs were due to background influence from the Mainland, the Administration should critically explore strengthening cooperation with the Mainland authorities to tackle the problem with joint efforts.
- Was concerned with the low WQO compliance rate for the water body in the Deep Bay and thus happy to note the joint efforts of the governments of HKSAR and Guangdong Province. Also supported the Administration in seeking improvement in water quality in the area through cooperation with the Mainland authorities, and would welcome the Administration to further brief the Council on the details of such cross-boundary endeavours.
- Suggested the Administration to assess the socio-economical impacts of revising the local WQOs and the associated cost to be borne by the society for any actions/programmes required for attaining the revised standards, and to consult the public on these issues in the second stage engagement exercise.

A gist of the Administration's response to Members' questions and comments is as follows –

- The compliance situation would remain similar upon a review of WQOs since the local and overseas levels of toxic substances in water bodies were similar. As the *E. Coli* levels in the Victoria Harbour were on the high side, the Administration had advanced the commencement of operation of a disinfection facility under the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme to the end of 2009 to improve the situation.
- On cross-boundary cooperation, the Administration was aware of the need to join hands with the Mainland to control pollution at their sources. EPD had maintained close collaboration with the provincial authorities of Guangdong and municipal authorities of Shenzhen to improve the water quality in Deep Bay and Mirs Bay. A water quality model of the Pearl River estuary had been jointly developed with Guangdong Environmental Protection Bureau to

aid the cross-boundary water quality management such efforts, while further collaborative endeavours to manage the water quality in cross-boundary water bodies were being explored and discussed. A cross-boundary water quality management study would also commence early next year.

- One of the tasks under the WQOs review was to consider the socio-economic implications of the proposals to attain the improved WQOs, on which the public would be consulted in the second stage of the engagement exercise.

Secretariat
Council for Sustainable Development

I. Review of air quality objectives (AQOs)

Gist of SDC Members views/comments at the EPD briefing on 30 October 2009

- Supported adopting the World Health Organization (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines by a staged approach with a view to protecting public health.
- Suggested that the use of renewable energy (RE) should be explored and promoted on top of natural gas, the latter being a fossil fuel due to be exhausted in some 70-100 years according to some scientists.
- The Administration should take the lead in promoting light-emitting diode (LED) and the pace of using LED for traffic signal and street lighting should be accelerated.
- Supported a pragmatic approach and considered that moving targets could be set for periodically reviewing the AQOs at an interval of three to five years. Cooperation between governments of the HKSAR and Pearl River Delta (PRD) region to tackle the problem of cross-boundary pollution should be enhanced so that interim targets could be set at a higher level.
- Enquired about the implementation timetables of Phase I measures and of measures of all three phases and whether any air quality alert systems would be put in place.
- Suggested that the District Councils (DCs) should be consulted on measures regarding transport management.
- Suggested that more specific implementation plans should be drawn up taken into account public's views and related emission control measures in the PRD. Also suggested that ratio of cost sharing among the Government, consumers and service providers etc, with reference to practices in other countries, should be included in the parameters for consultation.
- While some of the measures were for the medium or long term, early planning might be necessary. For instance, consideration might be given to planning/providing the supporting facilities in new developments to promote/support the use of electric vehicles.
- Suggested that the number of car parks in a particular district might be reduced through the requirement/action of Transport Department for more immediate improvement if the local air pollution was serious.

- Suggested that consideration/planning be given to extending the district cooling system to beyond the Kai Tak Development to other areas such as Kwun Tong for their seaside location.
- Opined/reminded that the long-term choice of energy between natural gas and RE should not be based solely on the present price level as the price of natural gas among the fossil fuels was expected to rise remarkably in future, though currently RE was more expensive than natural gas.
- Hoped that with the consultation the Administration would be able to prioritize the Phase I measures and identify those which could be implemented in the first instance for more immediate improvement.
- Suggested that the Government should explain to the public and address the deterioration in visibility notwithstanding the emission of pollutants had continued to decrease in the past decade. Suggested that more greening be considered and providing information to the public on the effectiveness of greenery on improving air quality.
- While people would support the review, the challenge was with agreeing on the execution and the details of implementation. Citizens might also expect the Government to take a leading role and make the necessary financial commitment to make things happen.

Comments received from a SSC member on 30 November 2009

- Basically have no comments on the review and targets of AQO. The AQO itself is a benchmark. The tightening and periodic review of the AQOs are welcome. What is more important is the measures adopted to achieve that goal, the time taken, the costs involved, and the costs to be borne by whom.
- From Figures 2.1 and 2.2 of the consultation document, it is clear that despite total emissions decrease, ambient air quality deteriorates. So regional influence is getting more and more predominant. The Government should agree with Guangdong on emission reduction targets beyond 2010 as soon as possible. Otherwise even if we agree with all 19 measures, the hard-earned environmental benefits could well be offset by an abrupt increase of Guangdong's emissions.
- Is disappointed that two very important initiatives, RE and road pricing are accorded low priority and classified as Phase II measures.

- The Government has a target of RE of 1-2% of total power generation by 2012. This target seems to have been abandoned, despite incentive mechanisms have already been in place for power companies to develop RE. The proposed CLP wind farm alone already accounts for 1% of total power generation. Therefore, to achieve 2% wind energy in 10 years' time is attainable, if the Government is serious about developing RE.
- The SDC spent tremendous efforts in the engagement exercise of Better Air Quality in 2007. One of its key recommendations was the implementation of road pricing. Road pricing could change the behavior of drivers and achieve long term reduction in traffic flow, thus vehicular emissions. The proceeds from road pricing could fund other clean-air initiatives, such as bus upgrade, further subsidy to hybrid cars etc.
- Therefore, both No. 20 (RE) and No. 28 (road pricing) should be re-classified as Phase I emission control measures.
- Other SDC recommendations, such as colouring system of Air Pollution Index (API), measures adopted during high API days should also be implemented as part of the whole package.
- The cost-benefit analyses of each of the nineteen measures are listed clearly in the document. While these numbers are estimates based on certain assumptions, this represents a good start for engaging the public in discussing the willingness to pay of various sectors and parties.
- Some critics said the Government is adopting 'scaring tactics' by highlighting the increase of electricity tariffs and bus fares without sufficient explanation. At the next stage, the Government should make a decision of the timetable of implementation of these measures and come up with a charging scheme where the Government, the industry and the consumers all have to contribute their fair share.

II. Review and development of marine water quality objectives (WQOs)

Gist of SDC Members views/comments at the EPD briefing on 30 October 2009

- As a user of the water body for amenities, observed that water quality in Hong Kong had seen some improvements in recent years.
- Expressed concern on whether a review of the WQOs in the light of overseas experience would result in any significant changes/deterioration to the

compliance situation for WQOs in some water bodies.

- As some cases of incompliance with the local WQOs were due to background influence from the Mainland, the Administration should critically explore strengthening cooperation with the Mainland authorities to tackle the problem with joint efforts.
- Was concerned with the low WQO compliance rate for the water body in the Deep Bay and thus happy to note the joint efforts of the governments of HKSAR and Guangdong Province. Also supported the Administration in seeking improvement in water quality in the area through cooperation with the Mainland authorities, and would welcome the Administration to further brief the Council on the details of such cross-boundary endeavours.
- Suggested the Administration to assess the socio-economical impacts of revising the local WQOs and the associated cost to be borne by the society for any actions/programmes required for attaining the revised standards, and to consult the public on these issues in the second stage engagement exercise.