



# The Way Ahead

## **The Continuous Improvement Strategy and Its Progress...**

Since completing the review of the EIA Ordinance in August 1999, progress has been made concerning each of the seven key elements identified for the Ordinance's continuous improvement strategy.

### **Enhancing Public Participation**

To enhance public participation in the EIA process, the 18 District Boards have been more closely involved. In 1999, all District Boards were briefed on the operation of the EIA Ordinance. Currently, the secretariats of the relevant District Councils are notified by fax of the availability of project profiles and/or EIA reports for their members' information and comment. To facilitate participation from members of the public at large, bilingual Chinese and English versions of project profiles have been required from 1 January 2000 for all EIA study brief applications and applications to apply directly for an environmental permit.

### **Cyber EIAO Help Bench**

The establishment of a "Cyber EIAO Help Bench" was proposed to provide consistent advice, examples and resource materials through the EIAO website to help proponents and consultants manage issues that are frequently encountered during the preparation of project profiles and EIA reports. The Cyber EIAO Help Bench is currently in the process of being set up and trial runs of the EIAO Help Bench will be conducted to ensure the technical practicality and the friendliness of the software before it is introduced officially online.

### **New Guidance Notes**

Additional guidance notes and other materials covering key areas of interest have been proposed to assist project proponents and consultants. EIAO Liaison Groups have prepared and discussed several drafts for new guidance notes or guidelines. These include "Basic Principles of Environmental Impact Assessment Process", "The Role and Operation of Environmental Study Management Group", "Flexibility and Enforceability of Mitigation Measures Proposed in an EIA Report", "The Role of Independent Environmental Checker", "Implementation Schedule for Mitigation Measures arising from the EIA Process", "Ecological Assessment from EIAO Perspectives", "Ecological Baseline Survey for Ecological Assessment", and "Preparation of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment under EIAO". The drafts have been revised and will be finalised soon for publication.

### **Cyber EIAO Project Template**

To allow the public, project proponents and consultants to check more easily the status of various projects and to promote the sharing of knowledge and experiences, a "Cyber EIAO Project Template" has been suggested for major projects that have commenced construction. An initial Cyber EIAO Project Template has been completed and shown to consultants and contractors. As a further improvement, the Project Template will be upgraded to establish a web-based database on project environmental performance for public access on the internet and to facilitate data input by individual project agents. The project commenced in third quarter 2001 with completion in 2002.

### **EIAO Users Liaison Groups**

To promote better communication and experience sharing, the establishment of “EIAO Users Liaison Groups” for both government and private sector proponents, and a similar “EIAO Practitioners Liaison Group” for consultants has been proposed. Liaison Groups would work together to develop the “Cyber EIAO Help Bench”. Four EIAO Liaison Groups have been established, including the EIAO Users Liaison Group for Government Departments; the EIAO Practitioners Liaison Group for EIA consultants; the EIAO Users Liaison Group for private sector and public corporations; the EIAO Users Liaison Group for contractors. The direct communication and experience-sharing at the above meetings were fruitful.

### **Public Comment via Electronic Submission**

To broaden the means by which the public may provide comments and opinions on project profiles and EIA reports, an internet e-mail account has been created for public comment.

### **Web-based EIA Interest Group**

Establishment of a web-based interest group was proposed to allow interested members of the public to receive information and news on the EIA Ordinance or any new guidance notes issued. Technical arrangements for the web-based interest group are in progress. The service is expected to be available in 2002, depending on technical practicality and friendliness of the software.