



40/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong  
香港灣仔告士打道5號稅務大樓40樓

**ACE Paper 30/2005**  
***For Information***

**A Policy Framework for the Management of  
Municipal Solid Waste in Hong Kong**

**Purpose**

This paper informs Members of the publication of the document “A Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)” (the Document) which sets out a comprehensive strategy for the management of municipal solid waste (MSW) in Hong Kong for the ten years from 2005 to 2014.

**Background**

2. Hong Kong has an urgent waste problem to tackle. At present, we rely solely on our landfills to meet our waste disposal need. As the economy continues to grow and if waste is allowed to increase at the current trend, our current projections predict that the remaining landfill capacity will be exhausted in the next 6 to 10 years and we would have to identify about 400 hectares of land (ten times the area reserved for the West Kowloon Cultural District) for new landfills to serve Hong Kong up to 2030.

3. Plans to extend the existing landfills are in the pipeline but using landfills as the only means of disposal of MSW is clearly not sustainable. There is great urgency in putting in place advanced treatment methods which can effectively reduce waste volumes to be disposed of at landfills. The Government has conducted a number of studies on the subject, all of which point to the setting up of thermal treatment facilities such as incinerators for treatment of waste.

4. The subject was discussed at the Panel on Environmental Affairs (EA) of the Legislative Council on 28 February 2005 and 23 May 2005. Deputations were invited on 23 May 2005. On 5 July 2005, the EA Panel Members passed the following motion –

“That this Panel urges the Administration to include in parallel in the upcoming strategy document on MSW management a holistic and

comprehensive plan, targets and timeframes for measures on waste avoidance and minimization; recovery, recycling and reuse; as well as bulk reduction and disposal of unrecyclable waste.”

5. Separately, the Council for Sustainable Development (SDC) conducted a public engagement process on three pilot areas, one of which is solid waste management, and published its report with recommendations in February 2005. Some of the recommendations were that the Government should introduce economic measures to reduce waste and to identify alternative forms of waste treatment.

6. We briefed Members of the Waste Subcommittee (WSC) of this Council on the preparation of the Document on 4 May 2005 and discussed in detail the broad strategy at its meeting on 7 June 2005. WSC Members generally agreed with the broad direction of our waste management strategy, and three separate workshops were subsequently conducted with WSC Members on 5, 13 and 18 July 2005 on the following issues –

- a. Domestic Waste Recovery;
- b. Producer Responsibility Schemes (PRS); and
- c. MSW Charging.

WSC Members’ views and suggestions were summarized and reported to this Council in the ACE Paper 25/2005.

7. As set out in the 2005-06 Policy Agenda, we are committed to publishing a strategy document on MSW management. The Document (at **Annex A**) will focus on the core idea of using economic tools which enshrine the “polluter-pays” principle to induce behavioural changes to ultimately reduce waste.

### **The Policy Framework**

8. Taking into account the recommendations of the SDC’s report, the LegCo EA Panel’s Motion and views expressed by WSC Members, we have mapped out a comprehensive strategy for MSW management. The strategy continues to adopt the three-tiered waste hierarchy with specific targets for each of the three approaches as contained in the Government’s sustainable development strategy on solid waste management published in May 2005. These targets are -

Target 1 - Waste avoidance and minimization

- To reduce the amount of MSW generated by 1% per annum up to the year 2014.

Target 2 – Reuse, recovery and recycling

- To increase the recovery rate of MSW to 45% by 2009 and 50% by 2014.

Target 3 – Bulk reduction and disposal of unavoidable waste

- To reduce the total MSW disposed of in landfills to less than 25% by 2014.

9. The Document sets out the proposed way forward on MSW Management for the next decade. The emphasis is on community participation and the “polluter-pays” principle. The following major initiatives are proposed in the Document –

- (a) expedite the roll-out of territory-wide waste recovery programmes to increase the amount of local recyclables;
- (b) introduce mandatory producer responsibility schemes (PRSs) through new legislation upon completion of detailed studies on product-specific measures;
- (c) examine ways of introducing charging for MSW;
- (d) continue to encourage waste recycling through provision of short term tenancies (STTs) of suitable sites for longer duration with conditions for local waste recycling businesses on a case by case basis where circumstances warrant;
- (e) continue to develop the EcoPark exclusively for the environmental industry;
- (f) all Government departments to adopt a green procurement policy as far as practicable;
- (g) continue to encourage the development of recycling technology projects through the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF), the Innovation and Technology Fund and funds for small and medium enterprises;
- (h) introduce landfill disposal bans to complement the PRSs;
- (i) develop Integrated Waste Management Facilities (IWMF) adopting incineration as the core technology; and
- (j) extend the existing strategic landfills.

10. Many of the above policy measures, specifically source separation, mandatory PRSs and support to the recycling industry have been adopted by many developed countries such as Canada, the US and the European countries for more than a decade. Our neighbouring countries and cities such as Japan, Korea and Taipei have also started to implement successfully such policy measures over the last few years. Some provinces and municipalities in the Mainland have also

launched programmes to promote modern MSW management and circular economy. Hong Kong is clearly lagging behind. Being Asia's World City, we have to embark on a new and decisive direction to manage our MSW sustainably.

### **The Targets**

11. A Summary of the proposed targets for the policy initiatives is at **Annex B**.

### **Way Forward**

12. The Document proposes simple, yet effective, economic tools based on the "polluter-pays" principle that would create incentives for the community to recycle more and discard less waste. The public will be invited to discuss the measures and agree to the milestones set out in the Document, and endorse their expected share of contribution under the "polluter-pays" principle through MSW charging and PRSs. We will report on details and progress of individual proposals separately.

13. Environmental education and capacity building play an important role in gaining community support and participation. To this end, the Environmental Protection Department, together with the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC), will continue to organize community-based waste reduction activities. We will harness community participation in waste reduction through outreach programmes, partnership with the business sectors and District Councils as well as various environmental activities with funding support from the ECF.

### **Conclusion**

14. Members are invited to note and comment on the measures and targets promulgated in the Document.

**Environmental Protection Department  
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