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**ACE Paper 16/2005**

*For advice*

## **Report of the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee**

### **Introduction**

The Subcommittee considered the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on New Contaminated Mud Marine Disposal Facility at Airport East/East Sha Chau Area by circulation. The majority of Members agreed that the report could be considered by the Subcommittee without a presentation by the project proponent and could be endorsed without condition.

### **Advice Sought**

2. Members are requested to advise whether the EIA report on New Contaminated Mud Marine Disposal Facility at Airport East/East Sha Chau Area could be endorsed without condition.

### **Views of the EIA Subcommittee**

#### **EIA report on New Contaminated Mud Marine Disposal Facility at Airport East/East Sha Chau Area**

(ACE-EIA Paper 4/2005)

### **Background**

3. The “Strategic Assessment and Site Selection Study for Contaminated Mud Disposal” conducted in 1999 recommended that a Contained Aquatic Disposal facility (CAD) at Airport East could be an intermediate measure to handle contaminated mud requiring disposal in Hong Kong up to 2010. The study report was presented to the EIA Subcommittee on 9 July 2001 and the ACE on 23 July 2001. The

ACE concluded that the Council had no objection to the proponent's proceeding with the EIA study for the proposed site and option but the proponent should keep all sites and options open as far as practicable and speed up the study on the long-term strategy.

4. The current EIA report has identified alternative sites and disposal options within the Airport East and the East of Sha Chau areas for the new contaminated mud disposal facility and to select and assess the environmental acceptability of the preferred option.

#### Need for the project

5. CEDD predicted that a minimum of 8 million cubic metres of contaminated mud will require disposal up to 2015. As the capacity of the existing Contaminated Mud Pit IV at East of Sha Chau will be exhausted by early 2009, a new disposal facility is therefore required.

#### Description of the project

6. The project is to construct and operate a new contaminated mud marine disposal facility in a series of purposed-built pits with capacity to handle a maximum of 8Mm<sup>3</sup> of contaminated mud from 2009 to 2015. The works comprise the following:

- (i) Dredging of a series of seabed pits within the selected location;
- (ii) Backfilling each dredged pit with contaminated mud that requires Type 2 disposal in accordance with the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau Technical Circular No. 34/2002; and
- (iii) Capping each backfilled pit with uncontaminated mud to isolate the contaminated infill from the surrounding marine environment.

7. The project is a designated project under Item C.10, Schedule 2 of the EIA Ordinance, i.e. "a marine dumping area" and Item C.12, i.e. "a dredging operation exceeding 500,000 m<sup>3</sup>".

#### Consideration of Disposal Options and Alternative Sites

8. The CAD and the Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) options were

considered in the EIA report. The report concluded that as compared to CDF, CAD was preferred having regard to the following considerations:

- (i) There is a long-term operation experience with the existing CAD facility at East of Sha Chau since 1992;
- (ii) Track records of monitoring and related studies indicate that there are no unacceptable adverse environmental impacts associated with the operation of CAD in Hong Kong waters; and
- (iii) CDF is nearshore or island containment structure consisting of a perimeter dike within which the contaminated mud is placed. There are environmental impacts of creating a permanent artificial island and greater environmental control over contaminant pathway with higher costs as the contaminated material is placed into an area wholly confined by the perimeter dike.

9. Through a detailed site selection, CEDD identified two possible sites in the North Lantau area for locating the new facility – the remaining portion of the existing contaminated mud pits at East of Sha Chau (ESC facility) and the South Brothers at East of the Airport (SB facility) respectively as indicated in Figure 1. Sequential construction and operation of the pits have been used to develop scenarios for sediment transport modelling, assessing marine traffic issues and identifying key environmental issues for water quality, ecology, fisheries, human health, noise and heritage assessments.

10. The assessment concluded that both sites would be environmentally acceptable. Nevertheless, ESC facility is considered as more preferable because the SB facility is closer to Tai Ho Bay and there will be a number of concurrent proposed projects in the North Lantau, including the Logistics Park and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, between 2008-2010. Therefore, the ESC facility is recommended in the EIA report.

11. The SB facility may still be required, should the capacity at ESC facility be reached earlier than anticipated, or one or more pits of the ESC facility not being available due to other constraints. If the SB facility were to be required, then the EIA would be reviewed and assessed for its relevance prior to any work being conducted.

## Members' views and conclusion of the Subcommittee

12. Having regard to the findings and the recommendations of the EIA report, Members agreed by circulation that the EIA report could be endorsed without condition. The Subcommittee endorsed Members' views and agreed to recommend the EIA report to the Council for endorsement without condition.