

Waste Diversion Plan: Latest development

Purpose

This paper aims to update Members on the latest development of the Waste Diversion Plan (“WDP”).

Background

2. Hong Kong’s three strategic landfills were built in the 1990s and are engineered to the international standard. As Tseung Kwan O (“TKO”) develops, newly built residential developments have become increasingly close to the South East New Territories (“SENT”) Landfill. In recent years, more local complaints about the environmental nuisance in particular odour nuisance caused by the operation of the SENT Landfill have been received. Despite actions to mitigate the environmental impact of SENT Landfill, the concern of the local community remains. In view of the growth in residential buildings in the TKO area, we consider that there is a case to change the use of the SENT Landfill (and its extension) to receive only construction waste so that the odour concern arising from Municipal Solid Waste (“MSW”) and other wastes could be removed at root. As a result of the change, MSW and other wastes will have to be diverted to other waste management facilities.

3. On 11 November 2013, we briefed the Advisory Council on the Environment on a package of measures under the WDP to ensure that the MSW to be diverted from the SENT Landfill can be properly handled by the network of refuse transfer stations (“RTSS”) and any potential traffic and environmental impact can be minimized (ref: ACE Paper 15/2013). Some of the measures are administrative, while others require legislative amendments, namely:

- (a) opening up the Shatin Transfer Station (“STTS”) for use by

private waste collectors;

- (b) reducing the fee for use of the two RTSs on Hong Kong Island;
- (c) imposing new equipment standards on refuse collection vehicles (“RCVs”); and
- (d) designating the SENT Landfill to receive only construction waste.

4. A set of legislative amendments covering the measures mentioned in paragraphs 3(a) to 3(d) were subsequently proposed by the Administration and passed by the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) after vetting by a subcommittee under the House Committee, with some agreed amendments passed by a Resolution on 22 January 2014.

5. Since then, we have made further progress in implementing the WDP and have been liaising closely with various stakeholders. The progress of the different measures is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Progress of Implementation of the WDP

Legislative Amendments

6. The Secretary for the Environment (“SEN”) published two notices in the Gazette on 12 December 2014 to appoint the commencement dates of the legislative amendments for the measures mentioned in paragraph 3(a) and 3 (b) as 1 March 2015; and that for the measure mentioned in paragraph 3(c) as 1 April 2015. These two commencement notices were then passed by LegCo after vetting by a subcommittee under the House Committee.

7. As regards the legislative amendments for the measure mentioned in paragraph 3(d), SEN appointed the corresponding commencement date as 6 January 2016 by a third notice in the Gazette on 3

July 2015. This commencement notice is now tabled at the LegCo for negative vetting.

Extension of Refuse Transfer Service at the STTS to Private Waste Collectors

8. The STTS has been operating smoothly since its opening up to private waste collectors on 1 March 2015. Thus far STTS has not experienced any queuing of RCVs outside the station or received any environmental complaint arising from the diversion exercise as at 31 July 2015. The waste collection trade welcomed the use of the STTS which is at a convenient location for their operation. Currently, the STTS received an average of 160 tpd of privately collected waste, mainly arising from Sha Tin and Tai Po.

Reduction of fee for use of Refuse Transfer Service on Hong Kong Island

9. Upon the reduction of fee for use of the Island East Transfer Station (“IETS”) and Island West Transfer Station (“IWTS”) as from 1 March 2015, the same level of fee of \$30 per tonne of waste is now applicable to the 4 urban RTSs which serve the areas that will be most affected when the SENT Landfill stops receiving MSW. This measure encourages private waste collectors to deliver waste to the RTSs near to the waste sources and with unused capacity. Since the fee reduction, private waste intake at the IETS and IWTS has increased by 8% and 24% respectively.

Promotion of Refuse Transfer Service to Private Waste Collectors

10. To encourage those private waste collectors now using the SENT Landfill as disposal site to shift to the RTS network, an extensive promotion programme has been launched. Apart from display of publicity banners and posters and distribution of leaflets, we have embarked on more active engagement exercises, including a 2-week on-site survey with individual RCV drivers at the SENT Landfill, outreach contacts made to over 200 private waste collectors and a 3-month trial scheme for free use of the STTS by some 120 waste collectors to get familiarized with the station

operation.

11. Since the launch of promotion in October 2014, there has been a notable increase in the number of registered accounts under the refuse transfer service from 418 to 477, and the total number of registered vehicles also increased from 1 064 to 1 186 as at 31 July 2015. We are currently setting up a promotion booth at the SENT Landfill to promote the use of the RTS network. In the coming months, we shall continue to enhance the promotion effort and assist the SENT Landfill users to get prepared for shifting to the RTS network.

Publicity to Inform the General Public

12. To alert the general public that the SENT Landfill will soon cease to receive non-construction waste and remind those involved in property management to make timely alternative arrangement with their cleansing contractors, a radio API was produced and broadcast as from May 2015. We have also set up an enquiry hotline to answer related enquires from the public and provide assistance to the trades. Furthermore, the latest information regarding the WDP has been uploaded to the EPD's website for the information of the general public. We plan to launch a second stage of API in the 4th quarter of 2015 to further enhance publicity on the WDP and mobilize the community to get prepared.

Enforcement of New Equipment Standards on RCVs

13. To help the waste collection trade meeting the new equipment standards on RCVs, we launched a one-off subsidy scheme in January 2014 for private RCV owners to install a metal tailgate cover and a waste water sump tank on their vehicles. The trade's response to the scheme was very positive. Subsidies were granted to a total of 330 eligible RCVs and the associated retrofitting works were completed in March 2015.

14. The new equipment requirements came into effect on 1 April 2015. Starting from that date, all RCVs entering landfills or RTSs must be equipped with a metal tailgate cover and waste water sump tank of suitable construction and in good working condition. Offenders are liable

to a maximum fine of \$100,000. We carry out regular check and inspections on RCVs arriving at landfills and RTSs on their compliance with the new equipment requirements. As at 31 July 2015, we have carried out a total of 6 236 checks on RCVs and intercepted 47 RCVs for detailed inspection. They were all found to be complying with the requirements and no prosecution was initiated.

Re-routing of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's Collection Service

15. To make available sufficient RTS capacity at the WKTS and STTS to cope with the MSW diverted from the SENT Landfill, some collection services of Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in some districts in Kowloon and the New Territories need to be re-routed to deliver waste to those RTSs with more unused capacity or directly to landfills.

16. As at 1 September 2015, FEHD has completed the re-routing of collection service in 6 districts, and that another 2 districts are scheduled for re-routing in by October 2015. We assess that the re-routing of collection service in these districts would make available sufficient RTS capacity to cope with the MSW being diverted from the SENT Landfill. We would however keep the situation under review and stand ready to put into effect additional re-routing as and when necessary.

Liaison with Stakeholders

17. A working group was set up with representatives from the waste collection trade, property management and government departments in March 2014, and 5 meetings have been held so far. Members of the working group have provided full support to the WDP, assisted to disseminate the latest information through their trade communication channels, reflected the trades' concerns for discussion and provided constructive comments in refining the WDP. We shall continue with this communication platform until the WDP is fully accomplished.

18. To provide a channel for direct communication with

individual waste collectors, property management companies and other stakeholders, two briefing/discussion sessions were arranged in May 2015, with about 100 participants taking part. First-hand information was disseminated on the different measures of the WDP associated with the SENT Landfill stopping reception of MSW, how it will affect their business and service and advice on timely preparation to cope with the change in waste disposal outlets. The participants were active in sharing their views and reflecting the problems they encountered. The discussions were fruitful and the ideas exchanged were useful for refining the WDP.

Way Forward

19. Good progress has been achieved on the various measures under the WDP in preparation for the SENT Landfill to be designated to receive only construction waste. All the stakeholders are well informed of the anticipated changes. From our liaison and engagement work, the trade expects an early formal announcement of the official end date for delivery of MSW to the SENT Landfill, so that there will be sufficient lead time for them to plan their new collection routes and a firm basis to work out new service arrangements with their clients. Subject to negative vetting by the LegCo, the effective date for the SENT Landfill to receive only construction waste will be on 6 January 2016.

Environmental Protection Department
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