

**Confirmed Minutes of the 125th Meeting of
the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee
held on 13 September 2013 at 2:00 pm**

Present:

Dr Dorothy CHAN, BBS (Chairperson)
Dr HUNG Wing-tat, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Gary ADES
Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong, JP
Dr HAU Chi-hang, Billy
Prof FUNG Tung
Prof NG Cheuk-ye, John
Miss NG Yuen-ting, Yolanda
Prof TAM Fung-ye, Nora, BBS, JP
Dr TSANG Po-keung, Eric
Miss Evelyn LEUNG (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Prof LI Xiang-dong
Mr WONG Lok-tak, Luther
Prof YEP Kin-man, Ray
Dr YIP Chee-hang, Eric

In Attendance:

Mr Andrew LAI	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3), Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Mr K F TANG	Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment), EPD
Mr Y K CHAN	Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Ms Joanne CHIN	Executive Officer (CBD), EPD
Ms Daicie TONG	Executive Manager (CBD), EPD

In Attendance for Agenda Item 3:

Mr H M WONG	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Strategic Assessment), EPD
Mr Victor YEUNG	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Strategic Assessment)1, EPD
Mr K W CHEUNG	Senior Nature Conservation Officer (North), AFCD
Ms Eva YAU	Nature Conservation Officer (Yuen Long), AFCD
Mr Ambrose CHEONG	Deputy Project Manager (NTN&W), Engineering and Development Department (CEDD)
Mr LAW Man-tim	Chief Engineer/P2 (NTN&W), CEDD
Mr K S CHAN	Senior Engineer/9 (NTN&W), CEDD
Mr David LAM	Chief Town Planner (Strategic Planning), PlanD

Mr Wilfred LAU	Study Director, Ove Arup and Partners Hong Kong Ltd. (ARUP)
Mr Peter CHAN	Study Manager, ARUP
Ms Carmen CHU	Study Deputy Manager, ARUP
Mr Sam TSOI	Environmental Team Leader, ARUP
Mr Alex NGAI	Environmental Consultant, ARUP
Ms Theresa YEUNG	Director of Planning, ARUP
Mr Geoff CAREY	Director, AEC Ltd (ARUP's expert consultant)

In Attendance for Agenda Item 4:

Mr Ken WONG	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Metro Assessment), EPD
Mr Colin KEUNG	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Metro Assessment)2, EPD
Dr Kenneth LEUNG	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Strategic Assessment) 5, EPD
Dr CHAN Man-wai	Executive Director, Project Delivery, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD)
Mr NG Ying-chuen	Head, Technical Services, WKCD
Mr Brian TAM	Senior Environmental Specialist, WKCD
Mr Eric CHING	Associate, Mott MacDonald Hong Kong Ltd. (Mott MacDonald)
Mr Philip CHAN	Director, Mott MacDonald
Mr Fred NG	Senior Environmental Consultant, Mott MacDonald
Ms Cecilia CHAN	Project Coordinator, Earth Asia Limited (Earth Asia)
Ms Livia WONG	Landscape Designer, Earth Asia
Mr Francis SOOTO	Director, MVA Hong Kong Limited (MVA)
Mr Steven HO	Technical Director, MVA
Mr Michael DYER	Environmental Consultant, Mott MacDonald
Mr Henry LEUNG	Environmental Consultant, Mott MacDonald
Ms Eugenne YUEN	Assistant Environmental Consultant, Mott MacDonald

Action

Item 1 : Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 124th meeting held on 19 August 2013

The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 19 August 2013 had been circulated to Members. The minutes were confirmed subject to the amendments proposed by a Member as follows –

- (a) Para. 13 – replaced the word “study” with “literature research”
- (b) Para. 63 – added a Member to the list of Members who had declared indirect interest on the EIA report on “Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop”

Item 2 : Matters arising from the 124th meeting held on 19 August 2013

2. The Chairperson advised that the meeting would be conducted in English. The Secretariat had arranged simultaneous interpretation for a member of the public who requested the service for observing the open sessions of the meeting.

Item 3 : Discussion on the supplementary information on the EIA report on “Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop”
(ACE-EIA Paper 6/2013)

Internal Discussion Session

3. The Chairperson informed Members that the supplementary information from the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) on the EIA report on “Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop” (LMC Loop) was prepared in response to the comments/questions raised at the last Subcommittee meeting held on 19 August 2013. The information had been circulated to Members for reference before the meeting. The discussion would be divided into the following sessions –

- (a) Presentation Session
- (b) Question-and-Answer Session
- (c) Internal Discussion Session

4. The Presentation Session and Question-and-Answer Session would be opened to the public. The Internal Discussion Sessions would remain closed.

5. The Chairperson asked Members if they had any interest to declare. Three Members advised that the organisations/green groups which they belonged to had submitted comments to EPD. The meeting agreed that they could stay on and participate in the discussion.

6. The Chairperson reminded Members to keep confidentiality of the discussion on the supplementary information as the full Council had yet to consider the Subcommittee’s recommendations before tendering its comments on the report under the EIA Ordinance (EIAO). Members were advised to refer any enquiries to the Secretariat for follow up in case they were approached on the discussion and/or decision of the Subcommittee.

7. For a more structured and focused discussion of the supplementary information, the Chairperson suggested and Members agreed to raise questions on the key subject areas of the information in the order of –

- (a) Proposed Eastern Connection Road (ECR)
- (b) Reed beds area
- (c) Urban design considerations

- (d) Green transport management scheme

[The project proponent team joined the meeting at this juncture.]

Presentation Session (Open Session)

8. Mr Ambrose Cheong advised that CEDD's presentation would focus on the key proposals and measures in response to Members' comments and concerns raised in the last Subcommittee meeting. He and Mr Peter Chan then briefed the meeting on the following aspects:

- (a) Carving out the proposed ECR from the current EIA report (Response to Item 15(a) of ACE Paper 11/2013)
- (b) Integrating the reed beds into the Amenity/Activity Corridor (A/A Corridor) (Response to Item 15(b) of ACE Paper 11/2013)
- (c) Urban design considerations (Response to EIASC's comments at the meeting on 19.8.2013)
- (d) Green transport management scheme (Response to further comments from a Member dated 12.9.2013)

Question-and-Answer Session (Open Session)

Proposed Eastern Connection Road (ECR)

9. Mr Ambrose Cheong briefly recapped the justification for planning the proposed ECR to cater for traffic demand upon full development of the LMC Loop (the Loop) from transport management perspective as well as the connectivity/synergy of the Loop with the neighbouring areas. He informed that the Loop development would be in two phases, and the proposed ECR would only be required in Phase 2 development planned for 2027. Mr Cheong further informed that the planning circumstances and wider strategic infrastructure situation around the Loop development were expected to vary with time, e.g. the proposed Northern Link and the new pedestrian link with Shenzhen involving new boundary control facilities. Such would have potential bearing on the ECR traffic demand. Having regard to these considerations, CEDD would voluntarily exclude the ECR proposal from the current EIA report. Members welcomed the information,

10. A Member noted CEDD's proposal to promote green transport management scheme within the Loop and asked if it was also applicable for access to the Loop. He further sought clarification about the absence of direct pedestrian access from the MTR LMC Station/LMC Spurline Boundary Control Point (LMC Station) to the Loop, and whether it was feasible to restrict vehicular access to and within the Loop to those residing and working in the Loop similar to the road permit system on Lantau Island. Another Member reiterated his reservation on the now-withdrawn ECR being planned as an alternative access route of the Loop. He pointed out that without the proposed ECR, there was still a secondary exit route for emergency vehicles that connected the Loop area to the Kwu Tung North New

Development Area (KTN NDA) via Ma Tso Lung Road without the need to detour into the Ho Sheung Heung area. This involved a shorter travelling time than routing through the existing old and narrow Border Road and Ma Tso Lung Road from Fanling Highway.

11. In response to a Member's enquiry on the possible underestimation of the trip generation rate on the traffic demand for the Loop by comparing the student data of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Ms Carmen Chu explained that the calculation was based on the unified trip rate, i.e. the number of trips made by a student to the external area. They would take into account the double effect of the student population in the Loop and, where necessary to multiply the total volume of traffic with the expected size of student population at the detailed design stage. The Member remarked that he had no issue on the calculation method, but that CEDD must take the most updated data to derive a more accurate result to estimate the traffic demand for the Loop area.

12. In response to Members' concerns regarding the connectivity of the Loop with the neighbouring areas, Mr Ambrose Cheong explained that the Direct Link was only linked to the LMC Station and spanned across and along the Frontier Closed Area. In view of border control considerations, public access was restricted to commuters from vehicles and rail only. Ms Carmen Chu supplemented that the public could cycle or walk directly to the Loop area via the Western Connection Road (WCR) which was not situated in the closed area. Cycle tracks and footpaths would be provided to facilitate non-bus and non-rail users to access the Loop area via WCR.

13. Members were mindful of the existing security restrictions on the frontier closed area which was applicable to the whole of Hong Kong. They noted that for the situation in Lok Ma Chau, the public were banned from direct pedestrian access to the LMC Station and the Frontier Closed Area from the Loop. A Member suggested, and echoed by other Members, that CEDD should actively explore the possibility to facilitate the public to walk directly from the LMC Station to the Loop. He also requested CEDD to incorporate in the detailed design a pedestrian walkway in the Direct Link for facilitating this direct pedestrian access. The walkway reserve was for planning purpose in the event that there were changes in the existing security restrictions. CEDD noted the proposal. Mr Peter Chan supplemented that the proposed provision of a walkway reserve had to be reviewed having regard that the reserve would involve changes to the configuration of the bridge structure as well as other ancillary works.

14. Concerning a Member's enquiry on the route of the green shuttles along the Direct Link, Ms Carmen Chu informed that the shuttles would go directly from the Loop area above the Frontier Closed Area to the second level of LMC Station where people could walk to the boundary crossing to the Shenzhen side or to ride on trains to Sheung Shui. According to the current border control rules, people were only allowed to enter the Frontier Close Area by vehicles or rail.

15. In reply to a Member's suggestion to CEDD to consider implementing a permit system to restrict vehicular access entering and within the Loop area, Mr Ambrose Cheong explained that people who drove in would be required to park at the entrance of the Loop. The traffic control measures to be adopted would be subject to the Loop development at the later stage. Another Member suggested that CEDD should explore the "park- and-ride" option which was well practised in major cities like London to control vehicular traffic to and within the Loop.

Integration of reed beds in the Amenity/Activity Corridor (A/A Corridor)

16. A Member welcomed the latest proposal to retain some 3 ha of existing reed beds within the A/A Corridor and be connected to the proposed Ecological Area (EA) in the southern/southeastern part of the Loop. The reed beds would be hydrologically linked. He proposed to extend the reed marsh area further north by retaining those isolated red beds currently in fragmented patches for enhancing the overall ecology/landscape values of the Loop area. The view was shared by two Members. Suggestion was made to build boardwalks above these fragmented reed beds as access paths to mingle well with the natural environment. Mr Ambrose Cheong advised that the A/A Corridor was designed as a functional space to provide an open landscape for human activities and social interactions in the Loop. While CEDD had also considered the feasibility of retaining the isolated patches of reed beds as the landscape feature in the Loop, it was taken that the fragmented nature of the reed beds would not have much ecological value to the proposed EA. Having regard to the more important uses of the adjacent areas, the reed beds area was to be retained as now described in the proposal. Mr Geoff Carey supplemented that the proposed EA would be formed by using the whole existing reed marsh which would also serve as the reed nursery.

17. A Member considered that the proposal of retaining all the reed beds was to enhance the ecology/landscape values of the Loop as water bodies and vegetation were the important natural scene in the Loop area. She suggested upgrading the quality of the reed beds and the water channels for improved connectivity. Building boardwalks to connect patches of isolated reed beds could further enhance the overall amenity and feeling of openness. The Member stressed the importance of integration by connecting the water bodies, reed beds and people frequenting the area. She further urged CEDD to avoid forming open spaces on hard ground as far as practicable.

18. A Member noted that the reed beds were the only water bodies inside the Loop area. He suggested CEDD to consider establishing more water bodies to surround parcels of land to match with the fish pond environment surrounding of the Loop. The water bodies should be connected to Shenzhen River which could create a micro-climate to cool off the surrounding temperature. Two Members echoed that the water channels should naturally integrate with the environment. Mr Peter Chan responded that they had included extensive water features inside the Loop. The northern part of the A/A Corridor would be heavily landscaped with water features. Vegetation that would attract birds and other wildlife would be

provided to create a natural environment to blend in well with the Loop development.

Urban design considerations

19. Ms Theresa Yeung briefly recapped the “embracing hands” urban design concept adopted for the Loop development. The concept was based on delivering a flexible and permeable urban layout, an accessible urban structure via a network of access routes interlinked with landscape routes and a diversified mix of land uses.

20. In response to the question from a Member regarding CEDD’s commitment in promoting a people-oriented community in the Loop, Ms Theresa Yeung explained that they had proposed extensive landscape features and open spaces to create a comfortable and pedestrian-friendly environment. The east-west running Pedestrian Boulevard was also planned to serve as a major wind corridor, contributing to a low carbon and green development in the Loop. The proposed EA at the southern/southeastern side of the Loop would help enhance connectivity to the surrounding wetlands. She continued that one side of the Loop was located in an area of rural nature with high ecological value, while the other side was fronting the highly urbanised Shenzhen City. In between was the old Shenzhen River meander which had been retained and preserved. The Loop area would be co-developed by Hong Kong and Shenzhen and be integrated with the development of KTN NDA. The “embracing hands” urban design concept would bring the two cities together. She stated that by providing more open spaces at the A/A Corridor, students and people working in the Loop could better interact with each other and integrate with the surrounding natural environment.

21. Ms Theresa Yeung furthered that extensive greening would be provided in the open spaces and development plots to help reduce heat island effect and energy consumption on air conditioning uses. People would be encouraged to access different parts of the Loop by walking or cycling. She said that walking within the Loop, especially on the southern side of the Loop which shared a higher ecological value, would bring comfortable experience to the people frequenting the area. Taking into account the airflow direction, the east-west running corridors planned would also provide a comfortable wind environment. Other green features such as centralized district cooling system, roof-top and vertical greening, reuse of treated sewage effluent and green building design etc. would be explored and taken forward in the Loop development. The old Shenzhen River meander was the symbol of the Loop. People entering the Loop could walk on the trail to view the well-preserved ecological area and enjoy the entirely different montage of the meander – Hoo Hok Wai fish ponds and other natural habitats on the Hong Kong side and the densely populated Shenzhen City on the other side.

22. A Member commented that the “embracing hands” urban design concept in the Loop had not come out clearly in the plot layout and the perspective drawing spatial-wise and ecological-wise. He suggested CEDD to better integrate different

features in the Loop and achieve urban synergy in totality including an overall waste management strategy and rainwater harvesting system. Ms Theresa Yeung responded that they had included many green and low-carbon initiatives including waste recycling and sorting stations, re-use of treated effluent for irrigation and flushing purposes, use of green buses within the Loop subject to advancement of technologies and a centralized district cooling system to reduce energy consumption. The Member reiterated the importance of enhancing the people-oriented approach in the design. He also suggested CEDD to draw up a scheme design of the project to realize the proposed “embracing hands” concept to develop the Loop into a green community/neighbourhood ecologically, environmentally, spatially and landscapingly.

Green transport management scheme

23. In answering a Member’s questions regarding traffic to and within the Loop, Mr Peter Chan informed that the public commuting to the Loop in private vehicles had to stop and park in the centralized car parking spaces at the entrance of the Loop. Commuting within the Loop would be on foot, cycling and other mode of green transport including electric shuttle buses. No authorized vehicles except service vehicles and those for people with disabilities would be allowed commuting inside the Loop. Comprehensive cycle tracks and footpath networks within the Loop and connection to external road networks would be provided.

24. A Member shared the views of another Member for CEDD to explore the “park-and-ride” option. He pointed out that there were ample car parking spaces in the San Tin area where people could park their cars and change to shuttle buses to commute to the Loop. A Member echoed that professionals working in the Loop should be receptive to new technologies and innovative ideas on green transport initiatives. With technological advancement, there should be more creative modes of green transport in addition to electric vehicles. The Member further remarked that CEDD should take measures to ensure there would be no abuse of the proposed “park-and-ride” arrangement.

Other issues

25. A Member advised CEDD to make use of the existing reed beds in creating new natural habitat in the Loop development as the species had proved to adapt to the environment and would likely increase the chance of success. She was also concerned that CEDD had not clearly addressed the extent and treatment of arsenic-containing soil in the EIA report. This concern was shared by other Members. They considered that similar to the case of the North East New Territories New Development Areas (NENT NDAs) project in which CEDD was also the project proponent, CEDD should also conduct investigations to identify sites with high levels of arsenic and to propose detailed treatment and disposal plans prior to commencement of construction works in the Loop.

26.. The Chairperson thanked CEDD and its consultant team for the

presentation and answering questions from Members. Mr Ambrose Cheong appealed to Members to support the LMC Loop project which would bring long-term benefits to Hong Kong and Shenzhen in terms of economic growth, competitiveness and the environment.

[The project proponent team left the meeting at this juncture.]

Internal Discussion Session

27. The Chairperson reminded Members that the EIA Subcommittee could make recommendations to the full Council on the EIA report with the following approach –

- (i) endorse the EIA report without condition; or
- (ii) endorse the EIA report with conditions and details of the proposed conditions; or
- (iii) defer the decision to the full Council for further consideration – highlight issues or reasons for not reaching a consensus or issues to be further considered by the full Council; or
- (iv) reject the EIA report and inform the proponent the right to go to the full Council.

28. A Member considered that the report could be endorsed with conditions. He suggested that CEDD should be required to incorporate in the design a walkway reserve for facilitating pedestrian access between the LMC Station and the Loop. This would provide flexibility in the event that there were changes in the existing security restrictions regarding pedestrian access to the Frontier Closed Area from the Loop in future. Mr H M Wong reiterated that the security restrictions regarding pedestrian access in the frontier area were applicable all over Hong Kong and were not specific only to the Loop situation.

29. In view that a pedestrian walkway could provide a direct and convenient access for the public, Members agreed to make a recommendation to request CEDD to actively explore the possibility to facilitate the public to walk directly from the LMC Station to the Loop.

30. A Member considered that the “embracing hands” urban design concept of integrating different design features did not come out clearly in the EIA report. He remarked that CEDD should demonstrate how the “embracing hands” concept could be realized in developing the Loop into a green community/ neighbourhood. The Chairperson suggested making a recommendation that required CEDD to enhance the people-oriented approach in the design and the implementation process including achieving urban synergy, providing green corridors and more water bodies using natural landscaping.

31. A Member remarked that CEDD had not addressed the extent and treatment of arsenic in soil in the Loop area. She suggested that CEDD be required

to conduct investigations to identify the arsenic-containing soil and propose detailed plans on treatment and disposal prior to commencement of construction works. She further suggested that CEDD should enhance connectivity of water bodies and integrate them into the neighbourhood such as the existing fish ponds, as well as in linking them up with Shenzhen River. Under green transport consideration, the Member recommended restricting private vehicles running within the Loop.

32. The Chairperson suggested making a recommendation requesting CEDD to retain and extend the reed beds area in the design as far as practicable. This was echoed by a Member. In connection with another Member's concern over the design of the access paths around the reed beds, a Member shared that the use of boardwalks as access paths should integrate harmoniously with the natural context of the site.

33. A Member considered that CEDD should conduct a detailed assessment on the need of the ECR in case the traffic demand was expected in the later phase of the Loop development. Another Member added that the proposal must come with a detailed design to ensure a harmonious interface of the road connection with the Loop.

34. A Member pointed out that CEDD could change the plot ratio and building height at the subsequent town planning stage. He was concerned that these possible changes would intrude into the natural environment of the Loop. Members agreed to make a strong recommendation that CEDD should ensure the building typology and open/public spaces of the Loop development should be in harmony with the surrounding environment. These included plot ratio, building height, form and materials.

35. On the control of vehicular traffic, a Member suggested that a permit system could be introduced to restrict authorized vehicular traffic entering into and within the Loop. This suggestion echoed well the green transport management scheme which CEDD was committed for the Loop development.

36. Having regard to the findings and recommendations of the EIA report and the further information provided by CEDD, the Subcommittee agreed to recommend to the full Council that the EIA report could be endorsed with the following proposed conditions and recommendations –

Conditions of endorsement

- (a) CEDD will incorporate in the detailed design a pedestrian walkway reserve in the Direct Link between the LMC Station and the Loop. The design provision is required for planning purposes in the event that there are changes in the existing security restrictions allowing possible pedestrian access from the LMC Station to the Loop in future.

- (b) The proposed Eastern Connection Road is excluded from the EIA report as suggested by CEDD.

Recommendations

- (a) CEDD should actively explore the possibility to facilitate the public to walk directly from the LMC Station to the Loop, while noting that there are existing security restrictions regarding pedestrian access to the LMC Station and the Frontier Closed Area;
- (b) CEDD should consider restricting private vehicular traffic entering into and within the Loop through appropriate traffic management measures, including the use of car permits to restrict private cars accessing the Loop. “Park-and-Ride” options should also be investigated;
- (c) CEDD should conduct a detailed survey on the soil profile in the Loop to locate any hotspots where high levels of arsenic can be identified. Construction works at these hotspots shall be avoided as far as practicable. Should avoidance is not feasible, CEDD should submit detailed arsenic management plan(s) for such sites which require soil treatment to (i) double-check and confirm validity of the bioavailability predictions derived from the survey findings; (ii) identify and adopt appropriate treatment methods/processes to reduce the potential risk of arsenic exposure to human health to an acceptable level; and (iii) properly handle and dispose of the treated materials, prior to commencement of construction works;
- (d) CEDD should prepare a scheme design of the project to realize the proposed “embracing hands” urban design concept to develop the Loop into a green community/neighbourhood which will be in harmony with the surrounding environment, e.g. fish ponds, reed beds and water bodies in the natural context ecologically, environmentally, spatially and landscapingly. CEDD should also consider integrating the conserved reed bed area in the overall Amenity/Activity Corridor design; and
- (e) CEDD is recommended to enhance the land use planning to ensure that the building typology and open/public spaces of the Loop will be in harmony with the surrounding environment.

Item 3 : EIA Report on “West Kowloon Cultural District”

(ACE-EIA Paper 7/2013)

Internal Discussion Session

37. The Chairperson informed Members that the discussion of the EIA report would be divided into the following sessions –

- (a) Presentation Session
- (b) Question-and-Answer Session

(c) Internal Discussion Session

The Presentation Session and Question-and-Answer Session would be opened to the public. The Internal Discussion Sessions would remain closed.

38. The Chairperson informed Members that the EIA report on “West Kowloon Cultural District” (WKCD) was a designated project under “Schedule 3” of the EIAO. The public inspection period of the report was from 23 July 2013 to 21 August 2013. As an administrative arrangement, public comments and the gist of major issues/concerns received by EPD had been circulated to Members for reference before the meeting. Written response from the project proponent (i.e. West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA)) to questions raised by Members had also been circulated for Members’ information before the meeting.

39. The Chairperson asked Members if they had any interest to declare. A Member declared his indirect interest as a member of the Technical Committee of the Xiqu Centre Design Competition, West Kowloon Cultural District. The membership had been completed recently. The standing practice was that a Member declaring indirect interest could attend the meeting and take part in the discussions. The meeting agreed that the Member could stay and continue participating in the discussion.

40. The Chairperson reminded Members again to keep confidentiality of the discussion on the EIA report. Members should refer any enquiries to the Secretariat in case they were approached on the discussion and/or decision of the Subcommittee.

41. For a more structured and focused discussion of the report, the Chairperson suggested and Members agreed to raise questions on the key subject areas of the EIA reports in the order of –

- (a) Trees and grasses
- (b) Air Quality Objectives (AQOs)

[The project proponent team joined the meeting at this juncture.]

Presentation Session (Open Session)

42. Dr Chan Man-wai first presented an overview of the project which included the background, needs and benefits of the project. Mr Eric Ching briefed Members on the landscape planning and visual design of the WKCD project and the potential environmental impacts arising from the project.

Question-and-Answer Session (Open Session)

Trees and grasses

43. A Member referred to the preliminary tree planting proposal and asked why tree species not common for local environment had been proposed for planting in the development site. He also asked for the reasoning for planting trees instead of seedlings in the area. Reference was made to the Development Bureau guidelines regarding a consultancy study on street tree planting and management plan in Hong Kong. The study had reviewed urban tree species that had blended well with the surrounding urban environment and would attract biodiversity in the area. He suggested that the study findings would be useful for WKCD in the planting/landscape design at the detailed design stage. The Member also suggested providing a green corridor to link WKCD with Kowloon Park, which was rich in biodiversity in terms of trees, birds and other wildlife. The linkage could attract native species to the project site which would serve good conservation purpose.

44. A Member echoed the importance of the green corridor. He referred to the Chinese Fan Palms in Kowloon Park where fruit bats roosted. That could help enrich the natural habitats of both WKCD and Kowloon Park and enhance the ecological habitats for urban flora and fauna species in the area.

45. Another Member suggested WKCD to extend the connectivity of WKCD to the landscape deck of the planned Central Kowloon Route (CKR) which could connect to the Express Rail Link West Kowloon Terminus (XRL WKT). He also enquired on the percentage area of WKCD to be covered by turf grass, grass species to be planted and details of the grass management plan. He strongly advised against planting carpet grass of the *Axonopus* genus including *Axonopus compressus* in the site.

46. Dr Chan Man-wai informed that they had started the landscape planning and design processes and would plant a good mix of native and not-too-common tree species in the site. They had started a tree nursery and tested some 1 000 trees on their adaptability in the project environment. They were drawing up detailed tree management plan as well as evaluating the grass species to be planted. Dr Chan also thanked Members for their valuable comments on the connectivity between WKCD and Kowloon Park and would take on board the suggestion when formulating the landscape conceptual plans at a later stage. Mr Eric Ching supplemented that the percentage of greening spaces would be a minimum of 60% in the park and an overall 30% for the whole WKCD site. The landscape conceptual plan had not differentiated between trees and grasses, but the green open spaces were largely to be based on trees.

47. In view of the substantial green coverage of the development site, a Member suggested that WKCD should engage professionals in Hong Kong in reviewing the tree and grass species to be planted in the area at an early planning

stage, especially that they had already started preparing the tree nursery.

Odour impact

48. In response to a Member's enquiry on possible odour impact associated with the excavation of marine mud during construction, Mr Eric Ching advised that the WKCD project itself would not generate any odour problems and that they had already assessed the potential odour impact generated from the adjacent New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter on the project. He said that they had conducted a review of potential marine sediments and confirmed that there was no sediment issue for the area. Excavation works for the XRL WKT nearby had already been completed, and there would be very limited amount of marine sediment during deep layer excavation in the remaining part of the site. No marine sediment issues were anticipated for excavation for WKCD basement.

Air quality standards

49. In answering a Member's enquiry on compliance of the WKCD project with the new Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) to be effective in January 2014, Mr Eric Ching said that the air quality assessment for WKCD was based on the prevailing AQOs standards under the current EIA process. In view of the possible implications of the new AQOs on the project, they had made a further step to conduct a preliminary analysis about future compliance of the new AQOs. It was anticipated that the emission level of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and respirable suspended particulates (RSP)/fine suspended particulates (FSP) could comply with the new AQOs by 2015 and 2020 respectively. Compliance was achievable in view that vehicular emissions were expected to drop by 75% from 2015 to 2030 as a result of the retirement of older vehicle types as well as more stringent emission standards. Mr Ching added that results of the "Pollutants in the Atmosphere and their Transport over Hong Kong" (PATH) air quality model showed that the hourly NO₂ would be complied with by 2020 and the overall new AQOs standards by 2030.

50. A Member suggested that modern technology should be adopted on treating exhaust from the underpass road, e.g. painting the tunnel with titanium dioxide. Research had shown that titanium dioxide could serve as the photocatalytic material that grabbed airborne NO_x for conversion into harmless nitrates. Recent testing had demonstrated that concrete roadway/pavement laced with titanium dioxide could substantially reduce NO_x in air. He also suggested channelling exhaust through soil mass which could serve as the filtering agent.

51. Dr Chan Man-wai advised Members that electronic buses would be deployed to serve the east-west ends of the WKCD site. He would further investigate into the use of titanium dioxide with their consultants at the detailed design stage in respect of the road tunnelling works.

[The project proponent team left the meeting at this juncture.]

Internal Discussion Session

52. The Chairperson reminded Members that the EIASC could make recommendations to the Council on the EIA report with the following approach:

- (i) endorse the EIA report without condition; or
- (ii) endorse the EIA report with conditions and details of the proposed conditions; or
- (iii) defer the decision to the full Council for further consideration – highlight issues or reasons for not reaching a consensus or issues to be further considered by the full Council; or
- (iv) reject the EIA report and inform the proponent the right to go to the full Council.

53. The Chairperson suggested and a Member supported to impose a condition to request WKCDA to provide a detailed tree planting and management plan to ensure sustained landscaping could be carried out. A Member considered that WKCDA should also be required to submit a turf grass planting and management plan to the satisfaction of the relevant authorities. The plan should include information of the percentage area to be covered by turf grass, justification of such percentage area, the grass species to be planted and composition of the growth substrate. He categorically requested WKCDA to avoid using carpet grass (*Anxonopus compressus*) in the development site as the grass species was not commensurate with the environment and visual layout of the magnificent WKCD project.

54. A Member pointed out that having regard to the substantial amount of water required in particular for maintaining the grass patches in the development site, she suggested WKCDA to adopt appropriate rainwater harvesting method for irrigation of the greenery in the project site. She also proposed that professionals, e.g. certified arborist and preferably a separate turf grass specialist, should be engaged to review species of trees and turf grass to be planted at early planning stage.

55. Mr Y K Chan clarified that AFCD was the authority for monitoring ecological planting but not landscape planting as in this case. The Member suggested EPD to advise on the relevant authority on such management.

[Post-meeting notes: The Planning Department was the relevant authority on landscape planting under the EIA regime.]

56. A Member suggested making a recommendation to require WKCDA to pursue the opportunity to enhance the connectivity between WKCD and Kowloon Park and preferably the planned CKR podium so as to retain/enhance the ecological habitats for urban species in the area.

57. The Chairperson suggested, and echoed by another Member, to recommend WKCDA to take further steps to work towards the new AQOs as far as practicable and to seek more innovative and proactive measures to reduce the emissions and exhausts especially from the road underpass.

58. A Member further remarked that WKCDA should be recommended to re-use of the materials being dug out of the site for other construction works within the site e.g. landscape deck, as far as practicable to reduce materials to be disposed of arising from the WKCD project. Mr K F Tang advised that WKCDA could be requested to submit a detailed Waste Management Plan (WMP) to set out the measures to minimize waste as well as the handling/ treatment of surplus waste materials. He said that about 55% of the inert construction and demolition (C&D) materials would be re-used and the remaining 45% would be delivered to the Public Fill Reception Facilities for the use by other projects. Members opined that WKCDA should be recommended to improve the 55% re-use rate for inert C&D materials. A Member opined that it would be prudent not to re-use the materials as substrate for landscaping/planting as the soil might be contaminated.

[Post-meeting note: WKCDA clarified that there was no land contamination of the WKCD project identified in the EIA study that might cause potential public health risk.]

59. A Member echoed that WKCDA has to demonstrate how they could achieve and improve further in terms of waste management strategies for the project. He further advised that WKCDA could make reference to the benchmarks of re-using existing building materials as set out by the “BEAM Plus” and the experience of using marine mud in-situ in the Kai Tak Development project.

60. Concerning the reference guidelines issued by the Development Bureau for devising management plans for urban tree species, a Member said that the consultant should be aware of the latest publication and need not be made a recommendation for WKCDA.

61. With regard to a Member's comment on the layout/building form of the whole WKCD project, another Member advised that it was the design master plan being proposed and approved. The Member also pointed out that the master plan would not avail much room for WKCDA in enhancing the connectivity of WKCD with Kowloon Park and the CKR podium.

62. Having regard to the findings and recommendations of the EIA report and the information provided by WKCDA, the Subcommittee agreed to recommend to the Council that the EIA report could be endorsed with the following proposed conditions and recommendations –

Conditions of endorsement

WKCDA will submit quality tree and turf grass planting and landscape plans as well as a post-planting care plan, in consultation with the relevant authorities, including but not limited to the Planning Department, to the Director of Environmental Protection for approval before commencement of construction of the project. The tree planting plan should set out details of the composition of the native tree species to be planted in the project site. The turf grass planting plan should also set out details of the percentage of grass coverage with justification, the grass species to be planted. Carpet Grass of the *Axonopus* genus including *Axonopus compressus* be avoided. WKCDA should engage a certified arborist advise on, monitor and ensure proper implementation of the tree and turf grass planting and landscape plans.

Recommendations

- (a) WKCDA should pursue the opportunity to enhance the connectivity between West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) and Kowloon Park and the podium of the Central Kowloon Route to enhance the ecological habitats for urban flora and fauna species in the area;
- (b) WKCDA should actively work to adopt the new Air Quality Objectives standards when proceeding with the WKCD project as far as practicable and to undertake more innovative and proactive initiatives to reduce emissions during the operational phase of the project, especially those generated from the road underpass; and
- (c) WKCDA should submit an updated construction and demolition (C&D) material management plan to the relevant authorities, including but not limited to the Public Fill Committee of the Civil Engineering and Development Department for approval before commencement of construction of the project. The plan should include measures for minimizing C&D materials being generated and maximizing the re-use of C&D materials in-situ or for other projects.

63. The meeting agreed that there was no need to invite WKCDA to attend the full Council meeting to be scheduled later unless there were any unanticipated developments of the project which would call for their presentation/briefing at the meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Any other business

64. There was no other issue which Members wished to raise at the meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Date of next meeting

65. The Chairperson informed Members that as there was no EIA report submitted for discussion, the meeting reserved on 15 October 2013 would be cancelled. Members would be advised on the agenda of the next meeting in due course.

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
October 2013**