

## Results of the Public Consultation for HATS Stage 2

The Public Consultation for HATS Stage 2 was launched on 21 June 2004. Through various activities such as meetings, and community outreach forums, the community was given adequate opportunities to understand the proposals on HATS and the issues at stake when offering their opinions and suggestions. To raise the public's awareness of the environment and to increase their interest in HATS, we initiated a publicity and education programme and extended the consultation period by a month for completion on 20 November 2004.

2. There were views/feedbacks from a wide cross-section of the community, including political parties, Government's advisory bodies, District Councils in the harbour area, professional bodies, academia, special interest groups, and various business and trade organizations. Comments from 46 of these key stakeholder organizations/bodies were received and a further 81 written/electronic submissions were made by individual persons/companies. **Table 1** below shows a summary of the submissions received:

**Table 1 : Number of Submissions Received**

Stakeholders	Number of Submissions
Political Parties	2
Government Advisory Bodies, including the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE), the Capture Fisheries Subcommittee, the Aquaculture Subcommittee, the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee, and the Monitoring Group for HATS	5
Academics	12
Community Groups, e.g. green groups	5
Professional Bodies, e.g. Hong Kong Institution of Engineers	7
Business and Trade Associations, e.g. different chambers of commerce	8
District Councils (DC)	7
Individual persons and companies	81

## Views on Key Issues

3. Views generally support cleaning up the harbour and restoring this natural asset to an environmentally healthier state. Most of the comments received (87% of the key stakeholders and 77% of the individuals) indicate support for the Government to take action in cleaning up the harbour. Whilst none of the key stakeholders opposed HATS Stage 2, only 9 individuals expressed their views against spending money to clean up the harbour, largely because of the potentially heavy fiscal commitment, and concern about the possible need to reclaim the harbour. Views from the remaining 12% (or 15 submissions) have no clear preference.

4. To help us implement HATS Stage 2, we specifically asked for the community's views on (i) the preferred option; (ii) the suggestion that HATS Stage 2 be implemented in a phased manner, i.e. as Stages 2A and 2B; and (iii) the potential adjustment of sewage charges in line with the Polluter-pays Principle. The key results of these issues are summarized in **Table 2** below:

**Table 2 : Key Comments from the Public Consultation**

Issues	Number of submissions indicating views on these issues	Key results
What is the preferred option?	33 key stakeholders and 26 individuals	Around 64% of the key stakeholders and 73% of the individuals support Option A (treating all the HATS flow at the SCISTW). The reasons include the lowest cost and the presence of less sensitive receivers in the facility's proximity. Option B is the next most favoured option. Those who favour this option suggest 25% of the flow could be diverted to a satellite plant at Lamma Island for treatment, thus lowering the overall system risks, when compared with Option A. Options C and D are generally not favoured due to their potential impact to larger groups of affected populations, and higher costs.

To implement HATS Stage 2 in two phases, i.e. Stage 2A, and 2B?	31 key stakeholders and 18 individuals	<p>While 68% of the key stakeholders and 50% of the individuals support the phasing idea, the community strongly requests the Government to commit to Stage 2B by setting out a more concrete implementation plan.</p> <p>Around 31% of the responses including the green groups, academics, some private sector bodies and the general public, urge the Government to pursue Stage 2 in one go, so that harbour pollution will be reduced as soon as possible. Some propose the alternative of phasing the implementation based on capacity instead of the treatment level.</p>
Adjustment of sewage charges in line with the Polluter-pays Principle with a view to cleaning up the harbour?	19 key stakeholders and 24 individuals	<p>Around 74% of the key stakeholders and 88% of the individuals support the proposal, but many commented that the adjustment of charges should be fair, commensurate with the benefits to be brought about by the scheme, and affordable to the community, with adequate consultation beforehand.</p>

5. Other comments mostly focus on issues such as “Is Disinfection Needed?” and “Concerns on Chlorination”. While the general public who want to see the Tsuen Wan beaches reopened as soon as possible support disinfection, some professional bodies and academics consider that, as attendance rates at the Tsuen Wan Beaches are relatively low, it would not be justified to spend large sums of money on any disinfection facility. Other stakeholders, mainly the green groups, and marine biologists, are concerned that with the large volume of the HATS sewage (up to 2.8 million m<sup>3</sup>/d ultimately), if chlorination/dechlorination were to be adopted there would be by-products which might have undesirable chronic effects on the marine environment. Some thus suggest the Government adopt ultra-violet (UV) disinfection, although others commented that the use of UV would have its own drawbacks in dealing with CEPT effluent. The ACE and some marine biologists suggest conducting a detailed EIA to ascertain the environmental implications before making any decision on the choice of the disinfection technology.

## Other Issues of Concern

6. Other issues of concern and key views from stakeholders are summarized in **Table 3**:

**Table 3 : Other Concerns Raised During Public Consultation**

<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Key views from stakeholders</b>
Choice of Biological Treatment Technology	The community generally has no specific preference for any biological treatment technology. What they would like to see is a commitment to the implementation of Stage 2B.
Need for biological treatment, and nutrient removal	Some urge reconsideration of the cost implications and practicality relating to provision of biological treatment, and nutrient removal in Stage 2B. They consider that pollution loads from the Pearl River make the background pollution levels of the HKSAR waters high. Thus, they believe that to invest heavily in local biological treatment facilities in order to reduce organic and nutrient loads is not a cost-effective way to improve local water quality. They further suggest channeling the resources (i.e. the savings that could be achieved through dropping Stage 2B), to subsidize the pollution abatement work in the Pearl River Delta. To clean up the pollution due to local discharges, these stakeholders propose to resurrect the old SSDS long outfall scheme.
Public Private Partnership (PPP)	Views generally support this approach, provided that the public's interest is adequately safeguarded in the PPP arrangement.
Resurrection of the old SSDS long outfall scheme	Some suggest pursuing this scheme arguing that it would mean a much lighter fiscal commitment, while at the same time would bring about reasonably good water quality improvement, given the relatively good dilution available at the proposed discharge point southeast of Lamma Island. Stakeholders holding this view also suggest the Government should use the money for funding Stage 2B to subsidize the pollution

	<p>abatement work in the Pearl River Delta, as they believe that pollution loads from the Pearl River influence local water quality, and it would be more cost-effective to spend money to tackle pollution problems at source.</p> <p>Some academics also suggest resurrecting the old scheme from the perspective of cost and the assimilative capacity of the natural environment.</p>
Sludge Handling	<p>Since HATS will produce significant amounts of sludge, some stakeholders would like to know the Government's long term plan in handling the sludge. In this regard, they request detailed information on the future sludge handling arrangement and its related cost for further consideration.</p>
Proposal to extend the existing outfall of the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works (SCISTW)	<p>To achieve better dilution, thus dispensing with the need to disinfect the treated effluent, some propose to extend the existing SCISTW outfall to deeper waters within or outside the harbour area.</p>
Effluent reuse, conservation and minimization	<p>Some consider that these issues will be the more fundamental way to help tackle the water pollution problem and the Government should educate the public more in these areas.</p>
Proposal to use artificial reef for nutrient and bacteria removal	<p>Some propose to use artificial reefs for further polishing the effluent discharged by the HATS system, although this is normally used for enhancement of marine resources.</p>