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For discussion on 3 July 2017

Progress Report on the Promotion of Charter on External Lighting

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the progress of implementing the Charter on External Lighting (the Charter).

BACKGROUND

2. At the meeting of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) on 13 June 2016, we reported the following:

- (a) the recruitment of signatories by working closely with the Working Group on the Promotion of the Charter on External Lighting (the Working Group) and liaising with the relevant trade bodies and organisations, inviting owners of external lighting installations which have attracted complaints to join the Charter, and conducting on-site investigations in districts with a higher concentration of external lighting to collect information about the external lighting installations and invite those installation owners to sign the Charter;
- (b) organising a signing ceremony on 1 April 2016. Over 4 000 organisations / shops / properties signed up to the Charter;
- (c) the promotion of the Guidelines on Industry Best Practices for External Lighting Installations (the Guidelines) by organising a series of seminars on good practice for external lighting installations; and

(d) the handling of complaints towards nuisance caused by external lighting.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS OF THE CHARTER

3. The Environment Bureau (ENB) continues to proactively implement and promote the Charter. Progress made since June 2016 is set out in paragraphs 4 to 17 below.

Number of Signatories

4. As at mid-June 2017, there were over 4 800 signatories to the Charter. Signatories include premises from different sectors, such as property development, building management, hotels and catering, retail, banking, laundry, travel and cinemas, as well as schools, public utilities and public / non-governmental organisations. The updated list of signatories has been uploaded to the Charter's new website (www.charteronexternallighting.gov.hk).

Recruitment of Signatories

5. ENB continues to actively promote the Charter by working closely with the Working Group. Apart from liaising with the relevant trade bodies and organisations and inviting owners of external lighting installations which have attracted complaints to join the Charter, we also appealed to signatories to sign up all of their branches to the Charter, and to extend our invitation to the tenants of the participating shopping malls.

6. To enhance the promotion at district level, an outreaching programme was conducted on 17 May 2017 where the Secretary for the Environment, together with the Working Group Chairperson and members as well as some District Councillors, promoted the Charter and distributed leaflets to owners of shops with external lighting installations in Tsuen Wan and Eastern District. About 40% of the shops visited responded positively to our appeal and signed up to the Charter.

7. We have also briefed the relevant sub-committees of a number of District Councils on the Charter and invited their assistance to monitor compliance of signatories and promote the Charter through their networks to owners of external lighting installations.

Site Visits to Signatories

8. We have conducted site visits to signatories who joined the Charter in 2016 to check if they were in compliance with the switch-off requirement. More than 4 300 signatories have been found to be compliant. We are still ascertaining compliance by some 200 signatories. ENB is following up with the persons responsible for these external lighting installations. If any signatories are found to be non-compliant in our follow-up site visits, they will be removed from the signatory list.

Award Ceremony

9. The first award ceremony of the Charter was held on 15 June 2017 to recognise signatories who are found to be compliant to the switch-off requirement in the past year. Over 3 000 properties and shops that fulfilled the pledge to switch off external lighting from 11pm to 7am were awarded the Platinum Award, and more than 1 200 properties and shops that switched off external lighting from midnight to 7am were awarded the Gold Award. In addition, more than 300 properties and shops signed up to the Charter in 2017 and were granted certificates.

10. Apart from publicising the list of signatories on the website, ENB will publish the list of signatories and awardees on newspapers. Stickers and certificates have been distributed to signatories for display at their properties to show their participation and to raise public awareness of the Charter.

Partnership Scheme

11. To better promote the Charter, we launched in June 2017 a new Partnership Scheme to invite advertising companies, trade / professional bodies or associations to become Charter Partners. The Partners will encourage through their network other companies, business contacts and partners, and clients, etc, to sign up their premises with external lighting installations to the Charter. The number of signatories recruited by each Partner will be posted on the dedicated Charter website. The Partners will also obtain written consent from the signatories they identified and advise ENB of their names. The Partners will conduct initial vetting of each signatory's compliance with the Charter within three months after the signing of the Charter, and will inform ENB of the findings. Vetting can be done by different credible means proposed by the Partner (e.g. conducting site visit to the lighting installations, requesting the signatory to provide photos or any other evidence to demonstrate compliance, etc.).

12. To recognise the Partners' contribution, their names will be posted on the dedicated Charter website hosted by ENB. The Partners can also display the Partner logo of the Charter on their marketing materials. Partners who recruit over 50 and 100 signatories respectively before 1 April 2018 will be given Gold and Platinum prizes respectively.

13. One advertising company and two trade associations have agreed to become Charter Partners immediately after we have introduced the new Partnership Scheme. We will continue to approach suitable candidates to enrol them into the Partnership Scheme.

The Guidelines

14. ENB has engaged a consultant to organise a series of seminars on Good Practice for External Lighting Installations. So far, 25 seminars have been held since May 2016 to appeal to Charter signatories and members of the relevant professional organisations, trade bodies and public bodies to observe the Guidelines and to adopt the good practices in the Guidelines when planning or managing their external lighting installations. Issues covered at the seminars include operating hours for lighting, controls for lighting, light nuisance control measures, energy efficiency measures, lighting project design planning and prevention of glare impact.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST EXTERNAL LIGHTING

15. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) continues to take proactive actions to handle complaints against external lighting. Upon receipt of complaints about light nuisance caused by external lighting, EPD will relay the complainants' concerns to the persons responsible for the lighting installations in question, invite them to sign up to the Charter, and advise them to refer to the Guidelines and take appropriate measures to minimise the impact of the lighting installations on the residents in the vicinity. Experience indicates that most of the persons responsible for the lighting installations would, upon receipt of complaints, adopt measures to minimise light nuisance as far as practicable. If the nuisance is caused by a Charter signatory and the signatory refuses to take remedial action by switching off the lighting during the preset time, the organisations concerned will be removed from the list of participating organisations in the Charter.

WAY FORWARD

16. ENB will continue to invite organisations in both the public and the private sectors to sign up to the Charter, in particular tenants located in the shopping malls / premises which have signed the Charter; Charter signatories with branches / stores / shops that have not yet signed up to the Charter; and the owners of external lighting installations that have become the subject of complaints lodged with EPD or as reported in the media.

17. We plan to organise award ceremonies in 2018 and beyond in recognition of the efforts made by signatories to adhere to the switch-off requirement under the Charter. As it takes time for the Charter established in 2016 to gather momentum and for the Government to refine the Charter in the light of the experience gained, the Government will assess the effectiveness of this administrative measure around 2018 to 2019, including the conduct of survey on public perception of light nuisance, response to the Charter, and how the business establishments respond to complaints from the public, etc. We will also continue to study the overseas regimes and experience in regulating external lighting, and to assess whether those standards and practices are applicable to Hong Kong.

ADVICE SOUGHT

18. Members are invited to note the implementation of the Charter.

Environment Bureau
June 2017