

**Relevant Extract of the Confirmed Minutes of
the 38th Meeting of the Waste Management Subcommittee
held on 19 March 2019 at 9:00 am**

Present:

Ir Prof Irene LO, JP (Chairperson)
Ms Carmen CHAN, BBS, JP
Ms Sylvia CHAN
Miss KONG Wing-man
Mr Adam KOO
Miss LAM Chung-yan
Ms Julia LAU
Mr Andrew LEE
Ms Christina TANG
Prof WONG Sze-chun, BBS, JP
Ir Conrad WONG, BBS, JP
Ms Becky LAM (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Prof Albert LEE
Ir MA Lee-tak, SBS
Mr Simon WONG, JP

In Attendance:

Miss Dora CHU	Executive Officer (CBD) 1, Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Miss Carman LEUNG	Executive Officer (CBD) 2, EPD

In Attendance for Item 2:

Mr Donald NG, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (Special Duties), EPD
Ms Hanny LAM	Assistant Director (Waste Management Policy), EPD
Mr Bruno LUK	Assistant Director (Waste Management Policy) (Designate), EPD
Mr Stephen SIU	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Producer Responsibility), EPD

Item 2 : Progress Update on the Implementation of the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Glass Beverage Containers

(ACE-WM Paper 1/2019)

2. The Chairperson informed Members that the paper provided an update on the progress of the implementation of the producer responsibility scheme on glass beverage containers (GPRS), and consulted Members on matters to be prescribed in the relevant subsidiary legislation to provide for the operational details of the scheme.

3. There was no declaration of interests by Members.

4. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr Donald Ng gave an opening remark and Mr Stephen Siu briefed Members on the background, objectives, implementation details and timetable of GPRS with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

Target for recovering and treating waste glass containers

5. A Member commended the efforts of EPD in implementing the GPRS. Yet, he considered that only 6,300 out of 13,000 tonnes of recovered glass materials were delivered to the recycling outlets as at end January 2019 was on the low side. He enquired whether the Government had any plans to increase the recovery rate.

6. Mr Donald Ng explained that having regard to the cost-effectiveness and operational need, it was not uncommon for the glass management contractors (GMCs) to store up relatively large amount of recycled glass materials before delivering them to the designated storage areas. It was envisaged that the glass materials recovered locally in 2018 could be fully absorbed through outlets such as local manufacturers of cement and eco-pavers. He further advised that the ultimate target was to recover and treat a total of 50,000 tonnes of waste glass containers per year, which was approximately half of the total amount of glass containers or 70% of the glass beverage containers generated locally. GMCs were encouraged to actively identify more outlets to provide convenient and efficient regional collection and treatment services for waste glass containers across the

territory.

7. A Member enquired and Mr Donald Ng advised that the ultimate goal of recovering and treating a total of 50,000 tonnes of waste glass containers per year was to be achieved in three years.

8. In reply to a Member's enquiry on the rationale behind setting different targets for the three catchment regions of Hong Kong, Mr Donald Ng advised that the targets were set based on the anticipated generation rates of waste glass containers in the respective regions.

9. In reply to a Member's enquiry regarding the contribution of food outlets and bars to the generation of waste glass containers, Mr Stephen Siu advised that food outlets and bars contributed to approximately 70% to 80% of waste glass containers generation in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, and around 60% in the New Territories.

10. Addressing two Members' questions regarding the effectiveness of the GPRS, Mr Donald Ng advised that the recovery rate would be a key indicator and in order to uphold the performance of the GMCs, the contractual terms and conditions stipulated that the Government could deduct the service fees payable to the GMC concerned if a predetermined recovery rate could not be met. EPD would also monitor the GMCs' performance by conducting monthly inspections and meeting them regularly to review the actions required for making improvements.

11. Addressing a Member's question on the types of glass containers collected by the GMCs, Mr Donald Ng advised that most types of waste glass containers that had been properly rinsed, including those for food and sauces, would be accepted.

12. In reply to a Member's request for a breakdown on the types and quantity of waste glass containers recovered and the specific types of glass containers that could not be recovered, Mr Donald Ng advised that waste glass containers generated locally largely constituted of glass beverage containers. Having regard to the feedback received in the public consultation in 2013, GPRS would first target on glass beverage containers, and might be reviewed to cover other types of product containers in future. While currently the container recycling levy would

only be imposed on registered suppliers of glass-bottled beverages, he advised that the GMCs would accept most types of waste glass containers that had been properly rinsed. He pointed out that the target recovery rate of 50% was set with reference to successful overseas experience, and apart from the performance of the GMCs, the actual recovery rate would also depend on whether the public was willing to participate in source separation of glass containers for recycling.

Coverage of collection networks

13. Regarding a Member's question on the coverage of residential collection points, Ms Hinny Lam advised that there were currently over 1,500 residential collection points, which covered about 74% of the local residential population. To complement the GPRS, EPD had been expanding the glass container collection networks. Detailed information including useful contact points were provided to owners' corporations (OCs) and property management offices (PMOs) and they were encouraged to contact the GMCs directly for free collection services. EPD also invited PMOs to put up posters and inform residents on the locations of waste glass container collection points. Communication with chambers of commerce, shopping malls, residents' organisations and district councils etc. would also be strengthened to solicit their support to further promote glass container recycling. For instance, EPD was planning to draw up best practice guidelines to facilitate shopping malls' participation in glass container recycling and, in collaboration with the Eastern District Council, organised a competition among housing estates in the district to encourage residential households to recycle their glass containers.

14. A Member observed that the waste glass containers collection networks mainly covered the public and private housing estates and suggested providing more collection points for single-tenement private residential buildings.

15. Mr Donald Ng explained that the PMOs would usually help manage the collection points set up at public and private housing estates. EPD would work closely with the GMCs to provide collection points near single-tenement private residential buildings as far as possible, especially for old single blocks known as "three nil" buildings, i.e. those buildings without OCs, residents' organisations or PMOs. There were around 5,000 "three nil" buildings in Hong Kong and the feasibility of setting up collection points near these buildings would be subject to the availability of space and associated safety considerations.

16. A Member considered that there was room for expanding the collection network in housing estates and suggested the Government to draw on the experience of introducing the three-colour recycle bins for collection of recyclable municipal waste. Taking into account convenience and practicability, consideration should be given to whether the waste glass container collection points should be placed alongside with or separated from the three-colour recycle bins.

17. In order to facilitate waste separation and recycling and promote behavioural changes, a Member opined that the recycle bins should be placed at the same location where residents dispose of other general refuse, which was usually at the backstairs or refuse room of each floor.

18. Ms Hinny Lam agreed that the three-colour recycle bins should be placed at the backstairs or refuse room of each floor if space allowed. Since the quantity of waste glass containers generated by each household was on the low side, she considered it better to set up more centralised collection points for waste glass containers. The associated safety concerns also rendered some of the locations undesirable for collecting waste glass containers and the collection points were usually set up at locations under day-to-day management of PMOs or venue managers.

19. In response to a Member's enquiry regarding glass bottles collection in Lan Kwai Fong where large quantities of waste glass containers were generated daily, Mr Stephen Siu advised that the GMCs was in close liaison with the food outlets and bar operators in Lan Kwai Fong and would provide additional collection points during the night time or weekends to enhance the glass container collection services. To avoid overflow at the waste glass container collection points, regular inspections would also be conducted and waste glass containers would be transferred to the Lan Kwai Fong Refuse Collection Point for temporary storage if necessary. For food outlets and bars farther away from the collection points, they might be given recycling bags for collection and temporary storage of waste glass containers while the GMCs would collect the bags directly from the food outlets and bars. He said that the Lan Kwai Fong Association had signed up for the Charter Scheme on Glass Container Recycling (the Charter) and committed to promoting the Charter to its members. Mr Donald Ng supplemented that the

GMCs would be encouraged to strengthen communication with the frontline staff of food outlets and bars, and EPD would continue to invite more food outlets and bars to sign up for the Charter.

Container recycling levy

20. In reply to a Member's enquiry on whether there was room for downward adjustment of the proposed one-dollar-per-litre container recycling levy, Ms Hinny Lam advised that the proposed levy rate reflected the collection and treatment expenditures as well as administrative costs incurred, based on the five-year GMC contracts. She considered that the levy was set at a reasonable level and it was not expected to be transferred entirely onto the consumers given the fierce competition in the beverage market.

21. With reference to the introduction of the Plastic Shopping Bag Charging, which had caused a surge in reusable shopping bags, a Member pointed out that the container recycling levy might encourage local beverage manufacturers to consider the use of alternative containers such as liquid carton boxes or other non-recyclable packaging in order to cut down production costs. She suggested the Government to monitor the waste statistics and stay alert of any shift patterns in the types of waste generated.

22. Mr Donald Ng considered the likelihood was low for a major shift in the use of product packaging because of the levy imposed under the PRS. Considering that the use of alternative containers might require major revamp of the production processes or machineries used and the proposed levy was set at a relatively low level, shifts in the types of waste generated due to the introduction of GPRS were anticipated to be insignificant. This notwithstanding, he advised that EPD had been monitoring the quantity of solid waste disposed of at landfills and the annual waste statistics with detailed breakdown was reported to this Subcommittee every year.

23. In reply to a Member's enquiry regarding the arrangement for registered suppliers that would collect glass containers of their own products for reuse, Mr Donald Ng said that these suppliers could be exempted from paying the levy if they could attain a specified recovery and reuse level. If such a level could not be attained, the supplier would be required to pay a container recycling levy calculated

on the basis of the total volume of glass containers that failed to be recovered. The exemption was subject to review and EPD would impose additional conditions on the exemption as necessary to avoid abuse of the system.

Publicity and education

24. A Member was concerned that the GPRS might encourage the public to consume more beverages carried in glass containers given that there were outlets for waste glass containers. She considered it important to promote waste reduction at source and reuse of resources.

25. Mr Donald Ng said that EPD was stepping up the publicity efforts to raise public awareness of and participation in glass container recycling. In particular, the Charter was launched in January 2019, which invited all interested parties to collaborate with EPD in participating in and promoting glass container recycling. He stressed that public participation in glass container recycling was instrumental to increasing the recovery rate of waste glass containers.

26. Apart from the internet, Ms Hinny Lam supplemented that information regarding the collection points for waste glass containers and other types of recyclables was available on the “Waste Less” mobile application with geolocation function. EPD would promote the mobile application to encourage wider usage by the public.

27. A Member suggested adopting a “deposit-refund system” which involved the provision of a cash rebate as economic incentive to encourage the public to return used glass containers for recycling. Mr Donald Ng advised that such a system was under consideration for the recovery of used plastic beverage containers. Given that the sources of generation of waste glass containers were more centralised, the collection networks established by the GMCs should be able to recover the waste glass containers effectively. He advised that overseas places usually offered cash rebate for the return of waste plastic containers, and a different system/mechanism was adopted for recovering waste glass containers.

28. Addressing a Member's suggestion on strengthening environmental education on the types of glass containers that could be recycled, Ms Hinny Lam advised that EPD had designed a new label for the glass bottle recycling bins which

clearly displayed the types of glass containers that would be accepted for recycling, including those for beverages, food and sauce. Furthermore, Announcement in the Public Interest (APIs) and other promotional materials would be launched to communicate to the public on the types of glass containers that would be accepted for recycling and raise public awareness on the importance of clean recycling.

Conclusion

29. The Chairperson summarised the views of Members and concluded that Members supported the Government to introduce the Regulated Articles Regulation into the Legislative Council for the full implementation of the GPRS.
