

**Confirmed Minutes of the 101<sup>st</sup> Meeting of  
the Advisory Council on the Environment  
held on 5 December 2002 at 2:30 p.m.**

**Present:**

Mr. Peter H. Y. WONG, GBS, JP (Chairman)  
Mr. Daniel M. C. CHENG  
Prof. Anthony HEDLEY, BBS, JP  
Prof. Peter HILLS  
Prof. Dennis S. C. LAM  
Prof. LAM Kin-che, JP  
Mr. LIN Chaan-ming  
Dr. NG Cho-nam  
Mrs. Mei NG  
Mr. Otto L. T. POON  
Mr. Michael J. D. RUSHWORTH  
Ms. Iris TAM, JP  
Prof. WONG Yuk-shan, JP  
Miss Alex YAU  
Ms. Jessie WONG (Secretary)

**Absent with Apologies:**

Mr. Barrie COOK  
Mr. Edward S. T. HO, SBS, JP  
Dr. HO Kin-chung  
Mr. KWOK Kwok-chuen, BBS  
Mr. Peter Y. C. LEE  
Dr. LEONG Che-hung, GBS, JP  
Mr. LOH Ah Tuan  
Mr. PAO Ping-wing, JP  
Mr. Brian ROBERTSON

**In Attendance:**

Mrs. Rita LAU, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment), Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB)
Mr. Donald TONG	Deputy Secretary (E)1, ETWB
Mr. Thomas CHOW	Deputy Secretary (E)2, ETWB
Mr. Rob LAW, JP	Director of Environmental Protection
Mr. C C LAY	Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Mr. TAM Po-yiu	Assistant Director (Technical Services), Planning Department

Dr. Constance CHAN	Assistant Director, Department of Health
Ms. Polly LEUNG	Principal Information Officer, EPD
Miss Konnie KONG	Senior Information Officer, ETWB
Miss Petula POON	Chief Executive Officer (E), ETWB
Mr. Eddie CHENG	Executive Officer (E), ETWB

**In Attendance for Agenda Item 4 :**

Mr. Benny WONG	Assistant Director (Waste and Water), EPD
Dr. Malcolm Broom	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Water Policy and Planning), EPD
Mr. Satish Aggarwal	Assistant Director (Electrical and Mechanical), Drainage Services Department (DSD)
Mr. CHUI Wing-wah	Chief Engineer (Harbour Area Treatment Scheme), DSD
Dr. Samuel CHUI	Assistant Secretary (Environment), ETWB

**In Attendance for Agenda Item 5 :**

Mr. CHUNG Wing-kai	Assistant Director/Task Force (Black Spots), Lands Department (Lands D)
Mr. CHAN Nai-him	Principal Land Control Officer/Task Force (Black Spots), Lands D

**In Attendance for Agenda Item 6 :**

Mr. LEUNG Hon-ming	Controller of Government Supplies (General), Government Supplies Department (GSD)
Mr. CHAN Shu-bun	Controller of Government Supplies (Procurement), GSD
Mr. CHENG Chung-tai	Chief Supplies Officer (Provisioning and Inspection), GSD

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Action

**Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of Minutes of the 100<sup>th</sup> Meeting held on 21 October 2002**

The draft minutes were confirmed without amendment.

**Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising**

**Para. 8: Data on air pollution concentration regarding the Shenzhen Western Corridor Project**

2. The Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat had conveyed Members' request for air pollution data in connection with the Shenzhen Western Corridor project to the project proponent. The data would be forwarded to Members once available.

New term of office

3. In response to the Chairman, Mrs. Rita Lau said that the Government would continue to rely heavily on the Council's advice on environmental matters. She thanked Members for their participation and contribution in the past and would keep them informed once the new membership was available. As regards the Chairman's concern about EIA reports that may require Members' comments in January 2003, Mrs. Lau said that the Bureau would keep in close contact with EPD and avoid any vacuum.

**Agenda Item 3 : Report on the 75<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee**  
*(ACE Paper 30/2002)*

Construction Phase Environmental Monitoring and Audit (EM&A) Manual of the Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line project and the Lok Ma Chau Station Habitat Creation and Management Plan

4. The Subcommittee Chairman reported that the above documents were submitted to the Subcommittee for consideration as a follow-up to the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line project. He then summarized the points discussed at the meeting.

5. The Chairman enquired about the scientific robustness of the baseline figures of birds adopted for the EM&A programme. In reply, the Subcommittee Chairman said that the Subcommittee had considered the issue and was generally satisfied with the baseline used for the project. However, some individual Members expressed concern over some of the issues related to it.

6. The Chairman wondered whether there should be in the long term an ethical standard for the EIA profession. In response, Mr. Rob Law explained that EPD mainly relied on the self-discipline of the EIA professionals. The Hong Kong Institute of EIA also played the role of monitoring the professional standard. Under the current economic climate when there was heavy pressure to cut cost, the standard of EIA reports might be affected. In the past, EPD had received some substandard EIA reports

EPD

and the consultants concerned had been warned. However, there was no immediate solution to the problem. Nonetheless, he would liaise with the Hong Kong Institute of EIA from time to time and where appropriate alert the Institute of the concern.

7. Members noted the contents of the two documents.

EIA report on the Feasibility Study for Housing Development at Whitehead and Lee On in Ma On Shan, Sha Tin

8. The Subcommittee Chairman reported that the EIA report was circulated to Subcommittee Members and they agreed that the EIA report could be endorsed without conditions.

9. Members endorsed the EIA report without conditions.

Informal dialogues with project proponents

10. The Subcommittee Chairman reported that the Subcommittee would continue its current practice of having informal dialogues with project proponents at the early stage of the EIA process as far as possible if the project proponents wished to seek Members' views on specific issues. The Chairman reminded Members that whilst there could be exchange of views, no commitments should be made during the informal dialogues. A Member queried whether the data presented by the project proponent during informal dialogues should be regarded as formal data. She pointed out that project proponents sometimes withheld data until the informal meeting during which they would overwhelm the Subcommittee with information that would be difficult for Members to digest immediately. In response, the Chairman said that since informal dialogues would be conducted at the early stage of the EIA process, information so presented should be included in the full EIA reports concerned and fully considered at that point. Another Member commented that for some projects, informal dialogues with the project proponent might not be useful as there was very little information at the early stage.

Seeking expert advice on EIA reports

11. The Subcommittee Chairman reported that the Subcommittee would adhere to the existing practice regarding the seeking of expert advice on EIA reports. Nonetheless, Members could arrange and attend talks and seminars on specific environmental issues in their own capacity.

Meeting with stakeholders of designated projects

12. The Subcommittee Chairman reported that the Subcommittee decided not to hold meetings with stakeholders of designated projects. In reply to the Chairman's enquiry about the handling of petitions received from the public, the Subcommittee Chairman said that the Subcommittee had not discussed that particular issue. He suggested that the matter should be raised at the Council if the petition was related to environmental issues. A Member remarked that the Subcommittee should be more open-minded in dealing with stakeholders of designated projects and consider their requests for meeting on a case-by-case basis. The Chairman said that Member could approach the Subcommittee Chairman if he/she felt that the Subcommittee should meet any stakeholder for a specific issue. The Subcommittee Chairman clarified that the Subcommittee had no objection to the holding of briefing sessions by the stakeholders provided that views expressed by individual Members at such forums should not be taken as the views of the Subcommittee.

Declaration of interest

13. A Member suggested that the Council should revisit the protocol on declaration of interest before the new term began. The Chairman agreed but added that the discussion should be based on the advice of ETWB and EPD because the role of the Council was to advise the Administration on environmental issues, including EIA reports submitted under the EIA Ordinance. The subject bureau and department should consider whether the advice given was impartial and without conflict of interest. But it was best to err on the side of caution so matters that could have a bearing on possible conflicts can be declared at the earliest opportunity.

ACE,  
ETWB and  
EPD

**Agenda Item 4 : 2nd Progress Report on Trials and Studies for the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme**  
*(ACE Paper 31/2002)*

14. A Member declared interest and left the meeting afterwards.

15. The Chairman welcomed the presentation team to the meeting. Mr. Benny Wong presented the progress of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS).

16. The Chairman commented that in addition to scientific tests, other non scientific criterion such as whether the Victoria Harbour was suitable for swimming would also be relevant in assessing the effectiveness of the project, especially for the general public. Mr. Benny Wong said that in view of the costs involved, it might not be practicable to make the harbour suitable for swimming throughout the year. At best, the goal was to make it

an annual occasion. However, one should note that even when bacteriological water quality standards were met, as at beaches, there would still be some minor health risks that the public had to accept. As a related issue, a Member pointed out that the traffic in the harbour was too heavy for swimming activities. The idea might not be too good for publicity.

17. Noting that the proposed water quality criteria of HATS were only required to be satisfied in 90% of occasions, a Member wondered whether that would be too lenient for some parameters as damage might be done during the other 10% of occasions. In response, Mr. Benny Wong said that similar views had been expressed during the process of consultation on the water quality criteria. The main concern appeared to be dissolved oxygen, rather than other parameters. Thus, the dissolved oxygen criterion had been modified to establish a minimum level that should be met at all times.

18. A Member said he was happy to see the progress of the project but feared that as neighbouring areas were discharging effluent into the nearby waters, the effectiveness of the project might be compromised. He suggested that the Government should liaise closely with neighbouring areas on water pollution problem. Another Member clarified that the pollution of Hong Kong waters was mainly due to local sewage discharge and heavy metal sedimentation caused by local industries 30 years ago. Our neighbouring areas played only an insignificant role in polluting Hong Kong waters.

19. A Member questioned the capability of the models adopted for the study and whether it could model ecological parameters. In response, Dr. Malcolm Broom explained that the model basically described how the pollutants discharged into water would change chemically and how they would affect water quality. The limitation of the current mathematical model was that it could model algal growth but not ecological impacts. The science assessment team would make separate assessment on ecology by taking into account the predicted pollution level.

20. In response to a Member's further enquiry, Mr. Benny Wong said that the monitoring group had discussed the limitation of the modeling in the context of the appropriateness of the total inorganic nitrogen criterion. The project team had incorporated risk management into the project to address the concern about the TIN level and algal bloom. For other parameters, the project team had to wait for the result of the sensitivity analysis before deciding whether the same approach was required.

21. A Member enquired about the composition of the science assessment team, how the scientists were chosen and their interface with the

monitoring group. In response, Dr. Broom said that the scientists were part of the consultants team commissioned by the project proponent. Some of them came from local universities and some were overseas experts. He undertook to provide the list of the team to Members after the meeting. The Member asked whether the information provided by the consultants would be accessible by the public. Mr. Benny Wong said that the team would assess the result of the study next year. Information on the assessment would be available to the public by then. The Chairman pointed out that the assessment process should be transparent and the assessment result should be open to public debate. In response, Mr. Benny Wong confirmed that the workshops on the assessment results would be open to the public. Another Member suggested that the consultants should validate the model in the early stage of the study, otherwise the study might be fruitless. Mr. Benny Wong said that the Administration was aware of the importance of proper validation of the model. The consultants were similarly aware, and hence had decided to employ two world-renowned teams of experts to take up the model set-up and model oversight separately.

22. A Member pointed out that at a recent meeting of the LegCo Environmental Affairs (EA) Panel, it was mentioned that the further stages of HATS would produce some 600 to 750 tones of sludge per year and they might cause serious blockage problem. Mr. Benny Wong clarified that what the meeting referred to was the backwash process which was an integrated feature of the Biological Aerated Filter (BAF) technology. The backwash process replaced the conventional secondary sedimentation tanks which would take up a very large area. He also pointed out that the higher the level of treatment, the more sludge would be produced. This was not a problem particular to the BAF process. At present, the implication of more frequent backwashing was the increase in electricity consumption and the cost involved.

23. Mr. Satish Aggarwal explained that as sewage was treated under the BAF system, head loss of the system would increase. When head loss reached a predefined level, backwash would be required to bring it down to normal level. During the trial, the general high temperatures resulted in high bacteria activity and more frequent backwash was required. From the results obtained so far, the estimated frequency would be once per day but less frequent backwash would be expected for winter months. With a higher level of sewage treatment, the amount of sludge would increase no matter which kind of technology was adopted.

24. Mr. Donald Tong supplemented that the Government well understood from the beginning that backwash was part of the BAF process. Frequent backwash would increase the operation cost and that would be taken into account in calculating the total cost of each option. To enhance

Members' understanding of the trial process, the Government had recently arranged a site visit to the Sewage Treatment Works at Stonecutters Island. However, not all Members were able to make it. The Administration would be more than happy to organize another one for Members, if necessary. The Chairman suggested conducting another visit in spring 2003 so that new Members could participate.

25. A Member asked whether there was any estimation on energy consumption of the BAF technology. Mr. Benny Wong responded that based on the trial scheme, they were able to estimate the operation cost of BAF. However, the percentage of the operation cost of BAF to the whole project would depend on the costs of other supporting facilities and such information would only be available next year after the completion of the study.

26. A Member asked for written clarification on the backwash issue and suggested that the science assessment team should look into the problem, if any. She also asked whether the treated sewage and the sludge could be recycled to make HATS more sustainable. In response, Mr. Benny Wong said that the science assessment team might not be able to advise on the backwash issue as they were mainly ecology and water science experts. However the issue of the need for backwash frequencies appropriate for Hong Kong would be addressed in the process of drawing up the layouts for the proposed treatment works. On recycling, the treated sewage had to attain a very high level before it could be reused. The issue could be considered at a later stage because HATS would not preclude such a possibility.

27. A Member recalled that Members had been informed at past ACE meetings that the background nutrient level of Hong Kong waters was quite high which might mean that some pollutants in the Victoria Harbour originated outside Hong Kong. He asked whether there was any baseline figure on the nutrient level of the Victoria Harbour. In response, Dr. Broom explained that that the background nutrient level was high at the Victoria Harbour because a lot of sewage had been discharged there. The nutrient level in nearby waters outside Hong Kong was also quite high and that might be due to the influence of the Pearl River. The project team would conduct sensitivity analysis to ascertain the effects of Pearl River on Hong Kong waters.

28. A Member pointed out that with the advancement of technology, there might be other options apart from BAF that would be suitable for sewage treatment in Hong Kong. She suggested that the study should examine other possible technologies available. The Chairman strongly disagreed with the Member's proposal because the Government had

spent a lot of time and resources to achieve the present position of the HATS. It would tremendously delay the implementation of the further stages of HATS if the project team should start all over again to study other technologies available at present. It would effectively mean that there would not be any sewage treatment for the harbour area at all. Another Member and Mr. Rob Law also agreed with the Chairman and reiterated that the project team should go ahead with the BAF trials and studies.

29. Mr. Benny Wong pointed out that when the Drainage Services Department invited tender for the trial on compact treatment technologies, they did not preclude other technologies and in fact alternative technologies were proposed in some of the tenders received. However, some of those technologies had not been tested in any reasonably sized plants. Hence, the Administration had already examined all possible technologies. Mr. Donald Tong briefly outlined the history of HATS for Members' information. He said that the Chief Executive appointed an International Review Panel (IRP) in 2000 to advise on ways to implement the subsequent stages of HATS. The IRP recommended four options and the BAF technology. Funding was then sought from the LegCo Finance Committee to undertake trials and studies. Upon the suggestion of the LegCo EA Panel, the Administration had invited tenders for BAF as well as other compact sewage treatment technologies. As a result, two BAF systems and one non-BAF system were selected for trials. The results so far indicated that the performance of BAF was more satisfactory. A Member commented that an existing technology that was found workable in other countries might need modification before being applied in Hong Kong. He therefore suggested more studies on combinations of technologies that might lead to a more effective system.

30. A Member commended the transparency and the effectiveness of the consultation on water quality criteria. She was, however, confused when her organization was recently approached for comments on the HATS options and therefore enquired about the timetable of the consultation plan and whether there was any intention to go back on all the findings so far. In response, Mr. Benny Wong said that there would be a full consultation on the relative merits of the IRP options near the end of the studies. During the interim, they would continue to seek views from stakeholders. He would liaise with the consultants with a view to working out better guidelines on seeking views from stakeholders.

31. A Member requested the project team to provide the following information-

Project team

- (a) a list showing the names and background of members of the science assessment team;

- (a) progress report of the science assessment team;
- (b) written report on risks associated with the model;
- (c) written report on the backwash issue; and
- (d) information on energy costs.

32. The Chairman thanked the project team for the presentation. He looked forward to receiving more information on the treatment and quantity of sludge produced by the BAF technology.

**Agenda Item 5 : Progress report of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Flytipping Control**

*(ACE Paper 32/2002)*

33. The Chairman welcomed the presentation team. Mr. Chung Wing-kai presented the progress report of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Flytipping Control (IWG).

34. The Chairman commented that the current level of fine (the maximum being \$20,000 and the average around \$4,800) would not have any deterrent effect on flytipping once the landfill charges were in place. In response, Mr. Donald Tong clarified that the figures at Appendix II of the paper were the actual fines imposed by the Courts instead of the maximum amounts stipulated in the law, which was a fine of \$200,000 and an imprisonment of six months for first offenders and a fine of \$500,000 and six months imprisonment for repeated offenders. For offence of continuous nature, a daily fine of \$10,000 could also be imposed. The Chairman suggested and Members agreed to convey to the Judiciary the Council's views that the level of fines imposed on flytipping offenders was too lenient. A Member noted that a flytipping offender was sentenced to complete 80 hours of community services. He believed community service would be a more effective penalty for flytipping offenders and suggested conveying also that point to the Judiciary.

Secretariat

35. A Member pointed out that certain spots in the rural area were piled with waste-looking objects which were quite unsightly. In response, Mr. Chung said that flytipping referred to illegal dumping of waste from trucks and lorries. The activity described by the Member might not be flytipping. If a citizen suspected that flytipping had been committed, he could phone EPD, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department or the Task Force (Black Spots) for follow-up actions. Contact telephone numbers were available from pamphlets published by those departments or their web sites.

36. A Member asked whether the flytipping problem was under control and expressed concern about the problem after landfill charges were

imposed. In response, Mr. Chung said that the problem was under control at the moment since disposing waste at landfill was free of charge and there were fewer construction works at present due to the economic downturn. The Administration would step up control measures after the introduction of landfill charging. However, education should be the fundamental course of action to deal with the problem. The IWG had therefore been pursuing a publicity strategy to educate the public, especially truck drivers. Another Member pointed out that the Hong Kong Council on Social Services was considering setting up co-opt shops to sell old furniture and other reusable waste. If there were more outlets for reusable waste, flytipping might decrease.

37. In reply to a Member's enquiry on the difficulties encountered, Mr. Chung said that enforcement was difficult and expensive because the offenders had to be caught red-handed. Furthermore, caution statements had to be obtained before the offenders could be charged. Mr. Law supplemented that prosecution would not be possible if a citizen who had witnessed flytipping offences reported the details afterwards. Even for offenders found on the spot, some of them might attack enforcement officers and escape. The Government was considering revising the legislation so as to make prosecution easier. A Member suggested imposing minimum fines on flytipping offenders. Mr. Law said that EPD had made similar suggestion to the Department of Justice. The advice given was that it was contrary to legal principles of justice.

38. In reply to a Member's enquiry, Mr. Chung confirmed that fly tipping offences within Development Planning Area and Outline Zoning Plan areas were enforceable.

39. A Member enquired about the extent of clearance and restoration work on flytipping black spots. In response, Mr. Chung explained that the extent of work would depend on the scale of the problem and whether it would be possible to provide landscaping and fencing work. For large-scale flytipping cases such as the one at Ngo Hum Shek, Task Force (Black Spots) would restore the area by filling it up with earth and planting trees after clearance.

40. Quoting a case in Sha Po wetland, a Member pointed out that fencing might not be effective in preventing flytipping. He suggested restricting the access of big trucks and vehicles to roads leading to the flytipping blackspots. In response, Mr. Chung said that denial of certain vehicles' access to roads was a sensitive issue because owners of land accessible by roads had the right to use the roads. The Member pointed out that the road to Sha Po wetland was mainly to provide access to drainage channels and were normally used by maintenance teams only. Mr. Chung

agreed to liaise with the Transport Department on the Member's suggestion. Action  
(Black Spots)

41. In reply to a Member's enquiry, Mr. Chung and Mr. Law said that they did not have the information on flytipping offenders on hand but would provide it after the meeting. Task Force  
(Black Spots)

42. A Member said that some landowners in the New Territories contaminated their land with chemical wastes. He asked if prosecution was possible and whether the owners would be held responsible for cleaning up the land. In response, Mr. Law said that if the chemical wastes got into the waterways, EPD could take prosecution action. The Member suggested imposing a clause on the land lease to require the owner to clean up the land before putting it on sale. The Chairman remarked that the suggestion might result in the Government shouldering the responsibility if the landowner went bankrupt.

43. The Chairman enquired about the timetable of introducing landfill charging. In response, Mr. Donald Tong said that the Administration was working out the details of the scheme and would submit the proposal to the LegCo in the 2002-2003 session and consult Members around March to April next year. If the legislative procedures were smooth, landfill charging would be in place in late 2003 or early 2004.

44. The Chairman thanked the team for the presentation.

**Agenda Item 6 : Green purchasing of general commodities by the HKSAR Government**  
(ACE Paper 33/2002)

45. The Chairman welcomed the presentation team to the meeting. A Member declared interest as the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) had assisted the Government Supplies Department (GSD) in drawing up tender specifications on green purchasing. Mr. Leung Hon-ming presented the details of the paper.

46. The Chairman asked whether the expertise of HKPC mentioned above had been transferred to GSD staff. In reply, Mr. Leung Hon-ming said that after the study by HKPC, GSD had tried to cultivate a sense of environmental management by having meetings with staff and publicizing environment concepts. As GSD was seeking the ISO 14001 accreditation, the department had formulated goals and objectives for staff to follow. A Member supplemented that HKPC had assisted GSD in drawing up guidelines on preparing tender specifications so as to encourage suppliers to provide green products. GSD had not approached the HKPC since the study was completed. He presumed that the transfer of knowledge had

been successful.

47. A Member appreciated GSD's initiative on green purchasing. However, he pointed out that changing the mindset of people would be more fundamental than setting up policies. For example, economy in the use of paper would be more environmentally friendly than using recycled paper. In response, Mr. Leung said that GSD had uploaded the consumption of papers by various departments on the Government web site for monitoring by departmental green managers. Another Member agreed with the earlier Member and asked if there was any auditing on the practice of government departments in replacing old style furniture. She also pointed out that the list of items with green specifications could be extended to items such as pesticides, disinfectants, fertilizers, paints and furniture. Mrs. Rita Lau pointed out that ETWB considered it a very important mission to change the culture and mindset of civil servants on green practices and that all government departments should be involved in pursuing that objective. While GSD was responsible for providing central tendering services for procurement of common items, it was the responsibility of the head of each department to ensure that its activities were in full accord with Government's policy on green management. ETWB was considering setting up a green chapter to promote green culture. It would be more effective for each department to undertake green management than putting all responsibilities on one servicing department. As for commodities such as pesticides, it would be more appropriate for user departments to ensure that only green products were procured. Mr. Leung supplemented that for special items such as pesticides, user departments would need to draw up the tender specification and GSD would assist in the procurement process.

48. In reply to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr. Leung confirmed that the Electronic Tendering System had resulted in a reduction in paper consumption but it was difficult to quantify the exact reduction rate.

49. Noting that GSD did not have any regular advisor on environmental matters, a Member suggested the department form an integrated advisory panel consisting of representatives from the Occupational Safety and Health Council, the Consumer Council and EPD. She also enquired about the working relationship between GSD and the Consumer Council. In response, Mr. Leung said that GSD would study the Consumer Council's test reports on commodities and review the tender specifications of products concerned.

50. A Member declared interest as his company was one of GSD's suppliers for green commodities. He remarked that GSD had done much in implementing green purchasing. In response to the Member's enquiry about what Government had done in green purchasing, Mrs. Lau

said that information on green management and green purchasing was available from annual environmental report prepared by government departments/bureaux. ETWB was working with EPD to improve the contents of those reports and further promote the culture of green management.

51. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Hospital Authority which had done a lot on green management was one of the major clients of GSD. He suggested inviting the Hospital Authority to brief Members on their green management initiatives.

Secretariat

52. A Member asked whether GSD's specifications for purchasing electrical compliances included any green label schemes. In response, Mr. Leung said that energy saving was one of the considerations when the Electrical & Mechanical Services Department drew up technical specifications for procurement of electrical compliances.

53. The Chairman thanked the presentation team and wished them success in obtaining the ISO 14001 accreditation.

### **Agenda Item 7 : Any Other Business**

#### Study of the impact of air pollution on health

54. Prof. Anthony Hedley presented to the meeting some of the findings of a recent study of the impact of air pollution on public health. The study indicated that there was a significant drop in the number of premature deaths due to respiratory diseases following a decrease in sulphur dioxide concentration in the ambient air in Hong Kong.

55. The Chairman asked how certain the relationship between the reduction in mortality rate and the decrease in sulphur dioxide concentration was, and whether there were other factors that would affect the mortality rate, such as reduction in the number of smokers in Hong Kong. A Member also pointed out that the general increase in temperature during winter months over the past few years might lead to a decrease in the seasonal variation of mortality rate.

56. In response, Prof. Hedley explained that the present model had removed possible factors other than the decrease in sulphur dioxide concentration. He referred to the immediate decrease in the seasonal variation of mortality and pointed out that the decrease was mainly in respiratory diseases. Also, two districts were being compared during the study and there was a sharper decrease in mortality for the district with greater decrease in sulphur concentration. Other sulphur pollutants such as

sulphate should not be a factor because it had only decreased for two years and the concentration increased again.

57. Mr. Law agreed that reduction in sulphur dioxide and other pollutants would improve the health of the community. Power plants were the main source of sulphur dioxide. However, the chimneys of those power plants were designed in such a way that the pollutants would disperse effectively in the ambient air, rather than to the roadside where the health of citizens would be most affected. The sulphur dioxide pollutant that was directly affecting the general public was mainly emitted from vehicles and other local sources.

58. A Member asked whether it was correct that other pollutants had to be combined with sulphur dioxide before they would cause health problem and if so, whether it would be possible to reduce the impact of air pollution on public health by controlling sulphur dioxide only. Another Member said that the results of the study did not indicate that there was any combined effect of the pollutants and he believed that reducing other pollutants would also bring improvement to public health. Mr. Law pointed out that though each pollutant would pose its own health problem, it was known from literature that the combined effect of certain pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and sulphates would cause greater damage to public health.

59. A Member remarked that the findings of the study should be passed to the relevant authority in the Mainland to encourage them to step up their air quality control measures. He also noticed that the data of the study was mainly based on statistics compiled between 1990 and 1995 during which a lot of factories were moved out of Hong Kong. That might contribute to the reduction in sulphur dioxide concentration.

60. A Member enquired about the progress of installing catalytic traps for diesel engines. In response, Mr. Thomas Chow informed Members that phase I of the scheme was completed last year and 24,000 pre-Euro diesel light vehicles i.e. 80% of the total number had been retrofitted. The trap or catalyst could reduce the particulates emitted by each vehicle by around 30%. ETWB would proceed to make the installation mandatory by mid 2003. The Government would also start installing catalytic converters on 41,000 pre-Euro diesel heavy vehicles by the end of the month.

(The Chairman wished everyone a Merry Christmas before leaving the meeting for other urgent commitment at this point. Upon the Chairman's request, Mrs. Rita Lau took over the chair of the meeting.)

#### Indoor air quality

61. In response to a Member's request for an update on indoor air quality control, Mr. Thomas Chow said that ETWB would present a paper to Members in the first quarter of next year on the progress made during the past three years on indoor air quality control.

Noise barriers

62. A Member sought clarification on the recent move to stop the construction of noise barriers in Tolo Highway. Mr. Law informed Members that there was a review of the noise barriers that were planned for protecting future sensitive receivers. It was considered that those barriers could perhaps be put up later when occupation of the noise sensitive buildings began.

Renewable energy

63. A Member informed other Members that the Friends of the Earth was proposing a petition to the Chief Executive for developing renewable energy in Hong Kong. She would e-mail the petition letter to Members for their individual support.

64. Mrs. Lau thanked Members for their contribution and support in the past and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy new year. A Member also wished to thank ETWB staff and the Secretariat for the services provided to the Council.