

**Report on the 82nd
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

Introduction

At its meeting held on 23 December 2003, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee elected Mr. Otto Poon and Prof. Ho Kin-chung as the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the EIA Subcommittee respectively for the year 2004. The Subcommittee also discussed the key findings and recommendations of the Study for the Extension of Existing Landfills and Identification of Potential New Waste Disposal Sites commissioned by the Environmental Protection Department.

Advice Sought

2. Members are requested to note the points raised by Members at the meeting.

Views of the EIA Subcommittee

Extension of Existing Landfills and Identification of Potential New Waste Disposal Sites

(ACE-EIA Paper 9/2003)

Need for the Study

3. At present, over 6 million tonnes of wastes are disposed of in our three landfills (i.e. West New Territories (WENT) Landfill, Northeast New Territories (NENT) Landfill and Southeast New Territories (SENT) Landfill) each year. When planned in 1980s, the three landfills were expected to serve our waste disposal need till 2020. However, as the amount of waste requiring disposal has been increasing, the landfills have been filling up much faster than planned. It is projected that the existing landfills would only last for 8 to 12 years if wastes continue to grow at the current trend.

4. Waste reduction and recycling alone could not resolve the issue. While Government is examining the appropriate technology for the development of large-

scale waste treatment facilities to reduce the volume of unrecyclable wastes that require disposal, the existing landfills would have to be extended or new ones developed in the longer term up to 2050 to serve as final repositories for residue waste emerged from large-scale waste treatment facilities and waste that cannot be treated.

Members' views

5. Members' discussion at the meeting focused mainly on the need for the landfill extension and new landfill sites; how the projections on waste were calculated; the time required to develop a marine based landfill and land based landfill; whether joint efforts could be made with the Mainland and Macao to develop landfills in the two places to receive local wastes as well as wastes generated in Hong Kong; the encroachment of landfills upon potential and existing country parks; and issues concerning the development of marine based landfills in the form of an artificial island.

Need for the landfill extension and new landfill sites

6. Before commenting on the proposals, Members expressed concerns about the need for extension of existing landfills sites and the identification of new waste disposal sites. It was pointed out that detailed calculations on the projections of municipal solid waste, construction and demolition waste and other waste requiring disposal were not shown in the paper. Members also enquired whether the projections on waste have taken into account the large-scale waste treatment facilities to be introduced in the near future.

Projections on waste

7. The project proponent team pointed out that at present a total of some 17,600 tonnes of wastes that required disposal were generated daily. The projected figures on waste had taken into account the capacities of two large scale waste treatment facilities to be in place in around 2010, the reduction of construction and demolition wastes following the introduction of landfill charging in 2004 and the meeting of the target recycling rate of 40% by 2007. The project proponent team agreed to provide the assumptions and summary figures on the generation of various types of wastes and the remaining capacities of the existing landfills for Members' information after the meeting. The project proponent further pointed out that it was difficult to predict accurately the amount of waste that would require disposal in 2050. The present arrangement was to update the rolling programme on waste generation on a regular basis.

Time taken to develop a landfill

8. The project proponent team advised that it would take around 14 to 16 years to plan a marine based waste disposal site and about 10 years for a routine land based landfill site. Hence, there was an urgent need to find sites to extend existing landfills or sites for new landfills.

Joint efforts with the Mainland and Macao in tackling waste problems

9. Members suggested that the Government should join hands with the Mainland in tackling waste problems and that landfill sites could be set up in the Mainland to receive local wastes as well as wastes generated in Hong Kong. Another Member suggested co-operation with Macao to develop a landfill in Macao in the form of an artificial island. The project proponent explained that the Policy Bureau was responsible for dealing with waste issues that might involve the Mainland or Macao. It was pointed out that coastal cities in the Mainland had their own waste problems and might not be able to take on waste generated in Hong Kong. While the growth rate of wastes in Hong Kong was contained at a level of 2-4% per year, the rates in Guangzhou and Shanghai amounted to about 8% and 6% respectively. Nevertheless, Members' suggestions would be reflected to the Policy Bureau for consideration.

Encroachment of country parks

10. Members expressed concerns that the proposed extension site at NENT Landfill would abut the proposed country park at Robin's Nest and the site at SENT Landfill would encroach upon the existing Clear Water Bay Country Park. They asked whether the Country and Marine Parks Board had been consulted. The project proponent team informed Members that they would consult the Country and Marine Parks Board on the two proposals at an appropriate time as early as practicable. Furthermore, in the feasibility and EIA studies to be conducted for the two sites, the design of the projects would avoid ecological important areas identified as far as practicable and mitigation measures would be devised to minimize any potential environmental impacts.

Marine based landfills

11. Members noted that the proposed new site at South Cheung Chau (SCC) would involve a landfill to be developed on an artificial island and constructed over the

existing SCC disposal ground for uncontaminated mud. The project proponent team explained that since the development of an offshore site would be very complex, further investigation into the feasibility and the implications of the proposal would be required. Furthermore, it was not possible to develop the artificial islands at both SCC and Lamma Breakwater together as the two would interfere with each other. As for the Lamma Breakwater Landfill, the site was limited and there were concerns about the impact on the feeding ground of green turtles. That site was then held in “reserve” if further consideration identified that the SCC Landfill could not proceed with.

Conclusion

12. On the understanding that rigorous efforts would be made to reduce and recycle waste, Members agreed that the Administration would conduct detailed feasibility studies and EIAs on the proposed extensions of the NENT Landfill, WENT Landfill and SENT Landfill in accordance with the EIA Ordinance in 2004/2005.

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
December 2003**