

## **Plastic Bottle Recycling Operations in the New Territories**

### **Purpose**

At the meeting of the Advisory Council on the Environment on 9 August 2004, Members requested an update on the progress of monitoring work conducted on the plastic bottle recycling operations in the New Territories.

### **Background**

2. Due to the Mainland authorities' recent tightening of enforcement of import controls over plastic bottles (i.e. imported plastic bottles are required to be shredded and cleansed), we recognize that there is an emerging trend of plastic bottle recycling activities taking place in the New Territories, mostly in the North and Yuen Long areas.

3. The shredding of imported and locally produced plastic bottles in Hong Kong is a value-added intermediate process to turn waste plastic into secondary raw materials before exporting the materials to the Mainland. This is necessary to meet the Mainland's import requirements and to add value to the raw materials. The recycling trade should comply with all environmental protection requirements as well as other related legislation when carrying out these activities. This includes requirements under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, Water Pollution Control Ordinance, Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance and land use requirements.

### **Control measures**

4. It is Government's committed policy to facilitate development of the recycling industry. The recycling of imported waste in Hong Kong could provide business opportunities for the local recyclers. Experience shows that most recycling industries require sufficient quantities to kick start, and imports will provide the initial momentum.

5. The plastic bottles imported into Hong Kong for reprocessing and recovery are mainly beverage bottles and of good quality. Some of these green recyclable wastes may contain some beverage or food residues, which in general will not render them unsuitable for recycling. Under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, import/export of green recyclable waste is not subject to permit control. This is in line with international practice to promote recycling and resource conservation, and is consistent with the Basel Convention.

6. There is other legislation to ensure that recycling operations will not cause unacceptable environmental impact or nuisances. This includes requirements under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, Water Pollution Control Ordinance, Noise Pollution Control Ordinance, and Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance.

7. Also, the use of site for recycling activities is subject to control from the planning angle. Under the Town Planning Ordinance (TPO), recycling activities are normally not permitted unless the concerned sites are zoned as “Open Storage” or “Industrial (Group D)”. Planning permission from the Town Planning Board (TPB) is required for carrying out such operations. Each case will be considered on its merits e.g. whether the recycling activities will give rise to traffic/environmental impacts and local concerns. Moreover, if the recyclers fail to comply with the conditions attached to the planning permission, the TPB could revoke the planning permission.

### **Latest Position**

8. As at the end of September 2004, EPD’s regular inspections have identified plastic bottle recycling activities on 53 private land sites and 7 public land sites in the New Territories.

9. EPD has referred these cases to Lands D and/or Plan D, as appropriate, for them to follow up in terms of enforcement under lease conditions and the TPO. Most of these cases are not actionable as they either lie outside Development Permission Area or they are regarded as permitted use under statutory town plans<sup>1</sup>. Plan D can take action only on unauthorized development. So far, Plan D had issued enforcement notices on three sites requiring the recipients to obtain planning permission from the TPB or to discontinue the unauthorized development within three months from the date of notice. Also, warning letters were issued on three sites where further enforcement action may be required should the unauthorized development continue. A summary of details is at Annex for reference.

10. EPD has visited all sites and advised the operators to maintain good housekeeping against arising of any possible environmental nuisance. In EPD’s past inspections, a total of three Noise Abatement Notices were issued. Should the conditions contained in the Notices not be complied with, legal proceedings against these plastic bottle recyclers will be initiated.

11. All recycling operators have been asked to apply on a need basis for licence under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance. Recent inspections have revealed that

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<sup>1</sup> Under the statutory town plans prepared for the rural NT, such workshop is regarded as “Rural Workshop”, which is a “permitted use” in areas zoned under “Industrial (Group D)” and “Open Storage”. Rural workshops operating outside these two zones have to obtain planning permission unless they are classified as “existing use”. Workshops which are not “existing use” and without valid planning permissions are regarded as “unauthorized development”.

many recycling plants have upgraded their wastewater treatment facilities and maintained them in good working conditions with suitable sludge handling arrangement. Appropriate action will be taken if recyclers' activities infringe the statutory requirements.

**Advice sought**

12. Members are invited to note the actions taken in respect of the sites identified as operating as plastic bottle recycling factories.

**Environment, Transport and Works Bureau  
October 2004**

**Plastic bottles recyclers at the end of September 2004  
in Yuen Long and the North District**

**Follow-up actions by Plan D**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Reasons</b>	<b>No. of cases</b>
No action required	(a) Non-enforceable as sites falling outside Development Permission Area	2
	(b) Non-actionable, i.e. permitted use under statutory town plan/Not actionable under TPO/Changed in use	30
Actionable	Unauthorized development*	14
Under investigation	New cases	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>53</b>

\* Enforcement notices have been issued on 3 cases and warning letters have been issued on 3 cases.

**Follow-up actions by Lands D**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Reasons</b>	<b>No. of case</b>
No action required	(a) On private land	40
	(b) Allowed on government land under short-term tenancy	1
	(c) Ceased business	1
Control action in progress*	Wholly or partly on government land	3
Under investigation	(a) New cases	7
	(b) Unidentifiable site. To continue follow-up	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>53</b>

\* Site survey has been completed. Lands D will take action and post notice under Government Lands Ordinance.