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Declaration of Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) Water Control Zone

Introduction

This paper seeks members' advice on the proposal to declare Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) Water Control Zone (WCZ) in April 1996 and to establish Water Quality Objectives for the zone.

Background

2. The Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) provides the main statutory framework for the declaration of WCZs to cover the waters and the attendant land areas of Hong Kong. Within each zone, discharges of effluent are controlled by a licensing scheme administered by the Environmental Protection Department.

3. Under Section 4 of the WPCO, the Governor-in-Council may, by order published in the gazette, declare any part of Hong Kong to be a WCZ after consultation with the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE).

4. The first WCZ, Tolo Harbour and Channel, was established on 1 April 1987. Since then nine other WCZs have been established namely, Southern WCZ (August 1988), Port Shelter and Junk Bay WCZs (August 1989), Deep Bay and Mirs Bay WCZs (December 1990), North Western WCZ (April 1992), Eastern Buffer and Western Buffer WCZs (June 1993), and the Victoria Harbour WCZ (Phase One - November 1994 and Phase Two - September 1995). In addition, two supplementary WCZs were also established in June 1993 to complete the coverage of the water gathering grounds of the Tolo Harbour and Channel, and Southern WCZs. It is now proposed to extend the WPCO requirements to cover waters and land in the Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) WCZ.

Existing Water Quality in the New WCZ

5. Similar to the water quality in the adjacent Victoria Harbour (Phase Two) WCZ, the marine waters of the Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) WCZ are amongst the most polluted in Hong Kong. The water quality of the main typhoon shelter (Causeway Bay) is particularly poor with low dissolved oxygen through the water column and high levels of toxic metals in the bottom sediments. The quality of the marine waters in general is also not satisfactory, with high *E. coli* counts, high nutrient levels and particularly low levels of bottom dissolved oxygen. The poor water quality in the new WCZ reflects the impact of domestic, commercial and industrial discharges from the adjoining heavily populated coastal area.

Water Quality Objectives for the New WCZ

6. Under Section 5 of the WPCO, the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands will, after consultation with the ACE, establish Water Quality Objectives for the new WCZ. The Water Quality Objectives at Annex A are defined with a view to achieving and maintaining the conservation goals for the water bodies in the new WCZ which are for general amenity, aesthetic value, protection of aquatic life, industrial, commercial, domestic and navigation uses. As in all other WCZs, the Director of Environmental Protection should seek to achieve the established Water Quality Objectives and maintain the quality so achieved.

7. The area covered by the proposed Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) WCZ is shown in the plan at Annex B.

Scope of Control

8. As with existing WCZs, all types of discharges within the proposed zone will be controlled. These will include all discharges from residential, industrial, commercial and institutional establishments. The only exceptions will be the discharge of domestic sewage into communal foul sewers and unpolluted water into communal sewers or communal drains for the carriage of surface drainage water.

Implementation

9. To enable control measures to be implemented over a reasonable time scale, two action dates will be provided for under section 7 of the WPCO. The first date - the First Appointed Day (FAD) - is proposed to be 1 April 1996. For any new effluent discharge commencing after this date, a licence must be obtained before the discharge can commence.

10. The second date - the Second Appointed Day (SAD) - is proposed to be 1 December 1996. Application for a licence for any discharges which are in existence on or before 1 April 1996 (FAD) should be made before the SAD.

Consultation

11. Three district boards (Eastern, Wanchai, and Central & Western), the Urban Council and major industrial / commercial organisations have been consulted on the proposed declaration of the new WCZ. In general, they have no objections to the proposal.

Advice Sought

12. Members are requested to advise whether the following proposals should be endorsed :

- (a) to recommend to the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands to establish Water Quality Objectives for the Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) WCZ as set out in Annex A; and
- (b) to recommend to the Governor-in-Council to declare the Victoria Harbour (Phase Three) WCZ as shown in Annex B.

Planning, Environment and Lands Branch
Environment Division
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