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for information

## The Environment and Conservation Fund

### **Establishment**

In his 1993 Address to the Legislative Council, the Governor proposed to set up the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) to help finance environmental education and research. The Environment and Conservation Fund Ordinance (the Ordinance), which established the ECF, was enacted in June 1994. An initial capital injection of \$50 million was subsequently approved by the Finance Committee. The ECF came into operation in August 1994.

### **Trustee and the ECF Committee**

2. Section 5 of the Ordinance provides for the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands to act as the trustee of the ECF. Section 7 of the Ordinance provides for the setting up of the ECF Committee, the statutory role of which is to advise the trustee on the use of the ECF for the purposes of funding educational, research and other projects and activities in relation to environmental and conservation matters. The Committee consists of a chairman and eight non-official members appointed by the Governor for a term of two years and four ex-officio members. The membership list of the ECF Committee is at Annex A.

### **Woo Wheelock Green Fund**

3. A \$50 million private fund, called the Woo Wheelock Green Fund (WWGF), was set up in the same year by Woo Wheelock Company Ltd in parallel to match the Government's contribution to the ECF. The two funds are kept in separate accounts, but a joint application form is used, and the vetting of applications is co-ordinated by the ECF Committee. Projects with a stronger practical element and more likely to produce immediate results are usually referred to WWGF.

### **Strategic Objectives**

4. Under Section 4 of the ECF Ordinance, the objectives of the trust fund are to fund educational, research and other projects and activities in relation to environmental and conservation matters. The ECF Committee has decided to focus on aspects which promote individual behavioural and life style changes to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development. In particular these changes should lead to :

- conservation of biological diversity with particular reference to marine conservation;
- improvement in air quality;
- reduction in noise pollution;
- improvement in water quality;
- minimisation of waste generation and promotion of the 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) concept; and
- sustainable use of energy.

### **Vetting of Project Proposals**

5. The ECF Committee seeks to achieve these objectives through supporting two categories of projects, namely educational and community action projects and environmental research projects. The ECF Committee established a Vetting Sub-committee to consider environmental research projects. The Sub-committee comprised ECF Committee members and co-opted members from tertiary institutes and other sectors of the community.

6. The Committee entrusted the vetting of educational projects to the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC). The reason for this arrangement is that the ECC has administered a funding scheme for environmental education and awareness projects undertaken by community groups for six years, and it has developed the expertise and administrative framework needed for considering such projects.

7. Both the ECF Vetting Sub-committee and ECC could approve grants up to \$120,000 per project. For applications in excess of \$120,000, the recommendations of the relevant vetting bodies have to be endorsed by the ECF Committee.

8. Secretariat services to the ECF Committee and ECF Vetting Sub-committee are provided by the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch (PELB), whereas the secretariat services to the ECC are provided by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). Applications may be submitted anytime using the prescribed application forms which are available in all district offices, the EPD and the PELB. The ECF Sub-committee and ECC meet every two months. The ECF Committee meets half yearly to consider the recommendations of the Vetting Sub-committee and ECC.

### **Criteria for vetting applications**

9. Only applications from non-profit-making bodies and community groups are considered for funding support. The following broad criteria are used in assessing the merits of individual applications:

- Projects selected for funding support will be expected to contribute to the overall environment of Hong Kong, to raise environmental awareness of the local community, or to mobilise the community to take action to improve the environment.
- The benefits must accrue to the local community as a whole, and not just an individual, a single private organisation or a consortium of private companies.
- Projects should be non-profit making in nature. Income derived from a project should be used to further the project's aims.

### **Approved applications**

10. Up to September 1996, a total of 275 applications for funding support have been considered, of which 19 research projects and 118 educational and community action projects were approved with a total grant of about \$20 million. The WWGF has sponsored four projects with a total amount of \$3 million.

11. A list of approved projects is at Annex B. If members wish, an annual update can be provided in future.

12. The accounts of the fund for the year ending 31 March 1996 are at present being audited by the Director of Audit. We propose to submit the audited accounts to the Legislative Council before the end of the year. We will pass a copy to members when they are available.

Planning, Environment and Lands Branch  
September 1996