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(ACE Paper 42/97)
for discussion

DRAFT WASTE REDUCTION PLAN FOR HONG KONG

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' comments on the Draft Waste Reduction Plan for Hong Kong.

BACKGROUND

2. Hong Kong's landfills are being filled much faster than originally anticipated. If waste generation continues as forecast (more or less in line with GDP growth), we will have to look for new landfill sites within the next few years. This will be very difficult given the competition for land and other constraints. To tackle the problem of escalating waste disposal costs and the sharp growth in waste generation, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) commissioned Consultants to undertake a Waste Reduction Study in February 1994 to review existing waste management practices and waste generation, recovery and recycling activities; to explore means of reducing municipal solid wastes and formulate an integrated waste reduction strategy. The study was completed in late 1995. The Consultants recommended a combination of measures building on existing waste recovery and recycling activities. The progress and preliminary findings of the study were reported to the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) on 25 March 1996.

3. A limited preliminary consultation exercise commenced in April 1996 using the Study's recommendations as the basis. During the consultation, EPD sought the views of major business and industrial sectors, relevant advisory bodies, the Municipal Councils, green groups and professional bodies/institutions on a Summary Document containing the Consultants' recommendations. Based on the Consultant's recommendations and the feedback obtained during the preliminary consultation exercise, the Government's Draft Waste Reduction Plan was drawn up for public consultation. The ACE was briefed on the outline of the Draft Waste Reduction Plan and the proposed public consultation strategy on 21 April 1997.

DRAFT WASTE REDUCTION PLAN

4. The objectives of the Draft Waste Reduction Plan are to reduce the amount of waste requiring disposal, to prolong the life of our landfills and to reduce the growing costs involved in transporting, treating and disposing of waste. The Draft Waste Reduction Plan adopts a waste management hierarchy comprising, in order of desirability: avoid waste; minimise waste; maximise recovery, reuse and recycling of waste; reduce bulk; and finally dispose. It draws on overseas experience and builds on existing local experience. It aims to improve on many overseas schemes by ensuring that proper attention is given to providing outlets for recovered waste materials to encourage the development of a self-sustaining market driven solution to our waste problems. In keeping with the market-driven ideal, the policy approach is to encourage participation through government and non-government partnership, whenever possible. This partnership approach involves participation and contribution, either financial or by other forms of support, from both government and other sectors of the community. This will allow greater flexibility in implementing measures than would be allowed under mandatory systems. It is also important to note that partnership measures can often be implemented much quicker than mandatory controls, which could take years to put in place.

5. The overall waste reduction target for municipal waste is 40% in ten years which includes 20% reduction through waste avoidance, minimisation and recycling; and another 20% reduction through waste-to-energy incineration and composting of organic waste. Individual companies and sectors will be encouraged to set their own targets, in consultation with the EPD.

6. The Draft Waste Reduction Plan which contains largely the same recommendations as the Consultants' report proposes the implementation of three major programmes.

(a) Waste Avoidance, Minimisation and Materials Recovery Programme

- Education and publicity to change social attitudes towards waste, such as the throw-away habit;
- Participation in Wastewi\$e and DEMOS Schemes by individual companies involving initiatives to adopt waste avoidance measures to meet specific reduction targets;
- Involvement by manufacturers and importers in producer responsibility schemes to manage the waste they generate;
- Government to contribute some funding to set up material recovery projects;
- Government to facilitate provision of land and space in new buildings to encourage waste recycling activities; and
- Further application of the polluter pays' principle, such as the landfill charging scheme.

(b) Institutional Programme

The institutional programme is designed to co-ordinate implementation of the waste reduction measures.

- Establishment of a core team within the EPD to drive the Waste Reduction Plan;
- Setting up task forces within various sectors of the community to co-ordinate waste reduction activities;
- Enhancing the roles of the Municipal Councils, the Housing Authority and the Housing Society in waste reduction; and
- Initiating any necessary legislative measures to support the waste reduction process.

(c) Bulk Waste Reduction Programme

- The programme will examine the introduction of modern waste-to-energy incinerators into Hong Kong. Consideration will also be given to composting of organic waste.

7. Regular evaluation and monitoring of progress will be a feature of the Plan. Apart from annual reports on progress in different sectors, major reviews are proposed in year four and year eight of the Plan to enable detailed evaluation to be done and, if necessary, to redirect and refocus efforts.

ADVICE SOUGHT

8. Members are requested to comment on the Draft Waste Reduction Plan.

**Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau
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