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ACE Paper 45/97)
for advice

Report of the EIA Subcommittee

The Subcommittee considered the Initial Assessment Report on the West Rail at its meeting on 1 September 1997.

West Rail - Phase I: West Kowloon to Tuen Mun Centre Environmental Impact Assessment Study - Initial Assessment Report

2. The proposed West Rail aims to relieve the traffic problem in Northwest New Territories. It provides passenger and freight rail service to connect West Kowloon and cross border points, and a branch off passenger linking to Tuen Mun. Phase I of the project consists of passenger train services and interchange facilities between West Kowloon and Tuen Mun.

The EIA Study

3. The report submitted by KCRC is an Initial Assessment Report (IAR), which concluded that there are no insurmountable environmental problems arising from the proposed West Rail. The IAR has highlighted key environmental issues which would need to be addressed in detail.

Noise Impact

4. The IAR has identified noise as an issue during both the construction and operation phases of the project. A package of practicable noise mitigation measures, such as noise barriers, resilient tracks and specific limits on rolling stock specifications, has been recommended. Further mitigation arrangements will be examined in detail in the next stage of the EIA process to deal with any residual impacts arising from the construction and operation of the project, particularly in the Western Section.

Ecological Impact

5. The major ecological impacts include the loss of some 2.8 hectares of pond/marsh and river channel, and some 25.6 hectares of agricultural land in Kam Tin Valley mainly due to the construction of the North Section and the Depot of the railway. The IAR has recommended that KCRC should seek off-site mitigation under existing policy directive by identifying possible locations for wetland habitats. Other possible mitigation opportunities will be examined.

Water Quality Impact

6. Reclamation will be required to provide land in Tsuen Wan Bay for the construction of the Tsuen Wan West Station and the adjacent railway tunnels. The initial qualitative assessment has indicated that the residual water quality impacts could be controlled to within the established standards. Further quantitative analysis will be carried out to verify the findings and to develop and recommend site specific mitigation measures.

EIA Subcommittee's Views and Recommendation

7. The Subcommittee has not found any insurmountable environmental problems arising from the project and agreed to recommend its endorsement. However, Members were concerned about the mitigation arrangements to alleviate noise, visual, ecological, waste and water impacts. They requested the project proponent to provide further information on these issues in the final EIA report and to justify why the cut and fill method cannot be further extended. Members considered that waste management throughout the construction stage, and the energy consumption aspect of construction method are also important.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to advise whether the IAR for the West Rail - Phase I: West Kowloon to Tuen Mun Centre Environmental Impact Assessment Study should be endorsed.