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(ACE Paper 12/98)
for advice

Report of the 36th Meeting of the EIA Subcommittee

The EIA Subcommittee considered four EIA reports in March. Two were discussed at the meeting held on 2 March 1998 and the other two were endorsed by circulation.

West Rail - Phase I West Kowloon to Tuen Mun Centre Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study ***(ACE EIA Paper 10/98)***

- 2 The project aims to provide a new regional passenger rails service between the north-western part of the Territory and the urban area in Kowloon. The Initial Assessment Report of the project was endorsed by the full Council at its meeting held on 22 September 1997, on the understanding that further details on mitigation arrangements would be provided in the Final Assessment Report (FAR).
- 3 The FAR indicated that impacts arising from the project during construction and operation phases could be kept within established criteria by implementing practicable mitigation measures. Major issues highlighted were operational noise and ecological impacts.
- 4 An at-source treatment package, including the multi-plenum noise attenuation system and edge wall barriers, was recommended to reduce operational noise. With this package, the FAR concluded that the noise levels could be kept within limit with eight car trains during the initial operational stage. However, exceedances at three properties during full operation with 12 car trains would be expected. At-receiver mitigation measures such as noise barriers at the affected properties and building modifications together with fine-tuning of the rail noise mitigation measures would be investigated during the detailed design stage. For unplanned future developments close to the West Rail, the mitigation package provided flexibility for future enhancement as edge wall barriers could be extended to full enclosure for increased noise attenuation.

5 On ecological impacts, there would be a loss of some 12 ha of wetland habitats in Kam Tin Valley and 60 ha agricultural land would be resumed. To compensate the wetland loss, 8.5 ha of high quality wetlands at Kam Tin and Au Tau would be provided. An additional 3.5 ha of compensatory wetland was being sought to bring the total compensatory wetland to 12 ha. KCRC, the project proponent, agreed to provide long-term management to achieve the conservation objectives and would submit a Habitat Creation and Management Plan to AFD. As regards the agricultural land, the FAR concluded that the 60 ha to be resumed were of low ecological value. As similar adjoining and surrounding agricultural land would remain and may provide habitats for wildlife affected, no ecological mitigation measures were required.

Subcommittee's Views and Recommendations

6 Members were in general satisfied with the FAR except the part on ecology. They shared the view that the project was worth pursuing. Three Members agreed to endorse the project on the understanding that the wetland compensation would be provided on a "like for like" basis. Pending clarifications on ecological compensation and effectiveness of proposed ecological mitigation measures, three Members refused to endorse the report while one reserved his position.

7 Having considered Members' views, the Chairman concluded that ecological assessment and compensation were crucial issues which could not be resolved due to lack of information of the meeting. The matters would be referred to the full Council for further deliberation. KCRC was requested to address the following at the full Council's meeting:-

- (a) a detailed breakdown of the nature and characteristics of the 60 ha agricultural land loss would be provided;
- (b) whether wet agricultural land would need to be compensated;
- (c) effectiveness of the proposed ecological mitigation measures, especially those compensated wetland under the viaduct; and
- (d) whether long term cumulative ecological impacts has been assessed.

8 Should the FAR be endorsed by the full Council, the Subcommittee considered that the following conditions should be imposed:-

- (a) ecological compensation should be provided on a "like for like" basis; and
- (b) environmental friendly design for the section of the Yuen Long-Kam Tin Main Drainage Channel which fall within the project area should be adopted.

Environmental Impact Assessment for Backfilling Marine Borrow Areas at East Tung Lung Chau
(ACE EIA Paper 13/98)

9 The project aims to backfill the East Tung Lung Chau Marine Borrow Areas which would be completed in three and a half years' time. The major impacts arising from the project were on fisheries and marine ecology. The East Tung Lung Chau fisheries area represents 2.5% in value of the total annual fisheries production in Hong Kong waters and comprising 5% of a large zone recommended for protection as a spawning habitat. The EIA predicted that the maximum area of the spawning ground to be disturbed by backfilling would be less than 0.4% and would only be on a temporary basis during and shortly after the disposal events. As there would be no increase in suspended sediment at the nearby Fish Culture Zones at Tung Lung Chau, Po Toi O and Po Toi Island, no long-term adverse impact was envisaged on the fisheries resources.

10 For impact on marine ecology, the EIA indicated that the habitat modifications would only occur in the benthic communities within the borrowed pits. It was envisaged that the marine borrow areas would be recolonized by benthic organisms typical of the area after the completion of the backfilling operations. As a result, there should not be any adverse impacts on the marine ecology.

Subcommittee's Views and Recommendations

11 The Subcommittee was content with the report. Concerns were raised on the level of suspended sediment concentration and its impact on coral. The project proponent undertook to strictly implement the EM&A programme and would consider the appointment of an independent consultant to monitor the dumping activities. Members noted the commitment and agreed to recommend endorsement of the report without condition.

Environmental Impact Assessment of the Trunk Road T7 in Ma On Shan
(ACE EIA Paper 11/98)

12 The project is to provide a new road connecting the existing Ma On Shan Road and Sai Sha Road. It forms part of the committed road development in Ma On Shan Outline Zoning Plan. The works will entail construction of both elevated and at-grade roads. Footbridges and pedestrian subways will also be constructed at appropriate locations. A section of tunnel will be created at the T7 and Sai Sha road Interchange so as to minimise the volume of excavated material and also to limit the visual intrusion of T7 into the landscape. The construction is expected to commence in the Year 2000 and be completed by 2002.

13 According to the EIA findings, environmental impacts during the construction stage could be maintained within acceptable standards with the implementation of recommended mitigation measures. Major impacts highlighted were traffic noise and ecology.

14 The EIA indicated that, without mitigation measures, the predicted traffic noise levels at most of the adjacent residential developments would exceed the established standard. To alleviate the impact, a series of direct mitigation measures, such as low noise road surfacing, roadside noise barriers and semi-enclosures, were recommended. As regards the ecological impact, about 6.5 ha on-site replanting along the roadsides, the fringe area between the road alignment and the Ma On Shan Country Park and the new amenity areas formed near Lee On would be provided to compensate for a loss of about 5 ha woodland.

Subcommittee's Views and Recommendations

15 Some Members were initially concerned about the visual impact of the re-planting programme and whether a link path would be provided between the Kam Yin Court and Ma On Shan Country Park. Having considered the project proponent's written responses, Members were satisfied with the findings of the EIA report and agreed to recommend its endorsement without condition.

Environmental Impact Assessment for Investigation of Improvements to Island Eastern Corridor Section between North Point Interchange and Sai Wan Ho (ACE EIA Paper 12/98)

16 The project aims to provide additional lanes to the section of the Island East Corridor (IEC) between North Point Interchange and Sai Wan Ho to accommodate the predicted increase in traffic flows and to resolve the existing traffic merging and weaving problems. It involves the construction of two additional lanes in the eastbound direction and one additional lane in the westbound direction. Construction is scheduled to commence in September 2000 for completion in August 2003.

17 The EIA found that the noise, dust and water quality impacts during the construction stage could be mitigated to meet established standards and guidelines by implementing appropriate control measures and the EM&A programme. Traffic noise, vehicular emission and tree felling were identified as major environmental concerns.

18 The EIA identified that the prevailing traffic noise levels at about 4,890 dwellings and 60 classrooms had already exceeded the established standards. With the completion of the improvement works, noise level exceedances at 30 more dwellings were predicted by the year 2018 should there be no mitigation measures.

The EIA recommended that noise barriers should be erected at various location. About 2000 dwellings and 25 classrooms would hence benefit from a reduction of noise level from 1 to 13 dB(A). Indirect mitigation measures in the form of window insulation and air-conditioning were considered to reduce the noise levels for the rest of the affected sensitive receivers. Having applied the eligibility criteria, nine dwellings were qualified.

19 The EIA also predicted that the tennis courts at the existing Quarry Bay Park would be subject to vehicular emission impact. To meet the Air Quality Objectives, semi-enclosures would be erected to ameliorate the impact. For the proposed Quarry Bay Park Phase II development, a buffer zone of 10 m to 22 m would be reserved along the alignment of the IEC and the Eastern Harbour Crossing Tunnel portal during the design stage. As regards the impact on tree felling, it was identified that the 321 trees to be felled were widespread urban plantation. Approximately 645 trees would be replanted along the IEC roadside and in the Quarry Bay Park to compensate the loss.

Subcommittee's Views and Recommendations

20 The Subcommittee was content with the EIA report. A Member was concerned about the visual impact of the proposed noise barriers. Having noted the project proponent's written commitment that the impact would be minimised as far as possible during the detailed design stage, all Members agreed to recommend endorsement of the report without condition.

Advice Sought

21 Members are invited to consider the recommendations of the Subcommittee on the following:-

- (a) whether the West Rail - Phase I West Kowloon to Tuen Mun Centre Environmental Impact Assessment Study should be endorsed and if so, whether the conditions set out in para 8 should be imposed;
- (b) endorsement of the Environmental Impact Assessment of Backfilling Marine Borrow Areas at East Tung Lung Chau subject to the condition set out in para 11;
- (c) endorsement of the Environmental Impact Assessment for Trunk Road T7 in Ma On Shan without condition; and
- (d) endorsement of the Environmental Impact Assessment for Investigation of Improvements to Island Eastern Corridor Section between North Point Interchange and Sai Wan Ho without condition.

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
March 1998**