

**Confirmed Minutes of the 81st Meeting of the
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee of
the Advisory Council on the Environment
held on 19 November 2003 at 4:00pm**

Present:

Mr. Otto POON, BBS (Chairman)
Prof. HO Kin-chung (Deputy Chairman)
Mr. Peter Y C LEE
Prof. WONG Tze-wai
Miss Petula POON (Secretary)

Absent with Apology:

Mr. LIN Chaan-ming
Dr. NG Cho-nam
Mrs. Mei NG, BBS

In Attendance:

Mr. Simon HUI	Acting Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment & Noise), Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Mr. C C LAY	Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Mr. Eddie CHENG	Executive Officer (E), Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

In Attendance for Agenda Item 3:

Ms. Ava CHIU	Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment & Transport) T3,
Mr. WAN Man-leung	Deputy Project Manager/Major Works (2) Highways Department

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Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the 80th Meeting held on 23 July 2003

The draft minutes were confirmed by Members.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

Para. 12: To provide more information on wastewater treatment facility and the eventual loading of the reedbed for the proposed Public Transport Interchange at Lok Ma Chau Terminus

2. The Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat had reminded KCRC to take the necessary follow-up actions.

Para. 22: To arrange a site visit to the wetland compensation area in winter

3. The Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat had reminded KCRC to take the necessary follow-up actions. Members would be invited to join the visit once the date is fixed.

Agenda Item 3 : Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge
(ACE-EIA Paper 8/2003)

4. The Chairman welcomed the project proponent team to the meeting. Ms. Ava Chiu started off the presentation and Mr. M L Wan briefed Members on the findings of the Preliminary Environmental Review (PER) of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (the Bridge).

5. A Member pointed out that the proposed location of the Bridge would direct vehicles including industrial vehicles such as container trucks to the airport and the North Lantau Highway. The industrial areas in west Pearl River Delta were growing rapidly and a large number of container trucks would use the Bridge in future. Too many container trucks running on the North Lantau Highway would have negative impact on the tranquility of North Lantau and compromise the original design concept of that region. He suggested building an additional landing point at Tuen Mun to divert industrial vehicles away from North Lantau on one hand and on the other shorten the distance from Tuen Mun industrial areas to the container terminals in Kwai Chung.

6. In response, Ms. Ava Chiu said that Tuen Mun west had indeed been considered as a landing point of the Bridge but was ruled out for a number of reasons. First, landing at Tuen Mun would have significant impact on the feeding areas of a comparatively denser population of Chinese White Dolphin. Secondly, the traffic impact of the Bridge on the local network in Tuen Mun would be severe, as the area would already be taking in additional traffic from the Shenzhen Western Corridor. Furthermore, giving the Bridge an additional landing point would increase the cost of the project significantly and affect its financial viability. Ms Chiu added that during the review of the traffic network of the Northwest New Territories, one of the proposals considered was to

construct the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link to link up North Lantau and Tuen Mun. The proposal would be considered in greater details at later stages.

7. In view of the insufficient road network in Tuen Mun, a Member suggested building a bypass in the area so that the additional traffic would not use the Tuen Mun Highway and Castle Peak Road. That would also remove the need for the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link. The Chairman said as he had mentioned at an earlier Council meeting, his estimate was that as many as 3 million container trucks would use the Bridge per year, therefore, the impact on North Lantau would be significant. He hoped that the Administration would consider the Member's suggestion of an additional landing point in Tuen Mun. In response, Ms. Ava Chiu said that according to an estimate, about 12,000 to 16,000 vehicles per day would use the Bridge at the initial stage. It was believed that the existing traffic network would be able to cope with the increase in traffic. A Traffic Impact Assessment would be conducted during the investigation study to assess the traffic impact in greater detail. Mr. M L Wan added that in the longer term, consideration would be given to the need for a new road to supplement the North Lantau Highway and a tunnel to connect Lantau to Tsing Yi. Those roads would help divert traffic away from North Lantau.

8. In response to the Chairman's question on the traffic projections, Ms. Ava Chiu said that the projections of cargo and passenger flow were provided by the Institute of Comprehensive Transport under the National Development and Reform Commission. The projections had taken into account the future development of western Pearl River Delta, including development likely to be induced by the Bridge.

9. A Member pointed out that the Overall Assessment Matrix on the eight alignment options had focused on the environmental impacts of the options, and had not compared the options in terms of their merits. It was suggested that Tuen Mun might have certain merits over other options and might worth further consideration. He then asked whether the ecological and water quality impact of that option could be mitigated and requested the team to explain the option's relatively high score on air quality, noise and cultural heritage impacts. In response, Ms Chiu clarified that apart from comparing the environmental impacts of the three options, the Government had also compared the three landing points in terms of their traffic impact on the existing transport network, and their position vis-à-vis the existing and planned strategic facilities such as the Airport and the Disneyland. It was concluded that the Northwest Lantau option outperformed the Tuen Mun option. The Council had also endorsed the proposal to focus on the Northwest Lantau as the study area

of the EIA Study.

10. Mr. M L Wan supplemented that Option 1 had high ecological impact because it would affect the Chinese White Dolphin feeding areas. The impacts on air quality and noise were also great because the landing point was near residential areas. The option would also affect an archeological site directly and hence had high impact on cultural heritage.

11. Referring to Option 3, a Member commented that a bridge was more preferable than a tunnel because the construction cost would be lower and tourists would have a better view during the journey.

12. In response to a Member's question on the weighting of the factors and how the environmental impact of each option was assessed, Mr. M L Wan explained that the assessment was aimed at identifying options that were environmentally unacceptable rather than finding the best option and that the factors had been given the same weighting.

13. In reply to a Member's question on risk assessments on ecology, water quality, etc, Mr. M L Wan said that the risk assessments would be undertaken during the EIA process, not during the PER.

14. A Member pointed out that the air quality in Tung Chung frequently exceeded the air quality objective in recent years. The increase in traffic would likely worsen the problem. In response, Ms. Ava Chiu said that the EIA study would assess the impact on air quality very carefully. Mr. M L Wan supplemented that according to the PER conducted, while the ozone level in Tung Chung might be exceeded, the levels for other pollutants would be acceptable. The EIA study would look into those factors in more details.

15. Referring to a question on the Bridge raised by Prof. Anthony Hedley in another forum and which was tabled for Members' information, the Chairman asked whether the Bridge would provide for a railway system or not. If so, a marshalling yard could be set up in Zhuhai and containers could be transported to Kwai Chung through the railway system, thereby reducing the air quality impact. In response, Ms. Ava Chiu explained that a feasibility study to be conducted by the Administration would look into the practicability of having a railway system along the Bridge. However, she pointed out that integrating a railway system into the Bridge would increase the cost significantly.

16. In response to the Chairman's comments that the railway system in North Lantau might need to be upgraded for transporting cargos,

Mr. M L Wan pointed out that the existing railway system in North Lantau was not designed for freight transport and it would be extremely difficult to upgrade Tsing Ma Bridge for that purpose. Nonetheless, he informed the meeting that the proposal of incorporating a passenger railway system in the Bridge would be considered. Due to physical constraints, the railway system might need to follow an alignment away from the Bridge and an artificial island would be needed. As the alignment of the railway, if any, was yet to be decided, it would not be included in the EIA study.

17. A Member said that it would be more cost effective if the railway system could be built along roads. In reply, Mr. M L Wan said that the projected patronage might not justify a railway system in the near future. Nonetheless, the Bridge could be designed to allow provision of a railway system in future when there was sufficient demand for it.

18. In response to a Member's suggestion that the project should take into account the findings of the Hong Kong 2030 Study, Ms. Ava Chiu said that they would liaise closely with Planning Department but in view of the urgency of the project, they could not wait for the completion of the Hong Kong 2030 Study. In reply to the Chairman's enquiry, the Secretary said that the Stage III Public Consultation Document on Hong Kong 2030 Study would be discussed at the coming full Council meeting to be held on 8 December 2003.

19. The Chairman thanked the presentation team and hoped that the Administration would consider their views of members.

Agenda Item 5 : Monthly Updates of Applications under Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance

20. Members noted the updates.

Agenda Item 6 : Any Other Business

Selection of the EIA Report on the Re-provisioning of Diamond Hill Crematorium

21. Mr. Simon Hui reported that the scope of the Diamond Hill Crematorium project had changed. The project originally involved only the provision of a new crematorium but it was later decided that the existing crematorium should be decommissioned as well. The project had aroused some public concern, as it was quite near school areas. The Secretary supplemented that about two years ago, the EIA Subcommittee did not select the EIA report of the project for submission. In view of the changes in the scope of the project, EPD therefore brought up the project

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for Members' attention. In reply to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr. Hui said that the EIA report on the project was submitted to EPD on 13 November 2003 and the report was under consideration by the Department.

22. As some Members were not present at the meeting, the Subcommittee agreed that the project should go through the selection process once again with updated information from EPD.

EPD & the
Secretariat

Tentative items for discussion at the 82nd meeting

23. The Chairman informed Members that according to EPD's monthly update, there was no EIA report scheduled for the next meeting. The Secretariat would verify the position with EPD later and inform Members in due course.

Agenda Item 7: Date of Next Meeting

24 The next meeting was scheduled for 23 December 2003.

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
December 2003**