

Harbour Area Treatment Scheme Stage 2 Programme announced

The Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment), Mr K.K. Kwok, today (April 22) announced the implementation programme for the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS) Stage 2.

"Taking into account the generally positive response received during the public consultation on HATS Stage 2 last year, the Executive Council decided that we should implement the final stage of HATS in two phases," Mr Kwok said.

"The first phase (Stage 2A) is targeted to be completed by 2013", he said. "Depending on the results of a review to be carried out in 2010/11 which will take account of population growth and the trend in water quality, we plan to commence Stage 2B upon completion of Stage 2A." He added, "The public's acceptance of the need to recover the full operational costs through sewage charges is a prerequisite for the Stage 2 programme to proceed."

HATS Stage 1 is now treating 75 per cent of the sewage generated around Victoria Harbour. Since the full implementation of HATS Stage 1 in December 2001, the harbour water quality has improved significantly.

"But these gains will be eroded in the future if we do not act now to put in place a treatment system that not only deals with the remainder of the untreated sewage, but also caters for projected increases in the volume of waste water expected as a result of the growing population and increase in economic activities," Mr Kwok said.

The Administration consulted the public from June 21 to November 20 last year on the way forward for HATS Stage 2 which comprises :

For Stage 2A :

- Extension of the deep tunnel network to collect and convey sewage from the remaining parts of Hong Kong Island to the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works (SCISTW) for proper treatment;
- Expansion of the existing chemical treatment capacity from the present design level of 1.7 million cubic metres daily to 2.8 million cubic metres;
- provision of disinfection to all HATS treated effluent before the effluent is discharged into the Harbour; and

For Stage 2B :

- Upgrading to biological treatment for all HATS flows.

“The vast majority of the responses received during the public consultation process strongly supported the proposal to clean up the harbour by implementing HATS Stage 2.”

“By completing Stage 2A, we will be able to achieve most of our water quality criteria in the majority of the harbour area, thereby leading to a cleaner and healthier marine environment,” Mr Kwok said.

HATS Stage 2 will cost about \$19 billion to construct. It will also require about \$1.1 billion per year to operate. Based on the polluter-pays principle, the Government will conduct a review of the existing levels of the sewage charge and trade effluent surcharge and put forward proposals for consultation later in the year.

Mr Kwok also said that the results of the consultation revealed that most respondents supported the application of the polluter-pays principle to fund the operational cost for HATS.

“The Government is prepared to fund the capital cost of the facilities in Stage 2, but the resources for their on-going operation must come from sewage charges.”

“With public support of this principle, we will be able not only to proceed with Stage 2A for completion in 2013, but also to advance part of the disinfection facilities planned under Stage 2 for completion by 2008/09. This will bring further improvements to the water quality in the Harbour and enable the beaches in Tsuen Wan to be re-opened at an early date,” Mr Kwok added.

Details of the HATS and the consultation document can be downloaded from the website: <http://www.cleanharbour.gov.hk>.

End/Friday, April 22, 2005

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