

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs Special Meeting on 1 June 2013

Business Environment Council Limited (“BEC”) has long been a strong advocate for sustainable waste management. BEC would like to declare that we are a membership-based organisation, with over 150 member companies that spans across major holding companies in Hong Kong, to multinational conglomerates, and to small and medium-sized enterprises. Some of our member companies are involved in business related to waste management.

BEC has reviewed the Paper CB(1)1079/12-13(01) submitted to the Panel on Environmental Affairs by Environment Bureau (“EnB”) / Environmental Protection Department (“EPD”) dated May 2013, and has discussed this among our membership. The following views have emerged as our collective response to EnB/EPD’s paper. Views put forward in this submission represent the views of BEC as a whole, and may not necessarily correlate with the views of individual members.

BEC is very concerned about the state of waste management in Hong Kong. Despite EPD’s efforts, the overall amount of MSW that Hong Kong generates has continued to rise over time, peaking at nearly seven million tonnes in 2010 (up from 4.7 million tonnes in 1997).

BEC supports policy and regulatory approaches that encourage the sustainable use of resources. We recognise that there is an urgent need to reduce waste (including municipal solid waste (“MSW”) and construction & demolition (“C&D”) waste), increase resource recovery and improve waste management infrastructure. The recent “Hong Kong Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022” (“Action Blueprint”) published by EnB is a very good step in this direction.

It is regrettable that landfill extension remains as a necessary next step for the management of waste resources in Hong Kong, albeit it is a practical approach needed to deal with the imminent waste management crisis. This situation could have been mitigated if Government had addressed the lingering issues of Hong Kong’s waste reality and secured public support for implementation of the “Waste Reduction Framework Plan 1998-2007” and “A Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)”.

In addition to the development of appropriate policies and legislation, the successful implementation of the Action Blueprint relies on social mobilization and infrastructure. In this regard, BEC has recently formed the BEC Waste Management Advisory Group to act as a platform for BEC members to collaborate and promote best practices in waste management and to support and engage Government and other stakeholders on waste policy considerations.

During BEC’s EnviroSeries Conference “Rising to Hong Kong’s Waste Challenge: Policies, Best Practices and Opportunities” held on 24 May 2013, the Secretary for the Environment Mr K S Wong outlined that the Government set a 40% MSW

disposal reduction target (to 0.8kg per-capita) by year 2022. However, we note that this target lags behind those set by Singapore and Taiwan in particular. Taipei, for example, has set itself a 50% reduction target to achieve 0.225kg per capita collection by 2020. We hope that the Government can be more aggressive in reviewing MSW disposal reduction target to enhance the lifespan of landfills. In addition, fundamental changes to prolong the lifespan of landfill capacity, such as substantially reducing C&D waste disposal at landfills over time should be implemented.

Landfill sites should be treated as the last resort of waste management – this has been best practice overseas for many years now. The Action Blueprint clearly prioritizes waste reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery with a number of policies and accompanying infrastructure projects.

The raft of initiatives proposed in the Action Blueprint, if successfully implemented, will help Hong Kong tackle its waste problems. However, this is only a start: it is unlikely that these initiatives can be implemented soon enough, or will have significant enough effects on Hong Kong's overall waste problems, to mitigate the need for landfill extension. The reality of the imminent waste crisis makes the need of landfill extension the only practical option in the short term. With the implementation of proper waste management solutions, this should be the last time that Hong Kong needs to extend the lifespan of its landfills.

The Paper CB(1)1079/12-13(01) on Environmental Infrastructure Projects for NENT, WENT and SENT Landfills outlines costs and mitigation measures proposed by EPD for these projects. For instance, SENT Landfill, being placed at a strategic location as a waste disposal outlet, will be expanded in land size by 13%, but the composition of waste designated for disposal at this facility will be restricted to C&D waste only. This change of operation at SENT Landfill will greatly reduce odour nuisance nearby, and together with increased monitoring and mitigation measure of air particulates help to further reduce its environmental impact. BEC suggests a permanent communication and response mechanism to be established to ensure that environmental concerns from local residents and stakeholders are addressed in a timely and proactive manner.

BEC believes that the implementation of the Action Blueprint is needed now more than ever to accomplish necessary waste reduction targets. BEC also appreciates this opportunity to share our opinion in the hope of shaping a more sustainable future for Hong Kong.

Submitted by Business Environment Council Limited
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