

**Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Environment and  
Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee  
held on 29 May 2014 at 2:30 p.m.  
in Room 502, 5/F., Southorn Centre, Wanchai**

**Present**

Mr Kenneth CHAN	(Chairman)
Mr Victor KWONG	
Mr Barry MC KWONG	
Mr LAM Chiu-ying	
Dr Arthur PS LAU	
Prof Kenneth MY LEUNG	
Dr Daniel TSANG	
Mr Luther LT WONG	
Mr Conrad PK LAM	Environment Bureau
Dr YIP Yin	Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department (AFCD)
Dr Samuel CHUI	Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Mr Patrick LIU	EPD
Ms Anita SW TSUI	Secretary (EPD)
Ms Shirley WL FONG	Assistant Secretary (EPD)

**Absent with Apologies**

Miss Jane HUI  
Mr Victor C LI  
Prof Irene LO  
Dr SHUM Ho-cheung, Anderson

**Welcoming Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed all Members attending the meeting of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (RPVSC), particularly Ms Shirley FONG, who replaced Ms Sharon TSAI as the Assistant Secretary to RPVSC, and Dr. Samuel CHUI, Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Community Relations) of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) would attend the meeting for Agenda Items 2(a) and 4.

**Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

2. Draft minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to Members on 27

March 2014. No comment was received. Since Members had no other comment, the draft minutes were confirmed.

## **Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meetings**

### **(a). Applications Assessment Mechanism of the Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee [RPVSC Paper 02/2014-2015]**

3. Ms Shirley FONG reported that at the meetings of RPSVC held on 27 September 2013 and 7 January 2014, Members had agreed on the applications assessment mechanism as well as budgetary management arrangements for the Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference (RTDC) Projects funding scheme which would be adopted from 2014-15 onwards. She told the meeting that arising from suggestions received recently, the ECF Secretariat would like to propose further changes to the assessment mechanism for conference projects. Ms Anita SW TSUI supplemented that statistics on the number of conference projects and total funding approved in the past few years had been tabled for Members' reference. Excluding the odd years with exceptionally high or low funding requirements, on average conference projects took up about 10% of the total funding approved for RTDC projects in the past few years.

4. At the Chairman's invitation, Dr Samuel CHUI briefed Members about the proposal set out in RPSVC Paper 02/2014-15. Dr Samuel CHUI said that under the new assessment mechanism for the RTDC funding scheme, all applications received under the same round of invitation should be considered by RPSVC on a competition basis. The ECF Secretariat had received suggestions which indicated that for conference projects, a longer lag time often up to a year had to be allowed for planning and preparation work, and for this reason, early confirmation of ECF funding support would be essential so that applicant organizations could commence preparation work. Dr Samuel CHUI indicated that since the approved budget for conferences would be capped at \$500,000, funding applications for these projects would not be subject to the external assessment arrangements applicable to projects seeking funding support of over \$500,000. In addition, considering the different nature of conference projects on the one hand, and other research and/or technology demonstration projects on the other, it would be rather difficult for RPSVC to compare and assess these two types of projects on a like-with-like basis in selecting the most meritorious ones for support.

5. Dr Samuel CHUI said that after reviewing the situation, the ECF Secretariat would like to propose setting aside an amount of, say, 10%, from the budget for the RTDC funding scheme each year for exclusive use of conference projects. Under the proposal, funding applications for conferences would be separated from other research and/or technology demonstration projects for earlier assessment by RPSVC on a competition basis, which would help speed up the processing timeframe for

conferences by up to 3 or 4 months, and would allow more time for preparation work by the applicant organizations. Dr Samuel CHUI added that any unspent funding for conference projects could be pooled together with the remaining 90% allocation for use by research and/or technology demonstration projects. In the event the 10% budget was insufficient to meet funding requirements of all supported conference projects, such unfunded projects could be pooled together with the other research and/or technology demonstration projects to compete for funding support.

6. Taking into account the annual funding commitments for conference projects over the past few years and after deliberation, the Chairman concluded the meeting's views to accept the following revised vetting arrangements for conference applications:

- (a). A designated budget at 10% of the annual budget for RTDC projects would be set with a higher priority for conference projects each year. Accordingly, out of the total budget of \$20 million for RTDC projects in 2014-15, an amount of \$2 million would be reserved for conferences.
- (b). Funding applications for RTDC projects would continue to be invited in one go, with a single application deadline. However, funding applications for conference projects would be considered by RPVSC first under a competition basis. Under such arrangements, the results of funding applications for conference projects would be made available around September / October.
- (c). Any unused budget for conference projects could be pooled together with the remaining budget for supporting research and/or technology demonstration projects in the year. Any conference projects that could not be funded for reason of the limited 10% budget might be considered at the same time with the other research and/or technology demonstration projects in order to make the best use of funding. Any unused fund at the end of the financial year would be returned to the ECF.
- (d). The above arrangements would be adopted from the 2014-15 cycle onwards. The Secretariat would revise the applications assessment and funding arrangements for RTDC projects and arrange to promulgate the revised arrangements at the ECF website.

*[Dr Arthur LAU and Mr Luther Wong joined the meeting at this juncture.]*

7. Considering that some members would have to withdraw from the discussion on various funding applications carried forward from the previous meeting for reason of their association with the application organizations concerned, the meeting agreed to proceed with the discussion on the new application under Agenda Item 4 first.

**Agenda Item 4: New Application**

*Project 26/2013 Incense Smoke & Odour Collection & Filtering System and Incense Ash Regeneration (RPVSC Paper 07/2014-2015)*

8. Dr Arthur LAU declared that he belonged to the same organization as that of the consultants of the applicant organization for the present application. Considering that Dr Arthur LAU was not associated with the applicant organization, the meeting agreed that he should stay on for the discussion.

9. Ms Shirley FONG briefed the meeting about the proposal by the Sik Sik Yuen (SSY) seeking funding support at \$4,342,000 for a 30-month technology demonstration project which aimed to reduce the incense smoke and odour originating from incense burning at the Wong Tai Sin Temple; regenerate the waste ash into air filtering material that would be utilized in the air filtering system; and demonstrate the proposed technology to the public and other incense burning temples.

10. Ms Shirley FONG informed Members that the proposed project was one of the initiatives of SSY's greening programme under the ECF's Green Non-government Organization (NGO) Scheme, which had the objective of transforming SSY into a green organization through the implementation of a series of educational, energy, waste-related and research projects, and engaging SSY as a strategic partner and green role model in cultivating a green culture through its network of service units. Approval-in-principle for funding support totalling about \$21 million for the series of projects proposed under the greening programme was given by the ECF Committee in June 2011, including an amount of \$4,344,000 reserved for the present project. According to the established procedures, SSY should submit a detailed project proposal for the project to RPVSC for vetting and consideration of funding support.

11. Ms Shirley FONG reported that to enable SSY to take forth the greening programme, the ECF Committee had also approved funding at \$1.5 million for SSY to engage an environmental consultant, which was tasked to, inter alia, provide technical support for carrying out feasibility studies for the present proposed project as well as monitoring the implementation of the project. Subsequent to the ECF Committee's approval, SSY had engaged HKUST R&D Corporation Limited, through open tendering, as its consultant. With HKUST's support, SSY had completed a pilot design for the proposed Incense Smoke and Odour Collection and Filtering system. Based on the pilot design so developed, SSY subsequently submitted a funding application for

the present project which was meant to further take forth the system.

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34. The Chairman concluded the meeting's views that the idea to develop an incense smoke removal system for the Wong Tai Sin Temple was in principle supported. However, considering the constraints of the proposed system in effectively reducing air pollutants notably PM2.5 in incense smoke, the project team should be invited to take into account Members' views for improving the proposal for resubmission, viz., to address public health concerns over air pollution, and considering that one of the objectives of the study was to tackle public health hazards arising from incense smoke,

PM2.5 should be covered in the study, which should also demonstrate how the proposed system could help bring about a reduction in the level of PM2.5. The study should also consider further devices to reduce air pollutants not only arising from incense burning at the main altar, and also incense smoke emitted by the burning of remaining joss sticks at the incense burner. In addition, the study should explore further means to increase the percentage of incense smoke that could be collected by the system, and explore how to enhance the system's effectiveness in filtering PM2.5 when compared with other technologies available in the market.

35. Mr LAM Chiu-ying declared interests for Agenda Items 2(c), 2(d) and 2(e) concerning applications from the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). He and Dr Samuel CHUI departed from the meeting at this juncture.

(b). *Project 15/2013 "LED Up Hong Kong" - Documenting the Environmental Benefits, Social Acceptance, and Economic Opportunities of LED Lighting, to Facilitate its Effective Deployment in All Market Segments – Submission from The Climate Group [RPVSC Paper 03/2014-2015]*

36. Ms Shirley FONG said that the application from The Climate Group Hong Kong Limited was discussed at the previous meeting held on 3 March 2014.

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39. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that a reply should be issued to the applicant organization as proposed.

### **Agenda Item 3: Project Variations**

40. In response to the Chairman, Ms Shirley FONG reported that since the project under Agenda Item 3 was from the same PI of Agenda Item 2 (d), the meeting agreed to proceed to Agenda Item 3 first before going back to the funding applications under Agenda Items 2(c) to 2(e).

*Project 24/2010 The Contribution of Vertical Greening on Human Bioclimatic and Carbon Footprint in Built Environment [RPVSC Paper 08/2014-2015]*

41. Ms Shirley FONG referred Members to RPVSC Paper 08/2014-2015

concerning the proposed further project variations for project ECF 24/2010.

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44. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded the meeting's views that the requested project variations were approved. The PI should be reminded to observe the guideline requirements and allow sufficient time for processing the variation requests in future.

Applications considered at the previous meeting

(c). Project 01/2013 Assessment of the Ecological Role of Birds in Hong Kong's Secondary Forests [RPVSC Paper 04/2014-2015]

45. Ms Shirley FONG reported that this application sought funding support at \$484,000 for a 20-month project which aimed to assess the bird-dispersed seed-rain in Hong Kong's secondary forests throughout a year, with a view to investigating the role of avifuna on ecological succession. The PI of the project was Dr NG Cho Nam. Ms Shirley FONG said that at the previous meeting, Members considered that although the proposal was "Very good", the PI should be requested to provide a comprehensive manpower plan for further consideration, which should set out details on the proposed duties, required qualifications and experience, and man-hours involved for each of the staff members proposed to be funded by the ECF, the proposed salary rates with reference to the ECF's funding scale for research supporting staff, and other suitable details and justifications to substantiate the proposed salary rates and budget for manpower. Ms Shirley FONG reported that the Secretariat had since contacted the PI for the required information, and the PI's reply was set out in RPVSC Paper 04/2014-2015. In brief, since the study needed to engage persons with highly specialized skills and experiences in bird-ringing in Hong Kong, and that the field work of the study was particularly demanding and laborious, the salary rate for the proposed part-time researchers was higher than the average daily rates based on the ECF's funding scale for corresponding levels of research staff. In this respect, HKBWS had taken into account the salary scale used by AFCD for studies employing personnel with comparable expertise in putting forth the proposed salary rates for the present project. The PI had also slightly revised the project's budget, from the original \$487,000 to \$484,000.

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48. The meeting decided that the application with the revised budget proposal should be supported.

(d). Project 06/2013 Value of *Hermetia illucens* (Black Soldier Fly) for Food Waste Conversion in Hong Kong [RPVSC Paper 05/2014-15]

49. Ms Shirley FONG said that this project proposal from CUHK requested for funding of \$499,500 for a 15-month project which aimed to study the waste reduction capability of using *Hermetia illucens* (black soldier fly (BSF)) in recycling various common food wastes in Hong Kong. The PI was Prof CHU Lee-man, who was also the PI of ECF 24/2010 discussed under Agenda Item 3. Ms Shirley FONG reported that Members examined this application at the previous RPVSC meeting, during which Members noted that similar researches using BSF for food waste conversion seemed to have been carried out in Hong Kong. The meeting decided that the PI should be invited to advise whether any similar studies on the use of BSF for waste conversion had been carried out in Hong Kong, and if applicable, how the proposed project compared with those studies already conducted or being carried out in Hong Kong. Pending the PI's submission of the required information, the meeting had deferred a decision on the application. Ms Shirley FONG said that the Secretariat had subsequently obtained the PI's response, which was provided at Attachment 2 to RPVSC Paper 05/2014-15 for Members' consideration. In brief, the PI explained that although the rearing of BSF was practised in Hong Kong, no scientific study had been done on the subject.

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55. The meeting agreed that the application should be supported.

(e). Project 11/2013 Construction of DNA Barcoding Database for Rapid Taxonomic Identification of Marine Fauna in Hong Kong [RPVSC Paper 06/2014-15]

56. Prof Kenneth LEUNG declared interest for this item for reason that he would be supplying samples for use of the proposed study, and departed from the meeting.

57. Ms Shirley FONG said that this project proposal from CUHK sought funding support at \$1,163,080 for a 30-month project which aimed to construct a DNA barcoding database (mitochondrial cytochrome c oxidase subunit I, COI) from over 600 common marine species in Hong Kong to provide a rapid, accurate and inexpensive platform for the identification of marine species. DNA data so obtained could be used to validate and revise past records on the marine species list in Hong Kong. The PI was Prof CHU Ka-hou. Members examined this application at the previous meeting and rated the proposal as "Good, promising but not ready for funding". The meeting

decided that the PI should be invited to improve the proposal by narrowing down the study scope to, say, focus on selected locations or species on the basis of reasonable justifications, so that the study would be more focused and the samples more representative for further consideration

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61. The meeting decided that the application should be rejected.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business**

62. Members had no other business to raise.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Date of Next Meeting**

63. The next meeting would be held around September 2014. The Secretariat would inform Members of the details once available.

64. The meeting ended at 4:50 p.m.

#### **Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee June 2014**

##### Note:

The paragraph will not be included in the version of notes to be uploaded to the webpage of ECF according to the standing practice of not disclosing the detailed reasons for supporting or rejecting an application and / or the performance and other matters related to a specific organization or person. The ECF webpage contains a general disclaimer that "Reasons for supporting/rejecting an application had been made known to the project proponents concerned, and the public could ask the project proponents direct for such information".