

**Confirmed Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Committee
held on 15 June 2009 at 3:00 p.m.**

Present

Prof. LUNG Ping-yeo, David, S.B.S., J.P. (Chairman)

Prof. CHAN Chak-keung

Prof. CHU Lee-man

Mr. CHUA Hoi-wai

Mr. Joseph LEE, S.B.S., J.P.

Mr. LEUNG Wai-kuen, Edward, J.P.

Prof. WONG Woon-chung, Jonathan

Ms WONG Sean-yeo, Anissa, J.P.

PS(Env)/DEP

Mr. WONG Yiu-kam, Benny, J.P.

DDEP(1), EPD

Ms CHEUNG Miu-han, Betty

P(CR), EPD

Mr. YUNG Po-shu, Benjamin

Principle Education Officer, EDB

Mr. LAI Chuen-chi, Patrick

Sr Nature Conservation Officer, AFCD

Absent with Apologies

Mr. MAN Mo-leung

Ms NGAN Man-ling, Edith

In Attendance

Ms CHOI Siu-min, Linda

PA/SEN, ENB

Ms Elaine CHUNG

S(CR) Ag., EPD

Ms CHAN Suk-ha, Winifred

SEO(CR&E), EPD

In Attendance for Discussion Items 6 & 7

Dr. WONG Tung-kong, Lawrence

AD(WM), EPD

Mr. WONG Chuen-fai

P(WR), EPD

Mr. TAM Chun-keung, Wilson

S(WM)3, EPD



Opening Remarks:

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the fourth meeting. He introduced Mr. Patrick LAI of AFCD who attended the meeting for the first time and replaced Mr. Richard CHAN as representative of the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation because Mr. CHAN had changed his posting. He also welcomed Ms Elaine CHUNG who stood in for Mr. Francis WONG as Mr. WONG was having vacation leave

Discussion Item 1: Confirmation on Minutes of the Meeting held on 19.3.2009

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 19.3.2009 were sent to members on 20.5.2009. The meeting confirmed the draft minutes without any amendment.

Discussion Item 2: Matters Arising

Para. 3 Financial Position of the ECF

3. Ms Winifred CHAN reported that the fund balance as at end of May 2009 was \$1,056 million and the uncommitted balance was \$953 million.

Discussion Item 3: Public Education Programme for the Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste - Proposed changes to details of the project “Green Festival” (ECF Paper 15/2009-10)

4. Ms Winifred CHAN briefed Members on the paper. There was proposed re-allocation of unspent balance from printing cost of stickers to

cover the over-expenses of printing A3 posters for the "No Gift-wrapping Paper" Programme. As the recipient organization had successfully persuaded retailers to bear the costs of printing the "courtesy stickers", the resources could be used for printing additional posters. The total budget for this programme remained unchanged. For the "DIY with Sustaining Love" Programme, the recipient organization proposed to re-allocate the unspent balance from poster printing to the venue decoration to meet the increased expenditure for samples of DIY flowers and adornments placed at the workshop venue and the increased travelling allowance for volunteers. As no banner was made for the event, the original estimate of \$6,000 was identified as savings.

5. A Member commented that the recipient organization should make early application to the Lands Department for permit so as to avoid missing the opportunity of putting up appropriate banners for programme publicity. Another Member and Mr. Benjamin YUNG agreed that the recipient organization should not identify savings from any mistake in programme planning to make up the shortfall of other items. Ms Linda CHOY remarked that the recipient organization had made effort to invite participating retailers to contribute to the stickers and hence savings from stickers could be used for printing additional posters. Another Member considered that the recipient organisation should be allowed to manipulate the budget variation within a defined scope to meet operational needs. The Chairman then invited the Secretary to remind the recipient organization to monitor the project closely so as to avoid missing the application deadline for the banners again.

6. The Chairman concluded that the proposed variation of project details by Green Sense for the project "Green Festival" in ECF Paper 15/2009-10 was approved.

**Discussion Item 4: Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee Vetting Conference Applications
(ECF Paper 16/2009-10)**

7. Ms Winifred CHAN briefed Members on the paper which summarized the principles agreed by the RPVSC in vetting funding applications for researchers to attend overseas conferences and organizing international conferences in Hong Kong. The Chairman indicated support to the proposed ECF funding to organizing international conferences in Hong Kong. He recalled that the Secretary for the Environment (SEN) had met the Law Faculty of the University of Hong Kong to discuss the possibility of arranging an international conference on environmental law in Hong Kong. He also learnt that the Civic Exchange was also planning an international conference/event on climate change in Hong Kong, which may involve C40. The Chairman said these were meaningful events that would raise Hong Kong's profile in the international community. They would facilitate exchange of best practices, expertise and experience on environmental issues and raise Hong Kong's profile as a leading green city. In respect of the thematic approach, the Chairman then invited Members to suggest and provide themes or environmental initiatives to the Secretary for coordination.

8. A Member enquired if the limit of \$500,000 would be sufficient to cater for the actual requirement. As an example, he indicated that the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) was planning for an international conference in 2010 with an estimate of more than 2,000 participants. Taking into account the registration fees, sponsorship and other incomes, HKCSS had estimated that the budget would be in the order of \$12 million. Two Members stated that the funding cap of \$500,000 would cater mainly for academic or scientific conferences to be organized in tertiary institutes with an estimate of 100 to 200 participants only. The venue charges and administrative costs would be comparatively more economical and it was expected that the income from registration fees would recover part of the conference expenses.

9. Mr. Benny WONG pointed out that the proposed capping at \$500,000 only applied to general conferences usually organized by learnt societies and tertiary institutes. Other thematic international conferences proposals exceeding \$500,000 would be considered on a case-by-case basis. The RPVSC and ECFC could also set its own themes. A Member agreed that different scale of conferences would require different level of funding support. Another Member said that the RPVSC noted that there seemed to be a gap between the scale of academic conferences capped at \$500,000 and

other international conferences with world-famous scientists/speakers and other public engagement events. However, once the RPVSC received actual conferences proposals for detailed discussion, he trusted that the RPVSC would make appropriate recommendations on the basis of practical needs. He opined that the funding principles should be agreed for the time being and details to be considered on case-by-case basis.

10. Ms Linda CHOY said that in relation to the climate change conference referred to by the Chairman, there was much interest among C40 cities in the development of climate change initiatives, particularly over building energy efficiency and EVs, in Hong Kong and the region during SEN's recent visit to Seoul to attend The 3rd C40 Large Cities Climate Summit. Members were of the view that climate change could be one of the themes for thematic international conferences to be supported by ECF. On the C40 framework, a Member said that countries were often made to compete on financial undertakings and had to go in with a huge deposit in making bids for conferences. In response to that, Ms CHOY said since the next biennial meeting of C40 was scheduled for 2011, there may be a window for a C40 event in Hong Kong in 2010. The Clinton Climate Initiative office in Hong Kong, the executive arm of C40 in Hong Kong, should be approached for further discussion. Ms Anissa WONG remarked that selecting an appropriate theme for the international conference was important but the capability of the organizer was also an important factor to be considered. The Committee should consider carefully in providing funding support or in agreeing to be supporting organization towards the proposed international conferences.

11. In reply to a Member's question on funding support to outgoing conference trips for researchers, Ms Winifred CHAN stated that the funding cap of **\$15,000** would cover the airfare (economy class), conference registration fee, subsistence allowance including accommodation and public means of transport between the nearest international airport and the place of conference. Only one person per project would be funded to attend **one** overseas conference throughout the whole project period which might last for more than one year. As an interim measure, for those on-going research projects that were already approved, the PIs could still apply for funding support to attend overseas conferences for presentation of results, PIs of those research projects that were completed on or after 1 April 2009 could

submit separate applications for the conference grants at least 6 months in advance of the proposed conference date together with supporting invitation letter confirming the acceptance of paper or poster and the abstract of paper for presentation.

12. The Chairman concluded that the ECF Paper 16/2009-10 was supported. The Secretary would state clearly the principles and funding scope of \$15,000 for one researcher to have one outgoing conference trip in one project in the guides to applications and upload them to the website accordingly. The principle of providing funding support to organize international academic/ scientific conferences with a cap of \$500,000 was supported and could be uploaded to website. As funding proposals for other international conferences that met the ECFC theme, or with public engagement element would be considered on a case by case basis, it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to include such information on the website. (Post-meeting note: The coverage of funding for researchers to take outgoing conference trips was given in Annex A. The funding cap and list of acceptable expenditure items for international conferences to be held in Hong Kong are given in Annex B.)

**Discussion Item 5: New Application Recommended by the RPVSC -
ECF Project 17/2008 Development of an automatic
switching off system for idling engine to achieve
enhanced fuel economy and improved environment
(ECF Paper 17/2009-10)**

13. Ms Winifred CHAN briefed Members on the paper which summarized the project details and amount of fund recommended by the RPVSC at the two meetings held on 24.2.2009 and 27.5.2009. The RPVSC recommended to support the proposal with a total sum of \$3,008,150 (the original budget was \$3,982,200). The cost for patent (\$100,000) and salary for two research staff (\$772,800) was not supported and the monthly salary for the two remaining research staff was capped at \$28,450 per head.

14. A Member supplemented that the proposal would complement

the environmental initiative on banning idling vehicle engines which was under public consultation. The RPVSC had also reviewed carefully the staffing requirement for conducting the research and the contribution from the applicant organization, and eventually recommended a grant of \$3,008,150. Another Member enquired if the proposed Environmental Technology Consultant (ETC) to be engaged by the applicant was the sole company in the market capable of providing such services. Ms Anissa WONG added that the proposed ETC is an EPD approved emission testing centre which professional experience might be recognized. Members then concluded that the applicant should provide further justification on why open tendering was not adopted and the basis of selecting ETC to undertake the above works apart from its status of being an approved emission testing centre.

Discussion Item 6: Public Education Programme for the Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste - Every Day No Plastic Bag – BYOB Campaign by the Hong Kong Retail Management Association (HKRMA)
(ECF Paper 14/2009-10)

15. Dr. Lawrence WONG briefed Members on the paper. The objective of HKRMA's proposal was to raise public awareness on the environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags. It demonstrated the support of the retail trade to the levy scheme and invited participation of over 2,000 retail outlets. The Waste Management Subcommittee of the Advisory Council on the Environment endorsed this proposal as well.

16. The Chairman commented that in addition to the proposed publicity programme, HKRMA should also consider educating the retailers to avoid dispensable pre-packaging of products. Mr. Patrick LAI asked if the advertisement by HKRMA would mingle with Government API. A Member also considered that it should be the Government's responsibility to place advertisement on the environmental levy scheme. Dr. Lawrence WONG said that advertisements to be placed by HKRMA would indicate support from the retail trade towards the forthcoming environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags. It facilitated the general public and the non-prescribed

retailers to understand more about the scheme. He emphasized that there would be no duplication of effort with Government publicity programme.

17. Another Member said that he looked forward to new publicity ideas from HKRMA instead of Government's repeated messages of growing waste-loads and running out of landfill space. Mr. Benjamin YUNG remarked that the organization should demonstrate its support to the environmental levy policy by using its own resources in the public education activity instead of seeking public funding for its own campaign.

18. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the Committee agreed to support the proposal from HKRMA entitled "Every Day No Plastic Bag – BYOB Campaign" with a grant of \$183,300.

**Discussion Item 7: Funding to support non-governmental organizations to operate plastic waste and waste electrical and electronic equipment processing centres at EcoPark Phase II in Tuen Mun
(ECF Paper 13/2009-10)**

19. Dr. Lawrence WONG briefed Members on the ECF Paper 13/2009-10. He said that due to the global financial tsunami, the market price of some recyclables had dropped significantly which affected the viability of the recycling operation. In order to maintain local recovery of plastic waste so that the source separation of waste programme which the government had promoted and sustained in recent years could continue, and to recycle more waste electric and electronic equipment (WEEE) to pave the way for the Producer Responsibility Scheme (PRS), the EPD planned to set up at EcoPark Phase II two processing centres respectively for waste plastics and WEEE recycling. It was proposed that socially/environmentally oriented and charitable non-governmental organisations (NGOs) be engaged in the form of a partnership with the EPD to operate the centres with ECF funding support on a time-limited basis. EPD would provide the required land and infrastructures, design and build the processing centres, as well as technical support for the operation of the centres. The NGOs would apply for ECF

funding to support the operating costs of the centres. The selected NGO would oversee project planning and implementation, hire and manage the necessary manpower, operate the processing centre, oversee project accounts, and submit regular progress reports and audited accounts to the ECF Secretariat. The funding support to the NGO would also meet the cash flow requirements of the operation, subject to a cap of not more than \$10M over the three year operating period.

20. Dr. Lawrence WONG remarked that the proposed arrangement would complement the local recycling trade. For example, it is planned that the flakes/chips and the baled plastics processed by the NGO at the waste plastics recycling centre would be sold to local recyclers/dealers through open tendering. With the ECF funding support, it is expected that the price of these processed materials would be lower than what the trade could source from the market. He added that the waste plastics collected in the past was mainly baled and exported; in contrast, this project could serve as a pilot to provide relevant experience and operational data for future development of local processing of waste plastics.

21. A Member stated that he supported the proposal as he understood that the current local collection and recycling of waste plastics was not commercially viable and therefore the Government should provide some form of support to the industry. Nevertheless, he expressed concern on the selection of appropriate NGOs to run the centres as the NGOs would need to face a lot of business considerations, e.g. fulfill lots of requirements on minimum plant throughputs, minimum wage level, relevant environment, health, safety, and financial standards. Mr. Patrick LAI also questioned the capacity of the two processing centres and the way to sustain their operation.

22. Dr. Lawrence WONG stated that before the economic downturn, the recovery rate of plastic waste was relatively high; however, it had recently dropped sharply as the market value of waste plastics could hardly cover the collection and processing cost. With ECF funding support, NGOs would be able to collect waste plastics directly or engage the collection service of recyclers. It was expected that a minimum amount of 20 tonnes of waste plastics per day could be collected. The NGOs would be required to monitor closely the expenditure and ensure that reasonable revenue would be generated from the sale of processed plastics at the local market.

23. In respect of monitoring the two pilot projects, the Chairman opined that ECFC might be able to assist in providing advice to the operation of the two pilot centres. Dr. Lawrence WONG welcomed the Chairman's suggestion. He also pointed out that the selected NGOs would be required to appoint independent auditors to monitor the project account.

24. A Member welcomed the proposal and stated that the HKCSS had assisted in arranging briefings to NGOs on the proposal and he noted that some NGOs had already expressed interest in operating the recycling centres. He asked if there would be further flexible arrangements for NGOs to seek ECF funding support as they need to sort out the cash flow arrangement. Another Member supported the proposal and appreciated the benefits of creating job opportunities for the under-privileged low-skilled workers. He was also concerned about the sustainability of the two recycling centres. Dr. Lawrence WONG pointed out that there would be further briefings for NGOs on the detailed operation and funding arrangement and interested NGOs would be invited to set out their needs in their ECF funding applications. With the initial assessment from EPD, the ECF Committee would further examine the funding needs as well as the technical capability and financial strength of the NGOs when making a final judgement on their applications.

25. Ms Anissa WONG said that the involvement of Government would enhance the stability of the recycling industry under the current economic downturn and the setup of processing centres at EcoPark Phase II could help the industry to further develop. Comparing the modes of Government operating the centres on its own and collaboration with NGOs, the latter was the preferred option as this could foster community participation in source separation and recovery of waste drawing on the NGOs' extensive community networks with housing estates, schools and other community organisations. It could also help gaining social recognition and bringing about synergy under the close cooperation between the Government and the NGOs. The proposal of ECFC providing advice to the operation of the two centres could be further examined to provide more support to the participating NGOs. Upon Members endorsement of the proposal and mode of operation, EPD would arrange further meetings with NGOs to work out the details and invite funding proposals from NGOs for further consideration.

26. Two Members expressed concern on the selection of appropriate NGOs with the required capacity to run the pilot centres as they would face the threats and competition from the commercial sector. It was unlikely that the operation of the centres could become self-sustained in the long run. The Chairman said that despite the concern raised, the proposal would be an essential alleviation effort to tide over the current downturn in collection and recycling of plastic waste and WEEE. Similar to the establishment of social enterprise, the proposal would help creating employment opportunities and support services. Ms Anissa WONG added that the WEEE processing centre would help complement the future implementation of the mandatory PRS on WEEE now being proposed. After the implementation of PRS on WEEE, the processing centre could support the future PRS management organisation by serving as the WEEE refurbishment and donation centre.

27. The Chairman concluded that the Committee endorsed the proposed implementation plan and the operational arrangement for inviting, processing and approving applications under this funding scheme.

Discussion Item 8: Date of Next Meeting

28. Members noted that the next meeting was tentatively scheduled for late September 2009. The Secretariat would confirm with Members the meeting date nearer the time. (Post-meeting note: the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 23 September 2009 at 2:30pm.)

29. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:05 p.m.

Secretariat, Environment and Conservation Fund Committee
July 2009

**ECF Research and Technology Demonstration Projects
Coverage and eligibility for Researchers' Attendance to Overseas
International Conferences**

1. **Eligibility** – For each ECF supported research or technology demonstration project, only **one person** would be funded to attend **one** overseas international conference for presenting the results of the project throughout the whole project period irrespective of the duration of the research project.
2. **Coverage** – A ceiling of **HK\$15,000 per head per project** would cover airfare (economy class) direct to and from the conference held outside Hong Kong (including airport taxes), conference registration fee, subsistence allowance including accommodation (for a period beginning one day before the start of the conference and ending one day after the end of the conference for up to a maximum number of 7 days) and public means of transport between the nearest international airport and the place of conference.
3. **Principle of no double-benefit** – Academics with conference grants from local universities or research institutes or conferences organizers/sponsors would not be funded by ECF for attending the same conference.
4. **Application procedures** – The proposed attendance to overseas international conferences should be included in the funding proposals when the project proponents submitted the ECF projects application forms to the ECF Secretariat.
5. **Interim measure for on-going research projects** – Principal investigators of ECF-sponsored on-going research projects that were completed on or after 1.4.2009 may also submit separate applications for the above conference grants. The RPVSC will consider such applications on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the merits of individual projects and supporting documents for funds disbursement. Such applications must be made at least **6** months in advance of the proposed conference date.
6. **Disbursement of funds** – Funds will be granted only on **reimbursement basis** according to actual payment made. Expenses claims, accompanied by original receipts and supporting documents, must be submitted not more than 60 days after the end of the conference.
7. **Supporting documents for funds disbursement** – Documentary evidence issued by the conference organizer(s) confirming that the

acceptance of paper or poster for presentation at the conference; official conference announcement or invitation letter indicating the dates and venue of the conference and amount of the registration fee.

8. **Reporting** – A brief report on the conference and a copy of the paper or poster (with the title clearly stated) which has been presented at the conference must be submitted to the ECF Secretariat within 30 days of the end of the conference.
9. **Applications from Non-ECF-supported research projects** – The RPVSC may consider such applications on an exceptional case-by-case basis, taking into account the merits of individual cases and their contribution to Hong Kong. Such applications must be made at least 6 months in advance of the proposed conference date together with supporting letter from the applicant organization stating full justifications on the presentation of the research projects results and significance of the proposed representative.
10. **Absence from funded conference trips** – Grant holders who are subsequently unable to attend the conference due to change of personal circumstances (except for medical reasons with medical certificates) or visa delay/denial will not be reimbursed for the pre-paid conference fees or other associated cancellation charges.

**ECF Research and Technology Demonstration Projects
Funding cap and list of acceptable expenditure items for International
Conferences to be held in Hong Kong**

1. **Funding cap** – normally \$500,000 per conference or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. The RPVSC will consider applications above the ceiling on a case-by-case basis.
2. **Themes and scope** – To be decided by the ECF Committee or the RPVSC from time to time. Applicants should seek prior endorsement of the ECF Committee or the RPVSC on the topic of the conferences concerned for applications above \$500,000.
3. **Application Period** – Applications must be made at least **6** months before the first day of the conference.
4. **Other sources of funds** – Applicants must state in the application form other sources of funds including sponsorship from other organizations or government departments, registration fees and/or private sponsorship.
5. **Acceptable expenditure items:**
 - (a) **Venue Setup** – including rental payment (for all activities other than opening/closing ceremony), set up and decoration, backdrop, rental payment of venue, PA system, etc.
 - (b) **Subsidy to Invited Speakers** – Full airfare (economy class) to invited speakers. In exceptional circumstances where a higher class of air passage is proposed, the applicant should provide full justifications in his application.
 - (c) **Registration Fees** – Full subsidy may be considered for local post-graduates/students presenters.
 - (d) **Production of Conference Materials** – including brochures, conference booklets and publications.
 - (e) **Production of Exhibition Panels**
 - (f) **Engagement of Project Coordinators/Assistants for the conference**
 - (g) **Publicity** – including items such as banners, posters, leaflets, postage, etc.
 - (h) **Opening/Closing Ceremony** – including invitation cards, set up and decoration, backdrop, rental payment of venue, PA system, etc.
 - (i) **Transportation** – including hire of coach, hire of van/lorry for transportation of materials

- (j) **Insurance for Third Party Liabilities** – Funding support will be based on the basic requirements.
- (k) **General Expenses** – including engagement of event management consultant, stationery, films and film development, video tapes, website development and maintenance, simultaneous interpretation/translation, light refreshment for ceremonies and conferences, etc.