

**Confirmed Minutes of the Second Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 24 February 2009 at 2:30 p.m.
in the Conference Room, 28/F., Southorn Centre, Wanchai**

Present

Mr. Joseph Lee, SBS, JP	(Chairman)
Prof. Jonathan WC Wong	
Mr. Paul KC Chan	
Prof. Chau Kwai-cheong	
Mr. Barry MC Kwong	
Dr Arthur PS Lau	
Ms Agnes Ng	
Mr. Lawrence SH Cheung	ENB
Mr. Richard Chan Ping-kwong	AFCDD
Mr. Francis Wong	EPD (Secretary)
Ms Winifred Chan	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

In Attendance for Item 3

Ms Linda Choy	PA/SEN, ENB
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In Attendance for Item 4

Ms Iris Lau	EMSD
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Absent with Apologies

Dr. Kenneth MY Leung

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the second meeting of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (RPVSC).

2. Mr. Francis Wong proposed and Members agreed to advance the discussion on proposed enhancement for vetting principles upon confirmation of the minutes of last meeting.

Discussion Item 1: Confirmation of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 12.12.2008 were confirmed without amendment.

Discussion Item 2: Enhancements for vetting funding applications for Research, Technology Demonstration & Others Projects (RPVSC Paper 05/2009-10)

4. Ms Winifred Chan briefed Members on the proposed funding principles to attendance to overseas international conferences by applicants of ECF supported research projects and funding for organizing international conferences in Hong Kong.

5. Members generally supported the proposed funding for principal investigators (PI) of approved research projects to attend overseas conferences for presentation purpose. A Member opined that it was necessary to set a time limit for completed projects and carbon offset factor might also be included in any approved air freight. Another Member suggested that the new principle might be applicable to newly approved projects only so as to save the PIs' effort to prepare separate applications for the conference expenses. Mr. Richard Chan opined that the proposed funding support might cover both on-going projects and new applications. Another Member echoed that funding support to PI of on-going research projects might be considered. He suggested considering a maximum funding amount per head instead of a certain percentage to the expenses. He quoted the example of \$12,000 per conference trip per year can be budgeted for each RGC project. Another Member agreed on this point because the actual expenses of the conferences would vary depending on the destinations and registration fees of the conferences. The reference from HKBU was around \$13,000 per head per year.

6. Members generally supported the proposed funding principles for organizing international conferences in Hong Kong but had various opinion on different scale of conferences. A Member opined that as organizers of international conferences could solicit private sponsorship, a matching fund system might be considered. Besides, the RPSVC might consider setting priority themes for international conferences so as to facilitate prioritization of various applications. Another Member considered that the proposed funding cap of \$2M per international conference was on the high side. Another Member agreed on this point as most conference organizers could recover the expenses from private sponsorship and registration fees. He said that a ceiling of \$500,000 would be more appropriate and practical. Mr. Richard Chan opined that the funding cap for conferences might vary depending on the scope and scale of the event and funding for inviting overseas speakers was supported. Another Member pointed out that funding cap for international conferences organized by local universities or research institutes might be relatively lower as the organizers could identify savings in some expenditure items like venue charges. He noted that the approved amount for a conference to be supported by the Croucher Foundation would normally not exceed \$100,000. Nevertheless, he agreed that some large scale international conferences might require a higher level of funding support.

7. Ms Linda Choy said she understood members' concerns about an influx of applications. While Members might consider a lower ceiling, say \$1M, as a general rule, they could allow flexibility by reserving the discretion to consider funding requests for larger scale conferences on a case-by-case basis taking into account individual merits of future applications. Mr. Francis Wong invited Members to further consider A Member's suggestion of setting priority themes for international conferences by the RPSVC. It might facilitate interesting parties to forward funding applications to RPSVC. Another Member then suggested setting a separate funding ceiling for these RPSVC decided thematic conferences.

8. After further deliberation, Members agreed on the following principles on vetting conference grants:

- A. Funding support should be considered for attendance to overseas international conferences by applicants of ECF approved research or technology demonstration projects to present their findings as conference papers.

- B. Funding support should be considered for holding international conferences in Hong Kong for the following two categories –
- (i) The ECF Committee or the RPSVC to define the theme, scope and scale of the international conferences to be held and interesting local organizations would be invited to provide/submit funding proposals to the RPSVC for consideration. Funding cap would be decided on a case-by-case basis.
 - (ii) Local universities, research institutions, and other eligible organizations planning to organize international conferences on environment and conservation matters in Hong Kong may apply for funding support from ECF. Funding cap would normally be around \$300,000 to \$500,000 depending on the scale of the conferences.

9. On the basis of the principles in paragraph 8 and Members suggestions in paragraphs 5 to 7 above, the Secretariat would work out the details and submitted to the RPSVC for further consideration.

Discussion Item 3: Matters Arising

Progress Report of ECF funded research and technology demonstration projects [RPSVC Paper 01/2009-10]

10. Ms Winifred Chan briefed Members on the ECF Paper 01/2009-10 on the progress of 18 on-going research projects and three completed research projects as at 31.12.2008. Among the 18 on-going projects, the PI of ECF Project 6/2007 would like to seek approval from the RPSVC for the variation of project details. Details of the variation were set out in ECF Paper 02/2009-10 for further discussion. Three research projects were completed during the period of 1 July to 31 December 2008. The research findings were summarized in Appendices 19 to 21 of RPSVC Paper 01/2009-10 for Members' information.

Proposed variations to details of ECF funded projects

ECF Project 6/2007 Investigation on the feasibility and enhancement methods of wind power utilization in high-rise buildings of Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 02/2009-10]

11. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the PI of the project would like to seek approval for extension of the project period for six months, i.e. up to 31.8.2009. The PI explained that due to the visa application delay of the appointed research assistant, the project team was unable to complete the project on schedule. Completion of the project would thus be deferred to end of August 2009. No additional fund would be requested for the whole project.

12. Members approved the extension of project period for ECF Project 6/2007 up to 31.8.2009 without additional funding.

ECF Project 12/2008 The Impacts of South China Monsoon Climate Variability and El Niño on Hong Kong Air Quality

[RPVSC Paper 03/2009-10]

13. As a member of the Council of the City University of Hong Kong, the Chairman declared interest and requested Mr. Lawrence Cheung to chair the discussion of this project.

14. Ms Winifred Chan reported that at the last meeting, Members requested the PI to provide further details on the methodology and implementation method for further consideration. In response, the PI stated in the revised proposal that several statistical analysis methods would be adopted to summarize and analyze the relationship between air quality and climate variability. Though Dr. Kenneth Leung was absent from the meeting, he expressed support to the revised proposal by email to the Secretariat before the meeting.

15. After discussion, Members approved the project with a sum of \$249,880.

Appeal letter from the Friends of the Earth on ECF Project 15/2008

[RPVSC Paper 04/2009-10]

16. The Chairman took the lead of the discussion of the project. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the appeal letter from the Friends of the Earth (FoE). In order to address Members' concern about the possible duplication of work, FoE prepared to provide the tools of survey to EPD in advance so as to ensure that useful information would be gathered from the proposed survey. Members also noted that there might be different results from the surveys conducted by FoE and the review by EPD.

17. After further deliberation, the Chairman concluded to support the project ECF Project 15/2008 entitled "Questionnaire on public usage of plastic bags before and after the implementation Plastic Bags Levy" on the condition that FoE would discuss and agree with the EPD on the tools of survey prior to commencement of the survey to ensure that the information gathered would be useful reference materials for evaluation of the effectiveness and public acceptability of Plastic Bags Levy.

Discussion Item 4: New Applications

ECF Project 18/2008 Second International Climate Change Conference

[RPVSC Paper 06/2009-10]

18. Mr. Francis Wong briefed members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$833,000 for a 3-day conference scheduled for mid-October 2009 in HKCEC. Among the total budget of \$2.5 million, the applicant requested for \$833,000 which was one-third of the total budget covering partial funding to venue charges, event production, equipment rental and translation services and full funding support to production of conference materials, website, banners and telecommunications and post charges. The applicant would solicit other sources of funding including corporate sponsorship and conference and workshop registration fees.

19. Note

20. After discussion, Members agreed to support the conference with an allocation of \$400,000 for the captioned project. It would be in line with the agreed principle on funding locally organized international conferences on environmental and conservation matters.

ECF Project 8/2008 Development of a molecular-based technique for the rapid detection and quantification of microcystin-producing cyanobacteria

[RPVSC Paper 07/2009-10]

21. To avoid conflict of interest, Dr. Arthur Lau of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (HKUST) declared interest as the PI for the Project 8/2008 also came from the HKUST, and withdrew himself from the Conference Room.

22. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$651,000 for a 2-year project aiming at developing a rapid genome-based technique for the detection and quantification of microcystin-producing cyanobacteria. EPD, AFCD and External Assessor 1 supported the proposal in general. External Assessor 2 considered the proposed molecular-based detection technique not applicable and not meaningful as there was alternative method to identify the harmful cyanobacteria. Besides, the uncertainty of toxin production mechanism would affect the result of the project.

23. Note

24. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal was not supported.

ECF Project 9/2008 Environmental payback time analysis of building-integrated photovoltaic (BIPV) applications in Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 08/2009-10]

25. Dr. Arthur Lau rejoined the meeting. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal where the PI applied for \$439,000 to conduct a 18-month project aiming at measuring the “sustainability” of BIPV applications in Hong Kong by introducing energy payback time (EPBT) and greenhouse-gas payback time (GPBT) as environmental payback time indicators. The Electrical & Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), EPD and one of the external assessors supported the project in general. Another external assessor did not support the proposal as the outcome of the project would be theoretical and could not provide useful information of the performance of BIPV systems in Hong Kong.

26. Note

27. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded that the applicant should provide detailed justifications for requiring a Research Assistant for 6 months for implementation of the project and to list out the duties of the Research Associate and the Research Assistant. The supplementary information would be circulated to Members for consideration of a formal approval to the proposal.

ECF Project 13/2008 The Building Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP): Initial Phase of Development

[RPVSC Paper 09/2009-10]

28. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$3,109,360 to conduct a 24-month project to carry out the necessary ground works in preparation for launching the proposed Building Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) aiming at enabling achievement of substantial improvements to the energy efficiency of buildings in Hong Kong. The Environment Bureau (ENB), EMSD and the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) considered the proposal worthy of support. One of the external assessors supported the proposal but another one not. The latter considered that similar simulation programme was available in the market and the proposed software programme HTB2 seemed to be academic.

29. Note

30. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the applicant should provide further justifications on the staffing requirement for the relatively large pool of research staff and to explain if the research personnel/expertise from the overseas university could be replaced by local expertise. Documentary proof from potential users of the proposed model indicating their support to the study would also be required.

ECF Project 17/2008 Development of an Automatic Switching Off System for Idling Engine to Achieve Enhanced Fuel Economy and Improved Environment (RPVSC Paper 10/2009-10)

31. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal which aims were to develop an automatic switching off (i.e. idle stop) system for idling engine, identify an alternative air conditioning system, and integrate the automatic switching off system and the new air conditioning sub-system to achieve fuel saving and emission reduction. The applicant applied for \$3,982,200 to conduct the above demonstration project in 15 months. EPD and EMSD supported the proposal in general. Both external assessors supported the direction of the proposal in general. External Assessor 1 considered the concept and applicability of the project good but the basic design and mechanism adopted was old. External Assessor 2 considered the direction of project correct but the total project cost could be further adjusted.

32. Note

33. Note

34. After further discussions, the Chairman concluded that the applicant should provide the following information for the Members' further consideration –

- (i) contribution from the applicant organisation towards the proposed project in terms of cash/manpower; and
- (ii) documentary proof on any commitment from the business sector to adopt or use the project deliverables upon completion of the project.

ECF Project 19/2008 Waste Heat Powered Air-conditioning System for Automobile
(RPVSC Paper 11/2009-10)

35. As a member of the Council of the City University of Hong Kong, the Chairman declared interest and requested Mr. Lawrence Cheung to chair the discussion of this project.

36. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal and the assessments given by EMSD. The proposed project aimed to promote the sustainable energy use in transportation in Hong Kong by developing an experimental adsorption-type automotive cooling system that uses waste exhaust gas as heat (energy) input. The amount of fund applied for was \$249,135 and the estimated project period was 12 months. EMSD opined that the project deliverables would carry practical values but the performance of the proposed adsorption type air-conditioning system might be less efficient since the coefficient of performance (COP) of the adsorption refrigeration unit (ARU) was lower than that of conventional compression refrigeration units (CRU). In addition, the larger size and weight of ARU would add extra loading to vehicles.

37. Note

38. Note

39. After further deliberation, the Meeting concluded that the proposed study was worthy of support in principle but the PI should obtain written reply from the bus companies indicating their support to the proposed study. The supplementary information to be provided by the PI would be circulated to all Members for formal endorsement of the project.

Discussion Item 5: Date of Next Meeting

40. Next meeting would normally be held around 2 to 3 months from now. The Secretariat would inform Members of the date of the next meeting in due course.

41. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:00 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee

May 2009

Note: The paragraph will not be included in the version of notes to be uploaded to the webpage of ECFC according to the standing practice of not disclosing the detailed reasons for supporting or rejecting an application. The ECFC 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.”