

**Confirmed Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 5 July 2010 at 2:30 p.m.
in the Conference Room, 28/F., Southorn Centre, Wanchai**

Present

Mr. Joseph LEE, SBS, JP	(Chairman)
Mr. Paul KC CHAN	
Prof. CHAU Kwai-cheong	
Mr. Barry MC KWONG	
Dr. Arthur PS LAU	
Dr. Kenneth MY LEUNG	
Ms Agnes NG	
Mr. Lawrence SH CHEUNG	ENB
Mr. KW CHEUNG	AFCD
Miss Eunice YT CHAN	EPD (Secretary)
Ms Winifred SH CHAN	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Prof. Jonathan WC WONG

Welcoming Remarks

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

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

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 25.2.2010 were confirmed without amendments.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

Para. 5 – 15 ECF Project 4/2009 Air Quality in Hong Kong: A Supersite Program for Real-time Characterisation of Particulate Matter (PM) in Hong Kong's Air and ECF Project 7/2009 Study of Photochemical Air Pollution in Hong Kong

3. Miss Eunice CHAN reported that the ECF Committee agreed to allocate \$6,609,000 for Project 4/2009 and \$6,554,936 for Project 7/2009 respectively at the meeting held on 18.3.2010. The principal investigators (PIs) had returned the signed agreements to advise that the projects commencement dates were 2.7.2010. EPD would have a meeting with the two project teams on the formation of the Management Committee and other work schedules on 6.7.2010. The Secretariat would provide further information to the representatives of the RPSVC for attending the Management Committee in due course.

Agenda Item 3: Progress of ECF Project 5/2009

[RPSVC Paper 03/2010-11]

4. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members that the PI of the ECF Project 5/2009 proposed to transfer the project from the current recipient organisation to the university where she was going to be appointed so that she could keep on overseeing the project as PI. Miss CHAN cited the practice of Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) and University Grants Committee (UGC) and advised that in principle, ECF research projects were granted to the recipient organisations rather than the PIs. As such, transfer of projects from one recipient organisation to another organisation would not be allowed. Moreover, Members' attention was drawn to (i) the implication on the treatment for NGOs/green groups, which were also eligible for applying for ECF research funding other than universities, and (ii) possible transfer of equipments from one recipient organisation to another. Miss CHAN further invited Members to consider if discretion might be granted for projects of small scale and short duration, for transfer among UGC-funded institutions and without involving transfer of equipments, and subject to the agreement of the institutions involved at both ends, so that the PIs might see through the completion of the project. In reply to Members' questions, Ms Winifred CHAN supplemented that there was a precedent

case where the PI left the university before project completion. The Secretariat consulted the relevant head of department and the research office of the recipient university and was subsequently advised that no suitable researcher within the department would continue to oversee the project. As such, the project was terminated and the university was requested to refund the grant to ECF.

5. Members generally agreed that as the ECF funding recipient was the organisation rather than the individual researcher, management of the project should remain the responsibility of the recipient organisation. The Chairman concluded that the principle of keeping the approved research projects with the recipient organisations should generally be upheld.

6. Upon agreeing on the principle, Miss Eunice CHAN invited Members' consideration of the request from the PI of the ECF Project 5/2009 for transferring the project to another university. The Chairman and Dr Kenneth LEUNG declared interest and refrained from discussion as the Chairman was the Council Member of the City University of Hong Kong and Dr LEUNG worked at the University of Hong Kong and these two universities were the out-going and in-going organizations for the ECF Project 5/2009 under consideration. Mr. Lawrence CHEUNG chaired the following part of the discussion.

7. In considering the request for transferring the Project 5/2009 to another university, Mr. Lawrence CHEUNG invited Members, having regard to the principle agreed, to consider if discretion might be granted to the project. In response to Members' questions, Ms Winifred CHAN advised that the Co-I of the project, who would continue to work at the original recipient organization, had indicated that he could take over the project as PI until project completion. After further discussion, the Meeting agreed that the principle of keeping the ECF Project 5/2009 with the original recipient organisation should be upheld. The Secretariat should confirm with the research office of the university on the new PI who would continue the project and whether the project period would require extension owing to the change and ask the university to submit the progress report and financial statements of the project for Members' consideration if such variation of project details would be approved.

8. The Chairman resumed chairmanship of the meeting. Miss Eunice CHAN invited Members' views on the issue of potential transfer of entitlement of

equipment upon project completion. At present, equipment of on-going projects belonged to the ECF but according to the funding guidelines, the RPVSC could consider on a case-by-case basis any possible change of the entitlement upon satisfactory completion of projects. A Member remarked that recipient organisations would consider factors such as storage space, maintenance cost and depreciation of the relevant equipment after project completion if such equipment would be maintained by them in the long run. Another Member, although agreed with the Member's remarks, considered that if the equipment was transferred to the recipient organisations upon project completion, researchers of the same institute could maximize the utilisation of the equipment for further studies in related fields. Another Member advised that the equipment might be transferred to other research institutes requiring such items. Similar transfer arrangement among local universities was normally allowed for RGC-funded items. Another Member opined that each piece of equipment needed to be considered on a case-by-case basis as some equipment tailor-made for specific research purpose might not be applicable to other research institutes. Another Member suggested that applicants should in future state in the application form the estimated depreciation and re-sale value of the equipment upon project completion as such information would affect the RPVSC's decision on funding support to such equipment. Another Member concurred and suggested that the applicants should also be required to propose the treatment of equipment after project completion.

9. To conclude, the Chairman advised that the Secretariat should prepare a stock-taking of equipment of completed ECF research projects and consult Members further on the possible transfer of entitlement of the equipment of these projects. He suggested that the Secretariat should consider setting a timeline for the equipment after which the equipment would be considered obsolete and the entitlement of which would be transferred to the recipient organisations for disposal at their discretion. The Chairman opined that setting such a timeline for equipment could assist the recipient organisations to estimate the financial and administrative implications on equipment storage and maintenance during and after the project period.

Agenda Item 4: New Applications

10. Dr. Arthur LAU declared interest for the following application and withdrew himself from the Conference Room as the application was made by the

Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (HKUST).

ECF Project 19/2009 Pilot-scale System of Biodiesel Production from Sewage Wastewater Cultivated Algae

[RPVSC Paper 04/2010-11]

11. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the project proposal. The PI applied for \$2,378,600 to build a pilot-scale system for biodiesel production from sewage wastewater cultivated algae and to demonstrate the feasibility of industrial-scale application of the proposed technology. DSD supported the concept and considered the proposed system would generate algal biomass as a renewable energy source and demonstrate sustainable wastewater treatment. EMSD and the two external assessors (EAs) did not support the proposal.

12. Note

13. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded not to support the project.

ECF Project 24/2009 Green Wall Project

[RPVSC Paper 05/2010-11]

14. Dr. Arthur LAU rejoined the meeting. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the project proposal. The PI applied for \$416,000 to set up and demonstrate a portable video wall from old retired CRT video display and computer and to organise moving video art festival on the wall to draw public attention on electronic waste reduction. EPD had reservation in supporting the project.

15. Note

16. The Chairman concluded that the project was not supported.

ECF Project 23/2009 Green features for reduction in noise pollution and

improvement of air quality in buildings

[RPVSC Paper 06/2010-11]

17. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the project proposal. The PI applied for \$852,480 to study and promote the use of green features to improve indoor air quality and reduce noise pollution in buildings so as to achieve sustainable development and arouse public awareness on sustainable building design. EPD partially supported the project for the part on indoor air quality (IAQ) but not the noise control part. The two EAs supported the project.

18. Note

19. The Chairman concluded that the proposal was supported partially on the IAQ study. The PI would be invited to revise the proposal and budget with focus on IAQ and the revised proposal would be circulated to the RPVSC for formal approval.

ECF Project 01/2010 First International Conference on Sustainable Urbanization (ICSU 2010)

[RPVSC Paper 07/2010-11]

20. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the project proposal. The PI applied for \$500,000 to support the 3-day conference scheduled for December 2010 and the total budget was \$2,058,450. EPD and the Council for Sustainable Development supported the proposed conference.

21. Note

22. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded to support the conference with a total grant of \$250,000 for supporting at least 10 international speakers (for economy class airfare and accommodation) to attend the conference and exchange ideas concerning sustainable urbanization. In addition, the representative of the RPVSC would attend meetings of the organising committee of the conference to keep in view progress of the project. The PI should arrange video recording of the

keynote speakers' presentation as far as possible and the videos should be made available on the internet, together with the conference proceedings, so as to disseminate the discussion at the conference to the wider research community as well as the general public.

23. Dr. Kenneth LEUNG declared interest for the three projects applications, namely ECF Projects 04/2010, 35/2009 and 36/2009, and withdrew himself from the Conference Room as the applications were made by the University of Hong Kong.

ECF Project 04/2010 Conference on Climate Change Governance after Copenhagen
[RPVSC Paper 08/2010-11]

24. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members that the total budget for the 2-day conference scheduled for 4 to 5 November 2010 was \$461,399. As the applicant organisation had solicited \$110,000 donation from other sources, it applied for ECF funding support of \$351,399, which was slightly over 70% of the total budget. The conference would provide a platform for legislators, international experts, NGOs, policy makers and the general public to exchange views, share experience and explore various legal aspects of climate change. The conference would be a side programme of the C40 Workshop to be held in November 2010 in Hong Kong.

25. Note

26. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded to support the project proposal with a total grant of \$322,979 or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever would be the less.

ECF Project 35/2009 Quantification of antibiotic residues and microbial antibiotic-resistant genes in fish ponds and marine culture zones of Hong Kong
[RPVSC Paper 09/2010-11]

27. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the 16-month proposal applying for \$499,880 to investigate the levels of antibiotics and microbial antibiotic

resistance genes in fish ponds and marine culture zones of Hong Kong. EPD, AFCD and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) supported the proposal because the project deliverables would provide useful information of occurrences and concentrations of antibiotics, antimicrobial resistance and the resistant genes in relation to aquaculture activities.

28. Note

29. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded to support the project proposal with a total grant of \$499,880. The PI would be encouraged to share the project results with other fish farms operators and/or relevant authorities in the Mainland as well.

ECF Project 36/2009 Grid-connected BIPV system in a High-Rise Housing Estate of Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 10/2010-11]

30. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the 15-month proposal applying for \$389,000 to study a proto-type of BIPV systems on roof-tops of high-rise housing estates, to investigate the local environmental effects on its performance, and to utilize collected data for smart-grid simulation. EMSD supported the proposal considering that the measurement and analysis of BIPV system and the load profile would provide additional information in relation to renewable energy and the connected loads. However, the two EAs opined that the proposal carried little demonstration value and did not support the proposal.

31. Note

32. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded not to support the project.

33. Dr Kenneth LEUNG re-joined the meeting. Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong declared interest for the application ECF Project 33/2009 and withdrew himself from the Conference Room as the application was made by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK).

ECF Project 33/2009 Genetic Diversity and Population Differentiation of Freshwater Fish in Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 11/2010-11]

34. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the 30-month proposal applying for \$982,606 to elucidate the genetic diversity and population differentiation of six indigenous fish species based on DNA sequence analysis. AFCD and the two EAs supported the proposal.

35. Note

36. After discussion, the Chairman concluded to support the project proposal with a total grant of \$854,440. The budget for university overheads was not supported in accordance with prevailing guides to application. As a condition of grant, the project team should engage a local expert on freshwater fish ecology and biodiversity and AFCD would assist the project team to identify the local expert.

ECF Project 14/2010 Education and promotion of Green M2M technology in environmental protection industry

[RPVSC Paper 12/2010-11]

37. Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong rejoined the meeting. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the proposal applying for \$1,965,000 to promote and encourage the innovative use of wireless machine to machine (M2M) technology in environmental protection industry, by conducting a survey on the awareness and adoption of the M2M technology in Hong Kong, organising three overseas study missions and a series of workshops and conferences.

38. Note

39. The Chairman concluded not to support the project.

ECF Project 15/2010 “Green is the New Cool” Forum and Master Classes:
Designing for a Low Carbon Life in a Creative, Actionable and Affordable Way
[RPVSC Paper 16/2010-11]

40. Miss Eunice CHAN reported to Members that the applicant had sent in a request for postponing the consideration of the application, pending the sorting out of funding from other potential sponsorships. Hence, the application was not deliberated at the meeting.

41. As a member of the Court of the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), the Chairman declared interest and requested Mr. Lawrence CHEUNG to chair the discussion of the following three projects applications namely ECF Projects 29/2009, 37/2009 and 09/2010 and withdrew himself from the Conference Room as the applications were made by the HKBU.

ECF Project 29/2009 A study of the ecology of the giant sea anemone *Entacmaea quadricolor* and its associated animals
[RPVSC Paper 13/2010-11]

42. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the proposal applying for \$550,020 to quantify the distribution and abundance of *E. quadricolor* and its associated invertebrates and fishes at Tsim Chau, Bluff Island, Lak Lei Tsai and Sharp Island within a proposed project period of 19 months. AFCD and the two EAs supported the proposal.

43. Note

44. The Meeting concluded to support the project proposal with a total grant of \$546,020. The proposed publication fees (\$4,000) was not supported.

ECF Project 37/2009 Integrated Pond Fish Farming Using Food Wastes: for Quality Fish Production and Habitat Conservation

[RPVSC Paper 14/2010-11]

45. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the 3-year project with the objective to explore the feasibility of restoring fish ponds through proper management and to use compost generated locally as pond fertilizer and fish feed to ensure the quality of fishery products. The total budget was \$1,938,900. AFCD and the two EAs supported the proposal.

46. Note

47. The Meeting considered that the project should be further discussed at the next meeting.

ECF Project 09/2010 Global Climate Change and Low-carbon Living: Perceptions of Secondary School Students in Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 15/2010-11]

48. Miss Eunice CHAN briefed Members on the proposed 12-month study on the students' awareness of climate change and willingness to change their existing living habits by adopting a low-carbon lifestyle. The proposed budget was \$195,200. EPD supported the proposal as the result of the study would be of reference value to teachers, green groups and the government in developing fitting environmental education programmes to promote low carbon living among youngsters in Hong Kong.

49. Note

50. The Meeting concluded to support the project proposal with a total grant of \$195,200 on the condition that the PI would discuss and agree with EPD on the tools of survey prior to commencement of the survey to ensure that the information gathered would be useful reference materials for developing fitting environmental education programmes to promote low carbon living among youngsters in Hong

Kong.

Agenda Item 5: Date of Next Meeting

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

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

**Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee
September 2010**

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.”