

**Confirmed Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 26 May 2006 at 2:30 p.m.**

Present

Mr. Joseph Lee, BBS, JP	(Chairman)
Prof Chan Chi-ming	
Ms Lau Ka-shi	
Prof Chan Chak-keung	
Dr. Richard Cheung	
Dr. John Leung Kon-chong	
Ms Emba Leung WM	
Ms Edith Ngan Man-ling	
Prof Jonathan Wong	
Mr. Frankie Yick Chi-ming	
Mr. Eric Chan	EPD
Mr. Richard Chan	AFCDD
Mr. Lawrence Cheung	EPD
Miss Christina Chong	EPD (Secretary)
Ms Winifred Chan	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

In-attendance

Miss Florence Chan	EPD
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Absent with Apologies

Mr. Man Mo-leung
Prof Chu Lee-man
Mr. Richard W Lee

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the seventh meeting of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (RPVSC). Mr. Eric Chan introduced Miss Florence Chan who would take up the work of the Secretary of the RPVSC shortly upon the transfer of

Miss Christina Chong to a new post outside the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The Chairman expressed gratitude to Miss Christina Chong for her services to the RPVSC.

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

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 10 February 2006 were confirmed without any amendment.

Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising

Para. 6 ECF Project 3/2005

3. Ms Winifred Chan reported that upon recommendation by the RPVSC, the proposal was discussed and approved by Members of the ECF Committee on 31 March 2006 with a grant of \$426,280.00. The project would commence on 1 June 2006.

Para. 12-15 ECF Project 10/2005

4. Ms Winifred Chan reported that in accordance with Members' decision, the Secretariat had invited the principal investigator (PI) to provide information on the detailed methodology of the survey which was agreed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD). The proposal was subsequently approved with a grant of \$150,000.00 and commenced on 1 March 2006.

Para. 21-25 ECF Project 4/2005

5. Ms Winifred Chan reported that in accordance with Members' decision at the last meeting and circulation of the ECF Paper 42/2005 on 31 March 2006, all members, except two who abstained from voting due to conflict of interests, had endorsed the proposal with a grant of \$150,000.00. The project

would commence on 1 June 2006.

Para. 27

6. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the ECF Committee agreed at the meeting held on 31 March 2006 to the proposed arrangement of direct appointment of independent evaluator for completed research projects with funding over \$150,000.00.

Agenda Item 3 : New Application

ECF Project 11/2005 Developing Two Biosystems for Monitoring Dioxins or Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)

[ECF Paper 01/2006-07]

7. Prof Jonathan Wong declared interests in this application as he and the co-investigator (Co-I) came from the same university. The meeting agreed that Prof Wong could stay at the meeting.

8. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by EPD and two external assessors as summarized in ECF Paper 01/2006-07. The objectives of the proposal were to improve a cell culture system developed a decade ago for the detection of dioxins/PAHs and to establish a fruit fly reporter system for monitoring the corresponding compounds in air. The total budget of the project was \$775,100.00 and the project was expected to last for 24 months. EPD had reservation on the practical needs and benefits of the proposed bio-monitoring system and considered it more appropriate for the PI to apply for funding from the Research Grants Council (RGC) for this type of research-oriented project. The two external assessors also had reservation on its application in environmental conservation and whether the system was commercially viable.

9. Note

10. Note

11. Note

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

ECF Project 13/2005 Study of waste minimization and recycling of HEPA filter from health establishments in Hong Kong

[ECF Paper 02/2006-07]

13. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the EPD as summarized in ECF Paper 02/2006-07. The main objective of the study was to work on a worldwide literature review of management of High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter; to find out the numbers of HEPA filters used each year by healthcare establishments in Hong Kong; to find out the feasibility of recycling metal frame of filter in Hong Kong and to do a cost-benefit analysis of recycling HEPA filter in Hong Kong. The funding requested by the project was \$111,000.00 and the project was expected to last for 6 months. Miss Chong also reported the estimated number of filters to be disposed of annually by the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority. EPD raised no objection to the proposal with regard to reduction of waste.

14. Note

15. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal should not be supported.

ECF Project 15/2005 Solar/Wind Power Feasibility Study

[ECF Paper 03/2006-07]

16. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the EPD and two external assessors as summarized in ECF Paper 03/2006-07. The objectives of the proposal were to study the feasibility of placing solar panels and wind turbines on rooftops as a pollution reduction method and to prove that the use of solar and wind power in apartments in Hong Kong was economically feasible. The funding requested by this project was \$253,150.00 and the project was expected to last for 12 months. EMSD and the two external expert assessors did not support the proposal. EMSD considered that the approach might not be easily applied to apartments of high rising buildings and thus the application of the proposed project is limited. Assessor 1 considered that the output from photovoltaic modules and wind turbines had been over-estimated in the proposal. Assessor 2 commented that the project could not deliver innovative ideas and there was no demonstration need for this project.

17. Note

18. After discussion, Members concluded that the proposal should not be supported.

ECF Project 8/2005 Establishment of an Ecotourism Accreditation and Certification System (EACS) in Hong Kong
[ECF Paper 04/2006-07]

19. The Chairman declared interests in this application as the PI came from the same university of which he was a Court member. Mr. Eric Chan chaired this part of the meeting.

20. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the AFCD, the Tourism Commission (TC) and two external assessors as summarized in ECF Paper 04/2006-07. The objective of the study was to establish an Ecotourism Accreditation and Certification System (EACS) in order to improve the quality of ecotour guides and operators with a view to upgrading the quality of ecotourism activities and services in Hong Kong. The

funding requested by this project was \$1,474,300.00 and the project was expected to last for 36 months. AFCD supported the proposal from nature conservation point of view as it would help cultivate positive attitude towards nature and reduce possible ecological impacts by visitors to the natural environment in Hong Kong. While supporting the idea of promoting ecotourism training for local guides, the TC expressed reservations on the proposed accreditation and training arrangement. TC pointed out that more than 6,400 tourist guides had been accredited under the existing “Tourist Guide Accreditation System” administered by the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC). Training courses on nature appreciation were also held by various training institutes for members of the travel trade with funding provided under the Government’s Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS). The proposed accreditation system and training arrangement would likely give rise to confusion among members of the tourism trade in particular the accredited tourist guides under TIC’s accreditation system and those who had received training on eco-tourism under the SUS. Assessor 1 considered that the proposed time frame was far too long and the project cost was excessive. If such a scheme was to be introduced in Hong Kong, it would be much quicker and cheaper to adopt the Australian system than setting up a new one. On the other hand, Assessor 2 supported the proposal and considered that there was a need to articulate appropriate training methodologies and produce packages that could be used for the eco-tourism industry.

21. Note

22. After further deliberation, Members concluded that the proposal was not supported.

ECF Project 14/2005 International Conference on Environmental and Public Health Management: Aquaculture and Environment

[ECF Paper 05/2006-07]

23. The Chairman declared interests in this application as the PI came from the same university of which he was a Court member. Mr. Eric Chan continued to chair this part of the meeting.

24. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal in ECF Paper 05/2006-07. The funding requested by this application was \$48,000.00 to subsidize 40 local postgraduate students to attend an international conference scheduled for December 2006. Miss Chong remarked that RPSVC had previously approved funding to support postgraduate student participation of locally organized international conferences under the ECF Projects 27/2003 and 12/2004. The sponsorship level was capped at \$800 for each participant in a conference. The grant was disbursed on a reimbursement basis and participating students were required to submit reports after the conference.

25. After discussion, Members concluded that the Secretariat should ask the PI to clarify the eligibility for obtaining sponsorship, the selection procedures and funding conditions of the postgraduate students before inviting Members to confirm their support to the proposal and the exact amount of fund to be supported.

ECF Project 1/2006 Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium

[ECF Paper 06/2006-07]

26. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal in ECF Paper 06/2006-07. The funding requested by this application was \$142,000.00. The registration fee was HK\$1,200.00 per head for student and HK\$2,400.00 per head for non-student participants. The applicant applied funding for subsidizing students and academics from local and Mainland China institutes to take part in the conference in June 2006 and publication of the conference proceedings scheduled for December 2006.

27. ^{Note}

28. After discussion, Members concluded that the proposal was not supported.

Agenda Item 4 : Date of Next Meeting

29. The RPVSC was scheduled to meet bi-monthly and the Secretariat would inform Members of the date of the next meeting in due course.

30. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee

August 2006

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.”