

**Confirmed Minutes of the First Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 12 December 2008 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	
Mr. Barry MC Kwong	
Dr Arthur PS Lau	
Dr. Kenneth MY Leung	
Ms Agnes Ng	
Dr. Alain KL Lam	ENB
Mr. Lawrence SH Cheung	EPD
Mr. Francis Wong	EPD (Secretary)
Ms Winifred Chan	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Prof. Chau Kwai-cheong	
Mr. Richard Chan Ping-kwong	AFCDD

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the first meeting of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (RPVSC) for the new term 2008-10.

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

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 2.9.2008 were confirmed subject to the following amendment:
 - (i) In the presence list, the title for Mr. Joseph LEE should be S.B.S. instead of B.B.S.

- (ii) In page 4, paragraph 10, the second last sentence should read as “Nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to support the proposed study in view of the usefulness of the project.”

**Agenda Item 2: Standing Orders and Guidelines on Declaration of Interests
(ECF Paper 36/2008-09)**

3. Ms Winifred CHAN briefed Members on the terms of reference and the standing orders of the ECF RPVSC stipulated in Paper 36/2008-09. Members noted that the ECF RPVSC would approve applications at \$500,000 and below. For applications exceeding \$500,000, the RPVSC would conduct preliminary vetting before making recommendations to the ECF Committee for endorsement. For applications exceeding \$250,000, the Secretariat would invite two external assessors to assess the support worthiness of the project before its being discussed by the RPVSC. For applications below \$250,000, views from government departments would be sought to facilitate members’ assessment of the proposals. (Post-meeting note: the ECF Committee decided at the meeting held on 30.12.2008 that the approval limit for vetting subcommittees would be raised from \$500,000 to \$2 million with immediate effect. Thus, the RPVSC would approve applications at \$2 million and below, and making recommendations for applications exceeding \$2 million to the ECF Committee for endorsement from 31.12.2008 onwards.)

4. She also drew Members’ attention to the need to declare any conflict of interest. The guidelines on declaration of interest were set out in the Annex to Paper 36/2008-09. The quorum for the meeting shall be half of the total number of members.

Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising

Para. 15-17 ECF Project 11/2007

5. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the ECF Committee approved the recommendation by the RPVSC at the meeting on 24.9.2008 that a sum of \$1,768,380 would be granted to the ECF Project 11/2007 entitled “Developing a fully automated CPX vehicle for measuring tyre/road noise”.

Proposed variations to details of ECF funded projects

ECF Project 9/2007 Enhancement of integrated heat pumps for energy savings in hot water and air-conditioning at home

[ECF Paper 37/2008-09]

6. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the principal investigator (PI) of the project would like to seek approval for deferral of the project completion date and transfer of funds from unspent balance to cover the over-budget item “equipment”. Due to the lengthy processes for equipment design and equipment fabrication, the PI would like to extend the project period for three months, i.e. up to 31.12.2008. For the over-expenses on equipment, the PI explained that the actual cost for purchasing equipment was different from the budget plan of the application. No additional fund would be requested for the whole project.

7. Members approved the extension of project period for ECF Project 9/2007 up to 31.12.2008 and transfer of funds to cover the over-expenditure on equipment without additional funding.

Agenda Item 4: New Applications

ECF Project 02/2008 Green Roof for Hong Kong

[ECF Paper 38/2008-09]

8. Mr. Francis Wong briefed members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$1,768,400 for a 30-month project. With a testing site in a primary school in Tai Po, the project aimed to test for the optional structures, vegetations and gardening and irrigation models for green roof in Hong Kong. The project would seek for alternative technology to minimize roof loading requirement for green roof establishment. The Architectural Services Department (ASD) and External Assessor 1 supported the project as the project could address the effectiveness and the knowledge gaps of green roof technologies. ASD also opined that the project could recommend suitable plant species for green roofing. External Assessor 2, however, did not support the proposal as lots of details were missing for assessing

the performance of the technology and sustainability. The budget was on the high side and some fundamental research data were required to hint the success of the technology.

9. Note

10. After discussion, Members expressed doubts on the practicality of the deliverables on roof loading and structure and thus agreed not to support the proposal.

ECF Project 6/2008 Characterization and Classification of Environmental Sustainable Building Finishes using Infrared (IR) imaging technique
[ECF Paper 39/2008-09]

11. As a member of the Council of the City University of Hong Kong, the Chairman declared interest and requested Dr. Alain Lam to chair the discussion of this project.

12. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$497,700 for a 2-year project aiming at developing an assessment model for characterization and classification of different building materials (especially for external finishes) by investigating their emissivity and potential contribution(s) to the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effects in Hong Kong. The ASD did not support the project and commented that the project scope and time period required for the proposal were disproportionate for studying UHI effect. Both external assessors, however, pointed out that the proposal would address the UHI problem in Hong Kong and thus it would be worthwhile to support the proposal with some seed money.

13. Note

14. Dr Alain Lam concluded that the proposal was not supported because the technical section of project proposal was considered being too brief and Members had doubts on the effectiveness of the project.

ECF Project 7/2008 Dynamic web-based energy consumption benchmarking calculator for residential buildings in Hong Kong

[ECF Paper 40/2008-09]

15. The Chairman took the lead of the discussion of the project. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal where the PI applied for \$147,000 to promote the sustainable use of domestic energy by developing a simple, dynamic web-based sustainability energy benchmark calculator for electricity and fuel gas consumptions of apartments in Hong Kong, based on the utility bills and users inputs of apartment occupant loads and areas. The Electrical & Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) supported the project and suggested the PI to extend the sampling size and research scope. In respect of the recurrent maintenance of the website, the PI agreed to be responsible for all recurrent maintenance of the website even after completion of the project. Two representatives of the project team, Dr. Mui Kwok-wai and Dr. Wong Ling-tim, joined the meeting to answer questions from Members.

16. Note

17. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded not to support the proposal because there were doubts on the practicability of the project deliverables on mobilizing the public to take action to reduce energy consumption.

ECF Project 10/2008 Recycle Water Treatment Works Sludge to Induce Metal Stabilization in Ceramics

[ECF Paper 41/2008-09]

18. To avoid conflict of interest, Dr. Kenneth Leung of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) declared interest as the PI for the Project 10/2008 also came from the HKU, and withdrew himself from the Conference Room.

19. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal. The PI applied

for \$247,774 to induce metal stabilization by using water treatment works sludge as part of the ceramic raw materials. It would explore the recycling value of water treatment works sludge as an example of “waste to resource” technology. The Water Supplies Department (WSD) considered the proposal worthy of support as the research study would explore the feasibility of disposal of waterworks sludge as an additive for metal leaching prevention in ceramics. In respect of the budget, the PI also remarked that the staff cost for the research assistant and the research student would be absorbed by the recipient organization. A representative of the project team, Dr. Kaimin Shih joined the meeting to answer questions from Members.

20. Note

21. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposed project was a basic research which would be more appropriately considered by other funding sources like Research Grants Council.

ECF Project 11/2008 Antibiotics and antibiotic resistant genes in potable water and soil environments of Hong Kong
(ECF Paper 42/2008-09)

22. To avoid conflict of interest, Professor Jonathan Wong of the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) declared interest as the PI for the Project 11/2008 also came from the HKBU, and withdrew himself from the Conference Room. Dr. Kenneth Leung rejoined the meeting.

23. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal which aims were to ensure the safety use of Hong Kong potable water in relation to antibiotics and antibiotic resistant genes. In order to determine the concentrations of selected antibiotics, samples would be collected at various locations in the upper East River above the pumping of water to Hong Kong, in the water before and after the treatment in Muk Wu Water Treatment Plant and water from households in Hong Kong. AFCD supported the proposal in general. WSD had reservation in supporting the project because the risk of antibiotics possible contamination to streamcourses within the water gathering ground (WGG) was extremely remote and there was no sufficient scientific evidence linking adverse human health effect with

exposure to trace levels of antibiotic residues in drinking water. Besides, there had already been similar overseas studies. Department of Health (DH) and the Research Fund Secretariat of the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) were also consulted. DH supported the proposal and Research Fund Secretariat of FHB agreed that the proposal might fall within the funding scope of the Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases (RFCID). As the implications of the project proposal seemed to be on health instead of the environment, Members were invited to advise whether the application should continuously be processed under the ECF or the PI be advised to seek alternative funding support from RFCID.

24. Note

25. The Chairman concluded that the Secretariat would continue processing the application and invite external assessors to assess the support worthiness for further consideration at coming meetings.

ECF Project 12/2008 The Impacts of South China Monsoon Climate Variability and EI Niño on Hong Kong Air Quality
(ECF Paper 43/2008-09)

26. As a member of the Council of the City University of Hong Kong, the Chairman declared interest and requested Dr. Alain Lam to chair the discussion of this project. Prof Jonathan Wong re-joined the meeting.

27. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal and the assessments given by EPD and two external assessors. The proposed project aimed to study the relationships between climate conditions and air quality in Hong Kong. The differential and synergistic effects of summer/winter monsoon climate, and the EI Niño/La Niña would be investigated for their impacts on Hong Kong air quality. An air quality warning system would also be developed based on the relationship between air pollution index (API) and South China monsoon circulations. Both EPD and Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) supported the project in general. EPD opined that a better understanding of the relationship between air quality change and climate variability would help coming up with more effective control measures. HKO stated that the subject which had not received

attention previously did have potential applications in terms of planning in the time scale of months to years.

28. Note

29. The Meeting concluded that the PI should be invited to provide further details on the study methodology and implementation plan for further discussion at the coming meeting.

ECF Project 15/2008 Questionnaire on public usage of plastic bags before and after the implementation Plastic Bags Levy

[ECF Paper 44/2008-09]

30. The Chairman took the lead of the discussion of the project. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal where the PI applied for \$244,800 to evaluate the effectiveness and public acceptability of Plastic Bags Levy by studying public usage of plastic bags before and after the implementation of scheme. EPD stated that the effectiveness review of the environmental levy scheme would be conducted after one year of implementation of Plastic Bags Levy. Survey and other forms of assessment would be possible means to conduct the review and thus the proposed project would very likely duplicate with the work of EPD.

31. After further deliberation, the Chairman concluded not to support the project because the proposed project would very likely duplicate with the work of EPD which had also planned to review the effectiveness of the environmental levy scheme after one year of implementation.

Agenda Item 4: Any Other Business

32. Ms Winifred Chan reported that another application from Dr Gilbert Chan of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on project entitled “Ecological Footprint Assessment Criteria for Hong Kong” had been withdrawn.

33. The Secretariat had received an application entitled “Roadside Safety

and Air Pollution” from an organization namely “Mini Spotters”. The organization was registered under Society Ordinance in February 2008 but the only available proof of its non-profit making status was the Constitution of the Society. The application for tax exemption under Section 88 of Inland Revenue Ordinance (IRO) was still being processed. After discussion, Members agreed that the Secretariat would cease processing the application until the applicant organization was able to provide proof of its charitable status, i.e. registration for tax exemption under Section 88 of IRO.

Agenda Item 5: Date of Next Meeting

34. 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.

35. The meeting ended at 4:50 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee January 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.”