

**Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 10 September 2009 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	
Dr. Kenneth MY Leung	
Ms Agnes Ng	
Mr. Lawrence SH Cheung	ENB
Mr. Patrick CC Lai	AFCDD
Mr. Francis Wong	EPD (Secretary)
Ms Winifred Chan	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Prof. Jonathan WC Wong
Mr. Barry MC Kwong
Dr Arthur PS Lau

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the fourth 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 27.5.2009 were confirmed without amendment.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

3. Ms Winifred Chan reported that following Members' decision at the last meeting, the PI of the ECF Project 22/2008 obtained the written advice from the Swire Properties indicating that the company would provide the air-conditioning system operating profile of one typical floor in a commercial building for the study. The proposal was subsequently circulated to and approved by Members with a total grant of \$204,000. In addition, the PI of the ECF Project 20/2008 revised the proposal by incorporating additional sampling sites while deleting the proposed work on nano particles study and the requirement on relevant equipment and amended the budget. The proposal was also circulated to and then approved by Members with a total grant of \$1,279,360.

4. Mr. Francis Wong then briefed Members on the proposed C40 Conference which would be discussed at the meeting of the Environmental Campaign Committee to be held on 11.9.2009. After that, the proposal would be discussed at the coming meeting of the ECF Committee in view of the time constraint. As conference applications would normally be discussed at meetings of RPVSC, Members of the RPVSC would then be invited to attend the meeting of ECF Committee scheduled for Wednesday, 23 September to discuss the C40 Conference proposal. (Post-meeting note: Members were invited to attend the discussion of the C40 Hong Kong Conference at 5:15 pm on 23 September.)

5. As the Chairman has to declare conflict of interest for applications from the Hong Kong Baptist University and the City University of Hong Kong, Members agreed that the three applications from these two universities would be discussed at the latter part of the meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Lawrence Cheung.

Agenda Item 3: New Applications

6. Before discussion on the details of each new application, Members agreed to go through the proposed questions on the issues of ECF funding policies

to research projects as raised by Dr Kenneth Leung before commencement of the meeting. After deliberation, Members generally agreed that we should not set a ceiling on the ECF grant for each research application so as to encourage worthwhile research projects from various tertiary institutes on environmental protection and nature conservation. As regards the maximum duration of approved projects, Members opined that this should be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature and scope of the research though management of long-term projects would have resources implications. Members also agreed that the vetting and monitoring mechanism for mega-sized projects applying for millions of funding support should be enhanced to ensure effective assessment on the support worthiness and satisfactory completion of approved projects as well. Various enhanced vetting and monitoring procedures were suggested, for example, additional external expert assessments; inviting PI's presentation of the proposal to the RPVSC; and inviting PI's annual presentation of the project progress to the RPVSC. Members also proposed to develop different tiers of vetting and monitoring procedures and systems for different levels of project values.

7. Members also agreed that we should proactively identify suitable themes and topics for research proposals with a view to better utilizing the fund for supporting targeted scope of research projects. Members considered that the ECF may bring about a greater impact to the community if the funded research projects can be more focused. The RPVSC may also invite project proposals under such specific themes/topics in environmental protection and nature conservation and provide funding support to approved projects.

8. After further deliberation, Members agreed that there would be a special meeting in October to further consider the priority research themes/topics and the details of enhanced vetting and monitoring mechanism for mega-sized research projects.

ECF Project 24/2008 Development of Hong Kong Electric Light Bus for Public Transportation and Environment Protection

[RPVSC Paper 28/2009-10]

9. Prof Chau Kwai-cheong declared interest as he came from the same university of the PI of the Project 24/2008 and withdrew himself from the

Conference Room.

10. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the project objectives aiming at developing three new electric light buses as an environment friendly tool for the public transportation and improve the electric vehicle tested in the 2000 Alternative Fuel Light Bus Trial in Hong Kong. The PI proposed a budget of \$12M to conduct the 24-month study. Though ITF had recently approved a 24-month project to the Hong Kong Productivity Centre (HKPC) on the development of a hybrid vehicle, the PI's proposal of electric light buses involved a different technology. Moreover, the PI would collaborate with CUHK and the Hong Kong Minibus Owners Association to arrange road tests for the light buses.

11. Note

12. After deliberation, the Chairman concluded that the project proposal was not supported.

ECF Project 3/2009 Feasibility Study and Demonstrate the Implementation of Electric Vehicles in Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 29/2009-10]

13. Prof Chau Kwai-cheong rejoined the meeting. The Chairman left early due to other urgent commitments and the meeting was chaired by Mr. Lawrence Cheung.

14. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal applying for \$8,294,920. During the 24-month study, the PI would conduct a survey to find out whether it is suitable to implement electric vehicle in Hong Kong and to propose recommendations on the behaviour of the general public, infrastructures and government legislations in order to enhance business opportunities and the use of electric vehicles in Hong Kong. The project deliverables would also include a vehicle prototype for demonstration of the design, electrical, electronic, mechanical and renewable energy industries in Hong Kong.

15. Note

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

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 (RPVSC Paper 31/2009-10)

ECF Project 7/2009 Study of Photochemical Air Pollution in Hong Kong [RPVSC Paper 32/2009-10]

17. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the two mega-sized projects on air pollution which were similar in scale in terms of project duration and amount of funds required. Project 4/2009 was a proposed partnership program between the universities and the Government to conduct an intensive air quality research with instruments to characterize the physical and chemical properties of particulate pollutants. The outcomes of the project would create a research-based foundation on which to build air quality improvement programmes. The proposed project period was 48 months and the amount requested was \$13,169,900.

18. Mr. Francis Wong continued to brief members on the Project 7/2009. The PI applied for \$13,219,936 for a 48-month research to advance the knowledge of atmospheric science, provide scientific support to the governments of HKSAR and Guangdong in mitigating photochemical smog, and develop research tools and human resources for long-term management of air quality in the region.

19. Note

20. After deliberation, Members agreed to further discuss these two proposals after there would be further deliberation on the vetting and monitoring procedures for mega-sized projects. Members also agreed to invite the PIs of the two proposals to present the proposals for further discussion at the coming special meeting.

ECF Project 2/2009 Advanced Treatment Technologies for Endocrine-disrupting Compounds in Water

(RPVSC Paper 30/2009-10)

21. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the 24-month proposal applying for \$961,840 to develop and validate reliable treatment technologies for endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs) in water based on the synergistic combination and judicious use of ozone oxidation and adsorption processes. The ITF has recently approved a project to the PI entitled “Advanced Ozone Membrane Technology for Treatment of Endocrine Disrupting Compounds in Water”. The ITF project was proposed to be commenced in October 2009. There was no strictly overlapping on the study scope but the result of the ITF project might facilitate the PI’s further definition of study scope of the present proposal.

22. Note

23. After further deliberation, Members agreed not to support the project proposal. The PI would be advised to complete the ITF project before refining the present proposal for further funding application to ECF.

ECF Project 6/2009 Waste Separation Refuse Chute Technology Research

[RPVSC Paper 34/2009-10]

24. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the project proposal. The PI applied for \$219,000 to review the present Hong Kong position in solid waste management, and to introduce a technology which may provide benefits and feasibility of implementing to Hong Kong Housing Estates. EPD did not support the proposal.

25. Note

26. Members concluded that the project would not be supported.

ECF Project 11/2008 Antibiotics and Antibiotic Resistant Genes in Potable Water and Soil Environment of Hong Kong

[RPVSC Paper 27/2009-10]

27. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the revised proposal that the PI provided in response to Members' comments made at the last meeting. The sampling plan has been significantly increased and the study would focus on drinking water supply along the path from Dongjiang to Hong Kong, before and after the water treatment as well as the sludge from treatment plants. There was however, no additional resources required from the PI.

28. After discussion, Members agreed to support the project with a total project cost of \$465,680.

ECF Project 5/2009 Characterisation of Bacterial Community Associated with Skeletal Tissue Growth Anomalies in the Coral *Platygyra carnosus*

[RPVSC Paper 33/2009-10]

29. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$249,960 to conduct a 12-month study to characterize and compare the bacterial communities between healthy *Platygyra carnosus* coral tissues and diseased ones with skeletal tissue growth anomalies using conventional and molecular microbial tools, and to generate important data for future coral conservation and management purposes in local waters.

30. Note

31. After discussion, Members concluded that the proposal should be supported with a total grant of \$249,960 on the condition that the PI amended the Figure 2 to reflect the scope of study covering two different sites in two different seasons.

ECF Project 14/2009 International Conference on Solid Waste Management for Sustainability in Resource Management

[RPVSC Paper 35/2009-10]

32. Mr. Francis Wong briefed members on the proposal. The PI applied for \$500,000 for a 3½-day conference and a half-day field trip to deliberate the strategies, planning and regulatory guidance that would facilitate sustainable resource management. EPD supported the project.

33. Note

34. After further deliberation, Members concluded to support the conference with \$400,000 or 70% of the actual total expenditure whichever would be the less. The expenses on conference lunch and dinner, miscellaneous expenses and partial support to hotel accommodation should be excluded in calculation of the actual total expenditure of the conference. The approval was granted on the condition that (i) the PI would arrange a free seminar for members of public so as to enhance public's participation in the studies of waste management and sustainable resource management; (ii) additional topics on waste-to-energy technologies, waste management in clean development mechanism and regional collaboration on material recycling in Pearl River Delta would be included in the conference; and (iii) the conference proceedings would be printed and distributed for reference.

Discussion Item 4: Date of Next Meeting

35. 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.

36. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:30 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee

September 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.”