



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

(Translation)

本函檔案 Our ref. :
來函檔案 Your ref. :

電話號碼 Tel no.: 3509 8926
傳真號碼 Fax no.: 2136 3281

11 April 2017

Clerk to Public Works Subcommittee
Public Works Subcommittee
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Ms Sharon CHUNG)
(Fax: 2978 7569)

Dear Ms CHUNG,

Head 705 — Civil Engineering
Civil Engineering — Land Development

**758CL – Site formation and associated infrastructural works for development of
columbarium, crematorium and related facilities at Sandy Ridge Cemetery**

At the suggestion of the Chairman of the Public Works Subcommittee, we now provide a written response to the enquiries raised by Hon CHU Hoi-dick in his letter entitled “Re: Further enquiries relating to the integrated funeral facilities at Sandy Ridge”. Having consulted the relevant bureaux and departments, a consolidated reply is attached at **Annex**.

Yours sincerely,

(Diane WONG)

for Secretary for Food and Health

Re: Further enquiries relating to the integrated funeral facilities at Sandy Ridge

- (I) **Having read the information on “public columbaria in rural areas” provided by the Government, I would like to know if the resources on burial for indigenous residents can be better allocated.**
- (1) **Please advise on the total area of land for the exclusive use of the New Territories indigenous residents for land burial, as well as the area of land already used, the area of land reserved and the estimated area of land used annually for this purpose.**

Answer: Among the public cemeteries managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Cheung Chau Cemetery, Tai O Cemetery and Lai Chi Yuen Cemetery are designated for the use of the indigenous villagers of the Islands District, residents living there for a long period of time, or their minor children. Under the existing requirements, coffin burial spaces in public cemeteries are not intended for permanent use. All human remains which have been buried for more than six years are required to be exhumed. For burials in Cheung Chau Cemetery, Tai O Cemetery and Lai Chi Yuen Cemetery, the exhumed remains can be interred in the urn graves in the respective cemeteries. The three cemeteries have a total area of about 87 000 square metres.

- (2) **Please advise whether the Government has encouraged the New Territories indigenous residents to adopt cremation over land burial. Please provide the details of any publicity and promotion measures, their effectiveness, the residents’ response and the challenges to be met.**

Answer: Given the scarcity of land in Hong Kong, the Government has been actively encouraging the adoption of cremation over traditional coffin burial since the 1970s. After several decades of continuous public education, society gradually subscribes to the benefits of cremation, and the majority of the public have accepted cremation as the mainstream mode of funeral and burial arrangements. In the past three decades, the number of cremations over the total number of deaths has risen continuously from 35% (7 300 cremations) in 1975 to 93% (43 600 cremations) in 2016.

(II) With regard to the concept of “district-based development”, please advise on the following.

(1) Please advise on the number of deaths and the corresponding number of cremations in each of the 18 districts at present or in the past year.

Answer: The Government does not have a breakdown of the number of deaths and the corresponding number of cremations by district. In 2016, the number of deaths and the number of cremations in Hong Kong were 46 662 and 43 556 respectively.

(2) Based on “the projected annual average number of deaths and the projected annual average number of cremations for the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years” provided by the Government, please advise on the corresponding projection figures for each of the 18 districts.

Answer: The projected annual average number of deaths and the projected annual average number of cremations for the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years provided by FEHD were calculated on the basis of the Hong Kong population projections of the Census and Statistics Department. As there is no breakdown by district in the projections, FEHD is unable to provide the projection figures for each of the 18 districts.

(III) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Follow-up

(1) I note that in Chapter 4.4 (“Construction Dust Assessment”) of the EIA Report, the air quality at various locations has exceeded the standard prior to the implementation of mitigation measures (i.e. Table 4.11), and that it could meet the standard only after mitigation measures have been implemented (i.e. Table 4.12), meaning that mitigation measures are very essential. Would the Government further elaborate the mitigation measures mentioned in Chapter 4.4.5 and their respective monitoring process and responsible departments / officers?

Answer: During construction phase of the Sandy Ridge Project (the Project), various mitigation measures as detailed in Chapter 4.4.5 of the EIA Report, such as regular watering of exposed areas and covering of dusty materials, will be implemented. According to the EIA Report, construction phase

environmental monitoring and audit (EM&A) must be conducted to monitor and control the environmental impacts of the construction works of the Project, including dusts so created. The entire EM&A programme was detailed in the Environmental Monitoring and Audit Manual (EM&A Manual)¹.

Under the EM&A Manual, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) will establish an environmental team (ET) and employ an independent environmental checker (IEC) prior to commencement of construction. The ET is responsible for implementing the EM&A programme in accordance with the requirements of the EM&A Manual and auditing whether the mitigation measures as provided in the EIA Report are effectively put into place by the Contractor. The IEC is responsible for auditing the overall performance of the EM&A programme, including implementation of all mitigation measures, etc. CEDD will submit monthly EM&A reports to the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The reports will also be uploaded to the Project's dedicated website to be created in future for public perusal.

- (2) **In Chapter 4.5 (“Operational Air Quality Assessment”) of the EIA Report, the air quality is found to be in compliance with the standard. According to the data in Table 4.21 and Table 4.22, the air quality could meet the prevailing air quality standard adopted in Hong Kong’s Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) only by a narrow margin, and would exceed the standard of the World Health Organisation (WHO).**

Pollutant	Average	WHO AQGs	Hong Kong AQOs between 2014 and 2019	Table 4.22, EIA of Sandy Ridge – estimated data of such operating facilities in 2030	Hong Kong AQOs beyond 2029
PM2.5 (FSP)	Annual	10 µg/m ³	35 µg/m ³	30-31 µg/m ³	?? µg/m ³
	24 hours	25 µg/m ³	75 µg/m ³	63-65 µg/m ³	?? µg/m ³
PM10 (RSP)	Annual	20 µg/m ³	50 µg/m ³	42-44 µg/m ³	?? µg/m ³
	24 hours	50 µg/m ³	100 µg/m ³	84-86 µg/m ³	?? µg/m ³

¹ The EM&A Manual can be accessed at http://www.epd.gov.hk/eia/register/report/eiareport/eia_2362016/EIA%20HTML/index.htm.

By year 2030 as mentioned in Table 4.22, it is believed that AQOs should have been brought closer to the WHO's standard, if the AQO is tightened once every five years (i.e. in 2019, 2024, 2029 respectively) according to the statutory requirements. Would the Government advise if such air quality could still meet the AQOs at the time of 2030?

Would the Government advise whether it would facilitate compliance of air quality with the tightened AQOs upon completion of the Project, if the scale of the burial facilities at Sandy Ridge is reduced.

Answer: According to EPD, the prevailing AQOs of Hong Kong took effect on 1 January 2014. It is a statutory requirement for the Secretary for the Environment to review the AQOs at least once every five years. The decision on whether and how to tighten the AQOs is subject to the outcome of the review. The current AQOs are benchmarked against a combination of interim and ultimate targets of WHO's Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) which serve as an international reference for countries to develop their own air quality standards having regard to their air quality situations as well as social and economic considerations. Currently, no countries have fully adopted the AQGs as their air quality standards. In conducting the review, EPD will continue to adopt the recommendations of the WHO and a progressive approach to improve air quality with a view to achieving the ultimate targets of the WHO AQGs as a long-term goal. The review will assess the latest air quality, the effectiveness of air quality improvement measures implemented, the development of emission reduction technologies, health risks of air pollution, the feasibility of adopting new air quality improvement measures, social factors, etc. and examine the feasibility and potential scope for tightening AQOs. EPD has embarked on such a review in mid 2016, which is expected to be completed in 2018.

As regards the scale of the burial facilities at Sandy Ridge, Chapter 4.5 of the EIA Report (i.e. "Operational Air Quality Assessment") regarding the site formation and associated infrastructural works of integrated burial facilities at Sandy Ridge did not cover the emission of air pollutants from the Sandy Ridge Crematorium as mentioned in the question. Given the Sandy Ridge Crematorium is a separate designated project, the relevant bureau/department, as the project proponent, will be required under the EIA Ordinance to conduct a separate EIA on the crematorium project in future. EPD will, under the

relevant guidelines and codes of practice, consider the EIA Report concerned with reference to the reviewed and applicable statutory AQOs.

(IV) New Territories (NT) North Study

- (1) As the leading bureau handling the burial facilities at Sandy Ridge and permanent wholesale poultry markets, what are the stance and justifications of the Food and Health Bureau towards the preliminary development directions and scale of the public consultation regarding the NT North Study/Hong Kong 2030+? Please advise this Sub-committee for reference.**

Answer: According to the Development Bureau, the “NT North Study” is only a preliminary feasibility study. The broad land use plans proposed therein are currently preliminary concepts only, and have been included in the “Hong Kong 2030+” study for public consultation. Upon completion of the “Hong Kong 2030+” study, the Government will determine the next steps for the NT North Development taking into account the views collected. Detailed planning and engineering studies would be carried out (including environmental impact assessment, traffic impact assessment and conducting public consultation) at appropriate timing.

- (2) If the Government continues to take forward large-scale developments along the revealed directions in the NT North Study disregarding the public views, will the NT North Study be, and whether necessary to be, included in the current Sandy Ridge EIA and traffic impact assessment for re-assessment?**

Answer: Chronologically, the planning of the Sandy Ridge project is earlier than the “NT North Study”. In general, when the Government carries out the environmental impact assessment and traffic impact assessment in the planning and engineering studies for the NT North in future, the Sandy Ridge project would be treated as a committed project and would be included in the scope of such studies for comprehensive assessment.