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Press Release

Obsolete solutions for our 21st century city

Living Islands Movement

The Truth About Hong Kong's Waste Management

We urge members of the Legco Finance Committee to reject the funding proposal for an Incinerator on reclaimed land off Shek Kwu Chau. Hong Kong people deserve tomorrow's cleanest and cost-effective waste disposal, not yesterday's over-priced old technology.

The Environment Bureau's justification for the incinerator seriously misleads the Hong Kong public. The EPD hopes their waste mismanagement muddle will miraculously disappear if garbage can be thrown in the furnace. Only their aims matter: they don't seem to care how much public money goes up in smoke or how much environmental damage and pollution is caused.

A Protest Meeting will be held at the Central Government Offices on Friday 27th June at 2:30. The Environment Bureau will be invited to send a representative to receive a petition from the Meeting.

The Environment Bureau base their whole waste management strategy on their misleading "Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources (May 2013)". Specifically, the falsehoods include:

Untruth #1: Burn it: the only solution. Hong Kong *must* have an Incinerator says the EPD, to dispose of our Municipal Solid Waste (MSW). Not true. What's needed is sustainable management of rubbish, by reducing waste and proper sorting and recycling.

Untruth #2: Half our waste is recycled. EPD claims 48% of Hong Kong's waste is recycled. Not true. If we really recycled that much garbage, an incinerator would be redundant. EPD claims 44% of our total daily waste is food garbage. An organic waste treatment plant is already being built to handle that. If nearly half of our waste is recycled and nearly half again will be dealt with by the new plant – that leaves just 8% - 720 tonnes of the daily 9,000 tonnes produced – for an incinerator.

Untruth #3: An incinerator is "clean" state-of-the-art technology. Not true.

However much waste is incinerated, around 30% remains in the incinerator grate as a highly toxic ash. This too has to be disposed of. This ash will have to be transported for processing or to landfill, imposing additional and unacceptable risk to Hong Kong's already crowded waterways.

Untruth #4: No danger to public health. When planning to put their incinerator on reclaimed land off the pristine island of Shek Kwu Chau, the Bureau claimed that the prevailing wind came from the North. Not true. The Hong Kong Observatory notes that summer wind direction is mostly from the South. This means the incinerator's poisonous emissions will blow across densely populated urban areas. The Bureau failed to mention this major hazard to human health.

Untruth #5: No environmental damage. The Bureau claim their incinerator will not harm the local environment. Not true. The reality is that the environmental damage to the area off South Lantau and around Shek Kwu Chau and Cheung Chau waters will be substantial and irreversible.

Untruth #6: Shek Kwu Chau is the best location. Not true. Sites for the first Incinerator have not been properly evaluated. The EPD did not make a true and fair cost comparison between Shek Kwu Chau and other locations, and have repeatedly refused to show evidence of the relative costs. They rely on a spurious "beggar my neighbour" argument for "balanced spatial distribution" of waste facilities. Put simply: out of sight is out of mind.

Untruth #7: Act now or be buried by garbage. Not true. This is scaremongering and total rubbish. Action can be now, rather than delaying until 2022 when their incinerator will finally come online. They could start now with an intensive campaign to cut waste and encourage recycling with proper sorting at source. They could invest in the recycling industry to manage recoverable waste. But instead of constructive action, they use radio advertisements to promote landfill extensions and incineration.

Misleading data #1: Government recycling statistics include imported plastic waste, which is in fact then re-exported. It is totally wrong to include this with Hong Kong's domestic "recycled" waste figures. This is simply a fib by the Bureau.

Misleading statistic #2: Most residents can already recycle rubbish. EPD says more than 80% of Hong Kong residents have recycling bins near their homes. This could be true, but many bins are poorly located and most too small for public need. The result is overflowing bins and rubbish on the streets. The truth: despite their claims to the contrary, the EPD have done virtually nothing in the last three years to promote a sustainable strategy for waste management. Even the simple solution of bigger bins in better locations or collecting

recyclables from the existing bins seems beyond them.

Misleading statistic #3. The estimated cost of building the Organic Waste Treatment plant in North Lantau has ballooned from \$500 million to \$1.5 billion. The EPD and their advisors seriously miscalculated – and they got away with it scot free. Estimated cost of the Incinerator on reclaimed land off Shek kwu Chau is \$18 billion, but sensible estimates put the real price closer to **\$30 billion**. This is tax-payers' money. Where is the financial integrity and accountability for this huge miscalculation?

Living Islands Movement proposes, in co-operation with the Integrated Waste Management Action Group, a viable alternative. Find details about this Plan B at www.wastehk.org/our-plan

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Living Islands Movement is a non-affiliated, local group dedicated to the sustainable environment of Hong Kong's outlying islands – with a focus on Lantau. LIM is made up entirely of volunteers. All money raised through donations and membership fees goes directly into funding campaigns.