

## STAKEHOLDERS TO HAVE A SAY ON HARBOUR WATER QUALITY

The views of local experts and NGOs are to be sought on what sort of water quality they think is needed for Victoria Harbour. This will be the first part of a public process aimed at building awareness and a consensus on harbour sewage treatment.

Although, since the end of last year, 70% of the sewage that used to go into the harbour untreated is now being collected and treated to a high standard, the central and western parts of the harbour still have poor water quality because the remaining 30% of sewage is being dumped with little or no treatment. The degree to which the water quality needs to be improved will depend on what the harbour is used for - fishing or a once-a-year swimming event would require a higher level of sewage treatment than using the harbour only for shipping. A higher level of treatment is usually more expensive.

The exercise is planned to be launched in June and follows the findings of an International Review Panel of experts, who recommended the government amend its original plan to discharge treated sewage from around the harbour into the South China Sea. The panel also recommended a higher level of treatment for sewage.

The government is now studying the options for the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS), but underscoring its efforts is the aim of keeping the public and scientific community informed at each step. The original plans for cleaning up the harbour, first proposed in 1989, have been repeatedly delayed due to lack of consensus in the community.

"A key element of this exercise is to build consensus," Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Dr Malcolm Broom, said.

"In the past, we have quietly got on with doing a lot of detailed planning work and then come back to the community and found a lack of confidence in what we propose. This time we want the process to be as transparent and open as possible."

The awareness-raising exercise, which will last several months, targets both the general public and the scientific community, which will be asked for views on the preferred scientific goals for water quality in the harbour.

If consensus can be reached on the water quality goals, this will form the basis for deciding on the acceptability of each of the options suggested by the international experts. If there is no agreement, the most likely outcome is that a list of choices - and their financial and other implications - will be put forward for discussion by the community.

"The government will complete the first round of studies by the end of next year, but it will take many more years to actually clean up the harbour under standard government procurement procedures - probably until 2013 or 2015." Dr Broom said.

"But one of our other studies is looking at ways of arranging the delivery of the infrastructure in a more efficient way so we can save time," he added.

An encouraging sign of the benefits of sewage treatment has been the improvement to water quality in the eastern part of the harbour since late last year, when the first stage of the harbour clean-up plan was completed. All of the sewage in Kowloon and the northeast of Hong Kong Island is being transported by deep tunnel to Stonecutter's Island, where it is treated before being discharged into the western anchorage area. Bacteria levels - an indicator of sewage pollution - have dropped by 90 per cent in the eastern harbour. However, Dr Broom cautioned there was still significant pollution in the central and western parts of the harbour, and any increase in the population build-up of Hong Kong Island could negate the gains at the eastern end, hence the pressing need to push ahead with the improvement plans.

If you want to learn more about efforts to improve harbour water quality visit <http://info.gov.hk/cleanharbour/>.

#### 邀請有關人士就海港水質發表意見

專家及非政府機構將有機會表達他們對維多利亞港水質的要求。這是整個公共程序的開始，目的是加深市民對維港污水處理的認識，並且建立共識。

縱使自去年年底開始，百分之七十從維港兩岸所收集的污水經過高標準的處理後才流入海港，但維港的中央和西部的的水質污染問題仍然嚴重，這是由於其餘百分之三十的污水在排放前

只得到極少甚至沒有經過處理。其實水質所需的改善程度完全視乎維港水體的用途——如要使維港成爲一個適合於舉辦一年一度的游泳活動或可供市民垂釣的場地，所要求的污水處理標準比僅供航運用途的海港所要求的更高。污水處理的標準越高，成本通常也較昂貴。

有關工作將在六月開展，並跟進國際專家小組的建議。專家小組建議政府修改原先將處理過的污水由維港周圍排放至南中國海的計劃，並建議爲污水提供更高標準的處理。

政府現正就淨化海港計劃(HATS)中的不同方案進行研究，但強調其努力的目標是要令公眾和科學團體得悉計劃過程中的每一步驟。淨化海港的原有計劃在1989年首次被提出，因爲缺乏社會共識而一再拖延。

首席環境保護主任彭樂民博士說：「建立共識是整個過程的關鍵。」

「以往我們默默地制定了許多詳盡的計劃，但社會人士卻對我們的提議缺乏信心。這一次我們希望過程盡量保持公開和高透明度。」

這項加深認識的工作將持續數月，對象是公眾人士和科學團體，要求他們就所期望的維港水質應達到甚麼科學指標發表意見。

如果有關方面能就維港水質的目標達成共識，便爲國際專家所建議的不同的污水處理方案提供了討論的基礎，進而確定各選擇方案的可接受程度。如果沒有共識的話，便很可能出現一系列在不同意向下所能提供的選擇，有關方面亦會將這些選擇所帶來的後果，包括在財政及其他方面所帶來的影響，提出給社會人士公開討論。

彭博士說：「政府將在明年年底前完成第一階段的研究，根據政府的標準程序，大約要到2013年或2015年才能真正的使維港淨化。」

彭博士續說：「然而我們其中一項研究將著眼於如何安排一種更有效的基礎設施合約方式，使淨化海港計劃其他階段的工作能早日落實。」

令人鼓舞的是自從淨化海港計劃的第一階段於去年年底完成以來，維港東部的的水質明顯得到了改善。九龍和港島東北的污水透過污水隧道輸往昂船洲，經過處理後再排放到海港的西部水域。細菌水平——主要的污水污染指示物——已下跌百分之九十。

然而，彭博士警告在中央和西面的維港水質仍有明顯的污染問題，而港島人口如繼續增長的話，目前維港東部的的水質改善工作成效將被抵消，可見其他階段的改善計劃是刻不容緩的。

如想獲得更多有關改善海港水質的資料，可瀏覽<http://info.gov.hk/cleanharbour/>。