

**Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry
Development Advisory Committee
(Notes of the 1st Meeting)**

Date and Time : 3 July 2020 (Friday) at 2:30pm

Venue : Conference Room 3, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar

Present

Mr. Vincent Mak	Chairperson (DS(W)1 (Ag.), DEVB)
Prof. Leslie Chen, JP	Member
Mr. Kingsley Choi	Member
Mr. Daniel Ho	Member
Ms. Iris Hoi	Member
Mr. Lai Ka-ming	Member
Dr. Allen Lim	Member
Mr. Jimmy Leung	Member (CIC)
Mr. Victor Man	Member
Mr. Ken So	Member
Dr. Michael Wang	Member (VTC)
Dr. Peter Yau	Member (via video conferencing at Melbourne, Australia)
Mr. Robin Lee	Member (H/GLTMS, DEVB)
Mr. Steve Lai	Member (GM/QF, EDB)
Dr. Samuel Lam	Member (SCPO(TS), AFCD)
Miss Kathy Ng	Member (CLA, HyD)
Mr. Sunny Lo	Member (SLA/TD&C (Ag.), HD)
Mr. David Chaiong	Member (CLM(PA), LCSD)
Ms. Florence Ko	Secretary (H/TMO, DEVB)
Mr. William Chow	Note-taker (TMO3, DEVB)

Absent with Apologies

Mr. Ho For-hei

In Attendance

For IDAC Paper No. 2

Ms. Josephine Yang AS(TM)2, DEVB

For IDAC Paper No. 3

Ms. Olivia Cheung AS(TM)2, DEVB
Ms. Soso Wong PM, VTC

For IDAC Paper No. 4

Ms. Josephine Yang AS(TM)2, DEVB
Mr. Manson Pang SGE(SD), DEVB

1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Development Advisory Committee (“AHIDAC”), who were experienced academics, practitioners and vocational trainers from the trade associations, unions, professional groups, and higher education and vocational training institutions in the industry and also representatives from various government departments. He remarked that through active participation and sharing of knowledge and experience of Members at the meetings, the AHIDAC would serve as a platform to gauge views of and exchange ideas with the industry on the implementation of new policy initiatives, namely the Study Sponsorship Scheme (“SSS”) and Trainee Programme (“TP”) under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (“UFSF”), Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (“Scheme”), and the Manpower and Competence Study of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry (“Study”).

Item 1 : Terms of Reference and Membership (IDAC Paper No. 1/2020)

2. It is noted that all Members agreed to the Terms of Reference and Membership for the first term (2020-2022) of the AHIDAC.

Item 2 : Proposed Framework for the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 2/2020)

3. AS(TM)2 introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, highlighting that the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (“GLTMS”) had studied the feasibility of introducing a registration scheme for tree management personnel and exchanged views with the industry on the scheme since 2019. She further briefed Members on the findings of the view collection exercise and the proposed registration framework. She informed that the Scheme was targeted to roll out in Q4 of 2020.
4. The Chairperson thanked the presentation by AS(TM)2 and invited Members to provide their views on the proposed registration framework.

5. CLA expressed that the Highways Department would engage registered tree management personnel (“registered personnel”) to handle tree management work in government contracts upon the GLTMS’s policy steer. She enquired if the supply of registered personnel would be adequate by then. She advised that there should be sufficient lead time and coordination with the training institutions.
6. A Member was concerned about the manpower supply and opined that sufficient lead time should be allowed for contractors to train their staff who have yet to meet the registration requirements. He further suggested to conduct manpower surveys to understand the labour market situations.
7. Another Member asked about the training requirement for obtaining the qualification on arboriculture occupational safety and health (“OSH”).
8. The Chairperson explained that to minimise any possible adverse impact on the industry and the employment situation, as a start, the registration requirements for the tree management personnel would initially be set as the qualifications and work experience currently and generally required for in-service practitioners under government contracts. In other words, no additional qualifications and work experience requirements would be imposed in the first phase of registration. It was expected that the employment situation would not be adversely affected and hence the manpower supply arising from the implementation of the Scheme should not be an issue. Registered personnel would nevertheless be required to comply with a set of code of conduct to uplift their practice standards. New government contracts and those existing ones upon renewal would be required to engage registered personnel to handle tree management work. The GLTMS would also appeal departments to observe the end dates of their contracts and ask their contractors to encourage their staff to register in due course.
9. AS(TM)2 advised that training courses organised by recognised institutions or government departments which covered the core areas as stipulated in the Guidelines on Arboriculture Occupational Safety and Health or the relevant Units of Competence regarding the OSH in the Arboriculture and Horticulture Specification of Competency Standards

- (“A&HSCS”) would be able to meet the OSH training requirement.
10. GM/QF briefed Members on the potential applications of A&HSCS in the development and implementation of the Scheme. He also supplemented that the Vocation Qualification Pathway could form a basis for the proposed trade tests and continuing professional development (“CPD”) courses.
 11. A Member supported the Scheme and would like to know if there would be any deregistration mechanism or further training requirement(s) for non-performers.
 12. A Member considered that similar to other four job types, Chainsaw Operators should be required to have work experience for registration. He also suggested to name “Tree Climbers” as “Aerial Tree Work Technicians” to show clearly to the public that the registered personnel would perform tree pruning work in addition to tree climbing.
 13. The Chairperson agreed that the Scheme was targeted to uplift the professional standards of the industry in the long run and a consultancy study for the design of trade tests and professional assessments was being prepared. He assured that a performance monitoring system with an appeal mechanism would be developed to act on complaints. Non-compliance of the code of conduct would be subject to appropriate regulatory measures. The GLTMS was working on the details and would seek Members’ views in due course.
 14. AS(TM)2 agreed that practical experience was important for competent tree management personnel and supplemented that the prevailing requirement (i.e. completed recognised training courses only) for workers undertaking tree pruning works using chainsaws under government contracts would be adopted as the registration requirement for Chainsaw Operators. She clarified that practitioners would be required to register as both Chainsaw Operators and Tree Climbers if they needed to perform tree pruning works by climbing.
 15. A Member informed that registered arborists in Australia were required to purchase Professional Indemnity Insurance at an amount of at least two million Australian dollars to cover

potential claims. He enquired if registered personnel under the Scheme would be required to purchase similar insurance.

16. Regarding the concern on work experience requirement of Chainsaw Operators, a Member clarified that two years of work experience was indeed required for admission to the training course organised by the Vocational Training Council (“VTC”) in chainsaw operation. On the other hand, he pointed out that the Board Certified Master Arborist and Fellow should be the highest professional qualifications of the International Society of Arboriculture and Arboricultural Association of the United Kingdom respectively. He recommended to delete “or above qualification” from the corresponding registration requirements.

[Post-meeting note: “Or above qualification” has been deleted in the registration requirements.]

17. A Member enquired about how many practitioners would be eligible for registration, how to provide proof of work experience and details of the proposed trade tests.
18. A Member was concerned whether sufficient training courses would be available for new entrants under the pandemic situation, which may adversely affect the number of registration and thus the supply of registered personnel in the market.
19. A Member echoed the importance of introducing trade tests to ascertain the level of competence and knowledge of tree management personnel. She however enquired the need to have five different registration classifications. She also stressed the importance of practical experience as one of the registration requirements in the Scheme.
20. The Chairperson provided the following responses:
- The registration would be on individuals instead of companies. The requirement on individuals to purchase Professional Indemnity Insurance might incur a financial burden to some practitioners and hence deter the willingness of interested practitioners to join the voluntary Scheme. In fact, the employers (i.e. contractors in government contracts) of arboriculture practitioners were required to purchase Care of Works insurance to cover the liability under their contract works. The GLTMS would

not put in place such requirement in the Scheme but keep the matter in view.

- Having consulted the industry, the GLTMS worked out the framework of the Scheme including the five registration classifications which covered all key and essential tree management personnel. While the goal was set, further implementation details would be worked out together with the industry. In particular, the GLTMS would work closely with the training institutions to provide courses meeting the registration requirements and thereby build up the capacity of the industry and bridge the manpower gap in concern.
- After all, the GLTMS would continue to consult the Committee and refine the registration requirements and arrangements to keep pace with the development of the industry.

21. AS(TM)2 supplemented that based on the Human Resources and Competences Survey and Analysis of the Arboriculture, Horticulture and Landscape Management and Maintenance Industry completed in 2017, it was estimated that around 1,000 to 1,500 professional tree management personnel and 600 to 800 tree workers would be eligible to register under the Scheme.
22. A Member understood that purchasing of Professional Indemnity Insurance would not be considered in the Scheme at this stage. As a practicing arborist in Hong Kong, he shared that he had purchased Professional Indemnity Insurance for his own tree works.
23. The Chairperson acknowledged the insurance issue and would review such requirement if the risk was considered high in future. He noted the strong support from Members on the proposed framework of the Scheme and thanked again for Members' comments, which would be duly considered in a holistic manner when formulating the implementation details.

Item 3 : Manpower and Competence Survey Questionnaires for the Public and Private Sectors of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry (IDAC Paper No. 3/2020)

24. AS(TM)3 briefed Members on the Paper, with the aid of PowerPoint, regarding the background and objectives of the Study. She further informed Members that the Study was commissioned to the VTC in November 2019 and the findings would be available in Q2 of 2021. She then introduced the Project Manager of the Study from the VTC to present the survey arrangements and design of questionnaires.
25. PM, VTC presented the scope and methodology of the Study with the aid of PowerPoint. She further elucidated the details of designations of major principal jobs, desk research, telephone interviews, focus group meetings, visits to companies, etc. to collect employment information and estimate the manpower supply and demand in the industry. She also briefed Members on the proposed survey schedule.
26. A Member shared that practitioners working in small companies might be required to assume roles of both supervisors and frontline workers. He also pointed out that some practitioners might work for a few companies at the same time. In addition, regarding the forecast of the industry as mentioned in the Study, he suggested that the Government should provide a long-term plan so that employers in the industry could make necessary allocation on resources, manpower and training.
27. The Chairperson thanked for the comments which would be considered in a holistic manner in the Study, particularly in the focus groups meetings. He also invited all Members to actively participate in the Study.

Item 4 : Latest Development of the Study Sponsorship Scheme and Trainee Programme under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (IDAC Paper No. 4/2020)

28. AS(TM)2 and SGE(SD) briefed Members on the latest development of the SSS and TP under the UFSF with the aid of PowerPoint. It was expected that the SSS would be rolled out in early July 2020 and the TP in early August 2020.

29. A Member enquired if it would be possible to include more job types under the TP, such as Tree Risk Assessors and Tree Work Supervisors, so as to benefit more different types of practitioners.
30. A Member also enquired if any guidelines, briefing or training sessions would be provided to training tutors to ensure that the training outcomes and quality of trainees would be consistent.
31. GM/QF recommended that A&HSCS-based courses could be recognised under the SSS. He also suggested that the A&HSCS-based courses taken by trainees could be counted as CPD under the Scheme in future. He reminded that some recognised courses under the Qualifications Framework (“QF”) were subsidised by the Continuing Education Fund.
32. The Chairperson advised that if necessary, the arrangements and the number of quota allocated in the SSS and TP could be adjusted flexibly.
33. AS(TM)2 advised that a list of recognised courses under the SSS would be posted on the GLTMS website. The GLTMS would also recognise A&HSCS-based courses with relevant QF level.
34. SGE(SD) responded that the CIC would arrange briefings to training tutors at the commencement of their training to explain the detailed requirements of the TP. The CIC would monitor the performance of the training tutors and trainees throughout the training periods and would refine the training arrangements if necessary.
35. The Chairperson supplemented that the GLTMS would keep in view the implementation arrangements of the TP and arrange more briefings to training tutors as and when necessary.
36. A Member considered that it might not be practicable for small and medium enterprises to provide qualified training tutors and suggested to set a lower qualification and work experience requirements for them. He had no particular comments on the amount of subsidy to the employers and expressed that it was more important to retain more new blood to stay and work in the trade.

37. A Member however considered that the qualifications and work experience requirements for training tutors should not be lowered so as to maintain the quality of trainees. He was of the view that the work experience of training tutors was important.
38. A Member commented that in the academic qualification requirements for training tutors of arborist trainees, the subject of horticulture should also be included in addition to arboriculture, tree management and landscape management.
39. The Chairperson agreed that training tutors should have sufficient qualifications to ensure the quality of training outcomes.
40. A Member enquired whether the SSS was applicable to overseas arboriculture courses and if successful applicants of scholarship might work in other places like Guangzhou upon graduation in order to fulfil the scholarship requirements.
41. AS(TM)2 responded that the GLTMS might consider enlisting overseas courses under the SSS as long as they were QF-recognised courses at Level 2 to Level 5. To obtain the scholarship, one had to join the arboriculture and horticulture industry in Hong Kong within six months after satisfactory completion of the course so as to benefit the local industry.
42. A Member pointed out that there might be differences in the job natures in the Government and the private sector, which might result in different training contents and outcomes. He enquired if there would be a need for the CIC to adjust the training requirements for trainees working in different organisations to ensure that all the designated core competencies could be covered.
43. The Chairperson responded that the CIC would not be in a position to adjust the training requirements for different companies/organisations in the private sector. The training arrangements and requirements could be subject to review after acquiring experience on the implementation of the programme. However, the GLTMS would help coordinate the training of trainees engaged by the Government, for instance, by posting to different departments to cater for different training needs.

Item 5 : Any Other Business

44. H/GLTMS thanked Members for their comments on the new policy initiatives and solicited their continuous support. He added that the GLTMS would report the progress of these initiatives and seek further comments from Members as appropriate at the next meeting, which was tentatively scheduled for November 2020.
45. A Member enquired if the AHIDAC would review the massive tree failure incidents that occurred due to the hit of Super Typhoon Mangkhut in September 2018.
46. The Secretary supplemented that according to its Terms of Reference, the Urban Forestry Advisory Panel, which consisted of experts from different technical disciplines associated with arboriculture and horticulture, was a more appropriate platform for the technical discussion on tree failures.
47. There being no other business, the Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5:00 pm.

**Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section
Development Bureau
August 2020**