

**Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry
Development Advisory Committee
(Notes of the 2nd Meeting)**

Date and Time : 6 November 2020 (Friday) at 2:30pm

Venue : Conference Room 5, 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. Peter Yau	Member (via video conferencing at Melbourne, Australia)
Mr. Robin Lee	Member (H/GLTMS, DEVB)
Mr. Steve Lai	Member (GM/QF, EDB)
Mr. Patrick Lai	Member (AD(C&CP), AFCD)
Miss Sandy Tong	Member (SLA/VM(NT), HyD)
Mr. Sunny Lo	Member (SLA/TD&C, 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
Dr. Michael WANG (VTC)

In Attendance

Dr. Cheung Kwai-chung Academic Director, VTC

For IDAC Paper No. 5

Ms. Josephine Yang AS(TM)2, DEVB

For IDAC Paper No. 6

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

For IDAC Paper No. 7

Mr. Hsu Ka-man AS(TM)3 (Ag.), DEVB
Ms. Soso Wong PM, VTC

Mr. Freddy Leung
Mr. Chris Ho

SPO, VTC
TA, VTC

Action

1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the second meeting of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Development Advisory Committee (“AHIDAC”).

Item 1 : Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting

2. The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendment.

Item 2 : Proposed Implementation Details of the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 5/2020)

3. AS(TM)2 introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, reporting that the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (“GLTMS”) had submitted an information paper entitled “Progress Report on Proposed Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel” to the Panel on Development of the Legislative Council in July 2020. She further briefed Members on the details of the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (“Scheme”), including i) application for registration; ii) registration documents; iii) renewal requirements; iv) registration/renewal fee; v) code of conduct and performance monitoring; vi) Disciplinary Panel and Appeal Board; and vii) local professional assessments and trade tests. She advised the Committee that DEVB had planned to roll out the Scheme in December 2020 after consulting Members on the details of the Scheme.
4. GM/QF shared with other Members about the potential application of the Specification of Competency Standards (“SCS”) for the arboriculture and horticulture industry and the possible development of continuing education in arboriculture (“CEA”) courses, professional assessments and trade tests under the Qualifications Framework (“QF”). He also enquired about the accreditation of future CEA courses.
5. A Member commented that sufficient lead time should be

allowed for contractors undertaking government contracts to engage registered tree management personnel in undertaking tree management work. He also raised the need to provide clear and relevant information on registration requirements for new entrants.

6. SLA/TD&C noted in Annex B-1 of IDAC Paper No. 5/2020 that the CEA requirements had included some optional CEA hours for registered personnel to undertake arboriculture related CEA courses on their own choices. He also suggested disclosing the names of non-performers of registered personnel on tree work safety on the Scheme's website in future.

[Post-meeting note: After review, the demerit points and corresponding disciplinary actions to be incurred for unsafe acts would remain unchanged, to allow for progressive order of increasing level of regulatory measures and opportunities for improvement made.]

7. The Chairperson advised that the proposed CEA courses aimed to uplift the core competency of registered personnel to align with their expected competency based on the SCS. A list of CEA courses to be recognised by the GLTMS would be available on the Scheme's website in due course for reference. Apart from the mandatory CEA hours in the specific functional areas, registered personnel could undertake other arboriculture related CEA courses that would uplift their professional knowledge. Regarding the local professional assessments and trade tests being developed, the GLTMS would continue to work with the VTC to formulate the details, including the assessment requirements, performance criteria and quality assurance mechanism, etc.
8. With regard to the timing of engaging registered personnel in government contracts, the Chairperson advised that contractors undertaking government contracts would only be required to engage registered tree management personnel under new or renewed contracts in due course, subject to further coordination among tree management departments. The initial thinking was to issue a technical circular to stipulate the detailed arrangement related to the implementation of the Scheme in government contracts. He appealed contractors undertaking government contracts to encourage their tree management staff, who were qualified

under the Scheme, to register at an early stage. Registration of more in-service practitioners in the Scheme would make it more credible in the industry.

9. AS(TM)2 supplemented that a registration roadmap would be available on the Scheme's website to provide guidance to in-service practitioners and new entrants of different qualifications and work experience on registration and renewal under the Scheme.
10. A Member opined that the proposed implementation details, in particular the arrangement of the Disciplinary Panel and Appeal Board, should be developed by making reference to other similar registration schemes and opined that the proposal were generally in order. He supported the need for CEA and commented that adequate and quality CEA courses should be available in the industry for registered personnel to uplift their skills and knowledge, and meet the renewal requirements. He also recognised the need to uplift the registration requirements upon expiry of the transition period and to make known the plan to the in-service practitioners who were yet-to-be qualified or registered so that they could plan their career development.
11. A Member enquired if any skill enhancement course would be provided to those in-service practitioners who might encounter difficulties in meeting the trade test requirements in future.
12. A Member considered it necessary to ensure quality of work through the performance monitoring mechanism, but was concerned about potential abuse of the complaint mechanism. He also opined about the importance of reasonable timeframes for handling complaints and conducting hearings for achieving deterrent effect. He also noted a typo on the accumulative points in the table of disciplinary actions in Annex D of IDAC Paper No. 5/2020. He further supplemented that members from different trades with experience in handling disciplinary cases should be invited to join the Disciplinary Panel.

[Post-meeting note: The accumulative points for issuance of a warning letter was amended from 20-35 to 25-35.]

13. The Chairperson confirmed that in the course of formulating the performance monitoring mechanism, the GLTMS had reviewed and made reference to other established disciplinary and appeal mechanisms. The GLTMS had also started dialogues with the local institutions, training providers and professional bodies regarding organisation of CEA courses. In their best interest, qualified in-service practitioners should be registered at the earliest possible and renew their registration every three years by acquiring sufficient in-service work experience and CEA hours. For in-service practitioners who were required to undertake trade tests in future, subject to the findings of the consultancy study being carried out by the VTC on professional assessments and trade tests, the GLTMS would consult the AHIDAC in due course with regard to the possible, appropriate means to assist the in-service practitioners to meet the trade test requirements.
14. The Chairperson supplemented that the GLTMS was working on the internal administrative procedures to process complaints including specified timeframes. All Members were welcomed to join the Disciplinary Panel and Appeal Board, which would be operated on a rotational basis in consideration of any potential conflict of interest of members involved. The GLTMS welcomed the suggestion to invite members from other trades to join the Disciplinary Panel and Appeal Board to enhance its credibility and impartiality.
15. A Member was concerned if the CEA courses with the required units of competency for registered arborists would be available in the industry for renewal and if the specified competencies could be acquired through CEA courses which were training in nature. Besides, he inquired how would the CEA requirements for registered arborists and tree risk assessors be compatible with the qualification requirements for Inspection Officers set out in the Guidelines for Tree Risk Assessment and Management Arrangement.
16. The Secretary responded that the Scheme was developed for the industry to uplift the professional standards of the five types of tree management personnel who were responsible for various tree management work, while at the same time, to provide them with opportunities in career development. The Scheme was not targeted for the Inspection Officers undertaking tree risk assessments under government contracts only. By making reference to the SCS, the CEA was intended

to uplift the core competency of registered personnel to align with their expected competency through continuing education throughout their entire career, which was different from fundamental academic education and professional qualification required for joining and practising in the industry.

17. A Member enquired if government officers involved in tree management work would be required to register under the Scheme.
18. The Chairperson welcomed in-service government officers involved in tree management work to register, but it was not mandatory. CEA courses would also be provided to them to uplift their core competency to align with their expected competency. He thanked Members for the useful comments which would be incorporated into the implementation details as appropriate.

Item 3 : Progress Report on the Study Sponsorship Scheme and Trainee Programme under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (IDAC Paper No. 6/2020)

19. AS(TM)2 and SGE(SD) briefed Members on the Paper, with the aid of PowerPoint, regarding the latest development on the Study Sponsorship Scheme (“SSS”) and the Trainee Programme (“TP”) under the Urban Forestry Support Fund. The SSS was launched on 13 July 2020 and open for application throughout the year to encourage youngsters to join the arboriculture and horticulture industry as arborists and tree workers. As at the end of October 2020, 142 applications for study sponsorship and three applications for scholarship were received. The TP was launched on 10 August 2020 and open for application throughout the year to encourage employers to engage and train arboriculture and tree management graduates to become quality arborists and tree climbers to support tree management and maintenance work in Hong Kong. As at the end of October 2020, the Construction Industry Council received seven applications involving 18 arborist trainees and one tree climber trainee, of which two applications involving three arborist trainees and one tree climber trainee were approved. It was noted that the companies in the industry were small in scale in general and could not meet the staff establishment requirement to become

eligible employers. Refinement on the requirement could be considered.

20. A Member opined that companies in the industry were mostly small-scale, there might be difficulties for them to join the TP if the staff establishment requirements for becoming eligible employers were high. He further appealed to the government to provide means to retain young practitioners in the industry and to improve work safety of in-service practitioners.
21. The Chairperson acknowledged the challenges faced by small-scale firms in the industry and remarked that refinement to the TP regarding eligibility of potential employers would be made as appropriate. The Scheme, which aimed to uplift the professional standard of the industry, would help promote a positive image of the tree management personnel and enhance their work safety.

Item 4 : Progress Report on the Manpower and Competence Study of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry (IDAC Paper No. 7/2020)

22. SPO of VTC presented the progress of the Manpower and Competence Study of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry (the “Study”) with the aid of PowerPoint. As at the end of October 2020, the VTC completed the field survey for both public and private sectors and the desktop research. It was processing the data collated and preparing the focus group meetings. The survey findings should be available by January 2021. He advised that the Study was on track for completion by April 2021.
23. The Chairperson thanked for the presentation and invited Members to provide continual support to the Study and the focus group meetings.
24. A Member noted that participation of the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (“Thei”) in one of the focus group meetings was mentioned in the presentation but was not shown in the IDAC Paper No. 7/2020.
25. Another Member enquired if the Hong Kong Greening Contractor Association would be invited for participating in the focus group meetings.

26. TA of VTC advised that Thei was subsumed under the Institute of Vocational Education in Group 2 of the focus group meetings as presented in the IDAC Paper No. 7/2020. In addition, individual companies instead of trade associations would be involved in the focus group meetings.

Item 5 : Any Other Business

27. A Member enquired if tree management contracts of the LCSD and HD would tally with those of other works departments.
28. The Chairperson responded that it was intended to standardise terminologies and item coverage in similar tree management contracts of different tree management departments. However, in consideration of the operational needs of different departments, flexibility should be allowed for making adjustment by individual departments. He assured that departments would try to standardise requirements of contracts of similar nature as far as practicable.
29. Another Member enquired if the Scheme would hinder potential landscaping contractors from registering on the List of Approved Suppliers of Materials and Specialist Contractors for Public Works.
30. The Chairperson elucidated that registration would be on individual qualified in-service practitioners under the Scheme and contractors undertaking government contracts would be required to engage registered personnel to undertake tree management work. Registering on the List of Approved Suppliers of Materials and Specialist Contractors for Public Works was a separate mechanism.
31. There being no other business, the Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm.