

**Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry  
Development Advisory Committee  
(Notes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting )**

**Date and Time** : 19 August 2021 (Thursday) at 2:30pm

**Venue** : Conference Room 4, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar

**Present**

Ms. Angela LEE	Chairperson (DS(W)1, DEVB)
Mr. Kingsley Choi	Member
Mr. Daniel Ho	Member
Mr. Ho For-hei	Member
Ms. Iris Hoi	Member (via video conferencing)
Mr. Lai Ka-ming	Member
Dr. Allen Lim	Member
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)
Dr. Jackie Yip	Member (ADP, AFCD)
Miss Sandy Tong	Member (SLA/VM(NT), HyD)
Mr. Sunny Lo	Member (SLA/TD&C, HD)
Mr. David Chaiong	Member (CLM(PA), LCSD)
Mr. Ryan Lin	Secretary (H/TMO, DEVB)
Mr. William Chow	Note-taker (TMO3, DEVB)

**Absent with Apologies**

Prof. Leslie Chen, JP  
Ir. Alex Leung (CIC)  
Dr. Michael WANG (VTC)

**In Attendance**

Ir. Dr. Eric Liu                      Deputy Executive Director, VTC

For IDAC Paper No. 1/2021

Ms. Josephine Yang              AS(TM)2, DEVB  
Ms. Cindy Lo                      CEO(Reg), DEVB

For IDAC Paper No. 2/2021

Ms. Josephine Yang              AS(TM)2, DEVB  
Mr. HSU Ka-man                  AS(TM)3, DEVB

For IDAC Paper No. 3/2021

Mr. HSU Ka-man                  AS(TM)3, DEVB

Mr. Angus Lam  
Mr. Freddy Leung

PM/VTC  
SPO/VTC

## **Action**

1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the third 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 : Implementation of the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 1/2021)**

3. AS(TM)2 introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, reporting that the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) had launched the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (the Scheme) on 1 December 2020. The Tree Management Personnel Registration Unit (RU) under GLTMS was set up to process applications. She further briefed Members on the implementation progress including (a) registration status; (b) continuing education in arboriculture; (c) performance monitoring; (d) development of local professional assessments and trade tests; and (e) employment of registered tree management personnel in government contracts.
4. A Member expressed that as revealed by their union members, the registration process was conducted smoothly. Nonetheless, some experienced in-service practitioners who were not working for government contracts might need more time to complete relevant training, in particular the training in occupational safety and health (OSH), in order to get registered. He suggested GLTMS to review their cases and offer assistance to facilitate their application.
5. AS(TM)2 responded that the RU had been dealing with various enquiries and offering assistance in the application process. An “application strategy” had been drawn up to enhance applicants’ understanding on the application and it was uploaded onto the Scheme’s website. As the pandemic

was gradually subsiding, it was noted that classes on OSH training had resumed.

6. The Chairperson remarked that the application for registration under the Scheme was voluntary and she encouraged employers to allow sufficient time for their staff to attend relevant training in order to meet the registration requirements.
7. Another Member enquired about the major reasons for unsuccessful application, and if there was any information on the indicative number of registered tree management personnel that would be required in certain public works contracts so that the industry could make necessary preparation for meeting the demand. He expressed concern over any sudden surge of demand of registered personnel.
8. CEO(Reg) responded that the major reason for rejecting the applications was the lack of appropriate OSH training qualification. With the resumption of more OSH training classes made possible by the improving pandemic situation, it was expected that applicants would have less difficulty in meeting the OSH requirement. .
9. AS(TM)2 supplemented that tree maintenance departments would determine the number of registered tree management personnel required having regard to the specific scope and scale of individual contracts and operational needs. Based on the information provided by departments, the number of prevailing registered tree management personnel was considered sufficient to meet the expected demand in the coming years.
10. H/GLTMS added that the employment of registered tree management personnel in government contracts would only be applicable for new contracts with tenders to be invited in Q4 of 2021 or later, while the manpower requirements of existing contracts would not be affected.
11. A Member showed appreciation of the user-friendly application system and RU's swift follow-up actions, and shared some observations in the course of his application:
  - There was limited availability of OSH training courses in the market and the quality of some were in doubt.

- Regarding the recognition of overseas academic qualifications, he acknowledged the need of benchmarking overseas qualifications to the equivalent Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) level through the qualification assessment by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). However, such a need to apply for assessment might prolong the time and increase the cost of registration. He also emphasised on the importance of verification of the authenticity of the certificates.

He further enquired whether relevant training components would be provided and form part of the proposed trade tests and professional assessments.

12. On authenticity of the certificates, CEO(Reg) responded that the applicant would be required to sign a declaration statement, which had been incorporated into the application form, declaring that information submitted for his/her application under the Scheme were true and correct.
13. H/GLTMS supplemented that GLTMS had approached relevant OSH training course providers and noted that they would provide more classes with the improving pandemic situation. He also emphasized that it was the responsibility of an applicant to provide true and necessary information including proof of educational attainment of relevant HKQF level when applying for registration.
14. AS(TM)2 added that the consultancy study of reference trade tests and professional assessments was in progress, which covered detailed design of the local assessments including the syllabus, mode of assessment, eligibility for sitting the test, qualification requirements of assessors, etc. The proposed framework and details would be presented to the AHIDAC for discussion in due course. Regarding the quality of OSH training courses, she supplemented that for the Continuing Education in Arboriculture (CEA) courses related to OSH, the course provider, course content and trainers' qualification would be scrutinised by the GLTMS to ensure that their quality is in compliance with the required competence in uplifting the standard of registered personnel.

15. The Chairperson remarked that the Scheme was still at its initial stage and GLTMS would review the application procedures and make improvement to facilitate the registration as and when required.
16. GM/QF shared that the HKCAAVQ would assess each application independently based on the totality of individual applicant's educational qualifications against the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong. A number of factors would be considered in the assessment including the overall grade, assessment, curriculum, etc. As such, the HKQF levels attained by two students completing the same course in the same overseas university might not necessarily be the same. Secondly, he suggested to have the OSH-related CEA courses recognised under the HKQF to allow quality assurance and quality control. Having said that, he reckoned that course providers might have concern about the cost implication if their courses were to be accredited.
17. AS(TM)2 expressed that contact hour of CEA course was generally 3 or 6 hours which too short rendering it not suitable to be recognised under the HKQF. Alternatively, GLTMS would liaise with EDB to explore if the quality assurance and performance monitoring system under the HKQF could be incorporated into the design of reference trade tests and professional assessments.
18. A Member enquired whether the registration figures have included the number of tree management personnel in government departments. He commented that according to the projected demand he obtained from contractors, the actual market demand for registered personnel might be different from GLTMS's estimation. He also observed that provision of some overseas tree risk assessment training courses had been suspended due to the pandemic while some local courses were yet to be recognised by GLTMS. The insufficient recognised training programmes might hinder the growth of registered tree management personnel. Another Member echoed that some practitioners failed to get registered despite having attended local tree risk assessment training courses.
19. AS(TM)2 clarified that government staff responsible for tree management and conducting tree care works were not required to get registered and the figures reported in the presentation reflected mainly qualified private practitioners.

As regards the projected demand for registered tree management personnel, the GLTMS would review the situation upon receipt of more information. For training courses on tree risk assessment, application for recognition was opened to all training course providers. Indeed, an application from a local training course provider was under processing, pending receipt of supplementary information and hopefully, this would further increase the number of recognised local training courses.

20. The Chairperson assured that GLTMS would expedite the recognition process upon receipt of supplementary information from the local training course providers with a view to facilitating the registration. She also encouraged Members to convey any other comments on the Scheme to GLTMS so that we might continue to refine the Scheme having regard to the operational experience and feedback from the trade.

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**Item 3 : Progress Report on the Study Sponsorship Scheme and Trainee Programme under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (IDAC Paper No. 2/2021)**

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21. AS(TM)2 and AS(TM)3 briefed Members on the Paper, with the aid of PowerPoint, regarding the latest development of the Study Sponsorship Scheme (SSS) and Trainee Programme (TP) under the Urban Forestry Support Fund, and respective application figures and upcoming plan.
22. A Member shared that some of his students who were eager to join the arboriculture industry showed strong interest in the TP. He suggested standardised promotional information, on both SSS and TP, could be made available to the students through the recognised tree management/work programmes
23. AS(TM)3 welcomed the suggestion and responded that there was a designated webpage of the TP in the website of the Construction Industry Council (CIC), who was the administrator of the programme.
24. AS(TM)2 supplemented that recognised programmes under the SSS had already provided hyperlinks to the website of the Urban Forestry Support Fund which covered both SSS and TP. GLTMS would enhance the promotional activities so that

more students would know about the two programmes.

25. In response to the enquiry of SLA/TD&C on the formal name of the a recognised course, the Associate of Science (Tree Management), AS(TM)2 said that the name of the course was identical to that printed on the application form submitted by the institution under the SSS. Nevertheless, GLTMS would check if there was any update on the name of the course.

*[Post-meeting note: After checking against the HKQF, the name of course “Associate of Science (Tree Management)” remains unchanged.]*

26. To attract more private sectors to participate in the TP, another Member suggested lowering the requirement on experience for the trainer and further relaxing the trainer-to-trainee ratio. Besides, he proposed the use of job references to substitute the requirement of active tree-work-related contract(s) with a duration not less than one year to facilitate the participation by small companies.
27. AS(TM)3 responded that the trainer-to-trainee ratio in arborist and climber had already been relaxed to 1:3 and 1:2 respectively in the current programme. At present, only 6 out of the 22 participating companies had reached the maximum of the prevailing ratios and hence other participating companies still have rooms to cater for more trainees. The requirement on experience for the trainer was set to tally with relevant requirements specified in the Registration Scheme. He further explained that the requirement of an active contract was to ensure the company could offer sufficient tree-related works to provide adequate on-the-job training for the trainees. GLTMS would review the requirement with CIC as necessary.
28. The Chairperson remarked that all participants of the SSS had completed the courses without dropping out so far which was encouraging. She thanked Members for their valuable comments.

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**Item 4 : Findings of the Manpower and Competence Study of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry (IDAC Paper No. 3/2021)**

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29. AS(TM)3 and SPO/VTC presented the background and findings of the Manpower and Competence Study of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry (the Study) with the aid of PowerPoint. SPO/VTC briefed the Members on the manpower situation, recruitment difficulties, competency of current manpower, factors for attracting new entrants, and manpower projection for coming years, and the recommendations to attract new entrants to the industry and raise the quality standards of the industry.
30. The Chairperson enquired why the number of companies projected was high but the number of employees projected was low in the category of landscape care and greenery services vis-à-vis those of the whole industry.
31. VTC explained that most of the companies in the category of landscape care and greenery services were small-sized companies each engaging a relatively small number of staff. Hence, the per company employee figure was lower than that of other categories of companies in the industry.
32. Two Members sought clarifications on the categorisation of companies in the study coverage, which might affect the manpower figures of the industry. They also enquired about whether part-time staff was counted in the projection.
33. PM/VTC and his team explained that the companies in the survey had been categorised based on:
- (i) a list of Government approved landscaping contractors;
  - (ii) a member list of contractors' associations;
  - (iii) relevant Government bureau/departments, public utilities, and education & training institutions; and
  - (iv) relevant industry groups defined under the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification by the Census and Statistics Department

All companies belonging to type (i), (ii) and (iii) above were covered and surveyed under the study while samples were selected for type (iv). Only full-time staff was counted in the survey. Measures had been taken for companies of type (i) to (iii) not to be selected again under type (iv) to avoid double counting.

34. Another Member was concerned about the reasons and high number of wastage of human resources in the industry. The



Chairperson enquired about the wastage situation in other industries.

35. VTC advised that the manpower wastage in the arboriculture and horticulture industry was relatively high when compared with those of other industries in general. The wastage rate was collected in the survey while the reasons of wastage were solicited in the focus group meetings with representatives of the industry. Measures to minimize the wastage were recommended in the report by VTC for consideration.
36. A Member suggested that a new category for A&H workers could be introduced in the 'monthly wages return' provided by contractors of capital works contracts to reflect the speciality of the A&H workers.
37. The Chairperson concluded that the study had provided valuable data of the manpower situation and projection of the arboricultural and horticultural industry, and recommendations on fostering the development of the industry. To attract more new entrants to the industry and build up its good image, GLTMS would continue the prevailing measures, including the SSS, TP and Registration Scheme, as well as devise new measures as appropriate.

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**Item 5 : Any Other Business**

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38. There being no other business, the Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

**Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section  
Development Bureau  
November 2021**