

**Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry  
Development Advisory Committee (2022-2024)  
(Notes of the Third Meeting)**

**Date and Time** : 20 December 2023 (Wednesday) at 10 am

**Venue** : Conference Room 1, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar

**Present**

Miss Pamela LAM	Chairperson (DS(W)1, 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 (via video conferencing from overseas)
Mr. Victor MAN	Member
Mr. Ken SO	Member
Mr. Chiky WONG	Member
Dr. Peter YAU	Member (via video conferencing from overseas)
Mr. William THONG	Member (CIC)
Dr. K.C. CHEUNG	Member (VTC)
Ms. Kathy T.K. NG	Member (H/GLTMS, DEVB)
Dr. Samuel LAM	Member (SCPO/TS, AFCD)
Mr. Steve LAI	Member (GM/QF, EDB)
Ms. Victoria SO	Member (SLA/VM(S), HyD)
Miss Vince KOK	Member (SLA/TD&C, HD)
Ms. Annie FUNG	Member (CLM(PA), LCSD)
Mr. Ryan LIN	Secretary (H/TMO, DEVB)

**In Attendance**

Mr. Derek FOK LA/21, HD

For IDAC Paper No. 4/2023

Ms. IP Lai-mui AS(TM)3, DEVB  
Ms. Karen LI Project Manager, CIC

For IDAC Paper No. 5/2023

Mr. Nelson SO AS(TM)2(Ag.), DEVB

For IDAC Paper No. 6/2023

Miss Cindy LO CEO(Reg), DEVB  
Dr. Flora LEUNG AS(TM)2(Ag.), DEVB

1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the third meeting of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Development Advisory Committee (“AHIDAC”) 2022-2024, especially Mr William THONG, Dr. K C CHEUNG, Dr. Samuel LAM, Miss Vince KOK and Ms IP Lai Mui, who joined the meeting for the first time.

**Item 1 : Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting**

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

**Item 2 : Report on Trainee Programme (IDAC Paper No. 4/2023)**

3. Project Manager, CIC introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, updating the progress of the Trainee Programme (“TP”) since the implementation of the enhancement measures in July 2023. Views from Members were sought.
4. The Chairperson supplemented that the TP should be monitored for some more time because the enhancement measures had only been implemented for around half a year.
5. Project Manager, CIC, in response to a Member’s enquiry on the drop out cases, reported that a significant number of trainees who dropped out of the TP still stayed in the industry. In light of this, CIC was currently considering to accept those trainees to continue the TP despite working under another employer.
6. In response to a Member’s suggestion of promoting the arboriculture and horticulture (“A&H”) aspects of TP, Project Manager, CIC supplemented that CIC had been actively publicising the TP accordingly.
7. A Member commended the enhanced measures and suggested introducing more flexibility in the minimum wage level under the measures so that various organisations could join the scheme without adjusting their own salary hierarchy. H/TMO agreed to consider the suggestion with CIC in the next review.

8. A Member suggested allowing trainee attaching to multiple job types (e.g. arborist and climber trainee) at the same time to enhance the attractiveness of the TP. Besides, he noticed a growing number of participants studying arboriculture-related programmes, and he suggested CIC could consider promoting the TP to students in those programmes.
9. H/TMO responded that CIC had been proactively approaching institutes for promotion of the TP. Regarding the suggestion of allowing trainees to attach to multiple job types at the same time, he remarked that several points had to be considered, for example, the training period for different job types might vary and alignment might be needed; possible responses from employers; and capability of training tutors.
10. A Member suggested a strategic approach to attract more people to join the industry by highlighting both vertical and horizontal career advancement opportunities.
11. Another Member showed support of the enhancement measures. He suggested assisting arboriculture-related programmes' graduates to register under the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel ("RSTMP").
12. The Chairperson thanked Members for their views and suggestions and asked GLTMS to consider.

**Item 3 : Report on the Study Sponsorship Scheme (IDAC Paper No. 5/2023)**

13. AS(TM)2(Ag.) reported the enhanced measures of the Study Sponsorship Scheme ("SSS"). After the implementation since July 2023, the number of application on subsidy increased by 65% and a larger portion of applicants were from the age group above 30. GLTMS was considering to extend the study sponsorship to the other training programmes in tree risk assessment and Arboriculture Vocational Assessment ("AVA"), etc. which were required when registering personnel types under the RSTMP.
14. A Member acknowledged the positive result of the enhancement measures, despite limited review timeframe. He also expressed support for extending the SSS to cover other quality training programmes.

15. GM/QF appreciated that all the recognised programmes under the SSS were also recognised under HKQF. As such, those programmes had undergone a robust quality assurance mechanism through the accreditation process, conducted by either the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (“HKCAAVQ”) or by the self-accrediting institutions.
16. Another Member also observed a growing number of participants from various industries enrolling in arboriculture-related programmes in recent years. To effectively use the Urban Forestry Support Fund (“UFSF”), he suggested implementing measures that incentivise participants to join the industry upon programme completion.
17. H/TMO supplemented that one of the initiatives of UFSF was public education and promotion campaigns. More participants in different arboriculture-related programmes were a good sign from the perspective of public education.
18. A Member enquired whether a person with working visa could apply for the SSS. H/TMO responded that only Hong Kong residents could apply for the SSS.
19. A Member expressed his support for all the enhancement measures of the SSS. He considered that the diverse backgrounds of participants in training programmes would be beneficial to the overall development of the industry. He noted minor percentage increase in the number of scholarship applicants in the report suggested reallocating the scholarship to those students who already enrolled in the eligible programmes.

*[Post-meeting note: It is proposed to extend the study sponsorship to training programmes in tree risk assessment and the AVA in chainsaw operation recognised by TMO. The proposal aimed at facilitating practitioners to gain the necessary training qualification for registration under the RSTMP, and extending the coverage of the SSS to all 5 types of registered personnel under the RSTMP. The subsidy percentage will benchmark the existing subsidy to the recognised programmes under the SSS. The proposal will be circulated to Members for consideration.]*

#### **Item 4 : Report on the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 6/2023)**

20. CEO(Reg) reported the implementation progress of the RSTMP.
21. H/TMO informed Members that the RSTMP website had recently been updated by revising the table of recognised continuing education in arboriculture (“CEA”) courses and adding a new page on registration renewal requirements. He encouraged Members to share the information with their staff and other practitioners. In view of the various feedback collected on the RSTMP registration and renewal, he provided a brief overview of potential refinements on the CEA hours (essential vs optional) when renewing the registration, the work experience requirement for registration by taking into account applicants’ academic qualifications, etc.
22. A Member showed appreciation on the efforts in RSTMP. He enquired about the progress and roadmap of the professional assessment and trade test of the RSTMP, the renewal figures and any potential refinement on the renewal requirements of registered chainsaw operators to boost the registration figure.
23. H/TMO explained that the professional assessment and trade test were intended to standardise the professional standard of in-service practitioners in the industry by assessing their competence and skills while serving as recognised local professional qualifications. The reports of the professional assessment and trade test were basically completed by VTC. It was noted in the meantime many local arboriculture programmes and professional qualifications offered by different institutes had already been developed. Thorough consideration of the operational model and the viability would be essential prior to implementing the professional assessment and trade test. Concurrently, some enhancement measures of the RSTMP have been implemented and further enhancement measures were being considered. The RSTMP would be continuously kept in view, and new enhancement measures or alternative registration routes would be introduced as deemed appropriate. Currently, renewal of registered chainsaw operator required 9 out of 12 essential CEA hours in the functional area of occupational safety and health (“OSH”), considering the importance of safety. Refinement of the renewal requirements of CEA hours was being considered.

24. A Member agreed with the need of refining the current renewal requirement to make it more user friendly and accommodating for registered personnel with varying expertise and background, such as whether the same CEA hour requirement for renewal would be applied to an experienced trainer and a new comer alike.
25. H/TMO elaborated the current focus of review was on considering different requirements for CEA hours based on the academic qualifications of registered personnel, such as adjusting the ratio between essential and optional hours, combining several functional areas to allow flexible arrangement, allowing essential CEA hours to be earned through conferences, etc. He supplemented that CEA hours could also be earned by the course trainers of recognised CEA courses.
26. In response to the enquiry of the timeline for professional assessment and trade test, H/TMO explained that the design reports of the professional assessment and trade test were being reviewed. In parallel, the RSTMP was also being reviewed, and rooms of improvement had been identified.
27. Another Member inquired about the actual number of registered arborists and tree risk assessors working in the industry. He recognised the need to encourage and facilitate registered personnel to renew their registration. He supported the proposal to review the registration requirements, especially on arborist's work experience.
28. H/TMO supplemented that all government contracts with tender invitations issued on or after 1 December 2021 were required to engage tree management personnel registered under the RSTMP in undertaking respective types of tree-related works. For some contracts tendered before 1 December 2021, which might not have included the requirement, they would be phased out gradually over time. This would lead more practitioners to register under RSTMP and existing registered personnel to renew their registration.
29. A Member suggested collecting information such as job nature, salary range etc. in the registration renewal form to have a better understanding of the industry.

30. The Chairperson said that only information directly relevant to the renewal application would be collected through the form. Another Member remarked that collection of data should comply with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance when collecting data.
31. Another Member followed up on the issue of professional assessment and trade test which was intended to offer an alternative pathway for in-service practitioners who did not meet the registration requirements during the initial stage of the RSTMP. He understood that the assessment scopes were extensive, resulting in a lengthy assessment process. He agreed with H/TMO's proposed enhancement measures that there could be alternative registration pathways, such as considering different work experience requirements based on applicants' academic levels. This would serve the same purpose of facilitating more practitioners to join the registration and uplifting the professionalism of the industry.
32. GM/QF supported exploring alternative registration pathways other than professional assessment and trade test, for instance through the Vocational Qualifications Pathway ("VQP") available under the HKQF. He suggested considering the completion of a VQP programme and meeting specific work experience requirements as an alternative pathway for registration.
33. A Member pointed out that the new Guidelines for Tree Risk Assessment and Management Arrangement ("TRAM guidelines") required large amount of registered personnel to complete relevant tasks. He also suggested revising the qualification requirements specifically for operating the increasingly popular electric tools, such as electric chainsaw, and providing OSH refresher trainings for frontline tree workers. H/TMO supplemented that the manpower requirement under the impact of new TRAM and training issues were being monitored.

*[Post-meeting note: Taking into account of members' views, a revised proposal would be sent by email to invite Members' views on the revised proposal.]*

## Item 5: Any Other Business (“AOB”)

34. In view of an AOB item regarding capacity building, the Chairperson invited GM/QF to provide background information of the topic.
35. GM/QF briefed Members of the upcoming launch of the Recognition of Prior Learning (“RPL”) mechanism in the field of horticulture by the QF Secretariat on 1 April 2024. HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (“HKU SPACE”) had been appointed as the Assessment Agent. By recognising the work experiences and competencies gained at workplaces, practitioners could obtain QF-recognised qualifications ranging from HKQF level 2 to 3 through this mechanism without undergoing a training programme. It was worth noting that RPL mechanism had also been implemented in other 18 industries.
36. A Member considered that horticulture played a significant role in projects such as the "Shining City Project" under the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address. He suggested a systematic qualification recognition system for individual horticulture practitioners to be introduced with reference to similar systems implemented in other places such as Singapore. Considering the close relationship between A&H fields, he suggested including discussions on horticulture-related issues in the Committee.

He supported the introduction of the RPL mechanism in horticulture as an initial step. He also declared that he was appointed by HKU SPACE as one of the RPL assessors. He emphasised the importance of providing incentives for individuals to apply for the RPL and opined that the Government should incorporate RPL requirements into landscape works contracts or as a requirement of the frontline staff.

37. Another Member advised that Hong Kong Greening Contractors Association had initiated discussions with CIC on the registration of landscape sub-contractors. This could have positive implications on industry image, practitioners’ career advancement and attracting new manpower in the industry.



38. The Chairperson appreciated the suggestions raised by Members. She pointed out that the focus on arboriculture-related matters in the Committee was primarily driven by public safety concerns.
39. CLM(PA), LCS D responded that the Leisure Service Manager and Artisan of LCS D were multi-disciplinary grades and colleagues would be deployed to different positions including work related to horticulture. To equip colleagues with appropriate horticultural knowledge and skill, LCS D arranged in-house trainings for their staff to enhance their skills to support their daily work.
40. Another Member showed support for the development of horticulture field in principle, and emphasised that it could be driven by the practitioners and industry. Besides, he inquired if the upcoming manpower survey would encompass horticulture-related practitioners, for better understanding of the field. H/GLTMS replied that the upcoming manpower survey intended to encompass practitioners in both arboriculture and horticulture fields.
41. A Member acknowledged that currently the industry had placed greater emphasis on arboriculture. He recognised the need to enhance the professionalism of the horticulture field through various approaches such as registration or recognition; and the forthcoming RPL mechanism was supported.
42. A Member welcomed the discussion item of capacity development in the horticulture field, and agreed that A&H were interconnected. Recognising the significant number of horticulture practitioners in Hong Kong, he expected greater attention to be given to the horticulture field. However, he noted that there were currently only a limited number of training programmes in horticulture.
43. Another Member considered that arboriculture was a subset of horticulture, and this relationship has been reflected in education programmes.
44. A Member observed that in recent years, there had been increased attention on the arboriculture field due to safety concerns, resulting in its mature development. He agreed that the institutes, organisations or the Government might consider

improving the professionalism of horticulture.

45. A Member suggested the Government might consider RPL qualifications in horticulture when engaging contractors, though he acknowledged the need to consider other factors as well. He also inquired which parties would be responsible for horticulture matter within the Government. He emphasised the significance of horticulture and requested for information regarding the area under amenity planting and departments involved, as well as the number of staff or outsourced workers.
46. The Chairperson acknowledged the comments concerning horticulture development. She echoed the views that it would be necessary to conduct A&H industry survey to obtain necessary information before considering the way forward. She welcomed Members to give suggestions on the industry development between meetings.
47. With no further items to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 1 pm.

*[Post-meeting note: A working meeting would be arranged to facilitate further discussion on the AOB item.]*

**Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section  
Development Bureau  
February 2024**