

EPD issues EIA Study Briefs for “Artificial Islands in the Central Waters – Investigation”

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 24) issued to the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) three Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study Briefs for the reclamation works, connecting road links, and developments on the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands related to the "Artificial Islands in the Central Waters – Investigation".

A spokesman for the EPD said, "The CEDD submitted the applications for the above three EIA Study Briefs on November 11. According to the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO), the EPD shall issue to the applicant the EIA Study Brief within 45 days of receiving the application. In preparing the Study Briefs, the EPD has strictly followed the requirements under the EIAO Technical Memorandum (TM) and duly considered the 293 sets of comments, including 17 sets from members of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE), received during the project profiles' public exhibition period from November 12 to 25."

In accordance with the requirements of the TM, the relevant environmental issues and their scope to be addressed for the three projects include air quality, noise, water quality, waste management, ecology, fisheries, landscape and visual, cultural heritage, hazard to life and cumulative impacts. When preparing the Study Briefs, the EPD has made reference to previous study briefs and the implementation experiences of similar major infrastructural projects, such as "Expansion of Hong Kong International Airport into a Three-Runway System", "Development of the Integrated Waste Facilities Phase 1", "Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge", "Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link" and "Tung Chung New Town Extension", so as to ensure that the EIA studies will cover all the potential environmental issues.

Among the comments from members of the ACE and the public, marine ecology and water quality impacts arising from the reclamation works are the main concerns. To address the concerns, the Study Brief for "Reclamation for Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands" requires the CEDD to conduct at least 12-months of terrestrial and marine ecological baseline surveying, covering areas to be reclaimed and 500 metres from the reclamation boundary, so as to ascertain the significance of the habitats and species within the study area.

With respect to the assessments for air quality, hydrodynamics and water quality, the Study Briefs require the CEDD to carry out air quality, hydrodynamics and water quality modellings. The computer models shall cover the proposed reclamation works and development areas, and regions and water bodies likely to be affected, so as to assess the cumulative air quality and water quality impacts arising from the projects together with the other existing and planned developments.

Furthermore, in view of the comments from the ACE and the public, the Study Briefs require the CEDD to submit the EIA Reports for the three projects, i.e. reclamation works, connecting road links, and development on the artificial islands, in sequence. Such an arrangement allows the cumulative impacts arising from the three projects to be assessed systematically, and supports an orderly review of the reports by the EPD, the ACE and the public. Making reference to the interrelationship of the three projects, the CEDD shall first submit the EIA Report for the reclamation works. When the EIA Report for the connecting road links is submitted, the report shall address the cumulative impacts due to the road links and the reclamation works. Finally, the EIA Report for the development on the artificial islands shall cover the former two projects in the cumulative impacts assessment.

The ACE and some members of the public also raised concerns on issues such as climate change adaptation, carbon neutrality and biodiversity. Although these issues are not within the scope of the existing EIAO, the EPD has also conveyed these views to the CEDD.

The spokesman added that the EPD will consider the applications for EIA Report approval in strict accordance with the requirements of the EIAO, including putting up the reports for public inspection and the consultation with the ACE. The EIA Reports can be approved only if they have fully met the requirements of the EIAO, the Study Briefs and the TM.

The Study Briefs are available for public access on the EIAO website (www.epd.gov.hk/eia/index.html).