

LCQ17: Handling of waste tyres

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (September 1):

Question:

It has been reported that there are large quantities of abandoned waste tyres stacked up in piles in quite a number of waste recycling yards in rural areas, causing environmental and hygiene problems. On the other hand, the Government has not formulated a policy on the handling of waste tyres. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) among the waste tyres abandoned in each of the past three years, the respective quantities and percentages of those which were (i) recovered and recycled locally, (ii) disposed of at landfills respectively by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and its outsourced service contractors, and (iii) exported for recycling;

(2) whether it knows the current types and usage of products made in Hong Kong by recycling waste tyres; the respective quantities of such products produced and consumed locally in each of the past three years;

(3) as it has been reported that a local university has developed a new technology for recycling large quantities of waste tyres generated in Hong Kong into road surfacing materials, whether the Government will consider using such materials for road surfacing;

(4) as the action plans set out in the Hong Kong Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022 published in 2013 indicated that the Government would conduct a study between 2016 and 2018 on whether other waste (including tyres) should be included in the producer responsibility schemes (PRS), of the outcome of the relevant study; and

(5) of the measures in place to promote the recovery and recycling of waste tyres among the various stakeholders, in order to reduce the quantity of waste tyres disposed of at landfills and dovetail with the implementation of the policy on including waste tyres in PRS?

Reply:

President,

(1) and (2) Statistics on landfilled waste tyres that are handled by government departments from 2017 to 2019 are tabulated below.

Year	Quantity of landfilled waste tyres that are handled by government departments (tonnes)	Percentage to waste tyres disposed of at landfills (%)
2017	4 500	17
2018	3 600	15
2019	3 400	15

Note: Relevant statistics for 2020 are still under compilation. The Government does not have the breakdown figures on landfilled waste tyres that are handled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and its outsourced service contractors.

Compilation of statistics on the recovery of local waste tyres is mainly based on findings of the Waste Recovery Survey conducted annually by the Environmental Protection Department. Local recovery of waste tyres include the re-use, retread and recycling of vehicle tyres as well as the retread of aircraft tyres locally. Statistics on recovered waste tyres that are recycled locally or exported for recycling are tabulated below.

Year	Recovery of waste tyres		
	Quantity recycled locally (tonnes)	Quantity exported for recycling (tonnes)	Recovery rate (%)
2017	9 200	100	26
2018	5 800	100	20
2019	6 500	100	23

Note: Relevant statistics for 2020 are still under compilation.

According to the survey findings in 2019, around 80 per cent of the waste tyres locally recovered were retreaded, while the remaining 20 per cent were granulated into raw materials for production of rubber powder and paving blocks, etc.

(3) The Highways Department (HyD) commenced a collaboration study with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2018 on the feasibility of incorporating waste tyre materials into the various structural layers, including the wearing course, base course and road base, of conventional bituminous paving materials for carriageways. Given the promising findings, site trials have been carried out since August this year to test the performance of materials. The HyD has all along explored and researched the possibility of using eco-friendly materials for road surfacing and remains open to options. Any feasible and cost-effective road pavement material will be considered.

(4) and (5) In considering whether to introduce a producer responsibility scheme (PRS) for a particular category of products, we would examine the necessity, the recovery/recycling situation and availability of outlets, as well as the priority as compared to other products. We review the

circumstances of different products from time to time. On holistic consideration, we launched the PRS on waste electrical and electronic equipment in 2018, and are now focusing on introducing the PRS on plastic beverage containers. Although there is no PRS for tyre products at this stage, we understand that there is a waste tyres recycler in the market planning to further expand its production capacity to recover/recycle all waste tyres in Hong Kong. We will keep in view the development of the recovery/recycling market concerned and take corresponding measures to encourage and support the recovery and recycling of waste tyres. Relevant measures include the \$1 billion Recycling Fund (the Fund) launched by the Government in October 2015 to facilitate the upgrading of the operational capabilities and efficiency of the recycling industry with a view to supporting its sustainable development. An additional funding of \$1 billion was injected to the Fund in April 2021, and the application period of the Fund was extended to 2027 to cater for the latest needs of both the local and non-local markets and to achieve re-industrialisation.

Besides, the EcoPark in Tuen Mun provides long-term land at affordable rent to the recycling sectors, and is equipped with infrastructures like land and marine access, power and water supply, sewerage and telecommunication connections, etc. Tenants can also enjoy various common facilities in the EcoPark, including a road network, standard berthing piers and a weighbridge, as well as the meeting room, seminar room and conference room in the Administration Building. This will help tenants reduce their infrastructural expenditure and thus encourage them to invest in more advanced technologies and recycling processes. Currently, there is a waste tyre recycling company located in the EcoPark. The Fund subsidised the company with approximately \$8 million in 2021 to enhance its operational efficiency and transformational upgrade by purchasing equipment for shredding waste tyres, separating steel wires, granulating rubber and separating fibres, for turning waste tyres into rubber powder, steel wires, paving blocks and rubber mats. Besides, the Fund has also subsidised the business and operation of other two local waste tyre recyclers. The total subsidy to the three recyclers amounts to around \$10.6 million.