

Chapter Five Community Sharing and Open-mindedness



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To optimise plans for drainage and sewerage works, it is essential to consult different sectors of society. To this end, DSD endeavours to explain its project details through various channels to the public, District Council members, construction industry, green groups, etc., and hear their views to foster exchanges. Taking the Relocation of Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works to Caverns project as an example, a variety of public engagement activities were organised for the community to learn about the project details and help enhance the works proposal. In addition, DSD arranges from time to time promotional events such as visits to its facilities, open days and eco-tours, allowing the community to have a deeper understanding of DSD's work. DSD staff are also active in voluntary services to contribute to the community.



Public engagement

Boosting social development and harmony is the current global trend. To keep abreast of times, the Government has in recent years been promoting public engagement as a consultation approach and proactively establishing communication channels with the public. Also, government departments take initiative to contact community groups, gauge public views and formulate improvement plans through consultations to enhance local development.

Public engagement is a two-way communication that encourages the public to express their views. Through holding of various consultation activities, the Government on the one hand explains to the public its policy objectives, implementation process, implications, etc., while on the other hand responds to concerns of different sectors and considers public opinions. The objective is to reach consensus between the public and Government on the proposed plans and enhance the relevant measures.

DSD is committed to providing quality stormwater drainage and sewage treatment services for the public. As public comments are the key to enhancing its services, DSD spares no effort in hosting public engagement activities, local and international exchanges with the engineering industry, media briefings, visits to its facilities, and educational and promotional programmes to gauge opinions from all walks of life for achieving excellence in its projects. In addition, DSD staff are encouraged to participate in charitable and voluntary services of different kinds to contribute to the community.



DSD staff introducing the environmentally friendly sludge treatment process to the media

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Receptive to suggestions

All drainage and sewerage works are closely related to our daily life. Therefore, DSD values the views of experts, industry practitioners and the public on its projects, so as to know about the concerns of the stakeholders and their expectations for drainage development. DSD liaises with the media to keep the public and construction industry abreast of its latest activities. It also holds inter-departmental seminars to study issues of common concern and identify solutions. Besides, seminars, sharing sessions and forums are also organised each year to bring together experts of the industry for exchanging ideas about the latest developments and future trend of drainage services. Furthermore, DSD endeavours to keep in contact with local communities, District Council members and green groups to collect their opinions on drainage and sewerage projects as well as development strategies through established communication channels.

DSD appreciates that its large-scale projects attract public concerns. Hence, it will, throughout the planning, construction and post-completion stages of a large-scale project, conduct various kinds of public engagement activities such as consultation meetings, focus group meetings, seminars, progress briefings and the like, to keep in contact with relevant stakeholders, explain the project details and hear their opinions for formulating effective mitigation measures and more suitable works proposals. To maintain good interaction with the stakeholders for better exchanges and communication, DSD will invite them to visit its facilities and learn more about the facility operation.

Release of departmental information

To update the public about its work, DSD often arranges media briefings, interviews and visits to increase operational transparency and address public concerns.

DSD and the media



Ir Daniel Chung Kum-wah, the then Director of Drainage Services, outlined the latest progress and shared views on flood prevention works at the Annual Media Briefing 2014. DSD also organised a media visit to Lai Chi Kok Drainage Tunnel and Butterfly Valley Road Pet Garden built atop the stilling basin of the Tunnel

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A DSD engineer gave a briefing on Sheung Wan Stormwater Pumping Station and Hong Kong West Drainage Tunnel at the RTHK programme HK Engineering & Dreams



DSD held a media briefing on Harbour Area Treatment Scheme to present the blasting works for the deepest sewage tunnel in Hong Kong and arranged a guided visit to the tunnel for 40 representatives of the media

Exchanges with local communities

Attaching great importance to local views, DSD, very often, sends its staff to attend District Council meetings to hear district representatives' views on strategy planning. Between 2012 and 2014, the Director of Drainage Services attended meetings of the District Councils of Sai Kung, Kwai Tsing, Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Yuen Long, Kwun Tong, Central and Western District, Wan Chai, Islands, and Southern District, to outline DSD's work and report the latest progress of its projects in the respective districts. This did not only facilitate public understanding of DSD's work, but also gave its staff more opportunities to solicit feedback.



DSD staff attending Sai Kung District Council meeting



Eastern District Council members visiting the construction site of the Sewage Conveyance System from North Point to Stonecutters Island

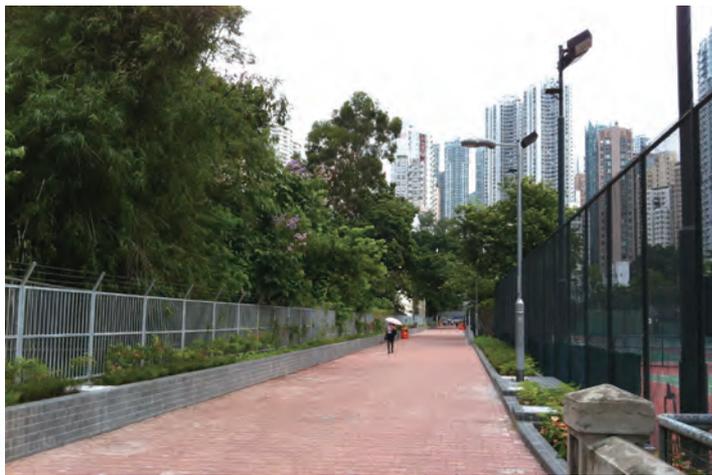
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Public engagement activities

Prior to planning of a large-scale project, DSD will seek public views to decide on the most suitable works option. Taking the nullah improvement works in Tai Hang as an example, DSD adopted the suggestion put forward by local communities to deck the nullah and widen and green the original pedestrian link. This design option eradicated the odour problem of the nullah, as well as created a comfortable promenade for the public. The new pedestrian link is named Fire Dragon Path, which refers to the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, a local cultural activity that has been listed under the national intangible cultural heritage¹.



Tai Hang Nullah before improvement works



Decked and widened Fire Dragon Path



Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance^{Fig 1}

Revitalisation of Kai Tak River

In recent years, the water quality and ecological environment of Kai Tak Nullah have been greatly improved to the extent that it is even called by many as Kai Tak River. There are views that it should be revitalised into a green watercourse and unique attraction in the district. Thus, while implementing the improvement works for Kai Tak Nullah, DSD took the opportunity to invite the public to render their views, and to engage them in planning and design of the project.

Public engagement exercise on Building our Kai Tak River

Public engagement exercise on Building our Kai Tak River was carried out in two stages in the forms of focus group meetings, workshops, press releases, newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, posters and websites.

The stage 1 exercise took place in late 2010 with two Community Envisioning workshops for local communities so as to collect public views and suggestions on the design concept of Kai Tak River. For the stage 2 exercise launched in mid-2011, a Consensus Building workshop was held to solicit feedback from local communities on the river design theme and the riverside facilities, facilitating DSD to formulate a suitable design plan.

We learned from the two-stage exercise that the public had diverse views. Some argued that Kai Tak Nullah should remain undecked, while others considered that the Nullah should be turned into an attractive green river corridor integrated with the surroundings with additional pedestrian linkages across the river for convenient access.

With reference to the results of this public engagement exercise and the remarks made in subsequent District Council and local community meetings, DSD resorted to incorporate greening, landscape and ecological elements into the improvement works for Kai Tak River, thus enabling the River to prevent flooding while providing open space for leisure, education, community art and the like for the local community. Also, to match with the adjoining land development, the River has been planned as the cityscape axis to link and integrate the neighbouring old districts with the Kai Tak New Development Area.



Community Envisioning workshop in stage 1 exercise



Consensus Building workshop in stage 2 exercise



Feasibility Study on Relocation of Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works to Caverns

In the Feasibility Study on Relocation of Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works to Caverns, DSD convened focus group meetings to exchange ideas with green groups and professional bodies, as well as public forums for participants to raise questions and express views on the project. The stage 1 public engagement exercise included a roving exhibition at 16 venues and 12 community centres or community halls in Sha Tin and Ma On Shan to explain details of the feasibility study and gather public opinions and concerns about the project by questionnaires. As regards the stage 2 public engagement exercise, DSD staged a roving exhibition and arranged visits for the public to the Stanley Sewage Treatment Works located in caverns (a successful precedent of its kind).

Public engagement activities for Relocation of Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works to Caverns



Community group meeting



Public visit to Stanley Sewage Treatment Works



Roving exhibition



Focus group meeting



Display and demonstration of mini-deodoriser



Interview with Ir Lai Cheuk-ho, the then Chief Engineer of Sewerage Projects Division

Ir Lai Cheuk-ho, the then Chief Engineer of Sewerage Projects Division at DSD, said that the public consultation on Relocation of Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works to Caverns offered him a new insight about his work, viz. it is necessary for the project team to explain to the public the project details as part of the project planning. Since the commencement of the feasibility study in 2012, various impact assessments on odour, blasting vibration, traffic, etc. were conducted. Ir Lai added that before explaining the assessments to the nearby affected residents, community groups and organisations, it was necessary to collate the information and work out the presentation approach to address their concerns. The project team also fine-tuned the technical details of the works based on the opinions collected to better meet public expectations.



Happy Valley Underground Stormwater Storage Scheme

The construction site of the Happy Valley Underground Stormwater Storage Scheme is adjacent to both residential areas and recreation and sports venue (surrounded by the racecourse of the Hong Kong Jockey Club) frequently used by local residents, sports sector and schools. The site is only just one street away from neighbouring school. For this reason, listening to the views of stakeholders from all sectors is particularly crucial to the works. Prior to construction, the project team specially convened a consultation meeting on project impact and mitigation measures and invited representatives from relevant bodies such as the Hong Kong Jockey Club, the Hong Kong Football Club, nearby schools and residents, as well as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to attend for discussion on traffic, noise and environmental impacts and formulation of the most appropriate mitigation measures.



Consultation meeting on project impact and mitigation measures



Stakeholder forum

Experience sharing on mitigation measures

According to the project team, a uniqueness of this project is that it involves a large number of stakeholders. Based on their views, DSD developed a range of mitigation measures, including strict regulation of working hours, use of low-noise construction technologies, provision of a material transport tunnel underneath the racecourse to minimise the impacts on horse racing and recreation ground users, erection of fences to protect the City of Victoria Boundary Stone, structural survey for St. Paul's Primary Catholic School (a grade 2 historic building), tree protection with barriers, provision of green hoardings, etc. Since the commencement of construction, the project team has rarely received public complaints, and this reflects that the public engagement activities are highly effective in enhancing public confidence in the project.



Conducting a structural survey for a grade 2 historic building



Fences to protect the Boundary Stone



Barriers to protect trees

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Stakeholder involvement

In addition to arranging consultation activities for relevant stakeholders and the public, DSD also actively liaises and fosters exchanges with other public bodies and organisations.

Research & Development Forum

DSD values greatly the advice from the construction industry, experts and academics. To encourage collaboration amongst the Government, academia and industry in research and new technologies regarding stormwater drainage and sewage treatment services, DSD Research & Development Forum 2013 was held, focusing on four areas, namely Sustainable Drainage, New Engineering Contract (NEC), Greening and Wastewater Treatment. The Forum, attended by a great number of experts, was a four-day sharing of knowledge and experience. It contributed to further studies on the feasibility of applying novel technologies to drainage and sewerage works and facilities. The year 2014 marked DSD's 25th anniversary. In celebration of this, the DSD International Conference 2014 was organised and academics from all over the world were invited to exchange views on various research topics.



DSD Research & Development Forum 2013

Exchanges on environmental protection

Sustainable development is a new approach of environmental protection in the 21st century. To further raise the ecological awareness among engineering staff and explore feasible conservation plans for river training works, DSD regularly invites green groups such as the Green Power, the Conservancy Association, the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, and the World Wild Fund for Nature to its seminars, workshops and training courses for exchanges and discussion on common ecological issues and environmental impacts of DSD works. These communication platforms allow DSD staff to be more acquainted with relevant precautions during construction and ways to enhance conservation measures and further allowing their wider use in future projects.



Workshop on Ecological Consideration of Urban Stream

In 2012, DSD organised the Workshop on Ecological Consideration of Urban Stream to share with green groups its eco-channel design for drainage improvement works in Ho Chung, Lam Tsuen and Mui Wo, and to study the emerging concept of urban stream ecology in Hong Kong. Representatives from various green groups attended the Workshop by invitation to put forward their views and recommendations on protecting and enriching the river ecology.



Group discussion



Experience sharing by green groups

Training course on urban stream ecology



River conservation workshop



Field visit

In 2013, DSD invited several green groups to co-organise a training course on urban stream ecology to heighten its staff's awareness of environmental conservation of streams. Representatives of green groups lucidly outlined to course participants the local river ecology and elaborated on common ecological issues and environmental impacts of local river training works. A field visit was also arranged to better illustrate to participants about relevant precautions for works carried out at natural watercourses and ways to enhance ecological measures.

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Education and publicity

In 2013, DSD organised guided tours to the Tai Hang Tung Stormwater Storage Tank and several sewage treatment works for more than 3 300 visitors. To facilitate public understanding of DSD's work through interesting means and cultivate public awareness of environmental protection by cherishing resources, DSD, from time to time, holds seminars, open days and exhibitions, as well as establishes websites, publishes newsletters and produces publicity videos for projects.



DSD staff introducing to students about the roof greening works at Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works

Exhibitions

DSD launches public exhibitions at some of its facilities to present its sewage treatment methods, green measures, the Total Water Management programme and the like in an easy-to-understand approach. Besides, an exhibition is located at the San Tin Stormwater Pumping Station for showcasing the flood prevention strategy for the New Territories. Also, the Equipment Enclosure at the Lai Chi Kok Drainage Tunnel is open to schools and organisations for visits by appointment.



Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works



Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works

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Ngong Ping Sewage Treatment Works



San Tin Stormwater Pumping Station



Equipment Enclosure at Lai Chi Kok Drainage Tunnel

With thematic panels, 3D models, computer games, audio-visual materials, sample displays, etc., DSD presents the drainage information in detail. It also arranges guided tours for schools and community groups (by appointment) in which DSD ambassadors will explain the information and introduce plant facilities.



Guided tour on reclaimed water



Interactive model at Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works

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Open days

DSD stages open days for the public to learn about its work in stormwater drainage and sewage treatment, including green measures at its premises, various community involvement activities and a number of major infrastructure projects. DSD Open Day 2014 held at Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works featured thematic guided tours, exhibitions, model displays, field visits, etc. This two-day event, attracting about 12 000 visitors in total, was well received.



25th anniversary open day of DSD in 2014

Public seminars

DSD is keen on co-organising public seminars to explain its work to the public. For instance, as one of a series of activities under the Science in the Public Service Campaign 2013, a talk entitled Modern-day Dayu Tames the Water - Flood Prevention Strategy in Hong Kong was delivered to introduce DSD's three flood prevention approaches, namely drainage conduits improvement, stormwater storage and stormwater interception, together with the flood control strategy adopted in Hong Kong and its effectiveness.



Ir Tsui Wai, the then Deputy Director of Drainage Services, introducing to the public about the local flood control strategy at the Science in the Public Service Campaign

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Participation in exhibitions

DSD often participates in different exhibitions in a bid to enhance public understanding of its projects. In 2012, DSD took part in the InnoCarnival held at the Hong Kong Science Park to brief the public about its Vertical Greening Study at Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works and the Happy Valley Underground Stormwater Storage Scheme. Besides, at the Hong Kong Flower Show 2013 organised by LCSD, DSD displayed a floral exhibit entitled Kaleidoscopic Cavern to promote cavern development, which won the Gold Award for Design Excellence under Landscape Display category.



DSD exhibition booth at InnoCarnival



DSD's unique display entitled Kaleidoscopic Cavern at Hong Kong Flower Show

Outreach education

Every year, DSD launches the outreach education programme under which its staff will visit schools to publicise DSD's work in flood prevention and sewage treatment. In 2013-14, DSD hosted talks for 26 secondary and primary schools, and were well received by students. In addition, DSD arranges various educational activities like slogan contests and drawing competitions for participating students to know more about DSD's work.



DSD staff giving talk at a primary school

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Interview with Ms Kong Mei-fong, Community Relations Officer

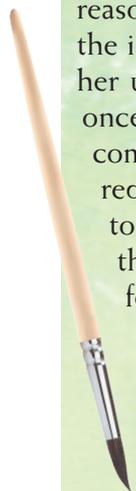
Ms Kong Mei-fong joined DSD in 2010 as Community Relations Officer. Her main duties are to plan and coordinate public relations activities, handle media or public enquiries and complaints, collect and compile media coverage, as well as assist in producing DSD publications and publicity materials.

As a Community Relations Officer, Ms Kong is required to handle public and media enquiries. In general, upon receiving an enquiry, she will assess the priority and give a reply in compliance with the requirements of the Code on Access to Information within a reasonable time. For Ms Kong, the greatest challenge is to obtain the information and answer the public in a short time. Speaking of her unforgettable experience, Ms Kong mentioned that a person once came to DSD Headquarters to argue with DSD about a compensation for works. Ms Kong listened carefully to his requests and took appropriate follow-up actions, and was pleased to see the case being settled at the end. This made her realise the importance of DSD's culture of "Do it from the Heart", i.e. feeling for the others and be people-oriented.

Ms Kong recalled that before joining DSD, she was just like any other ordinary citizens with no knowledge of DSD's work in flood prevention and sewage treatment, which is in fact closely linked with our daily life. She hopes that DSD will hold more diverse public relations activities in the future to let more people understand its work.



Ms Kong Mei-fong introducing Yuen Long Bypass Floodway to visitors



Eco-tours

To publicise the flood prevention projects for watercourses in the New Territories, DSD organised many eco-tours, allowing public access to the river areas to learn about the major flood control facilities and ecological conservation measures. Recently, DSD arranged the Yuen Long Bypass Floodway eco-tour for schools, in which DSD staff guided teachers and students around the San Tin Stormwater Pumping Station, the low-flow pumping station and inflatable dam of the Yuen Long Bypass Floodway, the engineered wetland, Nam Sang Wai and Kam Tim River to observe the river and wetland habitats at the field and learn about the design concepts of green channels and eco-channels.



Public visit to San Tin Stormwater Pumping Station



DSD staff introducing to visitors the river environment

Apart from eco-tours for schools, DSD is planning to launch the Nam Sang Wai River Education Trail. We believe that, upon launching, the Trail will become another public attraction with high ecological value and ample information about flood prevention.

Caring for the community

Adhering to its motto "Do it from the Heart", DSD has been encouraging its staff to care for the community and contribute to society. A group of its staff formed the DSD Volunteer Team which proactively participates in various community services and charity events. For example, the Team co-organised the annual Blood Donation Day with the Hong Kong Red Cross to invite DSD staff to donate blood; held interest classes for the elderly; participated in other charitable fundraising activities; and responded to the Social Welfare Department's "Hong Kong Citizen, Hong Kong Heart" Campaign by preparing handmade gifts for the elderly in residential care homes.



DSD staff holding an interest class for the elderly in a residential care home



DSD staff in Sowers Action Challenging 12 Hours charity marathon

Conclusion

DSD has been all along providing the public with people-oriented quality services, be it the management of the daily operation of its stormwater drainage and sewage treatment facilities, or implementation of projects. Making every effort to perform better in flood prevention and sewage treatment services, DSD adopts a multi-pronged communication approach to consult stakeholders and take advice from different sectors for formulating the most suitable and cost-effective plan with various mitigation measures in place.



¹ Press release of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. *DSD's nullah improvement creates new Tai Hang landmark: Fire Dragon Path*, 13 September 2012.

Fig. 1 was provided by courtesy of the South China Research Center, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.