

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

TLB025

(Question Serial No. 3168)

Head: (60) Highways Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (2) District and Maintenance Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (YAU Kwok-ting)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Logistics

Question:

The surfaces of paving block footpaths are likely to become uneven owing to dilapidation and soil erosion, posing threat to the safety of pedestrians. Regarding the quality and maintenance of the footpaths, will the Government advise this Committee on the following:

- 1) The Steering Committee on District Governance of the current-term Government identified in the first meeting to expand the repaving of footpaths for a more comfortable walking environment. What are the expenditures and progress of works since the implementation of this project?
- 2) What are the details of repairing footpath surface in Hong Kong in each of the past three years including the respective details of the manpower involved in handling relevant complaints and reports, estimated expenditures, actual expenditures, inspection frequencies and details of supervision? Please list the breakdown figures by District Council district.
- 3) Did the Government monitor the repair works carried out by the works contractors, including the progress of works, materials, etc.? If yes, please list specifically the repair works that were on schedule, the respective penalty amounts attributed by delay of works that triggered the penalty mechanism, and the maximum and average numbers of days delayed over the past three years.
- 4) Did the Government explore the use of materials with better quality in paving footpaths in order to reduce the administrative costs and repair expenses resulted from uneven or damaged footpath surfaces? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Hei, Edward (LegCo internal reference no.: 2)

Reply:

1)

In order to provide a more comfortable walking environment, the plan of expansion of repaving footpath under the Steering Committee on District Governance includes 40 sections of public footpaths which are implemented in two phases. All the repaving of footpath works for 20 sections of footpaths in the first phase commenced as planned before the end of 2023, while seven sections among a total of 20 sections in the second phase commenced as at end February 2024. The target is to commence the works of the remaining 13 sections by the second quarter of 2024. The Highways Department (HyD) would continue to actively follow up the implementation of relevant works. It is anticipated that all works of the 40 sections of public footpaths will be completed before end 2024. The relevant expenditures of the works are approximately \$15 million as at February 2024.

2)

The HyD engages contractors in the form of term contract to carry out inspections and repair works for road surfaces and associated facilities (including footpaths). Depending on the locations of footpaths and the pedestrian flow, the frequencies of routine inspections range from once per week to once per quarter. The HyD would also receive reports of uneven footpath surfaces from the public. For relevant damages that may lead to safety issues of pedestrians, the HyD would arrange repair works promptly in order to maintain the footpaths in good condition. Moreover, the HyD would arrange detailed inspections on public roads in Hong Kong (including footpaths) within its ambit once per six months to collect the information of road surfaces and structural conditions for the planning of medium to long-term repair works.

As at 1 February 2024, an establishment of 1 156 staff members under the Programme of District and Maintenance Works were responsible for district administration and roadmaintenance works in the HyD. Their regular duties about footpaths include the aforesaid regular inspections and repair works of footpaths, handling of relevant complaints, etc. There is no detailed division in the staff establishment that carry out the relevant tasks.

The estimated expenditures and the actual expenditures of footpath maintenance works between 2021 and 2023 in different districts by District Council district are listed as follows:

District	Actual expenditure / [Estimated expenditure] (\$ million)		
	2021	2022	2023 (Note 1)
Hong Kong (including Central and Western District, Eastern District, Southern District and Wan Chai)	1.941 [2]	2.654 [3]	6.576 [6]
Kowloon (including Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong and Wong Tai Sin)	17.618 [18]	18.759 [19]	25.748 [26]

District	Actual expenditure / [Estimated expenditure] (\$ million)		
	2021	2022	2023 (Note 1)
New Territories East (including Sai Kung, Sha Tin, Tai Po, North District and Outlying Islands)	8.194 [8]	7.064 [8]	11.790 [11]
New Territories West (including Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long)	3.101 [3]	9.887 [7]	12.449 [11]

Note 1: The estimated expenditures and actual expenditures in various districts in 2023 were higher than those in 2021 and 2022. This is because the HyD carried out beautification works at locations in Hong Kong Island (Central), New Territories East (Tai Wai), New Territories West (Tsuen Wan) as well as repair works of larger scale in Kowloon at the same time.

Contractors are requested to submit works records in compliance with contractual requirements after completing the relevant works, including the information such as site photos before and after the repair works etc. The HyD would review the relevant works records or reports to ensure that the repair works comply with the requirements of the maintenance contracts. The HyD would also arrange random checks on contractors' works. In case the contractors' works do not meet the stipulated standard, the HyD would take appropriate follow-up actions in accordance with the contractual requirements and established mechanisms. Moreover, the HyD would continue to strictly monitor the performance of the contractors to ensure that the footpaths within its ambit are maintained in good condition.

3)

The HyD has stipulated a strict mechanism in works contracts to monitor the works progress of contractors and the specifications of the materials used. Also, the HyD would pay close attention to the progress of works through monthly works progress meetings. Upon noticing that the works progress is affected due to the unsatisfactory performance of contractors, the HyD would first issue warning letters to contractors in urging them to speed up works progress through resource allocation as soon as possible. If the situation does not improve, the HyD would reflect the contractors' unsatisfactory performance in their performance reports. At the same time, the HyD would recover from the contractors the liquidated damages arising from delay of works in accordance with contractual requirements and established mechanisms. Over the past three years, the contractors completed most works orders on schedule. The details are as follows:

	2021	2022	2023
Finalised works orders for maintenance works	549	617	590
Numbers of works completed on schedule	498	592	586
Numbers of delayed works	51	25	4
Total amount of liquidated damages (\$'000) (Note 2)	1,720	200	60
Longest duration of delay (day)	134	174	52

	2021	2022	2023
Average duration of delay (day)	49.8	46.4	16.5

Note 2: The total amount of liquidated damages in 2021 was relatively higher because some delayed projects in that year were of relatively larger scale.

4)

With the prolonged use of footpaths, stepping could gradually develop between adjacent paving blocks. The common causes are excessive loading on footpaths by frequent loading/unloading of heavy articles or illegal parking of vehicles, leakage of underground water pipes, poor reinstatement by individual contractor after excavation works, etc. To enhance the stability of sand bedding sub-base, the HyD has added a small amount of cement to the sand bedding below paving blocks to strengthen the stability of paving blocks' sub-base. The HyD has also filled the joints between paving blocks with stabilising sealant. All these measures could effectively improve the unevenness of paving block surfaces.

The footpaths in Hong Kong are classified into two major categories, i.e. footpaths laid with concrete and footpaths laid with precast paving blocks (paving block footpaths). The HyD has been determining the materials used with reference to the loading on the footpaths. For example, paving blocks are generally used in the streets with relatively high pedestrians because they do not only enhance the cityscape, but are also more environmentally friendly. For sections of paving block footpaths with relatively higher loading (for example near the entrances and exits of car parks), the HyD would adopt Herringbone pattern when laying paving blocks so as to strengthen the interlocking between paving blocks. Nevertheless, the HyD would use the aforesaid concrete footpath surfaces that are more durable in those streets in industrial areas where loading/unloading of goods are frequent and footpaths are used for transporting goods. This is to ensure that frequent damage on footpaths and necessary repair works can be minimised.

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