

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)063**

**(Question Serial No. 2704)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified  
Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services  
Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Please advise on the approximate fees for traditional burial services and green burial services. Which service is more attractive and competitive in terms of the cost? As people only begin to adopt green burial, there should be more incentives to encourage the public to opt for green burial. It is known that some cities, such as Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing, have encouraged people to scatter cremains of their deceased family members at sea by providing them with a cash subsidy. Will the Government make reference to such practice and attract the public to give it a go? What are the numbers of niches in existing public columbaria and in public columbaria under construction and under planning, including their locations? Please also advise on the latest waiting time for niches in public columbaria. Does the Department have any means to shorten the waiting time?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Chi-chuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 39)

Reply:

At present, the majority of the public have accepted cremation as the mainstream mode of funeral arrangements. The number of cremations in 2019 accounted for over 90% of the number of deaths in the same year. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department charges a fee of \$1,220 for adult cremation. After cremation, if the ashes of the deceased are interred in a public columbarium, \$2,400 will be charged for a standard extendable niche for an initial 20-year interment period. Upon expiry, the interment may be renewed at 10-year intervals at prevailing fees. If the ashes of the deceased are disposed of by green burial and scattered in a Garden of Remembrance or at a designated area at sea, no fee is charged. For placing a memorial plaque at a Garden of Remembrance, the administrative charge is \$90.

The Department follows closely the green burial measures being pursued elsewhere including the measure of providing financial incentives as adopted by some cities in the Mainland. The Department has also considered the merits of waiving the charges for cremation or other related services in those cases where green burial is opted for. But on balance, it is not considered ripe for pursuing such an idea at this stage, for fear that some may misconstrue this as according greater importance to financial considerations than filial

piety. Nevertheless, the Department maintains an open mind towards waiver of certain fees and charges as a modest financial incentive to encourage people's adoption of more environmentally friendly modes of ash disposal, should there be such calls in the community.

Currently, the Department manages 9 columbaria providing about 216 000 niches. These columbaria are located at Cape Collinson, Wong Nai Chung Road, Diamond Hill, Wo Hop Shek, Fu Shan, Kwai Chung, Cheung Chau, Peng Chau and Lamma Island.

Potential sites have been identified in various districts under the district-based columbarium development scheme. Between the second quarter of 2011 and the end of 2019, the Government consulted the relevant District Councils (DCs) on projects at 14 sites to which they all indicated support or no-objection, which would altogether provide around 590 000 new niches. As regards the remaining projects, the Government will continue the planning work and consult the relevant DCs when ready. If taken forward, they would provide an additional 300 000 niches.

Among the projects which have gone through DC consultation, the Department has obtained funding approval for taking forward the following:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of niches</b>	<b>Anticipated year of completion</b>
Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun District	163 320	2020
Wo Hop Shek Cemetery (Phase 1), North District	44 100	2020
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension, Islands District#	580	2020
Lai Chi Yuen Cemetery Extension, Islands District	784	2020
Cape Collinson Road, Eastern District	25 000	2022

# Not under the district-based columbarium development scheme

At present, the Department's new extendable niches are allocated to eligible applicants by open drawing of lots and computer balloting, instead of being allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. In late 2019, the Department completed the niche allocation exercise for two new public columbaria, namely Tsang Tsui Columbarium (first phase) in Tuen Mun (providing around 20 000 niches) and Wong Nai Chung Road Columbarium (providing 855 niches). In the next few years, with new columbarium projects being completed one after another, it is estimated that no less than 20 000 niches will be available for allocation each year.

- End -