

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)146

(Question Serial No. 3022)

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 Diane WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Please provide the following information in the past 3 years:

1. the number of burials;
2. the number of applications, the number of allocations, the average waiting time (in months) and the number of return cases in respect of new niches and re-allocated niches;
3. the number of cases of scattering ashes at sea and in Gardens of Remembrance;
4. the number of cases of scattering ashes in each of the 12 Gardens of Remembrance;
5. the expenditure for cemeteries and crematoria services;
6. the number of new public columbaria commissioned and the number of niches provided in each of these columbaria; and
7. the number of niches to be provided by and the estimated completion time of the new public columbarium projects taken forward by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla (LegCo internal reference no.: 51)

Reply:

(1) & (2) The information sought is provided as follows:

Year	Number of burials	Public Niches				
		New Niches*		Re-allocated Niches*		
		Number of applications	Number of niches allocated	Number of applications	Number of niches re-allocated	Number of return cases
2018	3 136			8 410	448	455
2019	2 780	30 107	751	2 878^	258	281
2020	2 852	29 156	35 590		207	369

* The year in which new niches and re-allocated niches are allocated may not be the same as that in which the applications are made.

^ The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has ceased to accept applications for allocation of used niches since 26 April 2019. The waiting list for this type of niches has also been frozen.

At present, the Department allocates new extendable niches to eligible applicants by open drawing of lots and computer random balloting (rather than on a first-come, first-served basis). Regarding the allocation of new public niches each year, new niches at Tsang Tsui Columbarium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase VI were made available for public application in May 2020, and a total of 24 584 eligible applications were received. Niches were allocated to all applicants by drawing of lots and computer balloting in October. Furthermore, the Department launched a one-year pilot scheme to allocate niches on a monthly basis in December 2020. Under the scheme, the Department would accept applications from the public for new niches at Tsang Tsui Columbarium all the year round. About 1 700 niches, together with the unallocated ones from the previous month, would be allocated each month. In the past three months (i.e. December 2020, January and February 2021), the Department received a total of 6 708 eligible applications, all of which were successful. It took about 50 days the longest from the time an applicant submitted his application to the time he got notified of the niche allocation. In the next few years, with new columbarium projects being completed one after another, the number of new niches available for public application is estimated to be about 30 000 to over 40 000 each year.

3. The information sought is provided as follows:

Year	Number of cases	Scattering of ashes		
		In Gardens of Remembrance*	At sea	Total
2018		6 074	972	7 046
2019		7 010	899	7 909
2020		6 822	854	7 676

*Include cases handled by private cemeteries.

4. The breakdown of the number of cases of scattering ashes in Gardens of Remembrance managed by the Department in the past 3 calendar years is provided as follows:

Name of Garden of Remembrance	Number of cases of scattering ashes each year		
	2018	2019	2020
Cape Collinson (New)	924	1 055	1 056
Cape Collinson (Old)	24	18	3
Diamond Hill (New)	2 795	3 323	3 329
Diamond Hill (Old)	5	10	0
Kwai Chung (New)*		222	338
Kwai Chung (Old)	555	587	433
Fu Shan	272	315	287
Wo Hop Shek Phase V	740	720	777
Wo Hop Shek Phase III	24	23	17
Cheung Chau	12	5	4
Peng Chau	1	2	3
Lamma Island	0	0	0
Total	5 352	6 280	6 247

* The New Kwai Chung Garden of Remembrance was opened on 23 January 2019.

5. The expenditure incurred by the Department in providing cemeteries and crematoria services in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 was \$355.4 million, \$419.7 million and \$438.0 million (revised estimate) respectively.
6. A total of 5 new public columbaria were opened in the past 3 years. The number of public niches available for allocation is as follows:

Location	Number of niches
Peng Chau Columbarium Extension	360
Wong Nai Chung Road Columbarium, Wan Chai	855
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension	1 250
Tsang Tsui Columbarium, Tuen Mun	163 320
Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase VI, Fanling	44 100

7. The Government implements a district-based columbarium development scheme. Between the second quarter of 2011 and the end of 2020, the Government consulted

the relevant District Councils (DCs) on public columbarium projects at 14 sites, which would altogether provide around 600 000 new niches. Projects located at Diamond Hill in Wong Tai Sin, Cheung Chau, Wong Nai Chung Road in Wan Chai, Lai Chi Yuen in Mui Wo, Tsang Tsui in Tuen Mun and Wo Hop Shek Phase I have been completed, providing around 210 000 niches. Two approved projects, located at Cape Collinson Road in Eastern District and Shek Mun in Sha Tin, are underway. They are estimated to be commissioned in 2022 and 2024, providing 25 000 and 40 000 niches respectively. The Government will continue to take forward other projects, with a view to securing the medium and long-term supply of public niches.

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