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Sludge plant aims to slip onto tourist trail

Patsy Moy

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A sludge treatment plant as a tourist destination?

The idea may seem far-fetched, but environmental officials revealed that such a plan is among those being considered for the HK\$5 billion project set to rise in Tuen Mun by 2012.

The plan calls for an environmental learning center, a warm-water swimming pool and even a spa using heat generated by the treatment plant to be built as part of the facility.

According to a senior environmental official, who did not want to be named, the blueprint will be discussed with representatives from Tuen Mun District Council today before being tabled for deliberation in the Legislative Council's environmental affairs panel on Monday.

The key element in the treatment plant will be its architectural design, for which tenders will be sought worldwide, he added.

An ash lagoon at Tsang Tsui near Nim Wan in Tuen Mun has been identified as a prospective site.

The ambitious plan is not without successful models. Sludge treatment plants in Osaka in Japan and Vienna have been so nicely designed they have become landmarks, the official said.

"They don't look like treatment plants at all. The one in Osaka is full of bright and vibrant colors, like a children's playground.

"We have plans to turn the plant in Tuen Mun into an education center for environmental protection."

The plant, which will reduce sludge in the city by 90 percent, is necessary as landfills are running out of space.

In its Legco paper, the Environmental Protection Department said continuing to bury sludge at landfills could lead to slope failures and sludge slides.

The incinerator will handle 2,000 tonnes of sludge a day by 2016. It will also create 613 construction jobs and 60 permanent jobs, according to the Legco paper.

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