

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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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 (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

To tackle water seepage problems that have long been frustrating the public, the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints will introduce a pilot scheme in the first half of 2026 to enhance the inspection and testing procedures.

1. What are the details, districts covered and expenditure earmarked for the pilot scheme?
2. What is the amount of time on average that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department expects the new scheme can save in handling water seepage cases?
3. What are the key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the scheme?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Han-pan (LegCo internal reference no.: 15)

Reply:

1. The Joint Office (JO), which is set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Buildings Department (BD) for the investigation of water seepage cases in buildings, will roll out a pilot scheme in 2026-27 in all districts across the territory to enhance the inspection and testing procedures for handling water seepage problems in buildings. Infrared thermography will be added in Stage I investigation to expedite the identification of the source of water seepage. If it is shown that the moisture content is higher than the specified level and there is reason to believe that water seepage is caused by the upper unit, a Notification Letter will be issued to the owner of the upper unit immediately, requesting inspection and repair on his part within a specified time frame. If water seepage persists after the deadline, JO will conduct investigation and may recover the costs of the tests during the investigation from the owner after confirming the source of water seepage. This aims to urge the owner of the upper unit causing the water seepage to carry out inspection and repair in a responsive manner so that the problem can be resolved promptly. At the same time, to streamline the procedures and increase efficiency, JO will carry out Stage II initial investigation and Stage III professional investigation in parallel for all applicable cases.

In 2026-27, the estimated expenditure of JO is as follows:

FEHD	
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	225.2
BD	
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	92.0
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	48.0

The expenditure for rolling out the pilot scheme is included in the estimated expenditure for 2026-27. As implementing the new workflow to enhance the inspection and testing procedures for handling water seepage problems is part of JO's overall duties in handling water seepage cases, JO cannot provide a breakdown of the expenditure specifically for the implementation of the new workflow.

- 2&3. Under the new inspection and testing procedures, for simple and straightforward cases, such as those where Stage I investigation shows that water seepage is caused by the upper unit, JO will issue a Notification Letter to the owner of the upper unit immediately. This is expected to take about 14 working days, which is significantly quicker than the previous practice of conducting an investigation before issuing a Nuisance Notice. Besides, if the scheme can encourage the owner of the upper unit causing the water seepage to carry out inspection and repair in a responsive manner, it will not only resolve the water seepage problem promptly, but also effectively reduce the number of cases requiring JO's investigation, thereby ensuring effective use of public resources.

The investigation and follow-up work of water seepage cases is subject to various factors. After launching the pilot scheme, JO will review its actual effectiveness in due course, including its impact on the time required for handling cases and the number of cases requiring JO's investigation.

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