

Tapescript EFSP 3.5 Listening 2:

Charitable Trust Committee Meeting

Situation:

The Broader Horizons Trust is a charitable organisation that spends its money on educational and cultural activities which might broaden people's horizons and experience of life. The Trust is run by a committee, which is going to have its first meeting of the year. You will sit in on the meeting and take notes on what the members will say.

Tapescript:

Chairman: Now, as you can see we have four items on the agenda. First, we have to welcome new members to the committee. Second, we have to hear proposals for this year's Student Overseas Experience Scheme. Thirdly, our treasurer will brief us on the trust's finances, and then there'll be Any Other Business. So, let's start with the first item - in case any of you don't know each other I'll introduce everyone very briefly. I'm David Leung - I think you do all know me - I'm a businessman and chairman of this committee. Our treasurer, who is suitably enough an accountant with the City Accounts Firm - I have got that right, haven't I? Yes, the City Accounts Firm, is sitting here to my left - Miss Daisy Lam. And next to Daisy is Professor Peter Chan from the Chinese University, and next to Professor Chan is Mr. William Baker, a lawyer, and a new member of the committee. At the end of the table is Dr. Nancy Wong who works at Queen Mary's Hospital. Then we have Mr. Nelson Lai, another businessman and a new member; then Mrs. Betty Ng, who doesn't actually have a job, but does an enormous amount of charitable work, and finally, the other new member, Dr. Frank Hart - this time not a medical doctor; Dr. Hart is an eminent architect. So, I hope you know who everyone is now - and may I formally on behalf of the Trust welcome the new members, and thank them for giving us their time.

And now we'll move onto this year's plans for our regular Student Overseas Experience Scheme. Every year we send a number of students to spend 10 days in various countries to broaden their experience of life. It's quite an expensive operation, so we can't send very many, I'm afraid. This year we think 35 is a realistic number.

A speaker: Oh, that really isn't very many. It must be terribly difficult to decide who is going. How do you do it?

Chairman: Well, for a start we don't publicise it very much - if we did we might get flooded with applications. We just send out a letter to all secondary schools saying they can nominate one student if they want. Then we write to those nominated, explaining what it involves in time and money, and sending them an application form. So we finally get about 80 to 90 forms in, and then we try to pick the best 50, interview them, and pick the most suitable 35.

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A speaker: What exactly does 'suitable' mean?

Chairman: We have drawn up a set of criteria. We want students with a very positive attitude who will really join in all the activities and benefit from the experience. We prefer students who would be unable to do this sort of thing without our help, and we expect the students to have served the community in some way in the past.

A speaker: Excuse me, but do you think we should give places to more or less equal numbers of boys and girls?

Chairman: No, I don't think we need such a policy.

Let's treat every individual on his or her own merits. It seems unfair for someone to be accepted or rejected just so we can reach some numerical target. As far as I know, we usually end up with slightly more girls than boys, but there's no reason to make anything like that a rule. So - we select our 35 people, as it will be this year, and then we arrange for them to go to various places. I'll explain the funding. The trust pays 50% of the cost. 30% of the cost is borne by the host country, and the student's family has to find the remaining 20%. Now, this year I have made arrangements for trips to the United Kingdom and the United States. The sponsor at the British end is the British - Hong Kong Association. That means they'll help us with all the arrangements and be responsible for 30% of the cost - though that may not actually involve money - they may offer to supply all the meals and accommodation free, or something like that. The programme is not fully finalised but there'll be a tour of London, a couple of days staying individually with British families, and then a camp in Liverpool, an old industrial city in the north-west. The camp is part of a scheme to clean up old industrial cities, remove pollution, and bring back life to derelict old areas of cities. That's all being organised by the Liverpool City Council. It's a big project, so our students will meet a lot of people from different backgrounds, and be exposed to a lot of new ideas. I think it will be very valuable. There'll be 10 people going on this trip. I think we'll be able to get help with the cost of air-tickets from one of the big airlines. It gives them good free publicity, so they are usually cooperative. As our investments have been doing quite well recently, I also propose that we give the group a special fund of £150 which they can use in some way to thank their hosts and repay their hospitality. They could take people to a Chinese meal - even better prepare one themselves, or put on a show.

A speaker: Oh, that's a good idea. It should please the hosts and make them more likely to invite us again.

Chairman: Good. I'm glad you like the idea. The plans for America are a little different. I'm thinking of some time in San Francisco, again going to stay with some local people and seeing daily American life at close quarters, and then the group will gather together again and go to Colorado for a few days on a nature project based on the ecology of the Grand Canyon. I have a promise to help from the Bank of America. I know their General Manager here and he says they have an educational fund and he thinks this

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would be a very suitable project and help promote good relations between Hong Kong and the United States. 10 students will go - and their thank-you fund will be 250 US dollars. Now the Asian destinations are in the hands of Mrs. Ng. Betty, could you say a few words?

Betty Ng: Yes, of course. Some of the new members here might be wondering why we have 4 destinations, but only 35 people. Well, now I can tell you; one of our destinations is Japan, and Japan is so expensive that we simply cannot afford to send 10. Every detail of the trip - even taxi rides cost so much.

A speaker: Excuse me - could we then drop Japan? I mean, it's a nice place and all that, but if we can send 10 to Korea, or 15 to the Philippines, I think that would be preferable to sending only 5 to Japan.

Betty Ng: Oh, no, certainly not. I'm shocked at you saying it. We always send a group to Japan. It's one of the favourite destinations with the young people, and the Japanese Consulate here is so helpful to us. They act as the sponsors and organise lots of things for us at as low a cost as possible. For this year's group I have arranged a real immersion in Japanese culture. They'll spend all the time in Kyoto - you know the ancient capital, full of those wonderful old temples - and they'll wear Japanese clothes, have Japanese lessons, eat Japanese food, go to Japanese theatrical shows, tea - ceremonies and so on. 10 days isn't long, but they'll come back knowing so much about Japan and its culture.

A speaker: Well, I'm still not so sure about Japan - and I'm not sure that this one will be very popular with the students. I think they'd rather see the hi-tech side of Japan.

Betty Ng: Oh, well, that's your opinion. I'm afraid it's basically all arranged anyway! Then, the second group - oh, but I forgot after the interruption - there's this new idea of having a group fund. I suppose the equivalent to the others is about 25,000yen - but that wouldn't pay for much. I think we'll have to make it 50,000.

Our last group go to Singapore. How much will they need - let's think - in the local dollars it will come to about - oh, I hope my mental arithmetic is right - about 320 dollars. The Singapore International School organises everything, and in return we look after some of their young people when they come here. As there isn't so much cultural difference between Singapore and HK people, we don't emphasise that side of things so much, and I've asked our friends in Singapore to put together a programme on Singapore society, how their government works, public housing, education, welfare, medicine, care of the old, and so on. Oh, and I forgot transport. So the group will be able to compare Singapore's system with ours, and that should help everyone think more clearly about social issues.

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Chairman: Thank you very much. I'm sorry we have a slight difference of opinion over Japan, but I do think it's too late to make any big changes to this year's programme. We can think about these things again when we come to plan next year's programme.

So, let's move on to the third item: our finances. I'll hand over to Miss Lam, our treasurer.

Miss Lam: Well, as you know we, the Broader Horizons Trust, were set up ten years ago with a very generous donation of 10 million dollars. This we keep invested. We use the income to organise a variety of activities that help to give Hong Kong people broader horizons. As the chairman mentioned earlier, our investment income has been increasing and is very satisfactory, but inflation is always eating away at the value of our assets. As a charity we cannot risk our capital with daring investments - we have to be conservative. I would like us to make an effort to increase our assets. I would like your permission to write to some of the large corporations in Hong Kong asking for donations. Perhaps you could suggest some names to me. Obviously I will approach people like the HK Bank and the Jockey Club, but maybe you know some less well known sources of money.

A speaker: Yes, I know a couple of people worth contacting I think it's an excellent idea. I'm all in favour. I wonder if there are any fund-raising activities we could organise ourselves. Suppose we could apply to have a flag-day? I know there's a lot of competition, but I think we could put up a good case for being given an opportunity to raise funds. We could ask a few schools we've helped to lend us students for the morning.

A speaker: And lots of charities organise big dinners that raise lots of money. I'm sure Mrs. Ng has experience of those.

Chairman: It is nice to see you all so enthusiastic. I'm afraid a couple of us have to go to other meetings, so perhaps I can ask you all to write down your ideas and give them to me before next week's meeting which will be much longer. Now, any other business? No, right, I'll close the meeting, and see you again same time, same place, next week.