

# **Outline of Aims and requirements for a national Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise Strategy**

## **1. Introduction**

Neighbour and local neighbourhood noise major sources of disturbance to many people and can have a significant impact on quality of life and the local environment.

Currently there is a considerable amount of legislation available to manage neighbour and neighbourhood noise. However, the spread of measures across different statutes can lead to confusion for both the public and those responsible for managing noise. There are still areas where redress is not sufficient. There is also often inconsistency in the enforcement methods used.

## **2. Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise**

It is important in the framing of both the National Ambient Noise Strategy (NANS) and the Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise Strategy (NANNS) that a comprehensive definition/description of neighbour and neighbourhood noise is drawn up, to ensure that important sources are not missed.

Whilst NANNS was described in the National Ambient Noise Strategy as “noise from household appliances, TV, music systems, noisy pets, DIY activities, construction sites, intruder alarms, parties or similar gatherings” - it has become clear that a number of activities associated with environmental noise are not covered by the END. For example:

rail horns; loading and unloading; deliveries; reversing alarms;  
military noise; small aircraft/aerodromes; agricultural machinery;  
lawnmowers and other garden equipment; off-road machinery; etc

It is crucial that it is made clear which Strategy will cover these key noise sources.

## **3. Formulating a Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise Strategy**

Formulation of a Neighbour Noise Strategy should provide an opportunity to:

1. Clarify the adverse effects of Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise
2. Consolidate legislative measures, for more efficient and effective enforcement
3. Ensure more consistent enforcement, and recording of complaints

4. Promote education – both formal and informal, for both the public and noise management professionals, to ensure a ‘reasonable’ attitude to noise and to promote a more harmonious society
5. Enforce wider consideration of noise mitigation measures in planning and building regulations
6. Identify synergies and conflicts between noise mitigation and other environmental considerations
7. Clarify the role of the police and community wardens.

#### **4. The Aim of a Strategy Should be to:**

1. Improve the noise environment where bad and preserve it where good (the National Ambient Noise Strategy should also contribute to this)
2. Work towards an acceptable standard of quiet enjoyment in the home environment for everyone
3. Ensure a consistent approach to investigation of noise complaints and enforcement
4. Promote public education on personal responsibility for neighbour noise
5. Set standards for acceptable noise in line with the WHO Guidelines for Community Noise<sup>1</sup> for:  
outdoor living areas; indoor living areas; bedrooms; public areas of tranquillity

#### **5. Achieving the Aims**

##### **Environmental Noise**

Management of the environmental noise climate, which impacts on the domestic noise environment, should be achieved through the National Ambient Noise Strategy.

##### **Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise**

Management of the neighbour noise environment should be achieved through addressing the following.

##### **5.1. Noise Statistics**

Currently there is no comprehensive information on the number of domestic noise complaints. This will make it difficult to quantify the impact of any strategic approach to neighbour noise. NSCA have found that local authorities record noise complaints in different ways – only some using the system prescribed by CIEH. Other work has found that many complaints are still made to police.

The systems used for monitoring and recording complaints need to be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/docstore/peh/noise/Commnoise4.htm>

## **5.2. Planning**

Better integration of noise into planning policies and procedures to ensure the soundscape of neighbourhoods is considered in development proposals.

## **5.3. Housing**

There is a key role for local authority housing officers and other housing providers in dealing with complaints and tackling noisy tenants. In addition, an integrated approach to the design, regulation and management of housing – both social and private, is long overdue.

### **New Homes**

Improvements to the building regulations:

- effective sound insulation
- better planning with improved, enforceable standards to ensure sound design in buildings i.e. ensuring sleeping space away from noisy space and the use of natural barriers.

### **Existing Homes**

- better information to owners and landlords on effective action
- retro-fitting sound insulation in existing properties.
- inclusion of a robust sound insulation standard in the Decent Homes programme.

The GLA are carrying out work on quieter homes which could feed into this, and existing work on the use of materials in flooring and for insulation needs to be developed and promulgated, with legislation where necessary.

## **5.4. Alternatives to taking formal action**

In addition to formal action, mediation or counselling services can deal with the anti-social behaviour that results in neighbour noise problems. If implemented before the situation becomes too heated an independent third-party can help resolve disputes, and enable aggrieved parties to reach an agreement.

These approaches require adequate funding to be effective and are not currently available in all areas. The Strategy should ensure this is provided.

### **5.5. Education and Awareness**

Where there are differences in noise expectation and tolerance among neighbours, better education aimed at improving communications in communities may also be of help and research (MORI, ERM, NSCA<sup>2</sup>) has shown education to be key. No matter how good sound insulation is, everyone has neighbours – whether they be the other side of a party wall or a mile away

The Strategy should therefore promote and support education and awareness raising:

- to encourage quieter citizens
- to promote awareness of reasonable noise expectation in the domestic environment
- include education on noise in the national curriculum

These approaches require adequate funding to be effective and the Strategy should ensure this is provided.

### **5.6. Quieter Appliances**

There is an increasing range of powered appliances available for tasks that were once carried out manually and with less noise. The Strategy should encourage the manufacture, distribution and use of quieter domestic appliances by working towards recommendations for noise standards and labelling for domestic appliances.

### **5.7. Working in Partnership**

A co-ordinated approach at local level is one of the key elements in tackling neighbour noise nuisance. Local Authorities are working with service users and other partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors on a range of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of the Local Environment. These initiatives need to be strengthened and improved. They include:

- Best Value
- Decent Homes
- Community strategies
- LSPs
- Crime and disorder reduction partnerships
- Local neighbourhood renewal strategies
- Neighbourhood wardens.

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<sup>2</sup> MORI, *Neighbour Noise 2003*, ERM, *Phase 2 Research into Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise 2003*, NSCA Noise Survey 2003, 2004, 2005

## **8. Taking the Neighbour and Neighbourhood Noise Strategy Forward**

We clearly need:

- A commitment to adequate funding, especially for Local Authorities to take this work forward
- A more effective publicity and educational campaign to raise awareness about noise issues and encourage considerate behaviour
- Encouragement of partnership initiatives so that those Government Departments who have policy responsibility for noise and anti-social behaviour work ever more closely together
- A clear link with the development of the National Ambient Noise Strategy to ensure that key noise sources do not fall between the two
- Work with the CIEH to improve still further the collection of noise compliant and related statistics from local authorities in order to help inform policy development
- Further research into technical, legislative and social remedies to noise problems