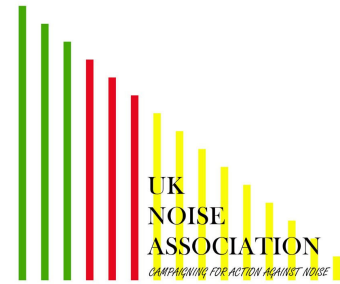




*environmental protection, improvement, innovation*



Right Honourable Dawn Primarolo MP  
Minister of State for Public Health  
Department of Health  
79 Whitehall  
London SW1A 2NS

Cc Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment

6<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Philip Mulligan  
Chief Executive  
NSCA  
44 Grand Parade  
Brighton BN1 4NT

Dear Minister

**Re: Importance of continuation of WHO activities supporting policies on environmental noise and health**

In advance of your discussion with fellow Health Ministers at the 57th session of the Regional Committee for Europe in Belgrade, the undersigned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ask for your support for the continuation of much-needed research into the links between noise and public health.

The undersigned are leading UK organisations campaigning to reduce noise and its negative effects. The availability of new research underpins our efforts. We believe that the research activities for evidence-based policy coordinated by the World Health Organisation European office on the impacts of environmental noise on public health are vital and must be assured over the coming years. Such activities are particularly important in the context of the forthcoming review of the European Directive on environmental noise. European Union Member States and Institutions must therefore request the continuation of research projects, and support this with appropriate funding.

**Noise: long forgotten but not gone**

Noise emissions, similarly to air and water pollutants, have very serious, potentially life-threatening effects on human health. The new WHO-coordinated research on the burden of disease provides the most solid evidence to date of the scale and severity of this problem. And yet, in contrast to many other environmental health problems, noise – particularly from traffic – is getting worse.

**Research in the field of noise and health must continue**

The leading role of the WHO is clear: WHO expert groups have accumulated state-of-the-art knowledge from leading researchers. They have concluded that environmental noise constitutes a serious public health problem.

Recent WHO activities supporting evidence-based policy, commissioned by national governments and international institutions, have made a crucial contribution to awareness of the scale and impact of noise. The results have filled a gap in knowledge about the most dangerous health impacts of noise, beyond the better known annoyance effects.

However, further research is needed to develop a methodology for holistic assessment of health impacts. Clearer understanding would help national administrations and the European Union to take this aspect into account and improve future policy-making.

### **Making noise about noise in the media**

The results of WHO activities have enabled the issue of environmental noise to grab headlines in the media internationally over recent weeks (notably following in-depth coverage in *New Scientist* magazine). Such research is therefore necessary to raise public and political awareness of the dangers of noise; which we are also striving for.

### **WHO activities: a vital supporting role for more effective legislation**

The WHO Community Noise Guidelines (2000) and Night time Noise Guidelines (forthcoming) provide the benchmark for protecting public health from the negative impacts of noise and should be the cornerstone for appropriate guidance and regulation at local, national and international level.

The European Directive on Environmental Noise (2002/49/EC) is to be reviewed from 2009. The European Commission and the Member States will certainly require further evidence on the links between noise and public health, in order to support the revision. The WHO European office has a mandate to support the work of the European Union and Member States on environmental noise. It is therefore timely – and rapidly becoming urgent – for Member States to request such research.

The undersigned NGOs therefore ask the European Ministers of Health and the European Commissioner for Health, and their colleagues from Environment Ministries, to support future WHO activities in the field of noise and health. A first opportunity will be at the forthcoming session of the Regional Committee for Europe on 17-20 September 2007, when we sincerely hope that you will encourage your colleagues to demand further investigation into one of the most widespread environmental problems facing European citizens.

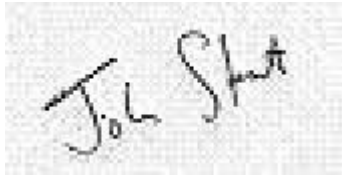
Yours faithfully,



Phillip Mulligan  
Chief Executive, NSCA



Peter Wakeham  
Director, Noise Abatement Society



John Stewart  
Chair, UK Noise Association

Please reply to:  
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