

From the Corridors of Power

IRISH NOISE BILL PLEDGED

Ireland needs to get its act together to ensure people can “simply enjoy... a good night’s sleep”, said Minister for the Environment John Gormley as he pledged to publish noise pollution legislation before the summer.

Mr Gormley told the Dáil the legislation would emphasise codes of practice for construction, commercial and domestic situations.

“Local authorities will have stronger enforcement powers to deal with nuisances from particular noise sources such as continuously sounding alarms, and I also see the need to extend

the powers of the Garda in certain circumstances,” he said.

Fine Gael spokesman Phil Hogan asked when the legislation would be implemented.

Mr Gormley hopes to publish the Bill before the summer, following a consultation process that involved 235 submissions, “which shows there is significant public interest in this.”

“Stricter laws governing noise are in force in European countries and it is time we got our act together to ensure people can simply enjoy, in some cases, a good night’s sleep.”

LUXEMBOURG NOISE PLAN

Luxembourg’s Minister for the Environment, Lucien Lux, has presented the government’s plans to combat noise pollution.

The plans cover road, air and rail transport, with the Minister stating that the plan was to combat the problem “at source”. The plan includes initiatives to regulate airplanes’ trajectories, producing eco-friendly vehicles, etc. On the A3 motorway, for example, noise barriers are to be erected.

The country’s 33 communes are to be canvassed over the next 2-3 months, with a strategy to be proposed by

September when it is to be presented to the European Commission in Brussels, with implementation by 2012.



Luxembourg city

HGV NOISE CHARGES COMING?

The European Parliament’s transport committee on 11 February adopted a report backing national governments’ right to charge heavy goods vehicles for the noise, pollution and congestion they cause.

In July 2008, the European Commission proposed a revision of the current Eurovignette Directive on tolls for trucks to allow national governments to offset pollution costs.

The Commission’s strategy for the internalisation of external transport

costs is part of a package of initiatives intended to make transport more sustainable. The aim of the initiative is to develop a transport pricing system to cover the negative environmental impacts of road freight, such as noise and pollution.

While the proposal was hailed by environmental NGOs, member states remain divided over the issue. Industry stakeholders have joined forces to denounce the “incorrect” assumption that merely increasing costs will lead to more sustainable transport.

Noise and air pollution costs could be charged following standardised formulas and respecting certain maximum limits.

However, the committee decided not to allow member states to charge trucks for costs related to CO2 emissions, climate change or road accidents. The next stage is a plenary vote in the European Parliament on March 10. If the proposed legislation is passed, the rules will not be binding but will set common EU standards for those

member states that choose to apply the charges.



RUBBER ROAD TRIAL

The Dutch Ministry of Public Works reports it is launching a trial of a rubber road surface on a stretch of the A50 near Apeldoorn. The ministry has a target to achieve a 10-decibel reduction in surface noise on Dutch roads, and it thinks a rubber road surface might be the answer. An earlier small-scale trial

of the rubber surface in Zeeland, in the southwest of the country, produced promising results. Now the ministry says it plans to develop the rubber road surface into a “fully-fledged alternative to asphalt.” The rubber road idea was first piloted in Japan, but experiments there showed it lacked durability.

EU ADOPTS NOISE, ROLLING RESISTANCE, WET GRIP AND LABELING RULES

The EU has passed into law the tyre noise, rolling resistance, wet grip and labelling regulations that have been the subject of public discussion since the beginning of 2008.

Despite complaints from some leading premium tyre manufacturers that the balance of improvements demanded is simply unworkable in the timeframe given, the commission said it should assess the feasibility of “strengthening the requirements for wet grip for tyres, and if appropriate, propose an amendment to this regulation.”

The decisions follow the EU’s adoption of a report, which includes calls for tyre rolling resistance, noise and safety regulations as part of “a simpler, standardised system for the type-approval of motor vehicles.” The new regulation will reportedly apply from Nov. 1, 2011, a year earlier than the commission proposed.

The idea behind the decision is for the EU to introduce a single regulation designed to “synthesise” the more than 50 regulations on subjects such as vehicle emissions, noise, ESC and TPMS and tyre performance. It will also be “directly applicable in all member states” and reflects car safety standards harmonised by the United Nations.

CITY WILL TRUST THEIR JUDGMENT TO DETERMINE IF ANYONE IS TOO LOUD AND BREAKING THE LAW

Naples (FL) police and code enforcement officers will soon be able to make a judgment on whether a sound, like music or construction noise, is in violation of the city’s noise ordinance by just listening. The change, means that police and law enforcement officers would not need to depend on sound level meters. City Manager Bill Moss wrote in a memo to council that this change now means an officer can call something a breach of peace or a public nuisance if they consider “it is loud and raucous so as to unreasonably disturb, injure or endanger the comfort reposes, health, peace, tranquility or safety.”