

From the Ministries

DEFRA'S NOISE POLICY STATEMENT FOR ENGLAND

The UK government has responded to the EU Noise Directive by publishing a long-delayed noise policy statement.

Councils in the 23 noisiest cities will be able insist authorities operating roads or railways install quieter road surfaces or noise barriers.

They can also insist on lower speed limits, especially at night.

The plan was welcomed by campaigners who complain they have waited too long to have noise identified as a serious environmental issue.

Excessive noise affects millions of people in the UK. People living near busy roads suffer increased problems from mental and physical health, with sleep deprivation and raised blood pressure among the symptoms.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has drawn up noise maps of the UK.

A Defra spokesman said that the

transport providers would pay the bill for any noise abatement.

The process of establishing quiet areas in the noisy cities will begin in July this year.

Philip Mulligan, the chief executive of Environmental Protection UK, said: "The Noise Policy Statement for England marks official recognition at last of noise as a pervasive national problem. Many of us hear road traffic noise most of the time.

"We welcome this recognition by government that noise must be considered in all decision-making in order to work towards a quieter, healthier country.

"It should no longer just be the realm of the noise specialist, who too often is only called in when unbearable noise levels are reached. We look forward to finally seeing the consideration of noise, our most pervasive environmental pollutant, integrated into all government policy."

NEW ISO STANDARD FOR REDUCING NOISE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF AIRPORTS

The new standard ISO 20906:2009, *Acoustics – Unattended monitoring of aircraft sound in the vicinity of airports*, will help regulators, professionals and researchers in their effort to reduce noise in the vicinity of airports.

This International Standard gives requirements for reliable measurement of aircraft sound. It describes a threshold system of sound event recognition in a complex sound environment with multiple aircraft and other sound sources. ISO 20906:2009 specifies:

- The typical application for a permanently installed sound-monitoring system around an airport
- Performance specifications for instruments and requirements for their unattended installation and operation, in order to determine continuously monitored sound pressure levels of aircraft sound at selected locations
- Requirements for monitoring the sound of aircraft operations at an airport
- Requirements for the quantities to be determined in order to describe the sound of aircraft operations
- Requirements for data to be reported and frequency of publication of reports
- A procedure for determining the expanded uncertainty of the reported data in accordance with ISO/IEC Guide 98-3, *Uncertainty of*

measurement – Part 3: Guide to the expression of uncertainty in measurement (GUM: 1995).

Exposure to intense noise or noise over long periods can lead to hearing damage and other physiological impairments. Those impacts are recognized both for those working on the site of an airport and for those who live near the runways.

Mr. Berthold Vogelsang, Project leader and convenor of ISO Working group which prepared the standard, comments: “the environmental

concerns of people living near airports is increasingly taken into account by governments, airport authorities and aviation companies. Manufacturers are developing quieter aircraft, governments are committing themselves to reduce noise around airports and plans to fight against noise pollution are being adopted. To achieve the objectives of such initiatives, regulators and aviation professionals need internationally agreed measuring tools and reference documents, ISO 20906 is a practical answer to this need.”

ROAD TRAFFIC NOISE – NEW ACOUSTICS STANDARD PUBLISHED

Standards New Zealand has published a new standard ‘Acoustics – Road traffic noise – New and altered roads NZS 6806:2010.’ The Standard aims to reduce traffic noise from new and altered roads by providing noise criteria to address the adverse effects of road traffic noise on people.

‘The acoustics Standard NZS 6806:2010 will help to achieve faster and more consistent decision-making nationally about road traffic noise,’ says Dr Bryan Pidwerbesky, Chair of the committee that developed the Standard.

Standards New Zealand developed the Standard with support from the NZ Transport Agency and the Ministry of Transport. A wider committee was involved in drafting the Standard and included representatives of: Department of Building and Housing, Local Government New Zealand, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport, New Zealand Acoustical Society, New

Zealand Institute of Environmental Health Inc., New Zealand Transport Agency, Road Controlling Authorities (NZ) Inc. New Zealand, and Roothing New Zealand.

The acoustics Standard NZS 6806:2010 will be used mainly by local authorities and road controlling authorities to manage road traffic noise on new or altered roads, as well as developers who are constructing or altering roads as part of a subdivision or land use development.

The Environment Court and Boards of Inquiry are also likely to take this new acoustics Standard NZS 6806:2010 into account when considering applications for major transport projects. The NZ Transport Agency has already made a resolution to apply the Standard to all relevant state highway projects. The Standard will also be of interest to roading contractors, land use and transport planners, road and traffic engineers, surveyors, urban and landscape designers, environmental managers, and noise professionals.

NO (AMPLIFIED) TALKING ON THE BUS

New York City Council has passed a bill that would ban open-air tour buses from using speakers to talk to tourists. Residents along tour bus routes have complained that the sound penetrates buildings. Twin

America, the company that owns Coty Sights and Gray Line tour buses, feels the industry is being unfairly singled out. A company official estimates it will cost \$5 million to install a new quiet sound system that would force passengers to listen to their guide through headphones.

CALL THE COUNCIL, NOT THE NEIGHBOURS

Complaints to city councils in New Zealand have been steadily increasing for the past five years. Hutt City Council figures show noise complaints have nearly doubled since 2005. In Porirua, complaints about dogs, noise, bylaws, littering and pollution have all increased since 2005. "Over the years people have been found to be more likely to complain to council than to raise the matter with the person causing the problem," environmental standards manager Jim Sutton said. "This is partly due to the fear people have of trying to resolve the problem with their neighbours themselves." Wellington City Council was unable to provide complaint numbers. But Chris Brown, from the council's Issues Resolution

Service, said the public was becoming more tenacious about complaints – calling or writing up to three times and going to the Ombudsman if they were still dissatisfied. Some people had been complaining about the same topic for more than 20 years. Others provided a customer service by regularly reporting faulty lights or stormwater drains. Noise complaints were increasing as more people were moving into the central city, yet expecting the quiet of the suburbs. "A lot of the time we end up being referees in ugly neighbourhood disputes. It's not the kind of society any more where people want to go and talk to the neighbour across the road themselves. It's much easier to pick up the phone and get someone else to do it for you."

FLINTSHIRE CEMENT FACTORY'S £250,000 SAFETY FINE

A cement factory in Flintshire has admitted safety breaches which could potentially have caused a cancer risk. Castle Cement Ltd admitted four charges relating to dust and noise nuisances at Padeswood as well as two fires which released potentially dangerous smoke. The Environment Agency Wales (EAW) said the £300,000 in fines and costs was one of the highest ever court awards. Despite the possible increased risk of cancer, and other illnesses, Mold Crown Court heard no cases had been detected. The charges covered a period between August 2005 and May 2007. Judge John Rogers he said: "These were persistent breaches of the permit conditions resulting in dust emissions, smoke emissions from burning tyres and other materials, and unacceptable noise levels." He added: "Emissions of dust and the fire particles put the general public to some potential risk of injury to their health." He said the breaches continued despite enforcement notices from EAW. In mitigation, the company had co-operated throughout the investigation and had pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity. The judge said he was satisfied the company had invested £1.8m trying to improve procedures. The court heard how EAW officials installed CCTV cameras, which revealed they were not being notified of emissions. The company admitted that it failed to maintain all plant and equipment in a good operating condition, failed to comply with enforcement notices, failed to operate appropriate techniques to minimise fugitive dust emissions and failed to control excess noise and vibration at the plant. The court heard that local residents had complained of dust, noise and vibration, and being unable to sell their properties.