

# THE BOTTOM RUNG

Noise: the challenges, trends, technologies, politics and opportunities

Looking forward; seeking solutions

Spring 2022

A Pret A Manger employee reveals all:

## YOU LOSE EVERYTHING THAT MAKES YOU HUMAN



This job can annihilate every piece of humanity inside of you. You start work at 4:30 in the morning when its dark and you finish at 16:30 when its dark again in the winter and you spend your whole day in the kitchen without windows where its very, very cold, 4-5 degrees and you are required to wear the short-sleeved uniform because they are always under-staffed and you might have to run on the point till at any of the day. There loud is painfully music in the kitchen so that you don't talk with the others because this is slowing you down and you have a timer that beeps every so many minutes and you have to race and assemble sandwiches as fast as you can which is like a game at first but it becomes very stressful with time and you are always late, always behind and if you somehow manage to finish for the time set, the next day they give

There is painfully loud music in the kitchen so that you don't talk with others because this is slowing you down

### Trapped by Noise

This article by a Pret A Manger employee says it all. No escape from the noise, from the loud music blasting across the kitchen. All the research shows stress at its worst when people feel trapped like this by noise.

It could be living under a busy flight path, with no option of moving away. Or only able to afford a room on a busy main road. Or unable to move away from a wind turbine built just yards from your home. Or the noise of the neighbour's new heat pump. Or being stuck with a neighbour playing loud music, and the local authority or social housing landlord unwilling to take effective action. No way out of what William Bryce in a fascinating article on pages 3 and 4 calls 'neighbour noise violence'.

Anybody can be trapped by noise but generally the wealthier we are, the more choices we will have.

Anybody in any income bracket can be trapped by noise but, generally, the wealthier we are, the more choices we have. Imagine a Pret employee standing up to management over the constant loud music.

Big choices are facing the Government and local authorities which have noise implications. Will they continue with low traffic neighbourhoods which usually mean more traffic for the adjacent main roads? Will they relax the rules on onshore wind turbines? The big noise losers in the last rush to build turbines onshore in the late 2000s were the rural poor. Will targets to install heat pumps remain, with potential noise problems for people in flats and shared accommodation? Will there be sufficient funds for councils to employ enough staff to tackle neighbour noise? If the wrong decisions are taken, many more people will be trapped by noise.

John Stewart  
Editor *The Bottom Rung*

**Pros: free food; as many extra hours as you want.**

you more stuff to make in the same time. It's all about productivity. I spent 6 months racing all day and barely spoke 3-5 words a day on my shifts, if I'm not

**Cons: loose everything that makes you human.**

on till where you are required to have the widest fake smile on earth, highly pitched voice and again be as fast as possible, it's all a race. Everywhere it's very noisy and very busy and you are always behind and the stress builds up so much that me and many of my colleagues had to take pills for sleep because you hear the noise in your head when you get home after work and we had this random mental breakdowns where you are crying on your lunch break without any real reason, its just tears coming out of your eyes and you can't stop. The giant corporation is making wealth from squeezing every drop of "productivity" from the employees and when people break and quit, there are always more desperate poor students or immigrants willing to take their position. See more: <https://youtu.be/Km4IQPzWm8A>

**For obvious reasons, the employee wished to remain anonymous.**

## WEBINAR:

12<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 5-6pm (free)

### HOW TO DEAL WITH A NOISY VENUE

**SoundPrint founder Gregory Scott** on the app you can use to record sound levels in venues.

**Nigel Rodgers, founder of Pipedown**, on muzac and Quiet Corners, the guide to places without background music.

To get the Zoom link email [johnstewart2@btconnect.com](mailto:johnstewart2@btconnect.com)

# MUMBLI: AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO REDUCE NOISE IN VENUES

by **Marion Marincat**

**Mumbli** is the first of its kind. A tech-based smart hearing wellness platform addressing recreational noise pollution in public social spaces. Following 4 years of development working with experts across Sound Engineering, Audio Experience Design and Hearing Psychology, the innovative tech ecosystem is partnering with bars, restaurants, cafes, hotels, co-working spaces and more to certify for sound. Based on analysis of data collected by Mumbli's sound monitoring devices, a venue is advised on interior design (foliage, acoustic panels, soft furnishings etc) to reduce the background noise pollution to deliver safe listening sound levels and ease of conversation flow. As noise levels within social spaces constantly change (depending on factors e.g. peak times or number of guests) Mumbli's tech ecosystem allows a venue to monitor its noise levels in real time, so it can adjust contributing factors accordingly such as music volume, in order to retain safe sound levels. In time, customers will be able to access the real time noise levels of a Certified for Sound venue, to choose where to go based on the noise levels at any given time.

**A tech-based smart hearing platform which addresses recreational noise pollution in public social spaces**



**Mumbli has taken a 360 degree approach to excessive noise levels in venues, so that it benefits both customers and businesses.**

\* **Venue** operators can ensure they are adhering to healthy noise levels for the wellbeing of their staff and customers whilst retaining the energy and buzz that people enjoy about going out. By providing more ambient auditory environments can also potentially lead to customer retention, increase customer dwelling time and return visits

\* **Customers** benefit from spaces where they can connect with their friend, partner or hear their business meeting conversation in an environment where there's still an energy and buzz

\* This summer, **customers** will also be able to easily locate and search for 'Certified for Sound' venues via the soon to launch Mumbli web app. This will allow users to identify venues where they know they will be able to have a conversation without the need to shout

**This year, on World Hearing Day (3rd March), Mumbli unveiled the first ever Hearing Wellness District at The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London.** In collaboration with London Legacy Development Corporation, a variety of social spaces are piloting the Certified for Sound programme to reduce the excessive recreational noise pollution to make them more audio accessibility for the wellbeing of all. The resounding positive feedback from businesses and the community alike, means the district will act as a benchmark to showcase how healthy sound levels can be embedded into the design of future smart cities.

**Mumbli is working closely with WHO to help implement its advised global standards within venues and social spaces**

This year, the World Health Organisation also unveiled its Global Standard for Safe Listening Entertainment Venues. Mumbli's Certified For Sound programme enables venues to adhere to the new advised global standards and is working closely with WHO to help support in implementing this change within venues and social spaces.

**If you operate a venue, book a free demo here (<https://mumbli.com/certified-for-sound/>) . For everyone else, join the hearing wellness movement and sign up to the Mumbli newsletter [here](#) to find out more about social spaces and venues where everyone deserves to hear and be heard without the interruption of noise pollution, and get access to activities and an invitation to try the app when it goes live.**

**[Marion Marincat is the CEO of Mumbli](#)**

# Neighbour Noise Violence

William Bryce argues it is about time to revisit the label “neighbour noise”



**My argument for using the term ‘neighbour noise violence’ is supported by research and anecdotal evidence** that reflect a need to change perceptions and attitudes in society to the damaging health effects of neighbour noise, especially amongst law enforcement, councils, judiciary and law makers.

Neighbour noise has been a bane of humanity for millennia according to Keizer in his “A Book About Noise” and is more than merely annoying, a nuisance or antisocial behaviour. Just ask any victim. In terms of definitions, I want to clearly differentiate neighbour noise from types of regular noise; such as from aircraft, traffic, lawn mower and appliances, although appliances use, noisy car and motorbike exhaust systems, noisy car sound systems, burnouts and leaf blowers also can be classified as neighbour noise.

Neighbour noise is about neighbours choosing to make noise that fails to consider the surrounding acoustic environment. Neighbour noise can mean heavy bass music, heavy footsteps, jumping on the floor, banging on walls, slamming doors, talking, parties, screaming children, noisy outdoor activity and sexual activity. Researchers have acknowledged that the worst aspect of neighbour noise is knowledge of who the noise makers are and that the hearer is totally defenceless against the noise. (Maschke et al 2006)

**Neighbour noise is about neighbours choosing to make noise that fails to consider the surrounding acoustic environment**

As part of this obligation, people need to understand the profoundly negative health effects of neighbour noise just like we understand the profound health effects of smoking because neighbour noise health effects are indeed comparable to a history of smoking according to longitudinal research.

Other longitudinal studies conducted (inc WHO) over the past couple of decades confirm the negative health effects neighbour noise which is known to increase the secretion of stress hormones resulting in “cardiovascular system, the respiratory system, and the musculoskeletal system as well as with depression” when relating to sleep disturbances.

Unfortunately, current research fails to humanise victims anecdotal evidence of suffering, insomnia, stress, hopelessness, feelings of being tortured and bullying, and physical violence. Even not knowing when the next “noise attack” may take place can be terrifying. This makes for a desperately disquieting situation.

**The severity of the health effects of neighbour noise and the distressing global anecdotal evidence justifies the term “neighbour noise violence”**

Furthermore, I believe the severity of the health effects of neighbour noise merely confirms the extent of the distressing anecdotal evidence globally to justify the term “neighbour noise violence”. This convergence of evidence I believe rejects the commonly held notion/concept that a balance can ever be struck between the so-called right of a neighbour to make noise to one that wants peaceful enjoyment. Your right to use your property stops at the boundary of your property or as US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said “The right to swing my fist ends where the other man's nose begins”.

Whenever a member of our household is asked to be quiet because they are preventing peaceful enjoyment of another member studying, relaxing, WFH, watching TV, getting respite or sleeping, then that noisy member complies without hesitation or resentment and would apologise.

A neighbour is held to just as high standards as if they were a household member, whether they are in a stand-alone home, share a party wall or multi-storey dwelling. It makes no difference. You have a responsibility to your downstairs neighbours and if you were to install hard wood flooring then you better think long and hard about the consequences that could profoundly affect your neighbour's health. This is why neighbour noise in this context, is “neighbour noise violence”.

**Current research fails to humanise victims anecdotal evidence of suffering, insomnia, stress, hopelessness, feelings of being tortured and bullying, and physical violence**

The continuing obsession to be able use one's property as one sees fit with little regard to the surrounding neighbour/s amounts to the ability of a neighbour to be cruel, torturous and sadistic to fellow neighbours with little or no recourse despite not owning the neighbours property. Noisy neighbours have no right to use a fellow neighbour's property, taking away their peace, as they see fit. Victimising the victim adds further to the mental trauma and amounts to gaslighting by councils, law enforcement, the judiciary and law-makers sanctions and perpetuates the victims torture and suffering.

Silence is required to sit exams, yet it seems we have no right to quiet to study for those very exams. We have quiet in our courts (whilst in session), tennis courts (before a serve), theatre, cinema (mostly), opera, ballet, trains (quiet carriages), movie sets (during performance), radio and recording studios (air conditioning is sometimes switched off). Why can't we have quiet at home?

Neighbour noise is certainly a global health issue. In light of this knowledge, a neighbour who purposefully denies another's health through the use of noise must be considered a form of neighbour noise violence.

Changes are required on many levels. Not least is changing the perception that neighbour noise is essentially harmless annoyance, nuisance or ASB, but is an actual health hazard. “How many cigarettes a day is your noisy neighbour costing your health?” Law reform is required to reflect the current health research rejecting categorically the notion that a balance of noise rights can be reached between neighbours. After all, what are the genuine health consequences of someone not being able to make noise that disturbs one's neighbour? ABSOLUTELY NONE.

**William Bryce runs the @NoiseNeighbour twitter account**



# LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS: AN ISSUE IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS



It has become clear that the controversial low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) will be an issue in May's local elections. It is a reflection of how high-profile the issue has become. Our interview in our last issue with 'Little Ninja', a leading campaigner against LTNs, was by some distance the most-read article we have ever published.

The issue has divided politicians, communities, environmental campaigners and residents, some of whom are standing for election. The results will be studied carefully but should be treated with caution, particularly in the inner-cities where turn-out is often low and many of those worst impacted by LTNs may rarely vote in local elections.

Our interview with 'Little Ninja', a leading campaigner against LTNs, was by some distance the most-read article we have ever published.

**Comment:** LTNs create pleasant areas where noise, pollution and road danger is cut; where it is easier to walk and cycle. But, the data is clear: it has been at the expense of the traffic being pushed on to many of the adjacent boundary and main roads. Typically, these main roads are already the noisiest, dirtiest and most congested. They are also where poorer people, and in some of areas ethnic minority communities, live in disproportionate numbers. Excessive traffic – the root of the problem - does need to be tackled but unfair LTNs are not the way forward.

# ACTION TO CURB 'BOOM' CARS RAMPS UP A GEAR



**NOISE cameras are backed by almost three quarters of UK drivers to help catch and fine illegally noisy vehicles.** Acoustic camera technology was first used in 2020 in London, with Kensington and Chelsea Council installing and using a number of cameras on its streets. Residents of the up-market borough had flooded the council with complaints of loud supercar and motorbike engines, prompting the introduction of the noise cameras. More than 90% of residents said revving, speeding or rapid accelerations affected them in their homes. The scheme is designed to target drivers making “excessive noise”, which can land some drivers with fines.

Noise cameras have also been introduced in New York and Paris. Paris has switched on its first noise radar as part of a plan to fine loud motorcycles and other vehicles in one of Europe’s noisiest cities. They are able to measure the noise level of moving vehicles and to identify their licence plate. In the next few months the city will test whether the radar can accurately identify the number plates of roaring motorcycles or cars, after which the equipment will have to be officially approved by authorities by the end of 2022. Paris plans to start issuing fines from early 2023, while the government deploys more noise radars in other French cities.

This is all a promising start but there is a long way to go. Noise from ‘boom’ cars remains a big problem for people in certain parts of the UK. This video filmed by a resident in Manchester provides a graphic illustration of the problem: <https://youtu.be/NR1Lokkp28>. And, of course, the problem is not confined to cars. Some motorbikes present a problem. Nor is it confined to urban areas. The noise can shatter the peace of the countryside.

**Noise from ‘boom’ cars remains a big problem for people in certain parts of the UK. This video filmed by a resident in Manchester provides a graphic illustration of the problem: <https://youtu.be/NR1Lokkp28>.**

**For further information on boom cars:**

<http://www.lowertheboom.org/problem.htm>

**For assistance to tackle the noise, anti-social behaviour laws may help:**

<https://asbhelp.co.uk/noisy-neighbours-noise/>



# PUTTING NOISE INTO ENERGY

The Government has announced its new energy strategy. It features up to eight nuclear reactors & an expansion of off-shore wind but no real easing of permission for onshore wind that can cause significant noise problems: <https://bbc.co.uk/news/business-61010605>. We've called for a noise audit of all energy policies. Below are extracts from our report.



**Nuclear** has been described as “the silent giant of today’s energy system.” There is not much more to say about its noise impacts. However, it has been a controversial source of energy so the report explores other aspects of nuclear. It concludes that, once up and running, nuclear is quiet, clean and safe.

**Solar:** The available evidence suggests, as long as solar farms are not sited within a few hundred feet of a property noise should not be a problem. There is less unanimity about the noise from rooftop panels. It is agreed inverters make a humming noise while converting energy. And that can create a noise nuisance in a person’s home. There could be problems in rented properties where tenants have little control over the siting of inverters or in blocks of flats where the panels may belong to somebody else.

**Fracking:** There is no argument that fracking causes noise. The dispute is around the extent it can be mitigated. There is also the separate problem that heavy lorries serving a site could be disturbing.

**Wind turbines** create noise problems. It is a fact which should never have been in dispute. It only ever was because a rapacious wind power industry, often buoyed by generous subsidies, claimed there was no problem. The World Health Organisation has shown quite convincingly that wind turbines cause noise problems. In fact, people start to get annoyed at lower levels by wind turbine noise than by any other noise. This is due in part to the high level of low-frequency in wind turbine noise. The industry has reluctantly admitted there may be noise problems and is talking about mitigation measures or offering people money who live beside turbines. Distance from the nearest residential property is critical as low-frequency noise can travel some distance and can penetrate buildings.

The full report can be found at:

[http://www.uknoiseassociation.com/uploads/4/1/4/5/41458009/noise\\_audit.pdf](http://www.uknoiseassociation.com/uploads/4/1/4/5/41458009/noise_audit.pdf)



# OVER 100 AMERICAN CITIES BAN LEAF BLOWERS



**More than 100 cities in America have banned gas leaf blowers.** Blowers can produce up to 100 decibels of low-frequency noise, around the same as a plane taking off. That level of noise will cause hearing problems. Most of the sound coming from a leaf blower is a combination of the engine, blades, and expelled air. This means there is a strong low-frequency element in the noise. This causes additional problems. Put simply, sounds with a lower frequency travel a greater distance than high-frequency sounds. Lower frequency also has a more penetrating capacity. You might think that the walls in your house are thick enough to block the onrushing sound but that is rarely the case. Even if you are in the furthest part of your home, you will still hear the blower as if it was held right next to you. This means that the noise is not limited to the user and a small, surrounding area. Instead, this sound reverberates throughout the neighborhood.

**The strong low-frequency element in the noise causes it to travel much further**

**They also emit serious levels of air pollution. Just 30 minutes use can emit the same amount of hydrocarbons as driving a pickup truck from Texas to Alaska**

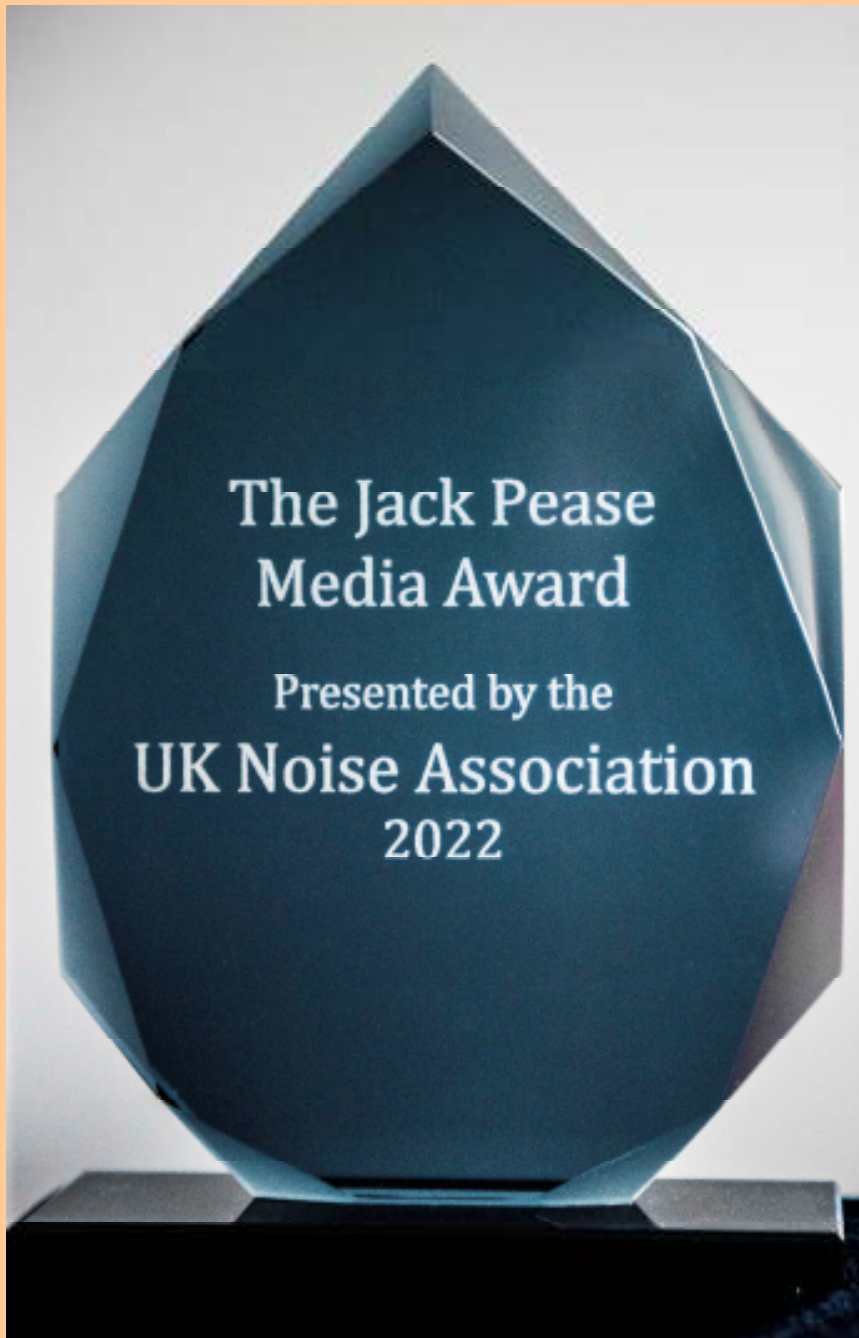
Even at 800 meters away a conventional leaf blower is still over the 55 dB limit considered safe by the World Health Organization: <https://youtu.be/FDJY1EuhLwI> This level of harsh noise can have adverse effects on a person's

physical and mental well-being, as well as their social behavior. But leaf blowers also emit serious levels of air pollution. [A 2011 study found](#) that just 30 minutes of using a leaf blower in the yard can emit the same amount of hydrocarbons as driving a pickup truck from Texas to Alaska. There are increasing concerns about their use in the UK and calls for them to be banned.

**A petition to ban noisy leaf blowers in the UK**

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/asblow-campaign-to-outlaw-noisy-polluting-leaf-blowers>

# UK NOISE ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES ANNUAL AWARD



The UK Noise Association has announced that it will present **The Jack Pease Media Award** each year to the journalist, newspaper or other media outlets which has contributed most to the noise debate in a particular year.

The award is in honour of Jack Pease, the premier noise journalist of his time. Jack ran Noise Bulletin, the first port of call for noise professionals and campaigners, for 23 years from 1999 until its final issue in March this year.

**The first winner of the award is Jack himself:**



**NOISE**  
March 2022 Issue 160 final issue **BULLETIN**





## Listen Out!

Our regular slot that gives you the chance to sound off!

This issue we feature Jack Pease's typically spirited words as he signed off after 23 years editing Noise Bulletin

So we can sign off with some predictions:

▶ **Vehicle noise:** the problem is now so bad that even the *Daily Mail* is welcoming the introduction of noise cameras by some enlightened councils. Central government is too hopeless to act so far, but we believe it might now be shamed into stopping pointless popping and roaring;

▶ **Heat pump noise:** putting rattly, tonal and cycling heat pumps near sleeping folks' windows will prove disastrous. All the information is out there (heat pumps are bad neighbours in the quiet of the night) but warnings are being ignored;

▶ **Drones:** Perhaps the worst imaginable noise outside your window, not at ground level but at bedroom level. Next door's young folk ordering beer and pizzas in the small hours via a drone drop - what could possibly go wrong!;

▶ **Permitted development rights:** Oh dear. It may be okay to put office blocks near busy roads but converting them to flats without planners' input on noise concerns will be create developments akin to shanty towns;

▶ **Collapse of EHOs:** More shootings and stabbings are inevitable as a result of being unable to get past Noiseapp hurdles and make complaints to real people capable of using their expert judgment to assess a nuisance. For the wealthy few, lawyers await your custom to launch private prosecutions.

I hope you've enjoyed my attempts to report the world of noise (with as few complicated numbers as possible) as much as I have enjoyed writing about it.

Thanks for your past support and goodbye!

## New Website Address

We have got a new website address:  
<http://www.uknoiseassociation.com/>

With new features

Check it out!

## Help! I've got a noise problem!

You can contact:

**The Noise Abatement Society**

<https://noiseabatementociety.org/>

Helpline on 01273 823 850;

email [info@noise-abatement.org](mailto:info@noise-abatement.org)

The Noise Abatement Society also carries out a range of activities including research and lobbying

Or contact **ASB Help**, a charity which aims to provide information and advice to victims of anti-social behaviour

<https://asbhelp.co.uk/noisy-neighbours-noise/>

**Noisedirect**  
08453 31 32 30

Independent, impartial advice line from noise professionals

*The Bottom Rung* is a quarterly journal published online by Cut Noise:  
<http://www.uknoiseassociation.com/>

We are always looking for contributions, be it articles or opinion pieces.

Email [johnstewart2@btconnect.com](mailto:johnstewart2@btconnect.com)

Our blog site is at:

<https://www.cutnoise2day.co.uk/>

Twitter: @cutnoise