

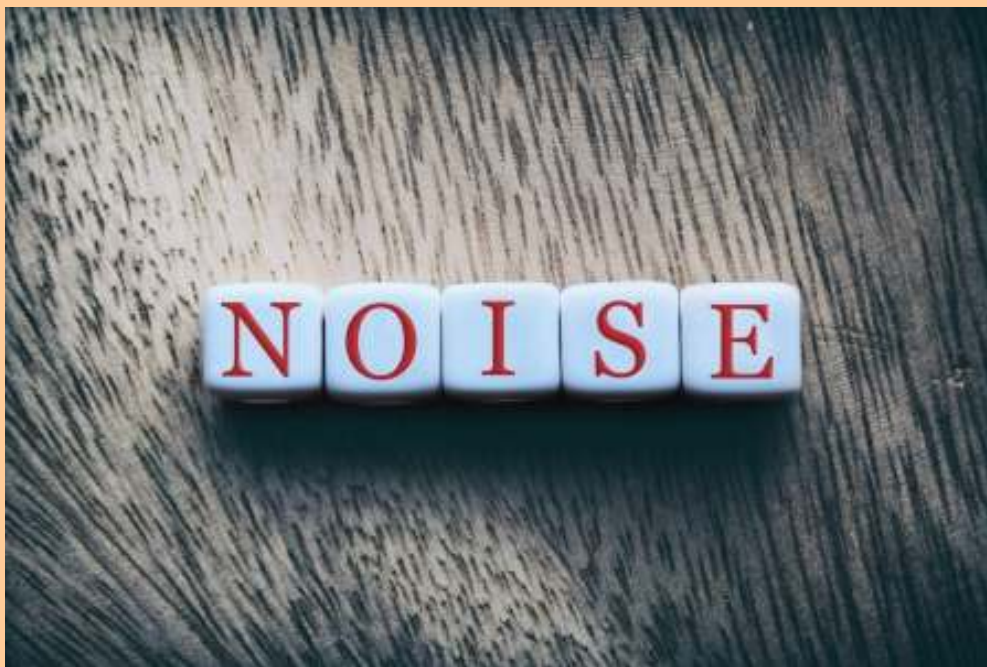
# **THE BOTTOM RUNG**

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

**Looking forward; seeking solutions**

**Autumn 2023**

## **“MOST IMPORTANT INVESTIGATION INTO NOISE FOR MANY DECADES”**



*"Artificial sources of noise are near-ubiquitous in the modern world"*

The House of Lords recent Inquiry could turn out to be one of the most important investigations into noise for many decades. It was comprehensive and its recommendations are potentially far-reaching. It gives Government ammunition to move noise up the agenda.

The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee's report into noise and light pollution (1) was published in July. It found 'noise pollution contributes to annoyance and can increase risks for stroke and heart disease'. The Government must respond by the end of the year.

*"Our report finds that environmental noise and light remain neglected pollutants, poorly understood and poorly regulated, despite their potential negative health impacts".*

The Committee wants Government to build on the current Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) which was published in March 2010, setting out the Government's long-term vision for noise policy.

**It recommends:**

**1. An independent advisory panel should be set up to provide independent advice to the Government.**

**2. An overall noise reduction target should be introduced. The target would be based on reducing exposure to noise. It would provide a clear objective to be met and stimulate action to achieve it.**

**3. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should set out what resources local authorities should have to tackle noise effectively.** The Committee felt DEFRA (the Government department responsible for noise) 'does not appear to be receiving the information it needs to conclude whether its policies are being effectively implemented by local authorities.'

**4. Noise must not lose out to decarbonisation.** There has been a real danger that noise will lose out in the rush to decarbonise. The Committee is clear this must not be allowed to happen. It said, 'The move to net zero requires widespread infrastructure changes, for example the possible widespread use of heat pumps and electric cars, which may have implications for noise pollution.' It recommended 'the Government should take steps to ensure that the implications of the technological shifts required for net zero and adapting to climate change for noise pollution are understood and addressed early on'.

(1). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldsctech/232/23202.htm>

## **NOISE MANIFESTO LAUNCHED**

The UK Noise Association launched its Noise Manifesto in early October. It is on our website. It is intended to influence the political parties as they draw up their policies in the run-up to a General Election (expected in 2024) and the next Government in formulating policy after it takes office. A special London noise manifesto will be published in the New Year to try to influence the elections for London Mayor and the London Assembly next May. In a series of short papers we lay out what can be done to tackle noise. They build on the Select Committee report, with a focus on solutions.

**There are short papers covering**

- The Need for a Noise Strategy
- Noise and Energy
- Roads and Traffic
- Aircraft Noise
- Rail Noise
- Neighbour Noise
- Community Noise
- Background Music
- Drones and Air Taxis

The papers are on our website: <http://www.uknoiseassociation.com/>



# IT'S SUMMERTIME IN THE CITY

*Summertime, and the livin' is **noisy*** (with apologies to Louis Armstrong)



The picture above is of a party, with a sound system in the foreground, taking place in Soho Square in Central London this summer. The historic square is a public space but throughout the summer people saw fit to blast their private music across the square. When we approached one individual he told us he was a DJ and 'wanted to bring his music for the public to enjoy'!

But Central London was not alone. Across the towns and cities of the UK, as well as in many places in Europe, there has been an explosion of loud, amplified outdoor music. Some of this has come from officially-sanctioned concerts but much of it is the result of individuals feeling free to play their music in public places. Many of these public places are close to where people live or work. There is also a growing problem with busking. On the whole, people like buskers but at times their amplified music can be so loud that it dominates the surrounding area. The UK Noise Association is carrying out a survey of busking which we will report on in the next issue. There is also a growing tendency for restaurants and cafes to slide open their frontages in the summer, blasting loud music on to the street.

# LOUDER THAN A JET AT HEATHROW

These gentlemen at London's Leicester Square reached over 100 decibels. But they were outdone by a pair further up the road – 110 decibels, louder than a jet departing Heathrow. The Irish national broadcast network RTÉ reported that local businesses in the town of Killarney are “turning up their amplifiers and putting speakers outside their premises in an attempt to outperform the noise from buskers. Who wins? Certainly not the residents.

**Outdoor music is a big problem across Europe.** In Madrid and Barcelona, where the outdoor music and partying can go on well into the night, there are regular demonstrations. In Brussels and Paris there are well-established residents' organizations which campaign for greater control of open-air eating and drinking.

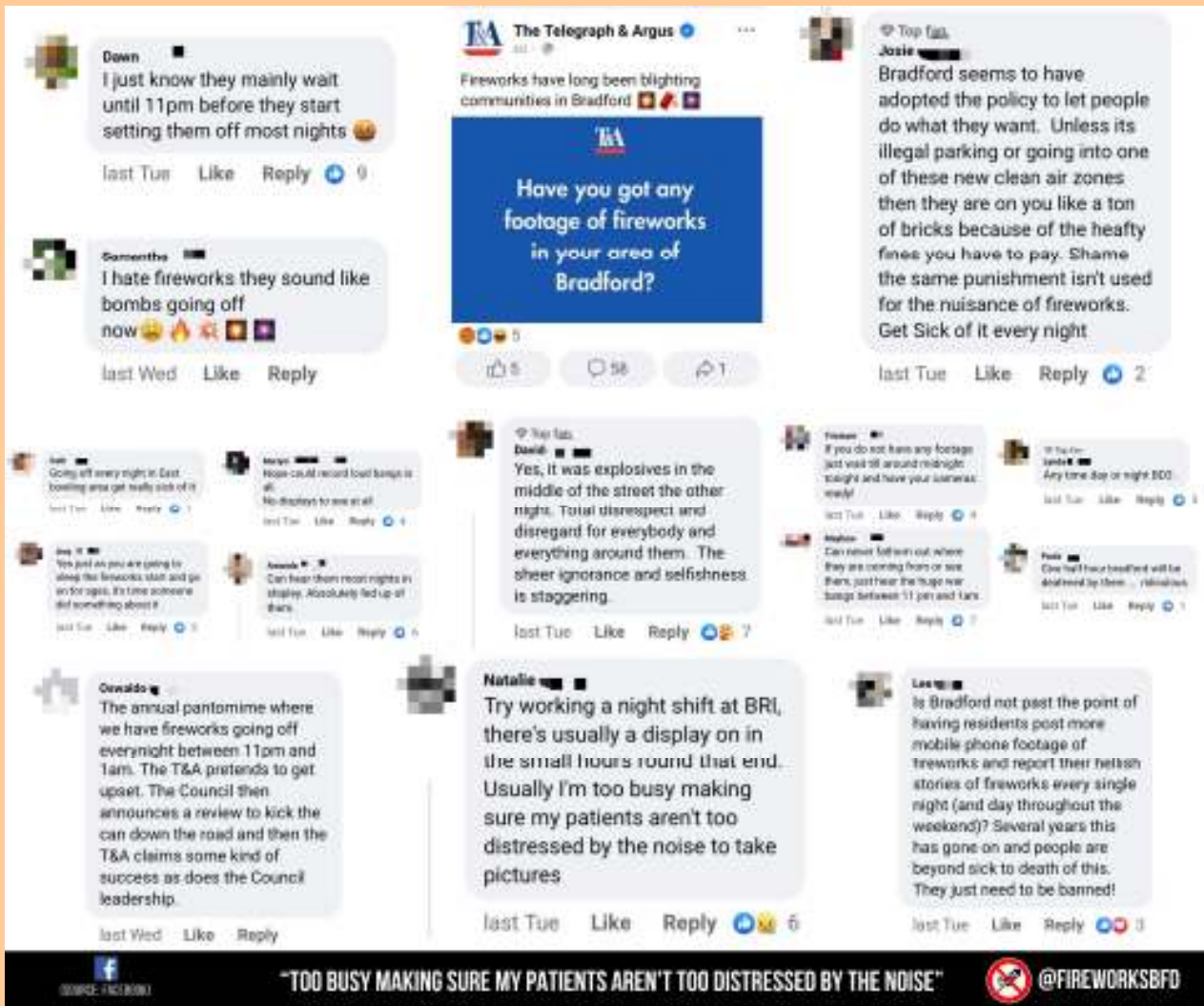
**But summer noise can also be a problem closer to home.** The journalist Charlotte Gill tweeted this: *Last night my neighbours had a house party til 4am. I asked them three times in total in person to turn the music down, including climbing over the roof so I had a bird's eye view of them! Discovered the council AND police do not come - so you have no back up.*



This gentleman, who set up in a residential street in North London, was moved by the local authority after complaints by residents. Unless more authorities take action, there is a danger of the situation spiralling out of control. In many part of the country there are by-laws to deal with music (including busking) in public places. These need to be properly enforced. For the worst offenders, there is also the national anti-social behaviour legislation. But local authorities need to get their own house in order. Many of them are responsible for the large parks and open spaces in their area. Increasingly,

these are let out during the summer months for large concerts. Most residents are prepared to accept a small number of concerts in their local part as long as the music – and particularly the base systems – are kept within reasonable limits and that the event does not go into the night. But we have had reports where the noise can be heard several miles away. This cannot be acceptable. Local authorities and, where relevant, the Police need to up their game.

# BRADFORD: FIREWORKS CAPITAL OF THE UK



Bradford is the fireworks capital of the UK. For 20 years residents have been asking the local council to take action. But it still goes on night after night after night. This moving clip shows the impact the on children's sleep: <https://t.co/vOkBqdJmsV>. Above is a selection of recent comments. The local MP, Robbie Moore, raised the issue in Parliament on 8<sup>th</sup> September. Bradford is the most extreme example but across the UK fireworks are causing noise problems to people and animals. Scotland has tighter laws on fireworks and there have been repeated attempts to tighten UK law, only to be rebuffed.

In our view, there needs to be:

- Only Public displays permitted
- Displays limited to certain days of the year
- Tight rules on the sale of fireworks
- A ban on the loudest fireworks

The Bradford Firework Campaign can be contacted on

[https://www.facebook.com/FireworkDamage/posts/2953006724739070/?paipv=0&eav=AfadIIUWKBpL AaB2SmmM1BqJLMV6UbBDb1qx9Clp5gb98703xGO-qvGbfDKTUhNWbU&\\_rd](https://www.facebook.com/FireworkDamage/posts/2953006724739070/?paipv=0&eav=AfadIIUWKBpL AaB2SmmM1BqJLMV6UbBDb1qx9Clp5gb98703xGO-qvGbfDKTUhNWbU&_rd)

# DRIVERS BACK NOISE CAMERAS

Drivers want to see cameras that can automatically detect vehicles with illegally loud exhausts or whose engines are revved unnecessarily rolled out across the UK, according to new RAC research.

Six-in-10 drivers (58%) questioned by the RAC said they would be in favour of so-called 'noise cameras' being widely used once the findings of the Department for Transport's £300,000 trials, which began last October, are revealed. Only a fifth (22%) were against the idea, with a similar proportion (20%) unsure.



The cameras, which are triggered by a number of microphones, can pinpoint vehicles exceeding the 74-decibel legal limit as they pass by. Pictures of vehicle numberplates together with recordings of the vehicle noise are then used by local police to identify and fine drivers. Trials took place in Bradford, Great Yarmouth, Birmingham and South Gloucestershire near Bristol.

A third (34%) of those who took part in the RAC study said they regularly hear loud revving engines or excessively loud exhausts. This rose to nearly half of drivers in London (47%) and to 40% in Wales and Scotland. Half of all drivers (51%) questioned said they occasionally hear one or more vehicles with particularly loud exhausts.

Asked for their opinions about whether the current £50 on-the-spot fine for a vehicle breaching the 74-decibel limit is appropriate, drivers were split. Four-in-10 (39%) felt the fine had been set at the right level whereas 37% disagreed, and a quarter (24%) were undecided. Of those who felt the fine wasn't severe enough, 43% thought it should carry a £200 fine and a driving ban until the exhaust was found to comply with the legal decibel limit. Among Londoners this shot up to more than two-thirds (67%).

**58% backed noise cameras,  
with only 22% against**

RAC head of policy Simon Williams said: "Our research with drivers shows there is a very strong desire to put an end to the scourge of excessively noisy vehicles that disturb the peace all around the country. "It's plain wrong that those who have fitted their cars with modified exhausts, some motorbike riders and supercar owners can currently just get away with making an unacceptable amount of noise. Fortunately, the Department for Transport's recent noise camera trials may provide the solution. We hope the findings are positive and that the technology can be quickly and cost-efficiently rolled out to the worst affected areas. There is no good reason why cars and motorbikes should make so much noise, so the sooner effective camera enforcement can be put in place the better."

Roads Minister Richard Holden said: "Boy racers are an anti-social menace and we have extensively trialled noise camera technology in various parts of the country over the past year. We are currently analysing data from the trials and will update in due course on any future measures which will help bring peace and tranquillity back to our towns, cities and villages."

**Full article:** [https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/motoring-news/six-in-10-want-noise-cameras-rolled-out/#:~:text=Six%2Din%2D10%20drivers%20\(%2Csimilar%20proportion%20\(20%25\)%20unsure.](https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/motoring-news/six-in-10-want-noise-cameras-rolled-out/#:~:text=Six%2Din%2D10%20drivers%20(%2Csimilar%20proportion%20(20%25)%20unsure.)

# Listen and Watch!

A selection of watchable noise videos

<https://youtu.be/QKrFXZ-0E7w>

An outstanding video, shot in London, from our friends at SoundPrint. How noisy are London neighborhoods Covent Garden and Soho? Is it safe to have a conversation in a busy food hall? Is the public aware of safe noise levels?

[https://youtu.be/kFh\\_OdMb5v8](https://youtu.be/kFh_OdMb5v8)

How noise is all around us and silence is hard to find. Refreshing, fun, watchable

<https://youtu.be/FDJY1EuhLwI>

Leaf Blowers

<https://youtu.be/f7DQ3SgSg0c>

Living 1600ft from a wind turbine

<https://youtu.be/gd-k0rHS-DM>

Traffic: noise from M8 in Central Glasgow

<https://youtu.be/NR1ILokkp28>

'Boom' cars in Manchester

<https://youtu.be/G2fDzqgg23Y>

Loud music ruins Soho Square in London (listen first with the sound off)

[Bradford noise-detecting camera to crack down on boy racers - BBC News](#)

Widespread coverage in papers on the roll-out of noise cameras.

<https://youtu.be/dBVCU8xuG9E>

When will we start taking noise pollution seriously?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMGniph-uPo>

A fascinating discussion by campaigners from 4 continents discussing aviation noise. Part of UECNA's recent conference: [www.uecna.eu](http://www.uecna.eu)

## Website Address

<http://www.uknoiseassociation.com/>

Reports, Briefings, Blogs, News  
Check it out!

## Become a Member

We have introduced a new membership scheme. Members will receive our briefings and reports as well as invites to our events. No fixed annual fee but we suggest £20.

Email [jdm.stewart@virgin.net](mailto:jdm.stewart@virgin.net) for details

## 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 advice line from noise professionals

*The Bottom Rung* is a quarterly journal, edited by John Stewart. 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