

THE BOTTOM RUNG

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

Looking forward; seeking solutions

Spring 2024

LABOUR COULD FAST-TRACK ONSHORE WIND TURBINES

Although no detailed plans have emerged, Labour in Government is expected to fast-track onshore turbines. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer told last year's party conference he would "fight the blockers" to build more wind and solar farms and "lay the cables our future prosperity needs". More recently, writing in the Telegraph (1), shadow farming minister Daniel Zeichner said Labour would "put money into the pockets of thousands of farmers and landowners"



by allowing them to profit from the generation of clean power. There have been very few onshore wind turbines built in England in recent years since the Government tightened up the regulations. Labour is expected to loosen them. There are fears in rural communities there will be a repeat of what one resident said was 'the free for all' last time Labour was in power. It left a legacy of noise problems.

(1). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/01/18/labour-fast-track-countryside-wind-turbines-solar-net-zero/>

Meanwhile in Slovakia

The Public Health Office has issued new guidelines for the assessment of noise and vibration at wind power plants. Plants with 150-metre high towers must now be located at least 3 kilometres from inhabited areas. The guidelines apply to all the projects that are currently in the permitting phase; these are collectively worth €1.4 billion. The Economy Ministry says it wants to negotiate with the office to remove the condition, saying it represents a barrier to the development of wind energy.

IMPOSSIBLE TO COMMISSION A MAJOR REPORT ON WIND TURBINES AND HEAT PUMPS AND NOT MENTION NOISE?

READ ON.....



Possible has managed the impossible. The climate charity, Possible, has commissioned a major report on wind turbines and heat pumps without mentioning the word noise. The report, done in conjunction with energy experts Regen, sets out to make the case that community wind farms could be the key to slashing energy bills by powering heat pumps. It says they could cut household bills by more than a quarter compared to gas heating. It also argues, if houses are installed with solar panels and batteries to reduce the reliance on the grid for power, that can cut the costs by as much as 31% compared to gas central heating. It argues that community-owned wind farms can generate revenues and benefits for the local area, it argues. <https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/wind-powered-heat>

The noise problems caused by wind turbines are well-documented and, as we reported in the last issue of The Bottom Rung, the Government has acknowledged that noise from heat pumps can be a problem <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6568b7b95936bb000d3167ef/ashp-planning-regulations-review-main-report.pdf> It found that 25% of people reported noise problems from heat pumps. People most often talk about a low rumbling noise. It is thought this 'tonality' is part of the problem. Sweden and Finland have cut permitted noise levels by 5 decibels to account for tonality. The UK continues to have one of the highest permitted levels in Europe. The Government said it is carrying out "an independent review of existing evidence on noise emissions and planning standards. In view of all this it is impossible to deny noise is an issue.

PIONEERING SMALL NUCLEAR REACTORS TO BUILT IN NE ENGLAND



The giant company Westinghouse has signed an agreement with Community Nuclear Power Limited (CNP) for the construction of four AP300 small modular reactors (SMRs) in the North Teesside region of northeast England. It would be the UK's first privately-financed SMR fleet.

CNP said. "This is the first privately funded project deploying SMRs anywhere in Europe, and our goal is to be generating clean energy with in ten years' time. There is mature market-led demand in Teesside for clean, reliable energy - in this instance a programme to build a specialised site that provides green sustainable power for the region and supports the development of a Green Energy and Chemical Hub on the North Tees Group Estate."

The UK Government has plans to expand nuclear energy capacity to 24 GW by 2050, with a fleet of SMRs a key part of that strategy. Last year, the Government and the new GBN arms-length body set up to help deliver that extra capacity began the selection process for which SMR technology to use. In October, EDF, GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy, Holtec, NuScale Power, Rolls Royce SMR and Westinghouse were invited to bid for UK government contracts in the next stage of the process.

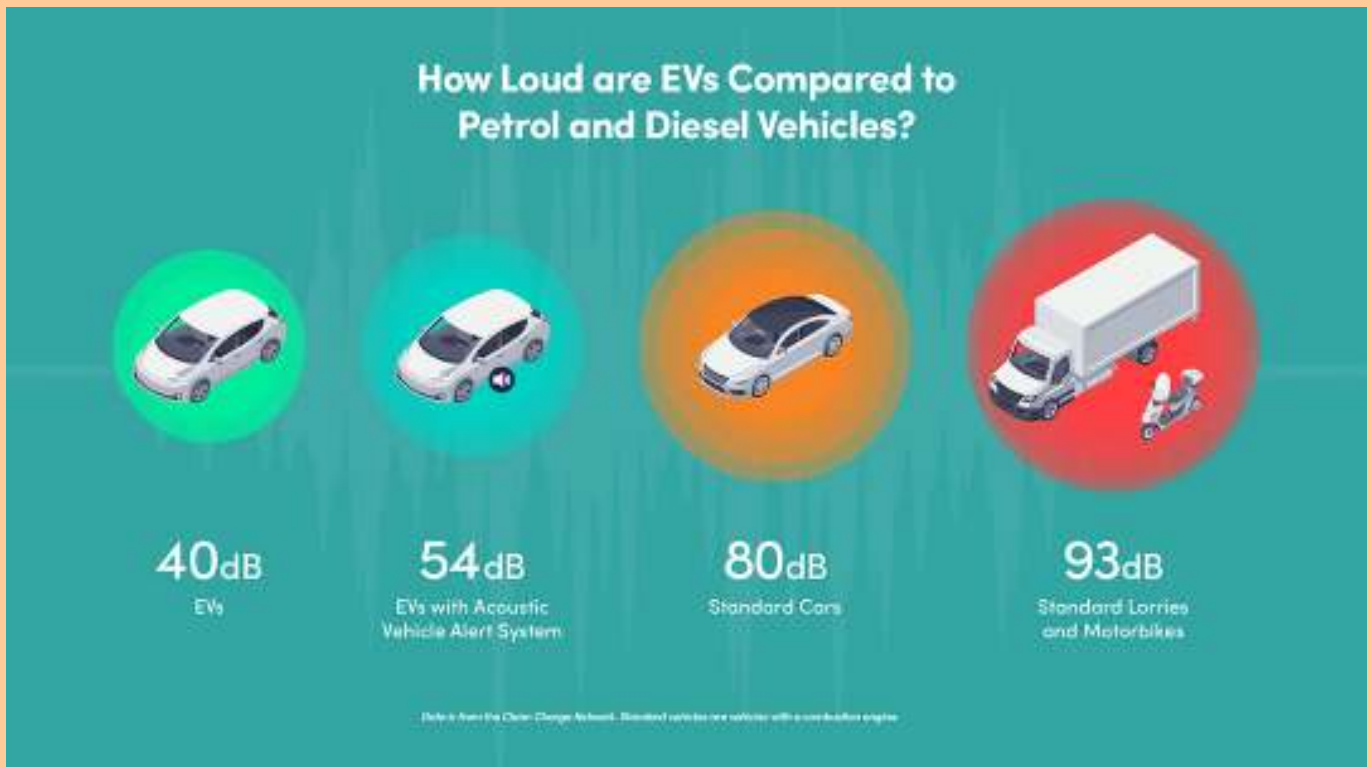
"We are at the final stages now of preparing and getting the approvals for the invitation to submit an initial tender document," GBN chairman Simon Bowen said. "This is the next stage where all six companies will engage with our contractual documentation in terms of how we think it should be structured. They'll submit the responses in their initial tender, we will then go through a process to down-select to around about four with the aim to be placing contracts later in the year."

NUCLEAR: QUIET ENERGY

When we interviewed the leading American acoustician Robert Rand in 2023 he told us nuclear was 'a whole new magnitude' quieter and more productive [than other types of renewable energy]. The noise from the cooling towers and pumps can be controlled. Only a water sound need remain which is not unpleasant." In other words, nuclear is not a noise problem for neighbouring communities. Both Labour and the Conservatives are committed to an expansion of nuclear.

The full article is here: <https://world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Agreement-for-UK-fleet-of-AP300-reactors>

COULD EVs SOLVE THE TRAFFIC NOISE PROBLEMS ON OUR STREETS?



Electric vehicles are a lot quieter than conventional ones. So quiet, it's becoming mandatory in many areas around the world that they produce a sound to alert pedestrians to them. The EVs and hybrids must make a noise above 56dB when a vehicle is 12mph and under using an acoustic vehicle alert system (AVAS). EVs are much quieter compared to petrol and diesel as they don't have a combustion engine. This means the only sound they generate is from the tyres on the road and the wind resistance.

However, there is a caveat. EVs only reduce noise at speeds of up to about 35mph. Above that, tyre noise rather than engine noise dominates. But for built up areas EV offer the real prospect of noise reduction. If that is combined with lower speed limits and the use of quieter road surfaces, noise from traffic could be cut considerably.

Meanwhile in Paris

The decibel levels you can expect to hear are appearing below the names of some streets.



MEMORABLE IMAGES AND QUOTABLE QUOTES



"It was loud enough in the day. At night, as the village fell silent, it was unbearable...."

Wind Industry Rides Roughshod Over India's Rural Communities

"Maybe someone will one day find the courage to tackle this scourge of our European tourist cities. How many people deprived of sleep very regularly, all year round due to this noise coming from the commercial exploitation of public spaces? 200,000? 500,000?"

Météo BRUIT Paris

@MeteoBruitParis



"My new headphone mission today has been less successful. Man on the train listening to music and crashing sounds (like sword fighting in a video game). I stood up and walked over to his vicinity, and said "is that yours?" He said "what?" And I said "the music?" I looked around and it was only him in the compartment, so I said "do you have headphones?" He said he can't afford any, and if I have a problem I can move down the train. I said "you can move down the train." I've decided not to push it for Darwinian reasons."

Journalist Charlotte Gill @CharlotteCGill

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 johnstewart2@btconnect.com for details

Website Address

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

Reports, Briefings, Blogs, News
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

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

Our blog site is at:

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

Twitter: @cutnoise

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

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/qd-k0rHS-DM>

Traffic: noise from M8 in Central Glasgow

<https://youtu.be/NR1Lokkp28>

'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

You'll find more videos on our website.