

THE BOTTOM RUNG

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

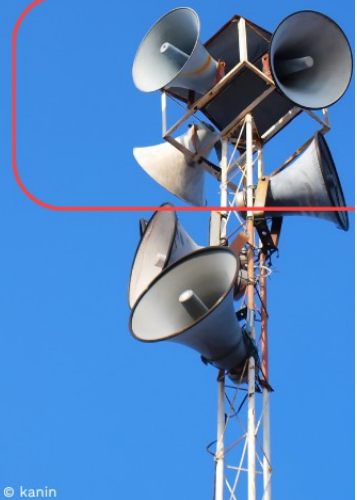
Looking forward; seeking solutions

Spring 2026

NOISE ACTION WEEK RELAUNCHED

Save the date for
**Noise Action
Week**

11 - 15 May



Adobe stock © kanin

Noise Action Week has been relaunched after a break of some years. It will run from 11th-15th May. It is being organised by EPIC, part of the Institution of Environmental Sciences and is being supported by some of the biggest names in noise (logos below). It has been relaunched to raise awareness of the 'Forgotten Pollutant'. Ellie Savage, Policy Lead at the Institution of Environmental Sciences and coordinator of the week, said: "Unwanted noise is more than an inconvenience - it is a serious public health issue. Noise Action Week puts this important message centre stage."

For details of a packed week and how to get involved: <https://www.the-ies.org/noise-action-week>



The Royal
Environmental
Health Institute
of Scotland

ANNUAL SURVEY REVEALS MORE THAN 350,000 NOISE COMPLAINTS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



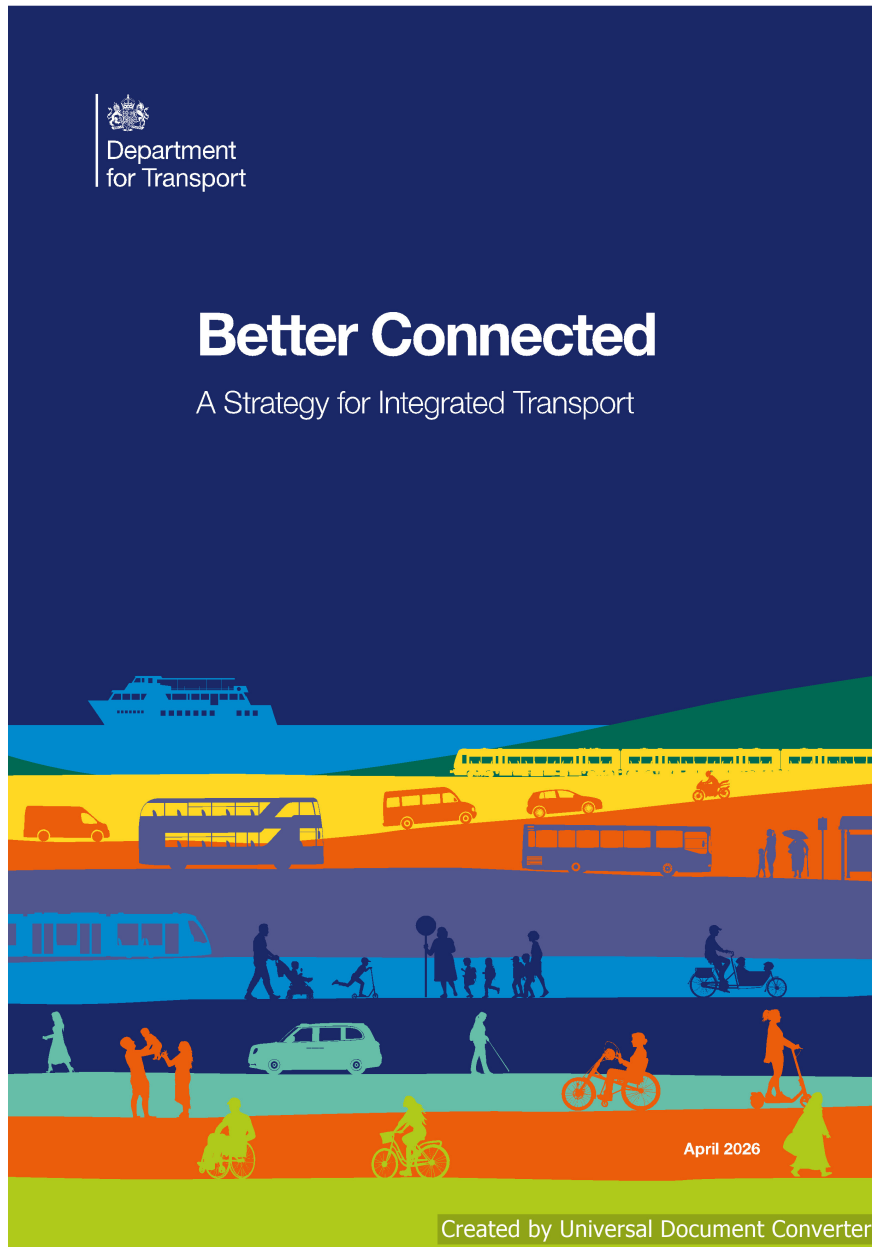
The [Noise Complaint Data Briefing 2026](#) covering England and Wales and compiled by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) provides the most up-to-date national overview of noise complaints received between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025. It is the first dataset of its kind published by CIEH since 2020/2021 and includes several new categories of noise sources, reflecting the changing nature of the built environment and public health needs.

Key findings at a glance

- More than 305,000 noise complaints were recorded across England and Wales - around 850 complaints per day and a drop since 2021, which covered the period of the three COVID-19 lockdowns.
- There was a stark drop in the amount of enforcement action undertaken by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), with only 2,282 abatement notices issued during the reporting period - a 72% decrease over 20 years.
- Just 190 prosecutions were lodged - a 71% drop compared with the equivalent period two decades ago.
- There were 103 complaints about air source heat pumps (ASHPs), with the highest number in the South West.
- There were 326 complaints about noise from holiday lets (e.g., Airbnbs).

With a 92% local authority response rate, it is one of the most representative noise datasets CIEH has produced in recent years. For the first time, the survey includes complaints about emerging noise sources such as ASHPs and short-term holiday lets.

GOVERNMENT TRANSPORT STRATEGY WEAK ON NOISE



The Government's Integrated Transport Policy, published just before Easter, has less than a page focused on noise (page 47) https://lnkd.in/e7Aw_VRz. Nothing on quieter road surfaces, noise cameras, lower speed limits or electric cars to cut road noise (though the latter two are promoted for other reasons). No specifics to tackle rail noise despite proven techniques to do so. The noise from rails can be cut by 'polishing' which reduces the roughness of the rails and wheels. The vibrations which cause noise can be minimised with rail dampers. And big gains can come from cutting the noise of the wheels by replacing the brake pads used. Nothing about noise barriers which Richard Greer, Fellow and Director at Arup, has said "are very effective for railways because we can put them very close to the trains. A noise barrier can straightforwardly halve the wayside noise level, a 10-decibel or greater reduction.". On aviation, no discussion on alternating flight paths to provide respite or on best operational practice or on night flights. Noise remains the forgotten pollutant.

THE WEAKEST LINK ON NOISE: THE GOVERNMENT



Our chair John Stewart writes the void caused by Government inaction on noise is being filled by outside organisations.

When I go away I usually book my hotel through booking.com. After the stay they ask me to rate the hotel. They ask 'Did it meet your expectations, exceed your expectations or fail to meet your expectations?' Applied to the noise section of the Government's Transport Strategy, it met my expectations. I expected little and was not disappointed. But it reminded me how little the current Government is doing about noise. I don't mean the civil servants in DEFRA, the department which takes the lead on noise. There are just two of them – each of them part-time – which says everything about the way the Governments looks at noise. They are heroines, working wonders.

The running about noise is being made by those outside government.

- **Acoustic firms and their umbrella bodies** like the Institute of Acoustics, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Institution of Environmental Sciences have stood against Government attempts in its consultations to water down the regulations on building standards, wind turbines and heat pumps.
- **Academics** have led the way on highlighting the links between noise and health.
- **New organisations like Noise Network Plus** have been formed to develop noise solutions using technology and engineering and have just awarded their first grants.
- **Local residents and businesses** have taken to the courts to challenge unacceptable noise levels from busking and padel courts.
- **Campaign groups** continue to work on neighbour noise, outdoor noise, noise in venues and traffic noise.
- **Even organisations like Heathrow** are taking the lead on aircraft noise from a third runway.

We all dream of the day when a Government will take seriously its responsibilities to the millions impacted by noise. Meanwhile, we'll all continue beavering away at the issue.

THE NEW NOISE ORGANISATION

MAKING WAVES - *QUIETLY*



Sownd Affects, just over a year old, is already being noticed in the noise world. At the end of this month it is launching Sownd Certified which will mean that the space you walk into will not be noisy. Marion Marincat – who became profoundly deaf at 26 – created Sownd Affects in 2024 because he was tired of attending spaces that were too noisy for real connection, and of feeling wiped out by unfiltered sound and poorly designed environments. After founding leading hearing health company, Hearology, launching hearing clinics in Greater London and speaking to hundreds of people about their hearing challenges, he found he wasn't alone. So, he decided to do something about it. He wanted to create a company that not only bridged the gap between businesses investing in acoustic design and people desperate for

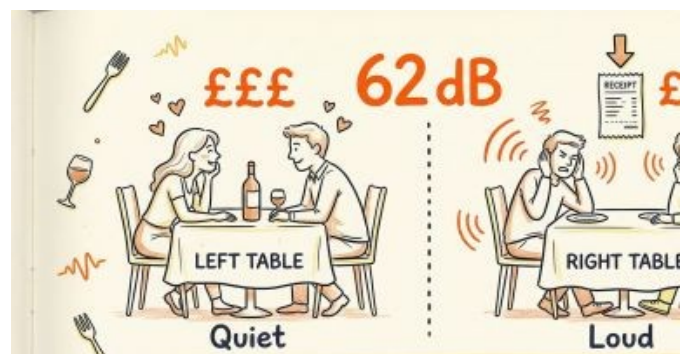
quieter, more intelligible spaces, but also provided a way for those businesses to showcase their achievements. Marion built Sownd Affects based on his own lived experience, 20 years of industry experience and 10 years of research and development. An expert in audio inclusivity, he's secured innovation grants, played a key role in global policy as a WHO World Hearing Forum facilitator and launched major hearing health companies prior to Sownd Affects.

Marion writes about the launch of Sownd Certified:

We spent the last 12 months developing the Sownd Certification framework. After I'd spent 8 years in R&D mode, working with dozens of cross-field experts. Whenever I speak about acoustics and reverberation time, I can see people start thinking about... whatever is not as boring. Their lunch. A holiday. Literally anything else. So I knew that to save everyone from empty conversations about how to design for ears and connection, we had to build a trustworthy framework - and turn it into a badge. Something that translates into: "This space is Sownd Certified? Great, it means it's not going to be noisy." But when you combine psychoacoustics, hearing psychology, subjective preferences and building physics - you need rigour. Peer-reviewed, evidence-based rigour. That's why we commissioned the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research at the University of Southampton to independently assess and validate the framework. If ISVR couldn't sign it off, we weren't launching it. They signed it off last month. The technical validation was one part. We also spent months with the noise-sensitive communities and specifiers this is built for - focus groups, people who live with noise sensitivity every day or design spaces and is currently being reviewed by RNID.

Learn more about Sownd Affects:

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



IMPACTED BY NOISE

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

Noise Nuisance provides information and help from experts.

<https://noisenuisance.org/about-us/>

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/NR1lLokp28>

'Boom' cars in Manchester

<https://youtu.be/G2fDzqqg23Y>

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.