

THE BOTTOM RUNG

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

Looking forward; seeking solutions

Summer 2023

JOINT WINNERS OF ANNUAL NOISE AWARD



On International Noise Awareness Day on 26th April the UK Noise Association announced the winner of its annual Jack Pease Media Award presented to the individual or organisation which has done the most to raise the profile of noise during the course of the year. This year there were joint winners. SoundPrint, the New York-based organisation which developed the pioneering Noise App that enables people to measure the noise in a venue, and the UK-based Mumbli, which works with venues to improve the noise climate for customers. During the year the two organisation embarked on a joint project. Val Weedon, President of the UK Noise Association, said, "This is a well-deserved award. For years customers have been complaining about noise in venues. SoundPrint and Mumbli have come up with positive ways of tackling it".

Watch a short video of the award presentation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnPHCSYuRtM>

For more information on the work of the winners Mumbli and SoundPrint, check out their websites: <https://www.mumbli.com/> ; <https://www.soundprint.co/>

UK Noise Association gives evidence to ‘the most important parliamentary noise inquiry in 50 years’

It has been called the most important Parliamentary Inquiry into noise since the Wilson Inquiry published its groundbreaking report, Noise, in 1963. The much-respected House of Lords Science and Technology Committee is conducting an inquiry into noise and light pollution. It has taken evidence from the Institute of Acoustics, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Arup consultancy, Quiet Mark, the Noise Abatement Society and the UK Noise Association. It is expected to make its recommendations to the Government later this year. You can watch the session where we and the

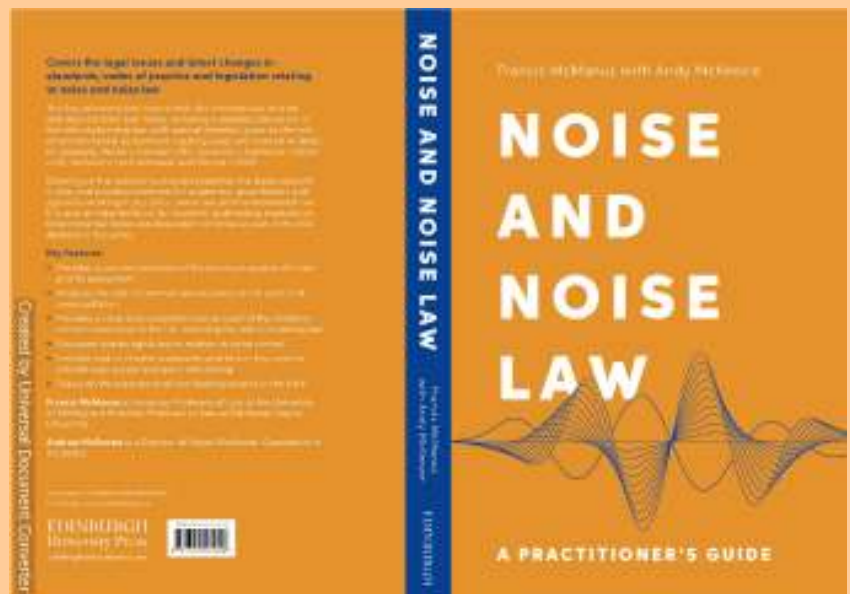


Noise Abatement Society gave evidence on this link (the noise section starts at 11.15).

<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/68e31b84-e74c-4378-bfa6-31cbb1aee372>

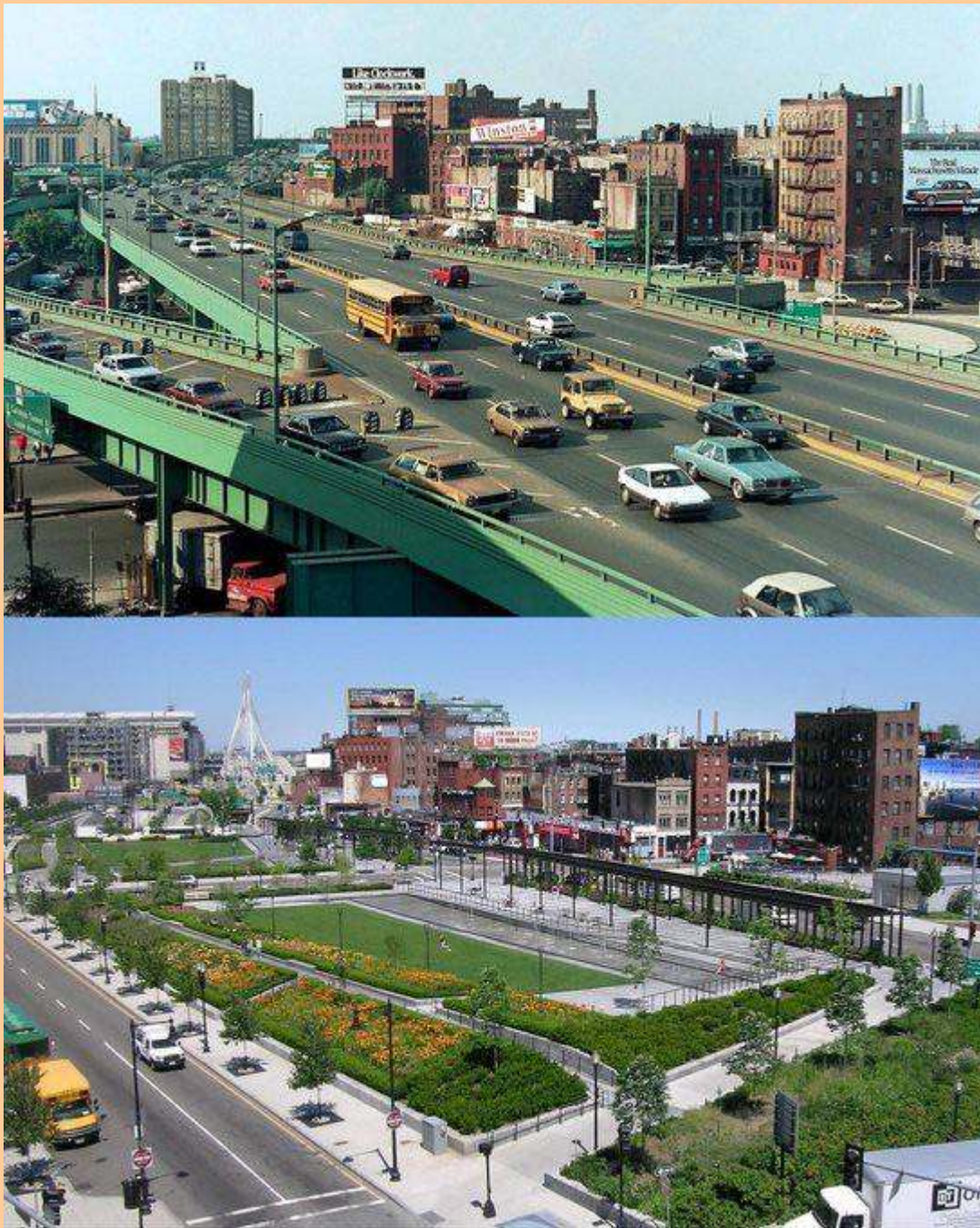
MAJOR NEW BOOK ON NOISE LAW TO BE PUBLISHED

A comprehensive book on noise law is set to be published at the end of May. Edinburgh University Press is publishing the work by Professor Francis McManus in association with Andrew McKenzie. Francis McManus is Honorary Professor of Law at the University of Stirling and Emeritus Professor of Law at Edinburgh University. Andrew McKenzie is a Director of Hayes McKenzie, consultants in acoustics. Drawing on the authors' expertise, the book provides a practical overview for academics, practitioners and agencies working in acoustics, noise law and environmental law.



- The launch, to be hosted by the UK Noise Association, will take place in Central London at 5.30pm on 23rd May. If you are interested in attending email johnstewart2@btconnect.com

IT HAPPENED IN BOSTON. WHY NOT IN GLASGOW AS WELL?



The M8 motorway cuts an ugly, noise, polluted swathe through the centre of Glasgow. It was built in the 1960s with the intention of linking the industries west of the city with the rest of Scotland. Last year The Bottom Rung featured the campaign group Replace the M8. It is starting to make an impact. Glasgow councillors have agreed to look for ways to "mitigate" the impact of the M8 in the short term before eventually seeking to downgrade the road. They will discuss a range of actions with the Scottish Government as the motorway is owned and controlled by Transport Scotland. If the M8 through Glasgow is seriously downgraded to allow for new homes and businesses to be built and parks to be created, it would need to be accompanied by a radical improvement in public transport to ensure the traffic does not simply migrate onto Glasgow's other motorways, the M74 and the M77.

REPLACING THE M8:

It may not be as madcap as some think

This article by its political correspondent Stewart Patterson first appeared in the Glasgow Times on April 6th. It provides a first-rate history of the M8, outlines some of the benefits of replacing it and looks at what other cities have done.



Nothing prepares you for that first encounter with the M8 on your first trip to Glasgow. Astonishing it's legal to house anyone within a kilometer of it.

Spotted on Twitter.

Talk of replacing the M8 through the city centre has been met with incredulity in some quarters.

The plan is to start discussions into the long-term future of the motorway from Townhead at the Royal Infirmary to West Street, south of the Kingston Bridge. Where would the traffic go? It will cause gridlock. It's anti-car, anti-growth, and anti-business. Just some of the responses to what is indeed a radical proposal for Glasgow.

But is it as madcap as many think? Other cities have taken similar action with major roads through their centres. Big cities in the USA, that car-loving, gas-guzzling petrol-based economy, have been ahead of the game in ripping up miles of freeway to create better spaces for people to enjoy. In San Francisco, a twin-deck motorway has been taken down. In Dallas, Texas, home of the oil barons, there is a plan to remove a freeway that cuts through the city centre. It's not only the USA. In Seoul, in South Korea, a major motorway has been removed. And in Europe, a motorway in the Spanish capital, Madrid, has been re-imagined with tunnels to allow a park at street level for people to enjoy. There are parallels with Glasgow, with the motorway running directly, through the city.

The damage done with the M8 through the centre was huge. At the time of construction, streets were cleared to make way for cars. Families, friends and communities were split up and scattered to the

outskirts as neighbourhoods disappeared in Townhead and Anderston to name but two. The damage continued as the road sliced through the city centre, separating it from the west and creating a massive pollution hotspot belching out fumes the people of Glasgow had to suck up, straight into their lungs. That continues today. To accommodate the M8 the built environment has been compromised and health has been endangered.

So, what have the other cities done?

In [San Francisco](#), State Route 480, the Embarcadero Freeway, a double-deck motorway, connected the Bay Bridge to the Golden Gate Bridge. One newspaper in the state said it was “a monstrous mistake” and “the ugliest thing we ever built”. When an earthquake hit the city in 1989 the freeway was damaged and the city took the opportunity to think differently. Rather than rebuild, the road was demolished and today it is a boulevard and promenade. And there are no calls to reinstate the freeway.

The [Dallas](#) Interstate 345 connects to other freeways but caused neighbourhoods to be cut off from one another and led to the areas below being run down and derelict. A current proposal is to replace it with an urban parkway and create space for people who want to move to the downtown area. Reports estimate that the plan could free up 245 acres for development, bring in 27,540 residents and create more than 20,000 jobs.

In [Seoul](#), in South Korea, the council has removed more than 15 expressways this century. The Ahyeon overpass was one. Another, the Cheonggyecheon expressway, was demolished in 2003 and replaced with an artificial river. The city has used the spaces instead for cycleways and trams. In [Madrid](#), the M-30 has been diverted underground with tunnels to allow traffic to still flow through the city. But at street level, it has been replaced with park areas, footpaths, cycle paths and new housing.

These projects are not without cost. Demolition and redevelopment cost hundreds of millions of pounds. Maintaining the current network, however, is also expensive. The cost of the Woodside viaduct repairs going on just now, which is inside the zone earmarked by the council for a possible long-term replacement, is costing at least £100m for a very short stretch of road. [The examples around the world and there are many more, give credence to the thinking of those who want to replace the M8.](#)

Angus Millar, the council’s transport convenor, has said that the M8 is a 1950s solution to a 2030s problem. He suggests that if we were considering it now, the M8 would not go through the city. Edinburgh, for example, did not build a motorway through its historic centre. The M8 stopped to the west and it was years later before a bypass was built to connect with the A1, heading south. Former chancellor, Alastair Darling, was a councillor in the 1980s when there were plans to build a motorway through the capital. He later said: “If we hadn’t stopped it, the middle of Edinburgh would have been a completely different place from what it is today. “It would have been destroyed by these maniacs who wanted to build a stilted-up motorway as the way of the future.” We have an opportunity to re-think our city centre and serious conversation about transport, public and private, is needed. The planners of the past made a huge mistake in carving up the city for the M8, leaving a scar. The people of today can heal it and create a cleaner greener future for our city.

Bottom Rung editor John Stewart writes: I spent my teenage years in Edinburgh in the 1960s. The family had good friends in Glasgow whom we used to visit. Much of their neighbourhood was destroyed to make way for the M8. And make no mistake about it. For swathes of Glasgow, the M8 is not some distant road. Its constant din is an ever-present reality. An ever-present reality in some of the most deprived areas in Europe. The M8 was a child of the 60s; a creature of the 20th century. The high-tech entrepreneurs of the 21st tend to put value on a good quality of life and people-focused city centres. Replacing the M8 will be a huge challenge. Transport policy will need a fundamental rethink to ensure the economy thrives and traffic is not simply displaced on to other roads. But, as the article makes clear, other cities have done it successfully.

LANDLORDS TO GET POWER TO EVICT TENANTS WITH 2 WEEKS NOTICE

Two huge holes in neighbour noise policy will be plugged by measures announced by the Government at the end of March.

Landlords are to be given new powers to evict problematic tenants with two weeks' notice under government proposals to address antisocial behaviour. The measures would cover tenants who play loud music, use drugs, cause damage to the property or fall behind on their rent. All new private tenancy agreements will have to include clauses that specifically ban antisocial behaviour – and the notice period for eviction on these grounds will be cut from four weeks to a fortnight.

And the action plan also requires homeowners who rent out their properties on the [Airbnb](#) website to register on a new database that will make it easier for local councils to deal with complaints about problematic guests. It comes amid concerns about the potential [for Airbnb guests to cause trouble for quiet or residential communities](#).

Referencing noise problems, drunken behaviour and

disorderly conduct, the plan promises the creation of a new registration scheme that would provide councils with the data to identify short-term lets in their areas. If any short-term rental property proved “problematic”, local officials could take action against guests and owners.

‘Noisy’ restaurant pelted with fruit by neighbours!

A recently-opened business in London has reportedly irritated its neighbours so much they “have thrown fruit and other items” to “stop the noise”. The residents say the restaurant has shown “complete disregard” for neighbours and that they “have had to endure noise all day and night” since it opened. The business was refused permission to sell alcohol.



Evict rowdy tenants in two weeks

● Crackdown will strengthen landlords' powers
● Airbnb database to help councils tackle noise

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Landlords will be able to evict tenants who are disruptive to neighbours, cause damage or fall behind on their rent within two weeks under government plans to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Homeowners who rent out their properties on Airbnb will also be forced to register on a new database that will make it easier for local councils to deal with complaints about rowdy guests.

The proposals were among dozens promised by Rishi Sunak in an “action plan” to address increased public concerns about antisocial behaviour.

All new private tenancy agreements will have to include clauses that specifically ban antisocial behaviour. The move is designed to make it easier for landlords to use such behaviour as grounds to evict disruptive tenants.

The notice period for eviction on these grounds will be cut from four to two weeks. Grounds for eviction will include “persistently problematic tenants” who cause disturbance through noise, drunken behaviour, drug use and damage to property, as well as falling behind on rent.

The government also announced:

- Users of nitrous oxide, known as laughing gas, will face up to two years in jail. It will be categorised as a Class C drug by the end of the year.
- An expansion of drug testing on arrest and plans for on-the-spot tests.
- On-the-spot fines for littering and graffiti will more than triple to £500, and penalties for fly-tipping will more than double to £1,000.
- Offenders will be forced to wear jumpsuits or high-visibility jackets while carrying out “community pay-back” within 48 hours of being caught.
- Members of the public will be given a greater say on how antisocial behaviour offenders are punished.
- The police will be given powers to move on “nuisance” beggars causing “public distress”, such as loitering near cash machines.

The government will make it easier for landlords to prove antisocial behaviour in court by clarifying that any behaviour “capable” of causing “nuisance or annoyance” can lead to eviction. At present landlords must prove that antisocial behaviour has already caused annoyance or nuisance.

Evictions will be dealt with more quickly, with plans to prioritise these cases in the courts. New legislation will require judges to consider the impact on neighbours, housemates and landlords, and whether the tenant has failed to engage with interventions to manage their behaviour.

The changes will be contained in a Renters Reform Bill that will also include protections for tenants, including bans on no-fault evictions and on landlords raising rent more than once a year.

The government said in the action plan that it was acting to speed up evictions because antisocial behaviour by neighbours was “particularly stressful”. It said that “feeling on edge or frightened at home impinges on people’s wellbeing and security”.

The plan cited research that found that more than one in four social housing residents had been affected by antisocial behaviour in the past year.

Continued on page 2

Royal witness The Duke of phone-hacking hearing at



CHAIR CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE UNDER FIRE AFTER CALLING WIND FARM OPPONENTS 'MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE'

Lord Deben, the chair of the UK's influential Climate Change Committee, came under fire when he said the communities opposed to wind turbines in their local area do not have an "acceptable moral position". Noise campaigners called him "arrogant and complacent" and accused him of disregarding the proven noise problems wind farms can bring. One furious local resident challenged him to come and see for himself: "My life has been turned upside down by the noise from wind turbines. I invite him to spend a week with me."

Deben's remarks come at a time dozens of large-scale windfarm applications are being considered in Wales under its plans to reach net zero. Campaigners say the ambition is putting the Welsh countryside at risk and south Wales already has several wind farms.

Lord Deben said the onus was on everyone to help reach the target.

"We can't all the time say we're in favour of things but somewhere else," he said.



"I think every community has to say to itself, 'if we don't have this what are we going to have?' We can't all the time say we're in favour of things but somewhere else. That isn't an acceptable moral position," said Lord Deben. He added that people could not expect others to carry the cost of net zero without doing something themselves.

Deben might have been addressing his remarks to those who may favour turbines but just not in their area. But once again a leading environmentalist appears to be willing to ignore noise in pursuit of his green dream. Readers will recall our interview in our last Winter issue with the leading American acoustician Robert Rand who argued the environmental movement as a whole was giving both wind and solar a pass.

A BUDGET RAIL REVOLUTION?

Will *Lumo*, *Italo*, *Iryo*, *Ouigo* and *Avla* become as famous as *Ryanair*, *easyJet* and *Wizz Air*?

A rail revolution could be underway in Europe.



There's Lumo in the UK. It offers an all-electric London to Edinburgh service. Fares start at £26.90. In comparison, an average flight will set you back between €35 and €70

There's Ouigo in France. Established as a budget arm of France's national provider, SNCF, it runs low cost, high speed trains between Paris and major cities including Lyon, Avignon, Aix, Marseille, Cannes, Nice, Nimes, Montpellier, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Rennes, Angers, Nantes and Strasbourg. Fares start at just €10 if booked in advance but can be much more than this if bought on the day of travel.

There's Italo in Italy. Operated by a private company that competes with the national rail provider, it can be very cheap. Tickets from Florence to Rome and Milan to Venice start from €10.90. The average flight for March for these options will set you back around €45.

There's Avlo and Iryo in Spain. Avlo is the low-cost arm of the national operator Renfe. Its initial service to Andalusia will be between Seville and Madrid and Malaga and Madrid with two trains a day leaving early in the morning and returning in the afternoon. These trains are significantly cheaper than flying. Average flights cost around €30-€60 for the same route between Spain's two biggest cities.

Iryo is a privately owned low-cost Spanish operator competing with Renfe. The company began its services between Madrid and Andalusia at the end of March this year. It also has routes from Madrid to Barcelona. Ticket prices start at around €18

The budget operators are still offering limited services. They are being run along the lines of the low-cost airlines, with low fares if booked in advance, extra costs for extra baggage, and, in some cases, not running at the most convenient times. There will need to be improvements if they are to attract the business market but it looks like the start of a rail revolution. For it to fully happen, the budget operators will need to mount a much more direct challenge to the established operators. A quieter way of travelling looks as if will become much more affordable.

HOW TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ABOUT NOISE THAT IS BOTH SERIOUS AND FUN

Read on.....

Shout it from the rooftops: the noise pollution in towns and cities is killing us

[Coco Khan](#) (first appeared in The Guardian (10/4/23))

The din of Britain's conurbations affects poorer people disproportionately, blighting lives in cheaply built homes.....

Two years ago, at my flat on an dressed except few moments Just terrible! me. You'll



my most lovingly overbearing and melodramatic auntie came to stay east London high road. Each morning she would emerge, fully for the eye mask left on her forehead like Chekhov's gun, taking a to chitchat before erupting: "Aren't you going to ask how I slept? Sirens! Buses all night, driving sinners around. This noise will kill be sorry when I'm dead!"

Her exclamations may sound over the top. But it turns out that not even the most hyperbolic of relatives could overstate the dangers of this threat, which has lurked unrecognised for too long. Noise in our towns and cities *is* killing us – and the evidence is piling up.

Residents up and down the country are being regularly exposed to unsafe levels of noise, from Bury to Hartlepool, Wigan to Bristol. Last year, the UN declared London one of the noisiest cities in Europe, with residents regularly being exposed to average levels of 86 decibels, well exceeding the World Health Organization (WHO) safety threshold of 53dB. The result? Hearing loss, shortened life expectancy (the WHO estimates 1m healthy life years are lost to noise in western Europe alone), an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, anxiety, depression, and type 2 diabetes. For children, a link is being explored between noise and cognitive development, as well as behavioural issues. Traffic noise is such a physiological stressor it's been compared to secondhand smoking.

I confess that, for a long time, the only urban noise-related issue that typically got my blood boiling was related to legacy nightlife venues being shuttered to preserve the comfort of a few affluent people who had only just moved in. (For the latest iteration of this, see Manchester's Night & Day cafe.) Or landlords of overpriced rentals, with walls so thin you can probably hear your neighbour fart, flatly refusing to pay for any soundproofing, no matter what acrimony follows (I'm sure some day this will be a TV show: Flat-tle Royale, where tenants fight to the death for the right to a good night's sleep or to watch TV without headphones).

Noise is, after all, a part of city life – and it cannot be overstated how quickly you get used to it. Writing this article, I checked the decibels of my street using this interactive London map: 70dB, mostly from

road transport. Yet I rarely notice the sound. I'm sure the cooking frog rarely notices the temperature too.

The people I hear complaining the most about noise pollution seem to be the monied nimbys, the wealthy curtain-twitchers, or the plain old killjoys (sorry, Auntie!). But research shows it is lower-income residents, more likely to live near motorways, airports and industrial areas, who are the most acutely affected by noise pollution. There are other factors that make some neighbourhoods louder than others. Trees act as an efficient sound damper, yet poorer areas tend to have less green space. Even the maintenance of the road itself can contribute to noise levels; the same car travelling through a wealthy area may sound quieter than when it is travelling through a pothole-ridden road in a poorer one.

Noise pollution is undoubtedly a class issue. It must be, if only those with certain resources can buy their peace, through soundproofing or access to quieter neighbourhoods. And equally, it must be if only those with resources have the luxury of making noise freely – to play their instruments, to have friends over and properly laugh from the belly well after dinner is done – because of where they live.

'Noise pollution is undoubtedly a class issue. It must be, if only those with certain resources can buy their peace, through soundproofing or access to quieter neighbourhoods'

This is not to say that my ex-neighbour playing his saxophone when he gets in from the pub (and always the cruelly named Careless Whisper) is just an innocent victim of his environment. There is such a thing as personal responsibility and being considerate. But so often in our polarised times, conversations get stuck on the rights and wrongs of the individual – tradespeople with phones ringing so loudly you can hear them from Mars, families with forever barking dogs – when perhaps our collective problem requires a collective solution.

If fingers need to be pointed, we could do much worse than take aim at city leaders failing to implement noise reduction policies. London hasn't updated its noise pollution strategy since 2004, and lags seriously behind Paris and Barcelona, which have already rolled out sound monitoring. Or we could point at those in the business of property continuing to swerve their soundproofing obligations, and the regulators who let them.

And while I still have my reservations about music venue closures, I would personally like to point a finger at the Madison Square Garden company, which is planning to create a monstrous orb near where I live. It would seem that if the scheme goes ahead as planned, the music and entertainment arena will apparently glow for most hours of the day, be covered with adverts for half the time, and nearly reach the height of Big Ben. Some local residents fear it could be a noise nightmare (and not in that woohoo-avant-garde-music way; more in the capitalism and increased numbers of cars way).

There is one bit of good news, though. In January, the House of Lords' science and tech committee launched an inquiry into the impacts of noise and light pollution on human health. Sound pollution is the not so silent killer terrorising our cities, and it is the poorest bearing the brunt. Time to make some noise about it.

- **Coco Khan is commissioning editor for Guardian B2B, and a columnist and feature writer**

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/gd-k0rHS-DM>

Traffic: noise from M8 in Central Glasgow

<https://youtu.be/NR1lLokkp28>

'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

New Website Address

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

We have got a new website address:

With new features

[Check it out!](#)

Help! I've got a noise problem!

You can contact:

The Noise Abatement Society

<https://noiseabamentsociety.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, 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

Our blog site is at:

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

Twitter: @cutnoise