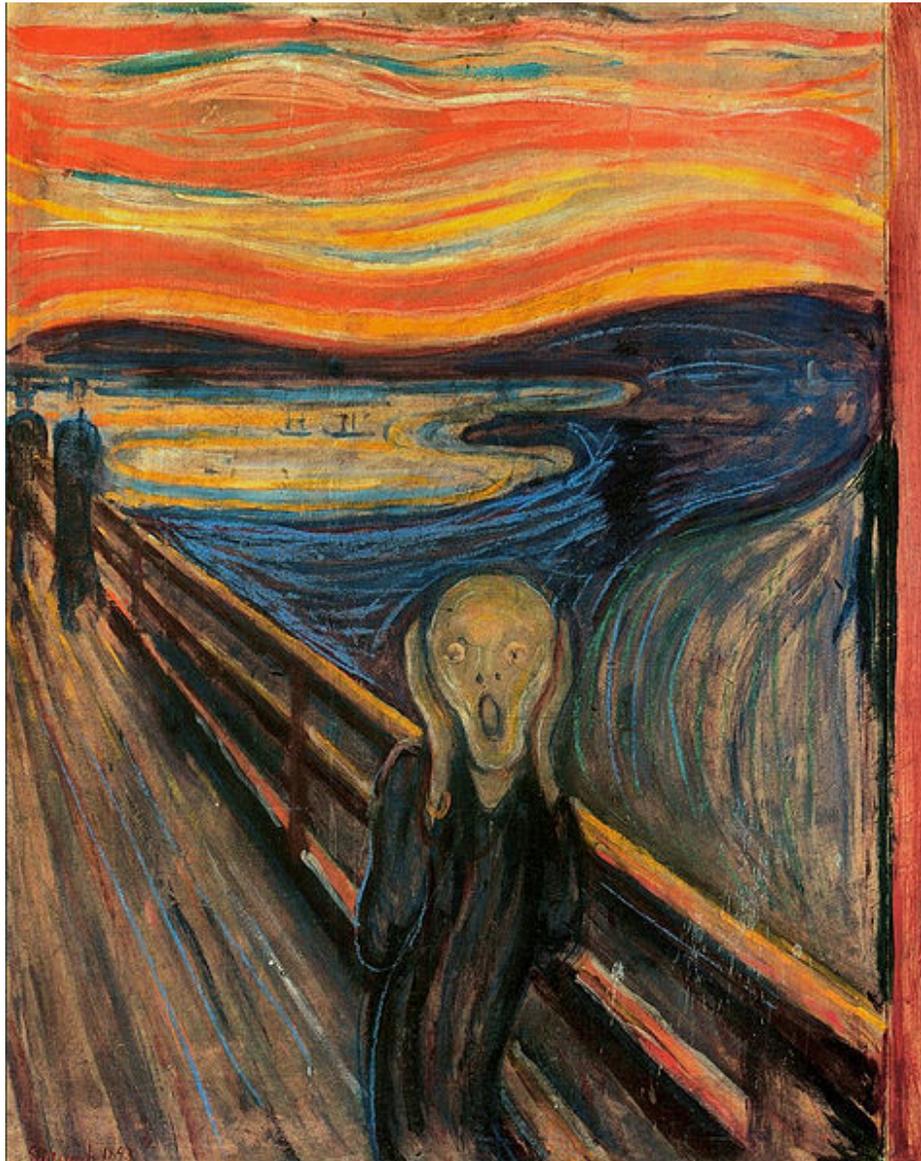


Noise Solutions



There are **solutions** to the vast majority of noise problems we face. It is the **political will** to implement them that is missing. In this pamphlet the UK Noise Association outlines what can be done.

Traffic Noise

According to the National Noise Attitude Survey 2012, 5 million people in the UK are extremely disturbed by traffic noise. That is 8% of the population. A total of 55% are disturbed to some degree (1).



Solutions:

Lower speeds

- Cutting the urban speed limit from 30mph to 20mph could reduce traffic noise by more than 50%.
- Cutting the motorway speed limit from 70mph to 60 mph could cut noise by more than 25%.

Quieter Road Surfaces

- The use of quieter road surfaces could halve the noise from traffic

Noise Barriers

- These can be expensive but are essential at noise hot spots. At their best, they can cut noise by 75%.

Quieter Vehicles

- Greater use of electric and hybrid vehicles will cut noise though it remains uncertain by how much as noise will be deliberately added to these vehicles so people can hear them coming.

Traffic Reduction

- Fewer vehicles on the roads would cut traffic noise as long as lower speed limits were introduced. Traffic reduction is possible. Half the journeys we make are under two miles; 75% are less than 5 miles; most are possible by walking, cycling or taking public transport.

Even without significant traffic reduction, it is estimated noise from traffic could be cut by 70% (2).

The UK Noise Association is calling for:

- A 20mph speed limit to become the norm in built-up areas
- The motorway speed limit to be cut from 70mph to 60mph
- Quieter road surfaces to be used in resurfacing all roads
- Noise barriers to be installed at noise hot spots
- Quieter vehicles to be brought on-stream as soon as possible
- A steady move towards traffic reduction

Neighbour Noise

According to the National Noise Attitude Survey nearly 7 million people in the UK are extremely disturbed by neighbour noise. That is 11% of the population. A total of 54% are disturbed to some degree (1).

Solutions:

Crack down on noise offenders

- This has been made a lot simpler by recent Anti-Social Behavior legislation which allows noise offenders to be prosecuted more easily and quickly (3). The challenge is for the Police and *all* local authorities to find the resources and the will-power to make this happen. It's time to get consistently tough on noise offenders.

Give residents the right of appeal

- When local authorities fail to crack down on noise offenders, there is little redress for noise sufferers. They can go to court (usually too expensive) or the Ombudsman (whose remit is often too narrow to deal with many of these cases). An Independent Appeals Panel needs to be set up.

Improve insulation of properties

- This is one of the hidden scandals of our housing crisis. Exact figures are hard to come by but research done by the UK Noise Association over 10 years ago estimated that at least 2.5 million people live in homes with poor sound insulation (4). This has almost certainly increased in recent years with the growth of the private rented sector. A nationwide programme to properly insulate all the UK's homes would run into billions but doing nothing is not an option. A 10 year programme to install effective sound insulation in all homes should be started.

The UK Noise Association is calling for:

- The Police and local authorities to make full use of the legislation available to tackle neighbour noise
- An Independent Appeals Panel to provide redress for residents.
- A 10 year programme to install effective sound insulation in all homes.

Aircraft Noise

According to the National Noise Attitude Survey nearly 2.5 million people in the UK are extremely disturbed by aircraft noise. That is 4% of the population; up from 2% in 2001. A total of 31% are disturbed to some degree (1).



Solutions:

Quieter Planes

These are slowly coming on-stream but over the next 30 years the industry is not expecting the same sort of step-change we have seen during the past 30 years.

Improved Operation Practices

Steeper descent approaches; improved flying techniques; and, particularly, the introduction of periods of respite for residents under flight paths will all help reduce the impact of noise over communities.

Fewer Short-Haul Flights

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) expects air travel across the world to grow by an average of 4.1% per annum over the next 20 years. The predicted growth in Europe, with a more mature market, will be lower at 2.7%. But even that lower growth could well off-set the noise improvements from quieter planes and improved operational practices. Unlike road and rail noise, aircraft noise only presents a problem when planes approach or leave an airport. This means that, as far as noise is concerned, it is more important to reduce the many short-haul flights rather than the smaller number of long-distance flights. The majority of short-haul flights are taken for leisure purposes. An equitable tax, such as a Frequent Flyers Levy (6), would cut down short-haul flights without hurting the economy.

The UK Noise Association is calling for:

- Quieter planes
- Improved operation practices - in particular periods of respite for residents
- A fair tax to cut the number of short-haul flights

Wind Farm Noise

Across the world, communities complain of noise from wind turbines. The evidence suggests that the low-frequency component in wind turbine noise plus the flickering of the blades can have a destabilizing impact on people's health.



Solutions:

No turbines within at least one mile of residential properties

- This is the distance recommended by the French Academy of Medicine. The terrain of course will influence how far the noise carries and some would argue that, if there is nothing to block the noise, the distance should be greater.

Close down turbines which cause disturbance

- It is not acceptable to expect people to put up with destabilizing and disturbing noise for decades.

The UK Noise Association is calling for:

- No turbines within at least one mile of residential properties
- The closure of turbines which are causing noise problems

Fireworks

We support the RSPCA's call for private firework displays to be limited to 4 a year and for the permitted noise limit on individual fireworks to be cut because of the severe impact the unexpected bangs have on animals



Piped Music and..... other Public Nuisances

Piped music is almost universal in the UK but it is not universally liked or wanted. Surveys suggest that, while a lot of people tolerate it, some find it really disturbing. It is a particular problem when people are trapped by it in places like hospitals. Other noises in modern life - such as over long and over loud announcements at stations or on trains – can add to the stress of modern life.



Solutions:

Sort out piped music and televisions in hospitals

- No patient should unwillingly be subjected to piped music or televisions in hospitals or nursing homes. Separate television rooms and headphones should be the norm.

Introduce legislation to protect workers rights

- Workers in shops, restaurants and elsewhere are bombarded by (often very loud) piped music. Legislation should be based on the World Health Organisation's noise guidelines.

Cut the announcements on public transport

- Much more information than the traveller needs is provided, and the volume is usually too high. Cut to a bare minimum the information given and reduce the volume at which it is given.

The UK Noise Association is calling for:

- Television rooms and headphones to become the norm in hospitals and nursing homes
- Legislation, based on the WHO standards, to protect people at work
- A reduction in the number and volume of announcements on public transport

Time for Government Action

There are signs that parts of the private sector are beginning to understand the market for quiet products (7). But Government has a role to play as well. Some of the solutions are cheaper than others but all are perfectly possible. Action from Government would send the right signals to the private sector and local authorities as well as stimulating further research and development into ways to cut noise.



References:

(1). *National Noise Attitude Survey 2012*

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18288>

(2). den Boer and Schrotten, *Traffic Noise Reduction in Europe*, published by CE Delft, 2007

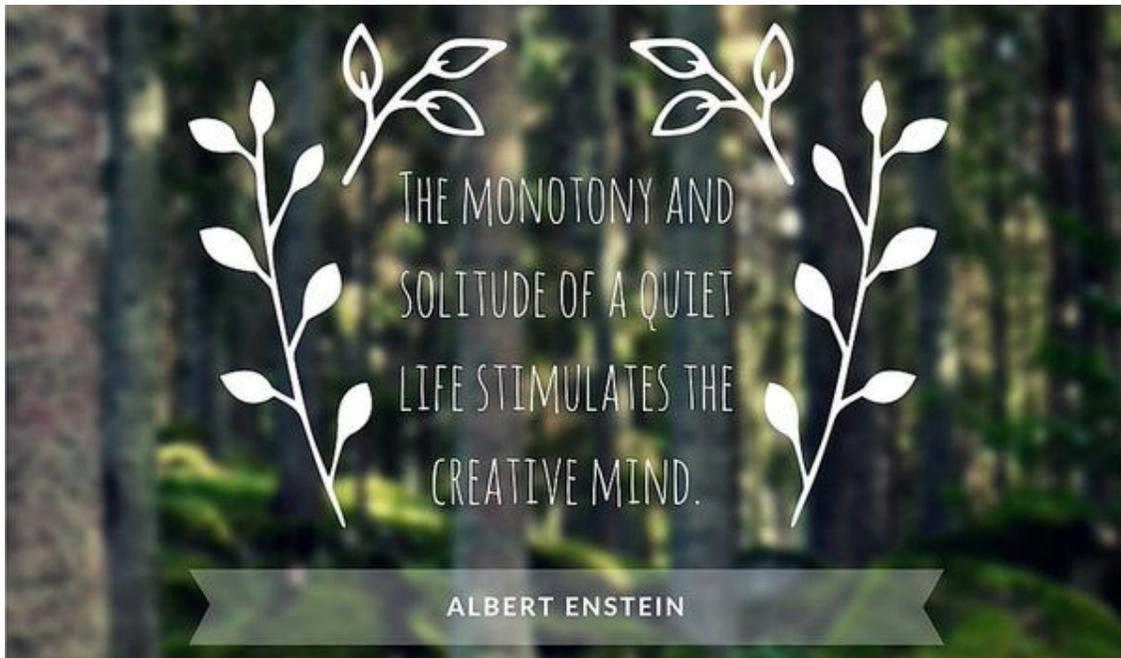
(3). *The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014* makes it easier to convict people of anti-social behaviour. A lower standard of proof is required to get a conviction than with other legislation. And that includes for noise issues. Previously the process could be cumbersome and could involve having to satisfy the court that a 'noise nuisance' had taken place, 'nuisance' being narrowly defined in legal terms. Under the new Act, a court may grant an injunction against anyone aged 10 and over if (a) "the court is satisfied ... that the respondent has engaged or threatens to engage in conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person" and (b) the court considers it "just and convenient to grant the injunction for the purpose of preventing the respondent for engaging in anti-social behaviour."

(4). *A Sound Solution*, UK Noise Association, 2002

(5). <http://www.iata.org/pressroom/pr/Pages/2014-10-16-01.aspx>

(6). <http://afreeride.org/> The basic idea of this is that everybody would be permitted one tax-free flight a year but that the tax would increase with each subsequent flight taken. Since a big majority of UK citizens take only one flight (or none at all) in a year, this scheme would benefit the majority of people while cutting down on overall demand/

(7). For details, see Quiet Mark: www.quietmark.com



This pamphlet has been published by the UK Noise Association. We can be contacted at 13 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9AU; email uknaorguk@gmail.com; <http://www.ukna.org.uk/> August 2016