

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006: Q and A

Q. What do these regulations do?

A. These regulations transpose the requirements under Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2002 (often known as the Environmental Noise Directive (END)). The END requires:

- the use of harmonised noise indicators and computational measures so that data can be collected and compared in a standardised way;
- common protocols for noise mapping;
- the drawing up of noise maps;
- making information available to the public;
- the drawing up of local action plans; and
- collection of data by the Commission to inform future Community policy.

The Regulations will help identify:

- the extent to which people are exposed to high levels of noise; and
- what areas of relative quiet we might or could have, thus enabling us to develop measures to protect them and not have the noise environment inadvertently eroded.

Q. What is a noise map?

A. Strategic noise maps are a product of a process which aims to secure information about the external noise environment. A noise map is a way of representing levels of noise in a location in terms of a noise indicator. Examples can be seen from the London noise map at www.noisemapping.org

Q. How accurate are the maps?

A. The maps are produced using computer based noise models. This process requires the acquisition of information about the noise source; its noise generating characteristics; its location and how the noise from that source impacts on its surroundings.

The noise maps are produced for use at a strategic level and are likely to give an acceptable level of accuracy for these purposes. They will not however represent every situation at a local level and it is likely that more detailed examination will be necessary in some of these situations in order to develop local action plans.

Q. Is the Government mapping the whole country?

A. In 2007, we are mapping major roads which have more than 6 million vehicle passages a year; major railways with more than 60,000 train passages a year; major airports and agglomerations with a population of more than 250,000. In agglomerations the mapping will include airports which create more than 55 dB (A), industry and ports.

Q. Is the UK introducing limit values?

A. No.

Q. How is the Directive being transposed in the Devolved Authorities?

A. Separate legislation will be introduced in each of the Devolved Authorities.

Q. How will the maps and action plans be made available to the public?

A. They will be published on a website with a facility to search the maps down to postcode level.

Q. What can the maps be used for?

A. The noise mapping process will provide a sound basis to help future policy making / strategies to tackle noise.

Noise maps will contribute to:

- establishing a baseline for present noise levels;
- quantifying the scale of public exposure to the main sources of environmental noise;
- enabling the development of objectives to manage noise to be based on a better understanding of the overall noise exposure;
- targeting the measures to where they are needed (hot spots);
- developing co-ordinated and cost-effective action plans to reduce noise;
- enabling plans to be tested theoretically to understand in detail their likely impact;
- monitoring the effectiveness of action plans and planning procedures;
- monitoring trends in environmental noise;
- providing a platform for further research.

Q When will the Government produce the National Noise Strategy?

A. Work is currently underway to develop the strategy for launch in 2007.

Q. Does the Strategy cover all of the UK?

A. The Strategy will in the first instance, focus on England.

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