

UK Noise Campaigners Urge Support for WHO Noise Research

NSCA joined the Noise Abatement Society and UK Noise Association in urging Dawn Primarola, Minister for State for Public Health, to support the continuation of World Health Organisation research on the impacts of noise and health in her discussions with fellow Health Ministers at the 57th session of the Regional Committee for Europe in Belgrade.

In the letter¹, we expressed concern that WHO funding for noise research is due to run out in 2008, and this at a time when initial results of research on the impacts of noise on health and quality of life have revealed potentially life-threatening effects; preliminary results of the WHO research, reported in



Long term exposure to traffic noise may contribute to heart disease

New Scientist², suggest that long-term exposure to traffic noise accounts for up to 3% of cases of heart disease in the EU, as well as 3% of cases of tinnitus worldwide; up to 1.7% of 7-19 year olds in the EU have hearing loss as a result of "leisure noise" (e.g. listening to MP3 players etc). And the results of the MORI noise poll for NSCA earlier this year found that up to 1 million people move every year because of noise. However for research to translate into action to manage noise, more work is needed. WHO has taken a leading role supporting work to manage the impacts of noise, providing guidelines for healthy noise levels and built up a significant body of expertise on health impacts – if our increasingly cacophonous world is to be calmed this work must continue.

1. Full letter available at www.nasca.org.uk/pages/news
2. New Scientist – 'Peace and Quiet' 25 August 2007

Scotland Launch UK's First National Noise Maps

In launching noise maps for Edinburgh, Glasgow and major Scottish transport sources – the first in the UK – Scotland is one of few EU countries to date to comply with this requirement of the Environmental Noise Directive (END).

Presenting the maps on 4 September, at the Scottish Government in Edinburgh, new Environment Minister Mr Michael Russell said "Noise issues are hugely important and set to become more so. Excessive noise causes disruption and distress to everyone". He emphasised that as a small but dynamic country Scotland can take forward new initiatives and share good practice between all relevant stakeholders – the attendance of Defra at the conference proving this point. He stated that maps were only the starting point towards meeting obligations in Europe and that the Scottish Government is working for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

Consultants Hamilton & McGregor, led by Dr Bernadette McKell produced the maps and are supporting the development of action planning. Dr McKell stressed that the maps are strategic, designed to calculate how many people, to the nearest hundred, live in dwellings exposed to each of the noise bands. They are not designed to give accurate exposure levels at individual properties.

Martin Valenti of SEPA, project manager for the END, emphasised that cooperation was key in executing this technically complicated project: stakeholders included SEPA, local authorities, Transport Scotland, Network Rail and BAA. He also applauded Hamilton McGregor, concluding that the work has just begun as the action planning process now gets underway.

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Final Briefing

This is the last issue of the *Briefing* in its current format; from the November issue it is being renamed *Environmental Protection UK*, expands to eight pages and will be printed in full colour. In a further departure, we will also be accepting some advertising – see www.nasca.org.uk/pages/news/briefing.cfm, or contact Lisa Crews (lcrews@nsca.org.uk) for details.

As with the *Briefing*, we will normally publish *Environmental Protection UK* on the last Thursday of each month; however, to enable us to cover our formal relaunch as *Environmental Protection UK* and the launch of *Future Focus* (our five year strategy) at the Houses of Parliament on 18 October, the first issue of the new publication will not be sent out until early November.

School Donates to NSCA

Congratulations to Year 7 students of Bristol City Academy who last term organised a 'Cycle & walk to school day', raising £82.02 in the process for NSCA. Teachers and students were encouraged to make a healthier start to the day whilst reducing their carbon footprint by travelling by foot or bike. For those people not choosing this mode of transport, penalty fees were charged and the proceeds donated to the NSCA. Well done and keep up the good work!

Autumn Workshops

- 10 October
Noise
- 16-17 October
Land Quality
- 7 November
Air Quality

Details: www.nasca.org.uk

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Scottish Noise Maps

NSCA Scotland played a key role in facilitating joint conferences with the Scottish Government and The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS). Joint working with relevant stakeholders on many aspects of noise has been in place for some time and it is imperative that such collaboration continues.

It was emphasised that the END is a complicated, challenging and technically difficult Directive to interpret and has taken time to work through. It has involved collaboration between transport engineers, GIS analysts, acousticians and solicitors, to name but some, and is one of the biggest data handling and manipulation exercises ever undertaken by the Scottish Government.

At the conference draft action planning guidance was launched – and comments invited. Linda Story of the Scottish Government emphasised that potential areas for action planning are being referred to as ‘candidate areas’ rather than ‘hotspots’, to avoid raising alarm or expectation from those in identified areas. The draft guidance can be viewed at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/08/24141743/0>. Noise maps can also be accessed via the Scottish Government’s website.

NSCA Increases Dialogue with RCEP

NSCA has long recognised the important work carried out by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) and as such, often contributes information and evidence to their reports. Although the record for government taking up the findings of the RCEP over the years has been very good, there can often be a delay, sometimes of years, before action is taken. With this in mind, NSCA’s Council and RCEP are together considering how NSCA should respond to their most recent report on the urban environment. With over 80% of the UK population already living in urban areas it will be vital for NSCA to address the types of cumulative and systemic pollution caused by such intense cohabitation if we are to help bring about a cleaner, quieter, healthier world. Indeed, research commissioned by NSCA during this year’s Noise Action Week found that 70% of the population are bothered by noise in their neighbourhood. NSCA is therefore lobbying the RCEP to make the study of noise pollution a top priority for future research. Such an overarching view of the environmental and health impacts of noise on the environment is lacking and the RCEP have an excellent opportunity to address this.

Open Letter to Party Leaders

As the Political Parties gather for their Annual Conferences, NSCA’s Chief Executive, Philip Mulligan, took the opportunity to write to the Leaders of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats reminding them of the urgency of tackling the environmental challenges that we are facing both globally and more locally:

“Addressing environmental issues has never been of more importance nor has the political will for achieving progress on these issues been higher. NSCA is the environmental charity working for a cleaner, quieter, healthier world. Our work currently focuses on three areas on which we believe action is essential.

Air Quality and Climate Change

Air Quality remains a serious problem across the UK, and reduces life expectancy of the average citizen by an estimated eight months. There are tremendous synergies between air quality and climate change. Managing emissions that improve air quality AND reduce climate change can result in win/win outcomes that help achieve targets in both areas at reduced costs. We therefore urge action to make the appropriate policy links that are at present lacking in many sections of UK policy or proposed policy relating to climate change.

Noise

Noise is the most widespread environmental pollutant. It affects all of us – at home, at work and at leisure. There is increasing evidence that transport noise affects us – in particular aviation noise can impair the learning of children and links are becoming evident between traffic noise and cardiovascular health. Neighbourhood noise causes annoyance and sleep disruption. We are working to ensure noise is considered in infrastructure decisions, major and minor, to secure the protection of quiet areas and the reduction of noise where it has the potential to harm health.

Land Quality

With increasing pressure to redevelop brownfield land to meet housing demands, land quality practitioners are under greater pressure. More support, improved guidance, and clearer assessment methods are needed to ensure a consistent approach is taken, thus ensuring that only properly remediated land is used for housing, resulting in improved protection for both human health and the environment.

We believe the public now recognise the importance of tackling these environmental challenges and are looking to politicians of all parties to develop and implement effective strategies for protecting our environment. We believe too that it is vital that the protection of our environment is integrated across all policy areas. We therefore hope that environmental matters will not only be high on the agenda of your conference but that the environment will become a recurring theme throughout all your debates.”

Air Quality Beacons Shine

As the Beacon Council year for air quality continues, nearly 100 delegates attended a learning exchange event in Manchester during September to learn more about the work of the Beacons, and to discuss how similar approaches could be applied in their own local authorities. Presentations from Beth Conlan (AEA) and Ed Dearnley (NSCA) defining the issues were followed by workshop sessions with each of the Beacons exploring their own particular area of identified expertise – Sheffield (social marketing), Sefton (transport plans), Greenwich (planning agreements) and Croydon (airText).

Whilst the expertise on display was impressive, perhaps even more exciting was the interest and enthusiasm shown by the delegates in integrating best practice. In the workshop sessions attended by NSCA there was a palpable buzz in the air, with a great deal of interest shown in the concepts on display. Of perhaps particular note was the airText system, with several more local authorities close to adopting the system, and the beginnings of a discussion on how the system could work nationwide. The Beacon year will continue with a number of other dissemination events hosted by the Beacons themselves; details will appear on the I&DeA website (www.idea.gov.uk). Of particular note to several NSCA members will be an event on air quality around ports, to be hosted by Sefton later this year.

NSCA Scotland



NSCA Scotland are pleased to announce that James Crawshaw has taken over the role of Honorary Secretary for the Division. James has been with Glasgow City Council for four years, having previously worked with Falkirk and East Ayrshire Councils. He is employed as a Team Leader with an interest in air quality, contaminated land and noise issues. His appointment will be ratified at the 2008 NSCA Scotland AGM. Contact details for James are – james.crawshaw@eps.glasgow.gov.uk or telephone 0141 287 0326.

Global Approaches to Noise Control – Internoise 2007

NSCA Noise Specialist, Mary Stevens, joined representatives from around the world for the annual Internoise Congress, held in Istanbul in late August. Internoise brings together noise specialists of all disciplines, with sessions including health aspects of noise, acoustics, engineering, and transport noise.

Engaging Engineers

Eager to engage noise engineers in action to raise the profile of noise issues, Dr William W Lang of the Noise Control Foundation, USA, organised a workshop on noise control engineering. This was the first workshop of its type, and a first for NSCA in attending Internoise. While turnout at the workshop was slightly disappointing (it coincided with sessions on the END and Noise Public Health as well as a wealth of technical workshops), it proved a productive and lively meeting. As well as NSCA, John Stewart of the UK Noise Association and Gloria Elliot of the Noise Abatement Society were present, along with representatives from Turkey, The Netherlands, Norway, USA and Nina Renshaw of Transport and Environment, representing European NGOs.

The session was a useful first step towards better international coordination in raising the public and political profile of noise. Outcomes included consensus that measures to tackle the sources of noise should be a priority, and that the health impacts and social costs (willingness-to-pay, loss of property values and health

costs) are the most effective messages for the media and politicians respectively. Knowledge on both aspects is developing rapidly, notably with the outcome of World Health Organisation research on noise and health and research commissioned by T&E which, will outline the total health and cost impact of traffic noise in the EU. Discussion led by Robert Hellweg from the USA centred on clarification of noise labelling of products for consumers.

END Implementation

The wider conference was attended by over 1000 delegates, with over 500 papers covering issues ranging from kitchen noise, perceptions of wind turbine noise to noise mapping in eastern Europe. There was much of interest on progress (or lack of it) in END implementation – with Anna Backman of the European Environment Agency reporting on data reported by member states so far. The task faced by the UK was put in perspective: of the 146 agglomerations in Europe, 28 (20%) are in the UK, and of the 76 airports, 22 are in the UK. It became clear that while time schedules are slipping due to the novelty and the complexity of the task of

mapping, a huge amount of work is being undertaken. Outside Europe, progress is being observed with interest – with the EU setting the standard for the wider world. It is already becoming clear which elements need to be improved in the revision of the Environmental Noise Directive. But the review itself is uncertain, because the key figures from the debate in 2001-2 have mostly moved on, and the key people at the Commission and EEA are likely to leave in 2008.

NSCA committee members at Internoise included John Hinton reporting on progress of the European Environment Agency working group looking at presenting noise mapping data to the public – with the first suggestions of a system for explaining the complexities, and Greg Watts presenting the UK work on quiet areas.

Health Impacts

A session on mixed sources aired research on the health impacts of transport – that is, both air pollution and noise. Research in these areas is at early stages but there was some evidence of a combined effect. Further on health, Dutch work looked at the impact of wind turbines in relation to their location – and found annoyance factors higher in empty, horizontal landscapes, compared to those that have more topographical interest. And, most significantly, Martin van Den Berg presented the proposed World Health Organisation Guidelines for night time noise (produced with a grant from the European Commission). An $L_{\text{night, outside}}$ of 30 dB is the proposed ultimate target of the Night Noise Guidelines (NNG). Two interim targets are proposed for the countries where the NNG cannot be achieved in the short term and where policy-makers choose to adopt a stepwise approach at the local or national levels:

- Interim target I (IT-I) $L_{\text{night, outside}} = 55$ dB
- Interim target II (IT-II) $L_{\text{night, outside}} = 40$ dB
- Night Noise Guideline (NNG) $L_{\text{night, outside}} = 30$ dB



Gloria Elliot (NAS), Mary Stevens (NSCA) and John Stewart (UKNA) at Internoise

10 October

Noise Update – Birmingham

16-17 October

*Contaminated Land
Workshop* – Birmingham

7 November

Air Quality Update –
Birmingham

21 November

*Seminar: Managing the
Impacts of Microgeneration* –
Manchester

The *Briefing* can also be accessed on our website at www.nasca.org.uk/pages/news. If you would prefer not to receive a paper copy of the *Briefing*, we can instead email you each month to let you know when each month's edition has been uploaded. Contact Lisa Crews (lcrews@nsca.org.uk) to register for on-line *Briefing* alerts.

NSCA was founded in 1898 as an air pollution campaign group. Today it brings together organisations and individuals to promote a balanced approach to understanding and solving environmental problems. Its membership includes environmental protection specialists from industry, local authorities, academia and consultancies.

Briefing

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TRANSPORT UPDATE

Cleaner Transport Forum Looks to the Future

The Cleaner Transport Forum (CTF) has formed a major pillar of NSCA's transport work over the years, leading the development of the Low Emission Zone concept prior to it being adopted by London, and playing a part in the development of new car CO₂ labelling.

With the rising low carbon transport agenda, however, the CTF faces a number of significant challenges. New low carbon transport carbon groups and niche groups such as our own Biomethane for Transport compete for Government attention and the time of members, whilst at the same time it is felt that, without a work plan, CTF has struggled to find a direction. One result is that attendance at meetings, and membership in general, has declined.

In light of the recently concluded review of NSCA's work, and the transition to Environmental Protection UK, we have decided to look at the form and function of CTF. A discussion paper has been produced looking at several options for the group's future, from a tight focus on projects with reporting lines to both NSCA and the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership, to the group becoming an annual cleaner transport conference. The CTF Forum meeting on 19 September discussed these options; however if you have any opinions on how CTF should develop then please let us know (edearnley@nsca.org.uk)

King Review Seeks Premier Options for Cleaner Cars

The zero pollution car is perhaps the holy grail of work to tackle both climate change and air quality. The King Review of Low Carbon Cars is a Treasury initiative examining how we can move towards this lofty goal over the next 25 years, with a particular focus on how the UK economy can benefit. NSCA co-ordinated a response to the review for the Biomethane for Transport group.

Although progress on hydrogen fuel cell vehicles is promising (bringing the concept of zero emissions at the point of use) we do not expect to see these vehicles take over the majority of the market within the 25-year timeframe. Instead we are likely to see continued incremental improvement in conventional technologies, complementary features such as hybrids and perhaps the greater use of alternative fuels.

Improvements to conventional internal combustion engines, allied with 'mild' or 'full' hybrids, could offer continued improvement in vehicle efficiencies against a framework of increasingly strict emissions standards. The main threat to this is the trend towards increasingly heavy and more powerful vehicles, which must be contained for real improvement in emissions.

Alternative fuels also offer hope, although the current biodiesel and bioethanol fuels offer only perhaps limited benefits. Of more interest are so-called 2nd generation biofuels, of which biomethane is one. Biomethane offers the air quality and noise benefits of natural gas vehicles, along with low or even negative well to wheel CO₂ emissions. It also offers a link to hydrogen vehicles through experience of gas handling and the prospect of reforming to create biohydrogen. The alternative fuels experience in the UK has, however, not been a happy one and appropriate long term support for both vehicle procurement and refueling infrastructure will be needed for fuel companies and vehicle owners to make the necessary investment.

A zero emission UK car fleet will perhaps remain a dream for many years to come, but by providing a framework of support for emerging vehicle and fuels technologies we can shift road transport towards this exciting goal.

LTPs Review Continues

Local Transport Plans are key to the local government response to air quality targets, and, under Government advice, the home of many Air Quality Action Plans. The current review of the system will therefore be of interest to many.

LTPs are under siege from a number of angles - 'excellent' authorities are not required to produce them, metropolitan authorities may switch to a system of 10 -15 year Integrated Transport Strategies, whilst the new Local Area Agreement system gives the option to remove targets for local transport where it is not a priority. It may therefore appear then that Air Quality Action Plans have been hitched to a sinking ship.

The good news is that LTPs are set to stay for most local authorities, with the current review focused on mid term reporting and fine-tuning for the next 'LTP3' round. NSCA will push the case for a strengthened link with air quality here.

In the medium to long term though AQAPs may benefit from a wider range of options for both their home and strategic links. NSCA will work with our members and Government to look at the options available in the current climate, and the guidance given to local authorities.