

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Environmental noise and the planning process



NOISE AND PLANNING

- Health and wellbeing policy drivers
- Seeking tranquillity in our cities
- Noise and planning guidance



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Health and wellbeing policy drivers



HPA REPORT

Environmental noise and health in the UK –
a report by the Ad Hoc Expert Group on
Noise and Health

(Health Protection Agency, 2010)

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/ProductsServices/ChemicalsPoisons/Environment/Noise/>



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“In terms of wellbeing we have little doubt that a significant number of people are adversely affected by exposure to environmental noise. If it is accepted that health should be defined in such a way as to include wellbeing then these people can be said to suffer damage to their health as a result of exposure to environmental noise. There is increasing evidence that environmental noise, from both aircraft and road traffic, is associated with raised blood pressure and with a small increase in the risk of coronary heart disease. Evidence that environmental noise damages mental health is, on the other hand, inconclusive.”

(HPA report)



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UNCERTAINTIES OVER MONETARY VALUATION OF NOISE-INDUCED AMI

- Confounding effect of air pollution
- Other confounding effects (e.g. self-selection bias)
- No accepted biological mechanism



OTHER LIMITATIONS

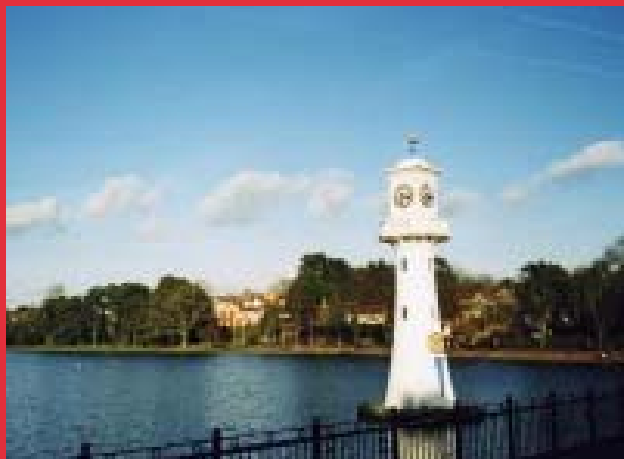
- What features of noise are responsible?
- Applicability to Welsh demographics
- Only one health effect monetised to date



JUSTIFICATION FOR ACTION IN WALES

- Assembly Government has a statutory duty with regard to sustainable development
- Wellbeing is one of its five headline sustainable development indicators
- Case for tackling environmental noise in Wales can be made on wellbeing alone





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Seeking tranquillity in our cities



ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE DIRECTIVE (2002/49/EC)

“adoption of action plans by the Member States, based upon noise-mapping results, with a view [1] to preventing and reducing environmental noise where necessary and particularly where exposure levels can induce harmful effects on human health and [2] to preserving environmental noise quality where it is good”

[2] = focus for today



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WHAT IS A “QUIET AREA IN AN AGGLOMERATION”?

“an area, delimited by the competent authority, for instance which is not exposed to a value of L_{den} or of another appropriate noise indicator greater than a certain value set by the Member State, from any noise source”

(Environmental Noise Directive)



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WHAT MUST WE DO?

competent authority = Welsh Ministers

“quiet areas in first round agglomerations
must be identified”

(Environmental Noise Regulations)



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WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY AGREED?

“intention of the Welsh Ministers to link the identification of quiet areas with locations identified by local authorities within the agglomeration as being of importance to their local communities”

(agglomeration action plans)



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WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY AGREED?

“local authorities within the agglomeration
have proposed initial areas with local
amenity value”

“these areas have been identified by the
Welsh Ministers as candidate quiet areas”

(agglomeration action plans)



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WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY AGREED?

“Welsh Ministers, in consultation with local authorities will confirm which of the candidate quiet areas should become quiet areas”

“this process will involve referring to the results of the noise mapping exercise to determine current noise levels”*

(agglomeration action plans)

*e.g. $L_{den} < 60$ dB(A) on noise maps (?)



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OUR AIM

to promote



sense of tranquillity → wellbeing

+

accessibility → fairness, fewer car journeys

=

local access to tranquil open spaces in an
urban environment



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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY TRANQUILLITY?

“tranquillity is a complex concept – it is both a state of mind as well as an indicator of environmental quality – for example, a Buddhist monk can find tranquillity in the noisiest of spaces whilst some rural households complain bitterly about noise levels taken for granted in the city”

(Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study)



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THE 'FIVE PILLARS' OF TRANQUILLITY

- Sounds
- Presence of nature
- Sense of personal safety
- Culture and freedom of the place
- Visual or aesthetic pillar



(Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study)



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“positive visual factors are of equal or greater importance than noise factors when defining tranquillity”

(Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study)

“visual quality can enhance ‘quietness’ or tranquillity”

(Quietening open spaces, EPUK)



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ENHANCING TRANQUILLITY

“mitigation of the most un-tranquil open spaces would involve noise-related interventions, while enhancement of tranquillity in other (less noisy) spaces would require a more holistic approach, giving visual, aural, sensual and even olfactory qualities more consideration”

(Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study)



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WHAT MAKES A GOOD QUIET AREA?

“noise monitoring can provide an indication of suitability for an area to be classified as ‘quiet’, but more than decibel levels must be taken into account in assessing what constitutes a quiet, tranquil or relaxing space that might induce wellbeing”

(Quietening open spaces, EPUK)



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“local knowledge is needed to make a true assessment of the current and potential utility of any open space”

“size as such is immaterial – small spaces in inner cities can have high value in terms of providing respite, opportunity for relaxation and exercise”

(Quietening open spaces, EPUK)



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HOW QUIET IS A QUIET AREA?

“the WHO guideline of 55 dB(A) has been taken as a starting point for looking at the designation of quiet areas – in dense UK urban areas it would be unrealistic to expect early achievement everywhere, but it has been widely adopted as a longer term aim”

(Quietening open spaces, EPUK)



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“a substantial part of a space being at least 6 dB below the typical daytime level of its surroundings might be a practical early guideline”



BUT



“attitudes to what constitutes quiet are to some extent determined by culture and location”

(Quietening open spaces, EPUK)



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OUR AIM



local access to tranquil open spaces in an urban environment

=

network of designated quiet areas that meet certain criteria for tranquillity and accessibility, and equivalent areas outside the agglomeration boundary which may inform a re-drawing of the boundary and subsequently become designated as quiet areas



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ALREADY HALF-WAY THERE

- Current candidate quiet areas likely to have been selected with tranquillity and accessibility in mind
- We just need to document the justification for their quiet area status in common terms



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SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

- Local authorities asked to provide written description of candidate quiet areas to support recommendation to Welsh Ministers
- Description should consider each of the ‘five pillars’ of tranquillity as they each relate to **perceived** quietness, and will be largely subjective (but based on local knowledge)



SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Some further objective criteria should be considered alongside the subjective tranquillity assessment

- air quality standards met
- reasonable hours of opening
- disabled access
- free to enter

...



WHAT WE CAN DO

- Confirm quiet area status for those within the current agglomeration boundary (leading to additional planning protection)
- Explore legal options for re-drawing the agglomeration boundary to encompass those areas outside, so that their status may also be confirmed



WHAT WE CAN DO

- Develop an indicator to measure local access to tranquil spaces in terms of the percentage of each agglomeration's population that lives within a certain distance of either (a) a quiet area or (b) a would-be quiet area currently outside the boundary



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Noise and planning guidance



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLANNING AND QUIET AREAS

- Provision of (complementary) evidence
- Direct and implicit relationship with noise considerations
- Indirect and implicit relationship with wider planning objectives

***Make the right connections between
activities to safeguard amenity***



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SPECIFIC PROTECTION FOR QUIET AREAS

“development plan policies should have regard to any relevant noise action plan, including the need to protect urban ‘quiet areas’ against an increase in noise”

(Planning Policy Wales 2010)



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SPECIFIC PROTECTION FOR QUIET AREAS

“special consideration is required where noise-generating development is proposed in or near statutorily designated areas, including urban ‘quiet areas’”

(Planning Policy Wales 2010)



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IMPLICIT WIDER CONSIDERATIONS

Fulfilling complementary and multi-objectives rather than separate approaches

For example:

- Open space and recreation
- Nature conservation
- Good design
- Conservation of the built environment
- Water management





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<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/noiseandnuisance/environmentalnoise/?lang=en>



Thank you!

