



NOISE POLICY STATEMENT FOR ENGLAND (NPSE)

The Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) in March 2010. The long term vision of Government noise policy is to promote good health and a good quality of life through the effective management of noise within the context of Government policy of sustainable development.

Q: Why do we need a Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)?

Noise is an inevitable consequence of a mature and vibrant society. For some the noise of city life provides a desirable sense of excitement and exhilaration, but for others noise is an unwanted intrusion that adversely impacts on their quality of life, affecting their health and wellbeing.

By describing clear policy vision and aims the NPSE provides the necessary clarity and direction to enable decisions to be made regarding what is an acceptable noise burden to place on society.

Q: What types of noise are addressed by the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)?

The intention is that the NPSE should apply to all types of noise apart from noise in the workplace (occupational noise). For the purposes of the NPSE, “noise” includes:

- “environmental noise” which includes noise from transportation sources;
- “neighbour noise” which includes noise from inside and outside people’s homes; and
- “neighbourhood noise” which includes noise arising from within the community such as industrial and entertainment premises, trade and business premises, construc-

tion sites and noise in the street. What will the Noise Policy Statement for England achieve?

Q: How should the Noise Policy Statement for England be used (NPSE)?

Noise management is a complex issue and at times requires complex solutions. Sound only becomes noise (often defined as “unwanted sound”) when it exists in the wrong place or at the wrong time such that it causes or contributes to some harmful or otherwise unwanted effect, like annoyance or sleep disturbance. Unlike many other pollutants, noise pollution depends not just on the physical aspects of the sound itself, but also the human reaction to it. Consequently, the NPSE provides a clear description of desired outcome from the noise management of a particular situation.

Q: What does the vision of the Noise Policy Statement for England mean (NPSE)?

There are several key phrases within the NPSE vision and these are discussed below.

“Health and quality of life”

The World Health Organisation defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, and recognises the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as

one of the fundamental rights of every human being.

“Promote good health and good quality of life”

This statement expresses the long term desired policy outcome, but in the use of “promote” and “good” recognises that it is not possible to have a single objective noise-based measure that is mandatory and applicable to all sources of noise in all situations.

“Effective management of noise”

This concept confirms that the policy applies to all types of “noise” (environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood) and that the solution could be more than simply minimising the noise.

“Within the context of Government policy on sustainable development”

Sustainable development is a core principle underpinning all government policy.





Q: What do the aims of the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) mean?

There are several key phrases within the NPSE aims and these are discussed below.

“Significant adverse” and “adverse”

There are two established concepts from toxicology that are currently being applied to noise impacts, for example, by the World Health Organisation. They are:

NOEL – No Observed Effect Level

This is the level below which no effect can be detected. In simple terms, below this level, there is no detectable effect on health and quality of life due to the noise.

LOAEL – Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level

This is the level above which adverse effects on health and quality of life can be detected.

Extending these concepts for the purpose of this NPSE leads to the concept of a significant observed adverse effect level.

SOAEL – Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level

This is the level above which significant adverse effects on health and quality of life occur.

It is not possible to have a single objective noise-based measure that defines SOAEL that is applicable to all sources of noise in all situations. Consequently, the SOAEL is likely to be different for different noise sources, for different receptors and at different times. It is acknowledged that further research is required to increase our understanding of what may constitute a signifi-

cant adverse impact on health and quality of life from noise. However, not having specific SOAEL values in the NPSE provides the necessary policy flexibility until further evidence and suitable guidance is available.

What is the first aim of the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)?

The first aim of the NPSE states that significant adverse effects on health and quality of life should be avoided while also taking into account the guiding principles of sustainable development.

What is the second aim of the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)?

The second aim of the NPSE refers to the situation where the impact lies somewhere between LOAEL and SOAEL. It requires that all reasonable steps should be taken to mitigate and minimise adverse effects on health and quality of life while also taking into account the guiding principles of sustainable development. This does not mean that such adverse effects cannot occur.

What is the third aim of the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)?

This aim seeks, where possible, positively to improve health and quality of life through the pro-active management of noise while also taking into account the guiding principles of sustainable development

(paragraph 1.8), recognising that there will be opportunities for such measures to be taken and that they will deliver potential benefits to society. The protection of quiet places and quiet times as well as the enhancement of the acoustic environment will assist with delivering this aim.



Hann Tucker Associates, the leading acoustic consultants in the UK, can give you the necessary advice to avoid potential problems at the design stage where costs are always at a minimum. While in many instances, it is possible to attenuate noise sources once a problem has occurred, this is always expensive and sometimes impossible. By using the specialist knowledge and expertise that Hann Tucker has gained over 45 years of practical consulting, you can avoid these potential problems which may cause a delay to your programme, will certainly cost you money, can attract the unwanted attention of the media and generally distract you from your normal commercial activity.



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