Chapter 4

Environmental Noise
Chapter 4: Environmental Noise

1. Introduction

Environmental noise is ‘unwanted or harmful outdoor sound’ arising from all areas of human activity. Although noise is a product of many human activities, the most widespread sources of environmental noise exposure in Ireland are various forms of transport.

Annoyance is one of the most prevalent responses to noise. Annoyance is described as a stress reaction that encompasses a wide range of negative feelings such as disturbance, dissatisfaction and distress. An individual’s response to noise depends not only on exposure levels but also on the context, the situation and personal factors (EEA, 2019a). The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported extensively on the health impacts of environmental noise pollution.

The human ear hears sound pressures over a wide range of frequencies. Decibels (dB), which are measured on a logarithmic scale, correspond to the way our ears interpret sound pressures. Figure 4.1 outlines some comparative noise levels for outdoor and indoor activities (US DT FAA, 2020).

Noise and Health

The WHO has identified long-term noise exposure as an important public health issue and the second most significant environmental cause of ill health in western Europe after air pollution.

In 2018, the WHO published the Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region (WHO, 2018). The guidelines set out how noise pollution in our towns and cities is increasing and how excessive noise, particularly from transport sources, has negative impacts on human health and wellbeing, adversely affecting sleep and cardiovascular and metabolic function. Night-time exposure to high levels of road traffic noise affects more than 78 million people in the 33 member countries of the European Environment Agency. In Europe more than 17 million people are exposed to high night-time noise levels from railways and approximately 1.3 million are exposed to high night-time noise levels from aircraft (EEA, 2019b). Data for Ireland from the transport noise mapping work, coordinated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are also available. These data are discussed later in this chapter (see section 2 for relevant discussion).

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**Figure 4.1** Comparison of indoor and outdoor sound levels (Source: US DT FAA, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON OUTDOOR SOUND LEVELS</th>
<th>NOISE LEVEL (DB(A))</th>
<th>COMMON INDOOR SOUND LEVELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car Horn at 3 ft</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Rock Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas Lawn Mower at 3 ft</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Inside Subway Train (New York)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel Truck at 150 ft</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Food Blender at 3 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy Urban</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Garbage Disposal at 3 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy Highway at 50 ft</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Shouting at 3 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Area</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Vacuum Cleaner at 10 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Urban</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Normal Speech at 3 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Rural</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Large Business Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Dishwasher Next Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Small Theatre, Large Conference Room (Background)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bedroom at Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concert Hall (Background)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcast &amp; Recording Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Threshold of Hearing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excessive noise is reported (WHO, 2020) to:
- seriously harm human health and interfere with people’s daily activities
- disturb sleep and cause cardiovascular and psychophysiological effects and
- reduce performance and provoke annoyance responses and changes in social behaviour.

Long-term exposure to environmental noise from road traffic, railways, aircraft and industry contributes every year to about 48,000 new cases of heart disease and 12,000 premature deaths in Europe (EEA, 2020). Research is under way in Ireland on the health impacts of exposure to environmental noise in a national context. Meanwhile, environmental noise reduction measures complement the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals on Good Health and Wellbeing (Goal 3) and Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11).

2. Assessment of Environmental Noise from Transport Sources in Ireland

European legislation requires the development of strategic noise maps and action plans on a 5-year cycle.

The European Union’s (EU’s) Environmental Noise Directive (END; 2002/49/EC) deals with environmental noise from major transport infrastructure including roads, railways and airports (EC, 2002). The END sets out a two-stage process for addressing environmental noise by requiring Member States to:
- establish the scale of the noise problem by preparing ‘strategic noise maps’ for major roads, railways, airports, agglomerations and industry and
- develop action plans to reduce the level of noise where necessary and to maintain environmental noise quality where it is good.

Strategic Noise Maps Covering Transport Noise Sources

Strategic noise maps show the predicted noise exposure in a given area resulting from transport noise sources.

The EPA is the national authority for overseeing the implementation of the Environmental Noise Regulations 2018.1 Responsibility for the preparation of the strategic noise maps lies with the designated noise mapping bodies. These include Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), the various local authorities, Irish Rail and the Dublin Airport Authority. The roles and responsibilities in terms of noise mapping in Ireland are outlined on the EPA website.2

Only the larger transport noise sources are required to be modelled and mapped. The thresholds that apply to the noise mapping are as follows:
- major roads – > three million vehicle passages/annum;
- major railways – > 30,000 train passages/annum;
- major airports – > 50,000 air movements/annum; and
- major cities – agglomerations with > 100,000 inhabitants, which in Ireland includes the cities of Dublin, Cork and, from 2020, Limerick.

Strategic noise maps show noise exposure levels. They are prepared using computer modelling techniques that use various types of source data to estimate noise levels, including traffic flow, types of road and rail, types of vehicles and vehicle speeds. The noise maps are presented in terms of two noise indicators, $L_{den}$ and $L_{night}$, as described in Topic Box 4.1.

Topic Box 4.1 Noise indicators

$L_{den}$ is the day-evening-night long-term average noise indicator. It is ‘weighted’ to account for extra annoyance in the evening and night-time periods. The END defines an $L_{den}$ threshold of 55 dB for reporting on the numbers of people exposed.

$L_{night}$ is the night-time long-term average noise indicator and is used in the assessment of sleep disturbance. An $L_{night}$ threshold of 50 dB is defined for reporting on the numbers of people exposed.

These indicators are based on year-long averages for the day (07:00-19:00), evening (19:00-23:00) and night-time (23:00-07:00) periods.

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2 Noise mapping – round 3; http://www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/noisemapping/.
The strategic noise maps can be viewed on the EPA Maps section of the EPA website under ‘Environment and Wellbeing – Noise’. The maps can be used to assess noise exposure in a given area (Topic Box 4.2). An example map for the Dublin agglomeration is shown in Figure 4.2. The purpose of this public information on noise mapping is to increase public awareness around these strategic maps and the noise action plans.

In Ireland, road transport, particularly in urban areas, is the predominant source of transport noise. In 2017, when the current maps were developed as part of the 5-yearly cycle, approximately 45 per cent of the total population living in the two urban areas of Dublin and Cork were exposed to a noise level of $L_{den} \geq 55 \text{ dB}$ from road transport noise. For those people living outside these urban areas, less than 5 per cent of the total population were exposed to a noise level of $L_{den} \geq 55 \text{ dB}$ from road transport noise. The mapping also showed that around 2 per cent of the urban population in Ireland were exposed to noise levels of $L_{den} \geq 55 \text{ dB}$ from rail or aircraft noise (EEA, 2019a).

In 2018, Fingal County Council received 580 submissions on its draft Dublin Airport Noise Action Plan. Fingal County Council officials used the noise mapping information on the EPA website to explain to the local community about the Fingal County and Dublin Airport noise maps (Figure 4.3). Residents were shown how to access their local map and zoom in to street level to see how they could be impacted by transport noise. The EPA Maps online facility enables users, for example planners, developers and the public at large, to assess the predicted noise levels along the busiest roads and in the larger cities, with a range of features to help visualise the data.

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3 Environment and Wellbeing – Noise; https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/
Noise Action Plans for Transport Noise Sources

Local authority noise action plans should identify measures to prevent and reduce transport noise and to protect quiet areas.

Following the preparation of the noise maps, the relevant action planning authorities, i.e. the relevant local authorities, are required to consult with the public in the preparation of noise action plans for those areas where the noise thresholds for $L_{den}(55 \text{ dB})$ and $L_{night}(50 \text{ dB})$ are exceeded. These action plans are designed to manage transport noise issues and effects, including the prevention and reduction of environmental noise where necessary.

As part of this process, each local authority identifies noise-sensitive locations. This may include drawing up a shortlist of potential areas for action, both above the recommended onset values for noise mitigation measures and below the recommended level for preservation, to help identify quiet areas.

A new requirement under the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 is that local authorities must report progress on their noise action plans to the EPA early each year. Each local authority is required to set out the steps that have been taken to prevent, protect against and reduce excessive transport noise, as identified in the noise action plan (Topic Box 4.3).

Topic Box 4.3 Assessment of Noise Reduction Measures on the Luas

Actions to reduce transport noise can range from strategic and policy solutions around mobility and urban planning to more detailed engineering solutions to reduce specific noise sources. For example, rail transport can result in some noise pollution caused by the train wheels running over the tracks. However, acoustic mitigation measures are feasible. TII undertook a small-scale experimental trial of two noise reduction systems on a section of the Luas network with slab track: un-tuned rail dampers (Photo 4.1) and absorbing rubber infill panels (Photo 4.2). These noise reduction systems were installed on separate 100 m stretches of the Luas Green Line in Dublin. Noise for the section of track installed with rail dampers decreased by approximately 2-3.5 dB, while, for the section of track installed with the absorbing rubber infill panels, tram pass-by levels decreased by approximately 2.5-4.0 dB. These findings are being used when considering acoustic mitigation measures for future Luas lines.

Photo 4.1 Rail dampers on slab track

Photo 4.2 Rubber mats on slab track
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Noise: EPA Research Programme 2014-2020

Since 2017, the EPA has funded two noise research projects representing a commitment of €0.6 million under its Health and Wellbeing research theme (Sustainability Pillar) in the areas of noise and health and strategic noise mapping (Noise Adapt).

These projects will add to the evidence base on environmental noise pollution in Ireland and its health impacts. The Noise Adapt project is due to be published in 2020, while the noise and health project is due to be published in 2021. Their findings should assist with the development and application of the new EU noise modelling and mapping methods that will be required in the next cycle of national mapping. More information is available at [http://www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/research/researchpublications/researchreports/](http://www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/research/researchpublications/researchreports/).

Another area to mention is the impact of noise on wildlife both on land and in the water. Underwater noise is covered in Chapter 8 The Marine Environment.

3. Impact of Noise

Noise complaints

The number of noise complaints has increased in recent years.

In Ireland, noise complaints normally fall under four main categories:

- complaints about entertainment, such as loud music
- domestic/neighbourhood noise
- industrial/commercial activities that cause noise and
- transport-related noise sources.

Figure 4.4 shows the noise complaints received by local authorities and the EPA for the years 2016-2018. Most of the complaints about noise received by local authorities were from urban areas, with Dublin local authorities receiving the most complaints. The number of noise complaints received by local authorities, as well as the number of noise complaints overall, increased from 2016 to 2018, the last 3 years for which data are available.

Almost one-third of all complaints received by the EPA about EPA-licensed sites related to noise issues (EPA, 2020).

![Figure 4.4](http://www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/research/researchpublications/researchreports/)
A detailed breakdown of the source of noise complaints (domestic, entertainment, transport or traffic noise, etc.) recorded by local authorities is not generally available. This is a data collection area that the EPA will be considering further as the breakdown of these data into categories would be a useful environmental indicator.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland is responsible for mapping all national roads that carry more than three million vehicles a year and for light rail lines, including the Luas network, under the Environmental Noise Regulations. Along with local authorities, TII has the main responsibility for dealing with road- and rail-related noise complaints.

**Airport Noise: A Key Issue to Control When Passenger Numbers Increase Again**

Dublin Airport welcomed 32.9 million passengers during 2019, setting a new record for traffic at the airport (Dublin Airport, 2020). Noise complaints around Dublin Airport have become a more significant issue in recent years, with the Dublin Airport Authority logging 1453 noise-related complaints in 2018 (Dublin Airport, 2019), although there has clearly been a major reduction in airport activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The numbers of passengers using Cork (2.4 million passengers) and Shannon (1.85 million passengers) Airports had also increased in recent years, until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, both airports are currently below the threshold of 50,000 air movements per annum for noise mapping requirements. Over the last 3 years, according to the Dublin Airport Authority, there have been very few recorded noise complaints for Cork Airport and no noise complaints for Shannon Airport.

In 2019, Fingal County Council was appointed as the competent authority to regulate airport noise at Dublin Airport under EU Regulation No. 598/2014 (Government of Ireland, 2019), which covers noise-related operating restrictions at EU airports with more than 50,000 aircraft movements per year. The independent competent authority section within Fingal County Council is called the Airport Noise Competent Authority. This unit is responsible for ensuring that noise generated by aircraft activity at Dublin Airport is assessed in accordance with EU and Irish regulations. It ensures the application of the ‘balanced approach’ to aircraft noise management, as set out by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in cases where a noise problem or potential noise problem is identified at the airport (ANCA, 2019).

### 4. Outlook for Noise Policy and Mitigation Measures

**Acoustic Design, Planning and Noise**

Project Ireland 2040 includes a national policy objective that will look to integrate noise management with health and planning.

The roll-out of Policy Objective 65 in the Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (DHPLG, 2018) is expected to be a significant driver of environmental noise policy in Ireland over the coming decades. Policy Objective 65 requires the following:

‘Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans’.

The National Planning Framework further states that ‘as we seek to promote more compact and efficient forms of development within our settlements, it is important to more proactively manage noise’. For larger urban areas, the extra value placed on ‘quiet areas’ is also highlighted as a key priority.

However, there is a need for national noise planning guidance for local authorities, to ensure better consistency in the assessment and conditioning of noise issues in planning applications across the country (Topic Box 4.4). Planning guidance is of upmost importance in mitigating the current and future health impacts of noise pollution and helping to promote the government policy of improved building standards and ‘ensuring that the right development takes place in the right locations’.
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Topic Box 4.4 UK Guidance on Planning and Noise

The Institute of Acoustics is the UK’s professional body for those working in acoustics, noise and vibration. It has some 3000 members worldwide, with approximately 150 members in the Irish branch. In 2017, the Institute co-published guidance to provide practitioners with a recommended approach to the management of noise within the planning system in England. The Professional Practice Guidance on Planning & Noise: New Residential Development (ProPG) (IOA, 2017) is now widely used, including in Ireland (e.g. in Limerick, Topic Box 4.5). Importantly, it encourages the implementation of good acoustic design from the earliest stages of planning for new residential developments, which should help reduce noise pollution levels for residents.

The recommended approach provides opportunities to incorporate innovative and effective design interventions to enable residential development to proceed in acoustically challenging areas. In locations where it would not be appropriate to build new dwellings because of significant noise pollution, even with acoustic design considerations, the guidance encourages early identification of the risk of refusal and supports early decision-making, thereby avoiding unnecessary development and design costs.

Integrating Air Pollution and Noise Mitigation Measures

Integrating air pollution and noise mitigation measures can bring many benefits.

Many of the sources of environmental noise are also sources of air pollution, such as traffic. There is growing recognition internationally that integrating air pollution and noise mitigation measures can bring many benefits. For example, the Scottish Government Policy Guidance on local air quality management helps ensure that an integrated approach to managing air quality and noise is taken across government (Scotland Government, 2018). The guidance identifies that special consideration should be given to noise management areas identified in noise action plans.

Other potential measures include restrictions on heavy goods vehicles, reducing speeds on motorways and dual carriageways, the promotion of environmentally friendly vehicles. It also includes strategies to increase the separation between noise sources and sensitive receptors, including urban planning measures, measures to encourage an increase in greenery and the promotion of energy-efficient buildings.

This approach calls for effective coordination among the different health, planning, transport and environmental protection stakeholders so that they can work together to address noise and air pollution.

Topic Box 4.5 Promoting Walking and Cycling and Transport Noise Reduction as Part of the Renewal of Limerick City Centre

The overarching aim of the O’Connell Street Revitalisation Project is for the street to be primarily pedestrian, while being flexible in use. The project includes:

- wider footpaths and additional pedestrian areas to facilitate people gathering, on-street trading, and ‘spill out zones’ from shops and cafes on the street
- the provision of street furniture on O’Connell Street including seating areas, trees, bicycle stands and lighting
- introduction of a bus lane, with cyclists allowed to use the bus lane, and reduction in the number of private traffic lanes to one, as well as general reductions in the width of traffic lanes (Limerick City & County Council, 2019).

Limerick was awarded (co-winner) the European Green Leaf Award by the European Commission in 2020. The local authority is engaging with communities in Limerick to identify tranquil and calm areas using the Hush City framework. The framework uses public participation to describe the acoustic environment (the soundscape), with policymakers using the results to assess and plan quiet areas in their cities (Hush City Mobile Lab, 2017). One of the ways to collect data is through organised ‘soundwalks’, excursions whose main purpose is listening to the environment.

Limerick City & County Council is also using international guidance in assessing planning applications for new residential developments. It has incorporated the ProPG approach outlined earlier (IOA, 2017) in its Noise Action Plan 2018-2023.
World Health Organization Guidelines for the Protection of Human Health

The application of ambient noise targets and limits could help to provide consistent protection from noise for proposed noise-sensitive developments and for existing noise-sensitive premises.

In 2018, the WHO published guidance to policymakers on noise levels above which it considers that adverse effects on health and sleep occur (WHO, 2018). These WHO guidance levels are below the END mandatory noise level reporting thresholds for $L_{\text{den}}$ (55 dB) and $L_{\text{night}}$ (50 dB). Although the END includes a requirement to report and publicise any noise limit values in place, it neither introduces noise limit values nor requires noise limits to be introduced within Member States or by competent authorities. The recent publication of the amended Annex III of the END, establishing assessment methods for harmful effects of environmental noise, did not change this approach.

In view of the WHO guidance and the flexibility afforded by the END to allow countries to report noise levels below the mandatory reporting requirements, due consideration of feasibility, costs and preferences should be given before guidance on values or noise limits is introduced by the relevant department. These considerations are acknowledged in the WHO guidelines.

In addition to the END noise reporting levels, many European countries have target values or limits for noise. These values may be set at levels below the END mandatory reporting thresholds. Target noise levels are generally used to define the onset level above which noise management will be considered relevant. Higher noise levels are generally set as a noise limit, often as the upper level for new developments or the first target for reducing noise from existing sources.

Where only noise limits are published, there may be different limits for new and existing situations. Noise targets and limits tend to be used to protect residential areas and other noise-sensitive developments where long-term noise exposure is expected, for example from roads, railways, aircraft and wind turbines.

While noise limits may be specified for industrial activities and attached to some planning permissions in Ireland, target and limit values for ambient noise are not specified. The application of ambient noise targets and/or limits would help to provide consistent protection from existing noise sources on proposed noise-sensitive developments. They would also protect people from the potential impacts of new developments on existing noise-sensitive premises, including dwellings, schools, hospitals and designated quiet areas (Topic Box 4.6).

Wind Energy Noise and Health

Revision of the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines is under way, covering noise management and noise monitoring aspects.

In 2020, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage undertook a public consultation on its draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DHPLG, 2019) as part of a review of the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines. In line with the ‘preferred approach’, the draft guidelines include new guidance that aims to take account of technological advancements for the purpose of protecting residents and communities living beside new wind energy developments. The guidance is based on international best practice for wind turbine noise control, including the Institute of Acoustics guidelines (IOA, 2013) and the WHO guidelines (WHO, 2018).
A significant modification in the new guidelines is the consideration of special audible characteristics (e.g. tones, amplitude modulation and low frequency noise) (DHPLG, 2019). The implementation of a new noise monitoring framework is also proposed. It is envisaged that the EPA will have a supporting and advisory role in ensuring that local authorities have a robust noise monitoring framework in place. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications are considering submissions from the public consultation process with a view to publishing the final Wind Energy Development Guidelines before the end of 2020.

5. Conclusions

Noise Soundscape

While acknowledging the negative impact of noise on our society, we also recognise that our lives are enhanced by conversation, laughter and cheering, music and the sounds of nature. A healthy acoustic environment is more than simply the absence of unwanted sound. The term ‘soundscape’ refers to the acoustic environment as perceived, experienced and understood by people in any given context, and this includes beneficial and neutral sounds as well as noise. The protection of quiet areas and healthy soundscapes can be achieved through good urban sound planning. We also need to be mindful of the potential for changes in the soundscape where people live, from new developments in technology.

Noise and Health

Long-term exposure to environmental noise from road traffic, railways, aircraft and industry contributes every year to about 48,000 new cases of heart disease and 12,000 premature deaths in Europe. It is also estimated that 22 million people suffer from chronic high levels of annoyance and 6.5 million people suffer from chronic high levels of sleep disturbance (EEA, 2020). Some of these noise-related deaths and illnesses occur in Ireland, but it is not yet possible to estimate the health impact here. The EPA-funded noise health research project will provide a detailed review of the relationship between environmental noise and health and wellbeing in Ireland when it is published in 2021.

Implementation of Noise Action Plans

A reduction in road traffic volumes and the benefits of lower noise levels have been observed by the Irish public during the restrictions implemented because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As outlined earlier, each local authority is now required to set out the steps that they have taken each year to prevent, protect against and reduce excessive noise, as identified in their noise action plans. The EPA recommends that ‘pilot’ noise mitigation programmes should be considered in Dublin, Cork and Limerick as part of a national coordinated approach to the implementation of control measures identified in the noise action plans. This approach would require close cooperation between local authorities and the relevant transport authorities and government departments, such as TII, Irish Rail and the Dublin Airport Authority, where appropriate.

Cross-sectoral Approach

Interventions that reduce both the adverse effects of air pollution and the adverse effects of noise have the potential to positively impact a larger number of people than those targeting only one environmental stressor. The same can be said for integrating such interventions with relevant measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In general, strategies that may be effective at mitigating both environmental noise and air pollution from transport or industry sources include traffic-calming measures, improvements in cycling and walking infrastructure, the use of environmentally friendly vehicles, urban planning measures, improvements in public transport and increases in greenery, as well as the use of energy-efficient buildings.

As well as reducing excessive noise, implementing such measures can also help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce traffic congestion, improve road safety and reduce the ‘urban heat island’ effect (see Chapters 2, 3, 11, and 14 for relevant discussion). Therefore, interventions intended to mitigate air pollution and noise will require a coordinated and collaborative approach among the different health, planning, transport and environmental protection stakeholders (EEA, 2019a).

The approach to environmental noise, including noise reduction strategies, is closely linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals on Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11). This goal can also be addressed through the preservation of quiet areas in both urban and rural areas and by developing urban soundscape plans for our larger cities. Noise can also impact on wildlife. The issue of underwater noise and marine mammals is covered in Chapter 8 The Marine Environment.
Developing a National Noise Policy or Strategy

Environmental noise originates from a wide range of sources: including transport, commercial and industrial sources as well as from wind turbines, entertainment and leisure sources, and domestic sources. As demonstrated in the 2018 WHO noise guidelines, excessive noise is an important public health issue. In Ireland, excessive noise mainly emanates from transport sources such as road traffic, aviation and railways, although, overall, the numbers of noise complaints across these different sources have been increasing in recent years. In this context, the development of a national noise policy statement or strategy has the potential to provide the policy framework within which integrated noise measures could be identified and promoted across government, industry and society.

Regional Approach to Air Quality and Noise Enforcement and Compliance

In Ireland, various regional enforcement/implementation models have already been established (in the areas of climate, water and waste) and are operating successfully to promote environmental enforcement and programme implementation. The impact of these regional structures has been very positive and the higher levels of support now available to local authority enforcement officers has resulted in enhanced outcomes. The Programme for Government commits to considering the development of a regional approach to clean air and noise compliance and enforcement.
National noise planning guidance for local authorities is needed. This will support and promote the proactive management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life. The guidance will also help to implement the noise objective in Project Ireland – National Planning Framework 2040 and should also consider the 2018 WHO noise and health guidelines.

Noise pollution complaints from the public have been increasing and current measures do not always allow for them to be adequately addressed. Local authorities need to take a much stronger leadership role in dealing with noise issues, particularly in more urban areas.

Integrating air pollution and noise mitigation measures (and climate actions), particularly in transport management, can bring many benefits. Such integration of options could be explored under the plans for a clean air strategy for Ireland. Local authorities should also designate quiet areas in their cities for health and wellbeing value.
References


