



EPA Report on Progress by Local Authority with Noise Action Plans

Summary Review of Noise Action Plan Annual Reports for 2022 FINAL

Noise Action Plans under S.I. No. 549/2018 – European Communities (Environmental Noise Regulations) 2018, as amended.

In 2018, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region. It sets out how noise pollution in our towns and cities is increasing, and particularly from transport sources such as road traffic, railways, and aircraft.



Legislation in Ireland requires that strategic noise maps are developed every 5 years. The maps set out the noise exposure in a given area from particular noise sources. These sources include major roads, major rail, major airports, & major agglomerations.



Noise Action Plans are designed to manage these noise issues and effects (priority areas for action), and prevent and reduce environmental noise.

1. Introduction

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 (NAPs). These action plans are designed to manage transport noise issues and effects, including the prevention and reduction of environmental noise where necessary.

Under the Environmental Noise Regulations, an annual Noise Action Plan progress report must be submitted to the EPA by each Local Authority by the 28th of February (each year). This Summary report provides an overview of the 2022 progress reports that were received and reviewed by the EPA in 2023.

The EPA guidance for Noise Action Plans¹ (currently being revised for development of the new Round 4 plans) specifies that each local authority should identify their noise-sensitive locations, which may involve drawing up a shortlist of potential areas for action. This list could include areas that are above the recommended onset values for noise mitigation measures, and those that are below the recommended level for preservation (to help identify Quiet Areas – this refers to a space that is not affected by noise from transport, industrial activities, or recreational noise).

2. Requirements of Noise Regulations

The European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018² state in Regulation 7:

“The following shall be designated action planning authorities for the purpose of making and approving action plans, in consultation with the Agency and the noise-mapping body for the noise-map involved—

- a) for major railways, the local authority or local authorities within whose functional area or areas the railway is located.
- b) for major roads, the relevant local authority or local authorities within whose functional area or areas the road is located; and
- c) for major airports, the local authority or local authorities within whose functional area the airport is located.”

Article 12 (10) of the Regulations regarding Action Plans states:

“Action planning authorities shall report to the Agency on all actions taken under each action plan or revised action plan in the previous 12 months.”

¹ EPA Round 3 Noise action planning guidance (2009, 2018); <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/noise/noise-mapping-and-action-plans/#d.en.90851>

² Environmental Noise Regulations 2018; <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/549/made/en/print> and [Environmental Noise Regulations 2021; S.I. No. 663/2021 - European Communities \(Environmental Noise\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/si/663/made/en/print)

3. Assessment Criteria Used

The Environmental Noise Directive (ENDs) is one of the National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs) under the Air and Noise thematic area in the EPA Local Authority Environmental Enforcement Performance Framework³. In 2023 local authorities submitted Noise Action Plan (NAP) Progress Reports to the EPA to demonstrate progress under the ENDs National Enforcement Priority and the information was assessed according to the Local Authority Environmental Enforcement Performance Framework Assessment Methodology.

Environmental Noise Directive Activities (ENDs)
For 2022, the NEP progress in this area should address the following:
(i) Submission of the local authority Noise Action Plan (NAP) Progress Report.

The assessment of the progress outlined in the Annual Noise Action Plan (NAP) Progress Report submitted to the EPA, as well as its subsequent review, are monitored and reported by the EPA under the Local Authority Performance Framework. The following table sets out the marking scheme under the framework.

Table 1: Marking scheme used for Noise Action Plan (NAP) progress reports.

Marking Scheme ¹	Description	Result
Demonstrate each Core criteria (A,B,C, and D) along with several examples from complementary criteria (E-K).	Very clear demonstration of outcomes being achieved, demonstrating a comprehensive system for detecting non-compliance and follow up to conclusion.	Excellent
Demonstrate each criteria A, B and C, and also at least one noteworthy example from D - K.	Strong performance is considered to be a coherent 'story' that clearly makes identifiable progress in a NEP area. The final outcomes might not be fully achieved but good progress is evident.	Strong
At least one good example from Core criteria A, or B, or C, or D demonstrated.	Moderate performance is considered to encompass useful addition to RMCEI Data Returns without being a complete story, include some level of useful learning in a NEP area or progresses the NEP.	Moderate
No significant information provided to demonstrate any single core criteria (A-D). Low level of activities relevant to the potential impacts in the local authority area.	Little activity evident or no significant information provided to give context to the numbers reported in RMCEI Data Returns e.g. simply restating numbers, 'We did 10 inspections. We issued 2 notices'	Limited

³ <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/compliance--enforcement/support-and-supervision-of-local-councils/la-performance/>

Summary Assessment Findings for 2022

A summary of the annual Noise Action Plan progress reports submitted for 2022 is provided in Table 2 below and in the map in Figure 1.

Table 2: Summary Assessment of the 2022 Noise Action Progress Reports from Local Authorities

No.	Rating Assessment by EPA	No. of LAs that submitted reports (29)	Local Authorities
1.	Excellent	1	Limerick City & County
2.	Strong	5	Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Kerry County Council, Kildare County Council, South Dublin County Council
3.	Moderate	14	Carlow County Council, Cavan County Council, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Galway City Council, Galway County Council, Leitrim County Council, Longford County Council, Meath County Council, Monaghan County Council, Offaly County Council, Tipperary County Council, Waterford City & County Council, Westmeath County Council.
4.	Limited	11	Clare County Council, Donegal County Council, Fingal County Council ^{Note 1} , Laois County Council, Louth County Council, Mayo County Council, Roscommon County Council, Wexford County Council, Wicklow County Council. Kilkenny County Council & Sligo County Council (as no reports submitted, they are rated as Limited).

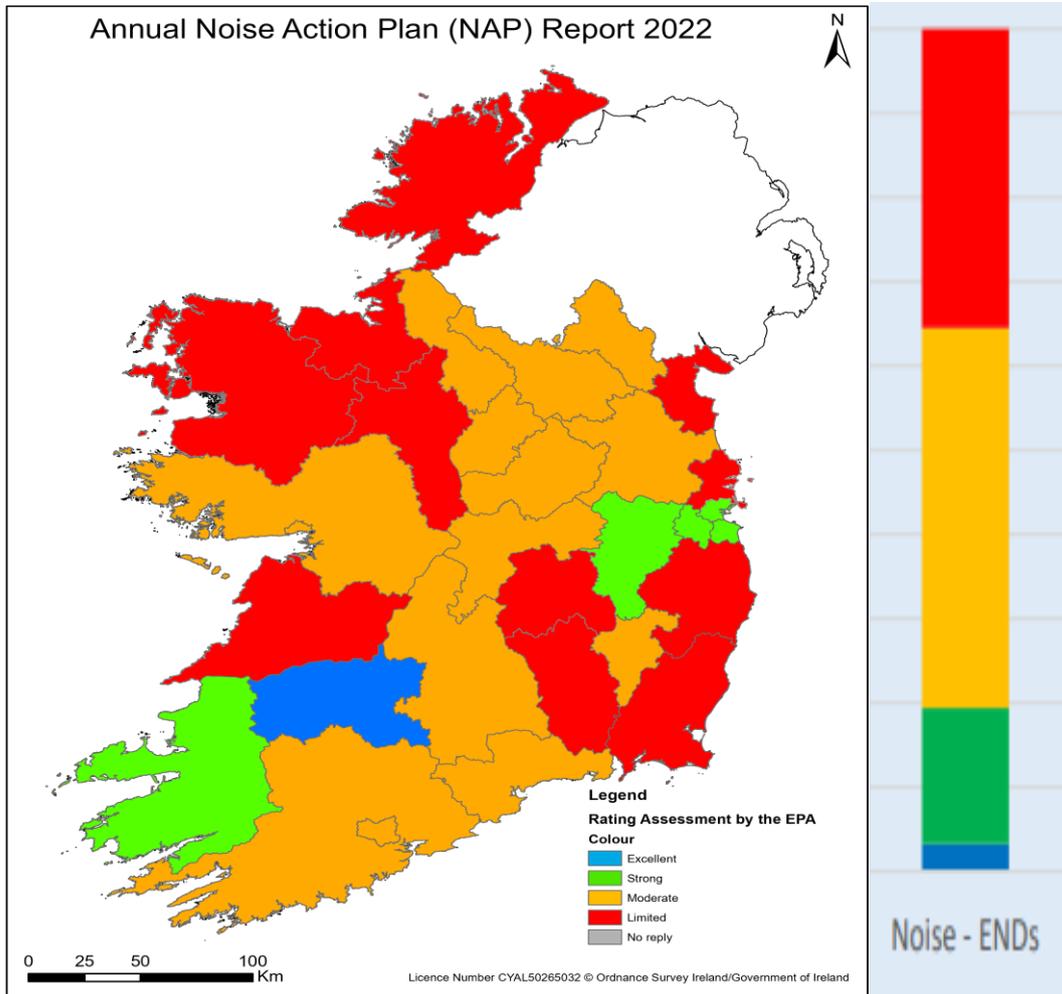
Note 1: The Fingal County NAP (Including the airport) was rated as Limited. The Dublin airport NAP part of the report was rated as Moderate, but the overall result for Fingal County was Limited.

Most of the progress reported by the local authorities has been around the use of low noise road surfaces, such as Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) and pavement rehabilitation, traffic calming measures to reduce speeds, noise monitoring at residential locations or the identification of potential Quiet Areas.

In Limerick, three cost benefit assessments were completed in 2022 for the Monaleen, Ballycummin and Patrickswell Hotspots. Pilot projects and proactive assessments such as these contributed to the excellent score achieved by Limerick as its clear that they have actively engaged in trying to progress noise improvement. However, this is not an easy task as there are funding issues to consider. For example, in the case of Monaleen, the local authority liaised with TII and undertook a pilot study for the area to determine the most cost-effective approach, which was determined to be resurfacing the motorway with a low noise road surface. This approach was projected to reduce noise levels for 1,314 households in the area during the day and 634 households at night, with an expected net cost benefit to human health of approximately €4.5m over 60 years. The local authority was awaiting measurements from TII to assess the efficiency of the improvement, but it appears any planned work are dependent on a resolution between the local authority and TII around how such works would be funded.

In many cases, no specific Noise Action Plan related actions were implemented in 2022. This would indicate that while some local authorities are making steady progress there is still a lot of room for improvement. Further overview details and data on the assessment of the progress reports from the individual local authorities is provided in Appendix 1.

Figure 1: Summary Assessment of the 2022 Noise Action Progress Reports from Local Authorities



● Excellent

Very clear demonstration of outcomes achieved. Comprehensive system of detection and follow up.

● Strong

Comprehensive system of detection and follow up. Identifiable progress.

● Moderate

Not a full coherent story, some useful additions to RMCEI stats.

● Limited

Context and results absent. Reliant on activity numbers.

Outlook to 2030

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has prepared a briefing entitled “Outlook to 2030 – can the number of people affected by transport noise be cut by 30%?”.

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/outlook-to-2030>

Reducing the negative impacts of exposure to transport noise by 30% is a 2030 target under the European Commission's Zero Pollution Action Plan. Living close to a busy road, railway or airport can be more than just a noise nuisance. Research now shows that at least one in five people in the EU are exposed to long-term noise levels considered harmful to their health. Health issues related to these exposures include annoyance, sleep disturbance, and cardiovascular and metabolic issues. It can also affect children's ability to learn. The EEA briefing assesses the feasibility of reaching this target based on an optimistic and a less ambitious scenario. Their results suggest it is unlikely that the target will be met, even with the implementation of a substantial number of noise measures.

The main obstacle to reaching the zero-pollution action plan target is the difficulty in reducing the large number of people exposed to road traffic noise. Reversing this would require significantly increased efforts to address noise from road transport. Based on the EPA review of the 2022 noise action plan progress reports (with summary details provided in Appendix 1), the EPA note the need for significant further actions to meet the aims and ambitions of the Environmental Noise Directive and the Zero Pollution Action Plan.

6. Recommendations

The EPA's assessment of local authority performance in 2022 shows that many local authorities have not prioritised implementation of actions under their noise action plans. From a review of the 2022 progress reports, the main recommendations for future consideration are as follows.

1. **Local Authority Performance Report 2022⁴**: Noise is the lowest performing enforcement priority across the Local Authority Performance Framework. Most local authorities struggle to implement their Noise Action Plans, as required under the Environmental Noise Regulations. The European Commission's Zero Pollution Action Plan sets a target of reducing the negative impacts of exposure to transport noise by 30% by 2030. Local authorities need to allocate adequate resources where relevant and collaborate with other key bodies especially Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), Irish Rail, and Dublin Airport Authority to prioritise and mitigate excessive noise exposure, particularly transport noise in urban areas, and designate quiet areas in cities for people's health and wellbeing.
2. **Implementation of Noise Action Plans (NAPs)**: Application for funding by relevant authorities for noise actions/mitigation for their Round 3 NAPs have mainly been based on the Priority decision matrix⁵. A new approach for Round 4 NAPs will involve the initial screening of noise exposed sites based on the results of strategic noise mapping. This process aims to identify Important Areas (IA), most important areas (MIA), and priority important areas (PIA). This process will be outlined in the Round 4 Guidance Note for Noise Action Planning that is due to be finalised and published in March 2024. Local authorities have already received a draft version of the guidance for feedback and any comments received are under consideration.

⁴ Focus on Local Authority Environmental Enforcement Performance Report 2022 - [Compliance & Enforcement: Public Authorities Publications | Environmental Protection Agency \(epa.ie\)](#)

⁵ Noise action planning guidance update (2018) - appendix 3; <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/noise/noise-guidance-update-2018.php>

3. **Regulatory Stakeholder Engagement:** It is very important to involve key stakeholders including the local authorities, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Irish Rail and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (as appropriate) in discussions and negotiations. This should help to ensure that there is a more strategic approach to the identification of priority areas for noise action and to securing the associated funding requirements.

Noise management measures in the Noise Action Plans should reflect the wider context of local and national sustainable development plans, policies, and strategies such as the 2040 National Planning Framework, the Local development plan and sustainable transport and sustainable urban mobility strategies.

4. **Road Noise:** The largest source of negative health effects due to noise exposure everywhere in Europe is road noise and should be the focus for noise actions in the coming years. According to the EEA, low noise tyres and pavements should be further promoted, as increased demand for such products will also drive tyre manufacturers and road contractors to innovate and make these available.

As noise pollution is a significant health issue, local authorities and other transport infrastructure organisations need to focus on noise prevention and mitigation, particularly in urban areas, by implementing noise reduction measures to reduce traffic noise as prioritised through the Noise Action Plans and by designating quiet areas in their cities⁶.

5. **EEA Briefing Report – 2030 Outlook;** To reach the zero-pollution target (30% reduction by 2030), measures need to target populations in high noise hot spots (i.e., those with higher noise exposure levels) and those living in areas that are exposed to lower noise thresholds. Therefore, a combination of measures is needed, including better urban and transport planning, as well as significant reductions in road traffic. Other measures outlined in this EEA report include better acoustic design for developments, reduction in speed limits on roads, redesigning roadways using low noise road surfaces, a balanced approach around airport operations, and creating low noise emission zones and quiet areas.
6. **Noise Policy including REGAIN:** The development of a national shared service to provide for the effective enforcement and co-ordination of local authorities' expertise in relation to noise legislation would deliver a framework within which integrated noise measures could be identified and promoted across government, industry and society. A national shared service could address funding, as well as roles and responsibilities for mitigation of noise from road transport. A national shared service should improve the performance of the NAPs implementation by local authorities and promote a progressive move towards using the WHO noise guideline values.

⁶ Soundscape Approach for Limerick City; [fa2023_20230620-163125_cs5kwz.pdf \(silssystem.solutions\)](#)

Appendix 1 – Data collection and further overview details on the assessment of the progress reports from the individual local authorities.

No. of Annual Action Progress Reports (2022)	29 received (out of 31 due to be submitted)
No. Reviewed	29
Mapping & NAP Round	3 rd Round ENDS
Noise Action Plan Year	2022

Excellent (1)

Limerick City & County Council: Three cost benefit assessments were completed for the Monaleen, Ballycummin and Patrickswell Noise Hotspots. The Council undertook a pilot study for the Monaleen Hotspot to implement the most cost-effective measure which was to resurface the motorway with a low noise road surface. This measure is expected to reduce noise levels for 1,314 households in the area during the day and 634 households at night, with an expected net cost benefit to human health of approx. €4.5m over 60 years. Plans for 570 proposed residential units have been assessed requiring the ProPG⁷ and preparation of Acoustic Design Statements to demonstrate good acoustic design. Noise monitoring data has been reviewed for two areas progressing towards quiet area designation.

Strong (5)

Dublin City Council: The main priority was to produce new noise maps for Round 4 of the END. A second priority was to ensure that noise actions and strategies were incorporated into the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028. Dublin City Council's Active Travel Network was officially launched.

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council: County Development Plan 2022- 2028 includes Policy Objectives in relation to noise. Work on major walking and cycle infrastructure schemes. Bike Share scheme licenses were extended in the County. Electric Vehicle parking is required in new developments. DLRCC has developed specific guidance with respect to noise in the planning process.

Kerry County Council: Works completed on traffic calming, active travel and pavement upgrade scheme at Upper Church Street, Listowel, including new Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) surfacing. Also, reduction of vehicle speeds and modal shift to new parallel active travel facilities in Listowel.

Kildare County Council: Encouraged employers to adopt Workplace travel plans; Facilitating home working and teleconferencing. Introducing monthly and annual tax saver tickets for public transport. Dedicating priority parking for car-shares. Introducing the Cycle to Work scheme. Maynooth Greenway under construction. Low Noise Surfacing to replace existing noisier surfaces in urban areas.

South Dublin County Council: South Dublin resurfaced 12 kilometres of road surfaces using SMA 14 and SMA 10. Have a network of 11 fixed noise monitors. Six meetings in 2022 with developers involved in large-scale residential developments of over 100 units in close proximity to major roads (M50, N4, N7 and N81). Have Four Quiet Areas (QAs) completed - await the approval from OPW in two of these, before they can submit for Ministerial approval.

Moderate (14)

Carlow County Council: Use of Stone Mastic Asphalt for road resurfacing works on a 1km section of the R448.

Cavan County Council: Resurfacing of Cavan Town main street was completed during 2022 with SMA. Commenced a review of its roads programme to identify other locations that may also benefit from low noise pavement materials. The identification and assessment of quiet areas continued in 2022.

Cork City Council: Progress on delivering the City Council's strategic transport policies (City Centre Movement Strategy (CCMS) and Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Study (CMATS)). 11 additional stations delivered in the bike share scheme across the city.

⁷ Professional Practice Guidance: Planning & Noise (ProPG).

Cork County Council: Some major roads have been resurfaced with SMA, which is a low noise emission surface. The N22 Ballyvourney Macroom Road has been partially opened providing a bypass for Macroom. The Carrigaline western relief road has been opened.

Galway City Council: The implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy will mitigate the environmental noise from the major roads by reduction, re-distribution and diversion of traffic volumes. A number of projects have progressed including Speed Limit Review, Electric Vehicles & Charging Infrastructure, and the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge.

Galway County Council: Works on construction of N59 Moycullen Bypass commenced. When completed it will reduce traffic volume passing through the village. Pavement resurfacing of R338 and R446 with lower noise SMA. Planned noise monitoring survey for Q4 delayed due to roadworks. Re-scheduled for Q2 2023.

Leitrim County Council: Had previously upgraded the road surface of the N4 in Carrick on Shannon. The material used to re-surface the N4 was SMA 14, with a 4-5 dB reduction in the noise levels at this location. The Active Travel Grants Programme supports strategic pedestrian and cyclist routes, access to schools, and urban greenways.

Longford County Council: Noise Mitigation measures included the use of Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) as a surface dressing along N4 main street Newtownforbes. SMA was also used on the N63 Main Street Lanesboro, but this area is not within the noise action plan mapping area.

Meath County Council: Identified additional roads (AADT) where consideration of noise issues may be required. 11.6 km of roads resurfaced using Low noise road surface (LNRS). Various schemes progressed: - modal shift in Navan; - traffic calming in Navan; and - proposed bypass for Slane.

Monaghan County Council: A review of noise complaints at 3 properties along the N2 route took place. The results of the R3 strategic noise mapping indicate that ~ 18 dwellings along the N2 have predicted noise levels above the onset levels for assessment of noise mitigation measures. The proposed N2 road realignment project between Ardee and Castleblayney will examine the noise implications of the project as part of the design.

Offaly County Council: Installation of Low Noise Road Surfaces were carried out by Roads Department at two locations; N52 at Kilooly was resurfaced with Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA), anti-skid surface on N80 at Clonminch, using SMA. Noise control & management included in County Development Plan, and in three local plans.

Tipperary County Council: Have progressed the planning & implementation of road pavement schemes in urban areas identified as high noise locations: N24 Carrick on Suir Pavement Scheme; and N62 Kilnoe Pavement Scheme; with some further schemes in planning. Inclusion of references to the NAP in revised County Development Plan, 2022-2028 (CDP).

Waterford City & County Council: Replacement of old HRA road surfaces with SMA in Manor Street, and the Folly, Waterford.

Westmeath County Council: A 'Hot Spot' identified in the NAP (N6 Athlone) has been designated as a priority. A noise survey was carried out. The consultant will model the acoustic benefits of mitigation measures and a cost benefit analysis will be carried out.

Limited (11)

Clare County Council: The report is the same as previous year – no progress on matters described previously such as the provision of traffic calming and cycling facilities to reduce speed and volume of traffic. Provision of additional pedestrian facilities. Traffic speed/counts on the regional road network.

Donegal County Council: No specific actions identified or implemented.

Fingal County Council: For most of the county (except for the airport) there was no progress against the NAP implementation plan, and there is no update on any other noise measures. So, the overall rating for Fingal County is limited. In relation to Dublin airport, additional noise monitors have been located around the airport and are available to the public on WebTrak⁸. DAA made an application for a revision of the noise restriction on night-time flights. As part of this process a Noise Abatement Objective for the airport has been set.

⁸ [Airport Noise | Dublin Airport](#)

Laois County Council: Referred to previous SMA10 used for resurfacing some roads around the County. Traffic and road surface data collected for R4 noise mapping.

Louth County Council: No NAP actions undertaken in 2022. As part of the NAP review other synergies were sought (retrofit program) to see what programs or project would support the NAP objectives.

Mayo County Council: No priorities have been addressed under the Noise Action Plan in 2022.

Roscommon County Council: Due to ongoing Environment staff resourcing issue, no priorities were addressed in 2022. The Council hope to recruit new staff in 2023.

Wexford County Council: No new NAP actions undertaken in 2022. Seven potential Quiet Areas in urban areas have been identified and included in the County Development Plan 2022-28.

Wicklow County Council: No specific noise mitigation actions outlined for 2022. Have identified some projects and policy areas that could be followed up on.

Kilkenny County Council: No report was submitted for assessment, so rated as Limited.

Sligo County Council: No report was submitted for assessment, so rated as Limited.