

Noise and power

A Bill to prohibit the widespread use of sirens on Federal Highways has been introduced into the Nigerian Senate by Senator Silas Jafna... and gained wide support. There is currently abuse of sirens by self-important drivers, who assert power over other road users, dispersing them with the status-symbolic noise of their sirens. Effective though this may be, it is also a cause of many accidents to those who scatter too slowly and spreads unnecessary noise along the highway. Although the citizenry had to tolerate such abuses during the Military Dictatorships, this behaviour now has no place in the newly democratic Nigeria.

There will be exceptions to the ban, especially the 41 Nigerians who are either President, Vice President, Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chief Justice of the Federation and the 36 State Governors. These will be permitted to continue to make siren noise to reflect their status, although some wise Senators wished use to be restricted to emergency vehicles only.

Is there is a connection between making noise and feeling powerful?

Whether it is the satisfying slap of

an axe cutting into a tree, the noise of the modified motor bike silencer, the noise of the hi-fi cocooning you in your own space, where you are in total charge, or the same noise giving you an entrée into the lives of your neighbours, perhaps with complete control over their comfort.

This is illustrated with appalling realism in the recent novel "Noise Abatement"¹, describing how a couple are driven to physical and mental illness by the occupants of the apartment above them, the boomerang revenge which is finally taken, and its ruinous consequences. "Noise Abatement" should be compulsory reading for, at least, all who work in the environmental noise sector, as an illustration of what might happen and of the dangers of neglecting calls for help.

The devastating effects of noise into your home cannot be fully appreciated until you have been forced to live with it, but this book helps to dispel any doubt that it is insupportable, abhorrent and must not be neglected by environmental authorities, however they may prefer to concentrate on the softer options in their work.

¹"Noise Abatement" Carol Anne Davis, £7.50 Published by The Do-Note Press, 2000, ISBN 1 899 344 64 0

Turbine Exceeds Noise - But Also Power Output

The wind turbine at the centre of noise complaints from neighbours in the McQueens Valley-Gebbies Pass area is exceeding expectations on its power output. Some McQueen Valley residents are upset the noise level has risen above the resource consent compliance level. But apart from the higher level of noise, the WF 500 prototype has produced a much greater energy output than expected in its two months of experimentation. Chief Executive of Windflow Technology, Geoff Henderson says the onset of greater seasonal winds has allowed the testing of the pre-production unit to its limit and he believes the machine will be commercially viable and competitive.

A listening ear at last for noise pollution sufferers

Twenty-five percent of the population of Northern Ireland are being driven around the twist by noisy neighbours. But now, thanks to a new campaign, they will no longer be forced to suffer in silence. With the launch of the new poster campaign to advertise a 24-hour helpline, late-night parties, music, barking dogs and screaming babies could be a thing of the past. According to charity ENCAMS Northern Ireland, half of “noise victims” have never made a complaint, either because they don’t know who to call, they have no faith in the system or they are too frightened to confront their neighbour. In response to this figure, Belfast Heritage Service tasked ENCAMS to join forces with Belfast and Londonderry city councils to advertise its new action line number. ENCAMS Northern Ireland director Caroline Briggs said: “Unfortunately, anyone who complains about noise is often stereotyped as being a bit of an interfering Victor Meldrew. Yet, in reality, they are ordinary people who are being driven crazy by a constant racket at unsociable hours, and what they badly need is a discreet and easy way of reporting incidents.” Last year, Belfast City Council received 400 complaints about noise, most concerning blaring televisions and thumping stereos. The council has now introduced a night-time noise service, and has extra enforcement powers under the Noise Act to help deal with the problem. Now “nightmare neighbours” can be slapped with a £100 on-the-spot fine, or in extreme cases risk having their stereo seized. Belfast City Council’s Heather Armstrong said: “Never underestimate the impact that noise can have on the quality of people’s lives. “We’ve found the threat of a £100 fine to be an effective deterrent for noisy neighbours and 96 per cent of noise makers comply with the warning notices served by council officers.” Complainants can log on to www.noisehelp.co.uk

Taking down noise barriers

The boss of a Birmingham waste processing works defended the the removal of a sound barrier designed to protect residents from noise. Damien Courtney, owner of Premier Waste in Perry Barr, says a planned six metre high acoustic barrier fence is not necessary as the concrete reprocessing takes place indoors. The company fought a two year battle against residents and councillors and won a public inquiry to get planning permission for the building waste plant in Walsall Road. But now it wants to extend its plant building to cover its processing operation and remove the acoustic barrier. Mr Courtney said: “With the extension the processing operation is now completely under cover, so there is no noise and no need for this barrier. “We’ve had experts measure the noise and residents have been invited in to see for themselves, the noise level is much lower,” he added. Coun Jon Hunt (Lib Dem, Perry Barr), who opposed the firm’s move to the area, said: “When the plant’s doors are fully open the acoustic fences will simply not be high enough and the racket from the plant will be projected over the fences to homes. “The acoustic barrier was a key part of the planning deal and I will be pressing for it to be retained.”