

Noise Action and the Law

Three years ago, we recognized that complaints and protests, however justified, would not achieve change in rural areas, because government processes and policies were biased in favour of urban populations. We had to provide hard evidence that policies were wrong and we had to get that evidence in front of decision makers. Fortunately, we are not alone.

In 2002, the EU published an Environmental Noise Directive (END). It required that member governments prepare National Noise Maps, including major highways, www.environmental-protection.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Defra_event_Sept_09_Yvette_Bosworth_1.pdf. M40 CEG did not exist at the time of the directive. By 2010, when Environmental Protection (UK) wrote to the Director General requesting a formal review of progress of the END, it cited M40CEG as a 'proactive local group addressing its noise problems directly'. By implication, within the UK, we are seen as a leading local environmental group campaigning for action on traffic noise.

A year ago, a major report 'Traffic Noise in Rural Areas' by the Noise Association, www.ukna.org.uk/index_files/page0031.htm exposed rural noise as a major issue. It was based on interviews with people who suffer from traffic noise around the country. The report drew heavily on the experience of M40CEG members and contains a 25 page Appendix of interviews with local residents. It concluded that *Noise Policy should be ambitious. It should aim to 'cleanup' country-side polluted by road noise, just as its rivers and estuaries have been successfully cleaned in recent decades.* The study found that people living in otherwise quiet locations were much more annoyed by traffic noise than those living in areas where higher background noise was experienced.

The Sustainable Communities Act www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1 became law in 2007. The intention is for local communities to bring intractable issues directly to attention of central government, through submission by their local authorities. Wycombe District Council, supported by South Oxfordshire District Council, undertook submission of the issue of 'M40 Traffic Noise J3 – J8'. M40CEG agreed to be responsible for evidence to support the submission. The submission was shortlisted, the only one citing traffic noise. For detail of progress, and the evidence provided [click here](#)

To bring this effort to a successful conclusion, we need support at many levels – specifically we encourage those who are directly affected by traffic noise to make sure your counsellors and MPs know how you feel. For guidance on addressing MP's [click here](#). Together we can make change happen!