



Noise Pollution

CHEATSHEET



Friends of
the Earth
Scotland

Need some shhh... in your life?

Ok, look inside.

Quieten Down!

“What can I do to stop this racket?”

First Step: The friendly approach

It is always best to first try and talk to the person or company making the noise. Getting to know them, whether they are your neighbours or a local business, is important. Most successful resolutions happen this way.

Next Steps...

Scotland has laws and regulations to prevent noise from affecting your health and well-being. Knowing what these regulations are and who's responsible for making sure they're followed is essential to a quiet life.



What is noise... and noise pollution?

Noise and sound, like speech and music, are part of our everyday life. Physically there's no difference between 'sound' and 'noise', but we often use the word 'noise' to talk about 'unwanted sounds'.

Noise pollution (or unwanted sound) can be different for different people. For example, the sound of your kids playing could be a joy to you and a nuisance to someone else!

Statutory Nuisance

If you complain to the local authority an Environmental Protection Officer may then visit your house. If they think the noise is a 'statutory nuisance' (there's no set level for this) then the local authority must try to persuade whoever's making the noise to reduce it. If persuasion fails, they must serve an abatement notice that can require the noise to be stopped, reduced or limited to certain times of the day. If this notice is not followed the person or company can be taken to court.

How is Sound Measured?

Volume is the measurement of loudness or intensity. Sound is measured in decibels (dB) but you will often see dB(A) written. dB(A) is a measurement that better represents how the human ear experiences noise.

Frequency is a measure of the pitch of the sound. 'Squeaky' sounds have a high pitch; 'deep' sounds have a lower pitch. Pitch is measured in hertz (Hz).



Industrial Noise

Depending on what the industry is and where the noise is coming from it might be the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) or your local authority (local council) that's in charge of the noise regulation.

If the noise is from building work, alarms, traffic, guard dogs or what's called Part B industries (these are generally smaller industries) then the local authority will regulate the noise through 'statutory nuisance'.

If the industry is what's called Part A (these are usually bigger than Part B industries and have more potential to pollute) you can use SEPA's 24-hour pollution hotline (0800 80 70 60) to report noise pollution. Follow this up with a letter asking for action and a written response.

Airport Noise

Communities battling for a reduction in aircraft noise around major airports have found the fight difficult and on-going. But don't despair, do nothing and your problem won't get better.

First step; join or form a community action group with your friends and neighbours. Advertise a public meeting and involve more people so you can take action together. The more voices the better. Well-reasoned arguments at public consultations are important but easy for the authorities to ignore. You'll be more successful with visible protests, newspaper articles and public opinion.

AirportWatch can give advice and put you in contact with other communities experienced in fighting noise issues. Phone: 020 7248 2227 or email info@airportwatch.org.uk.



STOP NOISE POLLUT- ION!

Health Effects

"I can't sleep properly at night"

We all need a good night's sleep to feel rested and relaxed the next day. Night-time background sound shouldn't be louder than roughly a whisper.

"My blood pressure's gone up"

Living with loud noise could lead to high blood pressure, blood vessel tightening and heart disease. Although other factors such as a history of family heart problems, your diet and smoking can also cause this.

"I just can't concentrate"

Reading, attention span, problem solving and memory skills are reduced in a noisy environment, especially in children.

"Could my kids be affected?"

Children can become more aggressive if they are continually hearing loud noises, especially if the noise is sudden and includes vibrations (e.g. a passing train).

Noise from the Road

Your local authority's roads department is responsible for local roads, while trunk roads connecting cities and towns are the responsibility of Transport Scotland. Contact the responsible department AND your local councillor with your problem asking for action.

Lorries could be diverted or asked to drive slower (speak to the haulage companies); speed humps can be moved or redesigned; you may get a grant for better sound insulation but sometimes the only solution is a modern quieter road surface. If your neighbours are affected too, get them involved.

Noisy Neighbours

Noise like loud music, barking dogs or shouting from your neighbours could be a 'statutory nuisance'. But remember to try the friendly approach first! For difficult neighbours ask your council for mediation services who can help you and your neighbour find an agreement.

Pubs and nightclubs

Remember, speak to the landlord first. If this doesn't work you could write to the Licensing Board of your local council asking for your views to be considered by a licensing review.

Noise FAQs

You've just read a CheatSheet, a quick guide to noise pollution. It's a summary of a bigger guide called 'Noise FAQs'. If you've got more questions or need more details on industrial, airport or road noise and what action you can take

Construction Noise

If building work is affecting you, speak to the site manager about your problem. If you can't agree on a solution you could contact the local authority (local council) and ask them to stop allowing work after a certain time at night.

Noise at Work

Local authorities and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulate noise pollution at work. The HSE can give you advice through their Infoline 0845 345 0055 or email hse.infoline@natbrit.com.

'Sound Advice on Noise – Don't Suffer in Silence' is a free booklet explaining Statutory Nuisance and court actions.

- **Online** – www.scotland.gov.uk
- **In Print** – Blackwell's Bookshop, Edinburgh. Tel: 0131 622 8205. Email: edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk



'Noise FAQs' is for you – FAQ stands for Frequently Asked Questions!

FREE from: www.foe-scotland.org.uk
£3 in print from: 0131 554 9977