

NSCA calls for action on noise

Government Policy

New NSCA research published for Noise Action Week suggests that complaints about noise continue to increase.

It adds that local authority officers have insufficient resources to manage noise, and a strategic approach to the management of urban and rural soundscapes is urgently required.

NSCA says: "While local authority officers responsible for noise find that poor relations between neighbours are often at the root of noise problems, and a raft of legislation is in place to tackle noise, local authority duties in responding to noise complaints remain unclear, and many currently have insufficient resources to manage the problem effectively."

"Therefore, noise needs to be tackled on three fronts:

- At national level – the Government should urgently draft both a National Ambient Noise Strategy and

Neighbour Noise Strategy, with achievable targets for our noise climate;

- At local level, local authorities need the duties and the resources to enable them to account for noise in strategic planning and to tackle noise problems as they arise;
- At public level – integrating education on noise into the curriculum, and working to raise awareness of the impact we can all have on our, and others quality of life, and in contributing to a more tranquil society."

NSCA's chief executive Martin Joseph urged the Government to heed the organisation's ten targets for tranquillity that include setting up of a national noise strategy.

- Full results of the 2005 NSCA noise survey are available by email from mstevens@nsca.org.uk
- Full story on Noise Action Week, see feature, page four

Newcastle sets up night service

Noise Action Week

Newcastle City Council has launched a night-time noise service to coincide with Noise Action Week.

Its new *Night-Watch* service will operate every Thursday, Friday and Saturday between the hours of 8pm and 4am. Noise complaints have increased from 250 in 1988 to 1,800 in 2004 and in the summer months, for example, can peak at up to 40 complaints a week.

Newcastle says its Night-Watch officers will monitor noise levels on the spot and if it exceeds the acceptable level – more than 10 decibels above the background noise – a warning will be given to the person causing the disturbance and they will be asked to

reduce the noise. If the problem persists or begins again, a fixed penalty notice for £100 will be issued to the offender.

Failure to pay the fixed penalty within 14 days will lead to court proceedings and repeated noise offences could also mean the council seeking permission from the courts for confiscation of the equipment.

The Night Watch service has been made possible with funding of £120,000 from the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which has paid for three dedicated Night-Watch officers for 12 months. Should the service prove successful, funding will be sought to continue the scheme.

- www.newcastle.gov.uk

Sanctum roadshows urge self help

Noise Action Week

As part of Noise Action Week, Sanctum Consultants put on a roadshow to drum up business in Kent and East London.

Sanctum Consultant's

... said that many people do not realise that they can take their own action using powers remarkably similar to those available to councils: "There is a need for self help solutions for individuals who are driven to distraction by the anti social, noisy behaviour of their neighbours.

"Sanctum Consultants has devised a fixed fee legal advice pack which explains the procedure for taking

private action under Section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended). It contains a diary sheet and notice plus detailed step by step advice on how to prepare a case, gather evidence, along with the procedure in the magistrate's court for obtaining a court order and fine of up to £5,000 for the person causing the noise nuisance."

It adds that it can offer expert, independent environmental health officers to advise and draft notices that will form the basis of the court order and even attend court as an expert witness on their behalf.

- Email mail@sanctumconsultants.co.uk