



WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

BY EMAIL 14th September 2021

Dear Sir Paul,

Subject: Motorbike Speeds and Excessive Noise on the roads of Westcott and the wider area of the Surrey Hills.

On behalf of the Members and Trustees of the Westcott Village Association, I would like to add our support to that of others who have written to you recently requesting your support in taking action against the growing problem of noise pollution on our local roads.

In the case of Westcott, it is mainly on the A25 but we know that the A24 and the A29 are similarly blighted. Any sunny day - actually just a dry day - especially at weekends leads to packs of motorbikes cruising our roads often at high speed and invariably very, very loudly! The roar isn't just a real nuisance in close proximity to the main road as it permeates right throughout our Village and into the surrounding hills. Sitting at the top of Ranmore Common you can clearly hear motorcycles noisily snaking their way from Dorking to Guildford and back again. This is a very serious problem and reputable research has concluded such noise does have detrimental effects to our health and well being.

Incidentally, the noise often comes with excessive speed. In August we launched a Speedwatch programme in Westcott as a deterrent to speeding motorcyclists and other motorists. It's early days on that front but hopefully it will be a part of the consolidated action plan needed to ensure our roads are safe and as quiet as can reasonably be expected.

Please can you help us and take the necessary action.

Summary

The subject of antisocial noise pollution from motorbikes is well documented and, in the past, action to address the problem has been supported by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Over the last three years however, it seems little has been done to advance a practical solution to the problem and existing legislation leaves the relevant authorities with no power to seek redress from persistent offenders or those who believe it their right to inflict their behaviour on others without sanction. Public Spaces Protection Orders have been deemed by the Police, Environmental Health, and the Highways Departments not to be suitable for this problem on main roads.

We were led to believe that Surrey Police were trialling Noise Cameras with a view to using them on our roads and reducing noise levels but this initiative seems to have stalled. It really does need fresh impetus and support.

Proposed Action by Parliament

We call upon you, our elected Member of Parliament, to strongly lobby the Government to seek to address noise pollution caused by antisocial behaviour by bringing forward legislation in Parliament at the earliest opportunity including through the use of a Private Members' Bill.

In order to be able to enforce the current Reg. 97 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1078 of 1986 -

"No motor vehicle shall be used on a road in such manner as to cause any excessive noise which could have been avoided by the exercise of reasonable care on the part of the driver."

– new legislation is required to:

1. make it a specific offence to generate noise levels above 86 decibels on a public highway through residential areas and areas with designated status such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty
2. allow monitoring of this activity to be conducted through the use of new technology which measures noise levels generated by vehicles and which incorporates number plate recognition technology. This will require motorbikes to display front and rear number plates to support recognition and prosecution
3. require manufacturers to fit effective silencers to motorbikes and make it an offence to modify, tamper with, or fit illegal silencers with significant penalties for successful prosecution
4. allocate financial and human resources from Central Funds to support technical research and development, and the implementation of the solutions required to address this problem
5. impose fines which increase in severity for persistent offenders and with the ultimate sanction of the confiscation of the vehicle

As things currently stand, no statutory body has any effective power to stop what has become a real challenge affecting the lives of Westcott, Surrey Hills and Mole Valley Residents. There is no doubt this problem is replicated across many parts of the UK reflecting a social norm which gives precedence to the rights of antisocial individuals over the rights of the majority of house-holders who show respect for their neighbours and the wider community.

Please find attached references to background material and research on the subject which might be of use to you and your team.

I would be grateful if you could update me with any progress so I can communicate this to WVA Members.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Goddard
Honorary Secretary, Westcott Village Association

email: prwg104@icloud.com or contact@westcottvillage.com

Copies: Secretary of State for Transport, Surrey Police Commissioner, Leader of MVDC

Appendix:

Some sources that might be useful to look at relating to

1) the measurement of noise and 2) the adverse health impact of excessive noise

- UK Department of Transport study into the measurement of traffic noise (2019-20) – findings:
 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007868/roadside-vehicle-noise-measurement-phase-2-final-report.pdf
 - *“The measurement data collected from the prototype noise camera has demonstrated that **it is possible for a noise camera to identify vehicles and for measured noise levels to be attributed to individual vehicles, demonstrating proof of concept.**”*
 - *“However, the confidence with which the measured noise levels can be assigned to an individual vehicle diminishes during heavy traffic streams where vehicles are close together as they pass the noise camera. Similarly, it is not possible for a single omnidirectional microphone to robustly assign noise levels to individual vehicles when they pass the noise camera simultaneously on different carriageways. All such noise camera systems would need to address these issues prior to approval for enforcement use.”*
 - Appraisal of the noise camera’s performance showed that the majority of weaknesses are resolvable (pg.44).
 - Recommendation: *“As testing of the prototype noise camera has established proof of concept, it is recommended that noise cameras are taken forward for further investigation. This includes appraisal of new noise camera systems that have been publicised or trialled by others since Phase 1 of the project and confirming with suppliers that noise cameras can distinguish individual vehicles and their noise levels in traffic streams.”* (pg.50).

- UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – environmental noise regulations
 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/813666/noise-action-plan-2019-roads.pdf
 - *“There is also a range of measures in place to control vehicle noise at source. Noise from individual vehicles is controlled under mandatory EU noise emission standards⁸, which will progressively reduce the sound level limits of new vehicles over a period of eight years from 2016, including a 2dB reduction every four years for conventional cars. In addition, once in service, silencers and exhaust systems are required to be maintained in good condition and not altered so as to increase noise⁹.”*

- Indian study (July 2021): ‘A study on the assessment of traffic noise induced annoyance and awareness levels about the potential health effects among residents living around a noise-sensitive area’
 - <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11356-021-15208-3>
 - Excellent sources cited for impact of noise on health.

- Noise and air pollution as triggers of hypertension
 - <https://academic.oup.com/eurheartj/article/42/21/2085/6179518?searchresult=1#263759494>
 - *“These results provide more evidence that long-term residential exposure to road noise is associated with hypertension, even though there is no proof of causality owing to the cross-sectional study design.”*
- Road traffic noise is associated with increased cardiovascular morbidity and mortality and all-cause mortality in London
 - <https://academic.oup.com/eurheartj/article/36/39/2653/2398234>
 - *“Long-term exposure to road traffic noise was associated with small increased risks of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular mortality and morbidity in the general population, particularly for stroke in the elderly.”*
- Trial of acoustic cameras in Edmonton, Canada (2018-19)
 - <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-vehicle-noise-1.5142851>
- ‘Quiet Brussels’ – resolution to be proposed in September 2018 to tackle road traffic noise
 - <http://weblex.brussels/data/crb/doc/2016-17/131773/images.pdf>
 - *“In view of the advantages provided by this solution for fight effectively against these noise pollution specific, this motion for a resolution aims to object to ask the government to act on three axes:*
 - *the establishment of specific noise emission standards for mopeds and motorcycles in a frame regulatory and, concomitantly, criminalization exceeding of the fixed thresholds;*
 - *the deployment of a permanent detection and measurement system allowing to establish cases of overruns and link them to a identification of responsible vehicles with a view to allow verbalization;*
 - *and, finally, the re- launch of the request from the municipal police to operate more monitoring of compliance with conditions techniques relating to noise emitted by mopeds and motorcycles as part of the checks they perform on vehicles.”* [Google translation from French]
- World Health Organization
 - <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/noise/data-and-statistics>
 - Adverse health effects of noise (pg.9)
 - <https://www.who.int/docstore/peh/noise/Comnoise-1.pdf>
- Acoustic monitoring without enforcement will achieve little and potentially exacerbate the problem
 - <https://canadamotoguide.com/2018/09/17/edmonton-noise-camera-project-backfires/>

END