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Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Layla Moran MP
House of Commons
London
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Your ref: LM26645

24 June 2021

Dear Layla,

Thank you for your email of 17 May on behalf of your constituents about traffic noise. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I am sorry to hear that your constituents are being affected by environmental noise. Defra helps manage environmental noise in England through the implementation of the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006. The Regulations require, on a five year cycle:

- The determination, through noise mapping, of exposure to environmental noise from major sources of road, rail and aircraft noise in large urban areas (known as agglomerations);
- The adoption of Action Plans based upon the noise mapping results, which are designed to manage environmental noise and its effects, including noise reduction if necessary; and
- Provision of information to the public on environmental noise and its effects.

The Regulations require the mapping to be carried out by means of computer modelling to ensure a consistent strategic approach across the country, and we are not legally able to incorporate data derived from local measurement into the official national noise maps. Noise maps are produced for all motorways and A roads inside large urban areas; and all motorways and A roads outside large urban areas that have an annual flow of at least 3 million vehicle movements. We will be embarking on the process of producing Round 4 noise maps later this year.

The Regulations require that the Action Plans identify 'Important Areas', which are deemed to be where the 1% of the population affected by the highest noise levels from is located according to the results of the strategic noise mapping. This approach has been taken because the population at these locations is likely to be at the greatest risk of experiencing a significant adverse impact to health and quality of life as a result of the exposure to road traffic noise. These areas should then be prioritised for investigation and, where appropriate, action by the relevant transport authority, in liaison with the relevant local authority.

However, given the strategic nature of the noise mapping, there may be situations where the relevant highway authority considers that an additional location, not identified through this process, should be added to the list of Important Areas. The action planning process allows highway authorities to identify such locations as Important Areas.

As a result, I would suggest that you share the results of any local noise monitoring exercise with Highways England, to enable Highways England to consider whether it merits the creation of a new Important Area.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact us about this important issue.



REBECCA POWER