



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## **Airport Noise Action Plans**

**Guidance for Airport Operators on how to revise  
Noise Action Plans under the Environmental  
Noise (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)**

**September 2022**

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# Overview

## Purpose

- 1.1 This guidance has been produced for airport operators by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), working in conjunction with the Department for Transport (DfT), to assist them in producing Noise Action Plans required under the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006<sup>1</sup> as amended (the Regulations). It includes:
- information on the legislative and policy background behind noise action planning;
  - a list of the information that needs to be included in each Noise Action Plan;
  - details of how to update and submit a completed Noise Action Plan;
  - an annex listing the airports producing Noise Action Plans following completion of round 3 mapping (A);
  - a short glossary of acoustic and technical terms (B); and
  - guidance on meeting the regulatory requirements for Noise Action Plans (C).

## Introduction

- 1.2 The Regulations require certain airports in England to produce noise maps and Noise Action Plans. The Regulations operate in 5 yearly cycles known as Rounds, with the current round (Round 4) requiring the operators of these airports to produce noise maps in 2022, using data from the 2021 calendar year. These maps are intended to provide a snapshot of the potential noise impact arising from each airport.
- 1.3 The Noise Action Plan process uses the mapping results and is designed to manage noise issues and effects arising from aircraft departing from and arriving at those airports. Airport Noise Action Plans need to be published by February 2024. Due to Covid travel restrictions, however, mapping for 2021 is likely to show a highly anomalous situation for most airports, and Noise Action Plans drawn up solely on the basis of 2021 data may not result in effective actions within the current and future context of Round 4. It is in the interests of airports and communities for Noise Action

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/2238/contents/made>

Plans to draw on information which best reflects the situation for the Round 4 Noise Action Plan period as appropriate. As a result, airports may supplement the 2021 data with information from a more representative period when drawing up Noise Action Plans. This information is likely to vary from airport to airport, but, if relevant, may include (but is not restricted to) noise contours from the most recent previous round; contours produced to meet other requirements; measured noise data or projections. Decisions as to what data to use should be discussed with the relevant consultative committee or other community groups as appropriate.

- 1.4 The anomalous nature of 2021 data may also result in difficulties in making comparisons and measuring progress between both previous Rounds and those that may occur in the future. It is recommended that where this is the case these difficulties should be made explicit in the narrative of Noise Action Plans.
- 1.5 The process set out in the Regulations supports the Government's aim, set out in the Aviation Policy Framework (APF)<sup>2</sup>, to limit and where possible reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise. The APF makes clear that 'the Government recognises that noise is the primary concern of local communities near airports and we take its impact seriously'. It also sets out that 'future growth in aviation should ensure that benefits are shared between the aviation industry and local communities, and aims to encourage better engagement between airports and local communities and greater transparency to facilitate an informed debate'. Noise Action Plans should identify whether there are any particular or additional measures that might be taken to meet the APF's aims at each airport, including noise reduction if necessary.

## **The importance of managing noise impacts**

- 1.6 There are many different effects of noise, and individuals experience each of them to different degrees. These can include general detection/distraction; speech interference; disruption of work/mental activity; sleep disturbance and cognitive effects. Any of these can lead to annoyance and possibly more overt reactions, including complaints.
- 1.7 In addition, there are physiological effects that can occur. These include stress responses, an increased risk of cardiovascular and metabolic health outcomes such as heart attacks, hypertension – which is a risk factor for stroke and dementia – as well as the risk associated with sleep disturbance. Annoyance from aircraft noise is believed to act as a risk factor for some of these health outcomes. Research has shown that it is possible to predict the likelihood of an individual or community

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aviation-policy-framework>

experiencing significant impacts such as these as a result of different levels of aircraft noise exposure<sup>3</sup>.

- 1.8 Noise, however, is an inevitable consequence of a mature and vibrant society. People enjoy and benefit from air transport and this benefit manifests itself in terms of business, leisure, the movement of goods and employment. When managing the environmental noise that arises from aircraft, a fair balance needs to be struck between the negative impacts of noise (on health, amenity (quality of life) and productivity) and the positive economic impacts of flights.

## The legal context

- 1.9 Noise Action Plans are a legal requirement under the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 as amended (“the Regulations”). The Regulations require strategic noise maps to be made for the main sources of environmental noise, i.e. major roads, major railways, major airports and agglomerations<sup>4</sup> every five years.
- 1.10 Noise Action Plans for airports in England must be drawn up by the airport operators and be based on the results of the noise mapping. The Regulations also require the Noise Action Plans to be reviewed at least every five years and revised if necessary and whenever a major development<sup>5</sup> occurs affecting the existing noise situation.

## Timetable

- 1.11 The Regulations require that Noise Action Plans are formally adopted by Defra’s Secretary of State by February 2024 and subsequently published by airports within 28 days of adoption. Defra will contact each airport to agree a timetable for the publication of their Noise Action Plan.

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<sup>3</sup> An overview of the adverse effects of aviation noise was included in the Government’s 2017 consultation on *Reforming policy on the design and use of UK airspace*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-policy-on-the-design-and-use-of-uk-airspace>

<sup>4</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/4739c0c3-e800-4cb1-89cd-e71115b191e9>

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘major development’ is not defined in the Regulations but it would include, for example, the use of a new runway.

# What needs to be included in a Noise Action Plan?

2.1 A Noise Action Plan must be drawn up for places near the airport which are affected by noise from airport operations as shown by the results of the noise mapping<sup>6</sup> and meet a number of requirements set out in the Regulations:

- a description of the airport and any other noise sources taken into account;
- the authority responsible;
- the legal context;
- any limit values in place;
- a summary of the results of the noise mapping, including an evaluation of the estimated number of people exposed to noise;
- identification of problems and situations that need to be improved;
- a record of the public consultations that have taken place;
- any noise reduction measures already in force and any projects in preparation;
- long term strategy;
- actions which the airport operator intends to take in the next five years, including measures to preserve quiet areas;
- financial information (if available): budgets, cost-effectiveness assessment, cost-benefit assessment;
- provisions envisaged for evaluating the implementation and the results of the Noise Action Plan; and
- estimates in terms of the reduction of the number of people affected (annoyed, sleep-disturbed, or other).

2.2 Detailed guidance on how each of the above requirements may be met is provided in Annex C.

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<sup>6</sup> Effectively those places within the mapped contours, i.e. with noise exposures of 55 dB(A), Lden or more; and 50 dB(A), Lnight or more.

# How to update and submit a Noise Action Plan

## Revising an existing Noise Action Plan

- 3.1 All of the airports listed in Annex A already have a Noise Action Plan in place from previous rounds of noise mapping. It is envisaged that these airports should follow the process set out below to update their Noise Action Plan.
- 3.2 The local context of each airport is different. Airport operators are encouraged to work with the airport's consultative committee, community groups and other stakeholders as appropriate to ensure a range of metrics are used in developing effective actions, and that actions are measured in a meaningful and appropriate way. This may include measures beyond the requirements of the legislation where appropriate. Consideration should be given to ensuring that actions focus on outcomes and their benefits within the local context, rather than outputs or processes. Further information on public participation can be found in paragraph 3.5.
- 3.3 The current plan should be reviewed and revised to include, as necessary:
- updated details about the airport and its operation;
  - the results of the noise mapping from 2021 supplemented with any data considered more relevant to noise action planning given that air traffic movements in 2021 are likely to have been affected by pandemic travel restrictions;
  - the progress made against the actions described in the current Noise Action Plan;
  - updated information about relevant legislation and standards;
  - consideration of updated relevant national and local policies;
  - information about on-going actions;
  - information about any new actions; and
  - estimates in terms of the reduction of the number of people affected as a result of new or revised actions (annoyed, sleep-disturbed, or other).
- 3.4 When revising their plans, airport operators should ensure that all the requirements set out in the Regulations (listed in paragraph 2.1 above and described further in Annex C) are met.

- 3.5 The Regulations require that, in preparing and revising Noise Action Plans airports must ensure that the public is given early and effective opportunities to participate in the preparation and review of the Noise Action Plans; and that the results of participation should be taken into account. The public should be informed of the decisions taken.
- 3.6 Where Noise Action Plans already exist, it is expected that once the plan has been revised for Round 4, it will be presented, and opportunities for participation given, to the Airport's Consultative Committee as a minimum, and to any other appropriate bodies or more widely depending on the extent and nature of the revisions. The Airport Operator should summarise the comments received in the revised plan together with their response to the issues raised.

### **Submitting a Noise Action Plan for formal adoption**

- 3.7 Once the plan has been updated and finalised, the Regulations require that it be sent to the Secretary of State for Defra for formal adoption. Plans should be sent to Defra via the [noise@defra.gov.uk](mailto:noise@defra.gov.uk) email address and must include prominently displayed wording identifying it as a draft subject to formal adoption and approval.
- 3.8 The Secretary of State for Defra, in liaison with the Department for Transport, will form a view regarding whether the submitted revised plan meets the requirements of the Regulations and, therefore, whether or not the plan is appropriate for adoption.
- If the Secretary of State for Defra considers that the requirements set out in the Regulations are met, they will notify the airport accordingly that the Noise Action Plan has been adopted. The Noise Action Plan should then be published by the Airport Operator as a public document in an electronic format within 28 days.
  - If the requirements set out in the Regulations are not met, the airport operator will be required to make the necessary changes to the plan. Following revision, the revised plan will need to be resubmitted to the Secretary of State for Defra by an agreed date for further consideration.

### **Ongoing requirement to review Noise Action Plans**

- 3.9 The Regulations contain a continuing obligation on airport operators to review (and revise, if necessary) the Noise Action Plan every 5 years or sooner where a major development occurs.
- 3.10 Airport operators may wish to agree to carry out an informal review of the progress being made on the implementation of the Noise Action Plan as part of their continuing engagement with the local airport consultative committee or other stakeholders. The process and timing for any informal review should be jointly

agreed between the Airport Operator and the committee, or other stakeholders, as appropriate. Such reviews could form part of any regular environmental reporting that is already undertaken.

## Annex A: Airports producing Round 4 Noise Action Plans

| Airport                   | ICAO Location Code | Current Noise Action Plan |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Birmingham International* | EGBB               | Yes                       |
| Bournemouth               | EGHH               | Yes                       |
| Bristol*                  | EGGD               | Yes                       |
| East Midlands*            | EGNX               | Yes                       |
| Leeds Bradford            | EGNM               | Yes                       |
| Liverpool John Lennon     | EGGP               | Yes                       |
| London City*              | EGLC               | Yes                       |
| London Gatwick*           | EGKK               | Yes                       |
| London Heathrow*          | EGLL               | Yes                       |
| London Luton*             | EGGW               | Yes                       |
| London Stansted*          | EGSS               | Yes                       |
| Manchester International* | EGCC               | Yes                       |
| Newcastle International*  | EGNT               | Yes                       |
| Southampton               | EGHI               | Yes                       |
| Southend                  | EGMC               | Yes                       |

\*Major airport as defined in the Regulations (over 50,000 qualifying movements per year)

## Annex B: Glossary of acoustic and technical terms

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agglomeration | An area having a population in excess of 100,000 persons and a population density equal to or greater than 500 people per km <sup>2</sup> and which is considered to be urbanised.                                                                                                             |
| dB(A)         | dB(A) is a measure of sound pressure level ("A" weighted) in decibels as specified in British Standard BS EN 61672-2:2013+A1:2017.                                                                                                                                                             |
| $L_{Aeq,T}$   | The A-weighted equivalent continuous sound pressure level which is a notional continuous level that, at a given position and over the defined time period, T, contains the same sound energy as the actual fluctuating sound that occurred at the given position over the same time period, T. |
| $L_{day}$     | The $L_{Aeq}$ over the period 0700 – 1900, local time (for strategic noise mapping this is an annual average).                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| $L_{evening}$ | The $L_{Aeq}$ over the period 1900 – 2300, local time (for strategic noise mapping this is an annual average).                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| $L_{night}$   | The $L_{Aeq}$ over the period 2300 – 0700, local time (for strategic noise mapping this is an annual average).                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| $L_{Aeq,16h}$ | The $L_{Aeq}$ over the period 0700 – 2300, local time (for strategic noise mapping this is an annual average).                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| $L_{den}$     | The $L_{Aeq}$ over the period 0000 – 2400, but with the evening values (1900 – 2300) weighted by the addition of 5 dB(A), and the night values (2300 – 0700) weighted by the addition of 10dB(A).                                                                                              |

## Annex C: General requirements for Noise Action Plans and how they may be met

The Noise Action Plan must meet a number of requirements set out in the Regulations. These are reproduced in the table below, together with accompanying guidance suggesting how each requirement may be met.

| Requirement                                                                 | How requirement may be met                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A description of the airport and any other noise sources taken into account | This information should have already been gathered as part of the data that had to be submitted to Defra under the noise mapping process. No other noise sources (such as 'ground noise' from airport activities or helicopter activity) will have been taken into account in the noise mapping. However, that does not preclude the Noise Action Plan covering other airport related noise sources.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| The authority responsible                                                   | This is the name of the airport operator, who is defined in the Regulations as the competent authority for preparing the airport Noise Action Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| The legal context                                                           | <p>This requires a reference to the "Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006" which place the responsibility of preparing the Noise Action Plan onto the airport operator.</p> <p>Noise Action Plans must also include a description and assessment of the existing national and local framework of control directly or indirectly relating to the management of noise from the airport e.g. current government policies, noise preferential routes, Airport Master Plans, any local planning agreements and restrictions, any local voluntary agreements etc.</p> |
| Any limit values in place                                                   | Reference should be made to any planning conditions or other agreements that set a constraint on the airports operations that could affect the level of noise generated. These might include any contour area limits, noise limits on departure, or aircraft movement limits etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| A summary of the results of the noise mapping, including an                 | The aim of this requirement is to provide a description of the current noise impact of the airport on its surroundings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>evaluation of the estimated number of people exposed to noise</p>      | <p>The results should include, for the various noise indicators for which mapping was carried out, the number of people and dwellings that lie within the various contour bands. This information will be provided to airport operators in the form of Airport Noise Action Plan Data Packs.</p> <p>Airport operators may also include information about other noise sensitive premises such as hospitals, schools, other premises or specific types of land use depending on local circumstances and priorities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>Identification of problems and situations that need to be improved</p> | <p>Airport operators will primarily have two pieces of information available to them for noise action planning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The current noise impact of their operations as shown by the results of the noise mapping; and</li> <li>ii. The current noise control measures they have in place.</li> </ol> <p>The Government's overall objective on aviation noise is to limit and where possible reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise. The Noise Action Plan process requires operators to consider whether there is scope for implementing additional noise management measures in pursuance of the Government's policy objective.</p> <p>When considering any new noise management measure within the Noise Action Plan, airport <b>operators should consider in a proportionate manner</b> the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The benefit that would be achieved from the measure;</li> <li>• The impact of the measure on other environmental factors, such as air quality and climate change;</li> <li>• The costs of implementing the measure, both direct and indirect; and</li> <li>• The implication of failing to implement a particular measure, both direct and indirect.</li> </ul> <p>Any new noise management measure in the Noise Action Plan must reflect the wider context of local and national sustainable development plans and policies, including any Master Plans. Further guidance is provided in section on long term strategy below.</p> |

|                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>A record of the public consultations that have taken place</p>                    | <p>The Regulations specify that, in preparing and revising Noise Action Plans, airport operators must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the public is consulted about proposals for Noise Action Plans;</li> <li>• the public is given early and effective opportunities to participate in the preparation and review of the Noise Action Plans;</li> <li>• the results of the public participation are taken into account;</li> <li>• the public is informed of the decisions taken; and</li> <li>• reasonable time frames are provided allowing sufficient time for each stage of public participation.</li> <li>• It is important that the Noise Action Plan process does not contribute to an “overload” in community engagement, and that the consultation is sufficiently long for interested parties to formulate their responses, taking account of other consultations which may be taking place over the same time period and placing a burden on consultees’ resources. It is also important that the issues raised by consultees are demonstrably given thorough consideration by airport operators. We will be looking for evidence of how you have ensured this is the case in your submitted Plans.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Any noise reduction measures already in force and any projects in preparation</p> | <p>Airport operators will have existing measures in place to mitigate noise impacts. This requirement can be met by describing the current noise control measures, including those set out in any existing Noise Action Plan and updating them as appropriate.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>Long term strategy</p>                                                            | <p>Airport operators should describe the likely development of their airport in the future. It is expected that reference would be made here to any Master Plan developed by the airport and the provisions of the Government’s Aviation Policy Framework (APF). Note that the Government</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

consulted in 2018 on proposed changes to the Aviation Policy Framework<sup>7</sup> and published Flightpath to the Future in 2022<sup>8</sup>. Airport operators should be aware that updated provisions may be published during the course of the Noise Action Plan process.

As part of the Noise Action Plan process, airport operators should:

- As a first priority, consider what further measures should be taken in areas shown by the noise maps to have residential premises exposed to more than 69 dB  $L_{Aeq,16h}$ <sup>9</sup>;
- Consider what further measures should be taken to assist the management of aircraft noise affecting noise sensitive buildings, such as schools and hospitals;
- More generally, examine the day, evening and night results produced from the noise mapping and consider whether there are any features of the noise impact from departing or arriving aircraft that might be managed further;
- Be satisfied that there is an effective complaint handling system in place;
- Consider the information from any noise complaint data that is held and whether there are any measures that might be taken to manage further the aircraft noise impact;
- Respond to any feedback from Consultative Committees on particular issues that might be addressed;
- Consider whether other new noise abatement objectives might be developed with the aim of providing further management of the noise impact;
- Consider how best to ensure transparency and engagement around operational changes which affect noise; and
- Reflect the International Civil Aviation Organisation's balanced approach for noise management.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-policy-on-the-design-and-use-of-uk-airspace>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flightpath-to-the-future-a-strategic-framework-for-the-aviation-sector>

<sup>9</sup> As the data are taken from the strategic noise maps, this is the  $L_{Aeq,16h}$  annual average value

|                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                       | Any proposed new actions must take account as necessary of the requirements of Statutory Instrument 2003 No.1742 – The Aerodromes (Noise Restrictions) (Rules and Procedures) Regulations 2003.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Actions which the airport operator intends to take in the next five years, including measures to preserve quiet areas | <p>This may be linked to the section above.</p> <p>At the time of publication of this guidance (September 2022), no quiet areas had been designated within agglomerations affected by any of the airports that are in scope of the Regulations Round 4 mapping and noise action planning requirements. Defra will inform any airport concerned if this situation changes before finalisation of their Noise Action Plan.</p>                       |
| Financial information (if available): budgets, cost-effectiveness assessment, cost-benefit assessment                 | Any new noise control measure that is considered for inclusion as part of the Noise Action Plan must take into account the cost of implementation and the likely benefit expected to be accrued.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Provisions envisaged for evaluating the implementation and the results of the Noise Action Plan                       | The Noise Action Plan must show how the outcome expected from any measure that is to be implemented will be monitored. Airport operators should consider providing an update, locally, on a periodic basis that takes any changes in local circumstances into account.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Estimates in terms of the reduction of the number of people affected (annoyed, sleep disturbed, or other)             | The Noise Action Plan should contain an indication of the expected outcome(s) of any measures that will be put in place as a result of having this Noise Action Plan in terms of estimated numbers of people affected by actions. Measures should be challenging; objective; quantified where reasonably practicable; subject to specific timescales; use a range of appropriate metrics and have taken account of the views of local communities. |