

March 2011

Noise Website Update

The social cost of environmental noise has been estimated at £7-10bn per annum. Noise is broadly defined as any unwanted sound, and to some extent it is an inevitable consequence of living in our mature and vibrant society. Most noise is generated as a by-product of economic activity, from the production and consumption of goods and services. Therefore, in managing noise the aim is to strike a balance in society between the demand for noise making goods and services and the detrimental effect that noise has on the population exposed. The [Noise Policy Statement for England \(NPSE\)](#) sets out the government's position and key responsibilities for the management of noise, which are to:

- Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life
- Mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life
- Where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life

Exposure to noise can have a significant negative impact through impacts on amenity, health, productivity, and damage to the natural environment. To reflect these impacts in decision making the [Interdepartmental Group on Costs and Benefits noise subject group \(IGCB\(N\)\)](#) was established with the remit to develop a robust economic methodology to value noise. The IGCB(N) is made up of an interdisciplinary group of analysts from across most major government departments which looks to disseminate these methodologies for use in appraisal as best practice guidance across all UK government policies. For more information the IGCB(N) appraisal tools follow the above link.

The IGCB(N) [first report](#) estimated the £7-10bn cost of noise, which comprises of Health effects, which include the most severe health effects such as changes in cardiovascular mortality (estimated at £2-3bn). Effect on amenity, which reflects consumers' constant annoyance from noise exposure (estimated at £3-5bn). Productivity impact relating to areas such as reduced work quality through tiredness or noise acting as a distraction (roughly estimated at £2bn).

To reflect the impact of changes in noise from policies, projects programmes the IGCB(N) recommend the use of the following key evaluation tools:

- To value the amenity effects of different transport sources of noise please follow the Department for Transport's [WebTAG guidance](#):
- Quantification and valuation of the health cost of noise from changes in the risk of Acute Myocardial Infarctions (heart attacks) available from the IGCB(N) [second report](#):
- To quantify the change in the number of people who expected to have their sleep disturbed and suffering from hypertension, guidance is available from [this link](#).

In light of developments in the evidence in this area IGCB(N) continue to develop and refine these tools. To check the latest guidance please visit the [IGCB\(N\) website](#):