



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Your ref: [REDACTED]

Our ref: RFI 5667

Date: August 2013

By email

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: SOUND INSULATION

Thank you for your request for information about research on the subject of sound insulation, which we received on 24th July 2013. We have handled your questions under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). You asked the following questions:

- Please could you inform me what progress has been made in the last 10 years (i.e. between 2003 - 2013) to improve the sound insulation in new builds and retrospectively in older buildings, particularly when older buildings are subdivided and converted into multiple dwellings. I would like to know what research has been commissioned, what the results and summary reports were, and also I would like to know what research is currently being paid for and when reports and summary results are available.
- In addition, I would like to know whether there has been any research into how anti-social sound transmission between dwellings can affect people's health, in particular their mental health.
- And also, I would like to know whether (by how much) government paid for research into sound insulation/and the negative side of sound transmission has influenced changes in building regulations over the last 10 year period and currently, i.e. now.
- I would also like to know whether it is the aim of UK authorities/government to have truly 'fit for purpose' sound insulation as standard, so that it prevents people from having to 'put up with' hearing and often being annoyed and upset by neighbours slamming doors, loud music, babies crying, people arguing and swearing, people having loud sex, etc...

Please note that overall responsibility for policy relating to sound insulation and building regulations rests primarily with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).



Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that most of the information requested is not held by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). However, I am able to supply you with all the information that we do hold.

One of the five assessments carried out within Defra's 'The Effects of Historic Noise Policy Interventions' research project was to examine the effects of changes to the Building Regulations in 1992 and 2003 regarding sound insulation. The research also looked at the effects of legislation covering road traffic noise, aircraft noise, construction noise and neighbour and neighbourhood noise and cost £57,296. We hope to publish the reports very shortly.

Defra has also made a £20,000 contribution to DCLG's current research project that looks at sound insulation criteria. Unless there are any complications, the project is expected to complete at the end of the 2013/14 financial year and normal practice is for reports to be published on DCLG's website within six months of completion.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you. I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Woolhead
Noise and Nuisance Team
Atmosphere and Local Environment

Annex A

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF