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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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Dear Michael,

Thank you for your email of 12 April about noise pollution emanating from the M3. I apologise for the delay in replying.

The Government is committed to ensuring that noise is managed effectively to promote good health and minimise disruption to people's quality of life. Defra helps to manage noise, mainly from transport, through the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006, which aim to reduce noise exposure in the worst affected areas.

The Regulations require that Noise Maps are produced in five-yearly cycles for all motorways and A roads inside large urban areas; and all motorways and A-roads outside large urban areas with an annual flow of more than three million vehicle movements. The Regulations require this mapping to be carried out by means of computer modelling rather than sound measurements to ensure a consistent approach across the country, which is important to enable prioritisation of mitigation work on a national basis.

Defra is currently developing a new noise model using advances in data and technology to improve accuracy and coverage for the forthcoming fourth round of mapping under the Regulations. The results are likely to be published in 2023. The model will also be capable of updating data more frequently.

Once this road mapping process is complete, the data is used to develop an Action Plan for the subsequent five-year period. As part of this, the mapping data is used to identify Important Areas for priority mitigation activity. These are defined as the areas where the 1% of the population affected by the highest noise levels from major roads is located.

The 2019 [Noise Action Plan for road noise](#) shows a number of Important Areas in the vicinity of Windlesham. Under the Regulations, Important Areas identified by Defra should be prioritised for investigation and, where appropriate, action, by the relevant transport authority or local authority. Moreover, the Actions Plans state that if a certain length of highway is associated with several Important Areas, the relevant highway authority should consider measures that could address the noise issues at all the locations concurrently. Important Areas may be expanded, merged or divided as appropriate by the responsible highway authority, where this allows for a more comprehensive and beneficial approach to be taken to the management of noise risks.

Defra does not however have the powers to enforce action by highways authorities or local authorities, and considers that decisions are best taken within a local context.

I hope this information is helpful and may be of use to you in your ongoing discussions.



RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP