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PROGRESSING MOTORCYCLE NOISE CONTROL-A NOISE COUNCIL PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Motorcycles are significant sources of noise annoyance in the community. This feature was shown clearly in the results of a survey carried out in N.W. England (1), which places motorcycles on roads as the second most annoying source (general road traffic = first place) with motorcycles on land in fifth place behind neighbours and aircraft noise.

These two district sources of motorcycle noise have been considered by the UK Noise Council and the following describes the current state of this examination.

The authors are members of a Noise Council Working Party on Motorcycle Noise.

MOTORCYCLES ON ROADS

Why are motorcycles perceived as being excessively noisy? The Noise Council believes that there is, as yet, no effective enforcement procedure which aims to limit machine noise to that which was permitted when it was new. One aspect of this problem is being tackled by the Government through regulations which will set standards for silencing and will demand such silencers be sold as the only replacements for original equipment.

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However, in the main the small minority of particularly noisy machines remain unchallenged inasmuch as there is no approved noise level test to facilitate effective "in-use" enforcement by the Police. A number of authors have considered this problem (2) (3) (4). The general conclusion is that the availability of a simple in-use test would lead to a rapid reduction in the number of very noisy motorcycles using roads. What remains at issue is the practicality of applying such a test.

Many newer motorcycles are not fitted with silencers conforming to a British Standard (5), yet the Police do have powers to deal with the offence (6) of using a sub-standard silencer fitted to a machine first used on or after 1st January, 1985. It is estimated that over 20 per cent of machines in this category have illegal silencers. Clearly enforcement of these existing regulations could help to reduce community annoyance.

MOTORCYCLES ON LAND

The problem of noise from motorcycles on land can be clearly divided between the individual rider using open land indiscriminately; and organised club events such as motorcross, trials, enduro and grass track racing.

In the first instance the ad hoc use of land may be dealt with by the Police and/or Environmental Health Officer (EHO) using powers under the Road Traffic Act or Control of Pollution Act. However, there are practical limitations to enforcement, not least being the apprehension of the noise maker!

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In the case of organised events it can often be that insufficient consideration has been given to likely noise impacts on adjacent noise sensitive areas. The Noise Council, other bodies such as MAPAC, NSCA, and the enthusiastic support of motorcycling organisations are seeking a mechanism whereby the noise impact of an event is assessed well in advance. The result of extensive deliberations is a draft Code of Practice on Noise from Organised Off-Road Motorcycle Events. The aim of the Code is to establish guidelines whereby both EHO's and Organising Bodies of events can show that suitable and reasonable attempts have been made, in noise sensitive areas, to minimise the noise impact on the environment during the event.

The draft code deals with:

- (i) prior notification of event details (to the EHO)
- (ii) legal controls
- (iii) noise control - at source
 - time/duration of event
 - P.A. systems
- (iv) public relations
- (v) noise impact assessments

It also recommends that a database of on-and off-site noise levels be compiled by the Noise Council. Eventually this should enable a more objective assessment of the suitability of potential venues. The data may also be useful in the selection of realistic maximum noise levels relative to noise sensitive premises in the locality of an event site.

It is intended that shortly the draft Code will be the subject of wide consultation. The ultimate aim is for it to be given Department of the Environment recognition.

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CONCLUDING COMMENT

Motorcycles can be noisy and a minority of riders can create a significant problem.

This problem needs to be tackled in various ways:

- by co-operation between motorcyclists and regulatory bodies
- by enforcement of existing regulations, and
- by new regulations.

REFERENCES

- (1) Manchester Area Council for Clean Air and Noise Control, 1987. Environmental Noise Survey.
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- (5) British Standards Institution 1983 BS AU 193.
- (6) HMSO 1986. The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations, 1986. SI 1986: No. 1078.