

## Item 6

26th August 2015



**Glasgow City Council**

**Sustainability and Environment Policy and Development Committee  
26 August 2015**

**Report by Executive Member for Land and Environmental Services**

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### **GREEN YEAR 2015 - BEING SOUND SMART**

#### **Purpose of Report:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to committee on positive noise actions being undertaken across the city.

#### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that committee agrees to note the contents of this report.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes  No ✓

consulted: Yes  No ✓

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the city is holding a Green Year throughout 2015. It provides a year of co-ordinated communications and events, aimed at raising awareness of a range of issues relating to a more sustainable city. Each month in 2015 offers varying events for all age ranges, businesses and visitors to the city.
- 1.2 To date, Green Year 2015 has had great success with a re-launched website and a new interactive App. Communication of green issues has been streamlined and information is more easily accessible via this format. The dedicated social media Twitter account *@greenglasgow* has been utilised as an effective way to share messages widely. Followers have increased by more than 2,500 in a few months and the launch of the Green Year app and website in January reached 100,000 Twitter users.
- 1.3 Each month in 2015 has been themed to focus on key messages and activities. These have been developed from the 12 European Green Capital indicators and thereby offer experience and material for a potential further bid. The dedicated Green Year website and a full programme of events across 2015 can be accessed at [www.greenglasgow.com](http://www.greenglasgow.com). The theme for May was 'Being Sound Smart'.

## 2. Being Sound Smart

- 2.1 May's theme was chosen to coincide with the UK Noise Action week, which ran from 18 to 23 May 2015. It was therefore an ideal time to link to other stakeholders and partners who are also working to raise awareness of noise issues and to tackle them. The month focussed on the challenges of environmental noise, particularly in relation to ambient noise levels caused by road traffic. A partnership between Green Year and the St Enoch Centre led to an exhibition on these issues being hosted in the shopping centre during the week.
- 2.2 City residents are aware of the problems arising from noisy neighbours, however issues around environmental noise are often underrated and misunderstood. Similarly, the need to ensure that people can have access to quiet areas where they can escape constant background levels of noise associated with highly urbanised forms of living is also significant. Such forms of noise have the potential to affect citizens in different ways, and are particularly associated with disrupted sleep becoming a contributing factor to poor mental health. In May, the city highlighted the various impacts of environmental noise, looked to raise awareness of the benefits of 'quiet', and supported enhanced approaches to affect behavioural change. This work will continue to be developed across the city beyond 2015.

## 3. Actions for Green Year

### 3.1 Progressing EU and Scottish Regulations

- 3.1.1 The purpose of the European Noise Directive (END) is to ensure that EU member states ***define a common approach to avoid, prevent or reduce***

***harmful effects, due to the exposure to environmental noise, on a prioritised basis.*** This also provides a framework for considering measures to reduce noise emitted by major sources such as road and rail traffic.

3.1.2 Several actions need to be implemented progressively as part of the process. Noise modelling is required to be undertaken, for instance, with Noise Management Areas and Quiet Areas designated where appropriate. Members will recall that Round 1 of the END modelling process was reported to a meeting of this committee on 2 February 2011. Round 2 of the END modeling process was reported on 26 November 2014. Designated Quiet Areas are those parts of a Council area which are protected from changes that might result in an increase of the noise level or a reduction in the size of the designated area itself.

3.1.3 As part of this process, 10 Quiet Areas have been designated across Glasgow (see Appendix 1 for a list of these). A priority was placed during May on raising awareness of these Quiet Areas for both residents and Council staff. The Green Year social media Twitter account, Green Year App, and other print media sources were used for this purpose.

3.1.4 In order to permanently mark the Quiet Areas, the Council will be initially erecting a bench plaque in each of these areas across the city. This will act as a permanent reminder of the benefit of Quiet Areas for residents and visitors alike and offer the potential for expansion in future years.

3.1.5 Members will also wish to note that Scottish noise insulation regulations provides local residents with potential eligibility for additional home insulation measures when any new road is constructed or an existing one is altered. This usually takes the form of extra window glazing. Officers from Sustainable Glasgow are currently working with Transport Scotland to support a revision of these regulations. One of these officers also chairs the Scottish Environmental Noise Steering Group.

## **3.2 Urban Tranquil Areas**

3.2.1 The END also allows for a pro-active approach to be taken towards the protection of quiet places which are not officially designated Quiet Areas.

3.2.2 The officially designated Quiet Areas are required to satisfy strict criteria based on noise contours, planning restrictions, use and amenity area. As a result, the areas which qualify are in parks located outside of the city centre.

3.2.3 Sustainable Glasgow is investigating the possibility of pro-actively creating additional areas within and surrounding the city centre. It has been suggested that these might be called 'Urban Tranquil Areas'. Although this designation would not carry formal planning restrictions, it could act as a positive promotion for public areas of peace and quiet within the centre of the city itself.

## **3.3 Gate: Open Air**

3.3.1 As part of Green Year 2015, the Council and Glasgow Life collectively commissioned urban artist collective All Eyes Wide to undertake an artistic

interpretation of noise in a Quiet Area of the city. The resulting output was the creation of 'Gate: Open Air' – a free and interactive sound experience for local residents.

3.3.2 This interactive sound experience was undertaken in Springburn Park, chosen for reasons of accessibility and inclusiveness. The idea was that the experience would awaken residents' senses to both the sounds of nature and the lack of noise from the human environment, and thereby encourage them to think about what Quiet Areas have to offer and why they are valuable to people.

3.3.3 The sound experience hosted 64 sessions over the two weekends of 23-24 and 30-31 May, which also coincided with the end of Noise Action Week. The main audience to which this was directed consisted of local residents in order to help them re-connect with their local Quiet Area and ensure that they could sustain this experience into the future through their access to such a major local asset. This has the potential to be rolled out across other Quiet Areas in the city and a full evaluation of this project is currently being prepared.

### **3.4 Low Noise Tyres**

3.4.1 Noise mapping undertaken across the city has identified that roads are a significant source of noise pollution. Traffic noise can be described as taking on two distinct features - noise generated at low speeds by the transmission or powertrain of a vehicle from the engine and exhaust system, and noise generated at speeds higher than 15mph when the tyre interaction with the road surface becomes dominant.

3.4.2 Opportunities to reduce road noise are limited, but one positive approach is fitting vehicles with low noise tyres, which can affect a decrease in noise at source. Studies in Switzerland and the Netherlands have indicated that a change in vehicle tyres could reduce average urban noise climate by up to 3 dB(A), thereby effectively reducing perceived traffic noise by half. As a result there was a concerted effort throughout Noise Action Week in Glasgow to raise awareness of low noise tyres, specifically through re-education about tyre labelling. This was also intended to raise public awareness of those features of tyre construction which can have other benefits, such as wet weather grip for road safety and low friction for the enhancement of fuel efficiency.

3.4.3 This work will be taken forward after 2015 in partnership with the national transport agency, Transport Scotland. It will engage with residents through an online citizen survey in relation to this issue. The results of this will be used to draw up a baseline of public understanding across the city in order to support a wider awareness raising campaign in 2016.

## **4. Next Steps**

4.1 The work that has been undertaken during the Green Year month on Being Sound Smart has linked to a range of partners as well as the Glaswegian public. This has helped to enhance this aspect of Green Year, which has

previously not had a particularly high public profile, and led to a further programme of work for progression beyond 2015.

4.2 Beyond 2015 will bring opportunities to build on these stepping stones. In particular, specific actions that will be progressed include:

- Ongoing modelling of city noise sources based on the Environmental Noise Directive;
- The requirement to address the city's existing Noise Management Areas;
- Continued promotion of Quiet Areas as assets in our local communities;
- Promotion and progression of Urban Tranquil Areas;
- Continued work on raising awareness of low noise tyres, in conjunction with national agency Transport Scotland;
- Consideration of further opportunities to link with the arts sector as a means of engaging citizens in the benefits of quiet.

## 5. Policy and Resource Implications

### Resource Implications:

*Financial:* There are no direct financial impacts to implementing further noise actions beyond 2015.

*Legal:* Actions will support implementation of the EU Environmental Noise Directive and Scottish Regulations.

*Personnel:* Future actions will be progressed using existing staff resources.

*Procurement:* N/A.

**Council Strategic Plan:** Green Year and the theme of positive noise action support the Council's aim to be one of the most sustainable cities in Europe. Green Year partners have also enabled Glasgow to promote our work nationally and internationally.

### Equality Impacts:

*EQIA carried out:* No.

*Outcome:* No significant impact.

### Sustainability Impacts:

*Environmental:* Green Year strongly supports Glasgow's strategic

objective to become a sustainable city. Green Year activities have provided a wide range of environmental benefits to the city.

*Social:*

Green Year activities have provided a range of social sustainability benefits. Raising awareness of the positive aspects of quiet areas helps to promote the health and well-being of residents and supports the place-making agenda.

*Economic:*

Green Year activities have provided a range of economic sustainability benefits. Projects such as the promotion of low noise tyres would support fuel efficiency, ensuring lower fuel bills and a reduced carbon footprint from road sources across the city.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the committee agrees to note the contents of this report.

## Appendix 1: List of Quiet Areas in Glasgow

QUIET AREA NAME
Big Wood, South of St. Martins Primary School, Castlemilk
Pollok Country Park
Cardowan Moss, East of Cumbernauld Road
Bishop Loch, near Gartloch Road, Gartcosh
King's Park
Greenfield Park
Hogganfield Park
Ruchill Park
Springburn Park
Knightswood Park

These areas have been identified through a screening process based on:

- A 55 Lday limit.
- A minimum area of 9 hectares.
- A minimum area of 'quiet' – 75% of the area must fall within the noise band <55dB Lday