



15 March 2021

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Sent via email only.

Dear Assembly Members,

Tube noise update

Thank you for requesting an update on Tube noise and vibration. I want to assure you that addressing Tube noise remains a priority for me, and I am sympathetic to those affected by it. I was pleased to meet with some of you in September 2020 to discuss Tube noise and hear your concerns. I hope you found the meeting helpful and felt reassured by our commitment to continue doing all we can to mitigate noise within our financial and engineering constraints.

I am also aware that unfortunately you received a delayed response to a motion on Tube noise you passed in November last year and had written to Andy Byford to express your concern regarding the delayed response; he has asked me to respond on his behalf. I hope that you find the updates below and attached helpful and that they demonstrate the seriousness with which we take this issue.

Attached is a report summarising key Tube noise related data for the last six months. Covered in the report is:

1. Complaints data

The report sets out the number of new complaints received in the last six months. It should be noted this does not include complaints received prior to this time which may remain open. We have provided a breakdown of these complaints by borough, and visually represented the hotspot locations for which we have received

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complaints. As you will observe, we have seen two hotspots of particular note in recent months: first at Kennington on the Northern line, and second at Canning Town, where residents of a new housing development have raised Tube noise issues with us. We are investigating these issues at both locations.

2. Noise measurement reports

Accurate data is essential not only to enable us to identify areas of particular concern and target interventions accordingly, but also to provide residents with a quantified, objective understanding of the noise levels they are experiencing. It is invaluable both to our team and to residents to also understand, through periodic noise measurements, how noise levels may fluctuate over time, including as a result of our interventions.

Unfortunately, due to restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, our ability to undertake residential noise measurements has been curtailed in recent months. Following resumption of noise monitoring in July 2020 after an initial period of several months' suspension at the start of the coronavirus outbreak, this was once again suspended according to government guidelines in November 2020 and remains so. The extended suspension has regrettably resulted in an unavoidable backlog of measurements to be undertaken. As soon as we are safely able to resume the collection of measurements we will do so, and an intensive period of measurements will commence. We will prioritise our noise measurement schedule both to clear this backlog and to address any notable hotspots identified via complaints in recent months. In the interim, we have issued a small number of reports based on measurements taken when restrictions allowed.

During this period, we have continued our work to address noise and vibration issues on the network, including rail grinding and specific track work interventions aiming to alleviate noise.

3. Rail grinding

Rail grinding is currently our principal means of addressing Tube noise. It works by smoothing rails and removing corrugation, which is often the root cause of residential noise. While an impermanent solution – rail grinding must be repeated as corrugation builds back up over time – it is often our best solution to noise in lieu of much more time and cost intensive interventions, which, in our present climate, are often unfeasible to undertake. Despite limited resource – we only have two grinding machines at our disposal – and limited time – safety and operationally critical rail grinding has to take precedence – we have undertaken a significant amount of noise and vibration related rail grinding in the last six months (10,355m in total). Details of this are broken down in the report, by month, line and specific location. I hope this

provides reassurance that we target rail grinding to known priority hotspots and undertake as much as we can wherever possible.

4. Track works

In addition to rail grinding, we have carried out a number of other targeted interventions to reduce noise, for example hand grinding of certain sections of track to reduce corrugation. Other interventions address issues unrelated to corrugation, for example the removal of redundant rail joints, the maintenance of points and crossings, and re-ballasting track where required, all of which may cause impulsive noise if not addressed. Once again, I hope this demonstrates our ongoing commitment to carrying out works to mitigate noise where possible, and the targeted nature of these works.

5. Hotspot areas

As part of the attached report, we have included an update on our planned interventions at a number of sites where Assembly Members have contacted us regarding Tube noise issues, which I hope you will find useful. We have undertaken a significant amount of work in these known hotspot locations in the last six months, and you will also see that a comprehensive programme of work continues, with a range of work planned for the coming months.

In addition to the data included in the report, I am pleased to update you that my team has had a number of positive meetings with residents and elected representatives in recent months, including several meetings with residents of Highbury & Islington, most recently in October 2020, who noted they felt our approach to tackling noise and vibration, and importantly how we have communicated with them, had improved. Specific updates have also been shared with Assembly Members in recent months regarding our planned interventions at a number of locations where residents have been impacted by Tube noise.

While my team and I continue to do all we can to address Tube noise, as I outlined in our meeting in September, at present, until a sustainable funding settlement is agreed, our ability to carry out long-term and expensive interventions to address Tube noise, such as Deep Tube Reconditioning, is limited. We continue to explore other potential solutions, for example an alternative rail fastening product called Delkor 167 on the Jubilee line, which could reduce in-carriage noise.

We continue to investigate every noise complaint we receive thoroughly and promptly. Therefore, it is important that residents get in touch with the TfL Contact Centre if there are any issues, as this allows us to identify any noise 'hotspots'. We would be grateful if you could encourage your constituents to do so should they

contact you with noise-related concerns. TfL will respond to any noise complaints within 14 days. Residents can get in touch with the Contact Centre on 0343 222 1234 or at <https://tfl.gov.uk/help-and-contact/contact-us-about-tube-and-rail>. Key sites are reviewed on a monthly basis by senior responsible managers.

I hope you have found this update helpful. I am happy to write to Assembly Members with a further update following the forthcoming elections, and agree how we could usefully provide more regular updates to Members on this important issue in future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andy Lord', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andy Lord
Managing Director

cc:

Andy Byford, Transport for London Commissioner
Heidi Alexander, Deputy Mayor for Transport