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Book review

Noise Control—The Law and its Enforcement, 3rd Edition by C.N. Penn, Shaw & Sons Limited, Crayford, UK, 2002, pp. xxix + 478, price £39.95, ISBN 0-7219-0832-2

‘Noise Control—The Law and its Enforcement’ is an excellent text for those involved in all aspects of the assessment and control of noise impact, be this in the home, leisure or workplace environments. The text also offers an excellent grounding and reference manual for those involved in the field of environmental assessment or in the planning forum. The manner in which the book is written makes it at the same time both highly readable yet also usable as a source of reference material. As such, the author must be commended on his efforts and his book is to be recommended to all those involved in practical noise issues.

The 1960s saw the UK’s first comprehensive review on noise. The findings of the review were far reaching, concluding that exposure to undue levels of noise could have significant detrimental impact on our home, leisure and working lives and also that, as living standards continued to rise, noise was likely to become less tolerated. Since then a whole raft of noise legislation aimed at protecting the population against everyday noise has been issued, resulting in a dramatic rise in the powers available to deal with noise. The past decade has seen the Government issuing an increasing number of consultation papers on proposals to introduce yet further powers to control noise.

It is against this background that ‘Noise Control—The Law and its Enforcement’ has been published. The book sets out to provide a well-guided path through the often complex subject of noise legislation, and the result is an unqualified success.

First published in 1979, and now in its third edition, the book provides a highly readable source of reference material. Throughout the book the topics covered are illustrated by reference to relevant case histories and judgements, all of which are easily accessible via the text’s Table of Cases which is usefully included at the start of the book, along with a Table of Statutes and a Table of Statutory Instruments.

The book is divided into 10 logically ordered chapters. The extensive introduction provides an excellent overview of the state-of-the-art in noise issues, highlighting how we have arrived at the situation we presently find ourselves in. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the concepts of noise that are of central importance to an understanding of the application of noise law. These concepts include its measurement, control, and potential subjective impact. The study of noise is somewhat unusual in that it relies on the same time on an understanding of potentially complex physical concepts, the impact of which depends on the subjective psychological responses of individuals. It is often difficult to present a simple, well-balanced explanation of noise and its potential impacts, so it is refreshing to see that the author has managed to condense an overview

of all of the important considerations into a single, relatively short, chapter. The chapter also includes a discussion of vibration issues.

The second chapter commences with a discussion of what constitutes a noise nuisance. The chapter then proceeds to discuss the powers available to the public and enforcement authorities to control nuisance, and the potential lines of defence available to defendants. As with the remainder of the book, this chapter includes many useful references to case histories to illustrate the points made.

Chapter 3 covers noise in public places. This chapter stands apart from the remaining chapters in that it deals with, in the words of the author, '*a miscellany of noise problems which usually occur in places frequented by the public*'. The sources considered include noise from: places of entertainment, recreational activities, country activities, neighbours and public affrays, with the remedies against the noise producers generally relying on Acts aimed at controlling the actions of individuals.

The treatment of noise from other major sources, such as industrial operations, construction activities, road traffic and air traffic, are deservedly given dedicated coverage in Chapters 4–8. Industrial noise receives attention over two chapters which cover the topics of Noise Abatement Zones and Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control. Noise Abatement Zones are now often considered an outmoded form of control, with only 58 having been designated since 1976. However, 18 zones still remain in force today, meaning the practising acoustician may still become involved in such zones in the course of their career. The inclusion of Noise Abatement Zones in the book is therefore to be welcomed. In contrast to Noise Abatement Zones, compliance with the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) regulations are a relatively new concept to the acoustician. IPPC is a subject that is gaining in its practical relevance as an increasing number of industrial operations become liable to the permitting process. Chapter 8 covers the subject of IPPC succinctly yet thoroughly, ensuring that all the major issues that must be accounted for in the permitting process are adequately covered. This chapter should offer welcome reading for those coming for the first time to the IPPC permitting process who would otherwise be forced to wade through the significant quantity of official documentation to gain an overview of what is required.

The chapters on road traffic noise, aircraft noise and construction noise deal with the legal aspects of their respective subjects thoroughly. All include a history of the development of the subject in hand, followed by a description of the basic technical issues involved, finishing with more detailed accounts of pertinent legislation and guidance. Once again the utility of all chapters to the practising acoustician is increased through frequent references to relevant case histories.

In Chapter 9 the discussion moves away from specific sources of noise to present broad guidance on planning control and consideration of environmental noise issues in this context. The introduction to the chapter offers the advice that it '*is not intended to cover in depth the complex matters of planning procedure, compulsory purchase and planning inquiries*', offering instead references to standard reference texts on these subject. However, for many readers the extent of coverage offered by the reviewed text is likely to offer a more than adequate coverage of the main issues. Following a brief history of the development of planning controls the chapter then presents a discussion of development plans, planning applications and conditions, environmental assessments and an overview of the relevant Planning Policy Guidance Notes. The chapter then continues with a discussion of the enforcement of planning controls, planning appeals, noise from

public infrastructure and building design as a means of control, including an overview of the latest Building Regulations. The chapter concludes with an up-to-date review of noise mapping, including the latest European Union Directive on the subject, and the contribution that noise mapping technology can potentially offer to the planning forum.

The final chapter of the book concerns itself with occupational noise exposure, including a section on the effects of exposure to vibration. Once again the coverage of the topics is sufficiently detailed to give the reader an excellent grounding in the major areas of consideration, with this grounding being fully supported by a detailed list of references should the reader require further information in any given area.

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