



## **BS4142 2014 Consultation Response The Association of Noise Consultants**

The Association of Noise Consultants (ANC) is the only body specifically representing the views of consultancy practices, and as such works closely with the Institute of Acoustics (IOA) the academic institution of which employees of member firms are required to be members.. Membership has grown to over 115 member companies, including several international members and representing nearly eight hundred consultants.

Established in 1973, the ANC seeks to raise the standards of acoustic consultancy and improve recognition of the vital role which good acoustics, and the management and mitigation of noise and vibration play in achieving good design and effective planning in the built and natural environment.

The Association holds bi-monthly meetings of representatives from each member company, at which information on consultation responses such as this is disseminated and the content discussed.

The ANC has compiled this consultation response of behalf of its members, reflecting the consensus view of participating members of the Association in general, rather than specific views of individual member companies. In addressing areas in which there is no general consensus of opinion, the range of views expressed will be presented in the interests of balance and fair representation.

### **Scope**

All members who expressed an opinion welcomed the extension of the scope of the standard to apply to types of assessment for which it was used previously beyond its intended scope (ie new noise sources, new receptors and nuisance assessments). They also welcomed the identification of specific noise sources to which the standard should not be applied (barking dogs, sport etc).

The draft revision contains a number of changes which will alter the numerical outcome of a '4142 assessment' when the two methods are directly compared. Members felt that this should be highlighted clearly in the introduction to the standard, as it may influence decision making behavior, including the need for local authorities to alter their default approaches and expectations. It will be necessary to clearly identify which version of the rating method is being referred to, especially in relation to issues which span a number of years and bridge the transition between the two standards.

### **Survey measurements**

Members felt that although a thorough understanding of prevailing weather conditions and those which actually occurred during any survey work is important, the wording of this section might lead to a requirement for weather monitoring stations at every survey (and indeed in extremis at every noise measurement position).

There may be situations in which on-site weather monitoring may be helpful, and the assessors' attention should be brought to the consideration of this possibility in some instances. Blanket application to all surveys, however, was broadly agreed to be excessive and to represent a significant and unnecessary burden in terms of cost and practicality.

### **Assessment**

Members welcomed the additional clarity provided on the consideration of typicality in relation to background noise conditions against which noise levels should be rated.

Some members identified an ambiguity in the references to assessment periods (1hr during the day and 15mins at night), which appeared to be 'suggestions' rather than 'defaults'. They felt these periods should be as stated, unless a deviation can be clearly justified on a case specific basis, although no-one was able to illustrate a case under which a deviation might be appropriate.

No consensus was clear on the objective methods for rating impulsivity and tonality other than the fact that more project case studies are required than was feasible within the consultation period to assess the likely impact on different types of assessment. Linear addition of both rating penalties will inevitably result in some significantly higher rating values than previously, but whether or not this represents a true reflection of community impact remains to be seen

A concern was flagged that with both a simplified and more complex approach presented for tonality assessment, there may be a temptation for some assessors (or their clients) to 'cherry pick' the method more favourable to the outcome of the assessment at hand. It was generally thought that if the more complex (Joint Nordic 2) method is 'fit for purpose' it should be applied universally. A possible exception to this was suggested for cases of proposed new plant assessments, for which the detailed measurements described are unlikely to be available. However, in such instances 1/3 octave band data is very seldom available either, so a qualitative estimate is likely to be the only option in any event

### **Uncertainty**

While most members appreciated the inclusion of uncertainty consideration within the proposed revision, most considered there to be insufficient detail provided in the method described for arriving at the figures illustrated in the examples.

It was also felt that more explanatory text was required to indicate how the uncertainty values determined might be used to inform the implementation and

consideration of the assessment outcome in any decision making processes. A specific concern was identified regarding the possibility that decision makers might use the quantification of uncertainty values to 'move the goalposts' rather than as a tool to assist them in putting precision, repeatability and reproducibility into context.

Additional commentary would be useful to explain that all assessments of this type, including those undertaken under the current standard, contain an inherent degree of uncertainty, and this should not be considered to represent a shortcoming or 'error' in the assessment, merely additional information to assist putting the values used in the assessment in context. There may be too much emphasis on uncertainty data within the assessment presentation examples shown.