



Network Rail
Freedom of Information
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Mr Alun Morris
By email: request-448297-f1a45ad9@whatdotheyknow.com

27th December 2017

Dear Mr Morris

Information request
Reference number: FOI2017/01393

Thank you for your request of 24th November 2017. You requested the following information:

Original request received on 23rd November 2017:

"I find the noise level from northbound trains entering the St Pancras domestic (underground) station to be extremely high.

Please supply all records (including emails) regarding the noise level at this station."

Clarification of request received on 24th November 2017:

"Thanks for the very fast response. I did not specify a timeframe since I don't know when sound levels were measured at the station.

I will narrow my request to whichever is the shorter of:

- * 2006 to the present OR*
- * One month before and twelve months after the most recent measurement of sound level at the domestic underground platforms, for the purpose of considering whether it is at an acceptable level."*

I have processed your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) as the information requested is environmental according to the definition in regulation 2 of the EIR (section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) exempts environmental information from the FOIA, but requires us to consider it under the EIR).

I can confirm that we do hold the information you have requested. The last noise level readings carried out at St Pancras Station on Lower Level Platforms A and B were recorded on 8th November 2017, the results of which are provided below. Please note that the track temperature at the point of measuring the sound levels was 8 degrees celsius, and noise levels were taken at the following times:

Platform A (measuring platform B)

16:32 - 111.3 decibels (dBA)
16:40 - 94.6 dBA (mid platform)
17:36 - 99.5 dBA

Platform B (measuring platform A)

16:34 - 97.4 dBA
17:40 - 98.1 dBA

Platform B (Measuring Platform B)

17:32 - 99.4 dBA

Based on the timescales you have specified, we have also conducted a search for any other records or emails that date from 8th October 2017, one month prior to these sound measurements being taken on 8th November 2017, and up to and including 24th November 2017, the date of your request. Within this search we have found the three email chains attached to this response as falling within scope of your request.

Please note the emails have been partially redacted to remove the names, contact details, and job titles of individual Network Rail employees.

Regulation 13(1) of the EIRs

Regulation 13(1) of the EIRs allows us to withhold information if it constitutes the personal information of identifiable individuals and its disclosure would contravene one or more of the data protection principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. In this instance, a small section of the information you have requested constitutes the personal information of Network Rail employees.

The first data protection principle states that personal information must be handled fairly and lawfully. In our view the disclosure of the information that you have requested would be unfair to the individuals concerned. This is because it constitutes the personal information of staff members and the individuals concerned would have had no expectation that such information would be disclosed.

In determining what is fair, we also need to balance the rights of the individuals with the legitimate interests in disclosure of the information. We recognise the legitimate interest in being accountable to the public and that releasing documents without

redaction allows for greater accountability. However, we are unable to release the names of staff at a less senior level because they do not have a public-facing role.

In addition to which, it is our view that accountability in this instance applies to Network Rail as an organisation rather than the individuals in question. In simple terms these individuals were doing a job for which Network Rail is ultimately accountable. The effect of this is that any interest in accountability is met by the documents being provided in their redacted form.

Taking all of this into account and in the absence of any overriding legitimate interest in the release of this information under EIRs, we consider that the disclosure of the information you have requested would be unfair and breach the first data protection principle.

To further assist you I have been supplied with some supplemental details regarding the noise levels at St Pancras Station Lower Level platforms. The rail curve leading into St Pancras is extremely tight, which causes wheel squeal. During the construction of the station the track directly underneath the St Pancras Hotel had to be quietened. The track noise which originally caused vibration through the structure had to be reduced and therefore Pandrol Vanguard baseplates were installed. These baseplates secure the rail with compressed rubber pads and convert the energy from vibration to airborne, which causes this rail squeal. To try and reduce the noise level, a rail lubricator has been installed along the top of the rail and around the curve, helping to steer the train around the curve. We have also used a gauge face lubricator in the hope of improving this situation.

Since 8th November 2017 and prior to the date of your request of 24th November 2017, different grease has been used and improvements have been made which we are hopeful improves the customer experience at the lower level platforms.

If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk or on 01908 782405. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Yours sincerely

Emma Wolstenholme
Information Officer

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Appeal Rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the FOI Compliance and Appeals Manager at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at foi@networkrail.co.uk. Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.