

WRS Board

Date: 20th November 2025

Noise and licensed premises

Recommendation	That Members note the contents of this report.
Background	Whilst numbers of noise nuisance complaints vary from year to year, generally officers feel that cases are becoming far more complex, often shaped by expectations of complainants, and many investigations take a prolonged period due to issues with obtaining sufficient evidence. This has also not been helped by the length of time cases take to get into court with the current backlogs in the system. An increase in challenges by complainants to approaches taken by local authorities in relation to nuisance matters appears to have been accompanied by a greater willingness to involve the Ombudsman when people are not happy with the outcome of something they have raised. This pushes services towards more standardised approaches rather than looking at how best to seek resolution in relation to the individual circumstances of a complaint. One way of tackling these trends is to attempt to be more proactive, so that issues do not arise in the first place.
Noise from pubs and clubs	Commercial premises are responsible for around 1/3rd of nuisance complaints to WRS. A reasonable proportion of these are issues with noise is from pubs and clubs. Pubs and clubs are a traditional part of the UK’s culture and can bring money into local areas. They are also a source of complaints to Local Authorities often related to music and customer behaviours. This can be triggered by a pub changing its offer to help maintain its financial sustainability. Changes in social habits, particularly the increased tendency of younger people to socialise with each other at home and to “order in” food, also means less trade for the sector unless offers are reshaped. Understanding the wider environment and the reasons why in general pubs and clubs are struggling in today’s financial climate, Leads us to thinking that a sensible course of action is to try to work with all parties to help pubs and clubs thrive whilst keeping a balance on the impact on their local communities. In some cases, the change in offer from licensed premises has been quite dramatic. Some are offering educational workshops on aspects of their own activities (e.g., cocktail making, cooking) or hosting pop-up markets and events. A few are even providing spaces for remote working and offering spaces for social groups. In more rural areas, some colleagues are reporting an increase in offers around holidays and camping. This diversification has no doubt helped pub businesses to survive, but some of these changes have also led to additional noise for nearby residents. Outdoor events, particularly those involving music festivals and bands, not necessarily large scale and accommodated under Temporary Event Notices, can and have generated concerns, particularly where these occur on the edge of rural communities.



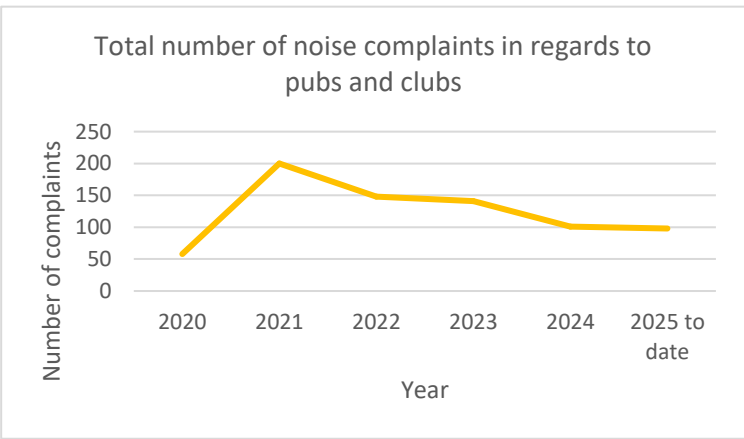
Proactive Approach

In 2023, the Community Environmental Health and Licensing teams decided to try to take a more proactive first response to nuisance issues by sending a targeted advisory letter to all pubs and clubs where a noise complaint was received. The letter reminded license holders of their duties under the Act, and included reference to the threat of license review should noise and other issues of disorder not be addressed. However, this approach received a positive response from the business community. In 2024 the approach was further developed to include issuing pre-season (i.e., before the summer nuisance spike,) noise control advice to premises where complaints had previously been reported. Its purpose was to try and reduce the number of complaints received, help support smooth running of events for local businesses whilst maintaining a positive relationship with local communities.

The guidance document (attached at Appendix 1) includes a look at noise amplification, equipment used, structure of the building and outdoor areas and how this may help. It also sets out a basic explanation of the law on nuisance, and the potential consequences have also been set out. Alongside the guidance document, visits were offered to any premise to discuss upcoming events as a proactive method to combat any potential complaints, including those that might arise from perceptions of what an event may be like. Some of these offers were taken up and the initial perception of officers is that it has assisted the managers of these premises to reduce the impact of their activities. We have continued this approach in 2025 and will be looking in more detail at the data to try to quantify the impacts. As our activity data shows, whilst we had an incredibly hot summer, which could have precipitated significantly more noise complaints, numbers were held at the same levels as 2023/4, when the summer was not particularly good. Whilst we cannot confirm that this is the only reason for this, we hope that it has helped with our officer workload and ensured that balance between businesses and communities.

The tables below illustrate the annual number of noise complaints received in respect of pubs and clubs.

District	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bromsgrove	27	25	40	18
Malvern Hills	17	6	7	11
Redditch	23	22	11	9
Worcester City	72	40	34	21
Wychavon	31	26	13	13
Wyre Forest	30	29	36	29
Total	200	148	141	101



**Positive
Outcomes**

The service continues to believe it is important to work with businesses work to achieve our community protection aims where possible, as this ensures both economic success and a good environment for residents. Officers will continue to review this initiative every year to build up outcome data and business response information.

The use of social media for communication is one aspect that has yet to be considered as a preventive element for controlling these situations. Providing clear guidance on our website, ensuring that correct information is given to potential complainants at first point of contact and managing the public's expectations on what constitutes Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 also form part of the approach. Engagement with other regulatory colleagues, whether in planning, building control or the wider aspects of environmental protection often referred to as street scene are also key. By working together, improved outcomes should be achievable that protect communities without imposing significant regulatory burden on businesses that provide both economic opportunity and places to socialise for the public.

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