



# Outdoor event noise management guidelines

2019-20



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**Approval date**

July 2018

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**Approved by**

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**Review date**

April 2020

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**Expiry date**

2021

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**Version number**

2

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# Introduction

The City of Port Phillip has a long history of being one of Melbourne's prime outdoor event locations. Our outdoor events calendar includes traditional on-road events which have been held here for over 20 years, alongside newer music, cultural and food events.

Council recognises that while events can bring many benefits to a community, there is also the potential for outdoor events to cause noise related impact.

This document sets out the necessary noise management requirements for outdoor events that include the use of amplified sound systems for music, speech or other noise.

As every event and venue is unique, there may be occasions where these requirements need to be tailored so they are appropriate for each event.

## Legislation

These guidelines form the framework for outdoor event noise management plans (NMP) to ensure they are meeting all Council's requirements.

All events must operate in accordance with the following legislation where it applies:

- Environmental Protection Act 1970
- EPA State Environment Protection Policy (SEPP) N-2
- EPA Noise Control Guidelines. Publication 1254

## Scope

These guidelines apply to all events covered by the Outdoor Event Policy 2017. This is defined as the following:

The policy applies to all outdoor events, promotions and markets on Council managed public space within the municipality. Including (but not limited to) events which are run by private organisations, businesses, schools, special interest groups or community groups.

## Important information to note

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CoPP expectations for managing noise at events   | Pages 5-9     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reporting requirements   | Pages 10 & 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check your event classification and the requirements for your noise management plan and noise monitoring | Pages 12-15   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibilities for noise management  | Pages 16 & 17 |

# Managing noise at events

## Noise Management Plan (NMP)

All events must provide a Noise Management Plan (NMP). These plans must be submitted and approved before a permit will be issued.

All noise management plans must include:

- Information on event type, sources of sound and operating dates/times
- Site layout plan
- Description of the sound system to be installed
- Hotline number – for the community
- Contact number – for council
- Resident and business notification plan
- Complaints handling procedure
- Noise management strategy
- Details of monitoring plan
- Times and locations for monitoring

## Noise monitoring

All events are required to have a plan in place to show how they will monitor noise levels. Monitoring locations and times are required as part of the NMP and will be included in the permit.

Noise monitoring must be undertaken as outlined in NMPs and the conditions will be included in the permit.

Monitoring locations have been set for Catani Gardens, Elwood Reserve, South Beach Reserve and Gasworks Arts Park. Maps outlining these monitoring locations will be provided. Sites outside the required points may need to be tested if complaints are received or if outlined in the NMP. All other sites will have monitoring points approved as part of the permitting process.

## Acoustic consultant

Acoustic consultants can be engaged to monitor noise at the event and will be appointed by the event operator and approved by Council. The consultant must be willing to respond to requests from Council staff and provide a comprehensive post event report.

As a minimum the approved acoustic consultant must:

- Be a member of the Association of Australasian Acoustical Consultants ([www.aaac.org.au](http://www.aaac.org.au)), or Australian Acoustical Society ([www.acoustics.asn.au](http://www.acoustics.asn.au))
- Have experience monitoring like events
- Use only noise measurement equipment compliant with Standard IEC 61672 and IEC 60942, and have corresponding NATA or manufacturers certification detailing Standard conformance testing within two years
- (For Category 1 events) Provide preliminary acoustic assessment, predictions and approval of noise monitoring and sound check program

- Be available for direct contact from Council and event staff throughout the event in order to respond to concerns
- Be present for the full event, including any preliminary sound checks
- Have measures in place to be able to follow the NMP, respond to noise complaints, identify and quickly remedy any breaches
- It is recommended that the consultant is involved in the development of the NMP.
- Provide a preliminary report supplied not more than two business days after to the event; and a comprehensive report not less than three weeks after the event.
- Cannot be an employee of the appointed AV company or events company, to ensure impartiality

Acoustic consultants will be employed and managed by the event organiser. The responsibility for the event management and delivery is on the event provider, therefore council does not employ acoustic consultants, or other event professionals such as security, traffic managers, medical services etc. By employing the consultant this allows event providers to work closely with providers so they understand all aspects of the event. However council will have final approval for noise management plans and the permit conditions that place controls on noise at events. On event day, council staff will be designated to all events and in contact with event providers or acoustic consultants as required.

## Noise limits

### SEPP N-2

It is the responsibility of the event organiser to identify applicable restrictions in the event Noise Management Plan (NMP) for Council approval. However, in accordance with SEPP N-2, the following are applicable for music noise from outdoor events on reserved land:

- Leq 65dB(A) measured outside residential properties for a small number of permitted large scale outdoor events during permitted hours
- Leq 55dB(A) measured outside residential properties for a greater number of small scale outdoor events, during permitted hours
- Outside of permitted hours, music inaudible outside residential properties
- Within the above framework, the event nature, corresponding noise limits and permitted times shall be judged and/or defined by the Council on a case-by-case basis

EPA Noise Control Guidelines Publication 1254 provides guidance for public address systems and other noise sources which operate during outdoor events.

### Bass noise

For events with a heavy bass component, maximum bass (dBc) levels will be included as a condition of the event permit. For example, noise limits may include Leq85dB(C) measured outside residential properties.

### Noise modelling

Council can supply Noise Contour Maps based on noise predicting modelling of our major event sites. These maps can assist in predicting expected noise exposure to noise sensitive areas around the event site.

## Time limits

Time limits on amplified noise at outdoor events are as follows:

### Finish times

- Unless for exceptional circumstances, all events will finish by 10pm
- Open Air Cinemas may be exempted and may continue until 11pm during daylight savings months.

Time range for event days are restricted to the following:

- 8 hours on weekdays
- 10 hours Friday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

### Preliminary sound checks

Preliminary sound checks can be undertaken by event organisers to set appropriate levels for upcoming performances. These need to be kept to a minimum and abide by the following guidelines:

- Sound testing for music performances will not occur between 6pm and 9am
- Sound testing may occur during bump in, as approved by Council officers
- Sound tests to be kept to a minimum

Sound testing times must be included in the NMP and notification letters and will form part of the permit conditions.

Council encourages planned sound checks throughout the outdoor event to ensure that noise levels conform with requirements or to adjust noise levels accordingly.

### Bump in and out

- Bump in and out times will be assessed on a case by case basis and are not included in the timings above
- Event organisers will need to submit schedules to show the activities during these times in order for Council to assess possible noise concerns
- Times for Bump in/out will be included in the permit.

### Drumming

- Drumming will only be permitted between 12noon and 10pm.

### Exemptions

- Further time restrictions may be considered for multiple day events
- Time ranges may be reconsidered if noise levels can be kept low outside these timeframes

## **Noise reduction measures**

The following are common types of measures that can be put in place to reduce the amount of noise that is heard at residential properties.

### **Speakers – types and size**

- More smaller speakers placed around a site are better than a few large ones. Smaller speakers mean that the overall noise levels can be lower while still gaining the same experience on site
- Avoid speaker clusters or large groupings of speakers
- Use in-ear monitoring only and reduce stage fold back speakers
- Use high directional line array speakers that focus noise direction at the audience and minimise noise spill
- Restrict sub-woofer (bass) speakers to the front of the stage only. The use of cardioid sub-woofer speakers that spill less bass behind them than other sub-woofer speakers are preferred.

### **Speakers – positioning**

- All speakers should be aligned and orientated to minimise noise disturbance
- Speakers are required to be placed facing away from residents, usually this means towards the bay.
- The physical angle and amplitude of line array speakers can be arranged in order to project sound away from nearby residences. This is achievable as line arrays are made up of multiple modules that can be individually adjusted
- Speaker systems erected at mid to high levels around the stage should have a small bass component and spill less sound backwards.

### **Stage sound barriers**

- Sound waves will travel from their origin until they meet some resistance that absorbs or reflects them or it runs out of energy (distance). Outdoors, blocking sound transmission with heavy, impermeable barriers is an effective strategy. There are many different ways of creating sound barriers at outdoor events such as use of shipping containers, trucks or purpose made noise reduction barrier solutions.
- Noise barriers are most effective around the whole stage and not just the speakers.

### **Stage positioning**

- Stages must be placed so they are not directly facing residential properties, this ensures that the speakers can be directed appropriately. Specific site noise contour maps can be provided to ensure optimal stage position locations with regard to compliance.

### **Sound management**

- A music noise limiter can be calibrated to ensure compliance with set noise limits outside residential dwellings.
- Use of audio compressors can reduce the volume of loud sounds and amplifies quiet sounds, thereby creating a consistent sound level.
- Self monitoring events should monitor prevailing wind conditions. The direction and speed of wind can increase the distance that noise travels.
- Preliminary sound checks should be used to obtain a relationship between noise at the site (mixing desk) and at residential locations.
- Event organisers are responsible for managing their own mixing desks and sound systems according to Council guidelines. This responsibility cannot be passed onto individual artists or performers.

## Complaints procedure

All events must have a complaints handling procedure. As a minimum this must include:

- An events hotline number which has been tested and is manned throughout the event (including bump in and bump out)
- An outline of how complaints will be handled and responded to
- A contact for Council officers to call directly during the event who can respond to concerns (this may be the hotline number or another event staff member)
- A process to record all complaints received and actions undertaken.

## Notifications

All events will be required to provide the following notifications:

- List event on Council's website
- Provision of a hotline number

Some events may also be required to undertake some or all of these additional measures:

- Send notification letters to surrounding residents
- Provide a hotline number which is active throughout set up and any sound testing
- Place signage by the road (for road closures) and/or on-site pre-event
- Post information on the Australian Tourism Warehouse site: [www.exploreportphillip.com.au](http://www.exploreportphillip.com.au)

Required notification measures will be outlined through the event approval process.

# Reporting

Reporting is required in order to:

- Record noise levels throughout event
- Provide details of any incidents, including duration and remedy
- Outline details of any complaints received and actions taken

A sample of a simple report can be found in the appendix.

## Requirements for reporting

### Category 1 Events

- Initial Report – two days after event
- Full Report – three weeks after event

### Category 2, 3, and 4 Events

- Simple Report – two days after event

### Category 5 Events

- Reporting as requested in permit conditions

## Initial report

Required for Category 1 events

Due within two working days and is to include the following:

- Compliance/non compliance with requirements.
- Reasons for any breaches, when they occurred, the duration and actions taken

## Full report

Due within three weeks of the completion of the event. Report must include the following:

- Name, address, telephone and email of person completing the report
- Relevant dates and times of all noise testing
- Brief information regarding the event – numbers attending, name, location and type of event.
- Times and locations where noise measurements were taken. These are to be included on a site plan –include any additional points that were tested during the event.
- Equipment and methods used to take measurements
- Compliance/non compliance with requirements.
- Reasons for any breaches, when they occurred, the duration and actions taken. Comments on how these could have been avoided or mitigated in future.
- Table showing noise measurements across the event and testing, including any comments relevant to the measurements.
- Complaints received – number, location and times received
- Relevant weather observations

## **Simple report**

Required for Category 2,3 and 4 events

Template provided in appendix

Due within two working days and is to include the following:

- Table showing noise measurements undertaken across the event, including times, locations and any comments relevant to the measurements
- Reasons for any breaches, when they occurred, the duration and actions taken
- Details of any complaints received – number, location, times received and action taken

# Event classifications and requirements

While all events have the responsibility to minimise noise impacts, the risk of disturbances and the level of management will vary for each event. Therefore, events require differing responses to noise management.

Council will decide on the event classification based on the application and information available at the time of assessment. Assessment will include considerations of the proposed event type, potential impact, NMP, experience and the performance of previous events held by the applicant.

## Category 1 - Music events

An event that involves a combination of the following:

- Continuously programmed, large audio
- A focus on music – headline acts, multiple stages, live dj or bands with drums and/or sub-bass
- Usual estimated participation or attendance of 4000+
- Identified as likely to breach 65dB(A) outside residential dwellings without significant noise management measures in place.
- Examples: music festivals, major headline music acts.

### **Noise management plan requirements:**

- Details of acoustic consultant to be engaged
- Preliminary acoustic consultant assessment and predictions
- Details of noise limiters that will ensure conformance with noise requirements
- Details of any noise barriers, including material, density (kg/m<sup>2</sup>), and any holes, openings or gaps in the barriers
- Identify measures to control and minimise on-stage noise levels, and/or noise impacts at residential properties
- Identify all major noise sources
- Noise monitoring and sound check program, including times and locations
- Location of all speakers and heights of speakers above ground
- Location of monitoring areas
- Expected attendance numbers

### **Noise monitoring requirements:**

- An acoustic consultant must be employed that is a member of the Association of Australasian Acoustical Consultants ([www.aaac.org.au](http://www.aaac.org.au)) or Australian Acoustical Society ([www.acoustics.asn.au](http://www.acoustics.asn.au))
- All noise monitoring and sound checks should be undertaken with a sound level meter compliant with Standard IEC 61672. The calibration of the sound level meter should be checked immediately before and after testing with a IEC 60942 compliant calibrator.
- Music noise limiters should be calibrated to ensure noise requirement conformance during preliminary sound checks
- In-ear monitoring is preferred. Foldback speakers should be limited, and on-stage music noise levels should be minimised

- The acoustic consultant should be present at the event at all times in accordance with the noise monitoring and sound check program
- At the request of Council, the acoustic consultant will measure at any identified trouble area(s) that arise during the event
- Unattended noise monitors should be placed at each stage mixing desk and locations representative of most affected residential premises, recording  $L_{eq,15\text{minute}}$  dB(A) and dB(C) continuously for the event duration. These monitors must be an easy reference for Council staff to check noise levels.
- Attended noise measurements shall be undertaken by the acoustic consultant as per the Council approved noise monitoring locations identified in the NMP or as specified by Council.

## Category 2 - Large cultural events

An event that involves a combination of the following:

- Food, art or culturally based events with a single performance space
- May include music with smaller sound systems/speakers
- Expected attendance approx 2000
- Expected noise levels between 55dB(A) and 65dB(A) outside residential dwellings, would include some noise management controls
- Examples: outdoor cinemas, cultural celebrations or music events with small stages and no major headline acts.

### Noise management plan requirements:

- Identify amplified music likely to have high on-stage noise levels, drums or amplified bass
- Identify measures to control and minimise on-stage noise levels, and/or noise impacts at residential properties
- Details of any noise barriers, including material, density ( $\text{kg/m}^2$ ), and any holes, openings or gaps in the barriers (noise countour maps can be provided to assist)
- Expected attendance numbers

### Noise monitoring requirements:

- Self noise monitoring and sound check program, including:
  - Hourly attended noise level checks at prescribed locations (a map will be provided)
  - Response to community complaint or Council request to measure testing at any identified trouble area(s) that arise during the event
- Sound level meter details, including capability to measure  $L_{eq}$  dB(A) and dB(C), and design for IEC 61672 conformance
- Equipment calibration/accuracy check methodology
- Personnel responsible for supervising and undertaking noise monitoring and sound checks during event

## **Category 3 - Food and beverage events**

An event that involves a combination of the following:

- Food and beverage focus
- May include music for background entertainment or acoustic sets
- Music is a secondary element and not the focus of the event.
- Low powered speaker systems
- Preference for no drums or sub-bass
- Expected noise levels to be below 65dB(A) outside residential dwellings, with little noise management controls required.
- Examples: food and wine or food truck events

### **Noise management plan requirements:**

- Music program details which will identify music sources likely to have amplified noise levels
- Identify measures to control and minimise noise levels, and/or noise impacts at residential properties

### **Noise monitoring requirements:**

- Self noise monitoring and sound check program, including:
  - Hourly noise level checks at prescribed locations (a map will be provided)
  - Response to community complaint or Council request to measure testing at any identified trouble area(s) that arise during the event
- Sound level meter to measure music noise levels, to ensure compliance with set noise limits outside residential dwellings
- Sound level meter details, including capability to measure  $L_{eq}$  dB(A) and dB(C), and design for IEC 61672 conformance
- Personnel responsible for supervising and undertaking noise monitoring and sound checks during event

## **Category 4 – Sporting Events**

An event that involves a combination of the following:

- Sporting focus
- Usually early in the morning
- Noise through low powered speakers, usually just public address systems
- Sound is usually just low level background music and safety messages
- No live bands or DJs, drums or sub-bass
- Expected noise levels to be between 55dB(A) and 65dB(A) outside residential dwellings with little noise management controls.
- Examples: triathlons, marathons and fun runs

### **Noise management plan requirements:**

- Music can be played at the swim start of triathlons, providing speakers are on the beach, facing the water and must be less than 67dB(A) @ 3m from speakers.
- Village/event area: from 8am music levels must be less than 72dB(A) @ 3m from speakers, with announcements no greater than 5 decibels above.

- PA for safety messaging is allowed in the reserve from the start of the event, speakers to be set at 67dB(A) @ 3m from speaker.
- From 9am identify measures to control and minimise noise levels, and/or noise impacts at residential properties

**Noise monitoring requirements:**

- Self noise monitoring and sound check program, including:
  - Hourly noise level checks at prescribed locations (a map will be provided)
  - Response to community complaint or Council request to measure testing at any identified trouble area(s) that arise during the event
- Sound level meter to measure music noise levels, to ensure compliance with set noise limits outside residential dwellings
- Sound level meter details, including capability to measure  $L_{eq}$  dB(A) and dB(C), and design for IEC 61672 conformance
- Personnel responsible for supervising and undertaking noise monitoring and sound checks during event

## **Category 5 - Small Community Events**

An event that involves a combination of the following:

- Usually a cultural or community event not focused on music
- Estimated participation or attendance of less than 500 participants
- Amplified speech or music by distributed low-powered speakers
- May include music for background entertainment or acoustic sets
- Music is a secondary element and not the focus of the event
- History of no previous complaints
- Noise levels likely to be no more than 55dB(A) outside residential dwellings
- Examples: small community events, commemorative services, local charity fundraisers.

**Noise management plan requirements:**

- Details of self-monitoring
- Music at background levels only
- No bass amplification speakers (eg subwoofers) allowed

**Noise monitoring requirements:**

- Self noise monitoring and sound check program, where the operator shall check hourly that noise levels within 2 metres of speakers do not exceed the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 Clause S.9A(5) definition of background music, which states:  
*“background music level, in relation to premises, means a level that enables patrons to conduct a conversation at a distance of 60 centimetres without having to raise their voices to a substantial degree”.*

# Responsibility for noise management

At all times, it is the responsibility of the event organiser to ensure compliance with noise restrictions in accordance with the NMP. It is also the role of the event organiser to take responsibility and be accountable for any non-compliance issues and penalties, including the management of other relevant staff and contractors (e.g. sound technicians, production managers, community liaison). Each event is required to provide a NMP to Council to be assessed and approved.

## Compliance

Compliance levels will be measured from a combination of mixing desk and residential boundary readings.

## Non-compliance

Failure to comply with the requirements of the NMP may result in:

- Fines from the EPA
- Forfeiting all or part of the Noise Bond which will be held by Council
- Rejection of future event applications in the City of Port Phillip

## Responding to a breach

It is expected that events have strategies in place to quickly identify exceeded levels and measures in place to respond. This will be outlined in the event NMP and needs to be included in post event reporting.

The reporting process must outline:

- The standard response to a breach eg. Test noise levels, immediately amend breaches, log incident, respond to residents, notifying Council including information.

## Noise bond

### What is a noise bond

- A security bond may be held to encourage events to comply with approved NMPs.
- The bond will be held until after the event and will be returned or retained based on the events compliance/non-compliance with NMPs.

### When will a noise bond apply

- A Noise bond will apply to all events which are deemed at high risk of breaching NMPs. This will include (but not be limited to):
  - All Category 1 events
  - Any events deemed as high risk of non-compliance
  - Any events that have a history of non-compliance

## What is the Bond amount

If applicable, the Noise Bond will be \$10,000 but may vary at the discretion of Council. The full amount must be paid prior to the event bump in, as per the invoice issued.

## Refunds

Compliance levels will be measured from a combination of Front of House and residential boundary readings.

Any requests to reduce sound levels by City of Port Phillip officers or the nominated noise management consultant, will be considered an official warning, and is required to be actioned and remedied within 15 minutes.

**Failure to action will be considered a breach of the event permit conditions.**

Breaches will be dealt with in the following way:

1<sup>st</sup> breach will result in loss of 25% of the noise bond

2<sup>nd</sup> breach will result in loss of 50% of the noise bond

3<sup>rd</sup> breach will result in loss of 100% of the noise bond

- Bonds will not be returned until noise management reports have been received.
- Events deemed to be fully compliant will receive a full bond refund within 2 weeks

Forfeiting the bond will be at the discretion of Council and will be based on (but not exclusive to):

- Noise reduction measures not implemented as per approved plans
- Lack of appropriate monitoring
- Unresponsive to complaints or breaches
- Multiple, wilful, or significant breaches

## Council's role

Council officers will assess and approve event NMP before a permit is issued. Event providers may need to make changes or update initial information if it does not meet the required standard.

Permits issued will include a requirement to abide by the approved NMP and any additional noise management requirements, such as time or level restrictions.

Council event officers will be on site for all category 1-4 events to ensure the event is compliant with all permit requirements. Any concerns will be addressed immediately with the event provider.

Council officers will be notified directly of all phone complaints received through the Council after-hours hotline and will contact the event provider to discuss required actions. Any emailed complaints will be received on the following work day and will be followed up and added to the event debrief.

As Council event officers are not qualified acoustic consultants, they will not be undertaking official readings however they will work with event organisers to ensure requirements are met.

Council officers may ask event organisers at any time to review their noise management as long as the requests are in line with the permit.

Management of noise levels is the responsibility of the event provider at all times. If monitoring shows that the event is breaching the approved NMP, reasonable actions must be undertaken.

Approved Council officers have unrestricted access at events, including mixing booths and at all times CoPP staff must be able to contact and communicate with the onsite acoustic consultants.

## Annual review

Ongoing assessments of these guidelines will occur throughout the season and each event will be assessed individually against these guidelines.

The annual review will occur during winter with the following components considered:

- Compliance and breaches
- Review of complaints data
- Effectiveness of monitoring locations,
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures
- Investigation of new options
- Improvements of systems as required.

# Glossary

Noise management plan	A document that demonstrates how noise at your event will be managed.
Leq	The “equivalent noise level” is the summation of noise events and integrated over a selected period of time.
dB(A)	A-weighted decibels. Replicates the human response of the ear by using an electronic filter.
dB(C)	C-weighted decibels. Can be used to measure bass noise.
In-ear monitoring	In -ear devices used by musicians to listen to stage instrumentation.
Fold back speakers	A stage speaker system used to amplify the performers music.
Line array speakers	A series of loudspeakers that cover the same frequency range and are stacked above one another.
Cardiod sub-woofer speakers	Bass speakers that produce noise levels louder at the front of the speaker and lower behind it.
Noise contour maps	A graphic representation of sound level distribution and sound waves in a given area.
Noise limiter	A digital device to measure sound pressure levels and expressed in decibel levels. Decibel limits can be set so advanced warnings are given for level exceedences.
Audio compressor	A device that can lessen the range between the loudest and quietest parts of an audio signal.

# Appendices

## Simple Noise Report - Template

### 1/ Event Details

- Brief event description
- Hotline number and person who was responsible on event day
- Timings: Hours of rehearsals, sound checks and main event.
- Schedule of performers and type of music performed – genre (eg, hip-hop, folk etc) and instrumentation used (live drums, guitar, bass etc)
- Attendance numbers
- Event Weather Conditions: wind, any weather related factors observed.

### 2/ Summary of Report

- Was compliance with CoPP noise management guidelines achieved?

### 3/ Details of Noise Management Approach/Strategies:

- Mitigation/Abatement - Methods detailed
  - Purpose of plan
  - Site investigation

### 4/ Sound System and Monitoring Details

- Stage orientation and loudspeaker set ups (speaker heights, noise barriers etc)
- Description of measurement system
- Site plan and outside event measurement locations
- Times of monitoring

### 5/ Breaches and Complaints:

- Details of any deviations from planned performances timings – explain reasons.
- Sound Related Complaints Received (Hotline register):
  - how many,
  - from where,
  - actions taken or
  - evidence of why no action was taken.
- Compliance with noise level limits:
  - Breach summary and actions taken – provide details of the incidence and duration of any noise that exceeded guidelines.

### 6/ Monitoring Data Reports

- The location of each monitored area
- The times of monitoring
- Data collected on the day
  - Noise level data taken from outside residences
  - Noise level data taken from the mixing desk/source
  - See table below

