Noise Network Plus General Assembly

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Workshop write-up and recommendations

Noise Network+
Engineering a Quieter Future

1. Introduction

This note provides a record of the Noise Network Plus (NNP) General Assembly, held in Manchester on 31 March 2026. It is intended for network members and others with an interest in the programme's direction - including those who attended on the day and those who were unable to join.

The Assembly marked an important moment in the life of the network. After a successful year building relationships, establishing working groups, and running a highly competitive first funding call, the network zoomed out to ask what it would take to achieve its long-term ambition.

This write-up covers the preparatory materials shared in advance, the morning presentations, and - in most detail - the rich discussions that took place across two rounds of structured workshop exercises in the afternoon. It closes with some tentative recommendations for how the themes could be taken forward.

2. Context and purpose

The Noise Network Plus is a funded transdisciplinary research network focused on understanding and reducing the costs of noise pollution. In its first year, the network established seven working groups to undertake horizon scanning - mapping challenges, knowledge gaps, opportunities and solutions across a wide range of domains including transport, health, education, sustainability, policy and law, inclusive engineering, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital. The network ran a competitive first funding call, receiving twenty-six applications and funding six pilot projects. It also began the important work of building a diverse and dispersed research community.

The March 2026 Assembly was the first time the full network has come together to work directly on the question of ‘a mission to reduce the cost of noise’. The horizon scanning work had revealed a rich and complex landscape of problems.

Preparatory reading

In advance of the Assembly, participants were sent a primer document, Thinking in Missions, which provided an accessible introduction to the concept of mission-driven working.

The primer traced the intellectual history of missions from their origins in mid-twentieth century science and technology - the Manhattan Project, the Apollo programme, Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) - through to their application to ‘wicked’ societal challenges such as climate change, public health and inequality. It introduced Mariana Mazzucato's framework of five criteria for a good mission and explained the three-level architecture of grand challenge, mission, and portfolio of projects. It closed with themes that are important to mission-driven working, and that would run throughout the Assembly: collective ownership; the need for a shared theory of change; tolerance for experimentation; the need to calibrate the mission’s level of ambition; and the goal of achieving collaboration across disciplines and beyond academia.

The primer was designed to establish a shared vocabulary rather than to prescribe conclusions - to help the group engage with their work conceived as a mission.

3. Presentations and horizon scanning

In opening remarks at the Assembly, Professor Abigail Bristow set out three questions for participants to hold in mind throughout the day.

- How do we use our resources most effectively to deliver the mission? Is the pilot project model the right vehicle, or does mission work require something different?
- Is the current working group structure - which served the horizon scanning well - the right structure for mission development and delivery? Do the groups need to work together more?
- How do we expand our influence to ensure the mission can outlive the funded life of the programme?

The session then moved into brief presentations of work that will be supported by the network's first round of funding.[1]

Pilot projects: the first funded cohort

The presentations illustrated the breadth of the network in both topic and approach. This included:

- Steven Bell (University of Southampton) - investigating safe noise exposures for hearing aid users in workplace environments - an area with, surprisingly, almost no existing guidance.
- Roger Domingo-Roca (University of Strathclyde), who presented work on hydro-acoustic resonators for improved noise attenuation in compact systems, using metamaterials inspired by biological structures to address the persistent problem of low-frequency noise in constrained spaces.
- Hasina Rahman (University of Warwick), who is leading a project on acoustic waves in nanoporous materials, developing a diagnostic tool for characterising building insulation materials under real-world conditions, with a longer-term vision of a digital twin model.
- Andrew Reid (University of Strathclyde; Principal Investigator: Lara Díaz-García, absent) - a project using multimodal sensing to understand the combined impact of noise, vibration, and artificial light on insect populations - beginning with cricket communities in Scotland and raising important questions about how noise harms non-human life.
- Lin Wang, Queen Mary, University of London - a privacy-preserving urban noise monitoring system that can classify noise sources (e.g. traffic, construction, conversation) without retaining intelligible human speech, addressing privacy concerns

The presentations showed that the network's research portfolio spans disciplinary boundaries: acoustics, materials science, ecology, data privacy, hearing and occupational health, and digital infrastructure, among others. The challenge is how to situate this work within a shared mission architecture, and push beyond academia into broader networks of influence.

[1] Five of the six funded teams presented on the day.

Horizon scanning: challenges, blockers, and opportunities

Professor Charlotte Clark presented a synthesis of the horizon scanning work carried out by the network's working groups over the preceding year. The working groups had been asked to map challenges and solutions within their respective domains.

The insights clustered around five broad areas:

- Social equity and inclusion (unequal distribution of noise exposure; the question of whether noise reduction aims at the whole population, or emphasises subgroups who are most exposed or harmed);
- Transport and infrastructure (pervasive and persistent noise pollution, and also generating new and emerging sources as technology changes);
- Policy and knowledge gaps (slow regulation; a weak economic evidence base; WHO guidelines with limited effect);
- Digital and AI risks (sensor bias; privacy constraints; questions about how technology could accelerate, or stall, progress);
- Education and awareness (low public recognition of noise as a serious harm; gaps in professional training).

A question posed - and that resonated throughout the day - was whether the field's primary challenge is a lack of new solutions, or a lack of political will to implement the solutions that exist. This distinction matters for mission design: it determines whether the primary task is research, communication, or advocacy, and how these relate to each other.

A mission to reduce noise: The intellectual framework

James Plunkett (Kinship Works) introduced the theory and practice of mission-driven working, with a focus on implications for the academic research community.

Missions contrast with project-based working, which can be effective for organising deliverables to predefined time-scales, but can cause us to work within disciplines and departments; orient around deliverables rather than purpose; and lose sight of our long-term goal. Missions create a different architecture - a social and intellectual structure that encourages more ambitious, outward-looking, collaborative, and reflective working.

The talk traced the history of missions from their mid-twentieth century technological origins to their application to wicked societal challenges, dwelling on the Apollo programme as an illustration of what mission thinking enables: Kennedy's declaration in 1961 set a destination without prescribing a route, mobilised actors across aerospace, computing, medicine and textiles, and so on. The insight is to start with the change you want to bring about, and work backwards.

Mariana Mazzucato's five criteria

A mission must be:

- Bold and inspirational;
- Clear, measurable, and time-bound;
- Ambitious but realistic;
- Cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, and cross-actor; and
- Generative of multiple, bottom-up solutions.

These criteria distinguish a genuine mission from an ambitious project in disguise.

When it comes to the mission architecture, we can distinguish between:

- A grand challenge (a broad, persistent problem with no target and no timeline),
- A mission (a specific, time-bound, measurable goal derived from the challenge),

- A portfolio of projects (diverse work advancing the mission, assessed not just on scientific merit but on contribution to the mission outcome). No single project achieves the mission; the portfolio succeeds or fails together.

For missions to succeed, a number of conditions are needed, especially:

- Collective ownership and orchestration (a mission cannot be owned by one organisation; to gain traction, the mission must galvanise actor beyond the mission lead's direct control);
- An explicit, and ideally open and shared, theory of change (ToC; not a fixed plan but a working hypothesis about what it will take for the mission to succeed, made explicit so the ToC can be tested and updated);
- Tolerance for experimentation (missions are catalytic - you find leverage points and seed chain reactions, rather than brute-forcing your way to the outcome, or pursuing the outcome in a linear way).

These ways of working raise tensions - career progression in academia, for example, is tied to outputs like publications, citations, and grant income; this can make collaboration difficult. Siloed funding and accountability structures likewise devalue collaborative, cross-cutting work. Short-term deadlines pull against long-term orientation. And like many sectors, academia is not a culture that rewards failure, making experimentation difficult.

It is important to approach mission working with our eyes open to these challenges.

4. Mission development workshops

The afternoon included two structured workshop exercises, in which participants dug deeper into the network's mission.

Round 1: Mission framing and success criteria

In Round 1, participants worked through four questions:

- What improvements or changes would they make to the mission as currently framed (and are there 'sub-missions' that could be valuably added)?
- What would need to be true for the mission to succeed?
- Who are the most critical actors?
- What are the critical unknowns?

The analysis below synthesises feedback captured on Miro boards and shared by chairs following the discussions.

Question 1: Feedback on the mission statement

The original mission - to halve the costs of ~~transport~~ noise by 2040 - was broadly supported but participants raised several main points of feedback:[2]

[2] It was proposed at the opening to the session that the scope be broadened beyond transport to reflect the breadth of work of the network.

A tighter definition

Participants agreed on the need for a tighter definition, for example:

- What does 'halving' mean? Do we seek to halve noise everywhere? On average?
- What is the baseline from which we are measuring?
- What exactly counts as 'cost' (financial cost, health burden, lost productivity, environmental impact, or all of these?)
- Are we dealing only with airborne noise, or does the mission extend to underwater noise, infrasound, or ultrasound?

Timeline and targets

The 2040 target attracted scepticism, although from multiple directions. Some felt the date was too close to be realistic; others felt it was too far away to feel urgent. The tension between needing a concrete and inspiring goal and needing a goal that is well-founded was not resolved. It was acknowledged that the timeline and ‘halving’ target did at least meet the needs of mission-working - clear, bold, memorable, and potentially inspiring.

The case for a more positive framing

Many participants felt the mission was framed too negatively. The language of 'cost' and 'harm' does not capture the positive value of quieter, better-designed acoustic environments. Several participants called for reframing in terms of what is to be gained - quality of life, wellbeing, biodiversity, economic productivity. The concept of ‘soundscapes’ was offered as a possible framing, though others noted that this term remains ambiguous and under-defined.

One table proposed a specific sub-mission to identify how sound can contribute to improvements in health and wellbeing, arguing that the current framing omits the opportunity side of the equation. One table raised a more fundamental concern: the word 'noise' may itself be a barrier, associated in the public mind with mere nuisance rather than with the serious health and environmental harm the network is addressing.

Equity is underserved

Multiple tables raised the concern that the mission, as currently framed, risks producing inequitable outcomes. The burdens of noise are not equally distributed: people who are most exposed tend to be the least resourced and the least able to act. A simple aggregate target risks being achieved with easy wins and cherry-picking - reducing noise in places where it is most amenable to reduction, rather than where it causes the most harm. A number of tables raised neurodivergent people and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) students as groups whose experience is inadequately represented in current framing.

The consensus was that equity needs to be embedded in the mission's design from the outset, not added as a qualification afterwards. This could be done by amending the headline mission, adding a ‘caveat clause’, or, as one table suggested, adding a dedicated sub-mission to 'halve the inequitable impact of noise'.

Extending beyond humans

Several tables noted that the mission gravitates towards transportation noise and human impacts, leaving out areas including: wildlife and non-ecological systems, and underwater noise. Some tables suggested adding two or three narrower, domain-specific sub-missions - each with its own noise cost definition, timeline, and map of key actors.

Question 2: What would need to be true for the mission to succeed?

Measurement and baselines

This was an area of significant consensus: the mission cannot succeed without establishing the current cost of noise, a baseline to measure against, and socialising agreement over metrics. Tools to measure costs - economic, societal, environmental - are especially important. A nationwide noise survey, an annual report on noise status, and 'cost-per-unit' framework were among the mechanisms proposed.

Political commitment and public engagement

For the mission to succeed, concern needs to extend to more people outside the noise research community. On the political side, participants noted that government is not taking ownership of the problem: health costs from noise are diffused across multiple departments. The All-Party Parliamentary Group model was raised as one lever; a parliamentary hearing on noise another. On the public side, participants pointed to the challenge of making noise an issue of concern - perhaps by finding a compelling 'villain' (as with tobacco, carbon). Finding the right language - cost-benefit for the Treasury, health outcomes for the NHS - would be important.

The evidence base on costs

Several tables argued that we need more focus on impacts, not just sound levels. School achievement, premature deaths, lost working days, biodiversity loss, economic productivity, quality of life - this is how we will make the case. One table raised the importance of mapping downstream consequences of noise-induced hearing loss - hearing rehabilitation, hearing aids, tinnitus support, employment effects. Another raised the need to move beyond epidemiology towards physiological measures of harm: skin conductance, heart rate, stress hormones. This represents a significant research agenda in its own right.

Governance and legacy

Several tables raised the question of who keeps the mission alive beyond the current programme. This points to the need for intermediate targets, a named champion, a mechanism for tracking progress, and a legacy institution. Professional bodies were identified as particularly important, sitting at the interface of science, standards, policy, skills, and practice.

Question 3: Critical actors

Government at all levels

Politicians and policymakers were named at every table as critical actors, but there was scepticism about current levels of engagement. The costs of noise are distributed across departments - health, transport, housing, environment - with no single owner. Consistent cross-departmental messaging, a parliamentary champion, and engagement with Select Committees were proposed as solutions. Again, there was a challenge of speaking to politicians in their language - electoral incentives, economic growth.

Industry: incentives and regulation

Manufacturers (e.g. of vehicles, aircraft, construction materials) were identified as critical actors. There was a view that industry will not change without regulation, but participants also noted that the right schemes and arguments can engage industry when regulation is slow. Quiet Mark was cited as one model; Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) style noise ratings are another. The construction and housing development sector was felt to be particularly important.

Beyond the research community

The mission cannot be delivered by the acoustics community speaking to itself. Economists, psychologists, ecologists, urban planners, architects, media professionals, and civil society actors are all needed - and most are not currently in the room. This speaks to the need for ambassadors and allies from beyond the acoustics discipline. One table proposed a 'Bob Geldof for noise' as a provocative illustration of the kind of coalition-building that was needed. Another called for the equivalent of a David Attenborough figure to bring the issue into popular consciousness.

The public and civil society

Citizens and consumers were named as critical actors, with uncertainty about the most effective mechanisms for engagement. Community-level action, consumer behaviour, and the role of the media and popular culture were all raised. One recurring thought was the power of property values and the relationship to excess noise as a lever for gaining public support. Several tables also made the point that public engagement is not just a tactic, it is also necessary for legitimacy - there is a need to co-develop solutions.

Question 4: Critical unknowns

How should we define and measure cost?

The main unknown raised across all tables was: how to define and measure the cost of noise in a way that is robust, meaningful, and actionable. Social cost valuations are not always reliable; indirect harms (cognitive load, safety risks, behavioural effects) are hard to quantify. The economic value of noise reduction varies significantly by location, existing exposure level, and deprivation. Separating the effects of noise from co-occurring stressors is difficult. It was clear that there is a need for substantive further work on these questions.

Where are we headed, with and without action?

The noise environment of 2040 will look significantly different from today's. New sources - drones, electric vehicles, new forms of aviation, further urbanisation - could change the extent of noise, and related harms, for better or worse. Electric vehicles, for example, are quieter in some ways, but also heavier, and therefore generate different tyre and road noise. It was felt it would be valuable, at minimum, to explore future scenarios as part of the network's future agenda.

How do people experience noise, and how does this vary?

An important cluster of unknowns relates to how people experience and respond to noise, in ways that go beyond standard acoustic measurements. The role of non-acoustic factors - expectations, context, perceived control, cultural background, neurodivergence - was raised. Who is most sensitive, and why? What is socially and culturally acceptable? These questions bear directly on the interventions to prioritise, and the populations of concern.

What are the impacts of noise on biodiversity and non-human species?

The impacts of noise on wildlife, plants, and ecological systems are all poorly understood. The most widely-used measurement frameworks are calibrated for human hearing and may not capture harms to other species. Although there are some warning signs of these costs - e.g. seal migration near wind farms - there is much we do not know. Expanding the noise harms framework to encompass other species was proposed as a research priority.

Round 2: What is the work to be done?

The second round of workshop discussions asked participants to think in three time horizons: what needs to happen in the short term, the medium term, and the long term?

The exercise moved the conversation from big picture context and diagnosis to explore the work to be done, and the question of priorities and sequencing.

Short term: Laying the foundations

Establishing the baseline

Many participants agreed that establishing a baseline is the most urgent priority. This includes: defining how to calculate the societal and environmental cost of noise; quantifying current costs across domains; standardising definitions; identifying who is most affected and where. Across six of the nine tables, this was named as the essential first step. There was also a proposal for more frequent noise surveys, improving on the current ten-year cycle.

Building the coalition

There was broad agreement to begin work now broadening the coalition - reaching into other academic disciplines (economists, sociologists) and into policymakers; industry; and wider institutional partners (professional bodies, influential charities and interest groups who are sympathetic to the network's goals). One table proposed offering free consultancy to industries as a way to build relationships; another called for co-design sessions with citizens; a third suggested using Noise Action Week as a communication platform.

Tactics: Quick wins and reframing

Several tables suggested aiming for some salient early wins - showing the value of the mission and shifting the public and political narrative. e.g. rolling out acoustic measurement for excessively loud vehicles, and rapid evidence reviews of severely underreported impacts. The goal was visible and readily communicable progress and insight to shift perception - moving noise from a 'nuisance and compliance' issue to a combination of 'health and economic risks', as well as a positive framing about the benefits of tranquillity.

Securing the Network's setup and future

A cluster of short-term priorities related to the management of NNP itself: planning now for follow-on funding, ensuring the next round of funded projects is genuinely mission-aligned, identifying an institution to carry the torch beyond the current programme, restructuring working groups to better align to priority work. Multiple participants suggested revisiting the working group structure to align with the goals of mission delivery.

Medium term: Broadening the coalition and deepening understanding

Longitudinal research and interdisciplinary evidence

A focus in the medium-term was more foundational work on measurement. This could include longitudinal studies on noise exposure and health outcomes, evaluation of early interventions; better data and models to inform policy; and evidence on dose-response relationships and behavioural drivers. Several tables emphasised the importance of going beyond acoustics: integrating medics, psychologists, ecologists, planners, and economists around outcome-focused research agendas. One table called for artistic approaches and acoustic ecology projects as part of a broader evidence and engagement strategy.

Standards and regulatory mechanisms

Over the medium term, the regulatory landscape can begin to shift. The main model cited was an EPC-style rating for noise: a simple, plain language standard that drives behaviour change in housing, products, and buildings without asking too much from individual consumers. Proposals included noise ratings for new-build houses, schools, and hospitals; incentives for quieter products analogous to CO_2 ratings for vehicles; and the further development of the Quiet Mark as a manufacturer-facing standard.

Integration with adjacent agendas

Finally, over the medium term the Network can embed its mission into other agendas that have momentum: e.g. net zero and the energy transition, public health (dementia, hearing loss, mental health, neurodivergence), urban planning (healthy homes, the night-time economy), and economics (worklessness). Several tables pushed for cross-sectoral engagement, new partnerships, and media engagement as medium-term priorities.

Long term: Cultural and systems transformation

Treating noise like other recognised harms

The most consistent theme in the long-term was the need for a shift in how noise is understood and treated in society. The main analogy given was passive smoking: a harm that was once tolerated as normal, then revealed as serious, then regulated, eventually achieving a shift in culture. Other analogies were seat belts, the links between alcohol and pregnancy health, and the regulation of carbon emissions. The goal was for noise to be regulated like these other harms - embedded in planning, product design, procurement, and public consciousness - rather than treated as a niche technical concern.

Technology at scale

Over a long-term horizon, technologies to reduce noise - quieter vehicles, better insulation materials, low-noise road surfaces, noise-mapping sensor networks - should be in widespread deployment. Participants noted the need to understand trade-offs: quieter road surfaces have shorter lifecycles and higher carbon costs; the transition to electric vehicles does not straightforwardly resolve the noise problem. These issues require sustained research and investment.

Embedded and enforcing policy

There is a long-term need for regulation - for noise not to be subject to political goodwill, and reliant on voluntary compliance, but embedded in law, planning frameworks, building standards, and product regulation. This requires specialist capacity in government, for example in the planning system, and skills to develop a coherent financial incentive structure, and a shift in the professions including engineering, architecture, urban planning, and public health.

The economic case made - and monetised

The link between noise, health, and economic productivity needs to be established, quantified, and widely understood. The health links should be undeniable and monetised - i.e. we should understand the costs paid by systems like the NHS and the labour market. Quiet should be valued highly as an attribute in housing stock. EPC-style noise ratings should be in place. The costs of noise should be part of standard economic accounting. Several tables also pointed to ecosystem benefits: less noise means healthier insect populations, better pollination, and more productive agriculture - and accompanying support from major environmental groups.

Eliminating noise poverty

Over the long-term, there is a chance for ambitious improvements in the equity impacts of noise - could there be a goal to halve or eliminate ‘noise poverty’, defined as being in harm's way as a result of long-term noise exposure. Could this be a concept that the network could formally define and own? The aspiration was for environments in which noise is no longer a barrier to health, wellbeing, sleep, or opportunity.

Mission governance beyond NNP

A final concern was a long-term institutional home for the mission. The answer proposed across several tables was that the mission be embedded in institutions - government strategies, funding bodies, professional standards organisations, that will outlast the current network. The aspiration, as one table put it, is for the mission to be 'embedded, not experimental'.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The General Assembly discussion confirmed that the Network has built a community of real value, surfacing rich and ambitious insights for what it would take to achieve a mission of noise reduction. The following recommendations are distilled from the day’s discussion, with a focus on the afternoon sessions. They are shared in a spirit of provoking further dialogue about next steps.

1. Refine the mission

a. **Undertake a structured process to sharpen the mission statement.** Consider work to define: what counts as 'cost', the scope of 'noise', what 'halving' means in practice, and from what baseline. Perhaps a small working group, drawing on expertise in economics, acoustics, and policy-making; the product could be a mission statement with a brief technical note on definitions and measurement.
b. **Develop a positive vision alongside the harm-reduction framing.** A quieter society is not just less harmful - it promises improved sleep, cognitive performance, mental health, and wellbeing; richer natural soundscapes and healthier ecosystems; more productive workplaces and schools; and economic value from quieter homes, neighbourhoods, and products. The network should invest in articulating this positive vision as a complement to the cost-reduction framing.
c. **Embed equity in the mission's design.** There is a risk that an aggregate target is achieved through easy wins. The network could explore amending the headline mission to address distributional impacts or, perhaps better, add a companion caveat or sub-mission on noise poverty. The concept of 'noise poverty' - being in harm's way as a result of long-term noise exposure - could be a powerful idea to develop.

2. Prioritise mission-critical research

a. **Establish the baseline.** Establish dedicated work to develop agreed measurement methods and establish a baseline, drawing on existing frameworks, and developing new approaches where these fall short. Ensure adequate focus on quantifying costs across health, economic, environmental, and social domains.
b. **Make the economic case.** The language of acoustics is insufficient to engage politicians, Treasury, industry, and the public. The Network could usefully establish work on the downstream economic costs of noise - hearing loss, lost productivity, premature mortality, educational attainment, mental health - quantified in terms that resonate with these audiences. This could be prioritised in the next funding round, or pursued through a dedicated partnership with an economics research institution.

c. **Use future funding rounds to reward interdisciplinary work and target key gaps.** Future funding can now be aligned to the Network's view of key gaps and can put more emphasis on valuable cross-disciplinary collaborations. The network could develop mission-aligned criteria for the next funding call - e.g. articulating a plausible pathway to mission impact. Some key themes emerged as potential priorities:
    i. **Baseline measurement and cost methodology.** Developing agreed methods for quantifying the societal, economic, and environmental cost of noise - including adapting existing frameworks.
    ii. **Health economics and the downstream cost of noise.** Building the full economic case - quantifying the downstream consequences of noise-induced hearing loss (hearing rehabilitation, productivity, employment), premature mortality, impacts on educational attainment, and mental health costs - in terms that speak to Treasury, the NHS, insurers, and employers.
    iii. **Equity and noise poverty.** Research into the distributional dimensions of noise harm: who bears the greatest costs; how exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity vary across communities; and what intervention designs would benefit the most affected groups, including neurodivergent people, children in poor acoustic school environments, those in high-density housing.
    iv. **Beyond-human impacts.** The impact of noise on wildlife, biodiversity and ecological systems is poorly understood and almost largely absent from policy frameworks. Research to develop measurement approaches and quantify harms - from pollinator disruption to marine mammal behaviour - would fill a knowledge gap and broaden the coalition.
    v. **Human perception, behaviour, and non-acoustic factors.** How people experience and respond to noise varies considerably - shaped by expectations, neurodivergence, cultural context, perceived control, and other factors. Better understanding of these factors would help to design effective interventions, and would guide which populations to prioritise.
    vi. **Emerging and future noise sources.** The noise landscape of 2040 will look different from today's. Research into emerging sources - drone proliferation, heat pumps, electric vehicle tyre and road noise, new aviation technologies, urban densification - would help the network anticipate and shape the future, and could also draw attention to the work.
    vii. **Standards, ratings, and regulatory mechanisms.** Developing the evidence base for an EPC-style noise rating for new-build homes, schools, hospitals, and products - including proposals on the measurement approach, the regulatory pathway, and the economic case for adoption.
    viii. **Privacy-preserving monitoring and digital infrastructure.** Scalable, real-time noise monitoring is constrained by legitimate privacy concerns. Research that advances privacy-preserving approaches - building on work already funded - would support urban noise management and policy.

3. Build the coalition

a. There is a need to **actively recruit beyond the acoustics community, in a targeted way.** Guided by the workshop, the network could develop plans to engage:

    i. **Health and disability charities.** Organisations focused on the communities most harmed by noise - e.g. Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID; hearing loss and tinnitus), the National Autistic Society and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD UK (neurodivergence and sensory sensitivity), the Alzheimer's Society (given the emerging evidence on noise and dementia risk), and mental health charities (as a source of lived-experience and

credible political voices). Partnerships with these organisations would strengthen both the evidence base and the case for action.

ii. **The housing and property sector.** Property values are believed to be affected by noise exposure, and this creates actors with a direct economic interest in noise reduction. Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), major housing associations, housebuilders, and mortgage lenders all have stakes in noise standards and ratings. Consumer organisations such as Which? could help translate the issue for homebuyers. Match-funded research partnerships with this sector - for example, developing a noise rating standard for new homes - would bring in resources as well as influence.

iii. **Industry associations with regulatory exposure.** Manufacturers and operators who face or anticipate regulation - automotive, construction, aviation - have an interest in shaping standards rather than having them imposed. Early engagement could build relationships while also advancing the evidence agenda.

iv. **Planning and built environment professions.** Architects, urban designers, and planners make decisions that determine acoustic environments for decades. There are a number of potential partners in these sectors who could help to embed noise reduction into professional standards and training curricula.

v. **Environmental and nature organisations.** The Wildlife Trusts, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), and marine conservation organisations are influential advocates with large public followings and established political relationships. Given the growing evidence on noise impacts on biodiversity, they represent a natural coalition partner, one that would substantially widen the network's public reach and legitimacy.

vi. **Economics and public health research institutions.** Outreach to health economics units, the Nuffield Trust, the Health Foundation, and academic public health departments could help build the economic case and embed noise within the public health mainstream. These institutions also have direct routes to government and to NHS decision-makers.

b. **Explore a political engagement strategy.** No one in government currently owns noise as a problem; the costs are distributed across departments with no single champion. The network could develop a more deliberate political engagement strategy, e.g. establishing an All-Party Parliamentary Group on noise; identifying key civil servants as internal advocates; and building relationships with devolved administrations, where different policy levers are available.

c. **Consider engaging the construction and housing sector early.** The EPC model - cited repeatedly as the best available regulatory analogy - originated in the building sector. The network could explore whether a comparable noise standard for new-build homes, schools, and hospitals is achievable, and identify a small number of industry partners willing to co-develop this proposal. Free consultancy or match-funded research could be a low-cost entry point to a sector that controls decisions shaping acoustic environments for generations.

4. Refine NNP's organisational approach

a. **Adapt the working group structure to fit the work to be done.** The current working group structure was designed with more focus on horizon scanning, and served that purpose well. But several participants questioned whether it is the right architecture for mission development and delivery. Domain-specific groups risk reinforcing silos at the moment the network needs to work across siloes. The network could reconstitute

groups around the key challenges the mission now faces. As examples, this could include:

i. **Mission definition and measurement** - taking forward the foundational work of sharpening the mission statement, agreeing definitions, developing metrics, and establishing a baseline.
ii. **Cost quantification and the economic case** - developing the health economics, productivity, and environmental cost arguments; creating frameworks that translate noise harm into the language of Treasury, the NHS, and industry.
iii. **Equity and noise poverty** - ensuring the mission is designed from the outset to reach the most affected communities; developing the concept of noise poverty; mapping the distributional landscape.
iv. **Beyond-human impacts** — developing measurement approaches and evidence for ecological and biodiversity harms; engaging environmental science and conservation communities.
v. **Policy, standards, and regulation** - mapping the regulatory landscape; developing the case for an EPC-style noise rating; tracking legislative opportunities; maintaining relationships with government and professional bodies.
vi. **Coalition and public engagement** - coordinating the network's outreach beyond acoustics; managing relationships with health charities, industry, the property sector, and media; developing a public communication strategy.

These are offered as options. The network's leadership may prefer a smaller number of groups with broader mandates, or may wish to retain some domain-specific groups while adding cross-cutting ones.

b. **Start planning for legacy now.** The question of who carries the mission forward, after the Network's current funding life, could be usefully worked on now. The network could identify institutions as credible long-term homes for key elements of the mission, and begin building the relevant relationships and making the case. The ambition expressed by participants - that the mission should be 'embedded, not experimental' - speaks to the need for deliberate succession planning.

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