

ROCP 50, IEDE Acoustics Group at University College London (UCL)

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Adolygiad o flaenoriaethau'r Pwyllgor ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd | Review of the Committee's priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Ymateb gan Grŵp Acwsteg, Sefydliad Dylunio a Pheirianeg Amgylcheddol UCL (IEDE) | Evidence from IEDE Acoustics Group at University College London (UCL)

Your views

1. What are your views on the Committee's three strategic priorities: Climate Change; Sustainable Communities; and Protecting and enhancing the natural environment?

In the report, support has been provided for adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing these critical issues by prioritizing climate change, sustainable communities, and environmental protection topics. Prioritizing climate change and environmental protection issues, which are among the most pressing challenges of our time, is an expression of awareness of urgent needs. Emphasizing sustainable communities is a forward-looking approach that recognizes the importance of creating livable, vibrant, and inclusive urban environments. Assessments related to sustainable communities, environmental protection, and climate change, as mentioned in the report, have various aspects, and these aspects are influenced in different ways. Providing a broad perspective on these effects and evaluating them together will strengthen the committee's assessments. Therefore, it is recommended to also evaluate the effects of noise and soundscapes, which are important in terms of sustainable communities and environmental protection. This approach also supports the aim of aligning and advancing the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill ('the Bill') by the Welsh Parliament, which seeks to evaluate the Bill in a broader context and create new opportunities in the field of noise and soundscapes.

- Noise is a critical aspect of the urban environment and affects the livability of communities. Often, certain types of pollution, such as noise, are overlooked in environmental protection efforts. Increased urbanization and the effects of climate change will continue to worsen soundscapes and introduce new
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challenges related to noise pollution. These challenges will require new approaches that go beyond traditional noise reduction methods. It is important to consider how sustainable urban planning can mitigate noise pollution and enhance the quality of life for residents within the scope of this report. A high-quality acoustic environment has a positive impact on quality of life, well-being, and environmental health. Therefore, it is appropriate to assess it alongside the priorities identified in the report. These assessments can be conducted in conjunction with decisions regarding carbon emissions and environmental effects, as evaluated in transportation or settlement planning decisions, by taking into account the environmental impact of noise and soundscapes. The use of noise mapping can be beneficial in these assessments. Additionally, in studies related to transportation solutions mentioned as priorities for sustainable communities (such as the environmental impact of transportation systems and choices) and user adaptation, the effects of noise and soundscapes should also be considered.

- Soundscape considers sound as a resource that regards noise not just as waste but as a fundamental component of healthy environments. Implementing this approach requires bringing together sound as a resource that supports the quality of life in communities and enhances the efficiency and sustainability of cities and natural environments. Sound landscape recommendations can play a critical role in enhancing the well-being and quality of life for citizens. A thoughtfully designed urban soundscape can contribute to a more enjoyable, healthy, and vibrant living environment. Well-managed urban soundscapes are important for the physical and mental health of urban residents. By prioritizing soundscapes in urban planning, cities can create environments that are not only visually appealing but also harmonious and conducive to well-being.

2. To what extent are the Committee's three strategic priorities still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?

No response.

3. What are your view on the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work for Years 3 to 5 of the Sixth Senedd (set out in its report, [Priorities for the Sixth Senedd?](#))

No response.

4. To what extent are the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?

No response.

5. Are there any other matters related to the Committee's priorities/work programme/ways of working that you would like to comment on?

We can clearly see that there is a relationship between the priorities identified in "Priorities for the Sixth Senedd" and the soundscape and noise.

- Climate Change: Noise pollution can be a by-product of various activities that contribute to carbon emissions, such as transportation or industrial processes. Similarly, since noise can affect the resilience and well-being of communities, it can impact climate adaptation.
- Sustainable Communities: Noise and the soundscape are significant components of the urban environment and can affect the livability of communities. It is important to consider how sustainable urban planning can reduce noise pollution and enhance the quality of life for residents.
- Protecting and enhancing the Natural Environment: Noise pollution can disrupt natural habitats and ecosystems. It is crucial to explore how minimizing noise interventions align with biodiversity conservation and the protection of natural environments.

In addition to a detailed assessment of factors related to sustainable communities, climate, and the natural environment, it is also important to consider their impact on each other. For example, in the face of rising temperatures, the use of mechanical systems increases energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, while also leading to the emergence of new noise sources both inside and outside buildings. Or, in order to reduce energy demand and create comfortable environments with natural ventilation (windows), suitable acoustic conditions in outdoor spaces will be expected. For these reasons, it may be possible to develop a holistic approach by taking into account noise pollution and sound environment issues in decisions related to topics such as energy consumption, thermal comfort, and urban planning.

6. Other information

No response.
