

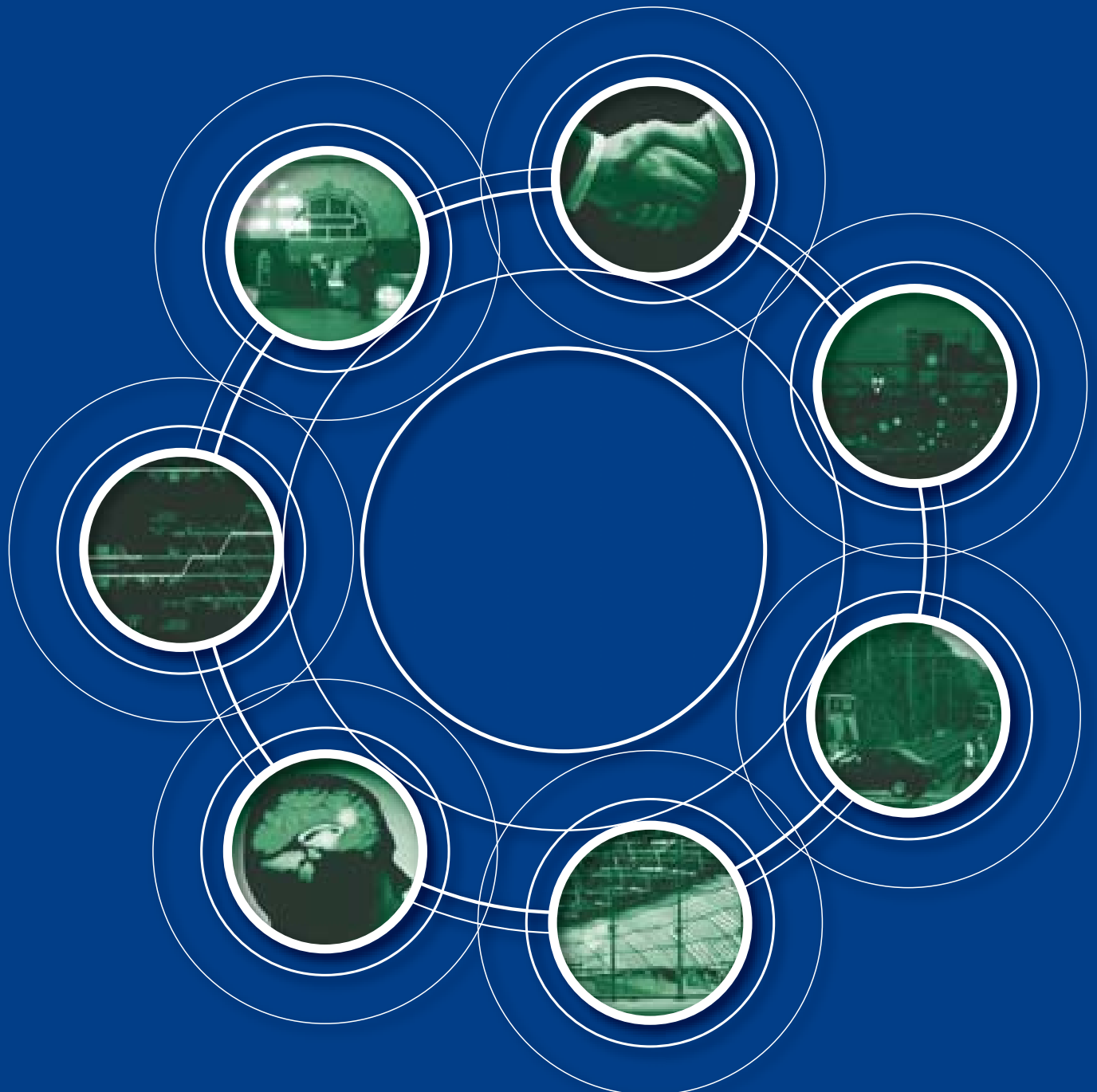


Rail Safety & Standards Board

Research Programme

# Operations

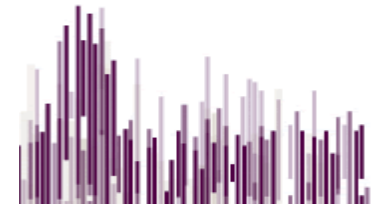
T681 Understanding the problems that train horn noise causes to neighbours - Horsham survey



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Faulkland Associates  
Management Consultants

# R04

C2054 R04-4

## Impact of Train Horn Noise – Results from Horsham Survey

A Project for the Rail Safety & Standards Board

## QA information

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V3 Oct 2006 Updated data set  
V4 Nov 2006 Formatting Changes

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# 1. Introduction

## Background

This report summarises the results of a survey into the impact of train horn noise at Horsham.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) together with its colleagues in the railway industry are aware that the noise made by train horns, which are an essential safety device, can cause a nuisance. They regret this impact on their neighbours and are working together to try and find a better balance between the safety benefit and the noise nuisance in order to give some relief to their neighbours.

New trains introduced onto the mainline railway network in the last three or four years have horns that comply with the industry standard (Railway Group Standard). However, they are louder than the horns on the old trains and their use has led to a significant number of complaints from residents living in the vicinity of crossings with 'whistle boards', where horns have to be sounded at all times for safety reasons. Over the same period the number of whistle boards has increased. Although steps were taken two years ago to reduce the level of noise and the number of locations at which horns are sounded, there are many locations at which significant numbers of complaints are made, and the problem has clearly not been resolved.

As part of the cross industry work to address these problems, RSSB is undertaking a study to assess the impact of train horn noise on a sample of trackside residents in three different locations: Lingfield, Horsham and Canterbury. These three locations were chosen as examples where there is evidence of significant impact on neighbours.

The results of this work, when combined with the research into the safety impact of train horns at footpath crossings, will enable the consideration and justification of proposed changes to the current arrangements for the sounding of train horns. Options that are being considered include:

- Reducing the level of noise to that which was made by the old trains;
- Introduction of broadband horn technology, which is more directional;
- A ban on using horns at night;
- A reduction in the number of whistle boards;
- The case for alternative controls at particular footpath crossings.

The aim of the work within local communities is to understand the impact on neighbours that are affected by train horns. Combining this information with noise mapping data will inform RSSB's estimate of the undesired impact caused to residents by train horns. It will also help determine which changes to train horn characteristics and usage would create the greatest improvements for residents.

RSSB commissioned Faulkland Associates to carry out the public opinion survey work, which was carried out between July and September 2006. The RSSB's website address is <http://www.rssb.co.uk>. The overall RSSB Project Director is Anson Jack, Director of Standards, who can be contacted at [anson.jack@rssb.co.uk](mailto:anson.jack@rssb.co.uk). More information is available on Faulkland Associates at [www.faulkland-associates.co.uk](http://www.faulkland-associates.co.uk). Faulkland Associates project manager is David Collier who can be contacted at [david.collier@faulkland-associates.co.uk](mailto:david.collier@faulkland-associates.co.uk).

## Research Programme Overview

A preliminary study of 8 interviews was carried out at Bentley in Hampshire but, as noted above, the main purpose of the research was to assess the impact of train horn noise on a sample of trackside residents in three different locations: Lingfield, Horsham and Canterbury. Separate reports summarise the results of the research in each these locations. This one covers Horsham, Surrey.

The main research programme comprised a combination of face-to-face interviews and hand delivered questionnaires with free-post return envelopes in the three survey locations. The focus was on those postcodes judged most likely to be seriously affected and surrounding streets. The results show this to have been a reasonable assumption. Taken together, the interviews and questionnaires were intended to give at least 50% of households in these postcodes the chance to participate.

The impact of train horn noise will not of course be limited to those areas included in the study. Horns will be audible at greater distances from the whistle boards and may have an adverse impact. In particular, local conditions may result in 'hot spots'. However, the main aim is to improve understanding of the nature of the impact rather than to try and differentiate between those who were affected and those that were not, though the results do give a general indication of the worst affected areas. In each survey area, the researchers:

- Interviewed as many of the people as practicable who had written complaining about the impact of train horn noise (Contact Interviews). Those complainants who could not be interviewed were sent a questionnaire (Contact Questionnaires).
- Interviewed, to the extent practicable, a comparable or greater number of people in the same postcodes who had not complained (Door-to-door Interviews).
- Hand-delivered questionnaires to a cross-section of households in the postcodes likely to be most affected. To reach the 50% target mentioned above required at least 450 questionnaires. Additionally, hand-delivered additional questionnaires to households up to 1km distant in one direction from a whistle board, ideally along a road running at right angles to the railway. (Door-to-door Questionnaires)

One of the main pressure groups campaigning on train horn noise issues, along with the Noise Abatement Society, is Residents Against Train Horns (RATH). RATH assisted with distribution in Canterbury and other areas in Kent but not at Horsham.

Although some inferences can be drawn, the aim of this work was to gain insight into the nature of the impacts rather than to gather rigorous statistical data. The sample and survey design was determined accordingly. Although a good spread of participants was achieved, the results have not been normalised or corrected for demographic factors, leisure/work pattern, or in any other way.

## 2. Horsham Survey

### Survey Area

Depending on local conditions, 'whistle boards' are generally positioned 300 yards either side of un-gated foot crossings. Drivers sound their horns as they pass the whistle boards to warn people who may be using the crossings of the train's approach.

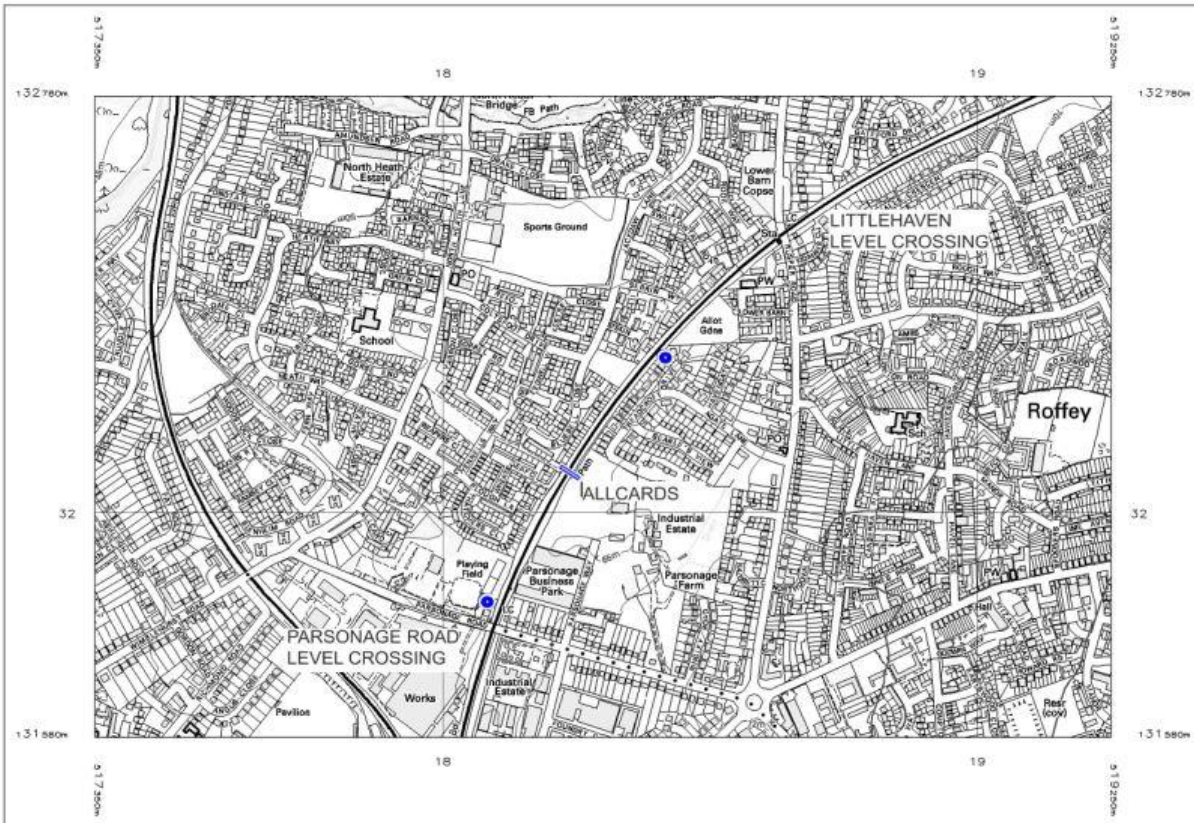
This area of study in north Horsham has one foot crossing (Allcards) with a level crossing to the north (Littlehaven) and a level crossing to the south (Parsonage Road). These are marked on the overview map below.

Questionnaires were distributed by hand to households situated close to whistle boards. Questionnaires were also distributed to households situated up to 1km away from the railway in order to ascertain how the impact of train horn noise alters with distance. Faulkland Associates did not attempt to contact every house in the postcode areas.

We have not included a description of Horsham in this report but readers may find it helpful to note that:

- The area to the west of the railway line is primarily residential and the area to the east of the railway line is a mixture of industrial estate and residential.
- The streets/closes/drives close to the railway line are mostly quiet cul-de-sacs with no through traffic.
- Relatively busy roads run north-south to the west and east of the railway (North Heath Lane and Rusper Road). The survey zone extends as far as, and slightly beyond, these roads.

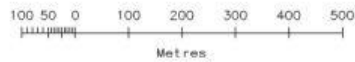
## Horsham Overview



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KEY:  
● Whistle board  
— Foot crossing



## Results Presentation

The results from interviews and questionnaires appear comparable, so they have generally been amalgamated for the purposes of this report. The results are presented by 'Zone'.

Average results for the sample as a whole are not meaningful for many of the questions because, for instance, they do not fairly represent the impact on those most affected. For key questions, we have therefore grouped postcodes into the four zones on the map below.

The main aim of this work is to understand the nature of the impact of train horn noise. We therefore constructed the zones depending on the percentage of respondents that said they found train horn noise very annoying or annoying in their homes in answer to question 2.6 (see Appendix A).

**Noise "annoying or very annoying"**

<b>Zone 1</b>	80-100%
<b>Zone 2</b>	60-79%
<b>Zone 3</b>	40-59%
<b>Zone 4</b>	0-39% (or no returns received in survey area)

The specific post codes targeted are shown on the maps below. As many respondents replied anonymously (i.e. without house number), it is not possible to present data on a resolution below postcode level. Where house numbers were included, to maintain confidentiality they have been deleted from any data passed to RSSB. Responses to all questions were checked and anonymised as necessary.

Postcode areas are irregularly sized and shaped and therefore the impact of train horn noise can only be mapped approximately. Where the postcode area forms a long-thin shape at right-angles to the railway, the impact on residents at one end may be diluted by the impact on residents at the further end. This effect may also apply to postcodes that form a long thin shape parallel to the railway - eg, Treadcroft Drive - that may be differentially affected by whistle boards at points along the railway.

When plotted on a map, zones give an indication of where the most affected houses are. Impact does not simply correlate with distance from the whistle board, even when horn directionality is taken into account, although it is obviously a major factor. The response of residents even within a small area varies hugely. Personal circumstances and sensitivity to noise pollution play a part, but local acoustic effects, building type, and local internal and external noise levels mean that the impact on any specific household cannot simply be inferred from a location on the map or zone allocation.

## Survey Details

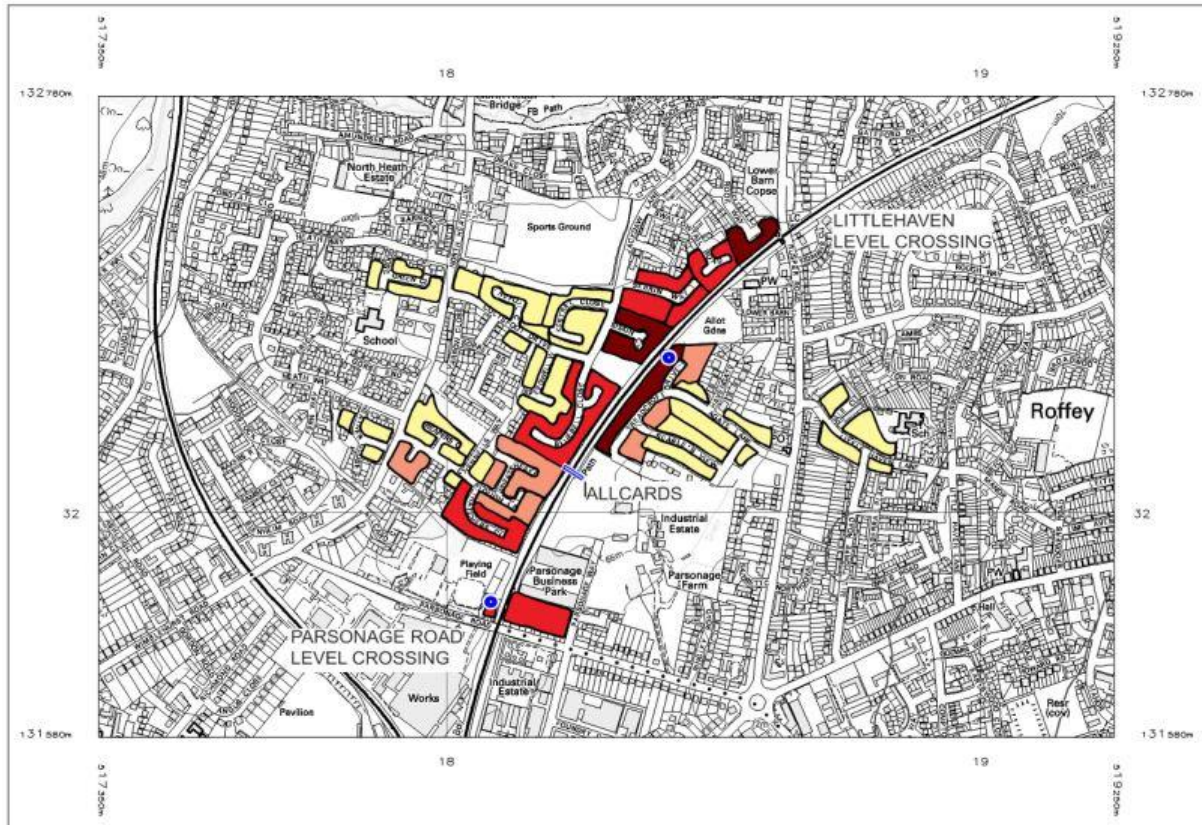
Based on Royal Mail publications, there are 764 houses in the Horsham postcodes we targeted. We either interviewed people or delivered questionnaires to 556 of them (72%).

- We conducted 2 interviews with existing contacts in July and August 2006. 20 additional 'door-to-door' interviews were conducted at the same time.
- We distributed 533 questionnaires in August, of which 135 have been returned (27%). A further questionnaire was sent to, and returned by, an existing contact.

	<b>Zone 1</b>	<b>Zone 2</b>	<b>Zone 3</b>	<b>Zone 4</b>	<b>All zones</b>
<b>Total houses in postcode area</b>	100	204	83	377	764
<b>Door-to-door Questionnaires distributed</b>	62	158	60	253	533
<b>Door-to-door Questionnaires returned</b>	26	46	20	43	135
<b>Contact Questionnaires returned *</b>	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Door-to-door Interviews</b>	1	12	5	2	20
<b>Contact Interviews *</b>	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Total response (Interviews + questionnaires)</b>	28	59	26	45	158

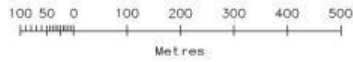
\* Contact Interviews/Questionnaires – RSSB provided few contact details for Horsham complainants.

### Horsham Zones



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KEY:	
	Whistle board
	Foot crossing
	Zone 4
	Zone 3
	Zone 2
	Zone 1

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### 3. Results

The results are presented below for the three zones, generally in the order that the corresponding questions appear in the report.

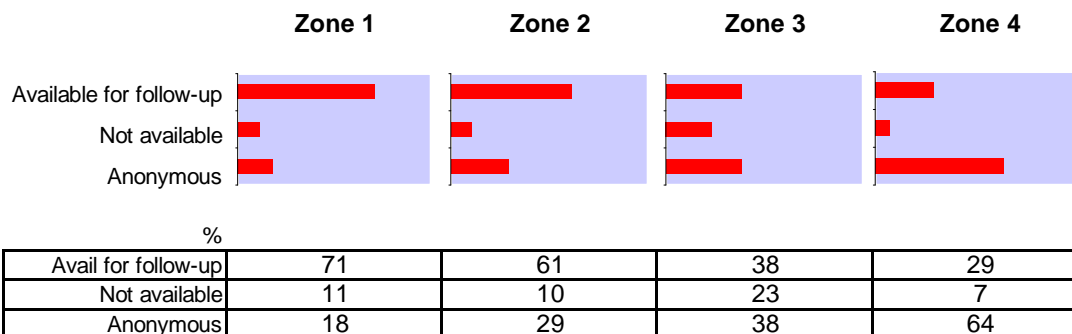
The data tables and graphs should generally be self-explanatory, but the following notes apply.

- Where a graphic is useful in illustrating the data, it is provided for the tabulated results.
- Results are expressed as a percentage of respondents.
- The percentage that did not answer (DNA) the question is given where appropriate.

### Contact

Section 1 of the questionnaire asked for postcode, residents' contact details and availability for follow-up work.

#### Q1.2 Are you willing to participate in any potential follow-up work?



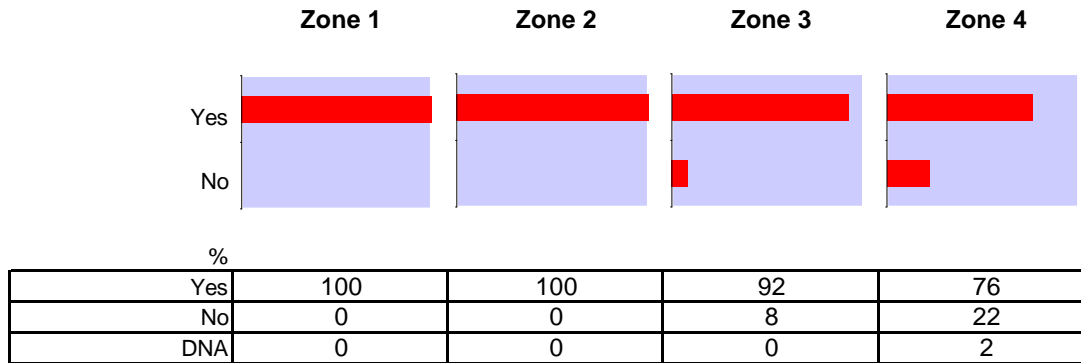
#### Notes

- Where a respondent replied anonymously, it is assumed they do not wish to participate in follow-up work.
- Where a named respondent did not answer the follow-up question, it is assumed they do not wish to participate in follow-up work.

## Questions on Train Horn Noise

Section 2 of the questionnaire covered the extent to which residents heard and were annoyed by train horns.

### Q2.1 Can train horn noise be heard from your home?



#### Notes

- The vast majority of houses surveyed were situated within 1km of a whistle board. The positive response to this question is therefore extremely high.

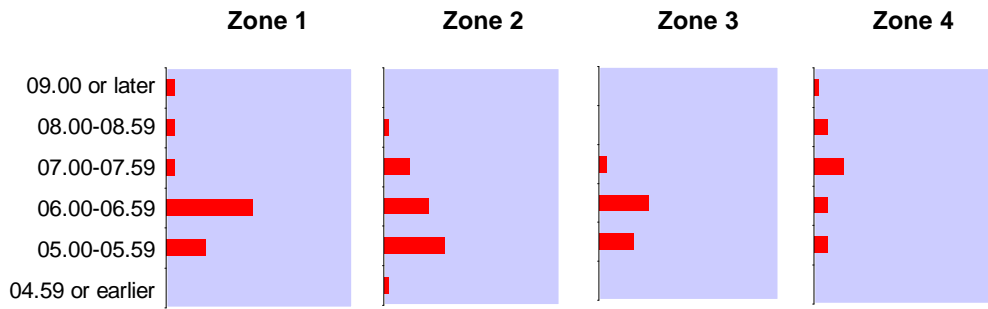
### Q2.2 At what time do you hear the last train horn noise of the night?



#### Notes

- Respondents provided a free-text answer to this question.
- Where the respondent provided a time range, the latest time is used.
- Variable – this category includes answers such as “Varies”, “When in garden”, “When I fall asleep”.

**Q2.3 At what time do you hear the first morning train horn noise?**

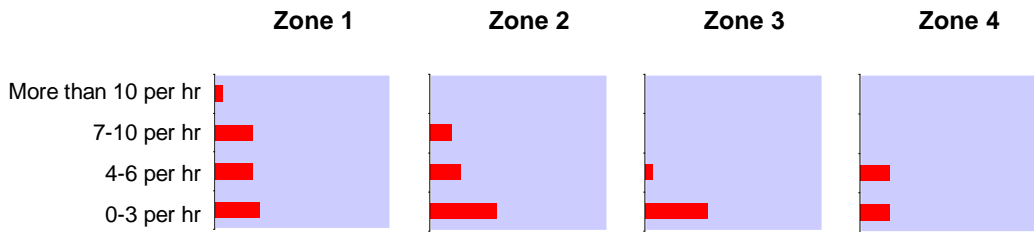


	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
09.00 or later	4	0	0	2
08.00-08.59	4	2	0	7
07.00-07.59	4	14	4	16
06.00-06.59	46	25	27	7
05.00-05.59	21	34	19	7
04.59 or earlier	0	2	0	0
Variable	4	3	12	4
Don't know	7	14	19	18
DNA	11	7	19	40

**Notes**

- Respondents provided a free-text answer to this question.
- Where the respondent provided a time range, the earliest time is used.
- Variable – this category includes answers such as “Varies”, “When outside”, “When I wake up”.

**Q2.4 How often do you hear train noise during the daytime?**



	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
more than 10 per hr	4	0	0	0
7-10 per hr	21	12	0	0
4-6 per hr	21	17	4	16
0-3 per hr	25	37	35	16
Other	18	12	23	13
Don't know	7	15	23	20
DNA	4	7	15	36

**Notes**

- Respondents provided a free-text answer to this question.
- Where respondent provided a range of frequencies, maximum frequency is used.
- Don't know - includes a variety of answers ranging from 'Don't know - at work all day', to, 'Don't know - we've got used to it'
- Other - includes answers such as “Varies”, “Most trains”, “When in garden”.

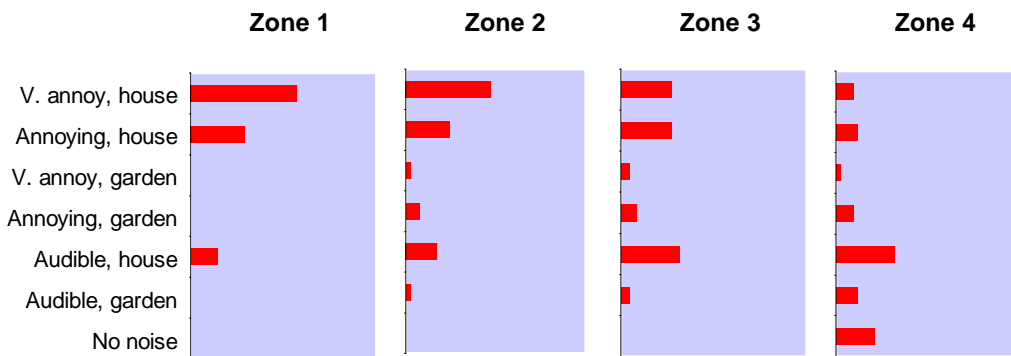
**Q2.5 During which periods of the day/days of the week is train horn noise most noticeable?**

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
All the time	21	24	23	11
Weekends	14	17	12	9
Weekdays	4	7	8	4
Rush hour	11	2	0	0
Night	29	20	15	18
Evening	36	24	19	7
Afternoon	14	7	12	7
Morning	25	19	12	13
Garden/outside	4	7	8	13
Does not bother	0	3	0	7
Other	7	8	12	9
Don't know	0	2	4	0
DNA	4	8	15	31

**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Other – includes non-specific responses such as “No pattern”.

**Q2.6 Which areas of your home or garden are affected by train horn noise?**



	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
V. annoy, house	57	47	27	9
Annoying, house	29	24	27	11
V. annoy, garden	0	2	4	2
Annoying, garden	0	7	8	9
Audible, house	14	17	31	31
Audible, garden	0	2	4	11
No noise	0	0	0	20
DNA	0	3	0	7

**Notes**

- Where the respondent provided multiple answers per area of house, eg, Annoying-Very Annoying, the most affected answer is used.
- The categories represent the most severe of the impacts reported (as ranked above).
- Zones 1 to 4 are defined against the results for this question and not by distance. This chart therefore illustrates the variation within a zone.

**Q2.7 Please describe the train horn noise (eg, volume, tone, duration):**

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Quiet/not annoying	7	5	4	44
Short	4	10	4	9
Variable length/volume	32	22	15	7
Two-tone	14	32	19	16
Long	14	10	15	9
Loud/annoying	50	54	58	20
Other	14	5	12	9
Don't know	0	0	0	0
DNA	4	17	12	7

**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Other – includes non-specific answers such as “Sounds like a train horn”, 'In the distance'.

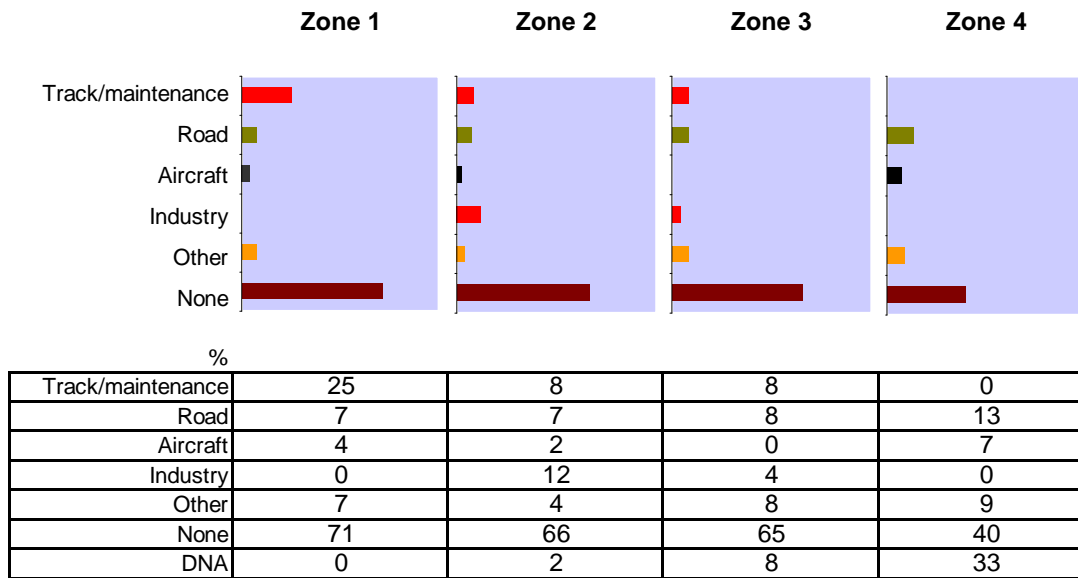
**Q2.8 Please describe how the train horn noise varies (eg, driver use of horn, train types, direction of travel, wind direction):**

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Train type	7	5	0	2
Driver variation	43	42	31	11
Wind direction	7	17	12	36
Atmos. conditions	0	3	4	7
Travel direction	32	8	0	4
Variation (unspec)	0	8	8	2
No variation	11	14	8	0
Don't know	7	2	12	9
DNA	8	20	31	44

**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Variation (unspecified) – includes answers such as “Varies but not sure why”.

**Q2.9 Do you experience any other noise nuisance in your home?**



**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Other – includes localised noise pollution, eg, shooting ranges, pubs, neighbours and other noise sources not otherwise categorized.

Respondents were invited to comment on these noise sources relative to train horns, ie, whether they were more or less significant. Relatively few did so, but the results are tabulated below.

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Track/maint - same	0	2	0	0
Track/maint - more	0	0	0	0
Track/maint - less	7	2	8	0
Road - same	0	2	0	0
Road - more	0	2	4	7
Road - less	4	2	0	7
Aircraft - same	0	0	0	0
Aircraft - more	0	0	0	2
Aircraft - less	0	0	0	4
Industry - same	0	0	0	0
Industry - more	0	3	4	0
Industry - less	0	3	0	0

## Questions on History

Section 3 explored people's perception of changes to the volume and use of train horns. It also gave an opportunity for feedback on the industry's complaints handling.

### Q3.1 How many years have you lived in your current home?

### Q3.2 Has the pattern of train noise changed with time?

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Yes - Res > 3 years	75	68	62	49
Yes - Res <= 3 years	7	7	8	0
No - Res >3 years	0	8	4	7
No - Res <=3 years	18	14	8	7
Don't know	0	0	4	4
DNA	0	4	16	33

#### Notes

- Respondents provided a free-text answer to Q3.2.
- The answers to these questions are combined to identify over what time frame the respondent may have been aware of train horn noise.
- Respondents in Horsham who had noticed change in train horn noise all suggested that train horn noise has increased.
- Most respondents were unsure of the time-frame and cause but were just aware that they heard louder horns more often. Many associated the change with the introduction of new trains.

### Q3.3 Have you complained about train horn noise?

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Media	7	0	0	0
Local petition	0	2	0	2
NAS	0	0	0	0
RATH	0	0	0	0
MP	14	3	8	0
Council (various)	11	7	4	4
RSSB	4	0	0	0
Network Rail	4	0	0	0
Operators	11	2	8	0
Station staff	4	2	0	0
Yes (Other)	4	3	8	0
No	68	81	81	91
DNA	4	3	4	2

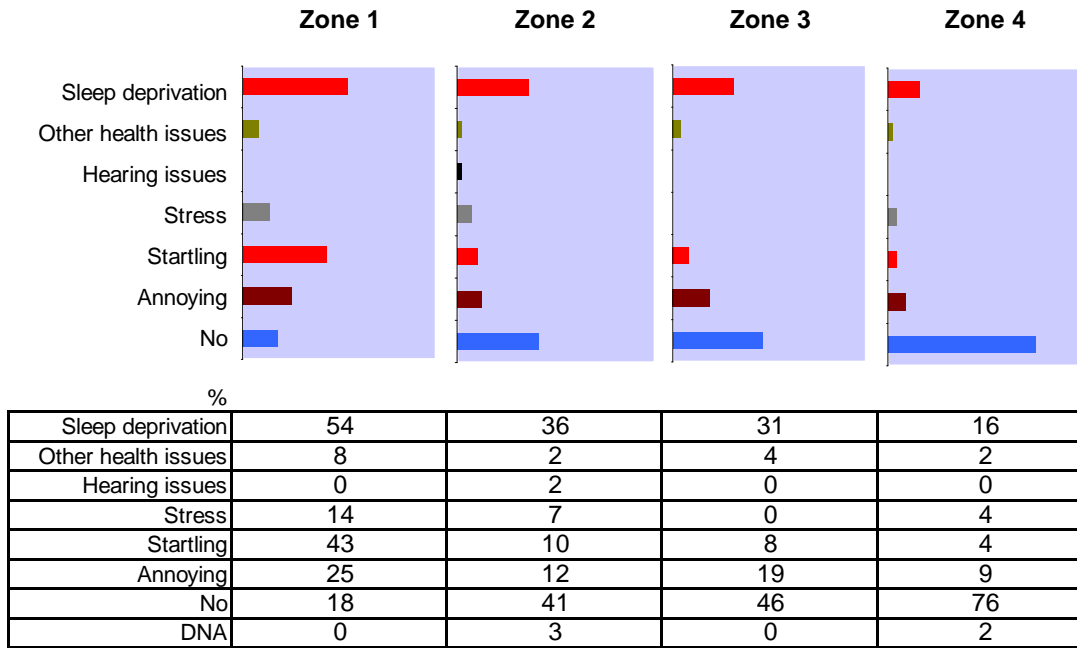
#### Notes

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question – multiple answers are possible.
- Some respondents provided copy correspondence of complaint history.

## Questions on Impact

Section 4 of the questionnaire explored people's perception of the impact of train horn noise on them.

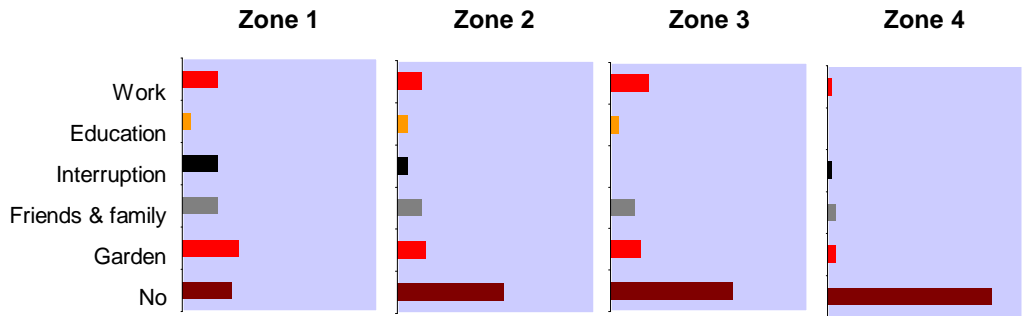
### Q4.1 Do you believe train horn noise affects the health and well being of members of your household?



#### Notes

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Where the respondent ticked No to health impact, but nevertheless listed health effects, these health effects are included in the results.
- Hearing issues – includes respondents who attribute the onset of hearing problems to train horn noise and also respondents where a pre-existing hearing problem is exacerbated by train horn noise.
- Other health issues - includes health impacts not categorised separately and respondents who ticked yes to health impact but provided no further details.
- Some respondents provided copy correspondence from medical consultants.

**Q4.2 Do you believe train horn noise affects the work, education or social life of members of your household?**



	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Work	18	12	19	2
Education	4	5	4	0
Interruption	18	5	0	2
Friends & family	18	12	12	4
Garden	29	14	15	4
No	25	54	62	84
Yes (Other)	7	10	8	2
Don't know	0	0	0	0
DNA	11	3	0	2

**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Where the respondent ticked No, but nevertheless listed work/education/social effects, these effects are included in the results.
- Many respondents made the point that the sleep deprivation highlighted by question 4.1 has a knock-on affect in all areas of life.
- Work impact – this includes those respondents who indicated they suffer tiredness at work, they work at home and are interrupted by train horn noise, or those who work shifts and suffer particularly from trying to sleep at times of loud and frequent train horn noise.
- Education impact – this includes those respondents who indicated they suffer tiredness at school or college, or those that find it difficult to study at home.
- Interruption – includes interruptions to phone calls, TV and radio.
- Yes/Other – includes those respondents who ticked Yes to work etc impact, but provided no further details.

**Q4.3 Please describe if / how different members of the household are affected differently**

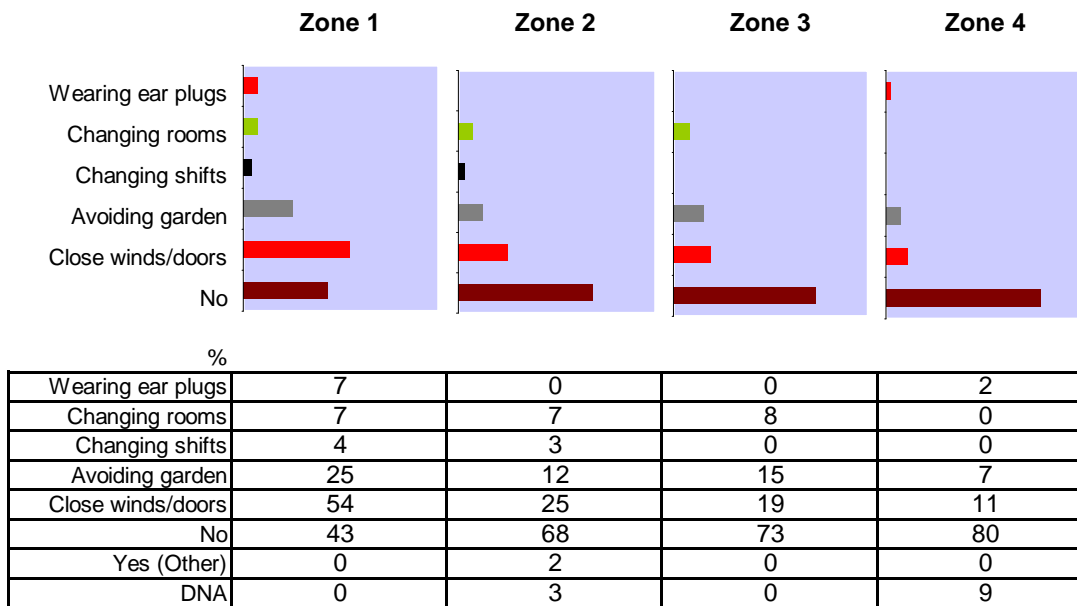
The answers to this question are not presented separately. The answers were combined into questions 4.1 (health), 4.2 (work/education/social life) and 4.3 (lifestyle). The question was designed to ensure that

- (a) the individual completing the questionnaire included effect of train horn noise on all the members of the household
- (b) a good demographic mix of respondents was obtained.

Note:

- All results are presented by household not by resident. For instance, if the wife and the husband both suffer sleep deprivation and stress, the household is deemed to suffer both sleep deprivation and stress. If the wife suffers sleep deprivation and the husband suffers stress, the household is categorised identically.

**Q4.4 Have you or your household changed your lifestyle to limit the impact of train horn noise? (eg, utilising other rooms, altering work shifts, changing sleep patterns, closing windows, avoiding the garden):**



**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Where the respondent ticked No, but nevertheless listed lifestyle impacts, these impacts are included in the results.
- Yes/Other – includes those respondents who ticked Yes to lifestyle impact, but provided no further details.
- No – includes respondents who feel that lifestyle changes are not effective in limiting the impact of train horn noise.

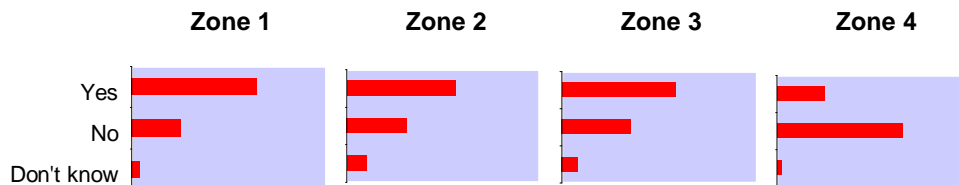
**Q 4.5 Have you (or previous occupants) altered the structure of the house in a way that reduces the impact of train horn noise? (eg, double-glazing, landscaping, walls, roof):**

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Already d-glazed	4	2	4	7
Double-glazing	29	24	4	4
Secondary-glazing	0	0	0	0
Triple-glazing	0	0	0	0
Garden struct/plant	14	3	0	0
No	61	66	73	58
Yes (Other)	0	0	4	0
DNA	4	8	15	31

**Notes**

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- Changing the structure of the property in a way that reduces the impact does not necessarily mean that this was the main or only driver for that change.
- Yes/Other – includes those respondents who ticked Yes to property alteration, but provided no further details.
- Of the respondents who answered No:
  - (a) some stated that properties had been built from new with double-glazing but that this had little effect in reducing the impact of train horn noise
  - (b) other respondents would like to install double-glazing, but are unable to for some reason: listed properties, cost etc.
- DNA – includes among others respondents who were renting and were unable to answer the question.

**Q4.6 Do you believe train horn noise affects your property value? If yes, indicate the impact.**



	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Yes	64	56	58	24
No	25	31	35	64
Don't know	4	10	8	2
DNA	7	3	0	9

**Notes**

- DNA – includes among others respondents who were renting and were unable to answer the question.
- Some residents provided estimates of financial impact.

## Questions on Crossings

The reason for whistle boards is to provide people using foot crossings with warning of approaching trains. Section 5 of the questionnaire was included to obtain information to help with risk analysis.

### Q5.1 Do you use the foot paths that cross the railway line nearby?

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Yes	50	44	31	38
No	46	53	62	51
DNA	4	3	8	11

If yes, indicate which crossing(s) and how often?

#### Foot Crossings

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Allcards-Yearly	14	17	4	9
Allcards-Never	4	7	8	4
Allcards-Monthly	7	7	12	7
Allcards-Daily	14	3	8	0

#### Level Crossings

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Parsonage LC-Yearly	0	0	0	2
Parsonage LC-Never	0	0	0	2
Parsonage LC-Monthly	0	2	4	0
Parsonage LC - Daily	0	5	0	0
Littlehaven LC-Yearly	7	0	0	9
Littlehaven LC-Never	0	0	0	2
Littlehaven LC-Monthly	4	7	0	2
Littlehaven LC-Daily	7	3	0	4

#### Key

Never – (almost) never  
 Yearly – several times a year  
 Monthly – several times a month  
 Daily – (almost) daily

#### Notes

- Respondents provided free-text answers to the subsidiary parts of this question - multiple answers are possible.
- In some locations, respondents included pedestrian use of level crossings as well as use of foot crossings. This information is included for completeness.

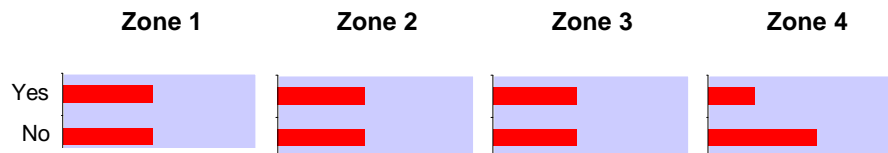
If yes, please describe how you decide whether it is safe to cross the line?

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Train horns	11	7	4	4
Train times	0	0	0	0
Train noise/vibrate	18	19	19	18
Visual/watch for train	29	27	31	24
Signals/barriers	18	20	0	16
Horns <u>NOT</u> useful	0	3	0	0

## Questions on Future Options

The final section of the questionnaire seeks residents' opinion on the best option for resolving problems with train horn noise.

**Q6.1a Do you believe it is safe to stop the use of train horns in the vicinity of local crossings without changes to pedestrian controls?**



	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Yes	46	44	42	24
No	46	44	42	56
Don't know	4	3	4	2
DNA	4	8	12	18

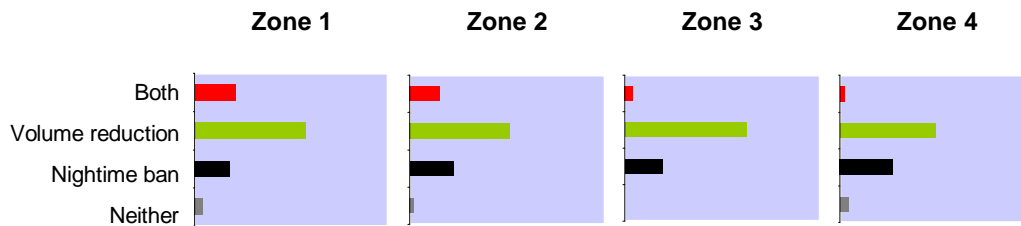
If No, are there any pedestrian controls that would make it safe?

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
%				
Horns necessary	14	15	8	7
Audible	7	2	0	0
Lights	14	10	19	13
Auto-gates	7	5	4	7
Bridge/tunnel	4	5	0	9
Close crossing	4	2	4	7
No (Other)	7	10	12	22

### Notes

- Respondents provided free-text answers to this question - multiple answers are possible.
- No/other answer – includes respondents who feel train horns are needed, and were unable to suggest alternative pedestrian controls to make the crossings safe without train horns.
- Horns necessary – includes respondents who feel that train horns are needed. However, many felt that a lower volume horn would provide equally as good warning.

**Q6.2 Other solutions are being considered. Which of these is more important to you: night time ban or reduction in horn volume?**



%				
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Both	21	15	4	2
Volume reduction	57	51	62	49
Nighttime ban	18	22	19	27
Neither	4	2	0	4
Don't know	0	0	4	0
DNA	0	10	12	18

**Notes**

- Both – some respondents were unable to decide between the two options.
- Neither – some respondents were adamant that no changes to train horn noise were required.

**Q6.3 Are there any other changes to train horn noise that would benefit you?**

**Q7.1 Further information/comments**

%				
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Comments	86	75	65	53
DNA	14	25	35	47

**Notes**

- These anonymised free-text answers are included in Appendix C.

## **Appendix A:**

**RSSB Covering Letters and  
Questionnaire**

**RATH Newsletter and Log Form**



**Rail Safety & Standards Board**

Our Ref      aj/210706/thsurvey

21 July 2006

Dear Sir or Madam

**Understanding the problems that train horn noise causes to neighbours**

The Rail Safety and Standards Board together with its colleagues in the railway industry are aware that the noise made by train horns, which are an essential safety device, can cause a nuisance. We regret this impact on our neighbours and are working together to try and find a better balance between the safety benefit and the noise nuisance in order to give some relief to our neighbours.

New trains introduced onto the mainline railway network in the last three or four years have horns that comply with the industry standard (Railway Group Standard). However, they are louder than the horns on the old trains and their use has led to a significant number of complaints from residents living in the vicinity of crossings with 'whistle boards', where horns have to be sounded at all times for safety reasons. Over the same period the number of whistle boards has increased. Although steps were taken two years ago to reduce the level of noise and the number of locations at which horns are sounded, there are many locations at which significant number of complaints are made, and the problem has clearly not been resolved.

As part of the cross industry work to address these problems the RSSB is undertaking a study to assess the impact of train horn noise on a sample of trackside residents in three different locations: Lingfield, Horsham and Canterbury. We have chosen these three locations as examples where there is evidence of significant impact on neighbours. We believe that the data we collect from this work will enable us to generate the justification for changes in the national rules for train horns that emerge from this review.

RSSB has commissioned Faulkland Associates to carry out this work. We hope that you are able to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the pre-paid envelope.

**Carol Durrant** of Faulkland Associates would also like to interview residents, particularly in Lingfield, Horsham and Canterbury. If you would like to be interviewed, or if you have any queries about the questionnaire, please contact Carol on telephone **01865 487159** or via e-mail on **[carol.durrant@faulkland-associates.co.uk](mailto:carol.durrant@faulkland-associates.co.uk)**.

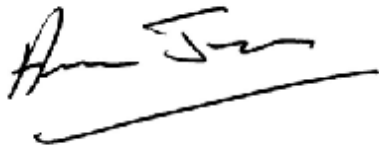
The results of this work, when combined with the research into the safety impact of train horns at footpath crossings, will enable the consideration of proposed changes to the current arrangements for the sounding of train horns. Options that are being considered include:

- Reducing the level of noise to that which was made by the old trains
- Introduction of broadband horn technology, which is more directional
- A ban on using horns at night
- A reduction in the number of whistle boards
- The case for alternative controls at particular footpath crossings

The aim of the work within local communities is to understand the impact on neighbours that are affected by train horns. Combining this information with noise mapping data will inform RSSB's estimate of the undesired impact caused to residents by train horns. It will also help determine which changes to train horn characteristics and usage would create the greatest improvements for residents.

Please accept my thanks, in advance, for your co-operation and assistance. If you have any questions or concerns about the project or have any other issue relating to train horns, please contact me ([anson.jack@rssb.co.uk](mailto:anson.jack@rssb.co.uk)) directly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anson Jack', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Anson Jack  
**Director Standards**

Dear Resident

1 August 2006

**Survey on the impact of train horn noise**

Faulkland Associates is an independent research organisation. It has been commissioned by the Rail Safety & Standards Board to carry out a survey on the impact of noise from train horns in your area. The attached letter from the Rail Safety & Standards Board outlines the aims of the survey.

In this questionnaire we are asking how train horn noise affects you and other members of your household. We would be grateful to receive a completed questionnaire from you, whatever your experiences and opinions of train horns.

All information will be kept confidential - no names or addresses will be linked to any information you provide. Your participation in the survey is voluntary. If you complete the questionnaire please return it to us by the end of August 2006 in the pre-paid envelope provided.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office. You can reach us on **01865 487159** Mondays to Fridays between 9.00am and 6.00pm.

Thank you for completing the form and contributing to the accuracy of the survey.

Carol Durrant  
[carol.durrant@faulkland-associates.co.uk](mailto:carol.durrant@faulkland-associates.co.uk)

**Section 1: Contact Details**

1.1 Your postcode:

Postcode

*Postcode is used ONLY to map the impact of train horn noise on residents.*

1.2 Are you willing to participate in any potential follow-up work?

If YES, please include your address below:

YES

NO

*We are keen to receive your response even if you prefer to remain anonymous.*

1.3 Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

**Section 2: Train Horns**

2.1 Can train horn noise be heard from your home?

YES

NO

If you have never heard train horn noise from your home, please go to Section 5.

2.2 At what time do you hear the last train horn noise of the night?

Last

2.3 At what time do you hear the first morning train horn noise?

First

2.4 How often per hour do you hear train horn noise during the daytime? Please describe any variation during periods of the day / days of the week:

2.5 During which periods of the day / days of the week is train horn noise most noticeable?

2.6 Please specify which areas of your home or garden are affected by train horn noise:

	No noise	Audible	Annoying	Very Annoying
Lounge /Reception				
Kitchen				
Master bedroom				
Other bedrooms				
Garden				
Other (please specify)				

2.7 Please describe the train horn noise (eg, volume, tone, duration):

2.8 Please describe how the train horn noise you hear varies (eg, driver use of horn, train types, direction of travel, wind direction):

2.9 Do you experience any other noise nuisance in your home? YES  NO

If YES, please describe the source and its relative significance in relation to train horns:

**Section 3: History**

---

3.1 How many years have you lived in your current home?

Years

3.2 Has the pattern of train horn noise changed in this time? YES  NO

If YES, please give brief details and approximate dates:

3.3 Have you complained about train horn noise? YES  NO

IF YES, when and to whom did you complain? Did you feel they responded adequately?

**Section 4: Impact**

---

4.1 Do you believe train horn noise affects the health or well-being of members of your household? YES  NO

If YES, please describe its effect:

4.2 Do you believe train horn noise impacts on the work, education or social life of members of your household? YES  NO

If YES, please describe its effect:

4.3 Please describe if / how members of the household are affected differently:

Person	Age	Sex	Effect on individual:
1		F <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/>	
2		F <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/>	
3		F <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/>	
4 & others		F <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/>	

4.4 Have you or other members of your household changed your lifestyle to limit the impact of train horn noise? YES  NO

If YES, please specify how (eg, utilising other rooms, altering work shifts, changing sleep patterns, closing windows, avoiding the garden):

4.5 Have you (or previous occupants) altered the structure of your property in a way that reduces the impact of train horn noise? YES  NO

IF YES, please specify how (eg, double-glazing, landscaping, walls, roof):

4.6 Do you believe train horn noise affects your property value? YES  NO

If YES, please indicate the impact (eg, you wish to move house because of train horn noise, you are prevented from moving because of difficulty in selling):

### Section 5: Crossings

---

- 5.1 Do you use the footpaths that cross the railway line nearby? YES  NO   
If YES, please indicate which crossing(s) and how often?

Name/Description of Crossing	(Almost) daily	Several times a month	Several times a year	(Almost) never

If YES, please describe how you decide whether it is safe to cross the line (eg, visual check for trains, listen for track vibration, check of rail signals, listen for train horns):

### Section 6: Future Options

---

- 6.1 Do you believe it is safe to stop the use of train horns in the vicinity of local footpath crossings without changes to pedestrian controls? YES  NO

If NO, are there any pedestrian controls that would make it safe to stop the use of train horns?

- 6.2 Other solutions being evaluated include imposing a night time ban on train horns or reducing the volume of train horns. Which of these options is MORE important to you?

Night time ban:

Reduce horn volume:

- 6.3 Are there any other changes to train horn noise that would benefit you?

### Section 7: Further Information

---

- 7.1 Please provide us with any further information about train horns that you feel is relevant:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. It will help the Rail Safety & Standards Board understand the problems and potential solutions.



## Newsletter July 2006

## Action after 4 years?

Following our public meeting in May, where over 70 local residents got together to press for action to stop the unwanted intrusion of the new train horns, we can report back that some progress has been made. Members of RATH's committee have met with a transport minister and have had a positive response from the Rail Safety and Standards Board.

The RSSB has decided to undertake a selective survey of affected areas, and many of you may be sent a questionnaire. This may be followed up by personal interviews. The committee at RATH back this initiative, but with some reservations.

We feel that there has already been enough evidence of noise nuisance and that the remedies are pretty obvious. The Noise Abatement Society has already given them chapter and verse on the depth of the problem and have outlined some very sensible solutions. While at last taking some action, we feel the RSSB is only prevaricating, and by pursuing a course that puts 'value' at the centre of its reasoning can only cloud the issue. It is obvious to all parties that action for change is needed and there is going to be some cost in solving this problem. The sooner positive action is taken the less that cost will be. We really hope that this issue does not have to be solved in the courts.

So please respond to their request. Please involve all your neighbours and anyone you know that is anyway affected. We want to nail this unwanted, unnecessary problem for once and all. Please contact us if we can do anything to clarify matters for you.

### MEETING WITH Dr STEPHEN LADYMAN MP

Members of the committee had a meeting with this government transport minister, who expressed his concern and promised to contact the all party group of MPs and to talk with the RSSB. He also promised that a junior minister would attend our next public meeting. We have asked for confirmation in writing and have, so far, received nothing.

### WHAT SOUTHEASTERN TRAINS SAY...

Not very much. They have blocked emails from us, and only repeat the mantra that the issue is one of 'safety'.

### NETWORK RAIL

Following a constructive meeting between RATH, Network Rail, Julian Brazier MP and local Sturry residents, Network Rail agreed to remove some whistleboards. Kent County Councillor Graham Gibbens promised to look into the possibility of closing a little-used foot crossing. The result has been some partial relief for local residents.

### OUR LOCAL COUNCILS

We have had verbal support but no action from our local council. They could easily take the Train Operators to court for their flaunting of health and safety and environmental legislation. So far they have passed motions but taken no action. We feel they are not doing their duty, in law, to protect their citizens. We are looking to take further action.

### TRAIN HORN LOG SHEETS (See reverse of this page)

We have had an excellent response to our campaign to log all the noise nuisances. This is the evidence we need to substantiate our complaints and to ensure that if our complaints are ever taken to court we can fully describe the scale of this health hazard. Please continue to send them in or join our free members' group and fill in the form online. Send an e-mail to

**[info@rath.me.uk](mailto:info@rath.me.uk)**

### THE WIDER PICTURE

There has been a protest meeting in Teynham with the local MP. In Ardleigh they have had success with a court order and removal of many whistle boards. There is a group starting in the Ashford area and we are now receiving more complaints from Whitstable and Herne Bay. The NAS reports new complaints from Windermere to the West Country. It is not a local problem.

### WHO TO CONTACT?

Contact RATH by e-mail: [info@rath.me.uk](mailto:info@rath.me.uk)  
or by writing to RATH, 5 The Hamels, Sturry, CT2 0BL Fax 01227 712161

By phone: 0792 2257100

The Noise Abatement Society: [nas@noiseabatementociety@fsnet.co.uk](mailto:nas@noiseabatementociety@fsnet.co.uk) 01273 682223

Anson Jack, Director, Rail Safety & Standards Board, Evergreen House, 160 Euston Road, London NW1 2DX

Tel: 020 7904 7518 Fax: 020 7557 9072

[anson.jack@rssb.co.uk](mailto:anson.jack@rssb.co.uk)

Sarah Boundy, Head of Customer Services (Complaints); Friars Bridge Court, 41-45 Blackfriars Road,  
London SE1 8PG Tel: 020 7620 5080

[Sarah.Boundy@setrains.co.uk](mailto:Sarah.Boundy@setrains.co.uk)

Julian Brazier MP, House of Commons, London. SW1A 0AA Tel: 01227 280277

[canterbury@tory.org](mailto:canterbury@tory.org)

However, there is still NO sign that the horns will be changed and residents WILL continue to be disturbed at all hours

**WE WILL HOLD ANOTHER PUBLIC MEETING IN THE AUTUMN**



# Appendix B: Horsham Photographs

Allcards Crossing



# Appendix C: Free Text Comments

Free text answers to questions 6.3 and 7.1	
Zone	Comments
1	Mandatory use of old fashioned whistle (as per some new trains) for use in built-up areas. Reduce train speed. Some trains loud horn in excess of 95db, others sound like quiet steam engine, some drivers sound approaching Littlehaven LC, some don't.
1	Family and friends in Lambsfarn area are disturbed by new train horns.
1	Do not include suicides in safety figures, path less used at night. Local trains slow and could stop in time as pulling away from Littlehaven station southbound. Original slam-door train horns did the job - unnecessary volume, some drivers don't sound.
1	Remove WB from my garden.
1	Horns too noisy and too late would like compensation for financial loss, thinks trains do not give enough time to warn pedestrians.
1	Remove horns from trains they serve no useful purpose. Annoyed that railway getting away with nonsense. Anyone near the crossing when train approaches would be disorientated by deafening noise and no safer.
1	Change sound to old fashioned tone which is instantly recognisable and loud enough. A survey should be undertaken by traffic management of pedestrian usage, this may indicate possible sources of finance to fund any construction.
1	The length of time some horns are blasted I sometimes feel that's some drivers delight in blasting their horn, more so when there have been complaints in our local paper by some residents!
1	Our usage of the crossing is almost forbidden because of the double stepped stile - which makes me at 81 nervous and my wife at 75 an impossibility. Do railway crossings never have kissing gates? It would make life easier.
1	With modern technology I cannot see why the horn has to emanate from the train for regular mornings. Why not have the train trigger a warning that is only audible at the crossing - this would not be expensive but would give a high level of social benefits.
1	Shut the crossing - only answer. Trains themselves very good - the best we have had.
1	Direct horn sound to front of train - not sides, limit sound duration. It is dangerous for people to expect horn warning when onus is on driver, drivers occasionally forget. This makes people less vigilant than when train horns were not used.
1	Would volume and/or frequency changes cause fewer complaints and still be effective?
1	Drivers seem to vary the spot at which they sound their horn, sometimes nearer the pedestrian crossing than at other times.
1	Ban them, and install local visual warning triggered by approaching train [letter provided].
1	Shorter duration, gradual build up, but must be reduced volume. Some trains seem to have horns that sound for longer or maybe due to driver, never ever seen anyone use the pointless manual crossing.
1	Keep horn duration to minimum, de da, not blaaaah blaaaah occasionally up train whistles which is surely unnecessary as there is no sign on the up line.
1	Have noticed on occasions when the drivers tend to toot in greeting to oncoming trains. The crossing that the trains toot at is a crossing that does not provide access to shops or short cuts etc. It serves no purpose and could be closed.

Zone	Comments
1	Flashing lights at crossing with "don't cross" on them. Footpath crossing should be closed for good as WB is at the (end) of our garden
1	Complete cessation of train horns see attached newspaper clippings (from West Sussex County Times).
1	I have lived here 29 years and find the change over of trains has been intolerable, we never had any problems before. Get it sorted. PS: I would like to be notified of work done on our lines and the use of arc lights which disturb our sleep.
1	Use the old type of horns or insist the driver just toot and not go wild (I think they get a kick out of the sound). Please visit to see the problem (please) you don't hear them blast. It effects the very young (babys) and the old.
1	They are obviously important but very loud when up close to them.
1	Make them quieter.
2	Why do trains not have same rules as cars, eg, not after 11pm? No details, just very annoyed.
2	Better life ie less disturbance at night.
2	Horn does not bother me.
2	Neither, safety of pedestrians is paramount, people use crossing late at night, cut through from town pubs. Trains are much quieter now so over length of day we get less noise.
2	Stop it altogether.
2	Use the same type of train horns used before the klaxon horns used on new rolling stock.
2	Not bothered.
2	Although a night time ban would be welcome, we don't want the noise during the day either, some drivers use horns at night - some don't use them at all- some hold horns on for long blasts others for short - there is no consistency. Changes to the footpath crossing would not be necessary if they reduced the volume of the horns as they promised to do more than two years ago.
2	Stop them altogether, there were never any accidents before they started to use them so why use them now - it's a straight track where trains can easily be seen.
2	Change the awful 2 tone effect.
2	I have lived in my house for 18yrs and the trains have been company as I am alone so their appearance at the bottom of my garden has always been good. The horn is very gentle and a joy to hear.
2	Some horns sounded for unreasonable length, not all sound, if some don't why do the rest have to?
2	Reduce horn volume dramatically. Could the 'tone' of the horn not be changed - something a bit softer - maybe like the old steam train horns.
2	Put a green or red light system by footpath this would eliminate the need to use horns. The pitch is too high and length of sound is dependent on driver, a specific time which would be appropriate.
2	Original train horn sound level was acceptable and completely satisfactory [letters with further information attached].
2	The horns are necessary. It does not affect our quality of life but it would be good if they were quieter. They can be quite loud compared to what they were like.
2	Not so loud tone them down, night time ban, common sense.
2	No horns at all but aware of safety case. Recent reduction was insignificant.
2	Not just a night time ban but also a later starting time in the morning.
2	The initial blast of the two tone horn is front loaded and a shriek. It makes you jump. Surely it should be quietened and less explosive. I wonder if it doesn't cause people to freeze with fright if they're on the tracks. Drivers should show restraint.

Zone	Comments
2	Horn sounds too late, not enough notice, pointless exercise.
2	Horn makes little difference to safety, train too fast and sounds too close & pedestrian has no chance. With barriers down / lights flashing at the crossing this should be enough.
2	This crossing has been in existence for many years and trains have 'whistled' as long as I can remember there would be no need for expensive controls that would be vandalised we live about 50 yards from the railway and have never been bothered by the noise
2	Single blast rather than two tone
2	Loudness is unnecessary
2	As long as hours are 9pm – 7am, also make it quieter.
2	Close the footpath it is not used heavily. Some drivers seem hell bent on a world record for longest train horn usage.
2	Night time not particular concern. Modest driver use would help, we live right on line
2	A smoother less sharp sound preferable.
2	Rather have trains than main road noise.
2	If the Littlehaven road crossing was not manned noise would be less as drivers appear to use the horn as a greeting device to the crossing keepers.
2	Reduction in volume would also be good.
2	(split vote) Directional horns good, and also length of sound should not depend on driver control. Level crossing is timed to have N&S simultaneous.
2	Not worried about it - accepts it. Would like high fence to stop passengers staring at him at home.
2	Reduction done to good effect, reduction to old train level would be better. It may well be that good visibility at these crossings does not require use of horn, hence use of whistles arbitrary, alternatively close these two little used FPs.
2	N/A [referring to LC]
2	Reduce volume and other alternatives if possible
2	Change of sound and time
2	Quieter and shorter, all drivers to follow same pattern. Train horns are helpful to track workers, animals, but pedestrians should not need as there are crossing barriers. Trains are so fast, that by the time the horn is blasted, if you were on the track, you'd still get hit, esp if deaf or drunk.
2	Use them less I was told by one train driver, an ex work colleague, he uses his horn more where they have received complaints from residents - that's really good customer relations.
2	Reduce pitch, only sound at high risk crossings, not as greeting, no long notes (worse since campaign started). WB on down line, some drivers sound from Littlehaven to our house, others when pulling into station on up line to greet staff?
2	Track machines loud and sound horns over & over, new Electrostar quieter but still noisy.
2	We are just in advance of whistle board, houses just past it must have much worse problem
2	Train the drivers not to hold horn for more than a few seconds
2	I believe that if it saves even one life then they are something we have to put up with. Although I totally accept that the horns are loud, most people know the implications of living near line. If you don't like the noise, you shouldn't choose to live here.
3	Make them a nicer tone and not so loud. When the horns blast out it makes me jump out of my skin & I don't like it. I think the noise is better lately, trains went through this morning (28/07/06) and not one used their horn. I say this but then another will go through and blast away.
3	We have no problem with the train noise so we have not completed your form.
3	Make quieter - soften the noise - it could affect you in time. Noise from horns should all sound the same. Ignore EU - make the same noise/ sound as previously used in the UK.

Zone	Comments
3	We have lived in our bungalow for the last 28 years, we do not take any notice from the sound of the running or the sound of the horns from the trains at any time of day.
3	Quieter horns - when people come into our bungalow they cannot believe the noise
3	Removal of the new legislation which now means constant sounding of horns. More people are suffering with the noise pollution now than probably use the unmanned crossing.
3	If no crossing, horns would not be necessary. I feel crossing is unsafe for young people as no barriers - close crossing before fatality.
3	This is all a red herring created by certain residents of [streetname deleted] who want the footpath closed, the path is used by ramblers, schoolchildren people taking short cut to work, people visiting relatives, also PO on Rusper/Agate closed and people cross for PO.
3	During evening and night the noise is terribly loud and unnecessarily so. Overall ambience is much quieter at these times (less traffic etc) so volume not needed. Even better close the crossing. Thanks for seeking our views. No one minds normal train noise but new horns are a blight. Does anyone use the crossing near Wheatsheaf? Accident waiting to happen. The crossing near us is totally unsafe and we never use it. However, it worries us that the kids will use it as they grow up despite our instructions not to.
3	I feel the crossing should be closed or a bridge built.
3	Complete ban - low accident rate. There are no accidents, what is benefit of horn?
3	Reduction in volume.
3	Complete elimination would be good.
3	If no solution can be found then public should be surveyed to see if they would trade the closure of footpaths for a quieter life.
3	Some drivers considerate in built up area and toot, some appear to be frustrated trumpet players and play tunes, others pretend to be cross-channel ferries in the fog.
3	Don't hear them at night and not sure about volume.
3	Close footpath, became redundant when housing estates between North Heath Lane & Rusper Road - access can be gained via Littlehaven more safely. Why are new trains so loud - we did not notice previously.
4	With a train-mad two year old, the sound is an excellent source of distraction
4	Lived at address 20 years, only a problem for 2 years if volume of train horns was returned to level of old trains which ran on line for 40 years w/o complaint and still warned at crossings the problem would be resolve - its not difficult!
4	I do not live close enough to railway to be affected so my views are probably not relevant
4	Stop noise pollution by stopping train horn noise
4	On very few occasions I have heard a horn (depends on weather), hear vibrations sometimes at 1-3am. I am some distance away, problems must be worse nearer.
4	Consistent short blasts and reduced decibels.
4	Go back to old- type pre Electrostar.
4	From my house, I can only hear train horns when in garden depending on wind direction
4	The horns do not cause any problem, they can only be heard in garden and are not loud, double-glazing keeps out most noise.
4	We use crossing regularly and horns are helpful for safety, horns especially important at night for us. Sound reminds us we are lucky to live in country with fantastic transport facilities. Horns - the louder the better! We bought our house near crossing so we expect noise, please ignore people who complain about anything.
4	Reduce horn volume as close 2nd preference. Beggars belief that new trains built with louder horns when knowing they present a real problem. If done for safety reasons it was a false move, there will always be someone who pushes luck at crossing.

Zone	Comments
4	Whilst horns are annoying to those residing near crossings, I believe that safety is prime consideration, when hearing horns, I know trains are running.
4	Reduced frequency, why have them unless people working on line.
4	What do the French do?
4	Neither important. Horns make it safer when I'm waiting for train at Littlehaven, know to keep back from platform edge, use train daily to Gatwick.
4	Does not bother me.
4	Does not bother.
4	Train horn noise does not bother us but we don't live right by railway, I'd prefer occasional horn noise to motorway noise.
4	Driver creative use of horns - particularly irritating. Noise from train horns has become dominant feature of this locality as 2 LCs and a pedestrian crossing within small radius - noise pollution of worst kind.
4	Rail crossing has been there since houses built. It is a bit sad if people feel this strongly about something. Maybe a group coming home from a drink would not appreciate a silent running train.
4	Reduce volume, directional horn. Allcards foot crossing is inaccessible, does not go anywhere, alternative route on foot by LC, horns are sounded 150 per day to protect non-existent pedestrians.
4	Not bothered about it, don't notice.
4	Need more at night for safety level. Crossing unsafe, people climb over decrepit gates.
4	Hear very faintly and not worth bothering about.

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