

Report from RAPS to Highways England on the M27 Noise Barrier at Port Solent

The M27 Noise Barrier at Port Solent was completed in July 2020. Liaison between residents and Highways England at the time was between RAPS (Olivia Firth and Chris Clark) and Greg Stone. Greg requested feedback from residents about the look and effectiveness of the barrier. RAPS duly consulted with all residents via a Newsletter distributed to all 665 households in early August, requesting written comments by the end of the month.

The number of written responses received was 11, to which can be added the verbal contributions from Committee members and other residents.

In the absence of objective noise level measurements before and after in the vicinity of Port Way we are reliant on subjective assessments. Residents were not expecting noise to be eliminated completely but the technical demonstration of the barrier's properties in Autumn 2019 did suggest that a reduction by 20 decibels could be achieved. Objective measurements would therefore indicate if this has been achieved and allow for a better appreciation of the degree of noise reduction.

In any assessment of the barrier's effectiveness one should take into account the wind direction at the time. Wind of any strength from an easterly or northerly direction increases the noise considerably, with or without a barrier. Noise levels are correspondingly far lower when the wind is from the south or west.

For the purposes of this report I have divided Port Solent into three zones based on their proximity to the motorway:

Zone 1 (within 300 metres) - Coverack Way, Mullion Close, Tintagel Way, Holywell Drive, Cadgwith Place and the NE stretch of Newlyn Way

Zone 2 (within 600 metres or shielded by other buildings) - Newlyn Way (S stretch), Kelsey Head, Carne Place, Bryher Island, Oyster Quay

Zone 3 (within 1 km) - The Anchorage, Sennen Place

Residents were asked to state the road or building from which they were making their assessment. The following table reproduces the results.

Response	Zone	Negative	Positive
PH Cadgwith	1	I don't feel there has been any reduction in road noise at all. My concern is also the waste of public money expended for no discernible benefit. What benefit does Highways England feels has been delivered to Port Solent.	
CQ Oyster Quay 5th floor	2	the barriers have not reduced the noise at all. The hum of the vehicles is the same now as it has been for years	I applaud the visual aspect from the M27 - the variant colours of blue are most pleasing although I would thought green would have been chosen to blend in
KW Bryher Island	2		thank you for the M27 noise barrier. We believe it has significantly reduced the noise at our house
MR Coverack Way	1	really disappointed in the inadequate result of the barrier and I know we are not alone with this view. I think it cannot be value for money in fact I think someone has been conned. Whilst when walking down Port Way it does seem to have made a difference, but where we live it has not, in fact it has I feel made things worse.	
OC Bryher Island	2		It makes a huge difference and looks great. Massive well done for making this happen
MD Coverack Way	1	We still haven't really noticed a reduction in the traffic noise particularly when the wind is from a northerly direction perhaps a little muffled but had expected a greater noise reduction.	it certainly looks very impressive and we are sure costly too
AB Bryher Island	2	we don't perceive any improvement in noise levels.	
AC Sennen Place	3		Pleased with the result of the noise barrier from the back of Sennen Place, but can still hear traffic noise from the bridge over the A27 from the front at times.
AJ Carne Place	2	the noise has gone down somewhat. We were lead to believe that the bridge over Southampton Road would be included in having the barrier. It doesn't!! And this leaves a gap and consequently the motorway noise filters through this gap leaving many properties at the Lock View area still unable to sit out or open windows.	
SE Tintagel	1	It hasn't made any difference in a taller property with 2nd floor bedroom windows facing the motorway. Barrier not high enough.	It has helped noise in gardens and ground floor.

Verbal comments recorded also reflect the above range of positive and negative feedback.

A resident in Zone 1 said that he thought there was very little difference in noise levels, but a neighbour, returning from a long absence, declared the difference was very noticeable.

Two Committee members living in Holywell Drive (Area 1) are adamant that the barrier has made no difference to noise levels when they're out on their balconies or when windows are left open.

Another Committee member makes the important observation that if you stand in the Tesco car park at North End where the motorway has no barrier, you can quickly appreciate the difference in noise levels and be reminded of just how noisy it used to be in Port Solent.

As a resident of The Anchorage (Zone 3), I believe there is a difference, especially in the character of the noise, depending on wind direction. Whereas before, with a northerly airflow, the noise was like a low roaring, it is now closer to the high-pitched sound of jet aircraft on a runway, especially in the early morning when individual vehicles are heard. The barrier obviously makes no difference to noise emanating from the hill climb or from the eastern approach to the Port Solent area and that is possibly the source of most of the remaining motorway noise to be heard here.

During the planning phase for the barrier residents said that they wanted as much as possible of the vegetation along Port Way to be retained. It is therefore very pleasing to note that almost all the trees and shrubs have remained unaffected by the works,

In summary, while some residents are pleased with the result, many, especially in properties closest to the barrier, have been left disappointed. While there is no expectation that the project be revisited, it would be useful if objective measurements could be taken of current noise levels for comparison, assuming that noise levels pre-barrier were in fact recorded.

We would also like to know about barrier maintenance. Within one month of the barrier's completion the top section of the barrier close to the bus stop on Port Way was damaged, apparently by a JCB. Can damaged panels be replaced easily?

Finally, one resident has remarked about the noise from the bridge across Southampton Road, where the parapet, although replaced, is lower than the barrier. I believe there is a technical reason for this that will be useful to have on record.

Chris Clark, RAPS Chair
18-09-2020