# Tories push for stricter laws to curb loud music and antisocial behaviour on public transport



The Conservative Party has set its sights on tackling the longstanding nuisance of loud music and antisocial behaviour on public transport, proposing new legal measures aimed at protecting passengers from disruptive noise. Shadow transport secretary Richard Holden has called for swifter justice against those who blast music on buses and trains, arguing that commuters should not be forced to “endure somebody else’s choice of crap music.” The proposals include tougher enforcement of existing railway byelaws, which currently forbid playing music to the annoyance of others, and plans to extend similar protections to bus passengers through amendments to the Bus Services Bill now before Parliament.

Under current railway byelaws, offenders can face fines of up to £1,000 for causing annoyance, but enforcement has been inconsistent. The Tories want to ensure operators implement these rules robustly by empowering staff to issue on-the-spot fines. Moreover, the Bus Services Bill would grant transport authorities powers to create byelaws against low-level antisocial behaviours and deploy officers to uphold them across the bus network.

The Conservative proposals dovetail with similar calls from the Liberal Democrats, who have fervently pushed for stringent penalties against so-called "headphone dodgers" — passengers who play music or videos aloud, disturbing fellow travellers. The Lib Dem plan includes fines up to £1,000 specifically targeting those who refuse to use headphones on public transport. This initiative has garnered cross-party support, including cautious approval from Tory leader Kemi Badenoch, who expressed reservations about the practicalities of imposing large fines but affirmed a strong stance against antisocial behaviour.

Government sources underline that strict laws already exist to maintain decorum on public transport, including potential fines of up to £1,000. The Department for Transport has also introduced additional measures such as mandatory training for transport staff to handle antisocial incidents more effectively. Alongside these legal tools, a new initiative is supporting the deployment of specially trained Transport Safety Officers (TSOs) across several English regions. These officers work closely with police forces and the British Transport Police to enforce rules and promote safer, more respectful environments on buses, trains, and trams.

Despite the legislative push, some voices caution against heavy-handed penalties. Commentators have noted the ambivalence many people feel towards unsolicited noise in public spaces — while it can be irritating, it also forms part of urban life’s complex soundscape. Instead of relying solely on fines, there is a call to encourage the public to engage with offenders directly, fostering mutual respect and accountability without escalating into punitive measures. This balance seeks to maintain public transport as a peaceful yet vibrant shared experience.

The drive to regulate public transport noise reflects broader concerns over everyday antisocial behaviour, a persistent issue that governments have tried to address for decades. Historical efforts, dating back to 19th-century laws against street musicians and noisy conductors, show that managing urban noise has long challenged policymakers. Today’s proposals aim to modernise these efforts, applying clearer rules and better enforcement to create a more pleasant, less disruptive journey for millions of commuters.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/people-blasting-music-on-trains-and-buses-must-face-swift-justice-say-tories-TZUGL6XID5MMHERB6KR3MTAMJY/), [[7]](https://www.irishtimes.com/world/uk/2025/08/24/tories-propose-banning-bus-passengers-from-playing-loud-music/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/people-blasting-music-on-trains-and-buses-must-face-swift-justice-say-tories-TZUGL6XID5MMHERB6KR3MTAMJY/), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/apr/23/lib-dems-back-ban-on-playing-music-and-videos-on-public-transport-in-england), [[7]](https://www.irishtimes.com/world/uk/2025/08/24/tories-propose-banning-bus-passengers-from-playing-loud-music/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/apr/23/lib-dems-back-ban-on-playing-music-and-videos-on-public-transport-in-england), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly5g7v2qddo), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/lib-dems-home-secretary-house-of-lords-home-office-b1223903.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-transport-safety-officers-to-crack-down-on-anti-social-behaviour), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly5g7v2qddo)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/7c96fc22-0494-41c5-b06a-475e65e65919)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/7c96fc22-0494-41c5-b06a-475e65e65919), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/apr/23/lib-dems-back-ban-on-playing-music-and-videos-on-public-transport-in-england)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/people-blasting-music-on-trains-and-buses-must-face-swift-justice-say-tories-TZUGL6XID5MMHERB6KR3MTAMJY/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/7c96fc22-0494-41c5-b06a-475e65e65919> - The article discusses the growing annoyance among British public transport users caused by 'headphone dodgers'—individuals who play music or videos aloud, disrupting the peace for fellow passengers. The Liberal Democrats have proposed cracking down on this behaviour with fines up to £1,000, aiming to champion the frustrations of the 'quiet majority.' This issue is part of a long-standing struggle against public noise, echoing historical complaints, such as the 1864 act against street musicians and even earlier depictions in art. While some value urban noise as a sign of vitality, others find it intolerable in day-to-day life. The author explores a personal ambivalence about unsolicited noise but expresses skepticism about heavy-handed penalties, advocating instead for subtle social pressure. By encouraging the affected majority to engage, humorously or directly, with noise offenders, the piece suggests that accountability and mutual respect could help restore public transport decorum without resorting to punitive measures.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-transport-safety-officers-to-crack-down-on-anti-social-behaviour> - The UK government has announced the deployment of specially-trained Transport Safety Officers (TSOs) in four English areas to enhance public safety and address anti-social behaviour on public transport. Backed by £2.5 million in funding, these officers will patrol buses, trains, and trams, working alongside local police forces and the British Transport Police. While their primary focus is on engagement and education, TSOs have the authority to issue fixed penalty notices for certain anti-social behaviours. This initiative is part of the government's broader anti-social behaviour action plan, which includes funding for various measures aimed at reducing such incidents on public transport.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/apr/23/lib-dems-back-ban-on-playing-music-and-videos-on-public-transport-in-england> - The Liberal Democrats have proposed an amendment to the Bus Services Bill currently going through Parliament to explicitly ban playing music and videos out loud from phones on public transport in England. Under this plan, individuals who play loud content on buses and trains could face fines of up to £1,000. The proposal aims to address the discomfort caused to passengers by 'headphone dodgers' and has garnered cross-party support, with the Conservatives backing the idea, provided it is properly enforced. The initiative reflects a growing concern over anti-social behaviour on public transport and the need for stricter regulations.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly5g7v2qddo> - The Liberal Democrats are calling for fines of up to £1,000 for 'headphone dodgers'—individuals who play loud music and videos on public transport. While current railway byelaws already prohibit many forms of anti-social behaviour, including using equipment to produce sound without permission if it annoys others, the Lib Dems seek to explicitly ban playing music and videos out loud from phones on trains and buses in England. A Department for Transport spokesperson stated that strict rules are already in place to prevent anti-social behaviour on public transport, including possible fines of up to £1,000. The government is also introducing further measures to tackle anti-social behaviour on buses, including mandatory training for staff on how to respond to incidents.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/lib-dems-home-secretary-house-of-lords-home-office-b1223903.html> - The Liberal Democrats have proposed imposing fines of up to £1,000 for individuals who play music out loud on public transport. This proposal aims to address the issue of 'headphone dodgers' who disrupt fellow passengers by playing loud content from their phones. The plan involves amending the Bus Services Bill currently in Parliament to explicitly ban playing music and videos out loud on public transport in England. The initiative has received cross-party support, with the Conservatives backing the idea, provided it is properly enforced. The proposal reflects a growing concern over anti-social behaviour on public transport and the need for stricter regulations.
7. <https://www.irishtimes.com/world/uk/2025/08/24/tories-propose-banning-bus-passengers-from-playing-loud-music/> - The Conservative Party has proposed changes to the Bus Services Bill currently going through Parliament to extend protections to passengers on buses, aiming to ban passengers from playing loud music. Shadow transport secretary Richard Holden stated that passengers should not have to 'endure somebody else’s choice of crap music.' The proposal seeks to ensure operators properly enforce existing rules and introduce on-the-spot fines for such behaviour. The initiative reflects a growing concern over anti-social behaviour on public transport and the need for stricter regulations to protect passengers from disturbances caused by loud music.