

# COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

## POSITION STATEMENT

### TRANQUILLITY



Tranquillity is one of the ‘special qualities’ of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In other words, it is one of the features of the Cotswolds that makes the area so outstanding that it is in the nation’s interest to safeguard it.

Tranquillity can be defined as a state of calm and quietude associated with peace, experienced in places with mainly natural features and / or historic character, free from man-made noise and other aural and visual disturbance. It is a valuable resource, which can add considerably to people’s quality of life.

The Cotswolds AONB has relatively high levels of tranquillity, especially when compared with the surrounding urban areas. However, there is a serious risk that the tranquillity of the AONB could decline as a result of increasing levels of development, infrastructure, traffic and visitor numbers. Whilst some level of noise and other aural and visual disturbance from development is inevitable, especially during construction phases, adverse impacts on tranquillity should be avoided and minimised as far as possible and, ideally, reduced.

This issue is addressed in Policy CE4 (Tranquillity) of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 (‘the Management Plan’), which states:

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to this tranquillity, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.
2. Measures should be taken to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB by (i) removing and (ii) reducing existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

The long term aspiration, as set out in Outcome 6 of the Management Plan, is that:

- The tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, with fewer areas being affected by noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

The supporting text for this Position Statement provides additional background information and guidance on how the issue of tranquillity should be addressed in the Cotswolds AONB and its setting.

Over-arching recommendations are summarised overleaf. These over-arching recommendations – together with additional recommendations that relate to specific topics - are also shown in the supporting text to provide additional context.

This Position Statement is not targeted at temporary - and / or infrequent - workday noise, especially for such noise associated with rural land management, rural skills and / or conservation management.

The related issue of ‘dark skies and artificial light’ is addressed in a separate Position Statement and in Policy CE5 of the Management Plan.

## **OVER-ARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS**

All relevant stakeholders<sup>1</sup> should ensure that activities and proposals that affect - or have the potential to impact on - the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB:

- accord with Policy CE4 (Tranquillity) of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023;
- give great weight to conserving and enhancing the tranquillity of the AONB;
- assess potential impacts on tranquillity, particularly with regards to noise, vehicle movements, landscape and visual impacts and, where appropriate, visitor numbers;
- comply with relevant legislation and national and local policies and guidance (e.g. environmental noise regulations and licensing regulations);
- have regard to – and be compatible with – the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy & Guidelines.

‘Relevant authorities’<sup>2</sup> should:

- have regard to tranquillity when fulfilling their statutory duty of regard under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, with the expectation that adverse impacts on tranquillity will be: (i) avoided; and (ii) minimised.

Local authorities should, in addition to the above recommendations:

- seek to address the issue of tranquillity through relevant policies in their Local Plans, having regard to Policy CE4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023.
- consider whether it would be appropriate to explicitly identify any part of the Cotswolds AONB that falls within their administrative boundary as a ‘tranquil area’ in their Local Plans, such that the AONB merits a special level of regard in relation to tranquillity.

Government should:

- implement and regularly monitor a nationally consistent and replicable framework for measuring and mapping tranquillity, which can be applied and regularly updated at the AONB level.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Relevant stakeholders’ are those organisations, businesses, communities and individuals who are involved in proposing, developing, assessing, making decisions on, implementing and or reviewing activities and proposals that affect – or have the potential to impact on – the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Relevant authorities’ include government departments and their executive agencies and related public bodies, regulators, statutory undertakers, local authorities, parish councils and the Crown Estate.

<sup>3</sup> If a nationally consistent approach isn’t forthcoming, the Board will investigate the potential for developing a framework for measuring and mapping tranquillity in the Cotswolds AONB.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 WHAT IS TRANQUILLITY?

There are a large number of definitions of ‘tranquillity’, including those definitions developed by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Historic England. A comprehensive review of these definitions is provided in Appendix 1.

This Position Statement amalgamates these definitions into the following definition:

- **Tranquillity is a state of calm and quietude associated with peace, experienced in places with mainly natural features and / or historic character, free from man-made noise and other aural and visual disturbance.**

A distinction should be made between ‘absolute’ tranquillity and ‘relative’ tranquillity (i.e. the tranquillity of one place compared to another). When we refer to tranquillity in the UK, it is almost always relative tranquillity that we are referring to as very few places have absolute tranquillity.

### 2.0 WHY IS TRANQUILLITY IMPORTANT?

#### 2.1 Enjoyment

An opinion poll commissioned by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in 2006<sup>4</sup> shows people value tranquillity most as a quality of the countryside.

- **Tranquillity**, tranquil, calm, solitude, peace and quiet, were valued by 72% of people;
- **Fresh air** was valued by 34%;
- **Scenery**, was valued by 20%;
- **Nature**, wildlife or flora and fauna, was valued by 19%.

Similar research in the North East of England<sup>5</sup> asked people to select their three top reasons for visiting Northumberland National Park. Tranquillity was the most popular response.

#### 2.2 Health and Wellbeing

Being in tranquil, natural environments allows people to relax, to escape from the stresses and strains of everyday life, to recover from mental fatigue and to ‘recharge their batteries’. For example, the most recent Natural England survey of the public’s engagement with the natural environment found that 88% of the people surveyed said that spending time in a natural environment made them feel calm and relaxed. For 86% of people, it made them feel refreshed and revitalised.<sup>6</sup>

Not surprisingly, research has demonstrated that experiencing the natural environment provides a number of benefits for health and well-being. These include reduced levels of stress and anxiety and improvements in mood, self-esteem, psychological well-being, attention and concentration, cognitive restoration, social contact and physical health.

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<sup>4</sup> YouGov poll, October 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Powe, N., and Shaw, T. (2003), *Landscape Assessment: Visitor Survey – Report to the Northumberland National Park Authority*, University of Newcastle: Centre for Research in Environmental Appraisal and Management, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape.

<sup>6</sup> Natural England (2018) *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment. The national survey on people and the natural environment. Headline report 2018*. Figure 8.

Research has also shown that playing in a natural environment has a positive impact on children's development.

A comprehensive review of literature relating to the benefits that natural environments rich in wildlife provide for health and well-being was compiled, in 2015, by the University of Essex for the Wildlife Trusts.<sup>7</sup>

Very comparable evidence shows how involvement in cultural activities also make a major contribution to well-being<sup>8</sup> and it is becoming clear that similar benefits arise from engagement with the historic environment.<sup>9</sup>

## **2.3 Economy**

Since seeking tranquillity is an important reason why many people visit the countryside, it can be argued that the presence of tranquil areas helps boost rural tourism. For example, given rural tourism in the UK directly supports 380,000 jobs and £13.8 billion annually to the economy and that a Mori survey has indicated that tranquillity is the main reason why 49% of visitors go to the countryside, one can conclude that tranquillity is worth 186,200 jobs and £6.76 billion a year to the economy.<sup>10</sup> The economic value of tranquillity specifically for the Cotswolds AONB is outlined below.

## **2.4 Cotswolds AONB Context**

Tranquillity is one of the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).<sup>11</sup> In other words, it is one of the features of the Cotswolds that makes the area so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it.

As well as being a 'special quality' in its own right, tranquillity is also an important factor in people's understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's other special qualities, including its distinctive landscapes and settlements, its historic and cultural associations and its flower-rich grasslands and ancient broadleaved woodlands.

Natural England has identified relative tranquillity as one of six factors that contribute to the natural beauty of AONBs. As such, it is one of the factors that Natural England assesses when assessing landscapes for designation as a National Park or AONB in England.<sup>12</sup>

CPRE's tranquillity mapping (see Appendix 2), shows that the Cotswolds AONB has a relatively high level of tranquillity, especially when compared to the surrounding urban areas. The AONB therefore fulfils an important function for the populations of these areas as a 'breathing space' where they can 'get away from it all'.

The relative tranquillity of the AONB is one of the reasons why the area is prized for its recreational and amenity value and why it attracts 23 million visitors a year<sup>13</sup>. These visitors support a tourism industry that is estimated to be worth over £1 billion to the Cotswolds.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Wildlife Trusts (2015) *Wellbeing benefits from natural environments rich in wildlife*. A literature review for the Wildlife Trusts by the University of Essex.

<sup>8</sup> Dept. Culture Media and Sport (2016) *The Culture White Paper* pp 15-17.

<sup>9</sup> Reilly, S., Nolan, C. and Monckton, L. (2018) *Wellbeing and the Historic Environment*. Historic England.

<sup>10</sup> CPRE (2006) *Saving Tranquil Places*

<sup>11</sup> The list of special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB in Chapter 2 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan includes '*the tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution*'.

<sup>12</sup> Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

<sup>13</sup> South West Tourism (2005) *The value of tourism to the Cotswolds AONB*.

<sup>14</sup> Cotswolds Tourism (2014) *Destination Management Plan for the Cotswolds 2014-2024*.

However, there is a serious risk that the tranquillity of the AONB could decline as a result of increasing levels of development, infrastructure and visitor numbers.

This issue is addressed in Policy CE4 (Tranquillity) of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 ('the Management Plan'), which states:

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to this tranquillity, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.
2. Measures should be taken to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB by (i) removing and (ii) reducing existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

The long term aspiration, as set out in Outcome 6 of the Management Plan, is that:

- The tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB will have been conserved and enhanced, with fewer areas being affected by noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

***The Board recommends that all relevant stakeholders<sup>15</sup> should ensure that activities and proposals that affect - or have the potential to impact on - the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB:***

- ***accord with Policy CE4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023; and***
- ***give great weight to conserving and enhancing the tranquillity of the AONB.***

***The Board recommends that local planning authorities should:***

- ***Seek to address the issue of tranquillity through relevant policies in their Local Plans, having regard to Policy CE4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023.***
- ***Consider whether it would be appropriate to explicitly identify any part of the Cotswolds AONB that falls within their administrative boundary as a 'tranquil area' in their Local Plans, such that the AONB merits a special level of regard in relation to tranquillity.***

### **3.0 HOW IS TRANQUILLITY ADDRESSED IN LEGISLATION AND IN GOVERNMENT POLICY AND GUIDANCE?**

#### **3.1 LEGISLATION**

##### **3.1.1 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 states that:

- *In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.*

This statutory duty is commonly referred to as the 'duty of regard'. The expectation of the duty of regard is that adverse impacts will be avoided or mitigated where possible. As well as being relevant to proposals within AONBs, the duty of regard also applies to proposals in

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<sup>15</sup> 'Relevant stakeholders' are those organisations, businesses, communities and individuals who are involved in proposing, developing, assessing, making decisions on, implementing and or reviewing activities and proposals that affect – or have the potential to impact – the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB.

the setting of the AONB boundaries that might have an impact on the AONB's statutory purpose.

The relative tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB is one of the factors that contributes to the area's natural beauty, including its 'special qualities'. As such, relevant authorities, including public bodies, should have regard to the tranquillity of the AONB when exercising or performing any functions in relation to it.

***The Board recommends that public bodies and other 'relevant authorities' should have regard to tranquillity when fulfilling their statutory 'duty of regard' under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, with the expectation that adverse impacts on tranquillity will be: (i) avoided; and (ii) minimised through appropriate mitigation.***

### **3.1.2 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; Ancient Monuments Act 1979; National Heritage Act 1983**

The Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act imposes on planning authorities a statutory duty to have special regard to preserving listed buildings and their settings, and to conserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Both guidance and case law establish that 'setting' and 'character' can include attributes of tranquillity where it is relevant to the historic significance of these assets. Although the Ancient Monuments Act and National Heritage Act do not impose the same duty on other national designated heritage assets, an equivalent standard is established by national planning policy frameworks (see below).

### **3.1.3 Environmental Protection Act 1990**

The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 addresses, inter alia, the issue of noise (i.e. unwanted sound) as a statutory nuisance. For noise to count as a statutory nuisance it must do one of the following:

- unreasonably and substantially interfere with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises;
- injure health or be likely to injure health.

Local authorities must look into complaints about such noise and, if they agree that a statutory nuisance is happening, they must serve an abatement notice, requiring whoever is responsible to stop or restrict the noise.

Further guidance on this issue is provided on the GOV.UK website under the heading of 'Noise nuisances: how councils deal with complaints'.<sup>16</sup>

Additional legislation which can be used by local authorities to deal with unreasonable noise arising from a wide range of sources includes the Control of Pollution Act 1974, The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the Noise Act 1996, and the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999.

### **3.1.4 Environmental Noise Regulations**

The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006, as amended in 2018, implement the requirements of the European Noise Directive (END) (Directive 2002/49/EC).

The Regulations require, inter alia, that Noise Actions Plans are prepared for major roads, major railways and major airports as well as 'agglomerations' (i.e. areas with a population in

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise-nuisances-how-councils-deal-with-complaints>

excess of 250,000 and a population density equal to or greater than 500 people per square kilometre).

Noise mapping has been carried out by calculating the level of noise arising from each noise source and these form the basis for recommendations in each of the respective Noise Action Plans, including monitoring, consultations, restrictions and improvements where required.

The data from the noise mapping that relates to the Cotswolds AONB is outlined under 'How can tranquillity be measured?'

### **3.1.5 Licensing Act 2003**

Events that involve the sale of alcohol and / or the provision of 'regulated entertainment', such as the performance of live music or playing of recorded music to an audience, usually require a Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003. Licence applications should set out what potentially intrusive activities would be involved over what period and should identify measures to control and reduce noise and other intrusions resulting from the event.

If the police or the local council receive complaints about noise from a licensed event, the licence application can be reviewed, revoked or conditions attached to restrict activities or limit permitted hours. If the local council considers that a statutory nuisance exists, they can issue a noise abatement notice, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as outlined above.

***The Board recommends that, for licence applications under the Licensing Act 2003, particular consideration should be given to the current tranquillity of the site where a licence is being proposed and of the surrounding area. This should include consideration of any areas of particular ecological, heritage or landscape sensitivity.***

## **3.2 POLICY**

### **3.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework<sup>17</sup>**

Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should, inter alia:

- mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and

Tranquillity is also addressed in paragraph 100 of the NPPF, in relation to Local Green Space designations. Paragraph 100 states (underlining added for emphasis) that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space, inter alia, '*holds a particular local significance because of its tranquillity*'.

***The Board recommends that local planning authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to explicitly identify any part of the Cotswolds AONB that falls within their administrative boundary as a 'tranquil area' in their Local Plans, such that the AONB merits a special level of regard in relation to tranquillity.***

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<sup>17</sup> This section cites the NPPF (2019) which is used for day-to-day planning. In terms of infrastructure proposals comparable policies for landscape, wildlife and heritage are provided in the National Policy Statement for National Networks (2014).

Paragraphs 184-202 of the NPPF relate to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Tranquillity is an important aspect of the setting of heritage assets and the historic character of places.

***The Board recommends that when the potential impacts of proposed development on the historic environment are being considered, consideration should be given to: (i) the extent to which tranquillity is (or was) an important attribute; and (ii) how adverse impacts on this tranquillity can be avoided, minimised or mitigated.***

### **3.2.2 Noise Policy Statement for England**

Footnote 60 of the NPPF refers to the aims of the Government's *Noise Policy Statement for England*<sup>18</sup> relating to the effective management and control of environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise. These aims are:

1. avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life;
2. mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life; and
3. where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life.

Policy CE4 (Tranquillity) of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 closely reflects these aims.

### **3.2.3 National Policy Statement for National Networks**

The Government's National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN)<sup>19</sup> provides planning guidance for promoters of nationally significant infrastructure projects on the road and rail network. With regards to the potential noise impacts of such projects, the NPSNN gives specific consideration to '*the proximity of the proposed development to quiet places and other areas that are particularly valued for their tranquillity, acoustic environment or landscape quality such as National Parks, the Broads or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*'.

## **3.3 GUIDANCE**

### **3.3.1 GOV.UK guidance on tranquillity**

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance<sup>20</sup> expands on paragraph 180(b) of the NPPF (outlined above). For example, it states that '*for an area to be protected for its tranquillity ... such areas are likely to be already valued for their tranquillity, including the ability to perceive and enjoy the natural soundscape, and are quite likely to be seen as special for other reasons including their landscape*'.

### **3.3.2 GOV.UK guidance on noise**

The GOV.UK website provides comprehensive guidance relating to noise, including guidance on how the planning system can manage potential noise impact in new developments. This includes guidance on how the adverse impacts of noise can be mitigated.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Defra (2010) *Noise Policy Statement for England*.

<sup>19</sup> Department for Transport (2014) *National Policy Statement for National Networks*. Paragraph 5.188.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise--2> (Paragraph 012)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise--2>

## **4.0 HOW CAN TRANQUILLITY BE MEASURED?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

There are a number of components to tranquillity, some of which are harder to measure than others. For example, the components of tranquillity relating to the 'state' of the 'recipient' are not readily measurable, whereas other components, such as noise levels, are. This makes tranquillity a particularly difficult factor to assess and measure.

For the purposes of this Position Statement, the most relevant measures of tranquillity are considered to be:

- the CPRE and University of Winchester / Dorset AONB methodologies for calculating tranquillity;
- noise mapping;
- visual impact, as measured in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments; and
- traffic and vehicle movements;
- landscape and visual impacts.

### **4.2 CPRE and University of Winchester / Dorset AONB methodologies**

CPRE has undertaken a considerable amount of work to define and map tranquillity across England, producing 'tranquillity maps' in 1995 and 2006<sup>22</sup>.

The 1995 maps were based on defining tranquil areas as '*places which are sufficiently far away from the visual or noise intrusion of development or traffic to be considered unspoilt by urban influences*'. Areas were identified as being tranquil areas when they were a certain distance away from features such as roads, towns, airports and fire stations.

The 1995 mapping exercise was completed as a comparative study which demonstrated the reduction in tranquil areas over the 30 year period from 1960 to 1990. The 2006 mapping exercise further contributed to this comparative study, showing a further reduction in tranquil areas. This reduction in tranquillity, in the context of the Cotswolds AONB, is shown in the Intrusion Maps in Appendix 2.

The 2006 mapping exercise also used a 'Participatory Appraisal' (PA) approach, involving extensive public and stakeholder consultation, which helped to define the factors that contribute to and detract from tranquillity. These factors were weighted in proportion to people's perceptions of their relative impact on tranquillity. These weighted factors were then combined with relevant Geographical Information System (GIS) data-sets to produce the tranquillity map. A version of this map, covering the Cotswolds AONB, is shown in Appendix 3.

CPRE's maps shows that the 'shadow of development' extends much further than the development itself, with half the country being affected, or 'intruded upon', by the sight or sound of roads, aircraft, railways, urban areas, mines and power stations and power lines.

The 2006 maps currently remain (as of May 2019) the most up-to-date tranquillity maps using the CPRE methodology.

A similar approach, combining participatory appraisal with GIS data, was taken in the more recent (2013-2015) 'Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity' (BET) project, led by the University of Winchester, in partnership with the Dorset AONB Partnership and Dorset County Council.

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<sup>22</sup> Details of the CPRE methodology maps for England (2007) can be viewed at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/landscape/tranquillity/national-and-regional-tranquillity-maps>

This project was intended to be compatible with, but further refine, the CPRE methodology. For example, unlike previous studies (such as the CPRE methodology), the BET project also engaged with local residents, specifically those classed as 'hard-to-reach' members of the local community. The research concluded that the distinctive views of these local resident stakeholders has important implications for who should be involved in determining local characteristics of tranquillity and for how protected area managers might include non-expert views in their understanding and conservation of tranquillity.

In 2017, funding was secured for a follow-up project, Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity, Easy and Refined (BETER). BETER is intended to broaden out the research across both a wider area and a wider range of environments, as well as considerably speed up the survey process.

The BETER project is intended to provide a replicable framework for determining and mapping tranquillity. A similar approach has been applied in projects in some other AONBs, including the Kent Downs and Howardian Hills AONBs.

Tranquillity (or, more specifically, '% of AONB recorded as 'most tranquil') is one of the Monitoring Indicators listed in Appendix 6 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023. It is also an indicator in 'The State of the Cotswolds' report which the Board produces at least once every five years. The measure of 'most tranquil' is based on CPRE's tranquillity mapping. However, given that the CPRE tranquillity map is not currently updated on a regular basis, it is also not possible to regularly update the AONB's tranquillity indicator. Ideally, the lack of a regularly updated tranquillity map and tranquillity data should be addressed at a national level. However, in the meantime, it may be necessary to develop and apply a methodology specifically for the Cotswolds AONB in order to provide a tranquillity map and dataset that can be regularly updated.

***The Board recommends that the Government should implement and regularly monitor a nationally consistent and replicable framework for measuring and mapping tranquillity, which can be applied and regularly updated at the AONB level.***

***If a nationally consistent approach isn't forthcoming, the Board will investigate the potential for developing a framework for measuring and mapping tranquillity in the Cotswolds AONB.***

### **4.3 Noise maps**

Noise maps have been produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to meet the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive (END), referred to above, and are intended to inform the production of noise action plans, which are to be developed on a five year rolling programme.<sup>23</sup> The noise maps show where noise levels from road, rail and air traffic, and from industrial activity, exceed 55 decibels (dB).<sup>24</sup>

Noise maps for major road noise for the area that covers the Cotswolds AONB are shown in Appendix 4, with the first map showing data from 2012 and the second map showing data from 2006.<sup>25</sup> Both maps clearly show the noise impact across the AONB along the M4 and

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<sup>23</sup> Further information regarding noise maps can be viewed at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/noise/mapping/index.htm>

<sup>24</sup> The World Health Organisation defines 55dB as the level at which long term exposure can cause health problems.

<sup>25</sup> The 2012 map is extracted from <http://extrium.co.uk/noiseviewer.html>. The 2006 map is taken from the Board's previous Position Statement relating to tranquillity. Both maps show 24 hour average noise levels in decibels (above 55 decibels) with weightings applied for the evening and night periods (Lden (day – evening – night)).

the A417 Cirencester to Gloucester road, on the western edge of the AONB along the M5 and more localised impacts on other main roads in the AONB. A comparison of the 2012 and 2006 maps shows a significant increase in the number and length of major roads affected by high noise levels within that time period.

Appendix 5 shows a close up of the noise map for the A417 Air Balloon junction. The Cotswold Way National Trail and Gloucestershire Way have been super-imposed to show the extent to which these routes are affected by noise pollution in this location. The proposed upgrading of this road provides an opportunity to reduce noise levels along this section of the A417.

Appendix 6 shows the major road locations in the vicinity of the Cotswolds AONB that have been classed as 'Important Areas' (IAs). These are the areas where the 1% of the population (nationally) that are affected by the highest noise levels from major roads are located. Several IAs are located in the AONB, primarily in close proximity to the urban areas adjacent to the AONB boundary.

***The Board recommends that Highways England and other highways authorities should ensure that highway schemes within the Cotswolds AONB support the aims of the Noise Policy Statement (NPS) for England:***

- ***To avoid significant adverse noise effects***
- ***To mitigate and minimise adverse noise effects***
- ***To improve the noise environment where possible,***

***For such schemes, specific consideration should be given to the fact that the AONB is an area that is particularly valued for its tranquillity.<sup>26</sup>***

Significant noise levels can also be generated on minor roads where there is a significant amount of traffic and / or where there are a number of larger, noisier vehicles such as heavy goods vehicles (HGV).

***The Board recommends that proposals that have the potential to affect the tranquillity of minor roads should assess baseline and anticipated noise levels on such roads.***

Localised noise intrusion can also occur due to the provision of traffic calming and safety measures such as road humps and special surfaces. Whilst these measures can assist in reducing traffic speeds and therefore noise, care needs to be taken with their location and design to avoid noise intrusion.

Noise maps have also been produced for major railways. However, in the context of the Cotswolds AONB, this noise is very localised, with the noise maps just showing noise above 50dB for the train lines from Bath to Bradford-on-Avon, Haresfield to Standish and Eckington to Bredon's Norton.

#### **4.4 Landscape and Visual Impacts**

Definitions of tranquillity and tranquil areas include the absence of visual disturbance from – and overt signs of - development and man-made features. As such, the extent to which development encroaches – and visually intrudes - into the AONB landscape is clearly a factor that influences the tranquillity of the area.

This link between tranquillity and landscape is recognised by the Landscape Institute (LI) in its 'technical information note' on tranquillity.<sup>27</sup> The LI's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual

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<sup>26</sup> This wording is consistent with the National Policy Statement for

<sup>27</sup> Landscape Institute (2017) *Tranquillity – an overview*. Technical Information Note 01/2017 (Revised)

Impact Assessment also identifies tranquillity as one of the factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes.<sup>28</sup>

The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies 19 different Landscape Character Types (LCTs) in the Cotswolds AONB. The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (LSG) identifies that the potential '*loss of tranquillity*' and the '*erosion of peaceful rural landscape character*' are significant issues in these LCTs, for example, as a result of development, road improvements and excessive traffic.

The standard way to assess the potential landscape and visual impacts of a proposal is to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). As such, LVIA also play a key role in identifying potential impacts on tranquillity. Where a LVIA identifies significant adverse landscape and visual impacts, this means that there are also significant adverse impacts on tranquillity.

***The Board recommends that:***

- ***proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to – and be compatible with – the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines;***
- ***where a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment identifies adverse landscape and visual impacts, it should be acknowledged that the tranquillity of the AONB will also be adversely affected.***

#### **4.5 Traffic and vehicle movements**

Development in the Cotswolds AONB, such as housing or quarrying, is likely to lead to additional road traffic within the AONB. Development outside the AONB can also lead to increased traffic levels within the AONB, for example, as a result of commuting, business travel, school drop-offs or leisure trips.

This increase in traffic levels has the potential to have a significant adverse impact on the tranquillity of the AONB, for example, as a result of noise and visual disturbance. Therefore, assessing the likely traffic levels and vehicle movements resulting from a proposed development is a key component of assessing potential impacts on tranquillity.

As well as assessing traffic movements into and out of the proposed development site, an assessment should also be made of likely traffic movements at relevant, off-site locations within the AONB, including AONB settlements that may be affected by increases in traffic movements.

Cumulative impacts on tranquillity should also be taken into consideration in such assessments, both in respect of multi-faceted effects (e.g. noise, dust, vibration and / or visual intrusion) and with regard to the impact of the proposed development combined with other existing or proposed developments (e.g. the combined impact of HGV movements from quarries that are in close proximity to each other).

The Institute of Environmental Assessment's '*Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic*' recommends using two 'rules of thumb' for identifying the scale at which increases in traffic movements should be considered in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

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<sup>28</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. Third edition. Box 5.1, page 84.

- **Rule 1:** Where traffic flows will increase by more than 30% (or the number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) will increase by more than 30%).
- **Rule 2:** Any other sensitive areas where traffic flows have increased by 10% or more.

AONBs are specifically identified as ‘sensitive areas’ in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.<sup>29</sup> As such, Rule 2 should be applied in the Cotswolds AONB and should relate to both traffic flows and HGV numbers.<sup>30</sup> On this basis, it can be argued that an increase in traffic flows - or HGV numbers - of more than 10% is likely to be significant and have an adverse impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB. However, there may be circumstances where a lower threshold would be appropriate, for example, where there is a particularly high landscape – or historic - sensitivity or where impacts on tranquillity are already significant, including cumulative impacts.

***The Board recommends that where a development is likely to increase traffic flows – or increase the number of heavy goods vehicles – by 10% or more, this should be considered significant. Such development proposals should require a Transport Assessment and, where appropriate, a Transport Plan and / or an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Any such assessment should include consideration of relevant locations in the AONB but outside the development site.***

***The Board recommends that the Board’s Transport Position Statement, which, inter alia, advocates measures to reduce rat-running and supports lorry management schemes, should also be taken into account.***

#### **4.6 Visitor numbers**

This Position Statement has highlighted the role that the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB plays in attracting visitors to the AONB and the contribution that this makes to the economy of the AONB. However, increasing the number of visitors has the potential to degrade the special qualities of the AONB, including its tranquillity. This, in turn, has the potential to adversely affect the economy of the AONB. For example, 33% of tourism and tourism-related businesses in the Cotswolds AONB have identified that a deterioration in the quality of the Cotswolds AONB landscape, including its tranquillity, would seriously affect their business performance. It is, therefore, essential to develop a sustainable approach whereby an appropriate balance is achieved between encouraging people to visit, enjoy and experience the Cotswolds and ensuring that the tranquillity of the AONB is conserved and enhanced.

***The Board recommends that proposals that may increase visitor numbers in the Cotswolds AONB should be carefully assessed and managed to ensure that the tranquillity of the AONB is not adversely affected. Where the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB (including its tranquillity) and the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB are irreconcilable, priority should be given to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.***<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Part 1, Regulation 2.

<sup>30</sup> Given that Rule 1 equates a 30% increase in traffic flows with a 30% increase in the number of HGVs, it would be appropriate to equate the 10% increase in traffic flows in Rule 2 with a 10% increase in the number of HGVs.

<sup>31</sup> This prioritisation of ‘conserving and enhancing’ is known as the ‘Sandford Principle’, after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.

## **5.0 OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE THE TRANQUILLITY OF THE COTSWOLDS AONB**

### **5.1 Parking**

Car parking (and sometimes other vehicles) and associated manoeuvring can be very intrusive, detracting from the tranquillity of places of natural, scenic or heritage interest, especially in the case of popular tourist destinations and their surroundings. These effects are often exacerbated where insufficient provision also results in congestion.

***The Board recommends that local communities and businesses (especially those promoting and managing tourist attractions) work with local authorities to find solutions to resolve:***

- ***current harm to tranquillity arising from inadequate parking facilities while also ensuring that any new provision does not harm the natural beauty of the AONB;***
- ***the potential indirect impact of new development contributing to loss of tranquillity through insufficient provision for sensitively sited and designed parking.***

### **5.2 Heliographic Effect (Reflection of Sunlight off Surfaces)**

As indicated above, the glinting of sunlight off car windscreens can be visually intrusive and adversely affect tranquillity. Other locations where the reflection of sunlight can have an adverse effect on the tranquillity of the AONB include solar farms with highly reflective solar panels and agricultural barns or industrial buildings with reflective steel sheeting.

***The Board recommends that measures should be taken to avoid or minimise the reflection of sunlight off surfaces such as solar panels, agricultural buildings or industrial buildings, for example, by using a less reflective surface and by positioning relevant developments in a less intrusive position and / or location.***

### **5.3 Off-road vehicles**

Within the Cotswolds AONB there are a number of 'byways open to all traffic' (BOAT). Whilst these are mainly used for the purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used (i.e. for walking, cycling and horse riding) motorised vehicles, such as 4x4s and motorbikes, also have a right of way on these byways. Whilst a limited amount of motorised vehicle use might be acceptable on these byways, such use should not be allowed to adversely affect the tranquillity of the AONB or cause a nuisance for other non-motorised users.

**The Board recommends that the use of motorised vehicles should on byways open to all traffic should be managed to ensure that it does not adversely affect the tranquillity of the AONB or cause a nuisance to other, non-motorised users.**

### **5.4 Drones**

The use of recreational drones can be a significant source of intrusion and adversely affect tranquillity, especially in relation to sensitive landscape, wildlife or heritage locations. Some public and charitable conservation bodies managing areas for public enjoyment (such as Natural England, English Heritage, the National Trust and the Rollright Trust), already have by laws and / or policies to restrict recreational use of drones where they are likely to cause a nuisance or conflict with Civil Aviation Authority requirements. Owners / managers of such areas can use an online facility such as [www.noflydrones.co.uk](http://www.noflydrones.co.uk) to map areas where such restrictions exist and consent is needed to use drones.

***The Board recommends that organisations managing sensitive landscape, wildlife or heritage locations with the AONB that have not yet done so, establish by-laws, policies and other means to manage the recreational use of drones in a responsible manner to minimise loss of tranquillity within the AONB.***

## **5.6 Aircraft**

Aircraft can adversely affect tranquillity both by reason of noise and visual intrusion, even at relatively high altitudes.

Fortunately, despite the proximity of major international airports such as Birmingham, Bristol and Heathrow, the Cotswolds AONB is currently relatively clear of commercial aircraft flight paths. This is aided by the Government's objective that, '*where practicable, it is desirable that airspace routes below 7,000 feet should seek to avoid flying over Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Park*'.<sup>32</sup> However, it is worth noting that the Gloucestershire 2050 initiative, funded by Leadership Gloucestershire, has identified the development of a major regional airport for Gloucestershire as one of six major project ideas for the county<sup>33</sup>. This could potentially have a significant adverse impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB.

The military airports of Fairford and Brize Norton are located in close proximity to the AONB. Aircraft noise from RAF Brize Norton is an issue for some parts of the Cotswolds in Oxfordshire, particularly in the Witney / Burford area. There are also a number of smaller airfields in close proximity to the Cotswolds AONB, for example, Cotswold Airport at Kemble, which logged 32,698 movements in 2017. These airfields are primarily used by light aircraft, helicopters and microlights.

At a national level, the UK's aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has a key role to play in managing the environmental impact of aviation on local authorities. As a public body, the CAA must have regard to the purpose of AONB designation under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as outlined above. The CAA's website has a section on 'Frequently Asked Questions' relating to aviation noise.<sup>34</sup>

Military aircraft are covered by different rules to civil ones. For example, complaints relating to noise from military aircraft are dealt with by the Ministry of Defence.

At a local level, decisions around when an airport is allowed to be open for flights, whether aircraft can operate at night, and how many aircraft are allowed to fly on any given day are often set out as part of the planning process approving the airport's construction or expansion. In most cases, this process is run by the local authority where the airport is located. Complaints about aircraft noise should be directed to the airport where the aircraft was operating from. Airports have a duty to investigate and respond to such complaints.

***The Board recommends that bodies with responsibilities for aviation and decisions relating to airports should have regard to tranquillity when fulfilling their statutory duty of regard under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.***

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<sup>32</sup> Department for Transport (2017) *Air Navigation Guidance 2017*. Paragraph 3.3(e).

<sup>33</sup> <http://glos2050.com/default.asp>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Environment/Noise/Noise/>

## NOTES

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has the statutory duty to pursue the following two purposes:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

This is one of a series of position statements published by the Board which help to expand on the Board's policies within the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan or explain the Board's approach to a range of issues such as renewable energy, affordable housing, tranquillity, and management of roadside verges. All position statements can be found on the Board's website at: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/position-statements-2/>

The Board is comprised of members appointed by the local authorities, elected parish council representatives and individuals appointed by the Secretary of State. The Board, formed in December 2004, is the only organisation that looks after the AONB as a whole.

The Cotswolds AONB was designated in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. It is one of 38 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across England and Wales. It is the largest AONB, covering 790 sq.miles (2038 sq.km). It is a landscape of equal importance to National Parks such as Snowdonia and the Lake District.

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## APPENDIX 1. DEFINITIONS OF TRANQUILLITY

The Oxford English dictionary definition of tranquillity is '*the quality or state of being tranquil, calm*'. The term tranquil is then defined as '*free from disturbance, calm*'.

The Cambridge Dictionary describes tranquillity as '*a peaceful, calm state without noise, violence, worry etc.*'

The term is also defined in the glossary of the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) as '*a state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape*'.<sup>35</sup>

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) defines tranquillity as '*the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones*'.<sup>36</sup>

In Wales, the definition of tranquillity that has been adopted by both Welsh Government<sup>37</sup> and Natural Resources Wales<sup>38</sup> is: '*An untroubled state, which is peaceful, calm and free from unwanted disturbances. This can refer to a state of mind or a particular environment. Tranquillity can be measured in terms of the absence of unwanted intrusions or by balancing of positive and negative features. These include the presence of nature, feeling safe, visually pleasing surroundings and a relaxing atmosphere.*'

CPRE's original tranquillity maps, published in 1995, define 'Tranquil Areas' as: '*places which are sufficiently far away from the visual or noise intrusion of development or traffic to be considered unspoilt by urban influences*'.<sup>39</sup>

Research commissioned by the Countryside Agency and CPRE in 2004<sup>40</sup> identified the following factors under the heading 'What is tranquillity?':

- **Perceived links to nature and natural features** - seeing, hearing and/or experiencing nature and natural feature.
- **Landscape** - experiencing (particularly in visual terms) the landscape or elements of it including wild landscapes and rolling countryside as well as characteristics such as fields, moors, woodlands, flora and fauna, natural colours and open views and the sound of water.
- **The importance of wildlife** - seeing wildlife behaving naturally, hearing birdsong.
- **Peace, quiet and calm** - the absence of noise and the feeling of 'getting away from it all', including a need for solitude.

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<sup>35</sup> Landscape Institute, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (LI and IEMA) (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. Third Edition.

<sup>36</sup> Campaign to Protect Rural England (2006) *Saving Tranquil Places: How to protect and promote a vital asset*.

<sup>37</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Tranquillity. On-line source:

<https://gweddill.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epg/noiseandnuisance/environmentalnoise/tranquillity/?lang=en> [Last accessed 14 May 2019]

<sup>38</sup> Natural Resources Wales. (2016). State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR): *Assessment of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*. Annex. Acronyms and Glossary of Terms. On-line source: <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/679406/annex-acronyms-abbreviations-glossary-final-for-publication.pdf> [Last accessed 14 May 2019]

<sup>39</sup> CPRE and the Countryside Commission (1995) *Tranquil Areas – England Map*.

<sup>40</sup> MacFarlane, R., Hagggett, C., Fuller, D., Dunsford, H., & Carlisle, B. (2004). *Tranquillity Mapping: developing a robust methodology for planning support*. Report to the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Countryside Agency, North East Assembly, Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Northumberland National Park Authority and Durham County Council, Centre for Environmental & Spatial Analysis, Northumbria University.

The research report identifies the following factors under the heading 'What is not tranquillity?':

- Presence of humans/too many **people** - certain behaviour/activities undertaken by people which created unwanted **noise** and **disturbance**.
- Negative impacts of various forms of **transport** including vehicle **noise**.
- Negative impact of various forms of **development** including commercial and industrial development.

A similar list of contributors to – and detractors from - tranquillity is provided in Appendix 1 of Natural England's 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England'.<sup>41</sup>

'Tranquillity', (alongside 'remoteness' and 'wildness') is also recognised as a potentially important attribute of the setting of heritage assets, while 'noise, vibration and other nuisances'; 'busyness, bustle, movement and activity'; and 'scents and smells' are other relevant attributes of how the surroundings of heritage assets can contribute positively or negatively to how their historic, archaeological or architectural significance is understood and appreciated<sup>42</sup>. Similar attributes often contribute to or detract from the character of historic places (including, for example designed, landscapes).

A distinction should be made between absolute tranquillity and relative tranquillity (i.e. the tranquillity of one place compared to another). When we refer to tranquillity in the UK, it is almost always relative tranquillity that we are referring to as very few places have absolute tranquillity. The relevance of tranquillity to heritage assets and places is also relative, in this case in relation to their intrinsic historic character as peaceful or noisy and busy locations.<sup>43</sup>

This Position Statement combines some of these definitions to provide the following definition:

- **A state of calm and quietude associated with peace, experienced in places with mainly natural features and historic character, free from man-made noise and other aural and visual disturbance**

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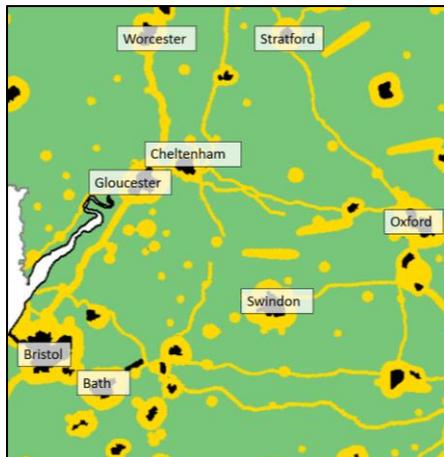
<sup>41</sup> Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

<sup>42</sup> Historic England (2017), *The Setting of Heritage Assets* Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) pp 4, 11, 14

<sup>43</sup> Historic England (2017) *The Setting of Heritage Assets*.

## APPENDIX 2. CPRE INTRUSION MAPS FOCUSING ON THE COTSWOLDS AONB AREA

### Intrusion Map, 1960

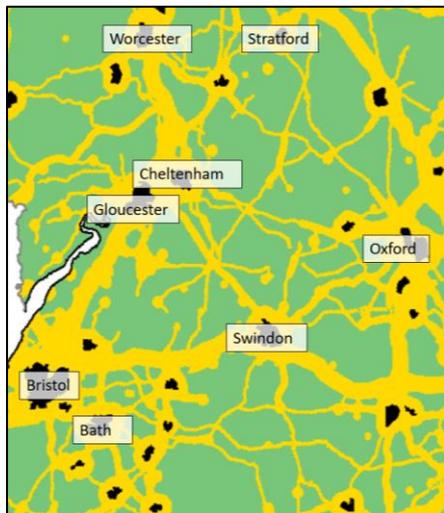


### Key

-  Areas disturbed by noise & visual intrusion\*
-  Undisturbed areas
-  Urban areas

\* Areas disturbed by urban development, major infrastructure projects and other noise and visual intrusion.

### Intrusion Map, early 1990s



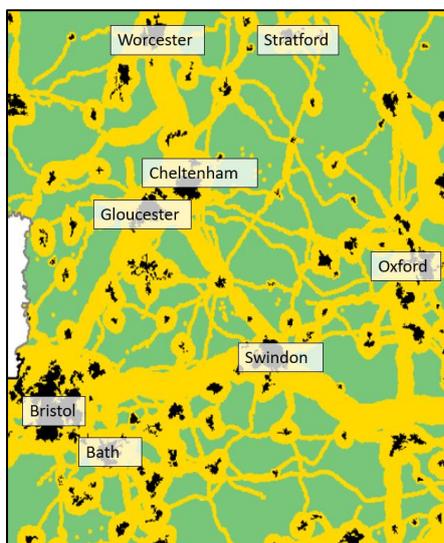
Campaign to Protect Rural England



Produced on behalf of CPRE by Land Use Consultants

Original copyright CPRE and Countryside Commission, 1995

### Intrusion Map, 2007

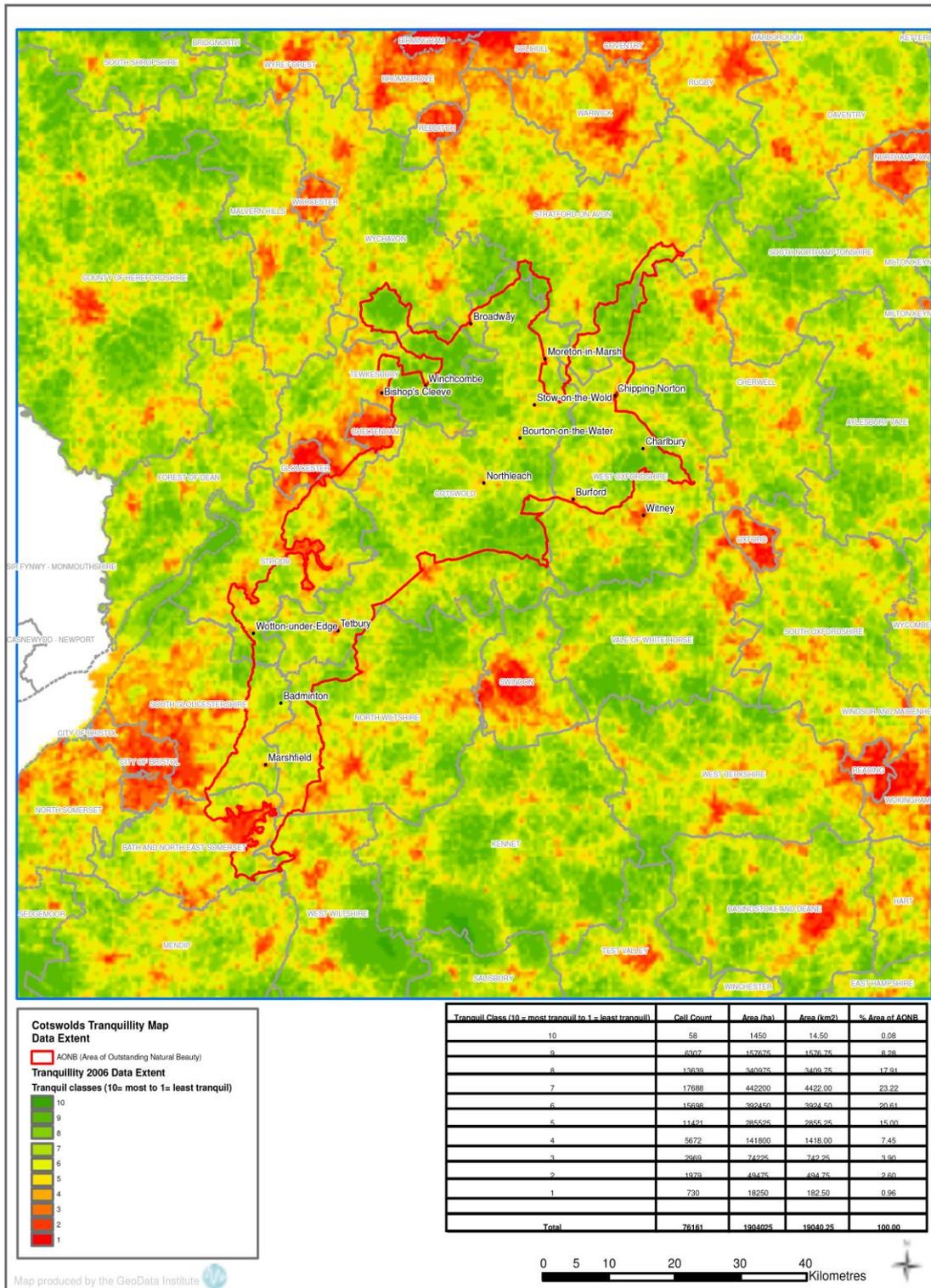


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**Further information on CPRE's intrusion maps:**

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1790-developing-an-intrusion-map-of-england>

### APPENDIX 3. CPRE TRANQUILLITY MAP, 2006



Based upon Ordnance Survey map with permission of the Controller of H.M.S.O. © Crown copyright. Reproduced under licence No. 1000409711  
 DATE: June 2008  
 MXD: GIS\_Projects\Standards\_Maps\_MXD\Tranquillity.mxd  
 PDF: GIS\Output\Reporting\Standards\_Maps\2006\Tranquillity.pdf

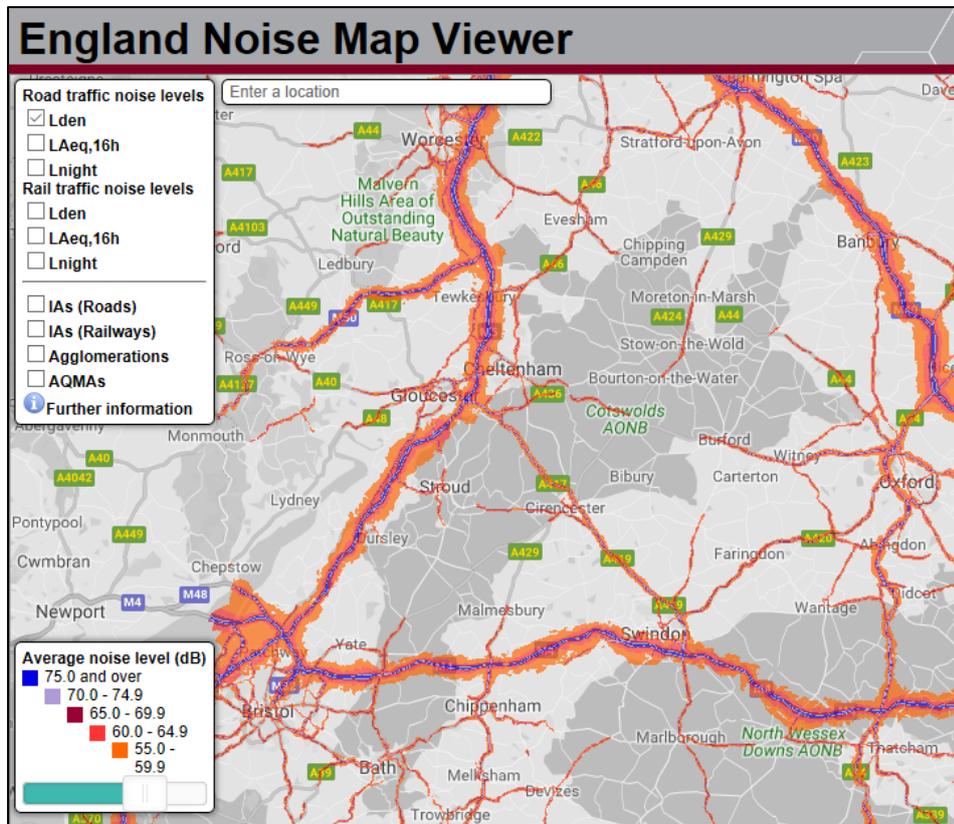
Cotswolds Data Extent Tranquillity Map



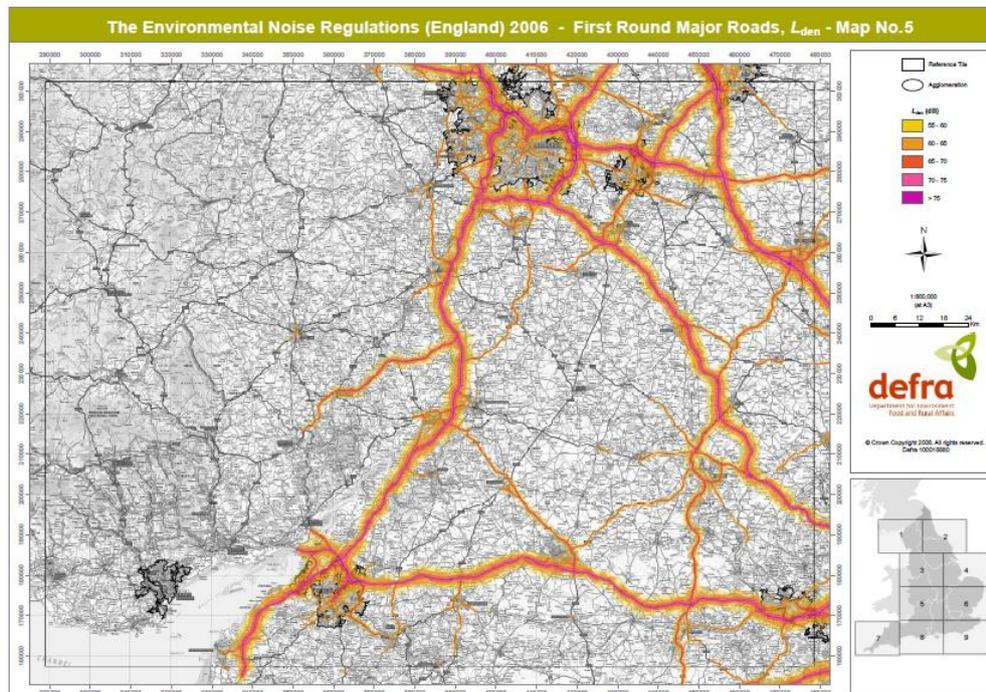
Further information on CPRE's tranquillity mapping:  
<https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/2046-tranquillity-mapping-developing-a-robust-methodology-for-planning-support>

# APPENDIX 4. NOISE MAP FOR THE COTSWOLDS AONB

2012



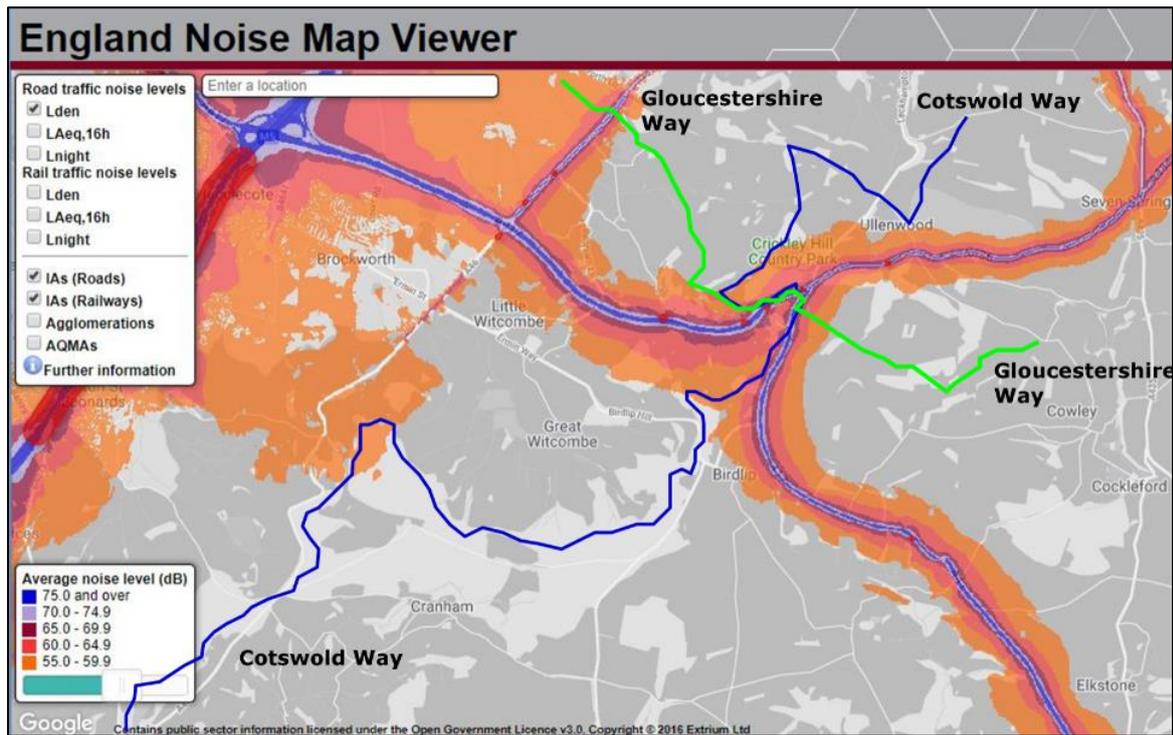
2006



Further information on the Noise Map Viewer:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-strategic-noise-mapping>

**APPENDIX 5. NOISE MAP FOR ROAD TRAFFIC IN 2012 FOCUSING ON A417 AIR BALLOON JUNCTION**



APPENDIX 6. NOISE MAP FOR ROAD TRAFFIC IN 2012 - IMPORTANT AREAS

