

Red Kite

Peace and Tranquillity in the Cannock Chase AONB

Cannock Chase AONB



COUNTRYSIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP Ltd

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1 Setting the scene

In 2010 Cannock Chase AONB commissioned Red Kite Environment and the Countryside Training Partnership to devise and deliver a peace and tranquillity study. It was a requirement of the AONB management plan that the condition of the AONB is monitored, and peace and tranquillity was considered one of the AONB's key features and attributes. The study was conducted during autumn 2010. It was the intention that the study would be repeated every five years to coincide with a review of the management plan. This is the report of the first five-year (2015) review.

As mentioned in the 2010 report, peace and tranquillity are difficult attributes to define and measure. The elements that contribute to a sense of peace include the physical properties of an area (including the proximity of roads and buildings), its use by people and by the perceptions and attitudes towards it by visitors. These perceptions can sometimes be contradictory – one person's peaceful woodland is another's uncomfortable dark space.

Many tranquillity studies have been undertaken by landscape professionals who assess an area against pre-determined criteria. The first study developed a methodology that explored local people's perceptions, asking for their most tranquil and least tranquil places in the AONB. The results of that study provided a graphic view of peace and tranquillity from those who are visiting the AONB. They formed the baseline for subsequent studies that can monitor change over time and, most importantly, to inform revisions in management practice.

2 Methodology

The methodology developed in 2010 aimed to provide a meaningful analysis that was simple enough to be repeated in subsequent years and for it to be low cost to allow the Cannock Chase AONB unit to monitor tranquillity with modest resources. The methodology involved volunteers undertaking the bulk of the survey using simple recording sheets and an A3 printed map of the AONB. The technique proved to be both usable and reliable, and the feedback revealed a high level of satisfaction from the volunteers. With minimal amendments the methodology was repeated for the 2014/15 survey.

2.1 Key features of the methodology

These are the key features of the 2010 methodology for assessing tranquillity within Cannock Chase AONB were:

- Visitors and members of the local community were asked their perceptions of tranquillity in Cannock Chase.
- Each respondent was invited to identify their **one** most tranquil place and their **one** least tranquil place in the AONB.
- Each participant was invited to say **when** and **why** the locations were most and least tranquil and **why**. Each surveyor had a cribsheet of words that were offered to the participants to help standardise responses. The responses were recorded and collated on a spreadsheet.

- Small coloured stickers marked the locations for the 'Most Tranquil' (green) and 'Least Tranquil' (red) on maps of the AONB. The stickers were individually numbered to correspond with the entries in the data sheets. Responses for 'when' and 'why' were recorded.
- The data sheets were collated to form a summary spreadsheet with recorders identified by their code letter, and individual numbers corresponding with each entry.
- The 'when' and 'why' responses were converted in **Wordle** (www.wordle.net) to identify the most used words, which are presented graphically.
- The maps were processed in a Geographic Information System to provide a visual representation of the scores for each **grid square** in the AONB.

For the 2014 / 15 study the methodology was modified by writing the grid square for **most** and **least** tranquil directly into the recording form, thus eliminating the need for marking the locations on the maps with red and green stickers.

2.2 Process

The study was conducted in the following stages.

- A half-day training session was held on 3rd October 2014 for around 20 volunteers. As some of these had been involved in the 2010 study the session was a refreshment of the methodology for them, and they helped to discuss the method with the others. The volunteers were provided with printed recording sheets for **most** tranquil and **least** tranquil and an A3 laminated map of the AONB with grid squares. During the session we discussed the words that respondents might use for the **when** and **why** responses. We were keen not to restrict the surveyors to a narrow range of words but we also wanted some consistency in approach for the 'Wordle' analysis.
- The volunteers conducted the survey at four times during the year starting during autumn of 2014, during the Christmas holiday period of 2014/15 and then repeated in spring, and the Easter and summer vacations of 2015.
- The responses from all the surveys were compiled during November 2015 into an Excel spreadsheet and then inputted to a GIS system to produce the maps. The total scores were calculated for each grid square and then grouped into ranges and colour coded. The subsequent maps are presented in Appendix 1.

3 Findings and discussion

3.1 Key findings

The success of the survey

In the 2010 survey the total number of responses was 440 for most tranquil and 434 for least. In the 2015 survey there were 870 for most tranquil and 865 for least, demonstrating that the methodology can easily be repeated. The near doubling in the number of responses has increased significantly the time needed for processing the data (three days) but has not necessarily been translated into a significantly improved sampling of opinion about tranquillity. A sampling of around 600 may be sufficient for a survey of this type.

“In opinion polls with random sampling, 95% confidence levels (plus or minus 4) can be achieved with a sample of 600 or plus or minus 3 for a sample of 1000. Researchers would ask why obtain 400 additional responses (with the associated time and cost) for a gain of just one percentage point in accuracy?”

Director Instinct and Reason

Feedback from the surveyors indicated that the survey went very well, that the methodology was quick and easy to use and the responses were easy to write into the recording sheets. The ‘cribsheet’ of standard words worked well but it was too long and people tended to prefer to just talk about the ‘when’ and ‘why’ rather than be prompted. The surveyor then ‘translated’ the response into a word that was most appropriate.

The use of grid square numbers – alphabetical on the horizontal axis and numeral on the vertical (for example B12) – was easier for the surveyors than the OS numbers (such as SJ9817). The numbers were subsequently translated into the OS number during analysis.

Around half of those interviewed had not been to Cannock Chase before so could not offer any response to most and least tranquil places, and therefore were not included in the survey. Many of those who had been before were regular visitors – often dog walkers – and were mostly happy to be interviewed for the survey. The surveyors often met the same people again, although were only included the once.

The surveyors were evenly located around the AONB and their locations were recorded.

The surveyors were all content with the survey and would be happy to be involved in future studies.

3.2 Discussion

Maps

The maps for most and least tranquil are shown in Appendix 1.

Making comparisons between the 2010 and 2015 analyses needs to take into account variations in the survey methods, such as the different number of responses between the two surveys and the different locations where the volunteers were conducting the surveys. A number of key observations from the surveys can be made, though, that show significant similarities between the two surveys, and some minor changes.

Key findings from the map and data analysis

The most tranquil areas are similar to those from 2010.

- The most tranquil areas identified in 2015 were around Brocton, Fair Oak and Horsepasture Covert. This is broadly similar to the findings of 2010. The Shoal Hill area also has a significant score for tranquillity.
- The most tranquil area of the AONB is SJ 9819, Brocton Coppice, with a score of 86. The predominant reasons were for its nature and beauty and that it is quiet and peaceful. It is considered most tranquil on weekdays in spring and autumn, although many people said that it was tranquil at any time. This is the same square that was considered most tranquil during the 2010 survey.
- The second most tranquil was the adjacent square SJ9818 (69), Sycamore Hill, again considered during the previous survey as having high tranquillity. The 'why' and 'when' for its tranquillity were the same as for SJ9819. For this part of Cannock Chase there appears to be a move eastwards to include Abraham's Valley. Tranquil scores for Abraham's Valley, SK0020 (35 – always, nature and few people), were higher in the 2015 survey.
- Another area of tranquillity focussed to the east of Fair Oak Lodge where high scores were recorded for SK0116 (48 – always, landscape and few people) and SK0117 (32 – anytime, nature, beautiful and peaceful).
- The area around Horsepasture Covert SK0413 received 21 responses (always, atmospheric, peaceful).
- Other high scores were recorded for Shoal Hill, SJ9611 (30 – weekdays, landscape and few people). This score is interesting as the score in the first survey was only 4, but this could be attributed to the location of the data collection.
- All squares wholly within the AONB score at least one point which means that tranquillity can be found by people almost everywhere in the AONB. Some squares at the periphery of the AONB, bisected by the boundary, score zero.

The least tranquil areas are similar to the 2010 survey, grouped into three areas.

- The least tranquil is an area around the visitor centre at Marquis Drive SK0015 (181 – weekends, crowds, dogs and bikes). The second area is around the Birches Valley, west of Rugeley SK0117 (132 – anytime, crowds and car park) and the third is focussed on Milford Common between Milford and Brocton SJ9720 (57 – weekends, busy and bikes). These are the same areas that were considered least tranquil in the first survey, though this time Marquis Drive scored the highest whereas during the 2010 survey it was Milford Common.
- Compared to the 2010 survey the grid squares to the West of Marquis Drive (SJ9915) and the Birches Valley (SK0017) appear to be affected by visitor pressure resulting in reductions in tranquillity.

- Most squares in the AONB have a score of at least one showing that a lack of tranquillity can be experienced almost everywhere in the AONB. This has not changed significantly since the first survey.
- As in 2010, there is the interesting situation that one of the most tranquil squares at Brocton Coppice (SJ9819) is diagonally opposite one of the least tranquil, Milford Common (SJ9720), though the latter square scores low for most tranquil unlike last time. It is assumed that the reason for most and least tranquil scores occurring close to each other is again that the car park area between Brocton and Milford is considered to be most tranquil by some, because it is more tranquil than, for example, the centre of Cannock, but least tranquil by others because it is a busy car park. An analysis of the postcode data recorded in the survey shows that there is little difference between the home locations of those considering these squares to have high or low tranquillity. The most frequent home locations for each square are ST17, ST18, WS11, WS12 and WS15.
- Square SK0116, Fair Oak Lodge, also scores highly for both most and least tranquil, exactly as last time.
- In other areas of the AONB the most and least tranquil areas are more exclusive. For example SK0413, Beaudesert Park and Horsepasture Covert, is clearly a tranquil place with no score for 'least tranquil'. This square was also identified in the first survey as exclusively tranquil. Square SJ9815 also scores highly, as in the first survey, but this time it has some 'least tranquil' scores too.
- The least tranquil squares are not as 'exclusive' as the most tranquil. The area of the Birches Valley (SK0117), which was identified during the first survey as one of the least tranquil with few 'most tranquil' scores, this time has a high score for least tranquil but also some scores for most, reflecting different perceptions of tranquillity.

Wordle word clouds

The *Wordle* word clouds show graphically the frequency of use of words. They are not a statistical analysis but simply show the use of words in an easily accessible format. As the survey responses were highly subjective, relying on perceptions and opinions, this non-statistical analysis was deemed to be appropriate for the survey.

Care needs to be taken with 'Wordle' to ensure some consistency with types of words and phrases. In the first survey we needed to edit the words and expressions used, which involved remove 'a' and 'the' and joining some words together that would be meaningless on their own – such as mountainbikes, anytime, fewpeople, nopeople, earlymorning, mostdays and weekdays. The programme is also case sensitive so all lower case first letters were changed to capitals.

Key findings from the 'Wordle' analysis

The results shown below are the cumulative results from all the survey periods.

When is Cannock Chase most tranquil?



'Anytime' was the most used response for when people found places most tranquil. 'Always' and 'weekdays' were also important times. 'Weekends' were considered to be tranquil with fewer people and this is not surprising since weekends are most likely to be busier and tranquility is found most often when there are fewer people visiting.

Why is Cannock Chase most tranquil?

'Few people', 'peaceful' and 'quiet' were given as the main reasons for tranquillity. This is exactly the same as for the first survey and is not unexpected. Most people equate tranquillity with the absence of noise, especially from other people. Other sources of tranquillity included 'landscape', 'walks' and 'nobikes'.



When is Cannock Chase least tranquil?



'Weekends' are considered the least tranquil times, with 'anytime' and 'always' having high scores. This is very similar to the results of the first survey.

Why is Cannock Chase least tranquil?

'People' were the greatest cause of lack of tranquillity. In addition 'busy' and 'crowds' were used extensively, which would have the same meaning. There has been no change since the first survey. Other frequent words were 'mountainbikes', 'bikes' and 'cars'. Mountain bikes figure highly again, even though they make little noise, but clearly detract from people's enjoyment of tranquillity. The presence of roads and buildings was not considered important.



Wordle analysis for each survey

The *Wordle* analysis was also used separately on each of the four surveys undertaken during the 2014/15 season. These are shown in Appendix 2. There are slight differences in the analysis for each of the surveys, though this may be due simply to variance in responses than to any significant seasonal change.

4 Conclusion

The results from the survey show that tranquillity can be found almost everywhere on Cannock Chase but that it is clearly focused in certain defined areas, such as Beaudesert Park and Brocton Coppice. Tranquillity is determined by quietness and lack of other people, and also by landscape and nature.

Lack of tranquillity can also be found almost everywhere on Cannock Chase, sometimes in the same places as a high degree of tranquillity. The causes for a lack of tranquillity are largely the presence of other people, crowds and mountain bikes. Cars and noise are also cited as causes of disturbance but it is mostly the presence of other people that causes 'non-tranquillity'. The contradiction of some places being both tranquil and not tranquil is due simply to differences in perception – a car park can be considered tranquil for some and too busy for others. The home locations of those surveyed appears to have no impact on their consideration of an area to have either low or high tranquillity.

Comparisons with the results of the first survey show that there has been little change in the sense of tranquillity in Cannock Chase. There has been some spread to the west for the two highest "least tranquil" squares that may warrant further investigation and action reflected in the review of the AONB management plan

The grid squares for most and least tranquil are very similar and there is also similarity in some squares appearing as both most and least tranquil. The causes of tranquillity and lack of tranquillity are also very similar.

5 Recommendations

Repeating the Peace and Tranquillity survey has demonstrated that the methodology is appropriate and simple to adopt for a Protected Area the size of Cannock Chase AONB.

For a repeat of the survey in 2019/20, consideration should be given to:

- **Limiting data collection to c600 responses.** 95% confidence levels can be achieved with these number of responses and the statistical significance of extra data would not be proportionate to the additional level of resource required to collate and analyse the data.
- **Undertake surveys at any time of year.** There was no significant difference between the between the surveys undertaken at the different times of year. In future, surveys undertaken, say, twice a year would suffice, perhaps in spring and autumn.
- **Standard format of recording.** The use of a standardised list of words was clearly a benefit to the surveyors although all felt the list was too long. Interviewees tended to choose just from the first few words rather than reading through the whole list. A shorter word selection presented as a 'cloud' of words, rather than a list would probably work better.
- **Use of digital recording.** There is opportunity to reduce data processing time by recording it digitally 'in the field'. This would require the surveyors to use digital equipment, such as iPads or other tablets, and to be confident about using them in remote places in the AONB. During the feedback session the surveyors were not averse to using digital recording equipment but had reservations about using expensive equipment in remote places and were concerned about being able to see a screen in bright light. Technology is likely to progress significantly in the next five years when new technologies appropriate to the survey may be available.

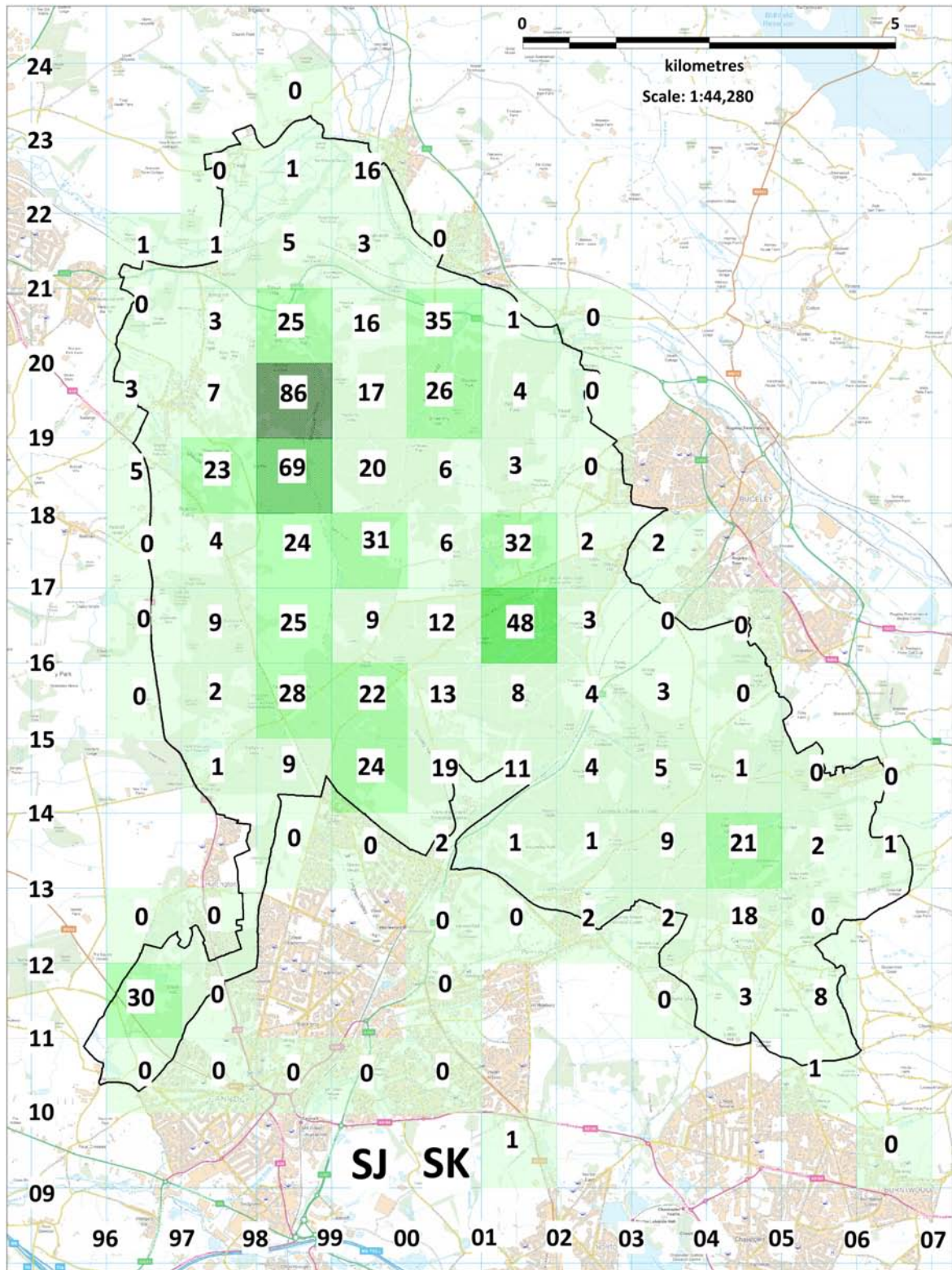
Consideration should also be given to improving management of visitors to Cannock Chase. In areas where currently there is a high sense of tranquillity due to low visitor pressure it is desirable that these continue to provide tranquillity for visitors. Increasing visitor pressure to these areas by, for example, encouraging visitors to the 'hotspots' to disperse to other areas will impact on tranquillity and may also damage vulnerable landscapes and habitats. Whatever measures are taken they must be appropriate for each area and take account of the impact of visitors on vulnerable landscapes and habitats.

We suggest the following as potential options to help with visitor management:

- Providing interpretation for the popular visitor sites that explains their interests and provides information on walking and cycling connections to other popular sites. Interpretation could be in the form of leaflets, panels, pdf downloads from the website, or static exhibitions at visitor centres and TICs. This will help to inform visitors to the popular sites and to encourage a more satisfying visitor experience.
- Updating the interpretation strategy to include interpretation mechanisms that tackle issues of visitor pressure and management.

Appendix 1 Maps

Most tranquil, all squares and all scores

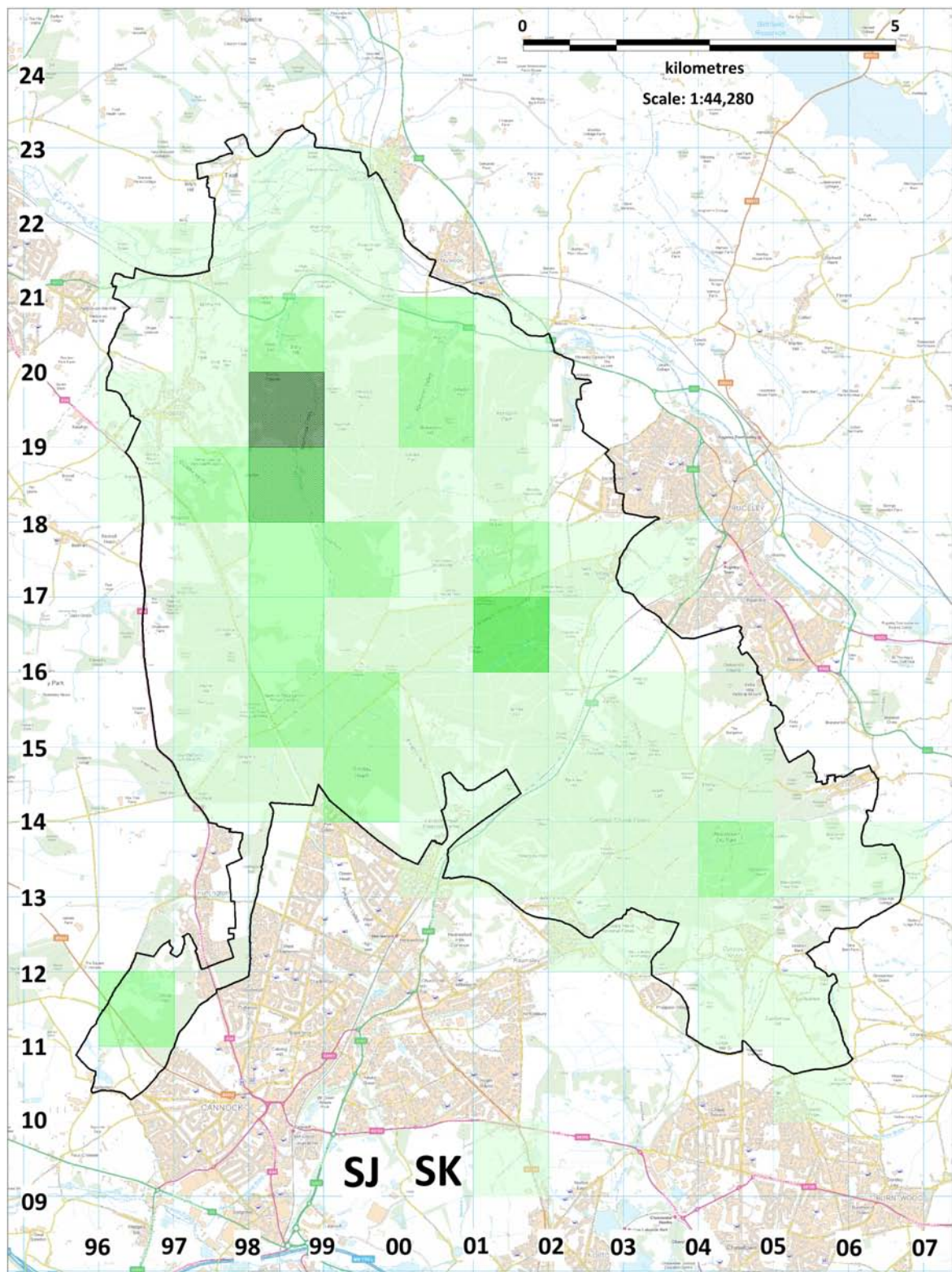


Most Tranquil

Scores:

Key: AONB 1 - 20 21 - 40 41 - 60 61 - 80 81 - 100

Most tranquil, squares only

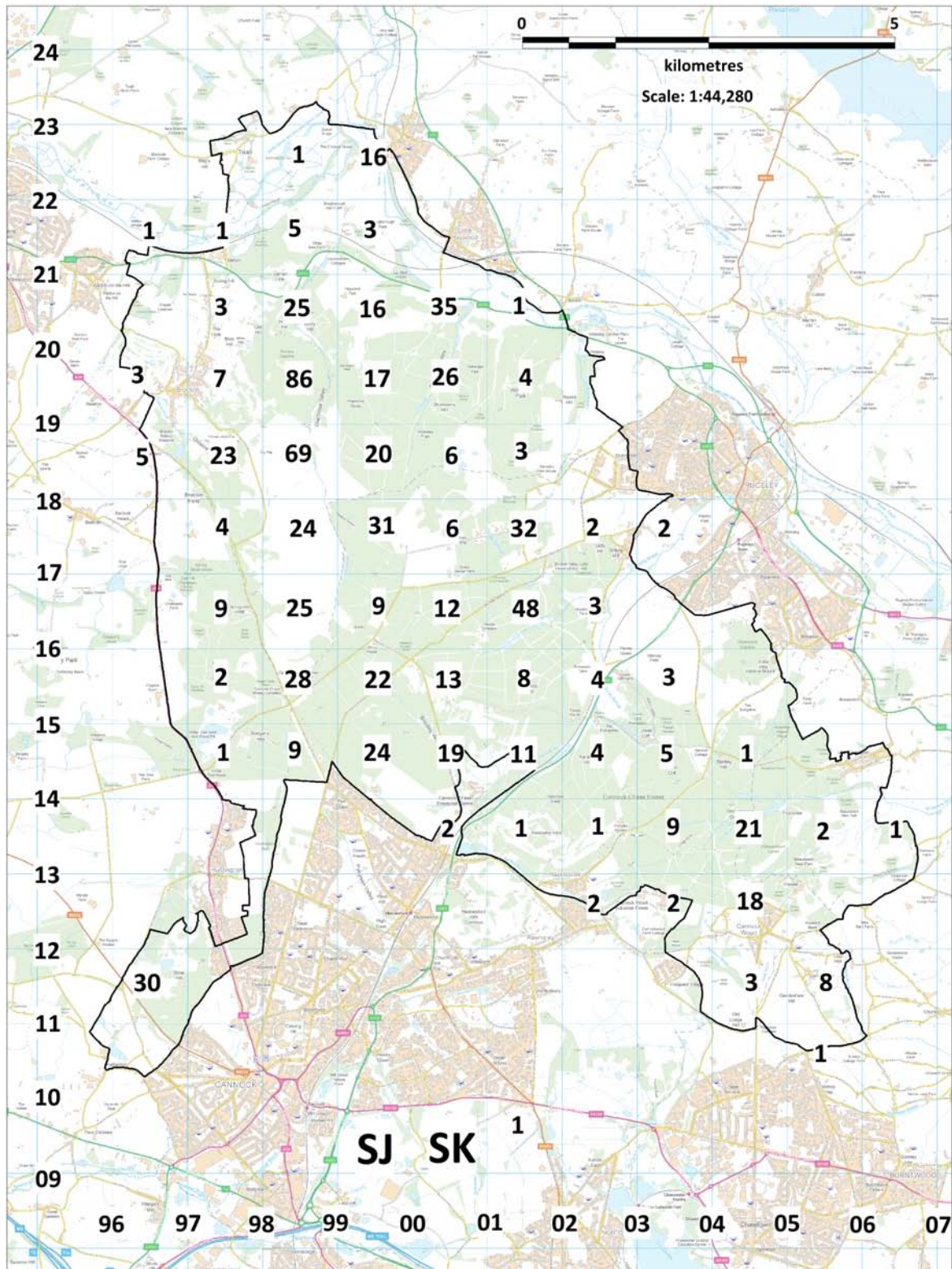


Most Tranquil

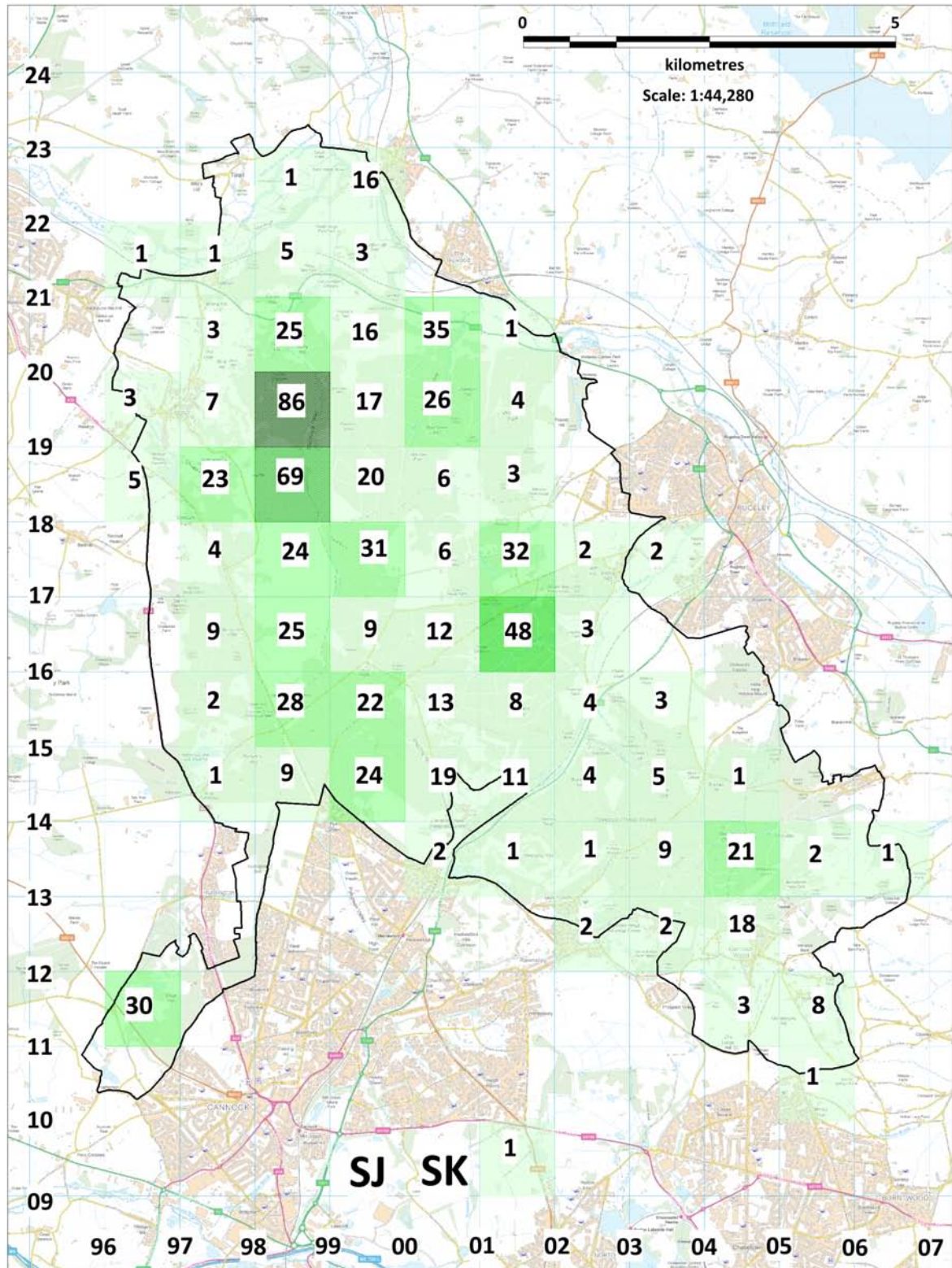
Contains OS data @ Crown Copyright (and database right) 2015



Most tranquil, scores only



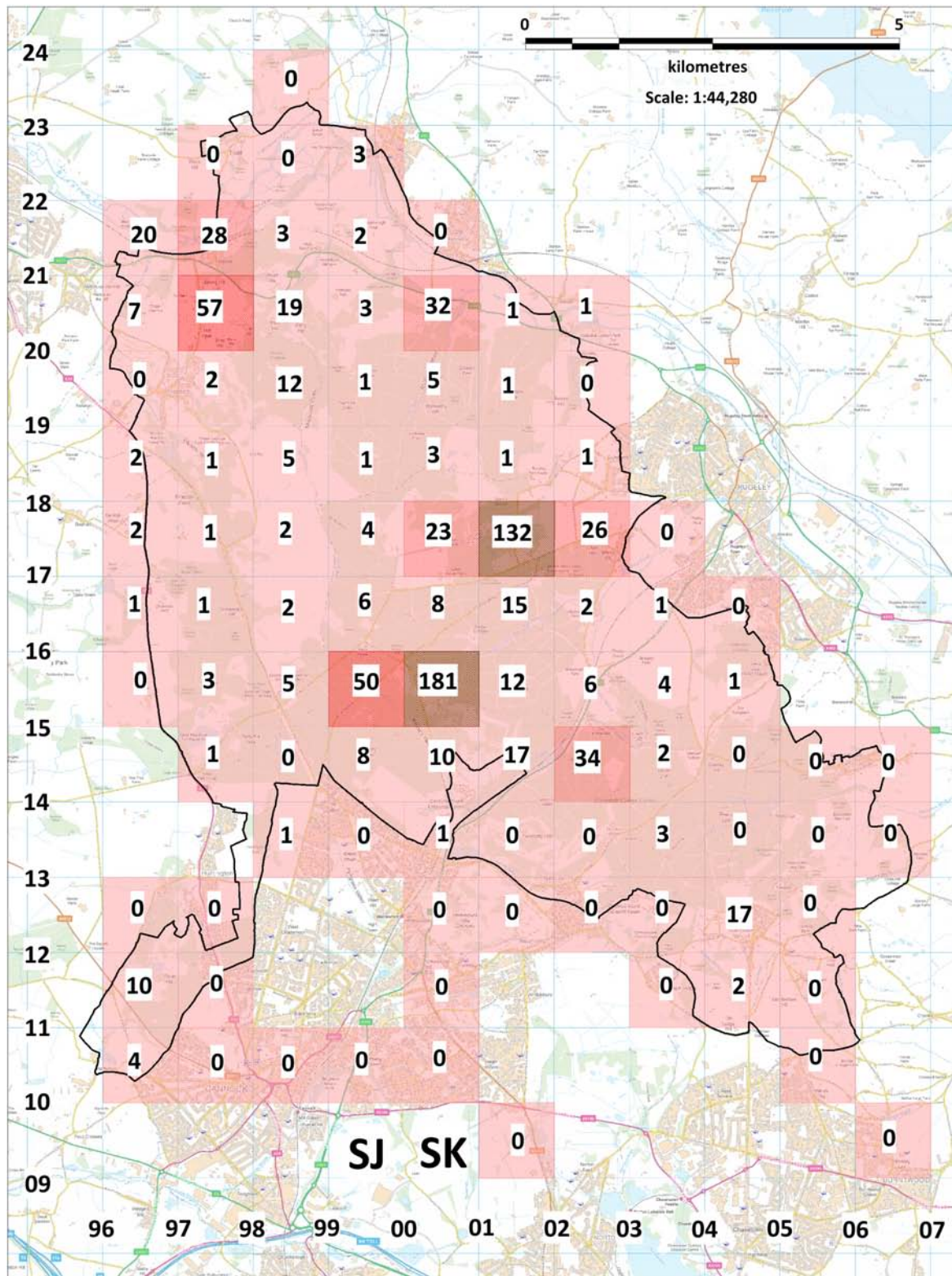
Most tranquil, squares and scores more than 1



Most Tranquil

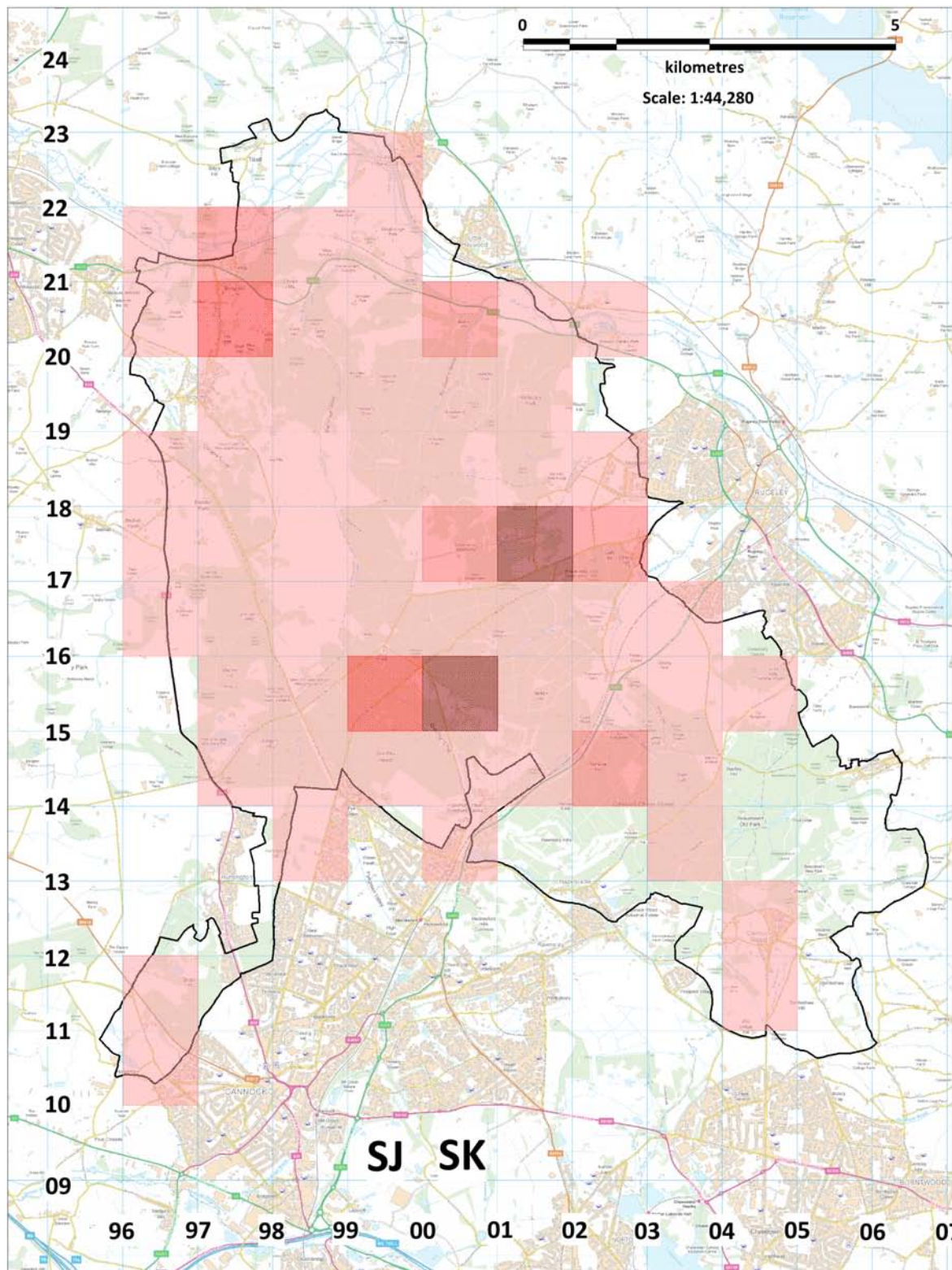


Least tranquil, all squares and all scores



Contains OS data @ Crown Copyright (and database right) 2015

Least tranquil, squares only

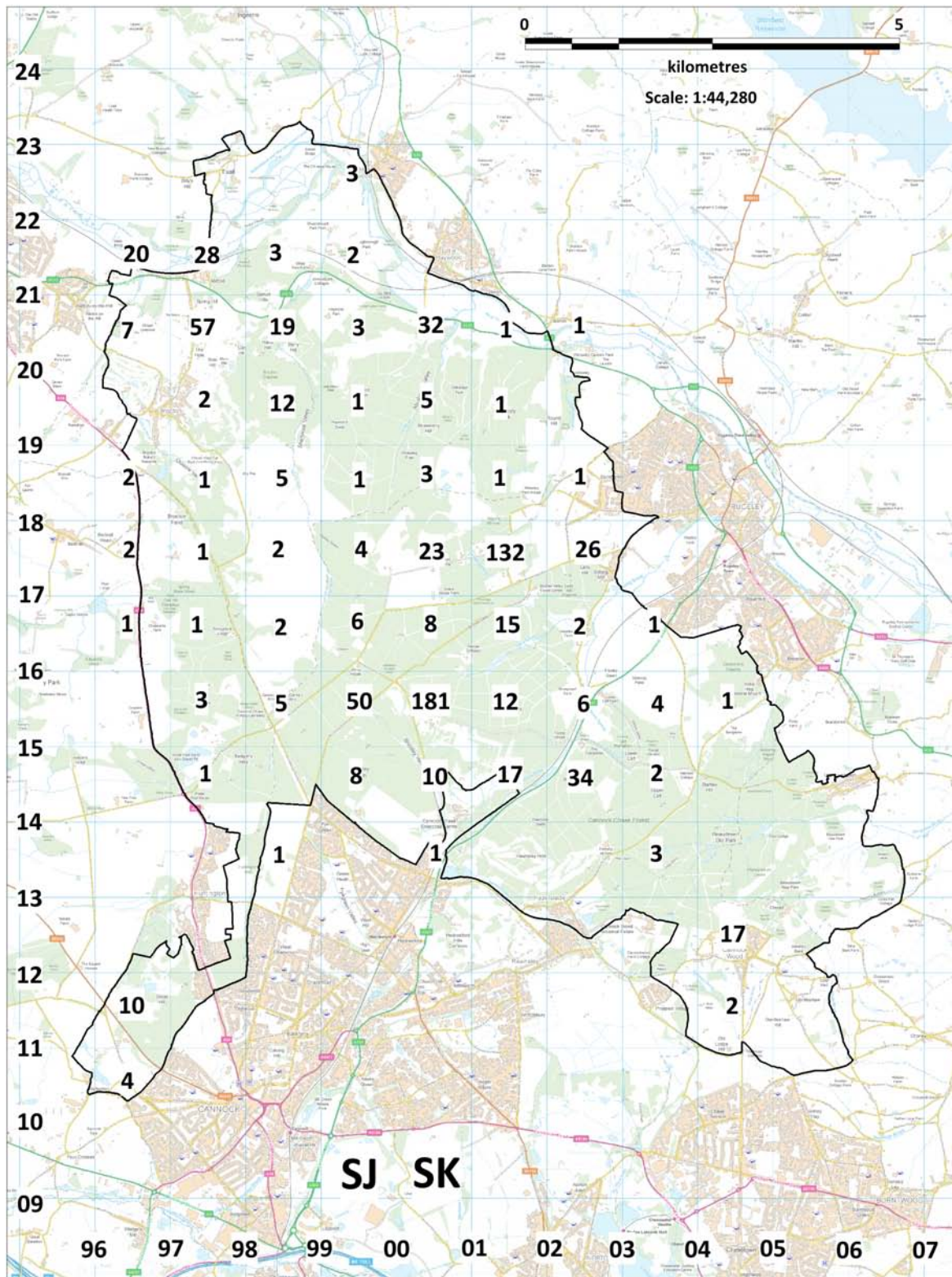


Least Tranquil

Contains OS data @ Crown Copyright (and database right) 2015

Key: AONB 1 - 20 21 - 40 41 - 60 more than 101

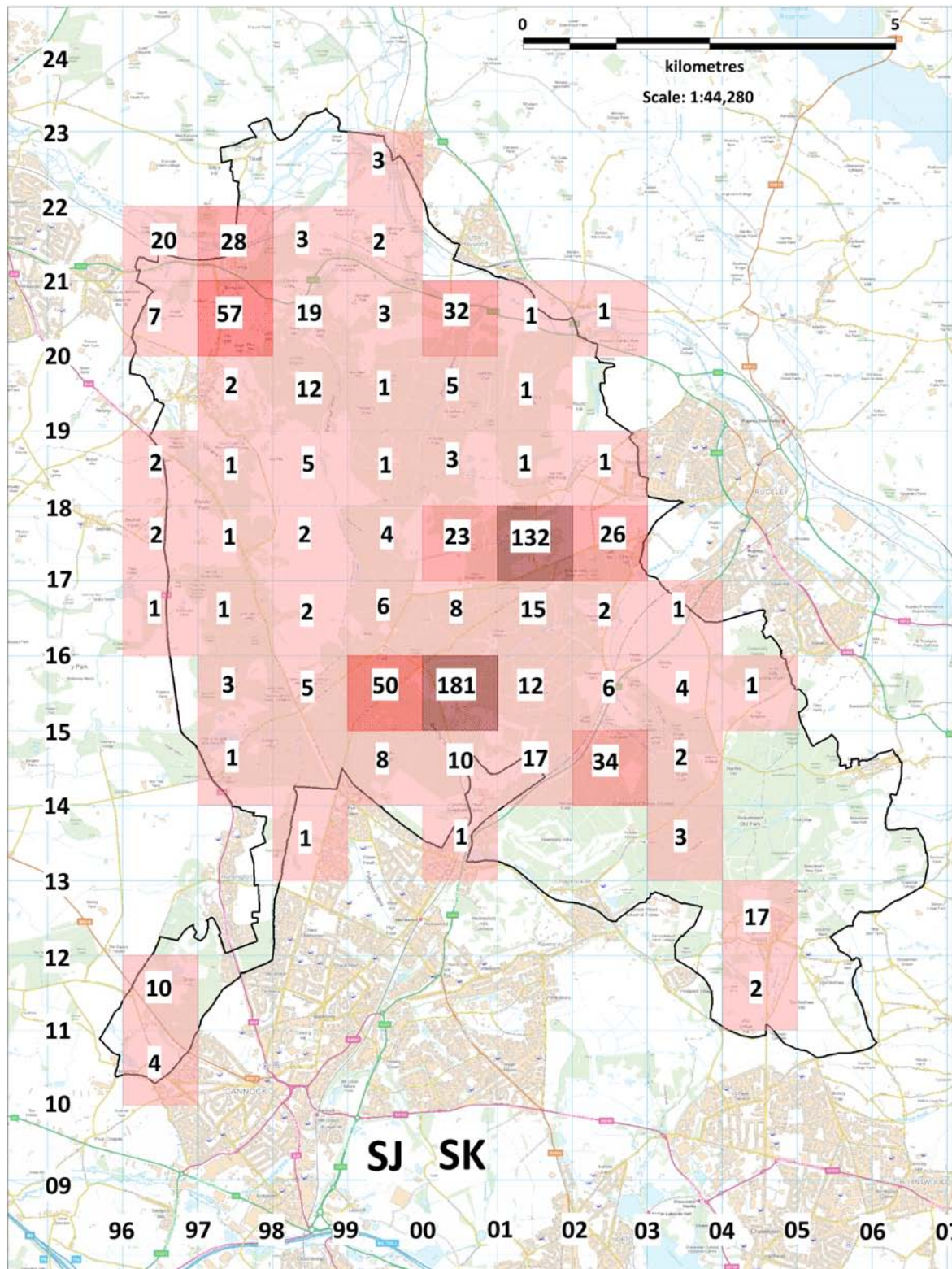
Least tranquil, scores only



Key:  AONB **Least Tranquil**

Contains OS data @ Crown Copyright (and database right) 2015

Least tranquil, squares and scores more than one



Key: AONB 1 - 20 21 - 40 41 - 60 more than 101

Appendix 2 Wordle word clouds

When and Why Cannock Chase is MOST tranquil ~ split by survey period

	When	Why
Period One ~ Oct to Dec 2014		
Period Two ~ Jan to Mar 2015		
Period Three ~ Apr to Jun 2015		
Period Four ~ Jul to Aug 2015		

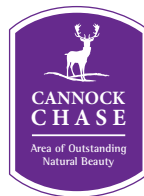
When and Why Cannock Chase is LEAST tranquil ~ split by survey period

	When	Why
Period One ~ Oct to Dec 2014		
Period Two ~ Jan to Mar 2015		
Period Three ~ Apr to Jun 2015		
Period Four ~ Jul to Aug 2015		

Prepared for Cannock Chase AONB by

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COUNTRYSIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP Ltd



We would like to offer our thanks to everyone who provided the information and insights that enabled this work to be carried out. Any errors and misinterpretations in the report are in good faith and remain our responsibility.

***Red Kite Environment
Countryside Training Partnership
December 2015***