

Peace and Tranquillity in the
Cannock Chase AONB
Cannock Chase AONB



Image by Cannock Chase AONB Unit

Final Report
March 2010

Peace and Tranquillity in the Cannock Chase AONB

Cannock Chase AONB



Image by June Jukes

Red Kite



COUNTRYSIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP Ltd

Red Kite Environment

Pearcroft Pearcroft Rd Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2JY

Tel: 01453 822013 *Fax:* 01453 791969

Email: info@redkite-environment.co.uk

Red Kite Environment
Countryside Training Partnership
ELP
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Cannock Chase AONB is one of 41 AONBs in England and Wales and is the smallest on the mainland, at 68 square kilometres. It is a requirement of the AONB management plan that the condition of the AONB is monitored to ensure it is managed in a way that conserves and enhances its key features and attributes. 'Peace and tranquillity' is recognised as one of these conditions and is a nationally recognised key indicator on the health of an AONB.
- 1.2 Peace and tranquillity are difficult attributes to define. They are determined by a number of factors including the physical properties of the area – the proximity of roads and buildings and the use of an area by visitors – and by the perceptions and attitudes of people who are using the landscape. Perceptions of tranquillity can sometimes be contradictory – one person's peaceful haven of, say, woodland, can be another's uncomfortable dark space to be avoided. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England has a national tranquillity map of England that uses a uniform approach to tranquillity assessment, and this is a useful starter for more detailed studies.
- 1.3 A study undertaken during 2006-07 in Cannock Chase AONB began to map peace and tranquillity in the area but raised a number of issues about the methodologies used and the involvement of the community. A subsequent study by Land Use Consultants reviewed all other methodologies used nationally and recommended the development of a new approach involving the use of GIS to map results and the involvement of local people to provide their own perceptions of tranquillity. Red Kite Environment and the Countryside Training Partnership were appointed to develop this approach and to undertake a first survey that would establish a baseline for the monitoring and evaluation of future management policies when the survey is repeated at a suitable point in the future.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 In developing a methodology for assessing peace and tranquillity in the AONB we were mindful of the need for the technique to be robust enough to provide a statistically meaningful result, for it to be simple enough to be repeated easily in subsequent years, and for it to be low cost to allow the AONB Unit to monitor tranquillity regularly without excessively draining resources. Our approach focused on the involvement of volunteers to undertake the survey, providing them with training in survey techniques, a straightforward approach that was easy to deliver and a simple proforma to record responses. By developing this approach we maximised the responses with minimal investment and provided a first baseline survey that identified very clearly the areas of Most and Least tranquillity within the AONB.

Key features

- The assessment was based on perceptions of tranquillity in the AONB by AONB partners, representatives of interest groups and the community.
- Each respondent was invited to identify their **one** most tranquil place and their **one** least tranquil place in the AONB.
- Each participant was also invited to say **when** the locations were most and least tranquil and **why**, and their responses were recorded on spreadsheets.
- The locations were marked by small coloured stickers (Green for 'Most' and red for 'Least') on 'Most Tranquil' and 'Least Tranquil' maps of the AONB, while the 'when' and 'why' responses were tabulated in a spreadsheet. The stickers were individually numbered to correspond with the entries in the spreadsheets.
- The spreadsheets were compiled to form a summary spreadsheet with recorders identified by their code letter, and individual numbers corresponding with the entries.
- The 'when' and 'why' responses were converted in **Wordle** (see 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.

Process

There were six key stages in the analysis process.

- The consultants attended the AONB Annual Conference in October 2009 to trial the methodology, and ran a session with participants, inviting each to identify their most and least tranquil areas and inputting their **when** and **why** responses directly into an Excel spreadsheet on two laptops. At the end of the session the locations were presented on maps and the responses converted using **Wordle** into 'word clouds' to show the frequency of the use of words.
- A half day training session was held on 23rd November for around 20 volunteers, to train them in the methodology to be used and in survey techniques and health and safety issues. The volunteers were provided with a printed sheet with space for up to 30 responses for Most and Least tranquil, an A3 laminated map of the AONB, and red and green stickers for showing locations on the maps. Although we were anxious not to limit the surveyors to a narrow range of words for the **when** and **why** responses we felt it was important to have some consistency in approach so that the

Wordle analysis would provide a clear response. Discussion was therefore held on the types of words to use, and to limit them to as few as possible in each column.

- The volunteers were given three weeks to get responses, which could be collected from anywhere inside or outside the AONB.
- A follow up session was held on 16th December to review the results and to compile responses. Two summary maps were produced with total scores for grid squares.
- Following the second session the scores were added to the results from the Annual Conference, the ***when*** and ***why*** responses were inputted into compilation spreadsheets and converted in ***Wordle***, and the total scores calculated for each square.
- The total scores were grouped into ranges and colour coded, and then presented in maps (see Appendix 3).

3 Findings and discussion

Key findings

How well did the survey go?

- 3.1 The success of piloting the methodology at the annual conference where 60 responses were generated from the delegates in a short workshop session gave confidence that the survey could easily be replicated by involving volunteers. A total of 22 volunteers were recruited, although two had to withdraw before completing the survey, and two worked as a team. 19 separate maps and record sheets were completed. The total responses from the conference and the volunteer survey were 440 for Most Tranquil and 434 for Least Tranquil. The inconsistency was simply due to some of the surveyors having unequal responses. As the survey was undertaken over just a three week period in late November and early December this was considered a good response. Many of the surveyors completed 30 responses.
- 3.2 The surveyors had few problems with the survey – all said that it was quick and easy to undertake, that very few people raised any objection to being involved in the survey and that the responses were easy to categorise. During the follow-up session on 16th December the data was easy to compile and the summaries provided a quick analysis as an almost instant feedback to the surveyors. The ease of delivering the survey was significantly enhanced by the high level of camaraderie amongst the volunteers, indicating a good working, and socialising, relationship with the AONB Unit!
- 3.3 The record sheets and laminated maps worked well and the coloured stickers were easy to apply. The individual numbers on the stickers, which corresponded with the numbers on the spreadsheets, which allowed for tracking through to the final compiled spreadsheet worked easily. The final Excel spreadsheet is grouped by surveyor's codes but can be re-ordered to show results from each grid square.
- 3.4 The *Wordle* analysis gave a rapid visual presentation of the frequency of words used. Care was taken to edit the words to provide a consistent result (see Discussion below).

Discussion

Key points coming out of the findings:

Maps

- 3.5 The most tranquil area identified in the survey is square SJ9819, Brocton Coppice. It received almost double the number of scores of any other square. It scored for its sense of peace and solitude, its remoteness and its trees and wildlife. People found it tranquil at all times but especially on weekdays and in mornings and evenings.
- 3.6 Other 'Most Tranquil' squares of note are areas around Brocton Coppice including Haywood Warren, Sycamores Hill, Sherbrook Valley and Marquis Drive (SJ9718, 9818, 9918, and 9820). This whole area appears to be the most favoured for its tranquillity, largely for its quietness, sense of solitude, wildlife and the landscape at any time. The

reasons for its sense of tranquillity are quietness, solitude, no people and wildlife. Other notable areas include the lakes near Fair Oak Lodge (SK0116, for quietness, landscape and water), the area around Wolsley Park (SK0118, for quietness, attractiveness and solitude), the war cemeteries at Broadhurst Green (SJ9815 for peacefulness and atmosphere) and the area around Beaudesert Old Park and Horsepasture Covert (SK0313 and 0413, for quietness, solitude and views).

- 3.7 Nearly all squares in the AONB score at least one showing that tranquillity can be found by some people almost everywhere in the AONB.
- 3.8 The least tranquil squares are focused in three areas – the area between Millford and Brocton (squares SJ9720 and 9721), the area around the Shooting Butts Centre west of Rugeley (SK0117 and 0217) and the Visitor Centre at Brindley Heath (SK0015 and 0115). The reasons for their being least tranquil are noise and traffic, and above all, other people. Again, nearly all squares within the AONB have a score of at least one showing that a lack of tranquillity can be experienced by some people almost everywhere in the AONB.
- 3.9 An interesting finding is that one of the most tranquil squares (9818) is diagonally adjacent to one of the least tranquil (9720), and that this latter square also scores quite highly for 'most tranquil'. There is a car park in square 9720 – between Brocton and Millford – where some people will find a sense of tranquillity compared to, say, the urban areas around Stafford, but which other people will find too busy and noisy for the number of cars parking. Many people find tranquillity, however, close by in Brocton Coppice which is only a short walk from the car park. The reasons why these squares score highly are the sense of peace, water, trees and views in midweek, mornings and evenings (most tranquil), and the crowds, traffic and noise in the summer and at weekends and holidays (least tranquil). Some people find this area to be least tranquil at any time, while others find it most tranquil also at any time.
- 3.10 Square no 0116, Fair Oak Lodge, also scores for both 'most' and 'least tranquil'. Analysis of the reasons why show that it is the views, wildlife and water on weekdays, early mornings and evenings that score for 'most tranquil', while the car park, number of people and play area at weekends and bank holidays score for 'Least Tranquil'. This shows that it is clearly a popular place to visit and those who seek tranquillity here choose to visit at the least popular times.
- 3.11 In other areas within the AONB the most and least tranquil areas are more markedly exclusive. For example, Beaudesert Park (0423) is clearly a tranquil place and it has no score for 'least tranquil'. If people are visiting this area for peace they are clearly not disturbing others who may also be there. There is also little disturbance from cars and bikes, even though there is a car park nearby. The area around the war memorials (9815) is also very tranquil (peaceful and atmospheric at all times) with only one score for least tranquil (for 'vulnerable' in the evenings). The area around the Shooting Butts Centre (0017) is considered least tranquil by many people for the number of people using it, the play area and its use by mountain bikers, most specifically at weekends, while it has a very low score for 'most tranquil' as a safe site for children's activities.

Wordle word clouds

- 3.12 The *Wordle* word clouds (see Appendix 1) provide a vivid picture of the frequency of use of words though care needs to be taken during the analysis to maintain a consistency in the spelling and choice of words to provide an accurate picture of their use. Certain amendments were made to words and phrases before the word clouds were created. These were:
- Singular and plural words were made consistent. For example 'evening' and 'evenings' have the same meaning but would be presented as two words. The following were used – morning, evening, weekdays, holidays, weekdays.
 - Some words were combined where they were used as a phrase, as the individual words mean little on their own, eg mountainbikes, mosttimes, fewpeople, nopeople, carpark, earlymorning, lateevening, sundaymorning, mostdays. Some phrases were kept separate where they would become too long, such as bank holiday Monday.
 - The software is case sensitive, so 'people' and 'People' are presented as two different words. Capitals were used throughout, though occasionally a lower case word was used as part of a phrase.
 - Exact similes were made consistent – eg 'all times' was changed to 'always', though 'anytime' was kept separate from 'always' as it has a slightly different meaning. 'Mostdays' was kept separate as it was felt to have a slightly different meaning to 'Mosttimes'.
- 3.13 The word clouds provide no statistical information on the frequency of use, but illustrate in a very visual way the preferences for words and phrases. As the survey is highly subjective anyway, relying on perceptions and opinions rather than an empirical analysis, it was felt a non-statistical approach was appropriate.

The Key findings from the *Wordle* analysis are:

Most tranquil 'why'

- 3.14 'Quiet' was the most reason given for a sense of tranquillity, followed by 'peaceful'. It was the absence of noise that provided most people with the tranquillity they desired. It was also the absence of other people – fewpeople and nopeople – and solitude. Other important sources of tranquillity were found to be views, a sense of remoteness, water, trees and wildlife.

Most tranquil 'when'

- 3.15 'Anytime' was the most common expression used for when people found tranquillity at their favourite place, though weekdays, midweek, morning and evening were also important times. Few people found weekends to be tranquil times, though since their source of tranquillity was the absence of other people this is not surprising.

Least tranquil 'why'

- 3.16 'People' were by far the greatest cause of lack of tranquillity in the AONB. The word was used significantly more than any other during the survey. Other important causes were traffic, cars, 'busy', noise and mountain bikes. Interestingly, although mountain bikes create no significant noise their presence clearly detracts from tranquillity. The proximity of buildings and other built features, often associated with a lack of tranquillity, was not

considered important at all. The presence of roads is also not considered to cause a lack of tranquillity, just the traffic they carry.

Least tranquil 'when'

- 3.17 Weekends are by far the least tranquil times in the AONB, though for the locations that people find un-tranquil 'any time' and 'always' are expressions often used. The spreadsheets link 'people' and 'weekends' very closely, which is not a surprising result.

Conclusions

- 3.18 The results of the assessment clearly identify the causes of lack of tranquillity as predominantly 'people', followed by 'traffic', 'cars' and 'noise'. For some areas of the AONB, such as Beaudesert Park, the response was unequivocal; people find it tranquil because of the lack of other people and noise. In other areas, however, there is a contradiction in responses. The area between Brocton and Millford is tranquil for some and very un-tranquil for others, even at the same time, while Fair Oak Lodge is tranquil for some when there are few people around – mid-week and mornings and evenings – but un-tranquil at weekends and holidays when it has more visitors. For some people, though, it is tranquil all the time, while for others it is *un-tranquil* all the time.

4 Recommendations

Frequency of monitoring

- 4.1 This survey is the first of a series of tranquillity assessments for the AONB, and will be the baseline for all subsequent surveys. Regular monitoring will help inform the development of management policy and actions and also guide implementation. We would recommend that surveys are undertaken to coincide with the reviews of the AONB Management Plan – every five years. Ideally, the survey should take place as part of the review process, perhaps a year or so before the publication of a revised plan allowing time for the results of a survey to guide the revised objectives, policies and actions.

Impact on management action

- 4.2 Tranquillity is a subjective quality that is perceived very differently by different people. For areas like Beaudesert Park and Brocton Coppice where the desire for lack of disturbance is paramount a suggested management principle might be to avoid actions that might encourage noise and disturbance, such as developing more car parks, and maintaining natural landscapes and wildlife habitats. Visitor management should be focused on encouraging people to use forest areas where their impact on each other is less, rather than the heathland which has high wildlife importance and open views. In areas such as Millford and Fair Oak Lodge where the causes of tranquillity are much more complex, suggesting clear-cut management actions is much more difficult. In these areas it is probably best to maintain a concentration of visitor activity – the areas are clearly appreciated by some – and to mitigate some of the worst effects of disturbance and noise through better car park design and effective interpretation.

Maintaining tranquillity

- 4.3 An analysis of the current AONB Management Plan revealed the potential areas where actions could affect peace and tranquillity. The main themes related to people (6 actions) and recreation (7 actions), although some actions relating to the local economy (2 actions) and the support section (1 action) could also have an adverse impact. The full list is given below. It is recommended that when undertaking these actions the relevant partners need to be made aware of the most and least tranquil areas to try and mitigate any adverse impact.

Ref	Action	Who
People		
PA1	Provide information and interpretation to champion the AONB, using a wide range of media and targeting understanding and enjoyment	AONB Unit
PA1	Provide information and interpretation to champion the AONB, using a wide range of media and targeting understanding and enjoyment	6 Visitor Group
PA2	Develop the role of the visitor centres located within the AONB as providers of co-ordinated information	6 Visitor Group
PA3	Implement the AONB Interpretation Strategy and its Action Plan	6 Visitor Group
PA4	Review and update the Interpretation Strategy every five years	6 Visitor Group
PA5	Raise awareness of the importance and relevance of the AONB to its local communities and strive to increase the involvement of those communities in decisions, projects and management	AONB Unit
PA6	Provide support to local communities for activities that will assist in	AONB Unit

Ref	Action	Who
	achieving the aims of the Management Plan	
Recreation		
RA1	Encourage visitors to enjoy the AONB without incurring damage to its precious landscape, habitats and species through the development and implementation of a co-ordinated visitor management strategy	AONB Unit 5 Local Authorities Visitor Centre Group
RA1	Encourage visitors to enjoy the AONB without incurring damage to its precious landscape, habitats and species through the development and implementation of a co-ordinated visitor management strategy	Ranger Teams Destination Management Partnership
RA2	Encourage the use of designated access networks	SCC Rights of Way
RA3	Develop the draft cycling strategy to full agreement with partners	Forestry Commission
RA5	Develop and implement tourism projects that showcase and protect the AONB	Destination Management Partnership
RA7	It will be ensured that formal access networks are well maintained and waymarked	SCC Rights of Way
RA8	Develop and implement programmes for healthy activity ~ Develop project ideas to meet Natural Health Service	Natural England
RA8	Develop and implement programmes for healthy activity ~ Implementing projects	Natural England
Economy		
EA4	Work with economic development and business professionals to identify, access and attract businesses that are appropriate to the AONB	Local Authority Economic Regeneration Units
EA9	Ensure tourism is sustainable and based upon the natural beauty and local distinctiveness of the AONB	Destination Management Partnership
Support		
SA7	Develop and implement a co-ordinated approach to educational visits	AONB Unit

- 4.4 When reviewing the management plan it was felt that all the other identified actions either had no direct impact on peace and tranquillity or could actually enhance peace and tranquillity.

5 Toolkit for Tranquillity Monitoring

- 5.1 The simplicity of this peace and tranquillity study allows Cannock Chase AONB to repeat the survey at intervals to integrate with reviews of the AONB Management Plan. It also allows for more detail studies to take place at locations within the AONB to guide the delivery of management actions. The toolkit below provides a comprehensive guidance for repeating the survey, including resources needed for implementation.

Key resources

- A3 maps of the AONB at 1:50K scale – two maps sealed back to back in plastic laminate for ‘most tranquil’ on one side and ‘least tranquil’ on the other.
- A4 spreadsheets outputted from Excel with 30 lines and columns for number, ‘when’ and ‘why’ – one each for ‘most’ and ‘least’ tranquil.
- Green and red stickers – approx 70mm diameter – for recording location and response numbers on the maps.
- Flipcharts, pens, Bluetack for recording responses in workshops.
- Excel software for compiling and analysing responses.
- Use of www.wordle.net for generating word clouds
- GIS capability for outputting responses into maps.

Programme for the initial training workshop, and subsequent follow-up session appear below.

Cannock Chase AONB Tranquillity Study ~ volunteers training day facilitation notes

Time	What	How
10.00	Introduction – the Tranquillity Study and the purpose of this session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce leaders and volunteers • Run through purpose of study, why it is being undertaken
45 mins	Review of previous survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback results from previous surveys, including maps and <i>Wordle</i> word clouds
	Task for today – helping the AONB to monitor tranquility	<p>Go through what is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the volunteers for their participation • Give people their unique letter • Hand out laminated maps, coloured stickers (green and red) and spreadsheets for 'most' and 'least' tranquil with space for 30 entries • Ask them to ask up to 30 people what is the Most Tranquil/Least tranquil area of Cannock Chase • Ask them to place coloured stickers (green for 'most tranquil' and red for 'least tranquil' onto laminated maps, find out reasons for 'when' and 'why', number the stickers to correspond with the entry onto the spreadsheets, and record responses onto spreadsheets • Plan where people should capture their information ~ try and get an even spread over and around the Chase
	Safety issues – how to be safe during the survey	<p>Are there any concerns regarding your safety?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a list of best practice/things to consider when conducting the survey
11.00 a.m. 1 hour	Trial survey – each volunteer to trial the survey and report back on findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go out in pairs and ask to trial the methodology ~ 30 mins • Ask if is there anything we need to change? • Do we need a crib sheet for example? <p><i>Optional session if volunteers feel there is a need to practice technique</i></p>
12.00 30 mins	What to do after the survey – transfer to PC and exchange email addresses Questions ~ confirm date for review day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through some of the logistics, have a big sheet of names with unique letters and space for e-mail address. Excel compliant • Run through completing the grid reference column • Use this as an opportunity to review how you have got on. • Learn some lessons, find out if there are any change to make • Compile the overall map by summing up
12:30	Finish	

Time	What	How
10:00am	Introduction ~ the purpose of this session Where are we up to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the purpose of the session – to collect results of the survey, to compile responses and to take a first look at some Wordle word clouds • Go round room and find out what responses they have recorded - record on flip chart • Numbers of interviews? • Grid reference? • Have they inputted data electronically?
	Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in small groups, mixed up with a number of people who are at different stages • Give groups a map, get groups to quantify number of green/red dots in each grid square
	Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up master maps of most tranquil and least tranquil • Depending on availability of electronic media, do a wordle and compare with the conference outcomes
	Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked? • What should be done differently the next time the study is undertaken? • Post it and flipchart exercise...
11:45am	Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps from here • Thank you ...
12:30	Finish	

Spreadsheets for recording responses

Most tranquil response table

No	Grid Ref	When	Why
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
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10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
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24			

Extend table to appropriate number of rows you wish to record. One page A4 can fit around 30 responses which is felt to be easily achievable and manageable.

Least tranquil response table

No	Grid Ref	When	Why
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
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Appendix 1

Wordle word clouds

Wordle 1 Most Tranquil 'Why'



Wordle 2 Most Tranquil 'When'





Appendix 2

Participants in the survey

Thanks are expressed to those people who participated in the survey in particular those people who contributed their time in helping to collect the data:

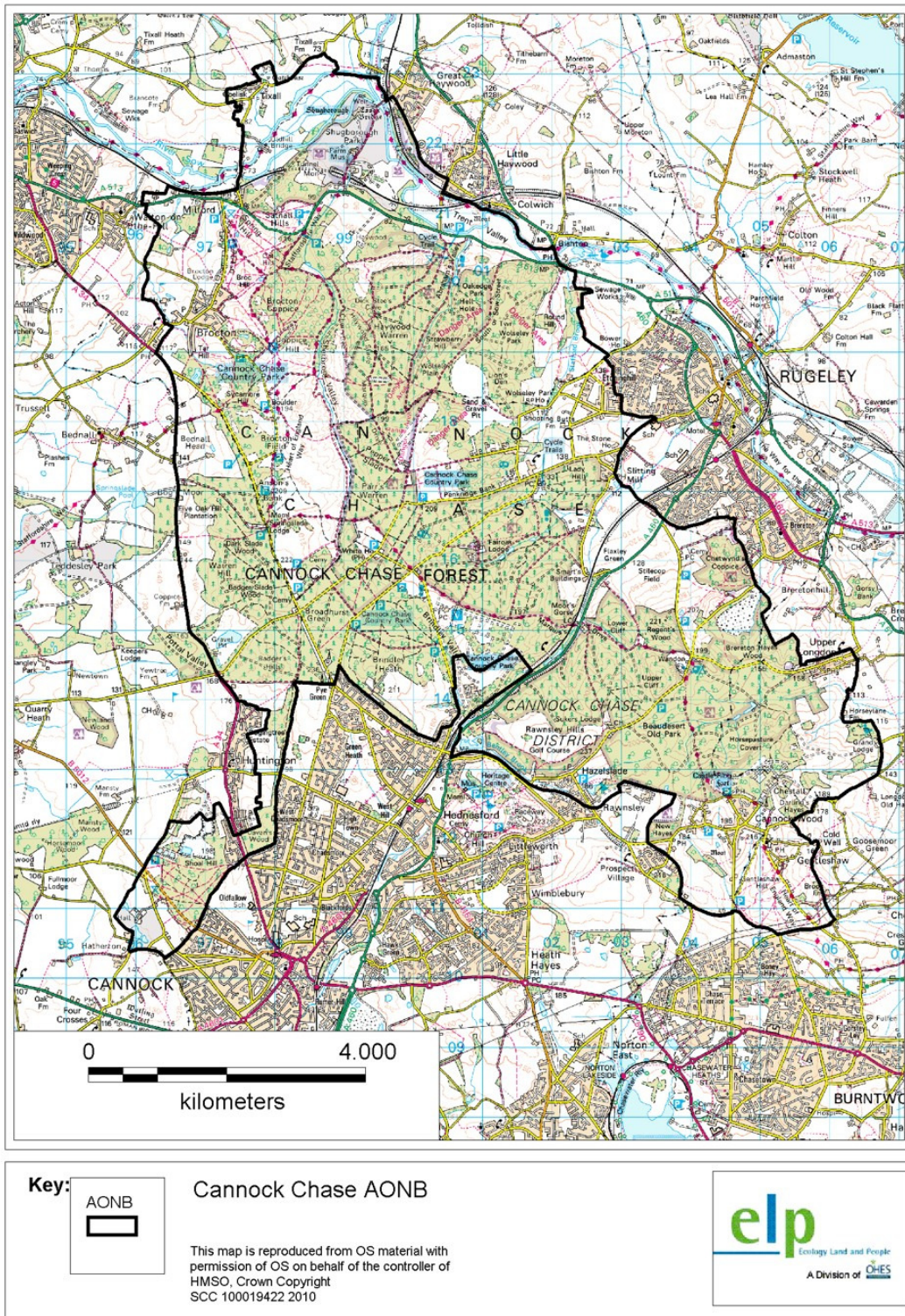
*Ian Bearne
Blodwen Williams
Jane Christopher
Gwyneth Boyle
Alan Pearson
Shirley Pearson
June Jukes
Jillian Hollins
Lew Badger
John Sulway
Bob Marsh
Andy Goode
Jason Maclean
David Cashmore
Michelle Edwards
Phil Armshaw
Mike Fawdrey
Sylvia Fawdrey
Elaine Dunn
Marlene Palmer
Fred Ward
Glynis Ward
Anne Clendon
Emma Beaman
Anne Walker
Ruth Hýtch*

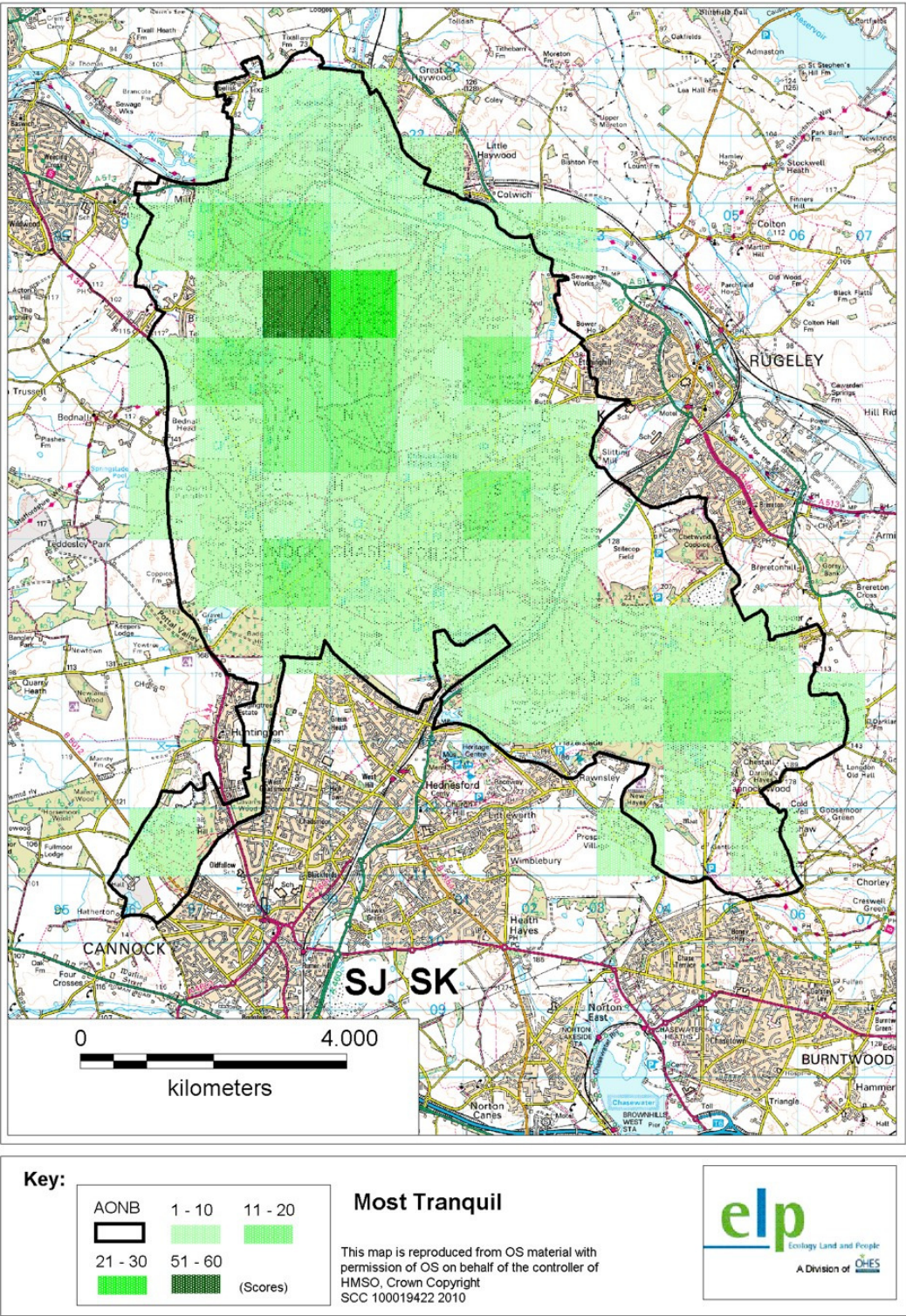
Appendix 3

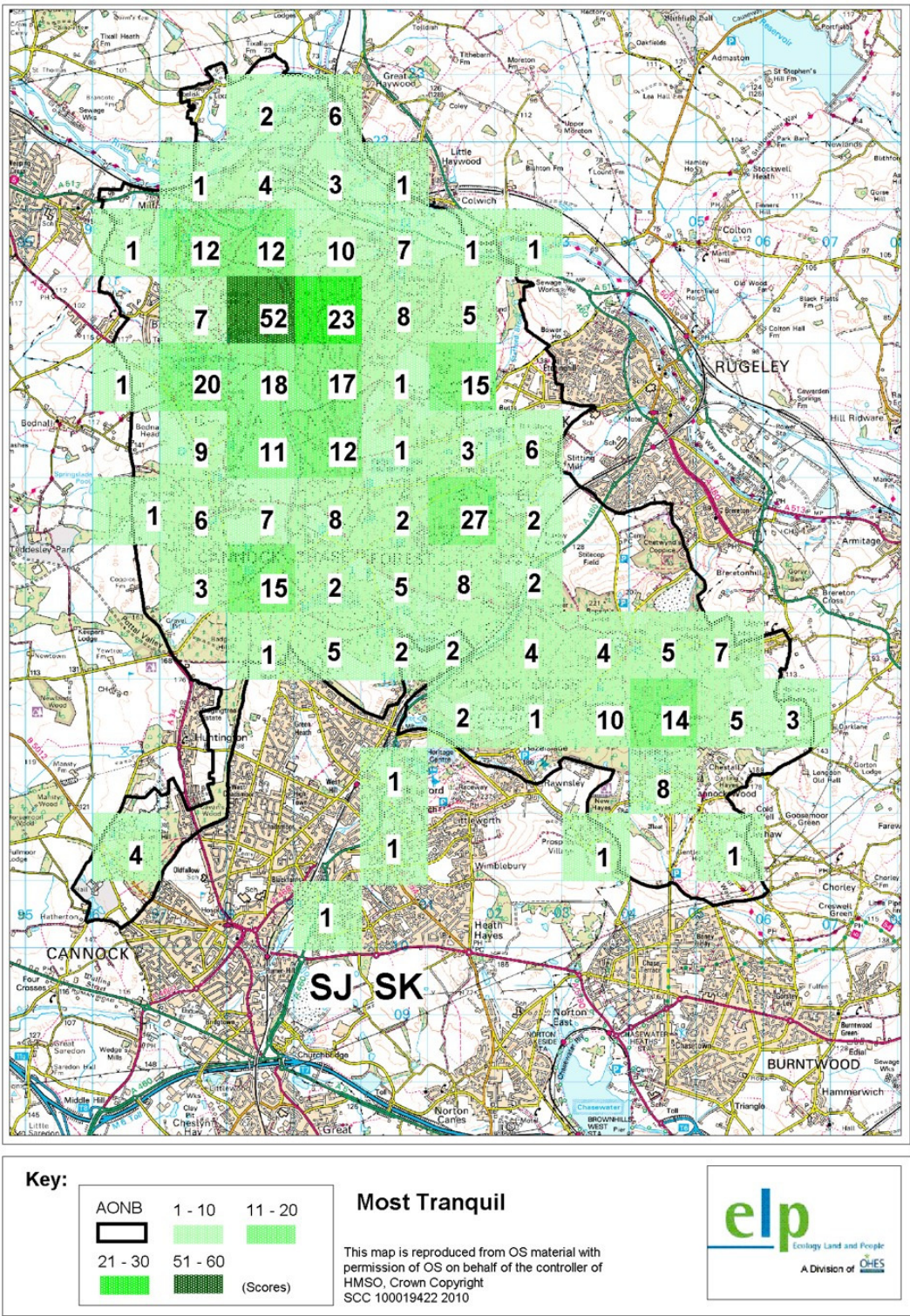
Maps

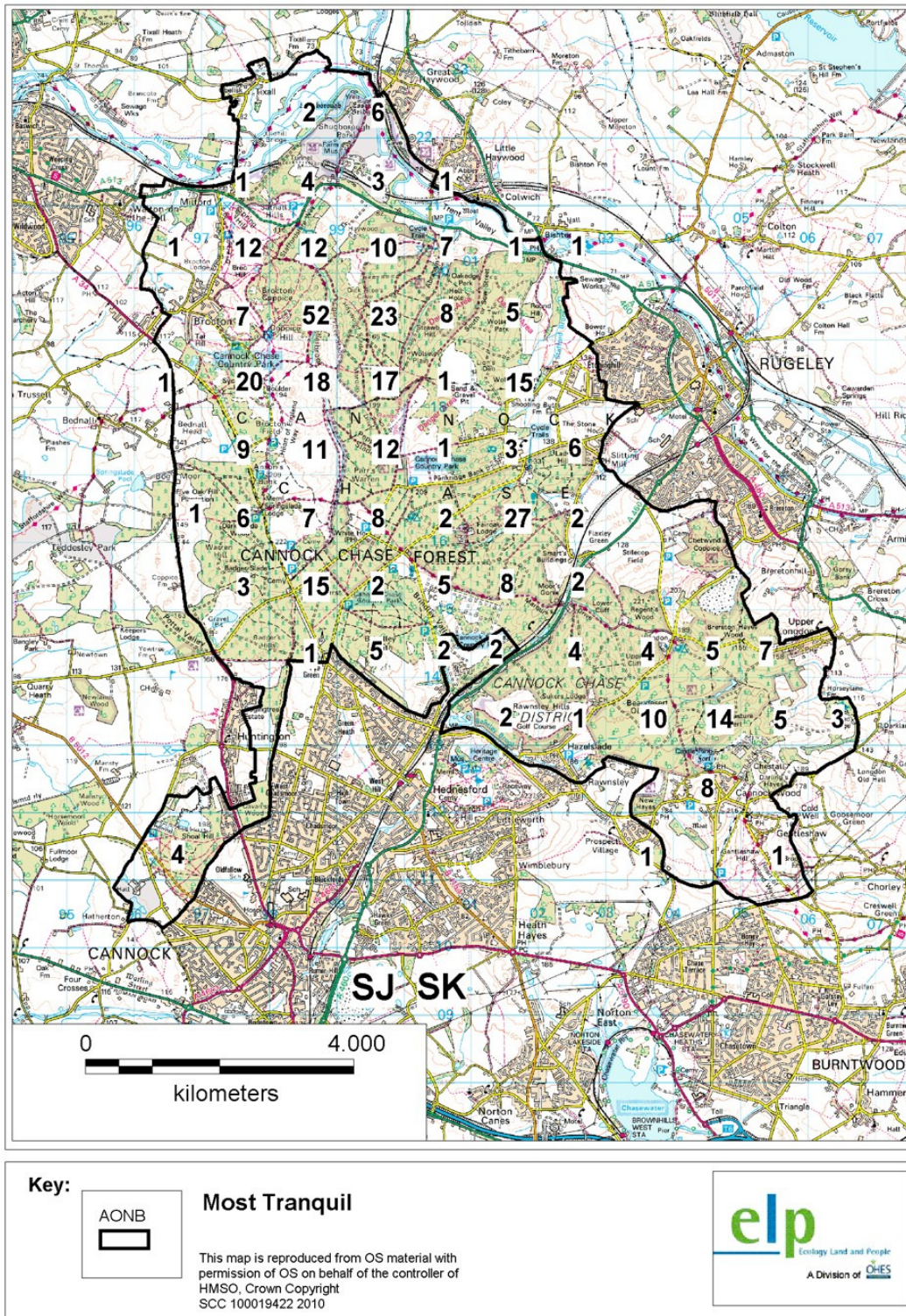
Cannock Chase AONB Tranquillity Maps

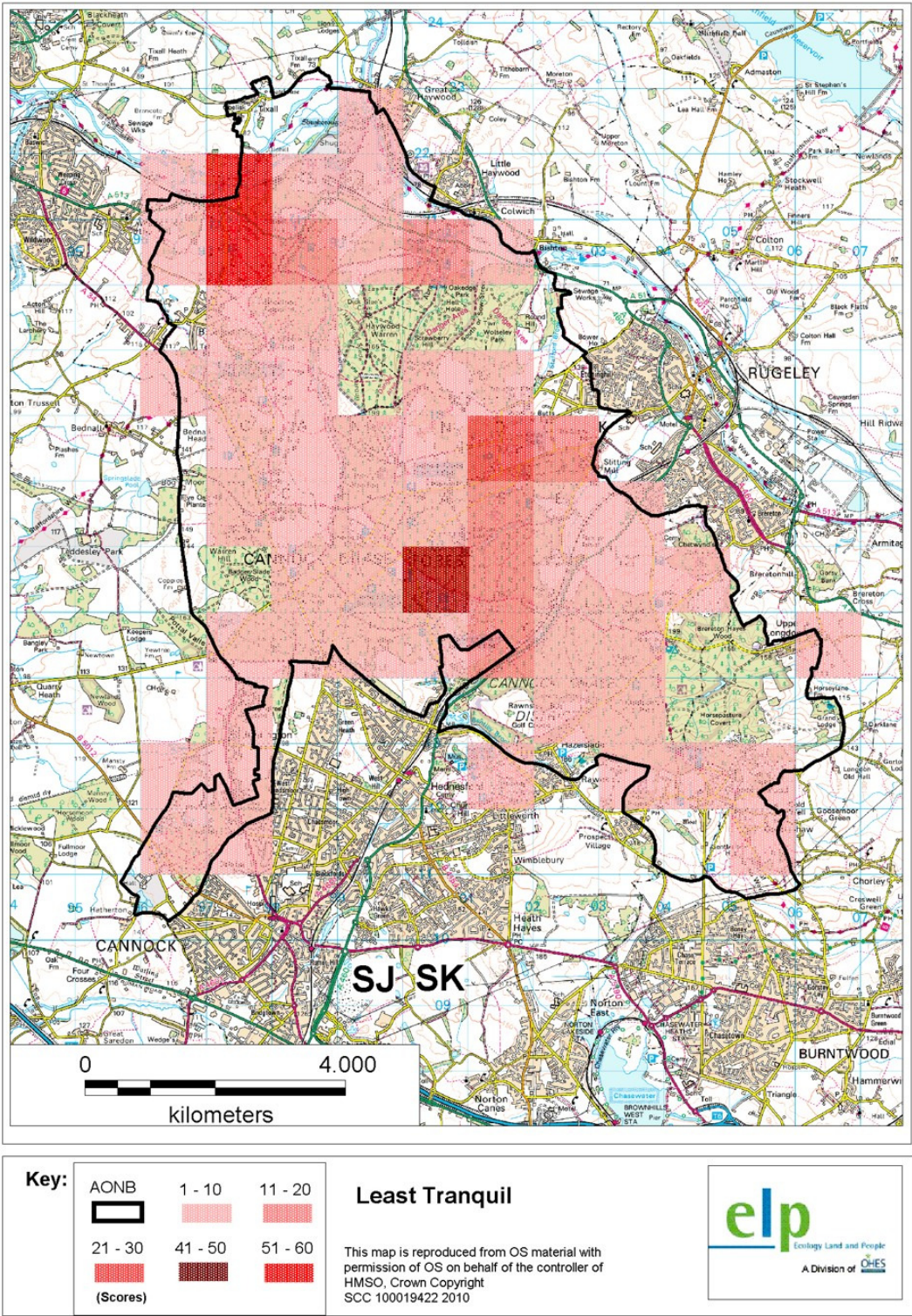
- 1 AONB boundary
- 2 Most tranquil areas
- 3 Most tranquil areas with scores
- 4 Most tranquil areas, no colour, with scores
- 5 Least tranquil areas
- 6 Least tranquil areas with scores
- 7 Least tranquil areas, no colour, with scores
- 8 Most tranquil areas with scores outside boundary removed
- 9 Least tranquil areas with scores outside boundary removed

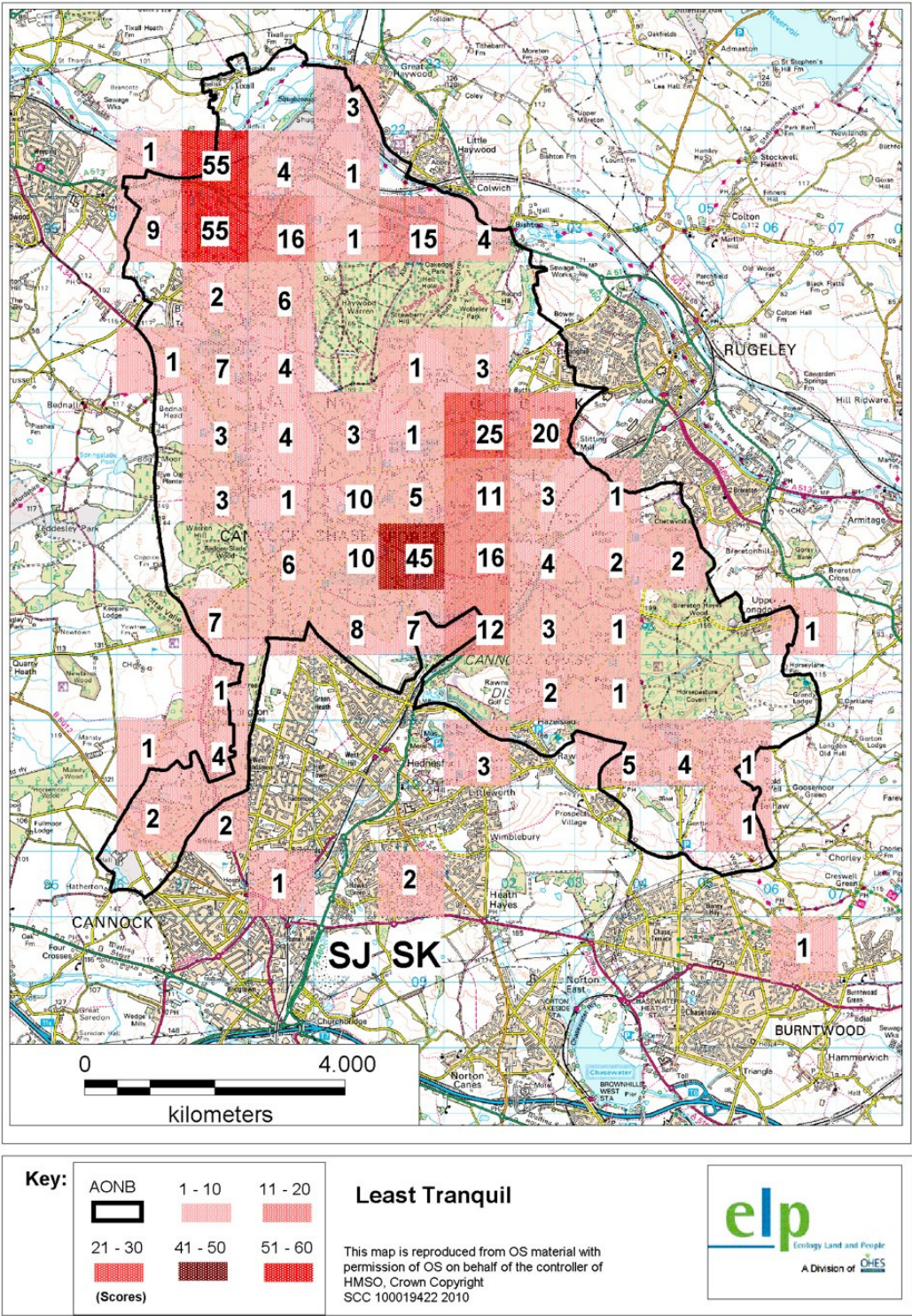


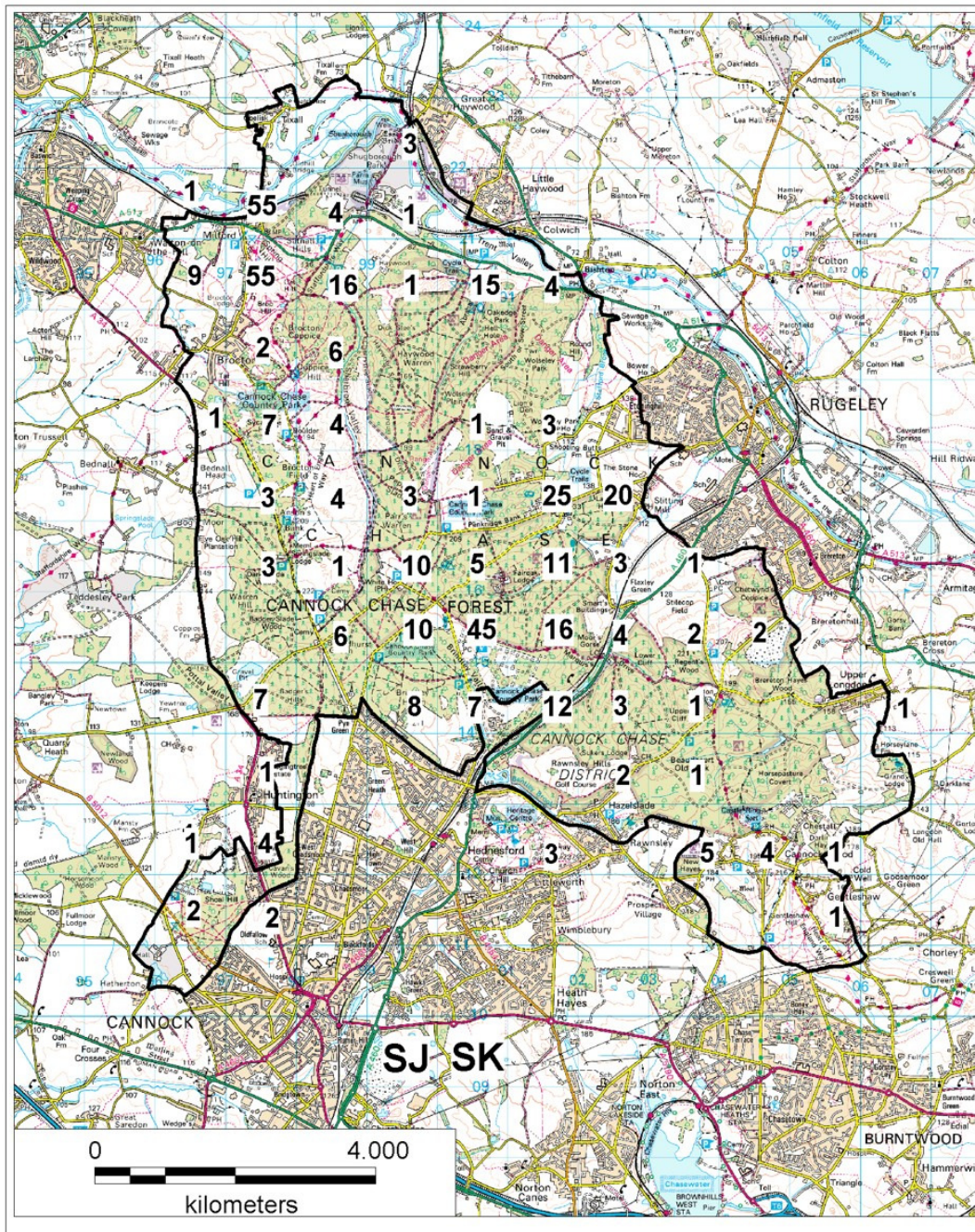












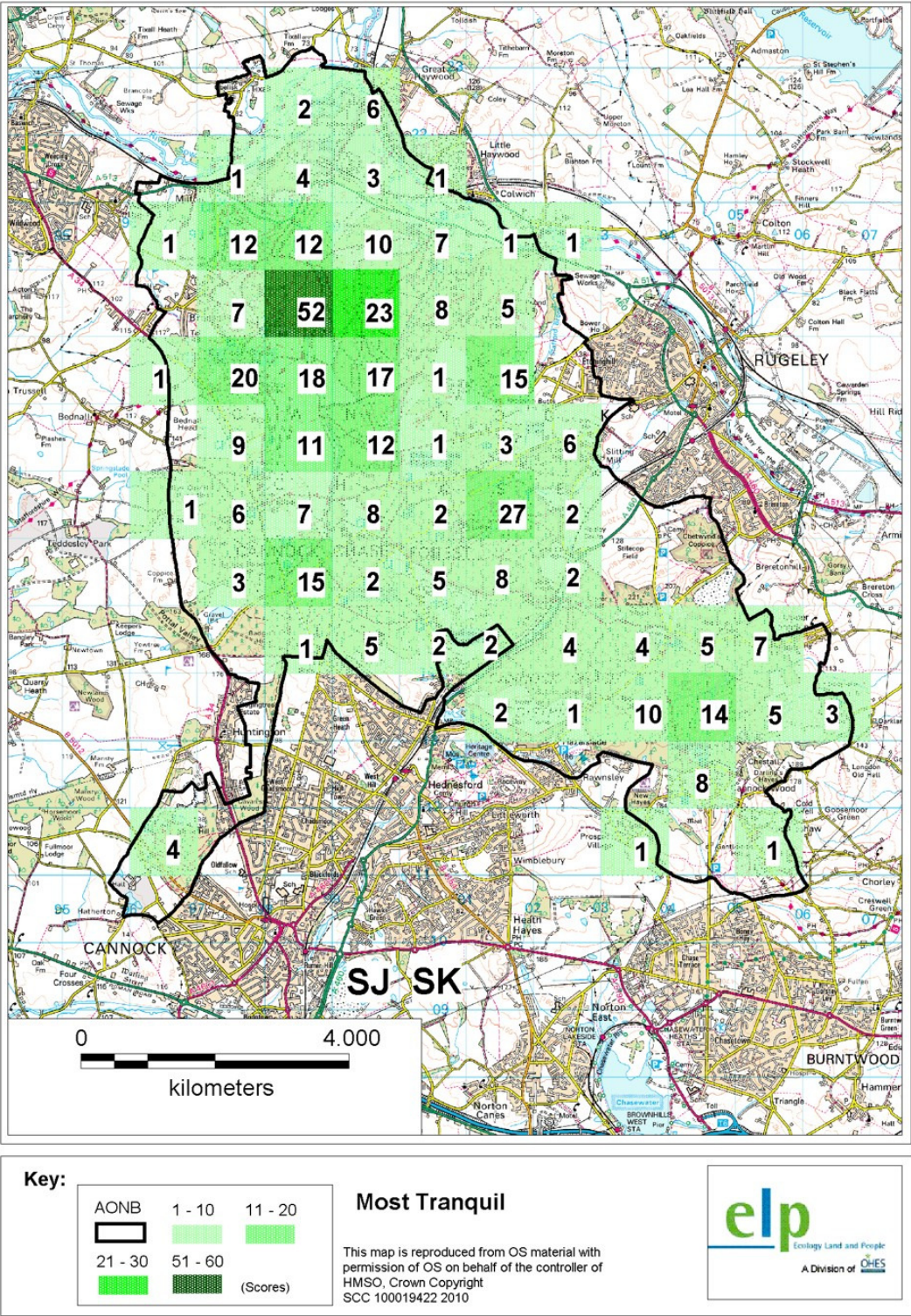
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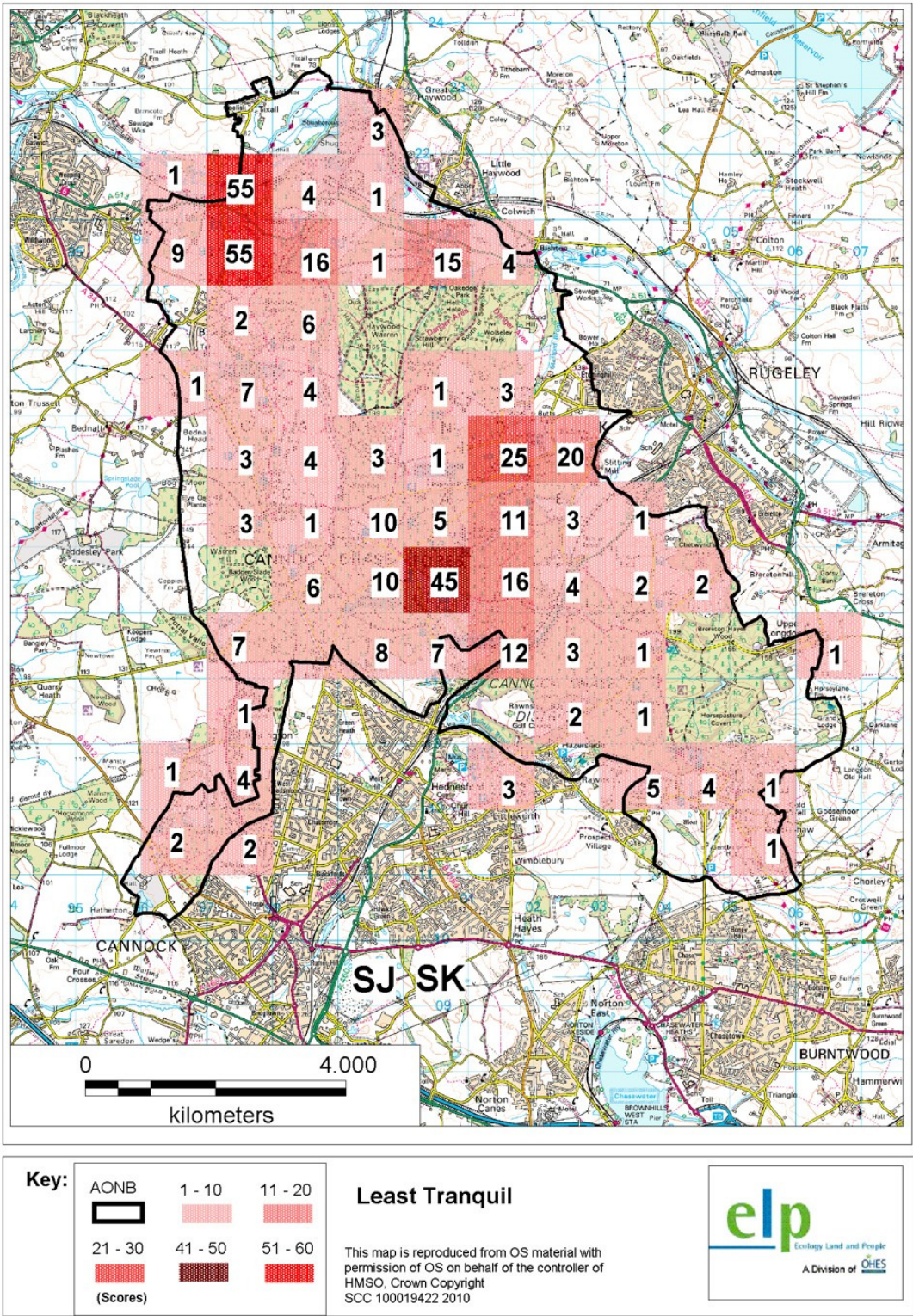


Least Tranquil

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Prepared for the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership by
Red Kite Environment, the Countryside Training Partnership and ELP

Red Kite

COUNTRYSIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP Ltd



Red Kite Environment

Pearcroft Pearcroft Rd Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2JY

Tel: 01453 822013 *Fax:* 01453 791969

Email: info@redkite-environment.co.uk

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