

3 green places

www.landscape.co.uk

NEWS

Map gives tranquillity rating for England

A map has been produced which shows England colour coded into areas of tranquillity (*below*).

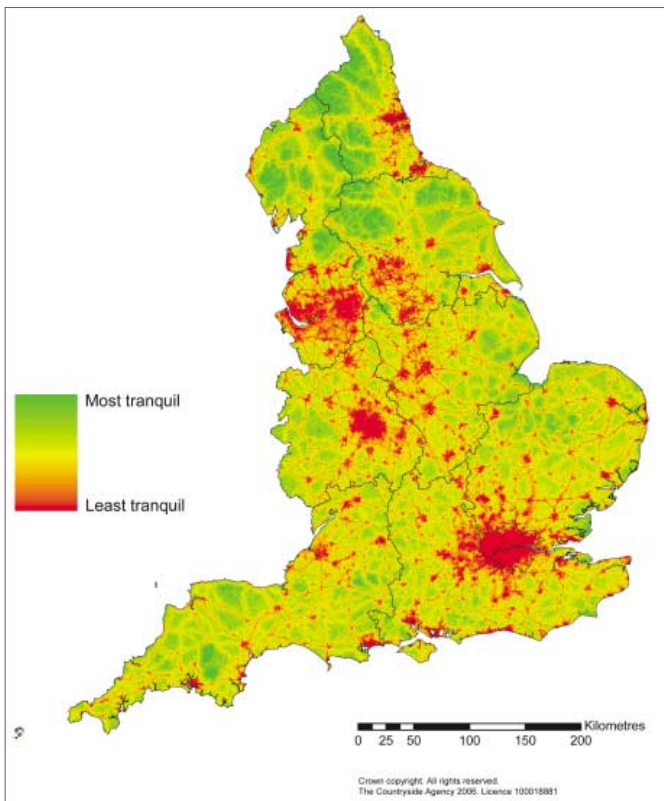
The map was created by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) at the launch of a campaign to retain the quality of life in the more peaceful areas shown in the map. The tranquillity map uses a measurement method, with a spectrum of colours indicating which areas are the noisiest and which are the quietest in the country. Deep red denotes the least tranquil areas within towns and cities and along major roads – with orange and yellow shades through to green, which signifies the most unspoilt areas of deep countryside.

It was created by researchers from Northumbria and Newcastle Universities, who consulted with over 1,300 countryside users and visitors on their perceptions of tranquillity in their surroundings. Factors included landscape qualities, the impact of man-made noise, and the presence or absence of people.

The map reveals that the most tranquil region in England is the northeast, and the most tranquil county is Northumberland. The least tranquil regions are London and the southeast – with Surrey named the least tranquil county, followed by Cheshire and Hertfordshire.

“This is the start of our campaign to persuade national and local government, planners, developers, business, and public bodies to start using it, in order to safeguard tranquil areas for the future and even enhance them,” says Shaun Spiers, CPRE chief executive. CPRE has also published a report – *Saving Tranquil Places* – which summarises the benefits of tranquillity, the methodology behind the mapping and its policy recommendations.

In a new YouGov opinion poll commissioned by CPRE tranquillity was mentioned, unprompted, by 72 per cent of 2,248 respondents as one of the things they most enjoyed or appreciated about the countryside. Visit: www.cpre.org.uk



HEALTH

Health benefits of green space

Natural England has launched the first of four campaigns to reconnect people with the environment. The new campaign aims to use the natural environment to improve people's physical and mental health. It will encourage:

- More people to get more health benefit from regular contact with the natural environment
- Health professionals to make more use of the natural environment as part of the total health care they give patients
- Public space managers to improve the amount and quality of green space near where people live.

Natural England intends to build a network of environmental, educational, scientific, health and community organisations to integrate the environment into the health agenda and link with such campaigns as the BBC Breathing Places project and the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers green gym initiative.

Helen Phillips, chief executive of Natural England, says: “We are working with the NHS to plan ways in which the environment is used as a ‘natural’ health service that gets, and keeps, more people healthy.”

Visit: www.naturalengland.org.uk

AWARDS

Awards for GP contributors

Green Places (GP) editorial board member and regular contributor Alan Barber has been presented with the Institute of Horticulture (IoH) Award for his ‘outstanding contribution to the industry’. IoH president David Miller commended Barber for his work in strategic planning for urban green space. Meanwhile, GP contributor and general secretary of the Open Spaces Society, Kate Ashbrook has won the Outdoor Writers’ Guild Golden Eagle Award for services to the outdoors.

Visit: www.horticulture.org.uk and www.oss.org.uk

■ The National Trust is urging Government agencies across the UK and Ireland to establish a UK Habitat Action Plan for traditional orchards. The Trust says that orchards are havens for wildlife which should be able to access agri-environment funding and Lottery money. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

■ The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) has completed its largest ever externally funded project. The £5.1m five-year ‘Reserves Enhancement Programme’ saw improvements undertaken on 95 of SWT’s 123 reserves. The bulk of the funding (£3.69m) was awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund – the largest award made to any UK wildlife trust. SWT has also launched its 25-year vision – *Natural connections – a vision for rebuilding Scotland’s wildlife*. www.swt.org.uk

■ The Royal Institute of British Architects has announced a competition for a multi-disciplinary team to create a high quality public realm in Stoke-on-Trent city centre. The challenge of the two-stage open design competition is to unify pedestrian movement corridors, create a network of revitalised public spaces and squares and an overall sense of place. www.architecture.com

■ The RSPB has purchased a large area on Canvey Island, Essex to form a nature reserve. The reserve will be made up of 30ha of saltmarsh at Benfleet Creek and will protect the land from future development. Financial support for the purchase came from the East of England Development Agency, Cleanaway Pitsea Marshes Trust, and the Department for Communities and Local Government’s Thames Gateway Programme. www.rspb.org.uk

Briefs...

■ **The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced a package of grants totalling £13m, which will go towards the regeneration of 13 towns and cities across the UK. The funds, from the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), will be spent on towns that have suffered a decline since the closure of traditional industries such as: Long Eaton in Derbyshire and Wansbeck in Northumberland. The THI has awarded over £150m in the past nine years to 190 towns and cities. It targets local partnerships to repair and regenerate historic areas. www.hlf.org.uk**

■ **HTA Landscape Design and the Green Heart Partnership (GHP) have been appointed by Stevenage Borough Council to enhance its 6.3ha town centre park. The Growth Areas Fund has granted £500,000 to finance the consultation and masterplan stages and provide access. Work will start in 2007 and will include a new footpath network, new lighting and landscaping to reduce crime. A bid will be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Parks for People'. www.stevenage.gov.uk; www.hta-arch.co.uk and www.greenheartpartnership.org**

■ **Islington Council is aiming to remove 61 advertising hoardings from the A1 within two years. It has already removed 32 of the hoardings and ongoing enforcement action and legal proceedings are set to get rid of the remainder. The council says the majority of the signs have been placed illegally. The action is part of the A1 Borough Project which works with the local community to improve the environment. www.islington.gov.uk**

■ **Redcar and Cleveland Council has agreed a £46m project to replace, upgrade and add to its street lighting stock. www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk**

COMMUNITIES

White Paper on communities

Communities secretary Ruth Kelly has published the local government White Paper – *Strong and Prosperous Communities* – which recommends devolving more power to communities.

- Its proposals include:
- Strengthening the ability of councillors to act as champions for their community via a new 'Community Call for Action', with the aim of giving local people a more powerful voice to question council decisions.
 - Providing better and more timely information on the quality of local services, including annual publication of local authorities' performance against national outcome indicators and a set of indicators on citizen satisfaction.
 - Reviewing the barriers to increasing community management and ownership of under-used local community assets, with a new fund to support local authorities refurbishing assets for transfer to community groups.

- Devolving the right to set up parish councils to local government. Quality parish councils will have a general power of wellbeing, with scope to act to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area.

The paper also aims to redress power by creating directly elected mayors, executives, and council leaders – all with four-year terms.

Chairman of the Local Government Association Sandy Bruce-Lockhart described the measures as "encouraging". Local streets campaign body Living Streets endorsed the view, with policy and campaign manager Richard Hebditch saying that: "Living Streets welcomes the encouragement of more parish councils with a general power of well-being. Parish or neighbourhood councils should focus on streets and public spaces."

The Royal Town Planning Institute said it "welcomes the Local Government White Paper's

statement of a clear role for local authorities as 'place shapers' and its references to the roles of spatial planning in achieving this. However, the White Paper leaves much unfinished business. We are particularly disappointed that the welcome emphasis on reducing the number of targets and moving to measures of outcomes appears not to have been applied to planning."

Visit: www.communities.gov.uk; www.lga.gov.uk; www.rtpi.org.uk; and www.livingstreets.org.uk

■ The Conservative Party, in conjunction with Local Works – the campaign for stronger local democracy – has published a new Sustainable Communities Bill. The Bill would give local authorities the power to demand from central government a yearly account of the amount of money spent by central Government in their community and allow local authorities to work out their own alternative local spending plan. Visit: www.conservatives.com and www.localworks.org

PLAY

Play gets planning boost in London

The mayor of London, Ken Livingstone has published guidance for boroughs, planners and developers which sets out benchmark standards for play and informal recreation space in housing developments. It fleshes out policy contained in *Further Alterations to the London Plan*.

Focusing on quantity, quality and accessibility of play and informal recreation space, the guidance aims to improve the health of young Londoners. It recommends a new minimum standard of ten square metres per child and provides guidance on developing more 'playable' spaces.

"Our guidance sends a clear message to developers that building homes with no play or recreation space for children and young people is simply not an option," says Livingstone.

"London has an abundance of planning and space standards for cars, but none for children. Provision for young Londoners has been progressively squeezed out of developments," adds deputy mayor Nicky Gavron.

The draft is open for comments until 28 February 2007.

Visit: www.london.gov.uk



A competition to design a new £13m sports academy and make improvements to Scunthorpe's Central Park has been won by architects Andrew Wright Associates. The winning designs include six pods, which would hold different sports venues and be covered in heather and grass to harmonise with the parkland (above and below). A further £2m is to be spent on park improvements including a new lake, improved landscaping and the existing fountain.

Visit: www.architecture.com; www.andrewwrightassociates.com; and www.northlincs.gov.uk

