



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

## The definition of tranquillity

**Tranquillity** is the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones.

**Tranquil areas** are places where a quality of calm can be experienced in the presence of mainly natural features and activities, and the absence of disturbance from manmade ones.

The rationale for these definitions:

- Overall they cover both the experience of tranquillity and the setting which can generate it
- The use of 'quality' emphasises that tranquillity is both an environmental quality of the countryside – an objective attribute – and also a composite combining a number of variables (such as features of landscape, absence of noise, visual intrusion)
- 'Calm' emphasises the feeling of tranquillity and can refer to visual 'calm' and lack of intrusive sound; also used in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definition
- 'Experienced' emphasises the importance of the experience to the individual; it does not exclude tranquillity being an attribute of a place in the absence of people to experience it
- Places refers to the spatial dimension of tranquillity and the most tranquil areas or least tranquil areas identifiable through the tranquillity mapping method
- Mainly natural is the element needing most further explanation; it needs to account for three aspects of tranquillity:
  - That the tranquillity scores represent a sum of positive and negative scores and so that where there is a positive tranquillity score, the features and activities in the setting are predominantly or mainly natural or seen as such
  - That 'natural' features and activities may be seen as such but be semi-natural in strict terms; that is, modified by human intervention over centuries or millennia such as hedgerows, fenland, fells and moor, coppiced woodland
  - That some elements in the landscape are 'natural' or in harmony with the context, such as dry stone walls, hedge banks, church bells, tractors and harvesters – in a way that road noise, low-flying aircraft or pylons are not – and so do not necessarily disturb the tranquillity
- Features refers to positive and negative features of urban and rural landscapes such as trees, rivers, land cover, roads and pylons
- Activities refers to positive activities – natural sights and sounds such as bird song or water lapping – and negative – such as movement of traffic or people making noise
- Disturbance suggests both the manmade feature or activity which is creating the disturbance and someone being affected by it; so some features and activities could be present in a setting but not necessarily disturb the experience of tranquillity, such as a tractor ploughing, a gate or a church bell in the distance; but it also accounts for activities and features such as road noise or sight of pylons which clearly do disturb the tranquillity; 'free from disturbance' is also used in the OED definition