



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SUSSEX

Intrusion maps chart growing effect of noise and visual disturbance on the English countryside – West Sussex

The peace and quiet of the English countryside is under threat as never before. A new set of intrusion maps published by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) shows that noise and visual disturbance arising from urban development, major roads, traffic and airports now affect 50 per cent of England and at current rates of loss most undisturbed countryside could disappear within 80 years.

A remote risk some might think, but that national figure changes dramatically when seen from a regional viewpoint. The South East, where the pace of economic development has been greatest, is under more intense pressure, to the extent that undisturbed countryside could disappear in only 45 years, well within the lifetime of today's schoolchildren.

The new intrusion maps for 2007 have been generated using the same methodology as earlier maps for the early 1960s and 1990s, enabling comparisons of the extent to which noise and visual intrusion have affected the countryside to be made between the three time periods.

Figures underlying the maps show that for West Sussex, the area designated as 'disturbed' in the early 1960s amounted to 609 sq kms, 30 per cent of the entire region. In the early 1990s the designated area had risen to 1114 sq kms (55 per cent) and, by 2007, the area had again increased, to 1316 sq kms, 65 per cent of the region.

The overall picture of the South East which emerges from the series of intrusion maps is of an area under sustained and relentless pressure from urban development and intensive use of the road network. Measures which could help to slow down this urbanisation of the countryside include greater use of brownfield sites for housing and commercial building; a brake on aviation growth and airport expansion; and a shift from road construction and widening to improved public transport.

At the same time, greater protection should be afforded to the tracts of countryside which still remain unspoilt. This underlines the importance of the South Downs National Park as a means of conserving and enhancing the landscape using powers more powerful and far-reaching than those accruing to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) currently covering much of the Downs. It also calls into question changes to the National Park boundaries, announced in July, which have excluded significant areas from the Park.

One of the most substantial of these is the Western Weald bounded by Petersfield in the west, Haslemere in the north, Pulborough in the east and the Downs to the south. Although differing in character from the chalkland of the Downs, much of this area remains unspoilt, retaining heathland and ancient woods which are worthy of preservation. Seen in the context of the intrusion maps the threat to this countryside if unprotected by AONB or National Park status, is readily apparent. The boundaries of the National Park should therefore remain as originally proposed.

Commenting on the maps, Roy Haycock, CPRE Sussex chairman, said "They provide a graphic demonstration of the degree to which the rural character of Sussex is being eroded. And what's more, they constitute a warning that further reckless infrastructure development and housing at the levels currently being proposed, will do immeasurable harm to our countryside".



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Intrusion maps chart growing effect of noise and visual disturbance on the English countryside – East Sussex

The peace and quiet of the English countryside is under threat as never before. A new set of intrusion maps published by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) shows that noise and visual disturbance arising from urban development, major roads, traffic and airports now affect 50 per cent of England and at current rates of loss most undisturbed countryside could disappear within 80 years.

A remote risk some might think, but that national figure changes dramatically when seen from a regional viewpoint. The South East, where the pace of economic development has been greatest, is under more intense pressure, to the extent that undisturbed countryside could disappear in only 45 years, well within the lifetime of today's schoolchildren.

The new intrusion maps for 2007 have been generated using the same methodology as earlier maps for the early 1960s and 1990s, enabling comparisons of the extent to which noise and visual intrusion have affected the countryside to be made between the three time periods.

Figures underlying the maps show that for East Sussex, the area designated as 'disturbed' in the early 1960s amounted to 381 sq kms, 22 per cent of the entire region. In the early 1990s the designated area had risen to 798 sq kms (46 per cent) and, by 2007, the area had again increased, to 970 sq kms, over 56 per cent of the region.

The maps clearly indicate the growing impact of the M23/A23 corridor southwards from the M25 via Gatwick and Crawley to Brighton, with 'hotspots' of disturbance around urban areas such as Horsham, Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint. And other North-South links which once left large tracts of intervening countryside undisturbed, are now interconnected by a network of roads criss-crossing hitherto unspoilt countryside.

The overall picture of the South East which emerges from the series of intrusion maps is of an area under sustained and relentless pressure from urban development and intensive use of the road network. Measures which could help to slow down this urbanisation of the countryside include greater use of brownfield sites for housing and commercial building; a brake on aviation growth and airport expansion; and a shift from road construction and widening to improved public transport.

At the same time, greater protection should be afforded to the tracts of countryside, from the Burwash Weald and the Ashdown Forest to the South Downs, which still remain unspoilt. This underlines the importance of the South Downs National Park as a means of conserving and enhancing the landscape using powers more powerful and far-reaching than those accruing to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) currently covering much of the Downs. It also calls into question changes to the National Park boundaries, announced in July, which have excluded significant areas from the Park. Given the threat to the countryside highlighted by the intrusion maps, the boundaries of the National Park should remain as originally proposed.

Commenting on the maps, Roy Haycock, CPRE Sussex chairman, said "They provide a graphic demonstration of the degree to which the rural character of Sussex is being eroded. And what's more, they constitute a warning that further reckless infrastructure development and housing at the levels currently being proposed, will do immeasurable harm to our countryside".