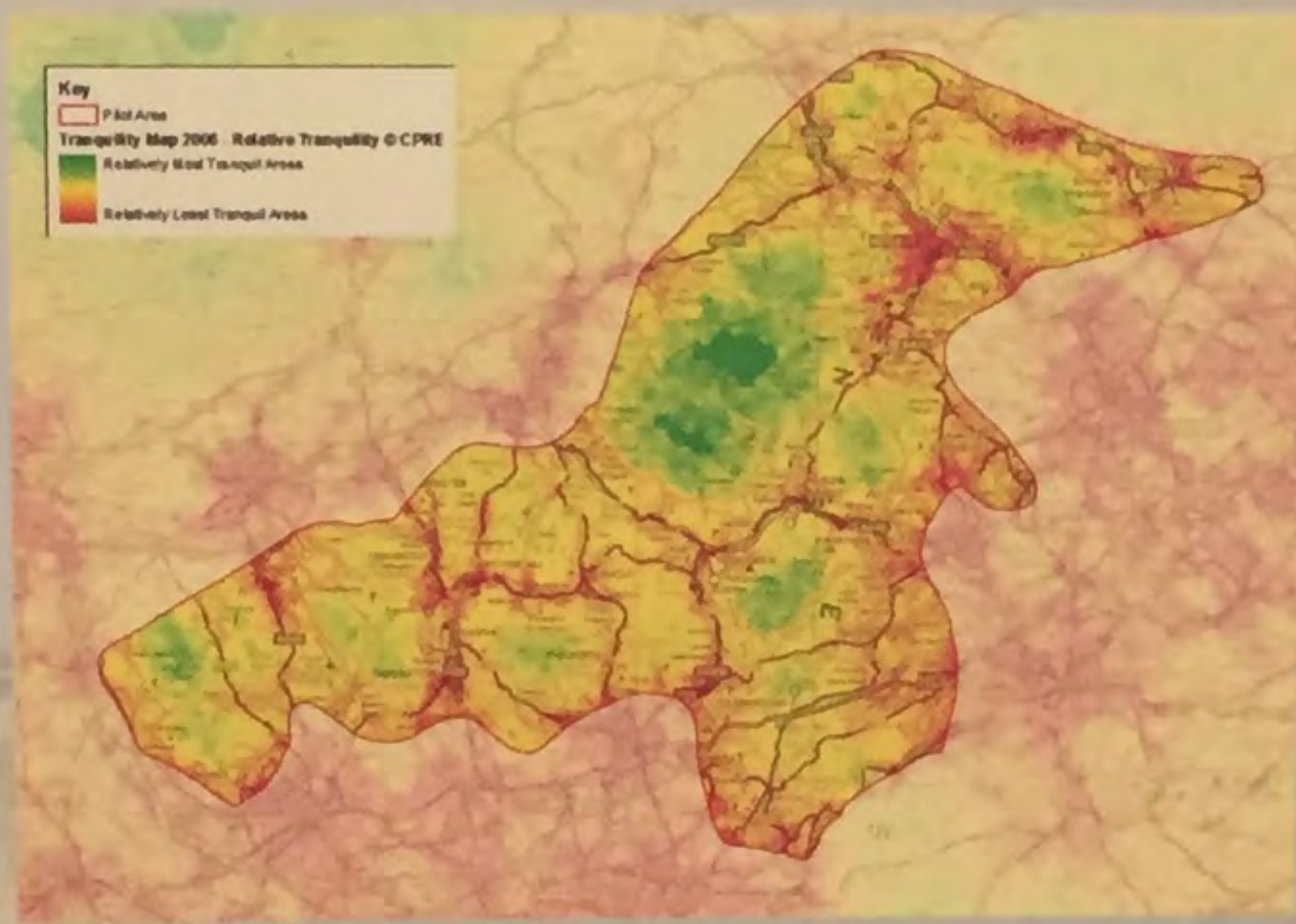




Cultural Services in the South Pennines: What is the value of a landscape?

“My wife asks me, ‘What do you think about when you are up there?’ and I say ‘nothing, I come here for the solitude’. That’s the point!”

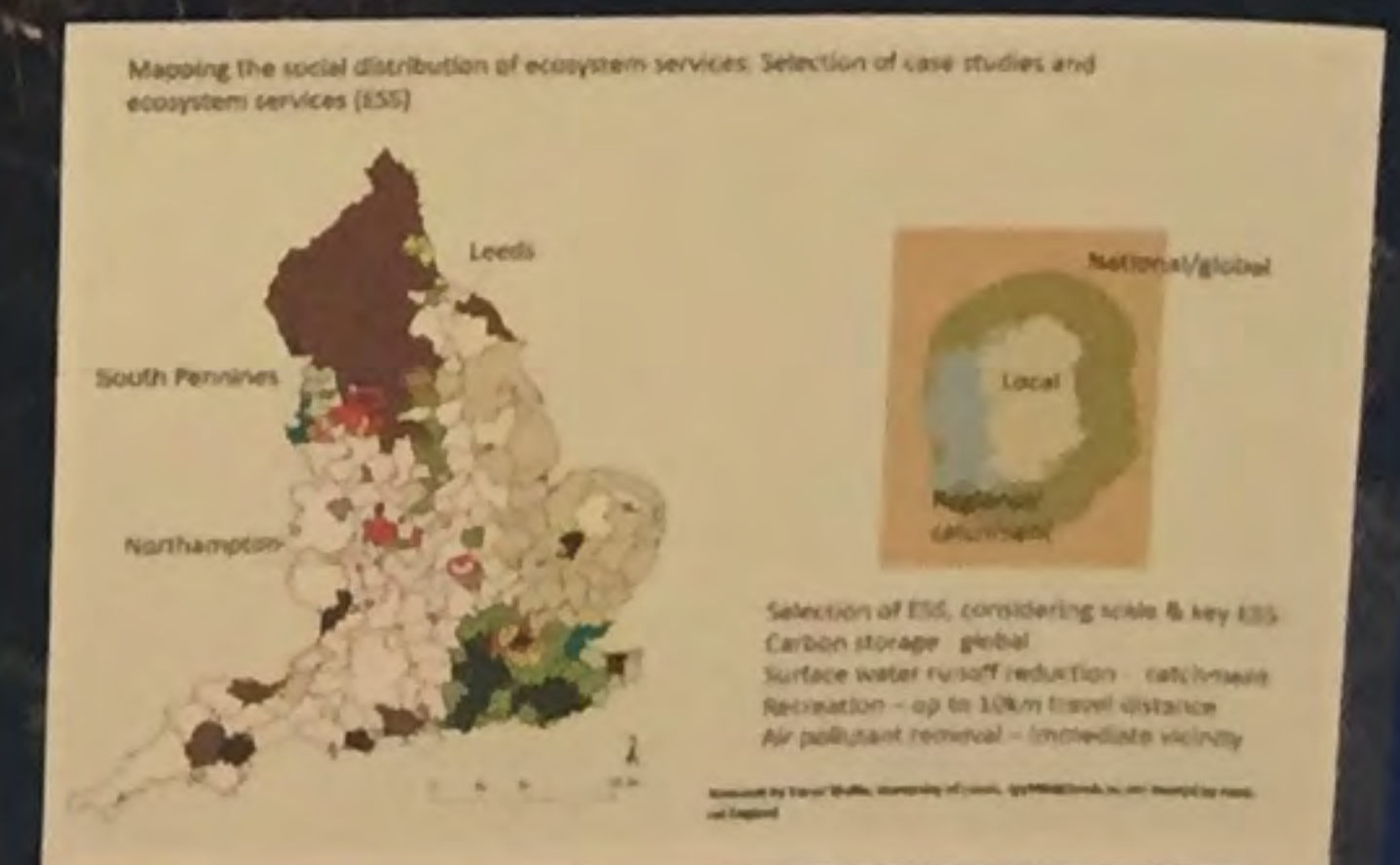
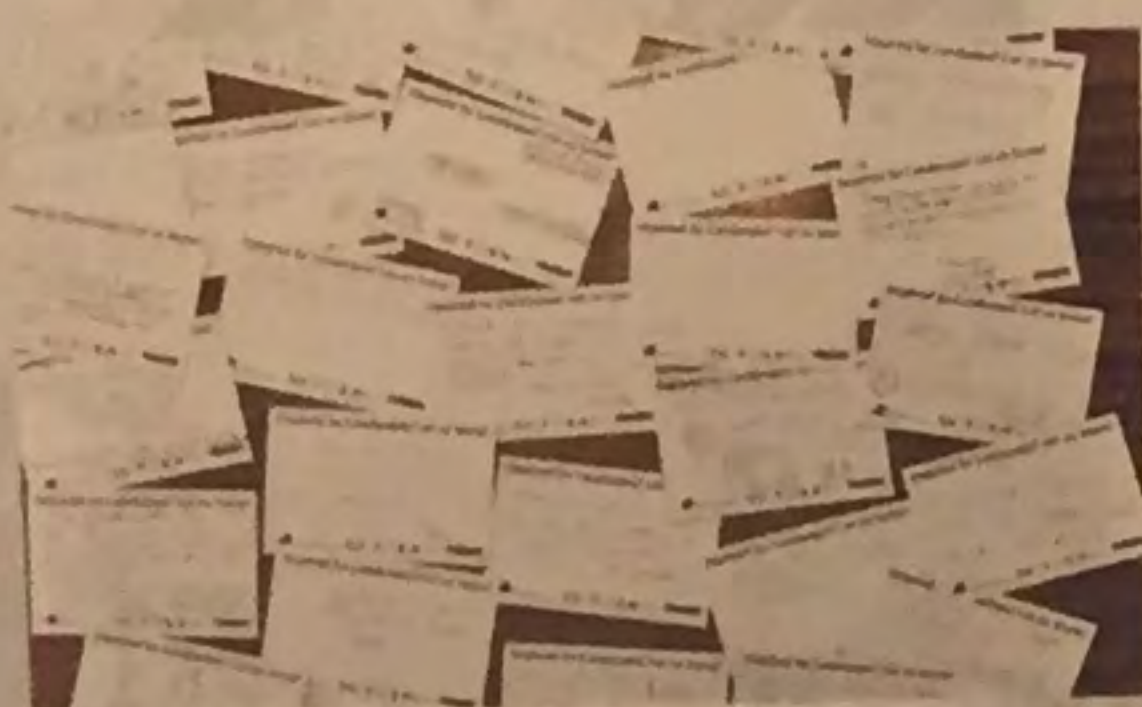
The South Pennines is the upland landscape where rainwater is divided east from west; North Sea from Irish Sea; Lancashire from Yorkshire. They can feel remote but are within an hour of where seven million people live. A playground for walkers and cyclists, internationally important for birds and a vital store of carbon – the uplands are important to us today. It is the only upland landscape in England not to have been recommended as a designated landscape – such as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Increasingly we are being asked to consider the ‘utility’ of our natural environment and even to put a value on its services. These services may include the fact that our uplands supply 70% of our water supply or may alleviate flooding or support internationally rare populations of birds – all of these are true of the South Pennines. But what of those non-material or cultural services: recreation and learning, spiritual enrichment and cognitive development.



To put a value on a landscape that has inspired artists and writers from Ted Hughes to the Brontes has drawn debate in the context of proposed new infrastructure in an increasingly urbanized world. As part of the South Pennines Ecosystem Service Pilot, the South Pennines Local Nature Partnership (hosted by Pennine Prospects) sought to establish what it is that people valued about our landscape. With support from Natural England, the market research company Research Box was engaged. The results of focus groups were illuminating: Respondents all used the local landscape for their personal pleasure, with varying degrees of frequency. Some lived rurally and some lived in towns, but all expressed gratitude that such areas were “on our doorstep”. Many referred to the landscape as being “part of them” or that it was “in the blood”. Whether a person had lived in the area all their life or not, the concept of ‘ownership’ of the landscape was strong, as was their perception that they belonged to the land and it belongs to them. Moorland was particularly felt to have a ‘common ownership’ aspect to it in people’s minds and the fact that it provides a ‘free’ activity was key to people’s enjoyment. They were particularly strong in providing four primary cultural services, those of:

- escape (getting away),
- active recreation,
- calm and relaxation (stress relief, calming)
- sense of local identity (belonging and heritage).

While the profile of people taking visits in the South Pennines is fairly evenly distributed by gender, the age profile includes more people aged 35-44 and 55+ than the average for visits to the natural environment taken in England but fewer people in the youngest age groups. The socio-economic profile of visitors is fairly polarised with 38% in the most affluent AB socio-economic groups (a larger proportion than the national figure) but 22% in the least affluent DE groups. Just 2% of visits are taken by members of the black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) population.



The South Pennines was identified as one of Natural England’s upland pilots to explore Ecosystem Services in 2009. The South Pennines Local Nature Partnership, hosted by Pennine Prospects, has been a partner in delivering projects that work with our local communities to value and celebrate these services whether this is the 70% of our drinking supply that is derived from the South Pennines or the feeling of peace and tranquility derived from our landscape through our award-winning Watershed Landscape project. For example, recent work by Karen Mullin at the University of Leeds, funded by Natural England is considering the social distribution of ecosystem services.

More information at www.watershedlandscape.co.uk or www.pennineprospects.co.uk.
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