

CHAPTER 12. HISTORIC CHARACTER AREAS

By C Newman

Following the definition of landscape types, a map was created in which the relationship of the different types was analysed. The combination of enclosure types, woodland and water, settlement, communications and industry onto one map revealed

patterns which suggested discrete historic character areas across the Lake District National Park. These character areas should not be seen as having either fixed or impermeable boundaries. Their edges should be regarded as fuzzy and changeable.



Figure 34: Character areas in the Lake District National Park

The aim in defining these historic character areas was to use the HLC landscape types alone, and to ignore other factors where possible, such as topography and personal knowledge. The process, however, was subjective and although the general extent of each historic character area was based on the relationship between the landscape types, subjective elements are implicit in the fine adjustments made to their boundaries.

Brief comparisons were made with other existing landscape character assessments, including the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) landscape types,¹ the Joint Character Areas (JCA)² and, where applicable, Cumbria County Council landscape classification,³ though this does not extend into the National Park. The historic character areas defined by HLC, however, will inform the Lake District Landscape Character Areas (LCA) process in due course. The criteria used to define these other landscape classifications were very different from the HLC mapping process. The ESA landscape types are based on topography, land cover and agricultural use,⁴ whilst the Cumbria landscape classification is largely topographical and geological. The JCAs are based on a complex analysis of many different variables, including geology, topography, ecology, land cover, field patterns and settlement patterns amongst others.⁵ These were combined and analysed on a national scale to produce character areas for the whole of England. Other information, specifically on field boundaries, was gathered from Cumbria County Council's aerial photographic collection.



Figure 35: Key to the landscape types shown on the following character area maps

The HLC landscape types produced a total of 19 character areas, and these are described in the following pages.

¹ MAFF 1997

² Countryside Commission 1998

³ Cumbria County Council 1995; 2003

⁴ MAFF 1997, 1

⁵ Countryside Commission 1998, 9

Crosthwaite and Underbarrow Low Fells

This area lies in the south-east quadrant of the National Park, between Kendal and Lake Windermere. Its eastern edge is defined by the Park boundary and the western edge by the towns of Bowness and Windermere. To the south lies the Allithwaite and Witherslack Low Fells, and to the north the Eastern Fells. This area is characterised by a patchwork of enclosure types with a largely dispersed settlement pattern. The field systems comprise blocks of ancient enclosures, amongst extensive former common waste, which were enclosed systematically in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The only nucleated settlement of any significant size is Staveley, which grew in the nineteenth century as a result of industrial expansion. Small patches of plantation woodland are scattered amongst both ancient and planned enclosures, whilst there are a number of small tarns in the former common waste. There is only one significant group of ancient woodlands, on the

lower slopes leading up to Scout Scar, north of Brigsteer. Field boundaries are mixed in this area, with stone walls dominating the planned enclosures of the common waste, and hedgerows on the more anciently enclosed land.

The patchwork nature of this area is reflected in the ESA landscape types, which are made up of enclosed and wooded fellsides, with craggy pastures and woodland with pastoral land. The upper end of the Lyth Valley, marked as planned enclosure by the HLC, is well-defined under the ESA landscape types as valley plain. In the County Council landscape classification, the Lyth Valley is marked out as a main valley, and the zones of pastoral land, craggy woodland and enclosed fells continue to the east as coastal limestone and upland fringes. This character area lies mostly within the South Cumbria Low Fells JCA, which is described as a pastoral landscape with substantial woodland, “*forming a rich mosaic of textures, patterns and colours*”.⁶ It also includes a small part of the Morecambe Bay Limestones, around Brigsteer.

⁶ Countryside Commission 1998, 64

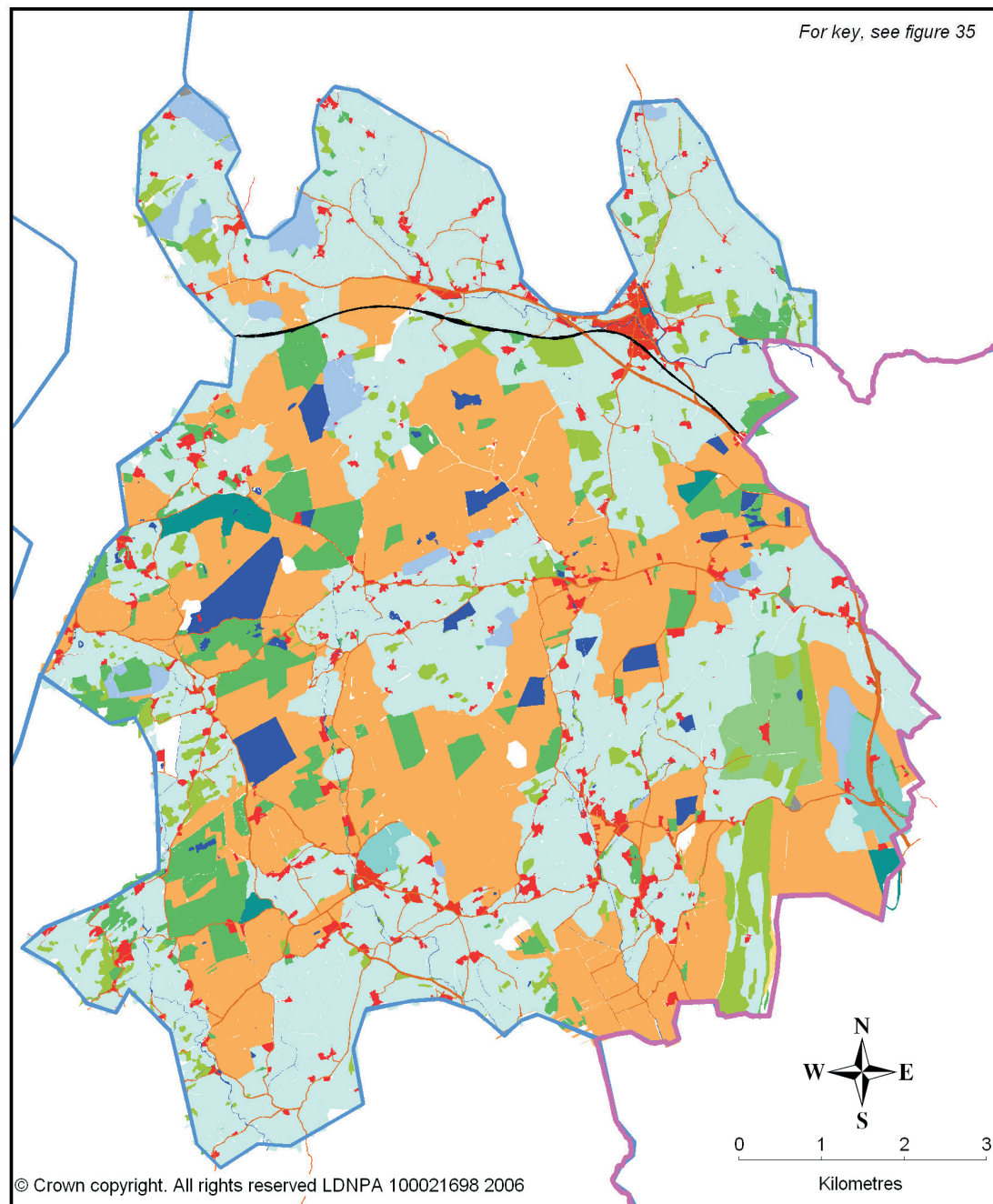


Plate 36: Crosthwaite and Underbarrow Low Fells character area

Allithwaite and Witherslack Low Fells

The area of low fells around Allithwaite and Witherslack lie to the south of the Crosthwaite and Underbarrow Low Fells. It is bounded to the east and south by the Park boundary, and to the west by the Furness Fells. The landscape is dominated by large blocks of planned enclosure, much of which are covered by large plantation woodlands. These planned enclosures include both former common waste in the low fells, and reclaimed wetlands around the Kent Estuary. Smaller patches of anciently enclosed land follow the long narrow valleys, running north-south, and there are extensive former common fields in the south, in the lowland below Newton Fell. Field boundaries are mixed; stone walls and hedges, but there is a predominance of hedgerows in the anciently enclosed land around the planned enclosures of the reclaimed mosslands. Stone walls tend to be restricted to the planned enclosures of the low fells, and the anciently enclosed land lying next to it. The settlement pattern is dispersed, mostly amongst the ancient enclosures, but with a few later farms in the drained mosslands.

Woodland, associated with either enclosed fellsides, craggy pastures and parkland, is a dominant feature of this area under the ESA landscape types. There are clear distinctions between the different landscape types, with significant portions of pastoral land around the edges of the higher land. The ESA landscape types also delineate the strong line of the north-south valleys of the Lyth Valley and Winster Valley, which form part of the extensive planned enclosures in the HLC. Overall, the ESA landscape types enhance the topographical differences in this character area more strongly than the HLC types. The low fells continue outside the boundaries of the National Park, where they are characterised as coastal limestone by the County Council landscape classification. Most of this area also comes under the Morecambe Bay Limestones JCA,⁷ as well as the part of the South Cumbria Low Fells. The Morecambe Bay Limestones include low undulating pastoral farmland, and conspicuous limestone hills with cliffs and scree above low-lying pastures and wetlands. Both parkland landscapes and scrub and broadleaf woodland are also considered features.

⁷ Countryside Commission 1998, 69

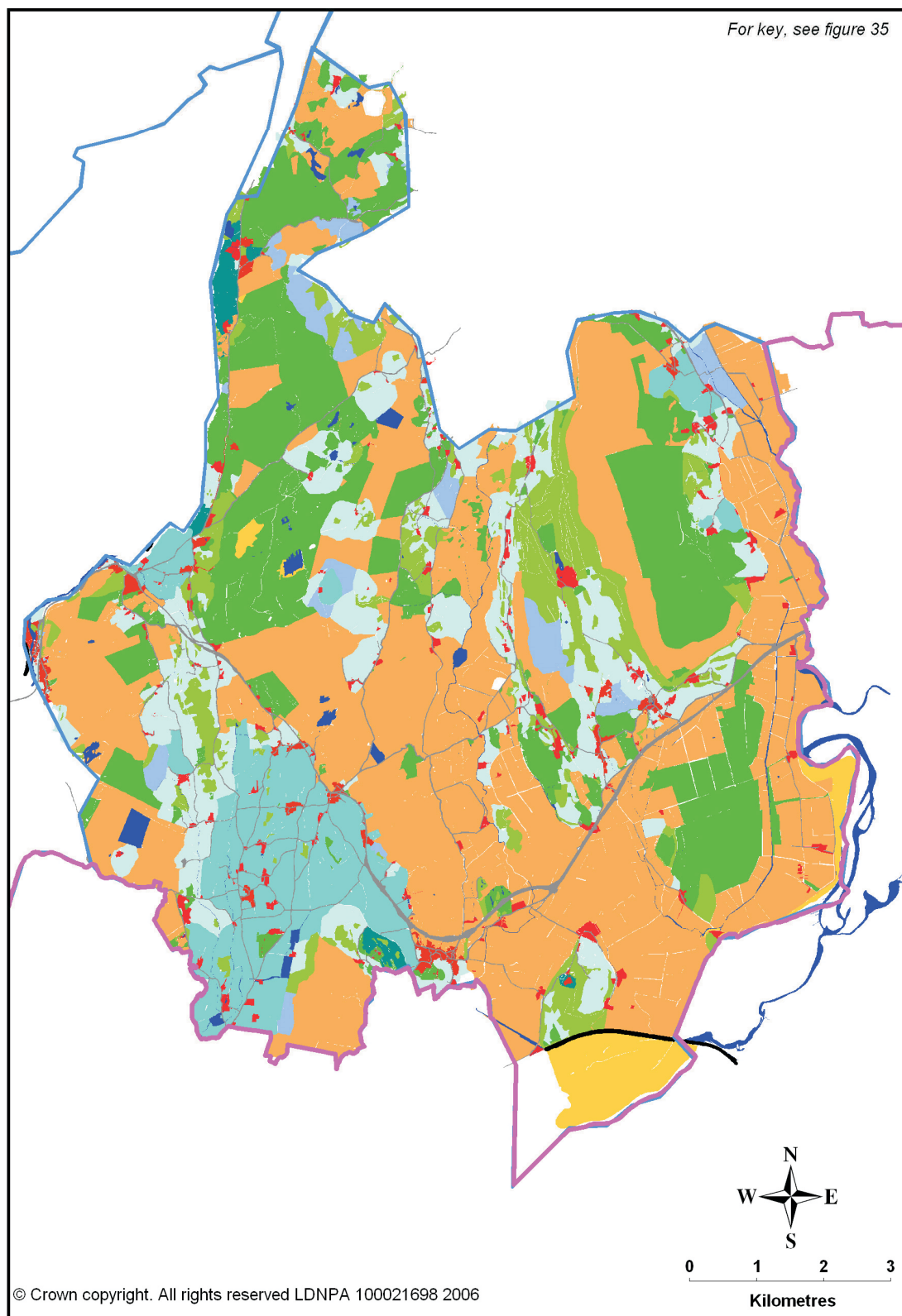


Plate 37: Allithwaite and Witherslack Low Fells character area

Furness Fells

The Furness Fells lie on the southern boundary of the Lake District National Park, south of Grizedale Forest, west of the Allithwaite and Witherslack Low Fells, and east of the Dunnerdale and Broughton Low Fells. Its western boundary has been drawn along the River Crake, the eastern bank of which is heavily wooded. Part of the eastern boundary includes the southern section of Lake Windermere. The character of this area is distinguished by extensive ancient woodland, most of which was coppiced to serve various woodland industries, such as iron processing, gunpowder manufacture and bobbin making. Ancient woodland occurs across the area, but the greatest concentration is in the eastern half, between the Rusland Valley and Lake Windermere. The Rusland Valley down to the Leven Estuary is made up of planned enclosure of reclaimed wetland, and the less well-wooded eastern half is anciently enclosed land, with some intakes. The field boundaries are a mix of stone walls, generally in the more upland and anciently enclosed land, and hedgerows, in the low-lying planned and ancient enclosures.

Settlement comprises a number of small nucleations, particularly along the Leven Valley, around Haverthwaite and Backbarrow, where iron and gunpowder industries developed, followed by the construction of the railway and the growth of this area as a key tourist route into the Lake District.

The heavily wooded nature of this character area is reflected in the ESA landscape types by the extensive craggy pasture and woodland, and enclosed and wooded fellsides. In addition, pastoral land is numerous, the Rusland Valley is picked out as valley plain and the Crake Valley as valley bottom. The predominance of ancient woodland is not brought out by the ESA landscape types, as woodland is included in wider landscape types. As with the Allithwaite and Witherslack Low Fells, this character area continues outside the boundaries of the National Park as coastal limestones, and in the Countryside Character programme, it is defined as part of the South Cumbria Low Fells JCA, where substantial woodlands are a key characteristic.⁸

⁸ Countryside Commission 1998, 64

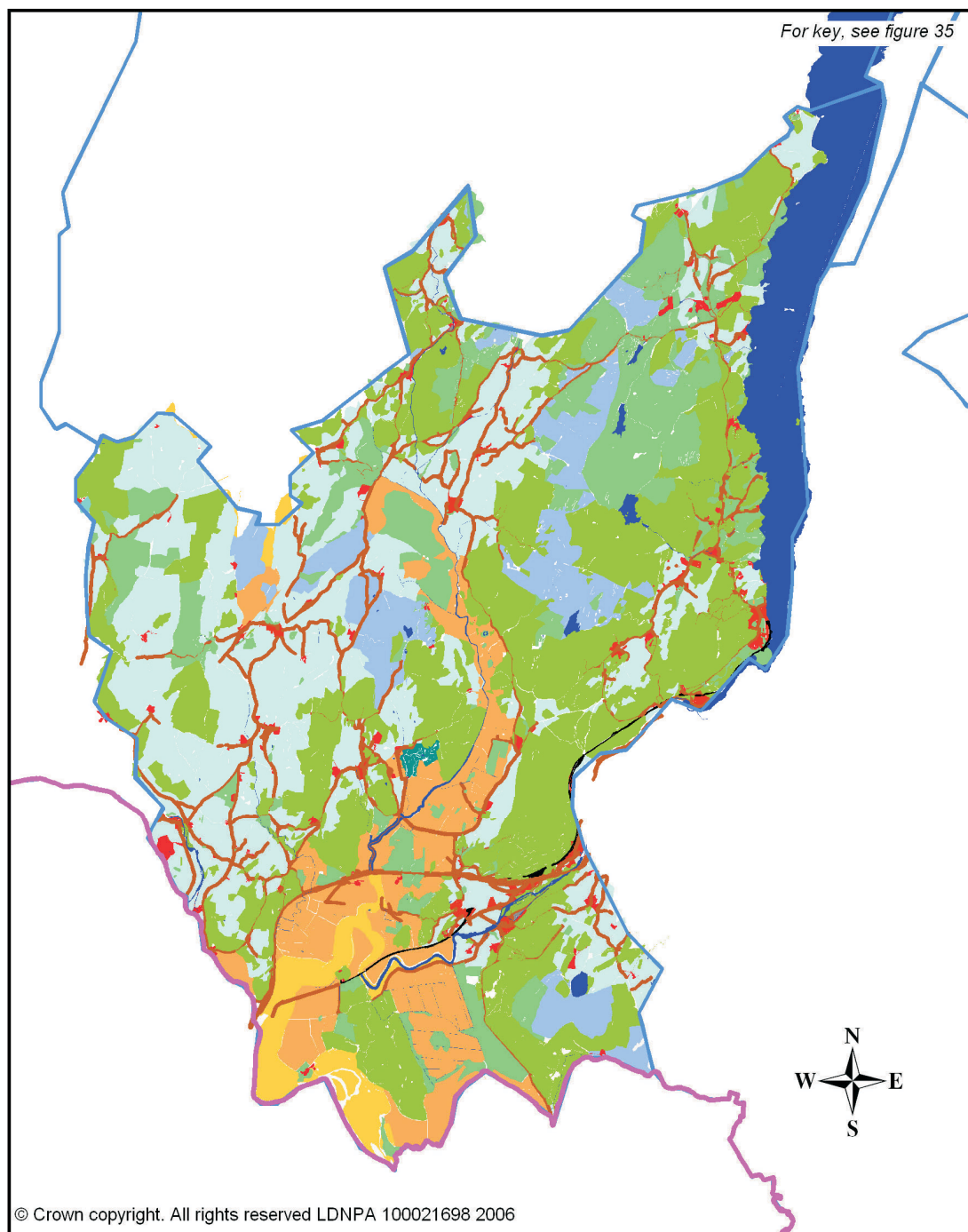


Plate 38: Furness Fells character area

Grizedale Forest

Grizedale Forest lies between Coniston Water and Lake Windermere. To the south it is bounded by the Furness Fells, and to the north by the Central Fells. The whole of Coniston Water and the northern half of Lake Windermere are included within the character area, which also includes Esthwaite Water. It is dominated by woodland plantation, much of which is contained within Grizedale Forest Park. The woodland was planted from the late eighteenth century onwards within intakes and planned enclosure, and much of it is still coniferous. There is a small patch of open fell, Bethacar Moor, on the southern edge, overlooking Coniston Water. The valleys and lower lying ground, mostly in the northern half, are less wooded, and comprise former common field in the valleys, around which are ancient enclosures, with intakes on the higher ground. The woodland in this area is more fragmentary, and appears to be a mix of ornamental and commercial planting from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example at Wray Castle. The northern limits of the area are defined by the valley of the River Brathay, where the

landscape comprises a patchwork of ancient enclosures and irregular plantation woodland. Field boundaries are a mix of hedgerows and stone walls, with hedgerows dominating the ancient enclosure. The settlement pattern, too, is mixed, with dispersed farms and small nucleations, often associated with industry.

The woodland plantation within the Grizedale Forest character area are defined as enclosed and wooded fellside in the ESA landscape types, with small portions of valley bottom land around Satterthwaite and the upper end of the Rusland Valley, where the HLC recorded ancient enclosures and small former common fields. The more mixed nature of the land in the northern half, where the HLC recorded ancient enclosures and small nucleated settlements, is defined as pastoral land, craggy pasture and woodland and parkland. Parkland also predominates along the western shore of Windermere. The entire character area is included within the South Cumbria Low Fells JCA, which is noted for the rugged nature of much of its landscape, its well-wooded character and well-managed pastoral landscapes with parkland character.⁹

⁹ Countryside Commission 1998, 64

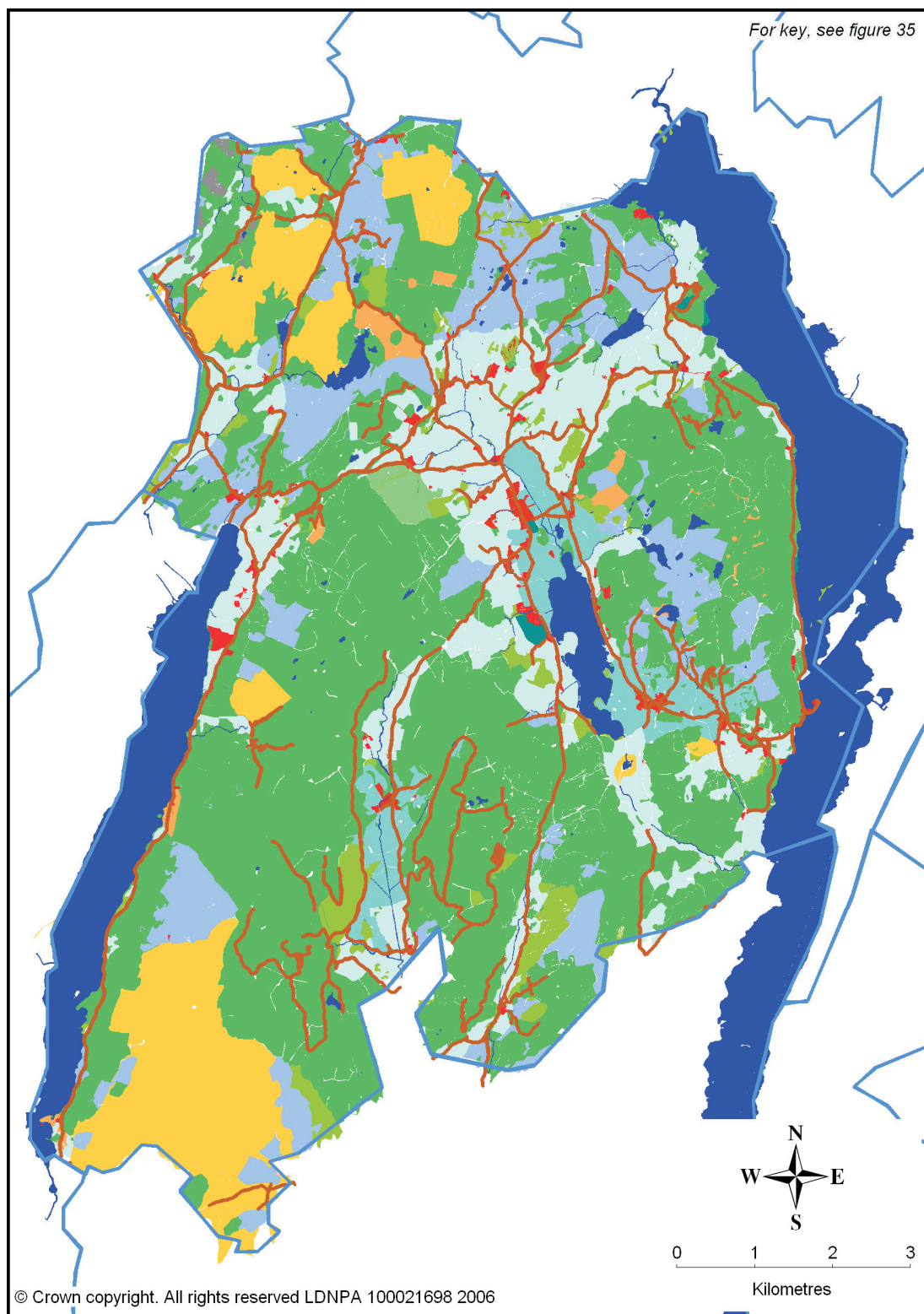


Plate 39: Grizedale Forest character area

Windermere, and the Rothay and Brathay Valleys

This long, narrow character area follows the valleys of the Rivers Rothay and Brathay, and extends down the eastern shore of Lake Windermere. It contains the largest area of urban development within the Lake district, including Bowness, Windermere, Ambleside and Grasmere. The built-up character is a reflection of this area's status as one of the key destinations for visitors to the Lakes, and it contains a number of hotels, holiday cottages and other places to stay. Both within the urban environs, and along the A590 Kendal to Keswick road which runs through the area, are a large number of nineteenth century villas and country houses, many with extensive landscaped gardens. It is well wooded, and many of the trees are exotic species, introduced for their landscape value. The northern part of the area is less developed, and north of Ambleside the landscape is more rural in character. Even here, however, there are popular visitor attractions, such as the village of

Grasmere, and Wordsworth's homes at Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount, as well as the smaller water bodies of Rydal Water and Grasmere.

The well-developed character of this area, with its large gardens and landscaped estates is reflected in the dominance of the parkland and woodland in the ESA landscape types, which cover the whole of the lake shores, and the Rothay and Brathay valleys. Around the edges are small pastoral areas, plus some valley bottom land and enclosed and wooded fellsides. Most of this land falls within the Cumbria High Fells JCA, apart from the strip running along the eastern shore of Windermere, which forms part of the South Cumbria Low Fells JCA. The Cumbria High Fells is extensive and includes a variety of landscape types. The Windermere, and the Rothay and Brathay Valleys includes the relatively formal lakeshore landscapes of managed grassland, broadleaf woodland and parkland, as well as some farmland and sheltered valley landscapes.

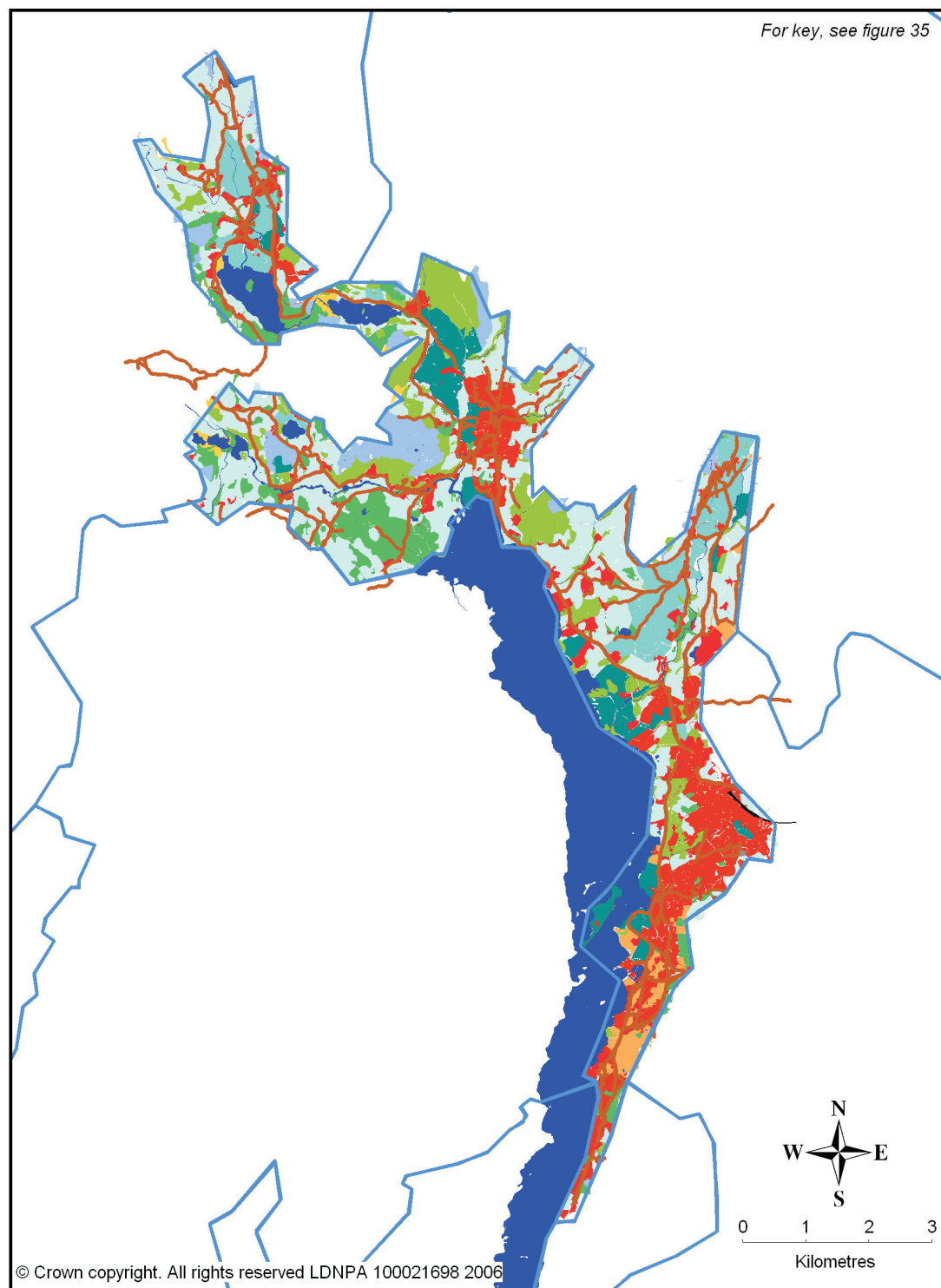


Plate 40: Windermere, and the Rothay and Brathay Valleys character area

Dunnerdale and Broughton Low Fells

Bounded by Coniston Water to the east, and the Central Fells to the north and west, like the Allithwaite and Underbarrow Low Fells, this area is characterised by significant areas of woodland, across low fells which were subject to planned enclosure in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is dominated by the valley running from the Duddon estuary up to Coniston Water, with Coniston village at the north end and the market village of Broughton-in-Furness at the south end. Running north-south from Broughton is Dunnerdale, the valley of the River Duddon. Ancient woodland running along the sides of both valleys, but there are also significant blocks of coniferous plantation woodland, often contained within zones of planned enclosure. The eastern half of the area is dominated by open low fell, farmed as common and now largely infested with bracken. Settlement is primarily restricted to the valleys, and is mainly dispersed in nature, and surrounded by ancient enclosures; apart from Coniston and Broughton at the northern and southern ends respectively. Field boundaries are mixed, with hedgerows predominating within the areas of

ancient enclosure, whilst stone walls were used for planned enclosures. Like the Furness Fells, this was an area of woodland industry, and the ancient woodland produced coppiced wood for craft industries such as the making of swill baskets and tool handles. The valleys were also important communications routes for the slate and metal ore extractive industries around Coniston, Torver and the Langdale Valleys.

Enclosed pastoral land, valley plain and craggy pasture and woodland are the main ESA landscape types in this character area, with a band of high and low fell across the eastern half marked as open fell in the HLC. Small portions of valley bottom mark the Black Beck and Dunnerdale to the west. The adjacent areas, lying outside the National Park are characterised as either coastal margin or upland fringes, on the County Council landscape characterisation, reflecting the juxtaposition of the valley bottoms and low fells. In the Countryside Character Programme, much of the Dunnerdale and Broughton Low Fells are contained within the Cumbria High Fells JCA, which includes sheltered valley landscapes at lower altitudes, with extensive blocks of ancient woodland.¹⁰

¹⁰ Countryside Commission 1998, 31-2

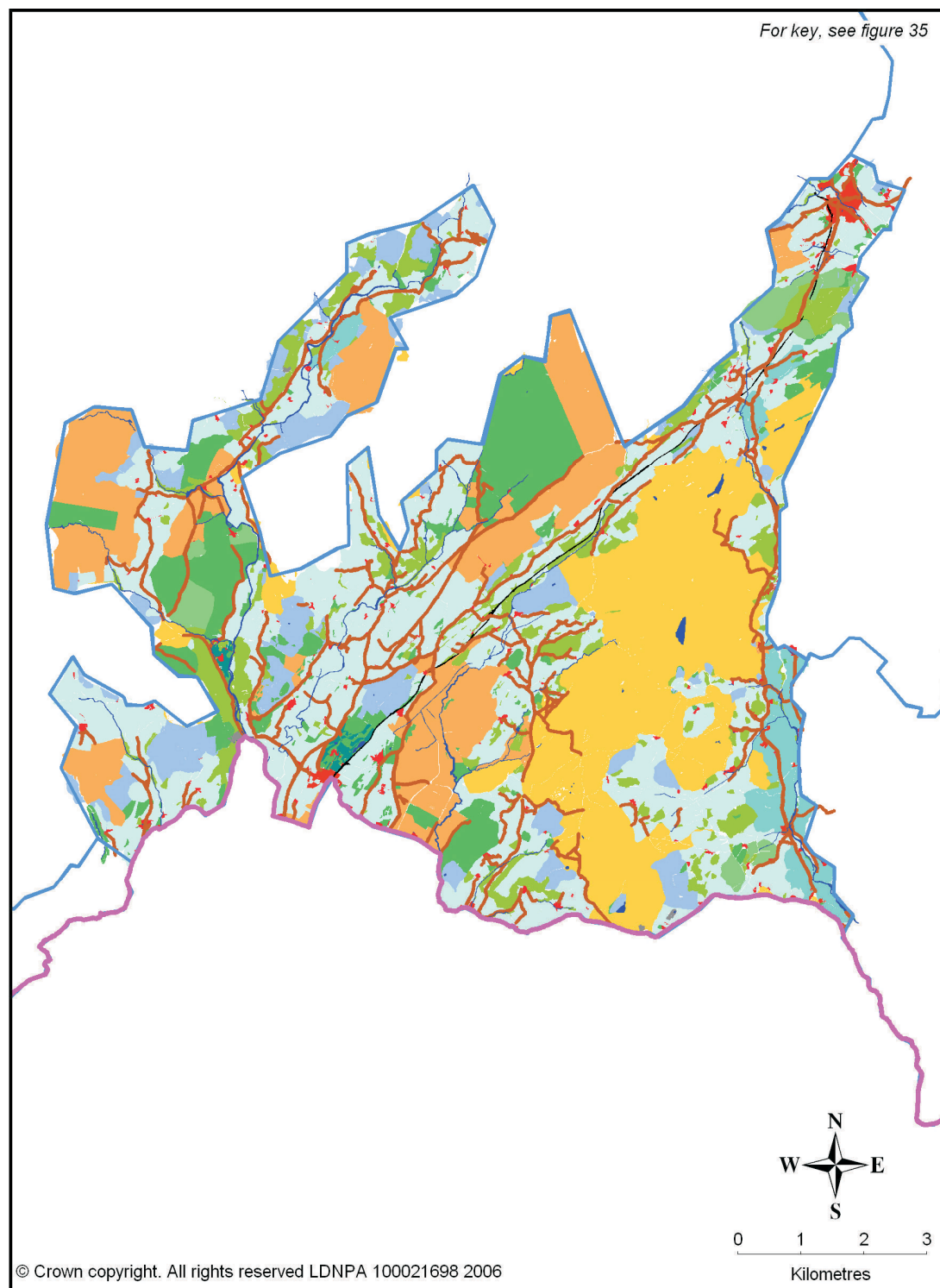


Plate 41: Dunnerdale and Broughton Low Fells character area

West Cumbrian Coastal Plain

The coastal plain is markedly different to most of the other character areas. . It comprises a strip of low-lying land to the west of the Central Fells, plus the Wicham Valley to the south, which stretches inland as far as Hallthwaites. At the northern end are the extensive stretches of mud and sand dunes of the Esk estuary, which are part of an internationally important natural habitat. The area contains very little woodland, and is characterised by large former common fields, surrounded by ancient enclosures and blocks of planned enclosure. The field boundaries are mainly hedgerows, with fencing where hedges have not been maintained. The settlement pattern is mixed, with dispersed farms spread across the whole character area, and the small nucleated settlements of Silecroft, Bootle and Hycemoor sited next to their associated former common fields. Two further common fields appear to relate to Annaside and Corney, which can be considered agglomerated settlements, that is a loose nucleated settlement, where dwellings may be widely spread, but clearly grouped.

The lower lying coastal strip lies outside the Lake District ESA, and is

therefore not covered by its landscape classification. At the southern and northern ends of the area, are valley plains, covering the Esk and Wicham Valleys, with narrow bands of pastoral land on the sides of the Wicham Valley. Pastoral land is the only landscape type defined for the district between these two valleys, lying between the coastal low lands and the unenclosed fells. Its reflects the open landscape of ancient and planned enclosures with very little woodland. This character area does fall within the West Cumbria Coastal Plain JCA, which is much more extensive and runs from Barrow-in-Furness in the south to Maryport in the north. The character of the HLC area is clearly reflected in the JCA, however, which includes open coastlines of mudflats, shingle and sand dunes of national and international importance, with open agricultural landscapes with extensive views to the fells.¹¹ Whilst the National Park boundary extends to the coast in this area, the Cumbria landscape classification to the north reflects a similar landscape, with estuary and marsh, fringed by coastal margins, and then lowland leading up to the fell edge.

¹¹ Countryside Commission 1998, 26

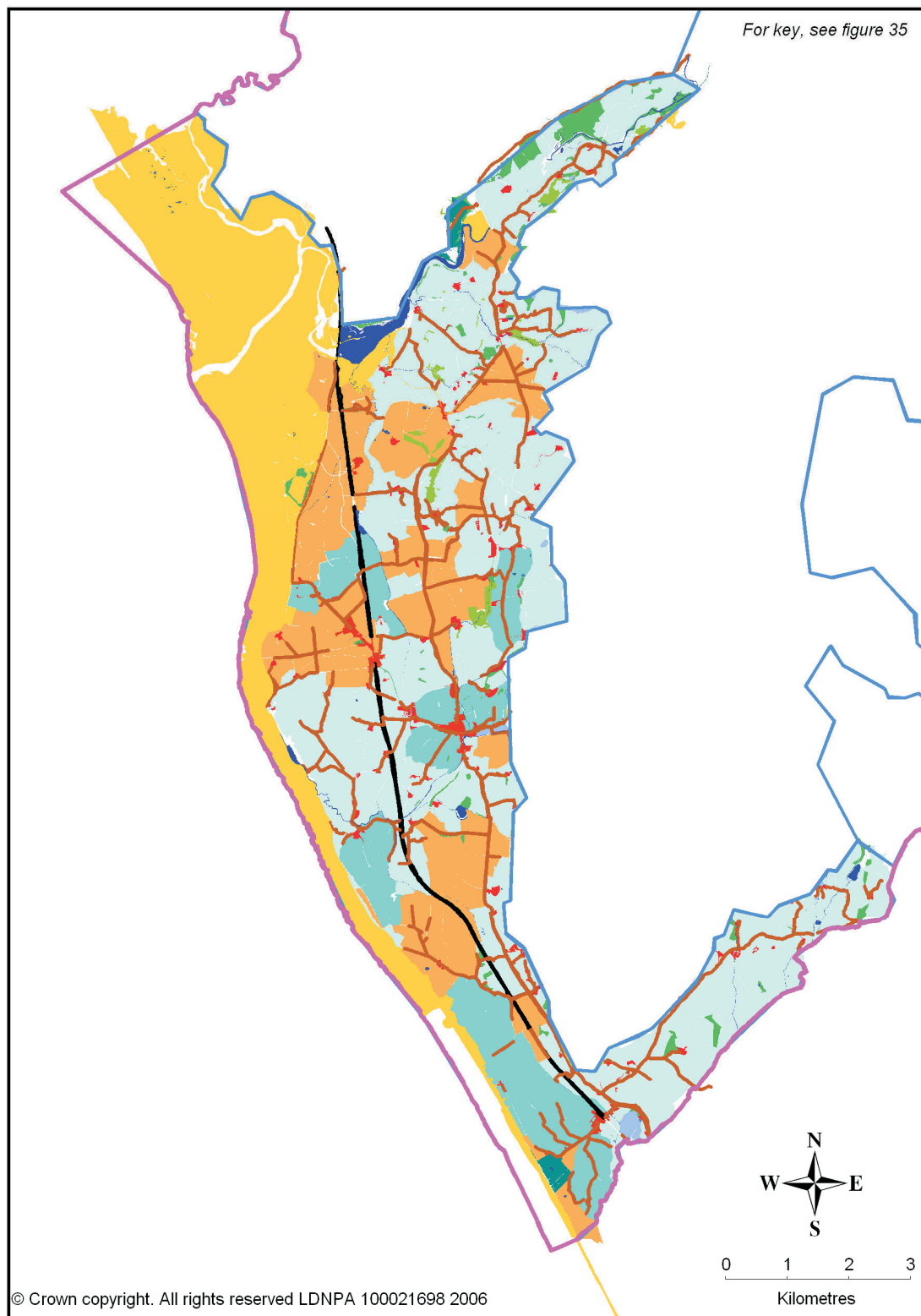


Plate 42: West Cumbria Coastal Plain character area

Gosforth and Muncaster Lowlands

An area of mixed landscape types on the western edge of the Lake District National Park, bounded to the south by the West Cumbrian Coastal Plain, to the north by the Western Fell edge, and to the east by the Central Fells. The southern boundary is marked by the valley of the River Esk, on the north side of which is a well-wooded ridge of low fell forming the grounds of Muncaster Castle. The northern edge partly follows the edge of Calder Abbey park. The area comprises a mix of landscape types, with former common fields, ancient enclosures, small patches of intakes and blocks of planned enclosures. There are also large blocks of plantation woodland, with fragments of ancient woodland. The pattern of distribution of these landscape types relates to topography, with the former common fields situated on the low-lying western side of the area, and the planned enclosure plus much of the plantation woodland, on the higher ground rising to the Central Fells. Between are zones of ancient enclosure interspersed with blocks of planned enclosure, some intakes and scattered ancient woodland. Hedgerows are the dominant type of field boundary, with stone walls restricted largely to the planned enclosures of the fell edges. Muncaster Castle, on the southern edge of the area, is a mixture of ornamental parkland, plantations and open fell. As with the West Cumbrian Coast, the settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed and nucleated settlement. The two main nucleated settlements are the villages of Ravenglass and Gosforth, both of which have clearly defined associated

former common fields, although that belonging to Ravenglass lies on the far side of the River Mite. Between the two, are the former common fields of Irton and Santon, which are largely dispersed settlements. The nucleated settlement of Eskdale Green, at the northern end of Muncaster Castle grounds, is a largely post medieval settlement, the growth of which can be attributed to mining and tourism.

Pastoral land, with parkland and woodland, are the dominating ESA landscape types in the Gosforth and Muncaster lowlands, with enclosed and wooded fellsides on the slopes leading up to the high fells. The presence of parkland and woodland is particularly marked around Santon and Irton, whilst the extensive lands around Muncaster Castle, are characterised as enclosed and wooded fellside. The pastoral landscape type is made up of ancient and planned enclosures as mapped by the HLC, and the parkland and woodland, and enclosed and wooded fellsides, are distinguishable as intakes and planned enclosures with large blocks of woodland. The dominance of lowland pasture is continued to the west, in the Cumbria landscape classification, whilst the JCAs include the Gosforth and Muncaster lowlands in the Cumbria High Fells. Included within the Cumbria High Fells area are farmland and valley landscapes at lower altitudes, with woodland, copses and dry stone walls and hedgerows.¹² This reflects the HLC characterisation of significant areas of woodland, both ancient and plantation, particularly along the lower fell slopes.

¹² Countryside Commission 1998, 31

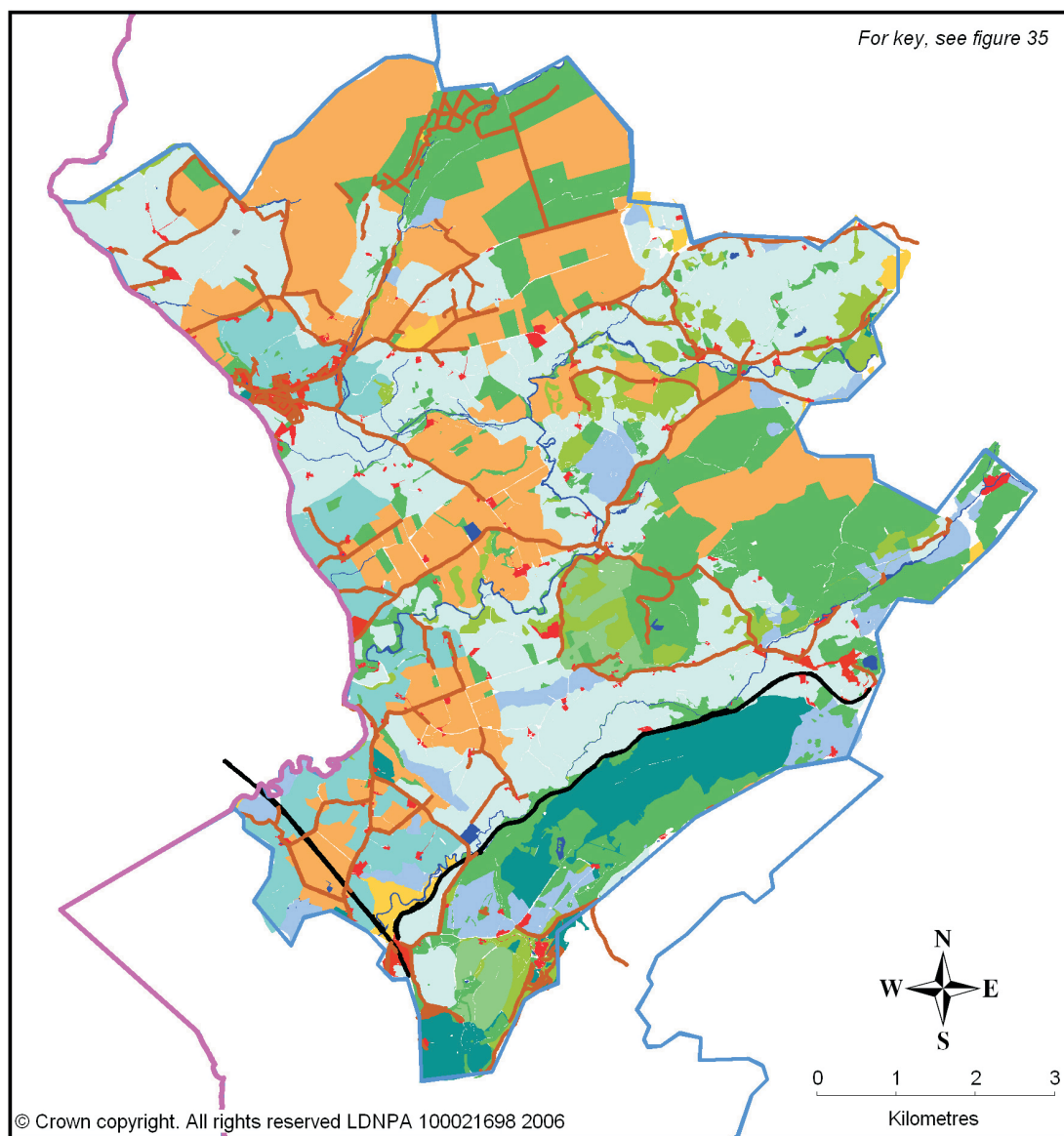


Plate 43: Gosforth and Muncaster Lowlands character area

Western Fell Edge

The Western Fell Edge is a small area on the lower slopes below the Central Fells, to the east of Egremont and Cleator Moor. Its northern edge is bounded by Ennerdale. It comprises mostly lower fells, dominated by intakes and ancient enclosures which probably represent late medieval assarts. Settlement, which is mainly dispersed, include a number of 'thwaite' names, such as Farthwaite and Sillathwaite, indicating that they were established from clearings in the common waste. The dispersed farms at the northern end may have older origins, as they are spread along the south side of the River Ehen, at the base of Ennerdale, and appear to have had a small common arable field,

anciently enclosed, around Meadley Reservoir. Field boundaries are mainly hedgerows, with stone walls restricted to the intakes, and around the edges of 'thwaite' farms.

The Cumbria landscape classification defines this area as upland fringes, whilst the ESA landscape types show enclosed and wooded fellsides, with some pastoral areas, mirroring the areas of ancient enclosures mapped by the HLC. As with the Gosforth and Muncaster lowlands, the Western Fell Edge also falls within the Cumbria High Fells JCA, and it also contains farmland with valley landscapes, woodland, copses, dry stone walls and hedgerows.¹³

¹³ Countryside Commission 1998, 31

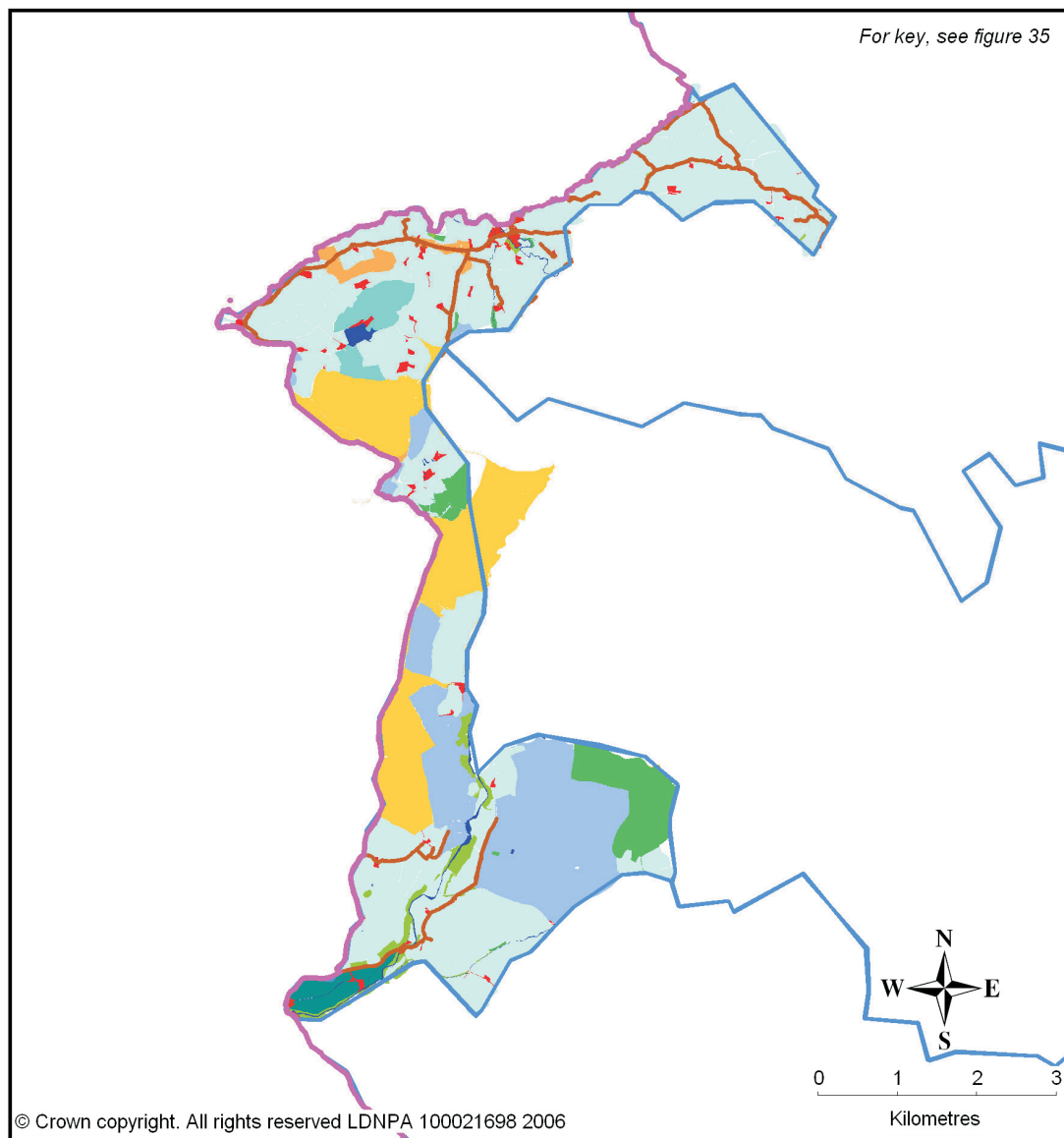


Plate 44: Western Fell Edge character area

Ennerdale

North of the Western Fell Edge, and south of the North Western Lowlands is Ennerdale. Its eastern boundary is shared with the Central Fells, and its character is defined by upland topography. The southern part comprises Ennerdale Water and its valley, whilst to the north are the Loweswater Fells. Apart from a very small patch of ancient enclosure, near Lamplugh, this area is characterised by planned enclosure and plantation woodland. Most of the area was enclosed in the nineteenth century, with very large irregular stone-walled enclosures, typical of the higher fells. In many cases, these enclosures have not been maintained, and much of the district around Ennerdale is reverting back to open moorland. The large blocks of coniferous woodland were planted by the Forestry Commission in

the twentieth century. Ennerdale is the subject of a rewilding scheme, and expanses of former plantation will be managed to allow the regeneration of native plant species.

The character of this well-defined area is not reflected particularly well in either the ESA landscapes types, which defines it as largely enclosed and wooded fellsides with small areas of valley bottom, around the lake and valley of Ennerdale plus high and low fell to the north. Although this includes woodland within the definition of the enclosed fellsides, it does not convey the picture of heavily forested hillsides which dominate this area. Neither the ESA landscape types nor the JCA show a picture of the history of planned enclosures on the fells, as neither classification was intended to portray the history of land development.

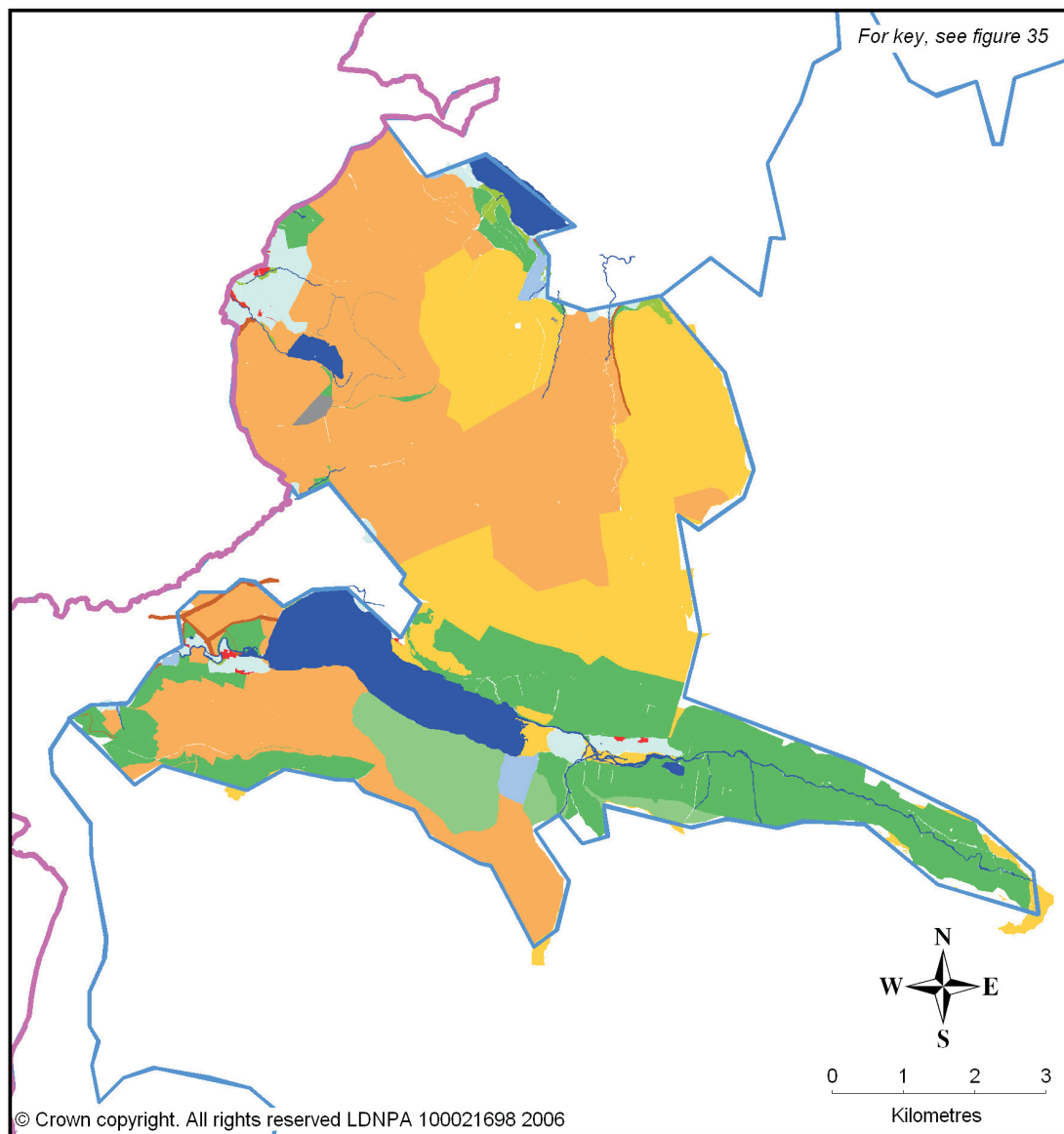


Plate 45: Ennerdale character area

North Western Lowlands

The North Western Lowlands occupy the valleys of Bassenthwaite Lake, the River Derwent and River Cocker, and some of the surrounding low fells. It is bounded by the Park boundary to the west, the Caldbeck, Uldale and Ireby Lowlands to the north, the Skiddaw Range to the east and Wythop and Thornthwaite Forest to the south. The land is mostly low-lying, but with low fells at the northern and southern ends. The settlement pattern is mostly dispersed, with some small hamlets, and the area is distinguished by several country houses and ornamental parks, such as Armathwaite Hall, Higham Hall and Isel Hall, to the east of Cockermouth. The field systems are based around a number of former common fields, which tend to be larger than those found elsewhere in the Lake District, probably because of fewer topographical restrictions and better quality agricultural land. These former common fields are surrounded by ancient enclosure. Apart from a small number of intakes, the remainder is largely made up of planned enclosures. The planned enclosures are within former common waste, for example Setmurthy Common and the low fells such as Binsey and Mosser Fell, but they also include the privately planned enclosure of extensive parks, such as that belonging to Isel Hall. Hedgerows dominate the field boundaries, with some stone walls around planned enclosures on the higher ground. There are also some stone walls around the former enclosed common field south of Low Lorton in the Lorton Valley. They occur in one block within the former common field, suggesting that they

were enclosed in a systematic manner in one episode. The area is not well wooded, and there are only a few fragmentary ancient woodlands. Plantation woodland is largely confined to planned enclosures, particularly Setmurthy Common, and around Isel Hall, where they reflect the ornamental nature of the landscape in this area.

The ESA landscape types reflect the HLC types fairly closely, although in a simplified way. The area is dominated by pastoral land, which includes zones of both ancient and planned enclosures, with a large area of parkland and woodland extending from Blindcrake eastwards and along the southern shore of Bassenthwaite. HLC mapping shows a predominance of planned enclosure and woodland in this area, mainly relating to ornamental parks such as Isel. South of Bassenthwaite, the area is made up of valley bottom and lakeshore. Other zones of planned enclosure, such as the former Binsey, Setmurthy Common and Fellbarrow, are shown as enclosed and wooded fellside, or as high and low fell. The mixed topography is also reflected in the Cumbria landscape classification, where the district immediately south of Cockermouth is lowland, with some upland fringe to the east of Cockermouth, whilst most of the area abuts a belt of higher limestone. The entire area falls within the Cumbria High Fells JCA, being defined by the farmland and sheltered valleys landscapes at lower altitudes. Although an attribute of this type is woodland and copses, here that is restricted largely to the enclosed parkland and former commons.

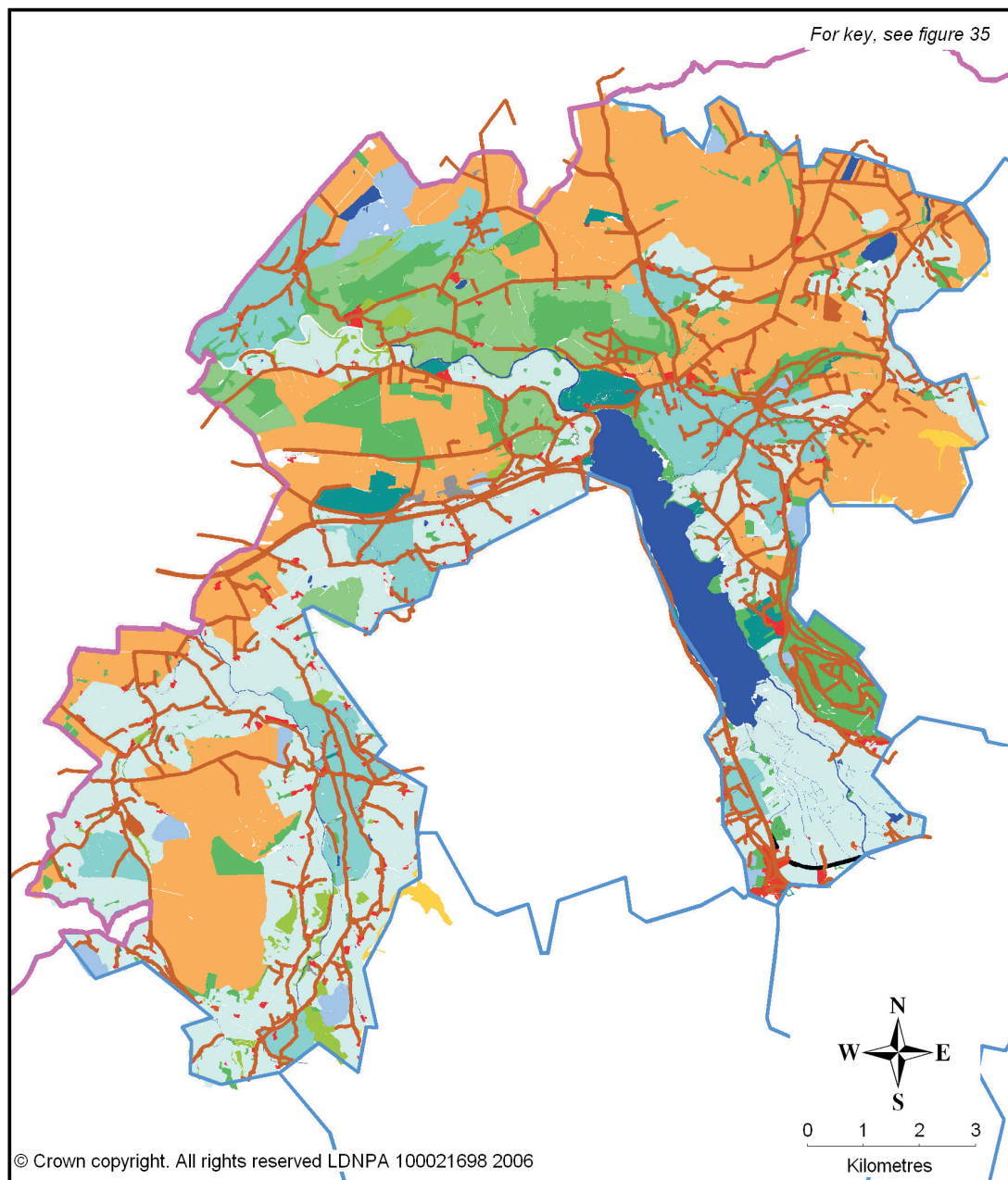


Plate 46: North Western Lowlands character area

Wythop and Thornthwaite Forest

South of the North Western Lowlands, and north of the Central Fells is a small portion of fell which would have formed the common waste to the low lands of Bassenthwaite and Lorton Vale. This was enclosed systematically in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, although it also contains small patches of intakes. There is also a small zone of lower lying land around Wythop Mill, which is anciently enclosed. One of its main characteristics, however, is the large coniferous woodland plantation, which was begun in the nineteenth century, but greatly extended by the Forestry

Commission in the twentieth century. Like Grizedale, this is now a forest park with large portions accessible to the public. . The unwooded fell is divided by stone walls into very large, irregular enclosures.

Like Ennerdale, this area is dominated by planned enclosures and forestry plantation, but the ESA landscape types differentiate only between enclosed and wooded fellsides and high and low fell. Indeed, many of the forest plantations are within the high and low fell. The extensive plantation woodlands are a feature of the Cumbria High Fells JCA.

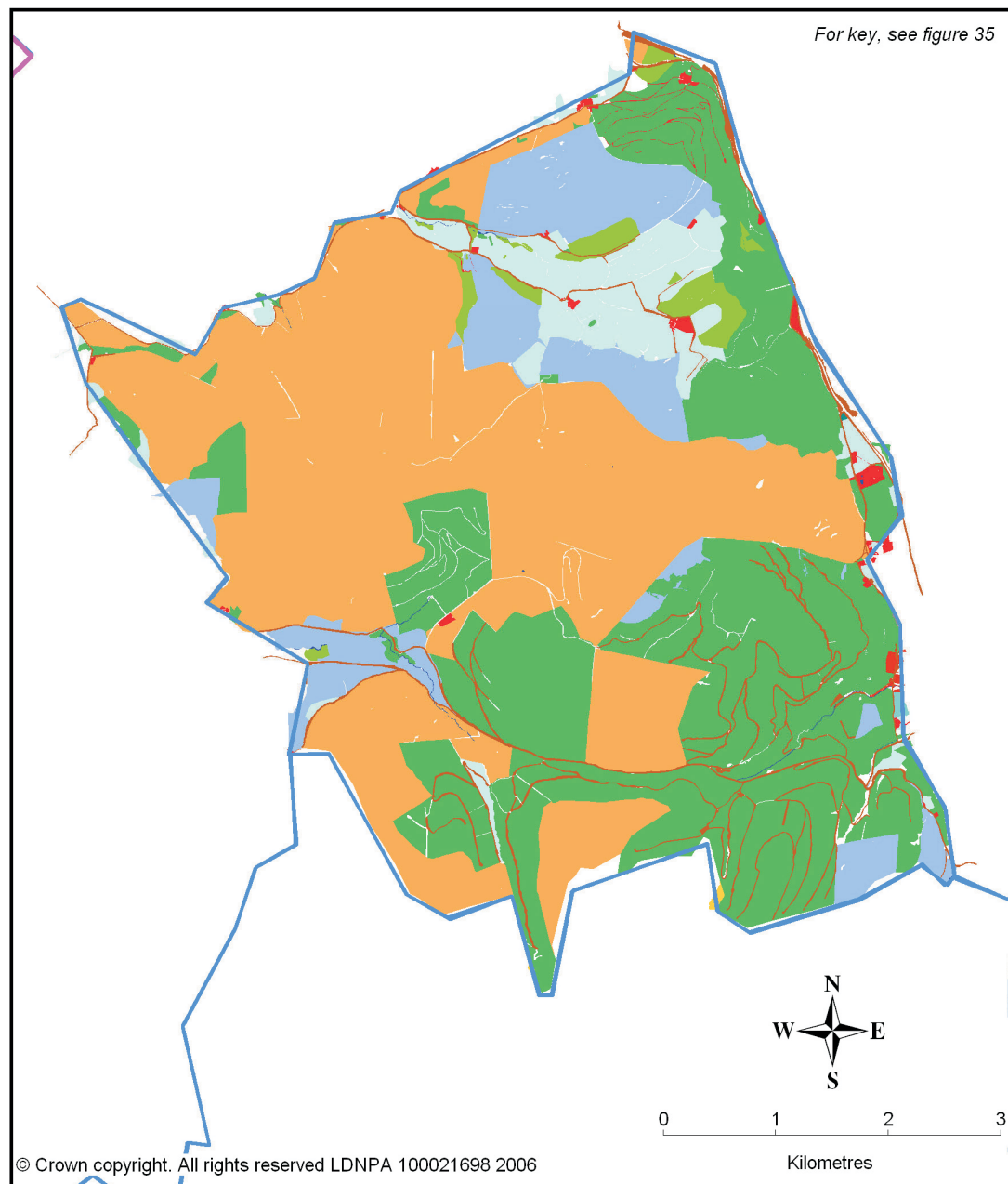


Plate 47: Wythop and Thornthwaite Forest character area

Caldbeck, Uldale and Ireby Lowlands

Lying at the northernmost point of the National Park, the Caldbeck, Uldale and Ireby Lowlands is a long, narrow strip north of the Skiddaw Range. Its landscape is dominated by the former common field systems of the three villages of Caldbeck, Uldale and Ireby, though the latter lies just outside the National Park boundary. These former common fields are larger than average for the National Park. Around these are ancient enclosures, and beyond these, to the north are some intakes and then open commons which extend beyond the Park boundary. There are only a few small patches of planned enclosures, on the edges of the former common fields around Caldbeck and Ireby. In addition to the villages of Caldbeck, Uldale and Ireby, there are a number of dispersed farms, which tend to be scattered across the ancient

enclosures, and in Caldbeck follow the fell edge. This area has almost no woodland, apart from a small plantation on its south eastern boundary, and some ancient clough woodland along Stock Ghyll and the River Caldew. The field boundaries are almost all hedgerows, however, and contain large numbers of standard trees.

The ancient enclosures are characterised as pastoral land by the ESA landscape types, and the zones of intake and open common as high and low fell. Continuing outside the National Park boundary, the Cumbria landscape classification has defined this area as high limestone, whilst it forms part of the Cumbria High Fells JCA, thus forming part of the same landscape type as the North Western Lowlands, the Western Fell Edge and the Gosforth and Muncaster Lowlands.

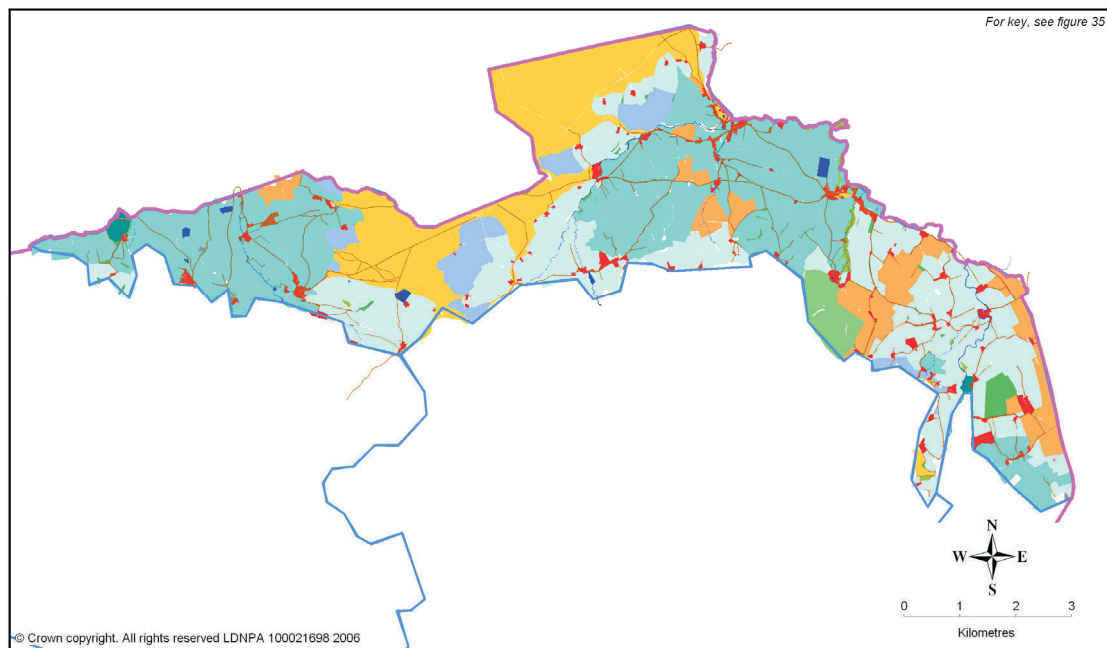


Plate 48: Caldbeck, Uldale and Ireby Lowlands character area

Skiddaw Range

An area of high, open fell surrounded by lowland, with Keswick and the Greta Valley to the south. The area is made up of unenclosed land almost in its entirety, apart from a small patch of intakes around Lonscale Fell in the south and the narrow Mosedale Valley to the east. The range includes two of the Lake District's highest fells; Skiddaw and Blencathra, and the area was known for its copper and tungsten mines in the post medieval period. In particular, the Carrock Fell Tungsten Mine is considered to be of national importance and is a scheduled ancient monument. The mines, which were

distributed around the southern and western flanks of the range, are of limited extent in themselves, but their remains can be found along a number of routes into the fells, and thus have a dramatic local physical impact on the landscape.

High and low fell covers most of this area in the ESA landscape types, with small areas of enclosed and wooded fellsides on the fringes, with a narrow finger of valley bottom along the Caldew. It is part of the Cumbria High Fells JCA, forming a distinctive group of fells, characterised by steep, generally smooth-sided mountains.¹⁴

¹⁴ Countryside Commission 1998, 33

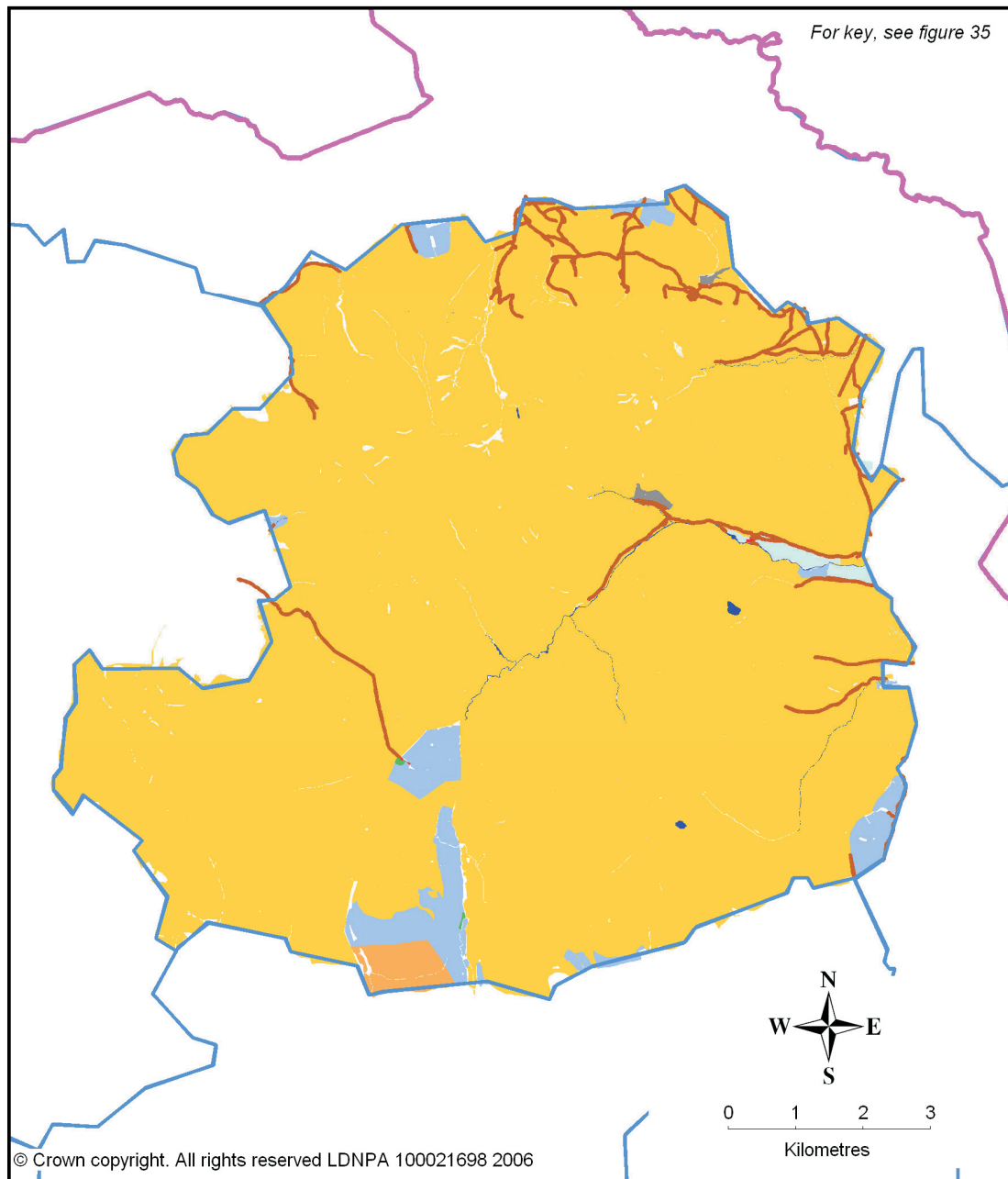


Plate 49: Skiddaw Range character area

Keswick and Derwent Water

South of the Skiddaw Range, and north of the Central Fells, is the area around Derwent Water and the town of Keswick. Like the Windermere area, this is one of the key destinations for visitors to the Lake District National Park, and its character partly reflects this, taking in Keswick and the lake, and the approaches to it from the east. Around Derwent Water the countryside is largely wooded, with plantations but also significant patches of ancient woodland. The town of Keswick forms the largest nucleated settlement in the north of the Lake District National Park, and is a 'honeypot' for visitors to the northern half of the Park. The urban environs and the northern shores of Derwent Water, therefore, have a number of camping and caravan sites and public recreation spaces. West of Keswick is an area of ancient enclosures, and south of Derwent Water is the head of Borrowdale with its former common field. Immediately north of Keswick is are numerous intakes, at Latrigg and Ormathwaite, with plantation and ancient woodland, which formed an important part in the itinerary of the eighteenth and nineteenth century traveller interested in the Picturesque. The landscape of the valley to the east of Keswick is centred on the village of Threlkeld, which had a small former common field, though the landscape comprises mostly ancient enclosures with some intakes. This approach to Keswick from the east is now

dominated by the A66 trunk road and the bypass to the north of Keswick. Although the eastern part of this area is not well wooded, the Greta Valley has ancient woodland, and the field boundaries comprise hedgerows with numerous standard trees. In addition, there have been substantial programmes of eighteenth and nineteenth century ornamental planting, designed to enhance the Picturesque view around Derwent Water and the lower fells north of Keswick.

This mix of ancient enclosures, intakes, ancient woodland and ornamental planting is reflected in the ESA landscape types for the area around Keswick and Derwent Water. The land adjacent to Derwent Water is almost all parkland and woodland, incorporating the town of Keswick, plus the landscaped grounds and ornamental planting around the lakeshore. Beyond this to the north, the low-lying land comprises pastoral land, with enclosed and wooded fellsides rising up to the Skiddaw Massif. South of the lake, the upper end of Borrowdale is made up of valley bottom, surrounded by enclosed and wooded fellsides. This landscape is typical of the pattern of glaciated valleys which form part of the Cumbria High Fells JCA, with relatively formal lakeshore landscapes, extensive ancient woodland, with semi-improved and improved pasture on the sheltered farmland north of the lake.¹⁵

¹⁵ Countryside Commission 1998, 31-2

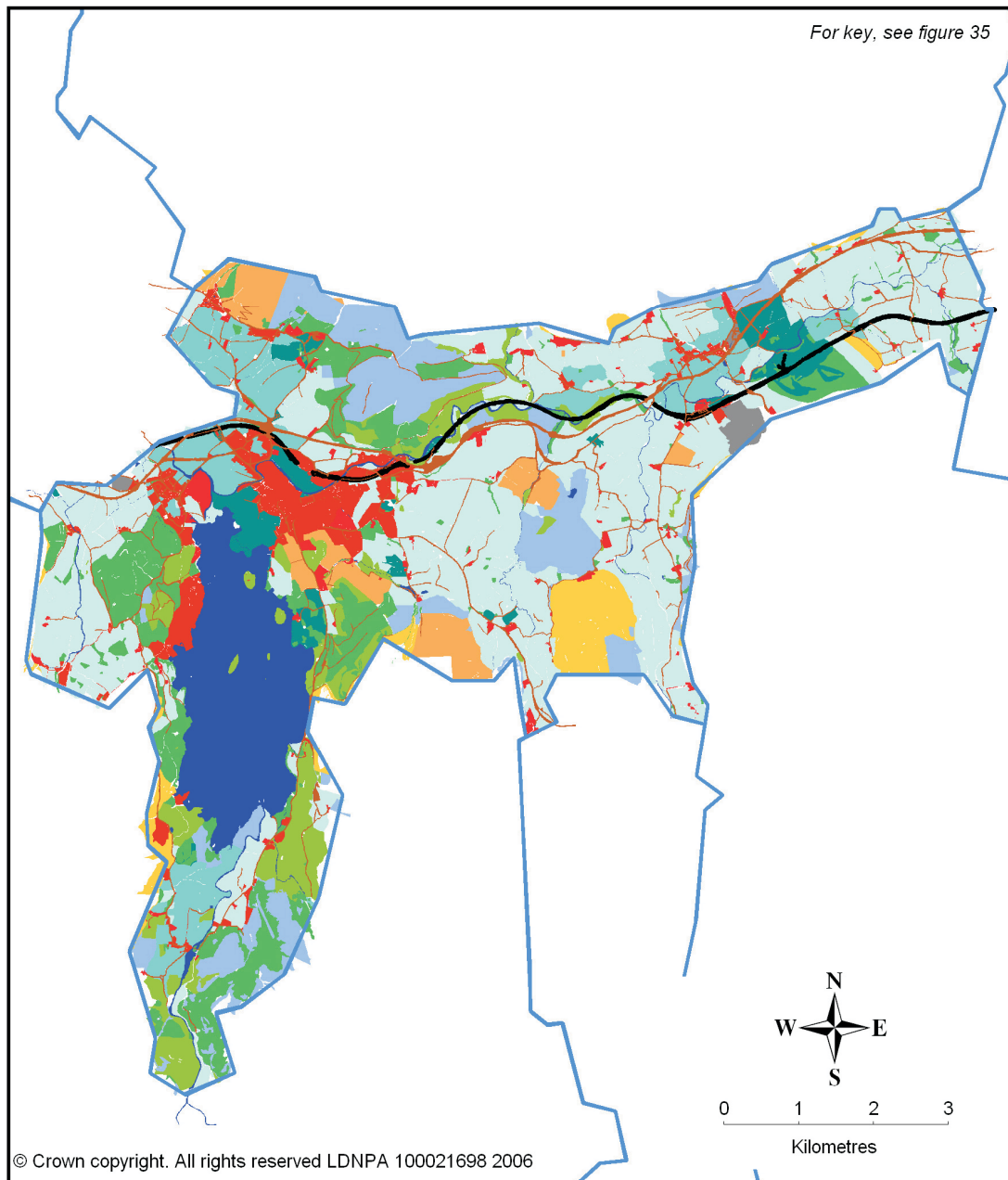


Plate 50: Keswick and Derwent Water character area

Thirlmere

The area of Thirlmere forms a small but distinct character area, defined by the reservoir and its surrounding woodland. At the northern end is a small area of ancient enclosures around Legburthwaite, which includes limited areas of ancient woodland. Before the construction of the reservoir in the 1890s, Thirlmere comprised two small tarns, linked by a narrow neck of water. Around its shores was a narrow band of enclosures, with scattered farmsteads. Following the enlargement of the lake, large expanses of coniferous woodland were planted on the slopes surrounding it, to act as a filter for water running onto the lake. Many of the individual settlements were lost as the area was planted up. The Manchester Corporation, who were

behind the construction of the reservoir, attracted a great deal of criticism for the large expanses of coniferous plantation, which was considered gloomy and dark. The original planting still survives, and indeed has been extended.

Like Ennerdale, this area is dominated by forestry plantation, but this is not reflected well in the ESA landscape types, which defines most of the area as enclosed and wooded fellsides, leading up to high and low fell. At the northern end, the area of ancient enclosure mapped by the HLC is defined as either valley bottom and lakeshore, or as parkland and woodland. Within the description of the Cumbria High Fells JCA, direct reference is made to the plantations around Thirlmere.¹⁶

¹⁶ Countryside Commission 1998, 31

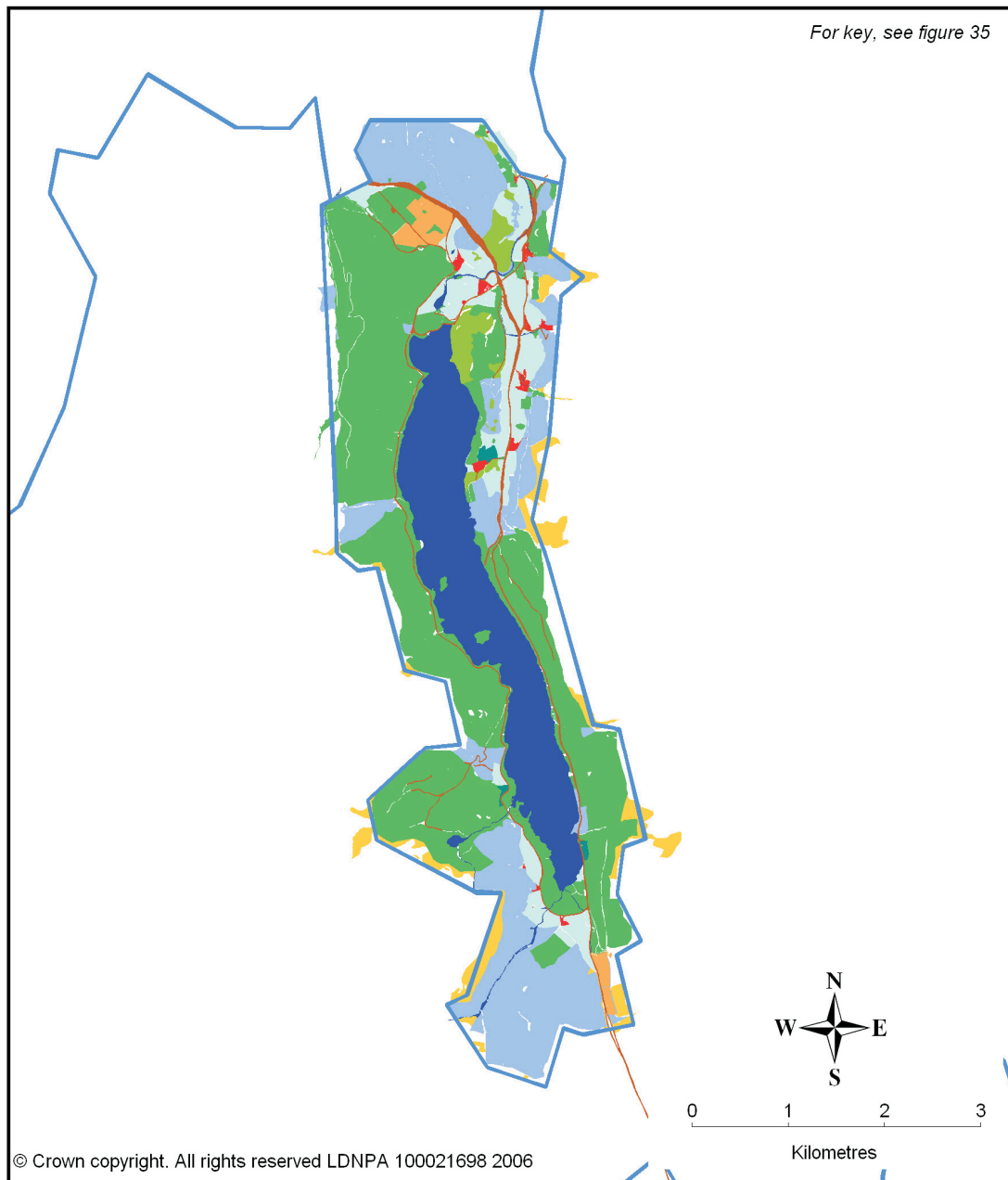


Plate 51: Thirlmere character area

North Eastern Lowlands

In the north eastern quadrant of the National Park, extending from Mosedale in the north to Shap in the south, is an area of lowland lying between the Central Fells and the National Park boundary. The character of the area is similar in type to the North Western Lowlands, and is a patchwork of enclosure types, with comparatively large areas of former common fields, ancient enclosures and planned enclosure. There are few intakes, mostly confined to the fell edges. Country houses and their associated ornamental parks, such as Glencoyne, Dalemain and Lowther, are a feature of this area, along with groups of ornamental tree planting around the northern shores of Ullswater. Elsewhere coniferous plantation has been carried out in areas of planned enclosure on former common waste, around Matterdale. As with many of the other low lying areas, hedgerows predominate as field boundaries, with stone walls in the higher zones of planned enclosure, but also with some fencing on low lying lands. Settlement is generally dispersed across the anciently

enclosed land, and around the edges of the former common fields, with a concentration of farms and houses around the northern end of Ullswater.

Not all of the North Eastern Lowlands are covered by the ESA landscape types, as Lowther Park, Dacre, Penruddock and Hutton all lie outside the ESA. Where it is covered by the ESA, the landscape types are a mixture of pastoral land, and enclosed and wooded fellsides, reflecting the mix of former common fields and ancient enclosures with large areas of planned enclosures. Around the shores of Ullswater there is parkland and woodland, marking the lakeside ornamental planting. According to the Cumbria landscape classification, the character of this area continues outside the park as high limestone, whilst the Countryside Character Programme defines it as part of the Cumbria High Fells JCA. Like the North Western Lowlands, the key elements of the Cumbria High Fells include farmland and sheltered valleys landscapes at lower altitudes, with woodland and copses restricted largely to the planned enclosures.¹⁷

¹⁷ Countryside Commission 1998, 31

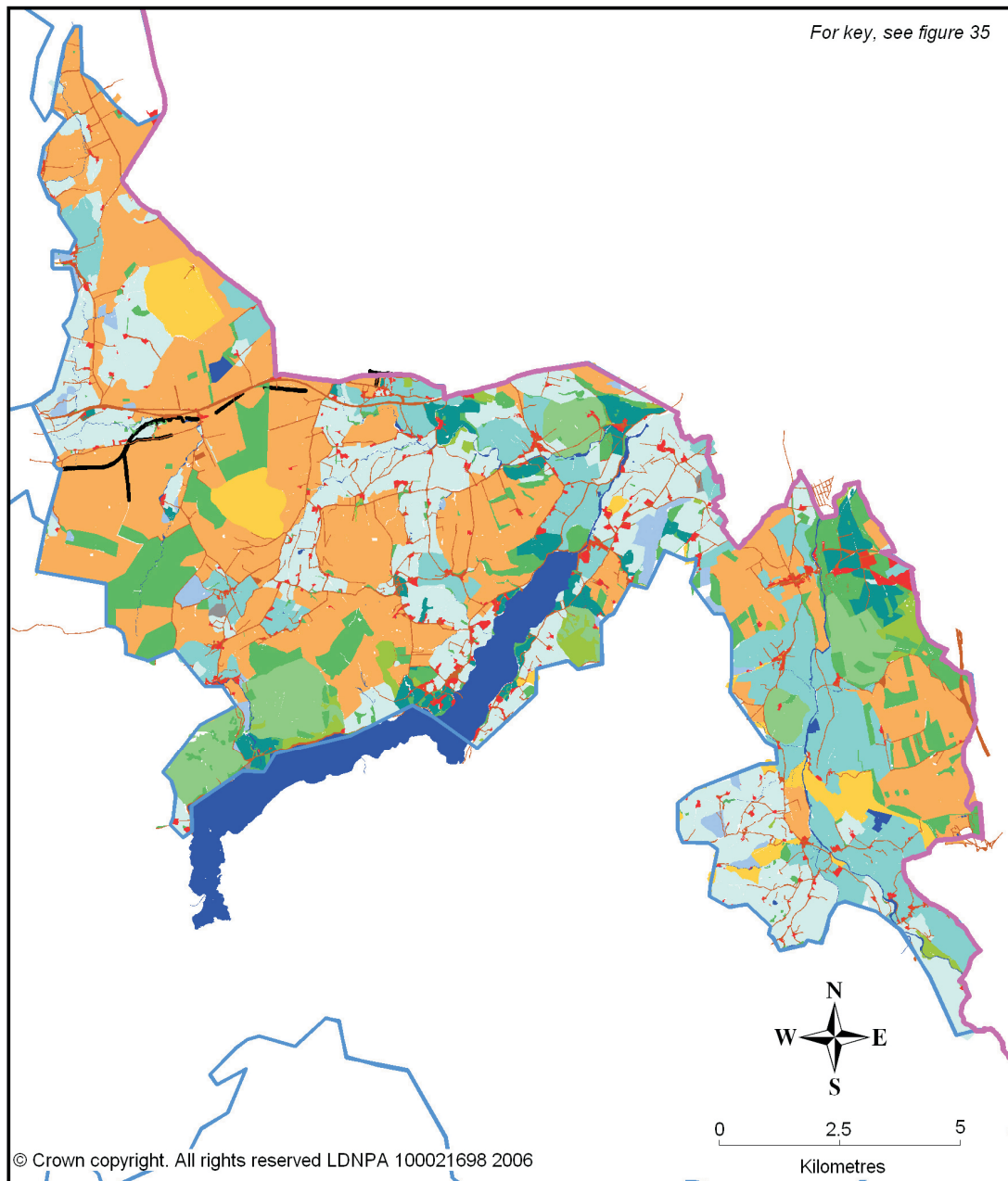


Plate 52: North Eastern Lowlands character area

Eastern Fells

The Eastern Fells lie to the north of the Crosthwaite and Underbarrow Low Fells and the Windermere, and the Rothay and Brathay Valleys. The park boundary forms its eastern edge, with the Central Fells to the north and west. Its character is defined by expanses of post medieval enclosures, both intakes and nineteenth century planned enclosures which extend onto the high moorland. The enclosures are large, and irregular in shape, defined mainly by topography, and in many places enclosure boundaries have not been maintained and the character is reverting back to open moor. On the moorland, most enclosure boundaries comprise dry stone walls. Penetrating into the moorland are a number of narrow valleys. The main valleys are Troutbeck, Kentmere and Longsleddale on the southern side, plus smaller valleys such as Bannisdale, the upper end of Borrowdale, Wetsleddale and the top end of Patterdale. The valleys contain almost all of the woodland within this character area, with concentrations of ancient woodland in Patterdale and Longsleddale. The western valleys of Patterdale, Troutbeck and Kentmere, have a more nucleated settlement pattern, and more extensive former common fields. In Kentmere, parts of the common arable fields were not enclosed until the nineteenth century.

Longsleddale, and the other smaller valleys, are dominated by dispersed settlement and ancient closes, with only limited areas of former common fields.

The pattern of planned enclosures of the high moorland, whether maintained or not, is not shown up by the ESA landscape types, which show most of the area as high or low fell. Around the edges of this are significant areas of enclosed and wooded fellsides, which mirror the intakes and planned enclosure of lower altitudes. There is little woodland on these enclosed fellsides, however, except around the valley sides. The valleys themselves are characterised as valley bottom. The ESA extends eastwards, well beyond the boundary of the National Park, where the landscape types reveal the same pattern of high and low fell, with enclosed and wooded fellsides above narrow valley bottoms. This area is being considered as an extension to the Lake District National Park, and the ESA landscape types suggest a very similar landscape to land within the National Park. This was also reflected in the HLC mapping, and the Cumbria landscape classification records the adjacent area as either high limestone or fells and scarps. All this area, including the high land to the east of the Park boundary, is included in the Cumbrian High Fells JCA.

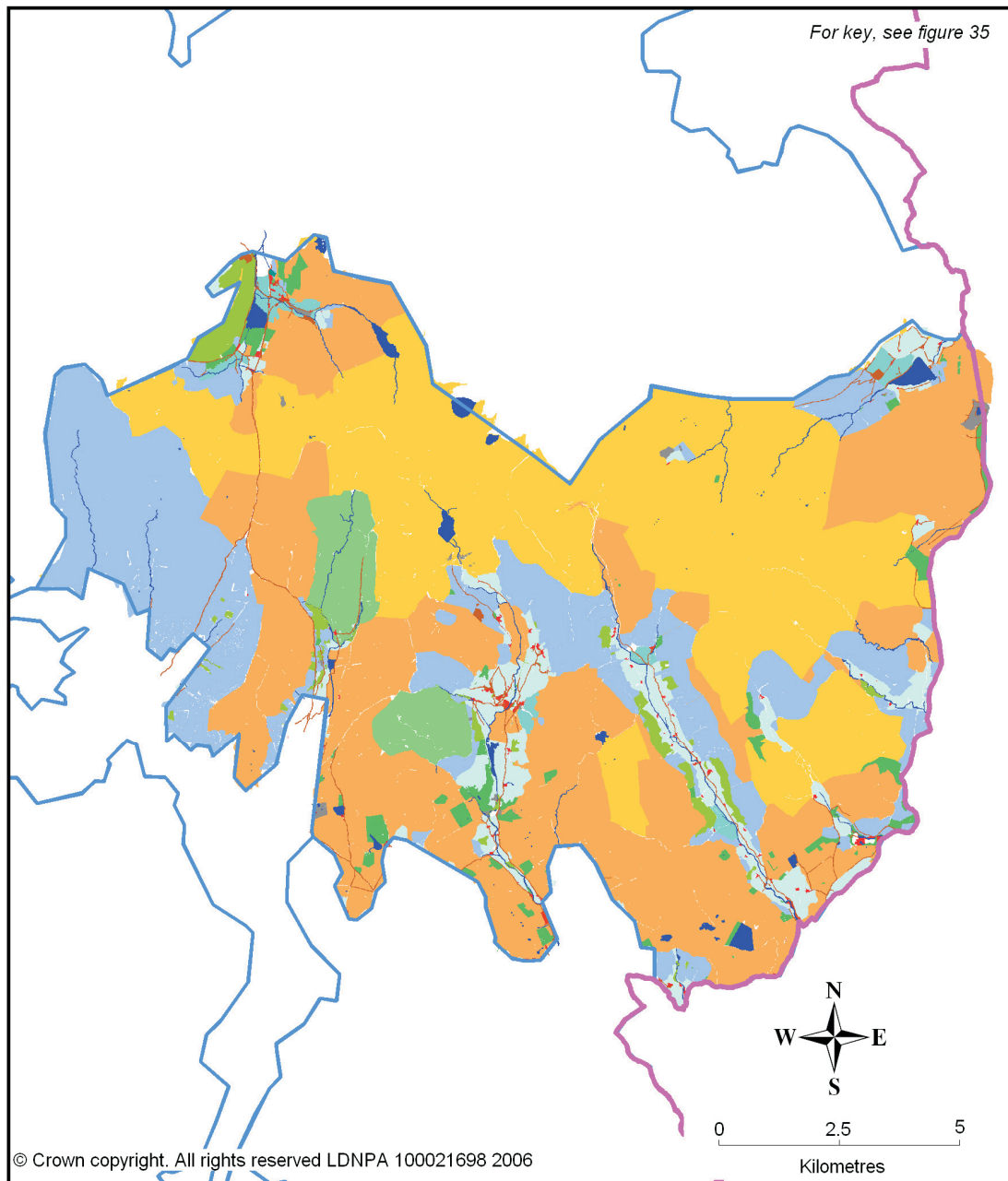


Plate 53: Eastern Fells character area

Central Fells

The most extensive character area is the Central Fells, covering the open, unenclosed moorland and fells of the central massif. This area is dominated by unenclosed land, and along with the large water bodies, is seen as one of the key features of the Lake District. As with the Eastern Fells, the area is punctuated by a number of narrow valleys, such as Eskdale, the Langdales, Grisedale and Glenridding, Borrowdale, Buttermere and Wasdale. The valleys are dominated by dispersed settlements spread along the valley sides, with ancient closes along the valley bottom and areas of ancient woodland at the base of the fell slopes. From the late medieval period, the enclosed areas were extended up the lower fell sides through intaking, and in the post medieval period the intakes became extensive where topography allowed, providing cow pastures. Common fields were usually small in these

valleys, and were enclosed at an early date, apart from a small portion in Great Langdale where part of the field survived was commonable until the nineteenth century.

Within the ESA landscape types, the Central Fells are, inevitably, dominated by the high and low fell landscape types. Around the edges of the narrow valleys, which protrude into the high fells and are characterised as valley bottom, are limited areas of enclosed fellside and woodland, mostly marking the areas of intakes mapped by the HLC. Land around the lakes is either enclosed fellside and woodland, or valley bottom, although there is also a small patch of parkland and woodland around Ullswater. The entire area falls within the Cumbria High Fells JCA, with its range of features from spectacular and rugged mountains, a radiating pattern of deeply glaciated valleys, and farmland and sheltered valley landscapes.¹⁸

¹⁸ Countryside Commission 1998, 31

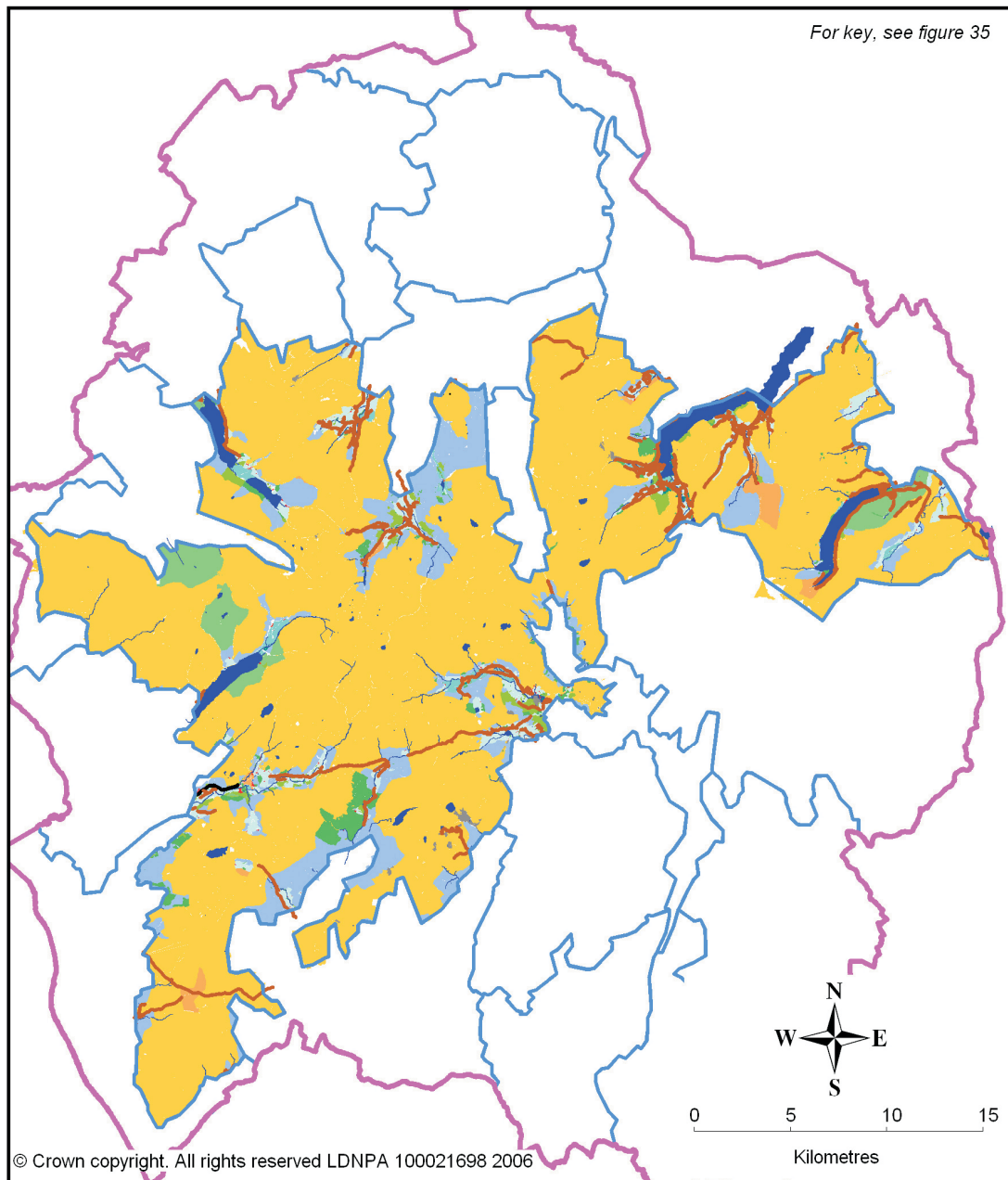


Plate 54: Central Fells character area

