

NCA 9 Eden Valley

Overview

The Eden Valley NCA covers the broad valleys of the River Eden and its tributaries. It is a wide south-north valley, with the Pennines to the east, and the Orton fells and Lake District fells to the west, and is included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type. The western edge of the North Pennines AONB lies within the NCA, along with the northern fringes of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, accounting for less than 8% of the total area. It is a lowland landscape of arable and semi-improved grasslands. Fields tend to be regular and enclosed by hedges or fences. Around the historic villages, field patterns exhibit evidence of enclosed medieval strip fields. The Eden and its tributaries drains half the county of Cumbria and severe flooding events in Carlisle have had their origins upstream of the river system. The settlement in the valley is a nucleated one, dominated by towns and villages including the historic centres of Brough, Appleby-in-Westmorland and Penrith. The Eden Valley is an important transport corridor, with the M6 motorway and West Coast Main Line running through the western edge of the NCA, and the A66 trunk road providing a link through the Pennines at Stainmore. Woodland covers 9.5% of the NCA, of which 3% of the NCA is ancient woodland, though much of it has been replanted. There are regular blocks of conifer plantations on the sandstone ridge between the rivers Eden and Patteril and the eastern foothills of the Pennine escarpment. Managed farm and estate mixed woodlands, are found on the valley floor, with frequent small copses and shelterbelts. There are some remnant stands of black poplar, rare in northern England, and the NCA is an important managed red squirrel stronghold.

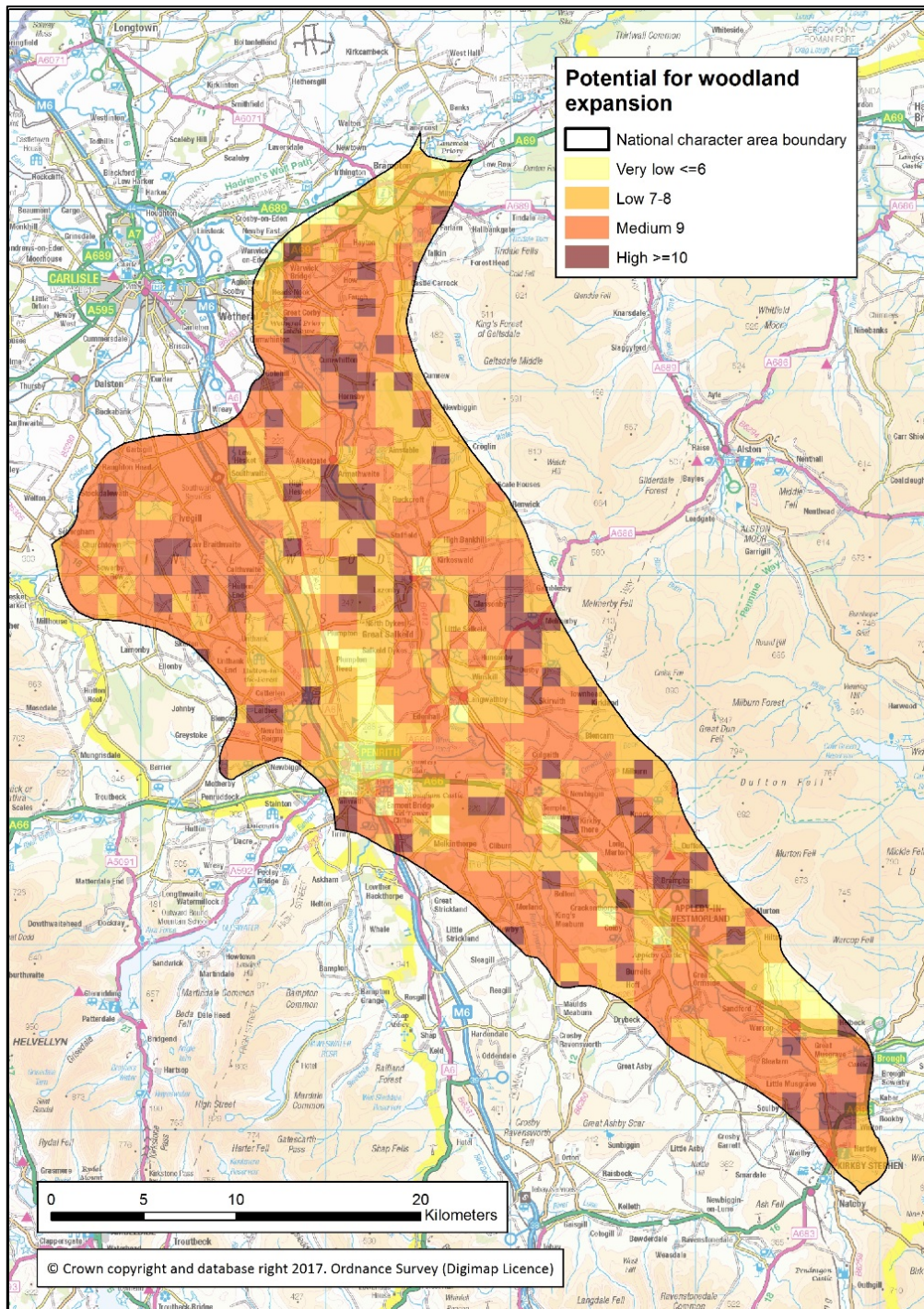
The Historic Environment Character

There is a history of human occupation dating back to prehistoric times, with finds of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint tools. From the Neolithic and Bronze Age, there are significant stone monuments such as Long Meg and Her Daughters, and the henges of Mayburgh and King Arthur's Round Table at Eamont Bridge. From the Roman period, there are forts and marching camps along the route of the main Roman road from Carlisle to Penrith, and eastwards to Brough, emphasising the valley's strategic importance as a transport corridor through history. The importance of the Eden Valley continued into the medieval period, with castles built at intervals, including Appleby, Brougham, Brough and Penrith. The area is known for its historic settlement pattern of medieval planned villages, commonly laid out as two row settlements with village greens. Shrunken and deserted medieval settlements and their associated field systems survive as clear earthworks, and in some cases these have been scheduled.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

Although there are several key existing objectives for woodland management and expansion in the NCA profile, the mapping of natural and historic environment attributes suggests it has only a medium to low potential. The NCA profile highlights the importance of managing and extending the rectilinear pattern of estate shelter belts, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, as well as the expansion of native woodland on valley sides and in the riparian zone. Conversely, woodland could be reduced in areas of commercial forestry plantation, to restore and expand areas of lowland heath, though it is also important to support red squirrel conservation in the Whinell Forest reserve and buffer area. Other priorities include

managing and restoring designed parkland and important trees in the landscape, and expanding the remaining stands of the rare native black poplar. The mapping score appears to result from a general spread of medium scores across the NCA, with a few clusters with high potential. It is likely, therefore, that the area could absorb new woodland on a small scale across most of the NCA. The archaeologically sensitive nature of the landscape in the NCA should be considered, however, avoiding impact on the setting of prehistoric monuments, for example, and not planting around settlements known to have medieval earthworks.



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