

NCA 10 NORTH PENNINES

Overview

The North Pennines NCA is at the northern end of the Pennine chain and forms a distinct area of upland moorland and dales, and it is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. A large proportion of the NCA is within the North Pennines AONB, which has also been designated as a UNESCO global geopark. The western half is characterised by massive moorland summits, with a scarp slope overlooking the Eden Valley, whilst to the east are high moors. The whole NCA has a remote character, with sparse settlement largely confined to the dales. The area is the source of several major rivers, particularly the South Tyne, the Tees and the Wear. It is an important area for water capture, with rivers and reservoirs supplying clean water to conurbations and industries downstream. The semi-natural moorland and grassland habitats form important links with adjoining uplands to the north and south. Settlement is constrained by the few roads, which are mainly confined to the valleys, and is dominated by scattered farmsteads with small villages and hamlets. Alston, Stanhope and Middleton-in-Teesdale are the main settlement centres. Tree cover is generally sparse at less than 6% cover of the NCA, but with extensive coniferous plantations on the moorland ridges. Semi-natural woodland is restricted mostly to gills and river banks, particularly in the lower dales where there are also shelter belts. There is wet woodland on poorly drained soils. Ancient woodland accounts for less than 1% of the total area of the NCA.

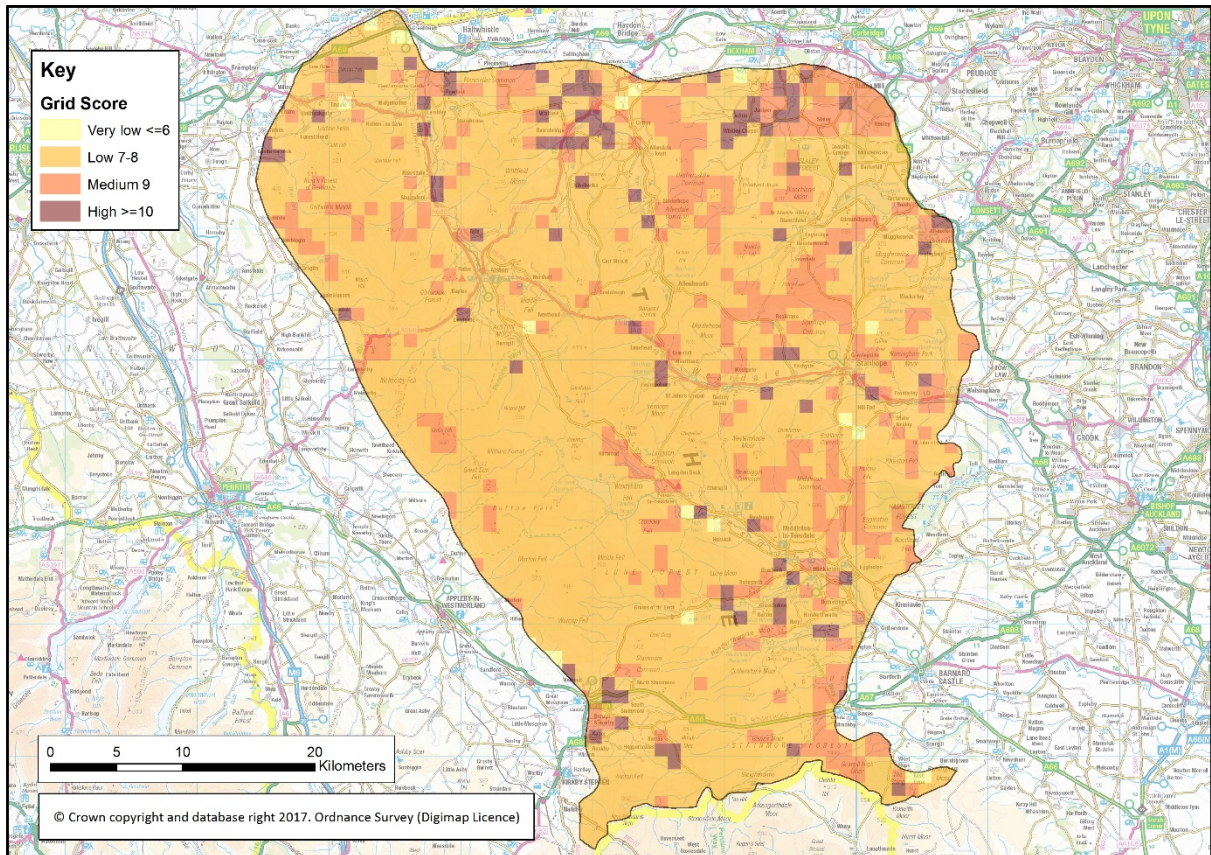
The Historic Environment Character

The moorland character of much of the NCA has led to exceptionally well preserved archaeological remains, including prehistoric settlement and medieval shielings (seasonal settlements). Within the valleys, there are medieval and later settlement and field system earthworks. The area was an important part of the Roman military frontier zone, and several roads crossed the uplands, alongside evidence of widespread small farms. In the north of the area, there are many late medieval and early post medieval defensive buildings, reminders of the frequent wars and raids as a result of the area's proximity to the Anglo-Scottish border. Mining and metal processing, particularly the extraction of lead, silver, iron, zinc and copper ores shaped the historic landscape from the 12th century onwards. The present-day settlement pattern of farmsteads scattered along valley sides has its origins in the system of by-employment, where miners also had incomes from pastoral smallholdings, with common grazing on the surrounding moorlands. The mining and metal processing industries have had a major impact on the landscape in the form of extensive remains including spoil heaps, buildings, shafts, levels, leats, wheel pits, washing floors, flues, chimneys, hushes and open cast workings. Expansion of the industry in the 19th century led to the growth of settlements, such as Nenthead, and planned villages, such as Allenheads. In Weardale and Teesdale, large-scale quarrying was important. From the 19th and 20th century, the area has been an important source of drinking water for the urban populations of Tyneside, Wearside and Teesside.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The open, moorland character of the NCA, and the importance of industrial archaeological remains limits the opportunities for woodland expansion. The limited potential is reflected in the mapping of environmental and historic environment opportunities, which score as

low. It is also highlighted in the environmental opportunities set out by the NCA profile, which emphasises the need to protect, manage and conserve industrial remains. Opportunities for woodland expansion relate to the protection and restoration of ancient woodlands, managing existing woodlands and plantations, and expanding broadleaved woodland in riparian zones. Where there are opportunities, they are restricted to the valleys, though with more extensive areas in the northern part of the NCA, both in the valleys and around areas of existing plantation. Any new planting, however, should be aware of industrial remains and medieval settlement earthworks on valley sides and in the valleys, as well as on the moors.



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