

NCA 21 Yorkshire Dales

Overview

The majority of the Yorkshire Dales NCA lies within designated landscapes. It encompasses most of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, apart from an area within Cumbria, and it also includes more than half of the Nidderdale AONB. The NCA is included with the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. It is a glaciated, upland landscape of rounded hills and moors separated by broad valleys cut into Carboniferous rocks of Limestone, Millstone Grit and shale. The landscape character is predominantly rural, with valleys dominated by pasture and meadow enclosed by fields bounded by drystone walls dotted with numerous stone field barns. The fields on the higher fells and fell sides are large and regular, whilst those in the dales and around the villages are smaller and more irregular. The moorlands are managed as unenclosed common grazing for sheep or as grouse moors. The upland hay meadows and limestone pavements are particularly distinctive and important. The settlement pattern is one of villages and farms strung out along the dales. There are three towns within the NCA, all outside the National Park boundary: Skipton, Settle and Pateley Bridge. Roads are relatively few and are largely confined to valleys and passes. There is only one major route, the A684, which crosses the NCA from east to west. It is a main tourist route providing access to Wensleydale. The Settle to Carlisle railway also passes through the NCA, and is a popular tourist line. Tree cover is very low, at only 4% of the NCA, of which around a quarter is ancient woodland. Ancient and semi-natural woodlands tend to be limited to the steep dale sides and gills, with some in areas of limestone pavement, as well as small areas planted for shelter around settlements. There are a few blocks of conifers, mainly in the upper ends of the dales, such as Langstrothdale, Wensleydale and Oughtershaw.

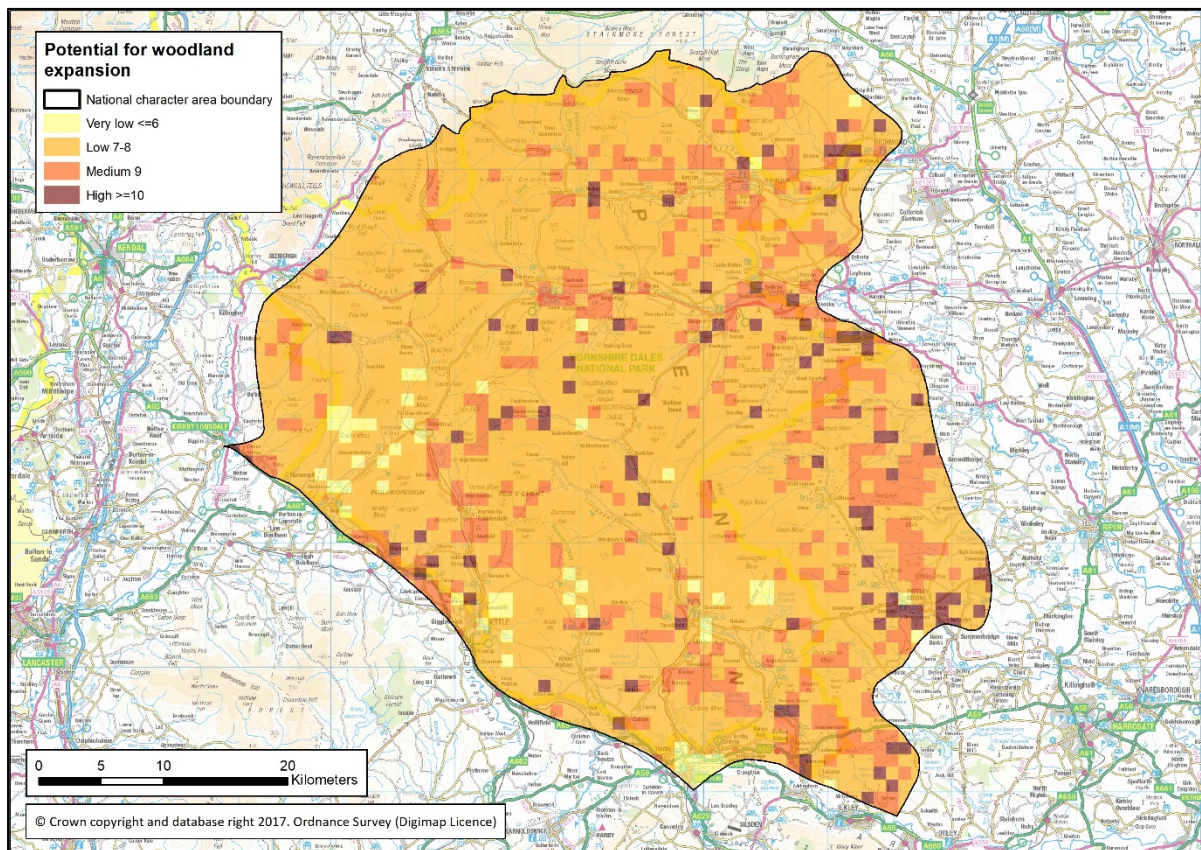
The Historic Environment Character

There are well-preserved prehistoric monuments, dating from the Neolithic period onwards, including enclosures, henges, cup and ring-marked stones, burial mounds and field systems. From the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, there are the earthwork remains of farmsteads and round houses. There is also earthwork evidence for a Roman military presence, with a temporary marching camp on Malham Moor and a fort at Bainbridge, as well as lead mining at Greenhow. A Roman road crosses the NCA, from Ingleton in the south-west to Bainbridge. In the later medieval period, the landscape was influenced greatly by secular and ecclesiastical lordships, with large areas administered under forest law. This meant that areas were run directly by lordships, mainly for the benefit of hunting, but also as vaccaries, or cattle farms. Large areas were also under the control of monasteries, particularly the Cistercian Abbeys of Yorkshire, and run as either vaccaries or berceries, for sheep rearing. Settlement appears to have been scattered, and developed out of the secular and monastic farms, and hunting lodges. Enclosure increased in the 16th and 17th centuries, with an increase in the number of new farmsteads. Large-scale parliamentary enclosure in the late 18th and 19th centuries, meant that all but the highest land was divided into large-regular enclosures bounded by drystone walls. Industry also left its mark on the character of the NCA from the end of the 18th century, in the form of textile mills, lead mines and limestone quarries. As well as the remains of the industries themselves, settlement increased to house the workforces. From the end of the 19th century, the area became

increasingly popular with tourists, as it was made more accessible with the advent of the railways. Grouse shooting also grew in popularity, for the wealthier visitors, and extensive tracts of moorland are still characterised by managed heather and structures such as grouse butts and remote shooting huts.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes identifies only limited opportunities for woodland expansion, largely because of the open moorland character of much of the NCA. The mapping suggests that there are a few areas of medium to high potential around the dales and around settlements. In many cases this would involve the expansion of existing woodland on a small scale. It is important, however, for new woodland to respect the landscape character of pasture in the valleys and open moorland and limestone pavement on the tops. The NCA profile highlights opportunities for new woodland and wood pasture on the steep slopes of the dale sides. The profile identifies the need for woodland in these areas in order to reduce erosion, as well as a way of joining up existing areas of woodland.



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