

## NCA 22 Pennine Dales Fringe

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### *Overview*

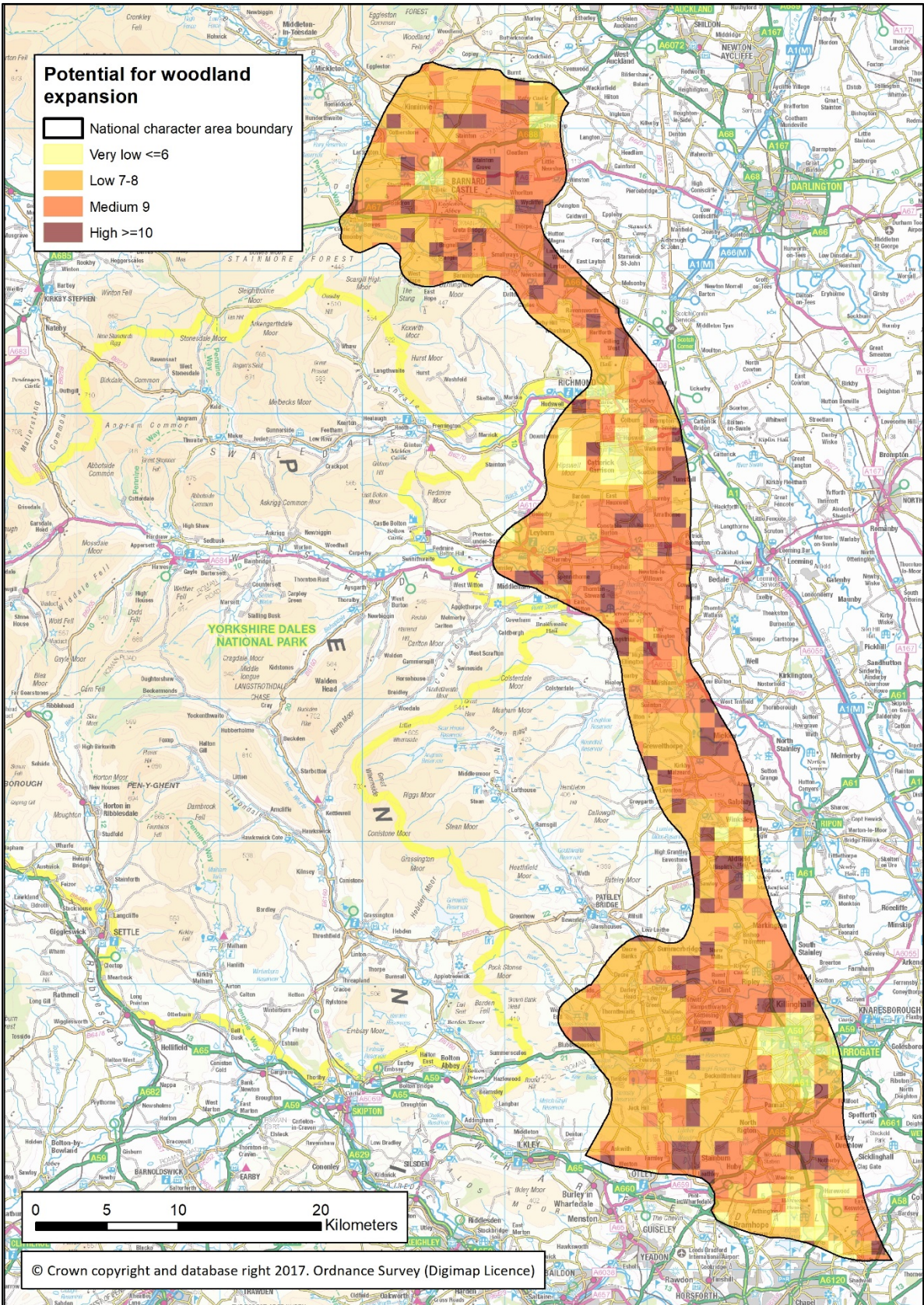
The NCA covers a long, narrow area, running north-south from Barnard Castle in Teesdale in the north to Wharfedale in the south. The NCA covers the lower slope of the Pennines, which lie to the west, and it is included in the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. Nearly a quarter of the total area lies within the Nidderdale AONB. Major rivers flow out from the Yorkshire dales, cutting through Limestone, Sandstone and Mudstone uplands, creating broad, mature valleys, widened by glaciation. Smaller rivers flow through narrower valleys that are more wooded in character. Agriculture is dominated by pastoral farming, from rough grazing on the higher lands to improved pastures in the lower areas. The field pattern varies, from large, regular enclosures bounded by drystone walls on higher grounds, to small, irregular fields bounded by hedgerows in the valleys and surrounding settlements. Aside from a few scattered farmsteads, settlement is dominated by towns and villages, such as Barnard Castle, Richmond, Leyburn, Masham and Harrogate. Harrogate forms a communications hub in the south of the NCA, though most of the area is crossed by key cross-Pennine routes and roads into the Yorkshire Dales. Woodland coverage is just under 10% of the NCA, of which around 22% is ancient woodland. Tree cover is concentrated on the lower lying land, along valley sides, with copses and plantations on the agricultural land and ornamental planting in parklands.

### *The Historic Environment Character*

Evidence for prehistoric settlement has been found in the form of flint scatters, rock art and settlement earthworks and cropmarks. As well as Roman forts along the line of the Roman road now followed by the A66, there is archaeological evidence for Romano-British settlement in the river valleys. In the later medieval period, arable farming was important to the local economy, centred on markets in the local towns such as Barnard Castle. In the post medieval period, the economy diversified into home-based linen and wool weaving, along with small-scale dairy farming. Following the large-scale enclosures of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the upland areas were divided and improved. Harrogate developed as a spa town, based on lime- and sulphur-rich springs, particularly boosted by greater numbers of visitors following the opening of the railway in 1848.

### *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates that there is only a low to medium potential for woodland expansion in the NCA, mainly concentrated on the lower lying land to the east. The areas of greatest potential are in the expansion of existing areas of woodland. This potential is reflected in the opportunities highlighted in the NCA profile, which identifies opportunities for using new woodland as part of strategies to reduce soil erosion and flood risk, as well as for buffering and connecting existing woodland. Where there is new woodland, however, it needs to be designed to retain the pattern of ancient enclosures, both ancient pastures and former enclosed common fields, as well as avoiding impact on archaeological sites and their settings. The NCA profile also highlights planting within historic parks, though any new planting must reflect the landscape design.



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