

NCA 24 Vale of Mowbray

Overview

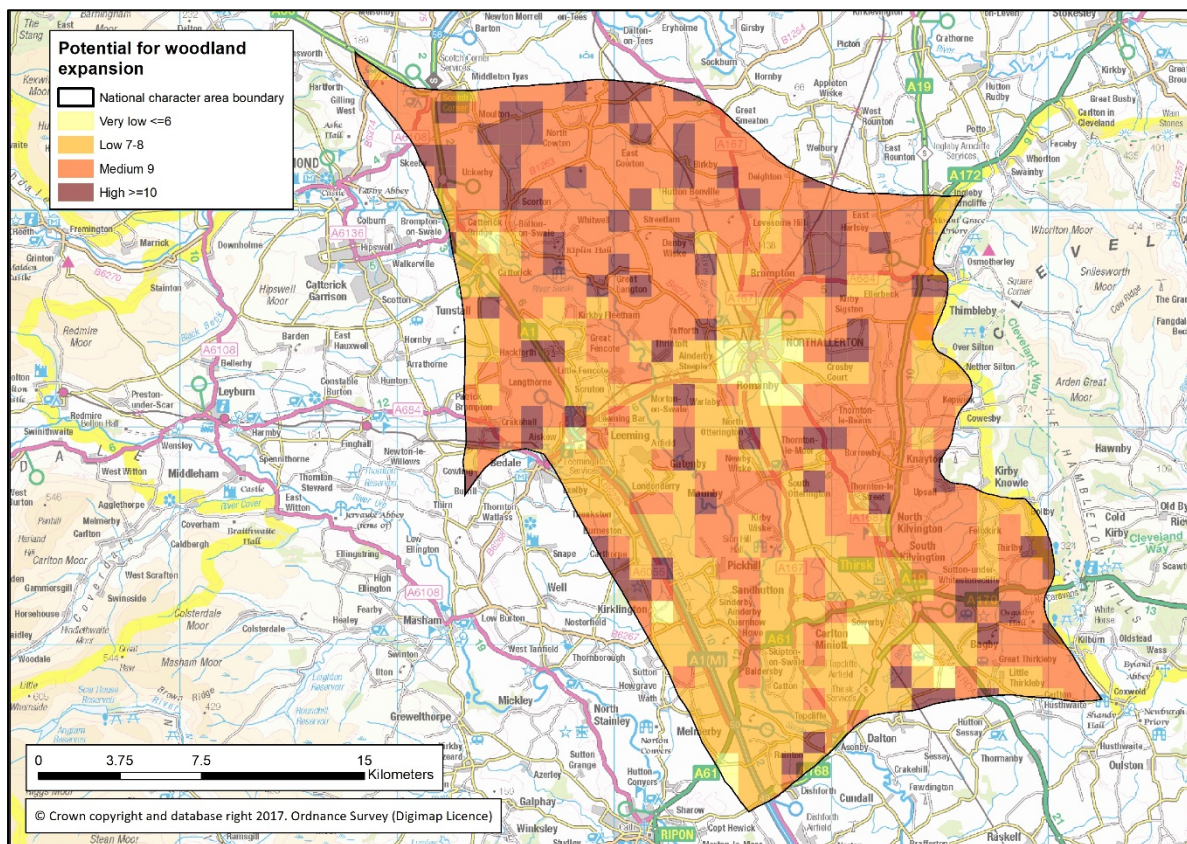
The NCA is a wide, gently undulating landscape, comprising the vale of the River Swale and the River Wiske, and it lies within the Eastern Arable Agricultural Landscape Type. The eastern edge of the NCA is defined by the Hambleton Hills and the North York Moors National Park. The soils of the Vale are quite fertile, and agriculture includes arable farming, as well as dairying and livestock production. Much of the arable provides fodder for the dairy industry. Fields are medium to large in size and fairly regular in shape, bounded mostly by hedges, but some by ditches and fences. The settlement pattern is mixed, with planned villages often laid out around a green, but with numerous farmsteads scattered between. The two main towns are Northallerton at the northern end of the NCA and Thirsk at the southern end. Military sites, particularly airfields have influenced the character of the area, at Catterick, Leeming and in the south around Thirsk. The NCA covers a major north-south transport corridor, with the western edge of the area defined by the A1 and A1M. To the east, and parallel to the A1, is the A19. Other main roads run east-west including the A170, which provides a link to the North York Moors and the east coast at Scarborough. The East Coast main railway line also runs north-south through Northallerton and York. There is a very low level of tree cover, at only 3.3% of the NCA. Of all woodland, around 11% is ancient woodland, though more than half has been replanted. Most of the landscape is open, and trees tend to be scattered in hedgerows and across fields, though woodland is also found in the form of small game coverts. There is more woodland in the eastern half of the NCA, on the undulating land at the foot of the Hambleton Hills.

The Historic Environment Character

Evidence for human activity has been found in the form of flint scatters, from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods onwards, and later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement has been identified in the form of cropmarks. The NCA lies across an important transport corridor, focused on the A1 and A1M, which follows the line of Dere Street Roman road. As well as Roman forts along its length, Dere Street became a focus for civilian settlement. In the later medieval period, the route was known as the Great North Road, a key route between London and the north, and from the 18th century it was one of the main coach roads. The strong pattern of nucleated settlements dates to the later medieval period, and most were clearly planned, laid out alongside roads with village greens. Some failed and were deserted or shrank, surviving only as earthworks. The pattern of former medieval common fields is not clearly legible in the modern landscape as a result of post medieval and modern rationalisation and engrossment of fields. Agricultural improvement from the mid-18th century led to the enclosures of common grazing land and to the rebuilding of many farmsteads. At this time, the character of the landscape was also influenced by field sports, with the planting of small coverts for game, and by horse breeding and training for horse racing. The post medieval field patterns have themselves now been largely replaced by modern improved fields, particularly on the west side of the NCA. The relatively flat landscape meant that it was ideal for the construction of airfields from the First and Second World Wars.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes suggests that the NCA has only a low potential for woodland expansion, though there are more opportunities north of Northallerton and along the eastern side. In many places, opportunities will lie in the reinstatement and restoration of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and the planting of in-field trees. Elsewhere, as indicated by the NCA profile, existing woodland could be extended, in order to link and connect fragmented habitats, as well as to increase carbon storage and reduce soil erosion, whilst maintaining landscape character. New woodland could be concentrated in those areas where the historic field patterns are less legible, through post-1950s agricultural improvements. Care should be taken, however, to avoid archaeological sites which survive as cropmarks and are not visible on the ground.



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