

NCA 25 North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills

Overview

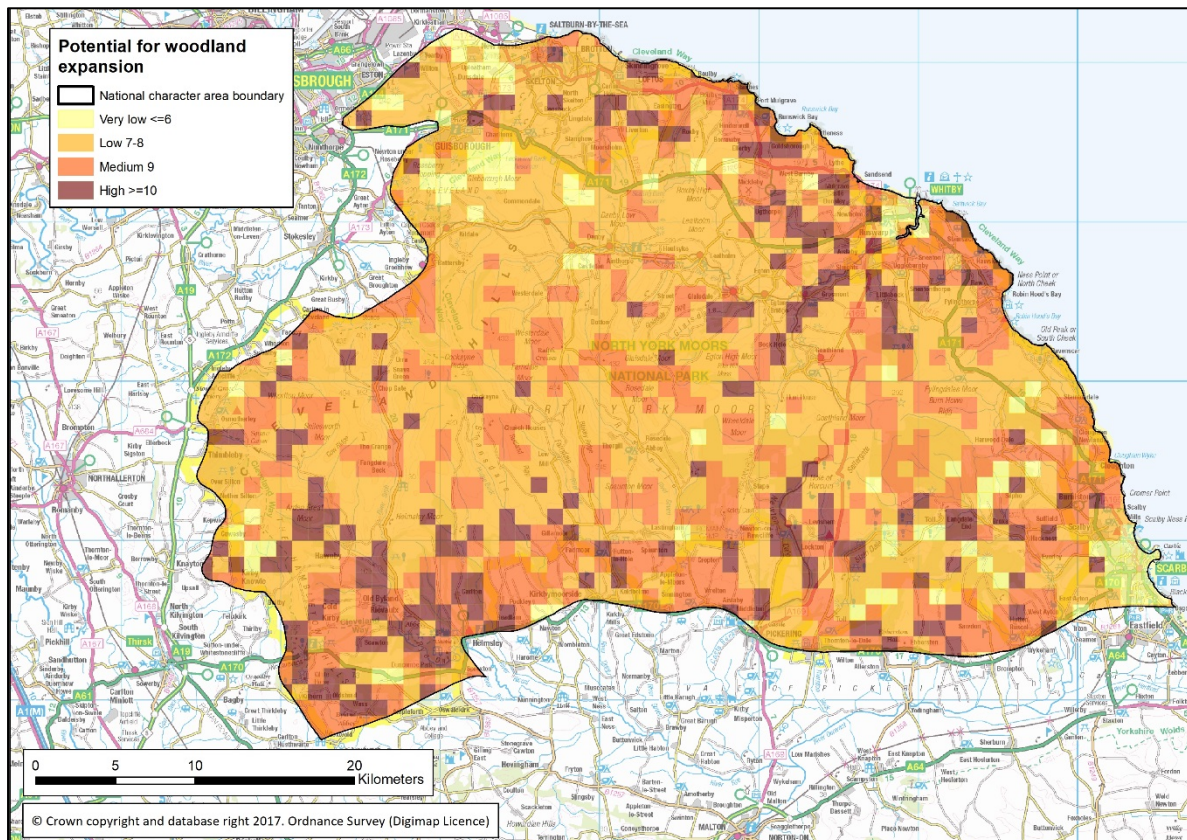
The North York Moors and Cleveland Hills is a discrete and distinctive area of upland that is almost wholly covered by the North York Moors National Park, and which lies within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. The east side is demarcated by coastal cliffs bordering the North Sea. The north, east and south sides are clearly marked by sharp slopes, apart from the north-east of the NCA where the landscape is a gently undulating plain of enclosed farmland. Agriculture is dominated by livestock farming, and pasture fields in the valleys tend to be small or medium in size and bounded by drystone walls or hedgerows, whilst arable areas tend to have larger enclosures bounded by ditches or fences. The dominant landscape character, however, is one of unenclosed moorland with expanses of heather. The moorland is cut by deep valleys, where the settlements are mostly located and take the form of hamlets and individual farms. Settlement pattern varies, however, according to its location within the NCA. Around the base of the hills, there is a more nucleated settlement pattern, of villages and small historic market towns such as Guisborough, Pickering and Helmesley. Where the valleys meet the coast, there are fishing villages, such as Staithes and Robin Hood's Bay, as well as the town of Whitby. At the southern end of the coastline is Scarborough, founded as a medieval town and port with a castle, but which developed as a seaside resort in the 19th century. Roads are few across the moorland, and are mainly restricted to valleys apart from the two main roads to Scarborough: the A170 road that runs along the southern boundary, and the A171 from Middlesbrough that runs down the east side of the NCA. Despite the extensive moorland character, the NCA has a very high woodland cover, at 21% of the total area. Much of this is commercial forestry plantation, however, and ancient woodland accounts for around 4%. The plantations are concentrated on the hill slopes on the south side of the NCA, the largest being the area covered by Dalby and Cropton Forests. Broadleaved woodland is concentrated on the steep slopes, both in the valleys that cut the moor and on the steep scarp slopes which demarcate the upland edge.

The Historic Environment Character

The North York Moors is an area with a particularly rich archaeological landscape. There are over 900 scheduled monuments within the NCA, of which a large proportion are prehistoric in date, including numerous burial mounds and cairns. The present-day settlement pattern originated in the medieval period, with planned settlements and towns around the base of the hills and along the coast, with a more dispersed pattern largely restricted to the steep valleys cutting the moors. Here farming would have been dominated by stock rearing, with common grazing on the moors and enclosed pastures with limited arable around the valley settlements. Monastic foundations exerted a strong influence on the landscape character, including rich Cistercian abbeys at Rievaulx and Byland in the south of the NCA, and the Augustinian Priory of Guisborough to the north. The monasteries controlled large areas of the moorland and established granges, or farms, within the valleys. The coastal villages have medieval origins as fishing villages, and the towns of Whitby and Scarborough were also ports. With the advent of the railway in the 19th century, places such as Saltburn, Whitby and Scarborough grew as seaside resorts, catering to the industrial towns of Yorkshire.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates that there is a low to medium level of opportunity to expand woodland provision within the NCA. Opportunities are mainly limited to the southern half, particularly around the valleys where existing areas of woodland could be extended. Given the importance of the open moorland, and the rich legacy of archaeological monuments within the NCA, areas of new planting should be assessed carefully. The NCA profile does identify opportunities to expand existing woodland, particularly in flood plains, as well as increasing native woodland cover and wood pasture.



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