

NCA 38 Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield

Overview

The NCA covers a large area running north-south along the eastern edge of the Pennines, from the Leeds-Bradford conurbation in the north to Nottingham in the south, and is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. Many of the towns are industrial in character, but there are also significant areas of countryside with villages. The overall character is of a mixed rural and urban mosaic. Agriculture is also mixed, with arable cultivation in the north and east, rough grazing on the more upland areas and pastoral farming between Chesterfield and Sheffield. Consequently, the field pattern is also mixed, with areas of small, irregular ancient piecemeal enclosure, and enclosed strip fields across the lower lying lands, with regular field systems on the uplands, resulting from late 18th and 19th century enclosure. The density of settlements within the NCA means that it has important transport corridors, both road and rail, including the M1 and M62, along with shorter motorway links providing access to city centres around Leeds-Bradford. The character of relict heavy industry has left its mark in the form of former coal mines and tips, most of which have been graded and restored. Woodland accounts for 9% of the NCA, of which around a quarter is ancient woodland. There has been much planting as part of the Community Forests scheme, particularly around Barnsley and Sheffield, but in general woodland habitat is fragmented, and tends to be found on the poorer soils of steeper slopes.

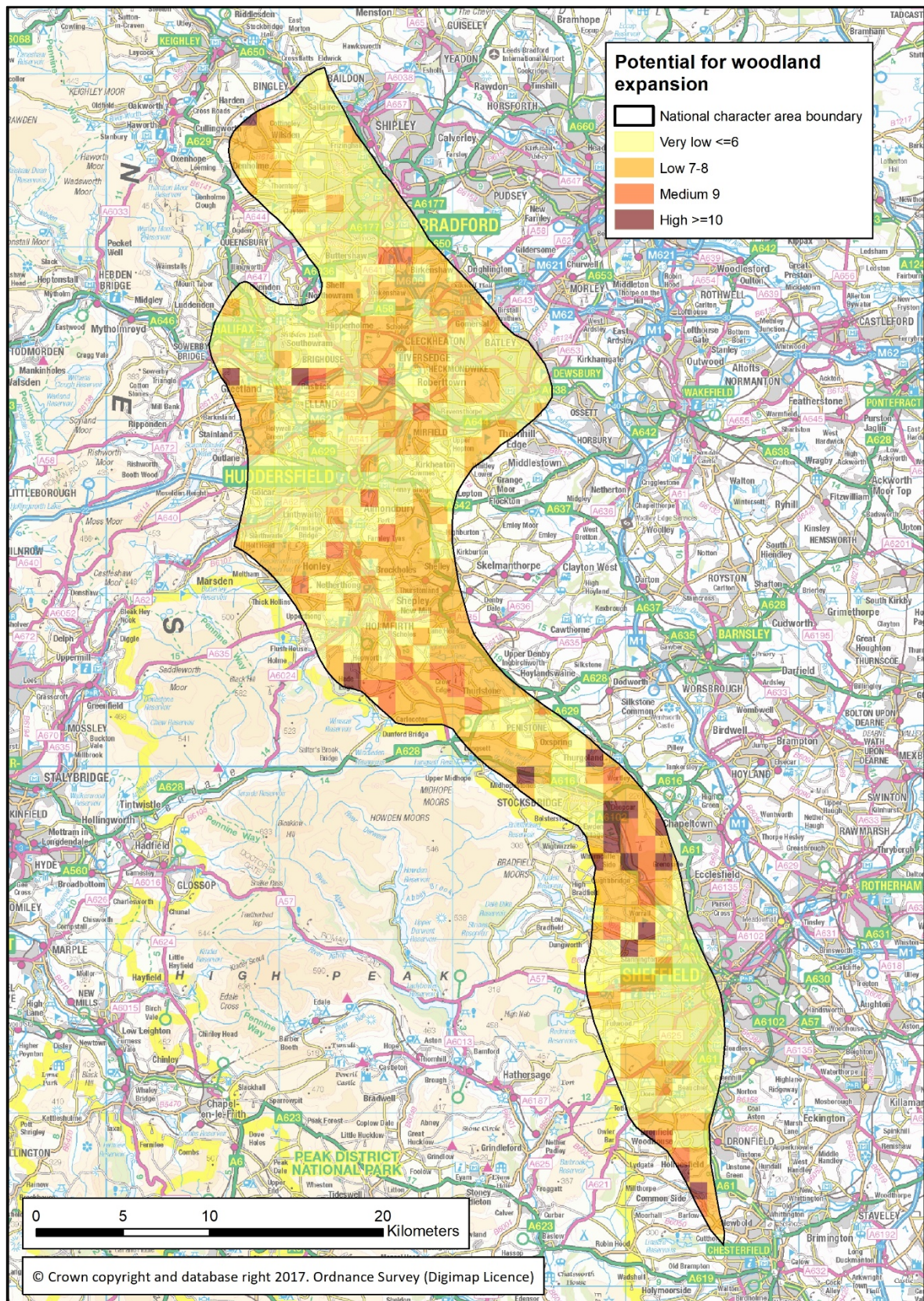
The Historic Environment Character

The industrial and urban development across large areas has obscured archaeological evidence of early settlement, there are Mesolithic and Neolithic flint scatters along the River Don, and crop marks suggest settlement of prehistoric and Romano-British date. In the later medieval period, there was a settlement pattern of villages and hamlets with common field systems on the more fertile eastern soils, but a more dispersed settlement pattern with small, irregular fields further west, where pastoral farming dominated. In the post medieval period, the cutlery industry developed around Sheffield using local resources of iron ore and powered by the area's many water courses. Leeds developed as a centre for flax and linen from the late 18th century, including cloth dyeing and finishing and later for engineering and clothing. From the late 19th century, there was major growth in the coal mining industry, particularly around Wakefield and Barnsley. Woodland was a valuable resource for pit props, bark for the tanning industry, and bobbins for the textile industry. The resulting wealth was invested by industrialists into country houses and designed parklands in the 18th and 19th centuries. Although much of the heavy industry has gone, the landscape is rich in industrial remains. Open cast mining developed on a larger scale from 1942.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates that the opportunities for new woodland in the NCA are very low, probably as a consequence of the extensive urban areas. Where the mapping does highlight opportunities, these tend to be on the urban fringes where there is existing woodland. This would allow planting on areas of

reclaimed industrial land, linking fragmented woodland and strengthening habitat networks, as highlighted by the NCA profile.



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