

NCA 40 Holderness

Overview

The NCA is a low-lying plain to the north of the Humber Estuary and east of the Yorkshire Wolds, centred on the valley of the River Hull. It is included within the Eastern Arable Agricultural Landscape Type, and agriculture is primarily arable, with cereals and root crops on the lower slopes of the Wolds and the slightly raised land between Hull and the North Sea, and root crops and vegetables in the lower reaches of the Hull Valley. Within the Hull Valley more generally, there are drained and semi-improved flood-plain pastures, with fens along the upper reaches between Driffield and Wansford. Fields are commonly large and regular, and in the Hull Valley they are bounded by ditches and dykes. The coastal area has extensive caravan parks and holiday homes but is vulnerable to coastal erosion. In the sparsely populated areas, there is a strong sense of rural character with dominant cultivated farmland, dispersed villages and hamlets. Village ponds and greens are a common feature and church spires are prominent landmarks in this flat, open landscape. The rural settlement character is one of villages and well dispersed farmsteads, which are often large. The coast is characterised by towns and villages such as Bridlington. Inland, there are small market towns such as Beverley and Driffield. The flat landscape means that settlement is particularly visible, with church spires as prominent landmarks. Woodland levels are very low, at only 3% of the NCA, of which only 79 ha, or 3.5%, is ancient woodland. Woodland blocks are small and are found mainly as shelterbelts around farms. There is ancient wood pasture to the west at Burton Bushes, and there is alder and willow carr at Low Wood near Hornsea.

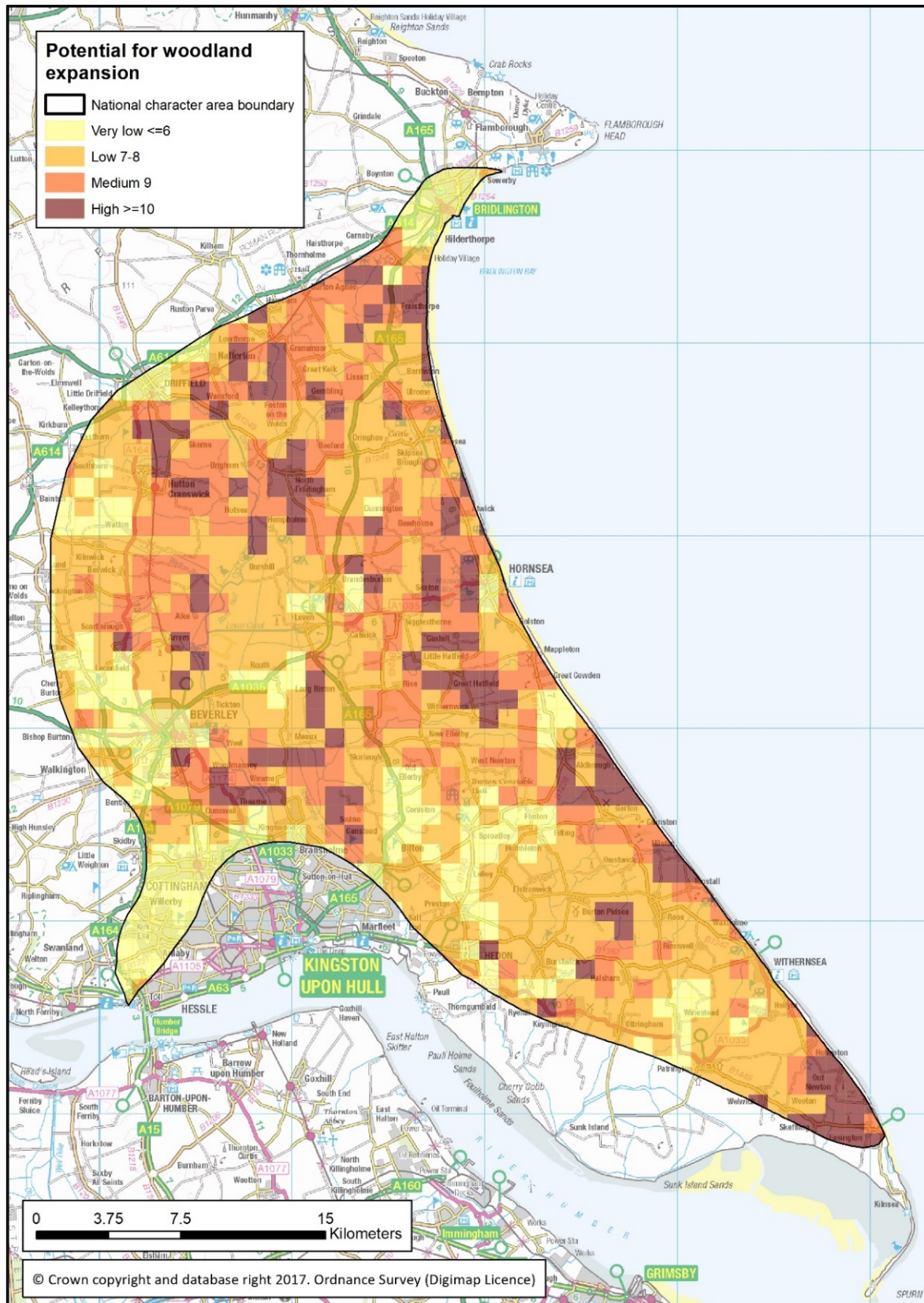
The Historic Environment Character

The area attracted early settlers, who exploited the rich resources provided by the extensive wetlands for hunting and fishing. Settlement was concentrated on the surrounding hills and on islands within the wetlands. The attraction of the area to Iron Age inhabitants is evident in the many barrow cemeteries located along the higher land to the west. Beverley was an important early Christian centre, with the founding of the Minster church in the early 8th century. Beverley was the most significant urban centre in the later medieval period, though the main settlement pattern of the NCA was made up of villages and moated sites, with a mixed field pattern of common fields, ancient closes and pastures. Several villages and moated sites were later deserted, the sites of which have been scheduled. Enclosure in the post medieval period created large regular fields enclosed by thorn hedges that succeeded many of the common fields. The marginal wetland landscape attracted the Cistercians, who found Meux Abbey on marshy land in the flood plain of the River Hull.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

Although present woodland cover is very low, the mapping of historic and natural environment attributes suggests that there is a medium level of opportunity for woodland creation within the NCA. In particular, the mapping highlights areas along the coastal strip, and on the higher inland areas. These areas of potential would fit with the recognised opportunities highlighted in the NCA profile, such as the need for woodland planting to reduce flood risk from the River Hull. Any new planting, however, needs to take account of the high potential for archaeological remains, as the limited areas of higher land would have attracted human settlement from an early date. The mapping also indicates areas where

new woodland would be inappropriate, not only in the wetland areas, but also to the west of Beverley.



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