

NCA 41 Humber Estuary

Overview

The NCA encompasses one of the largest river estuaries in Britain, and the Humber dominates landscape character, with its extensive mudflats and iconic features such as the Humber Bridge and tidal surge barrier. The area is included within the Eastern Arable Agricultural Landscape Type, and it comprises a rural landscape that is open and expansive with large regular fields, large farmsteads with big sheds, few visible field boundaries and very limited tree cover. This is particularly so on the north side, where reclaimed land allows productive arable farming. The wider urban area of Hull, with its major port and industrial complexes, dominates settlement on the north side of the estuary. On the south side, at Immingham, there are further ports and extensive industrial complexes. Rural settlement is very sparse because of the low-lying nature of the landscape, but on slightly higher land there are small villages in a more enclosed landscape with hedgerows. The most remote area is Spurn Point, a long sand and shingle spit which extends out across the mouth of the Humber Estuary. Communication routes are few outside of the few major roads that connect the urban areas to the wider region, contributing to the remote rural character. Woodland cover is extremely low, at just 1.6% of the NCA, and there is no ancient woodland.

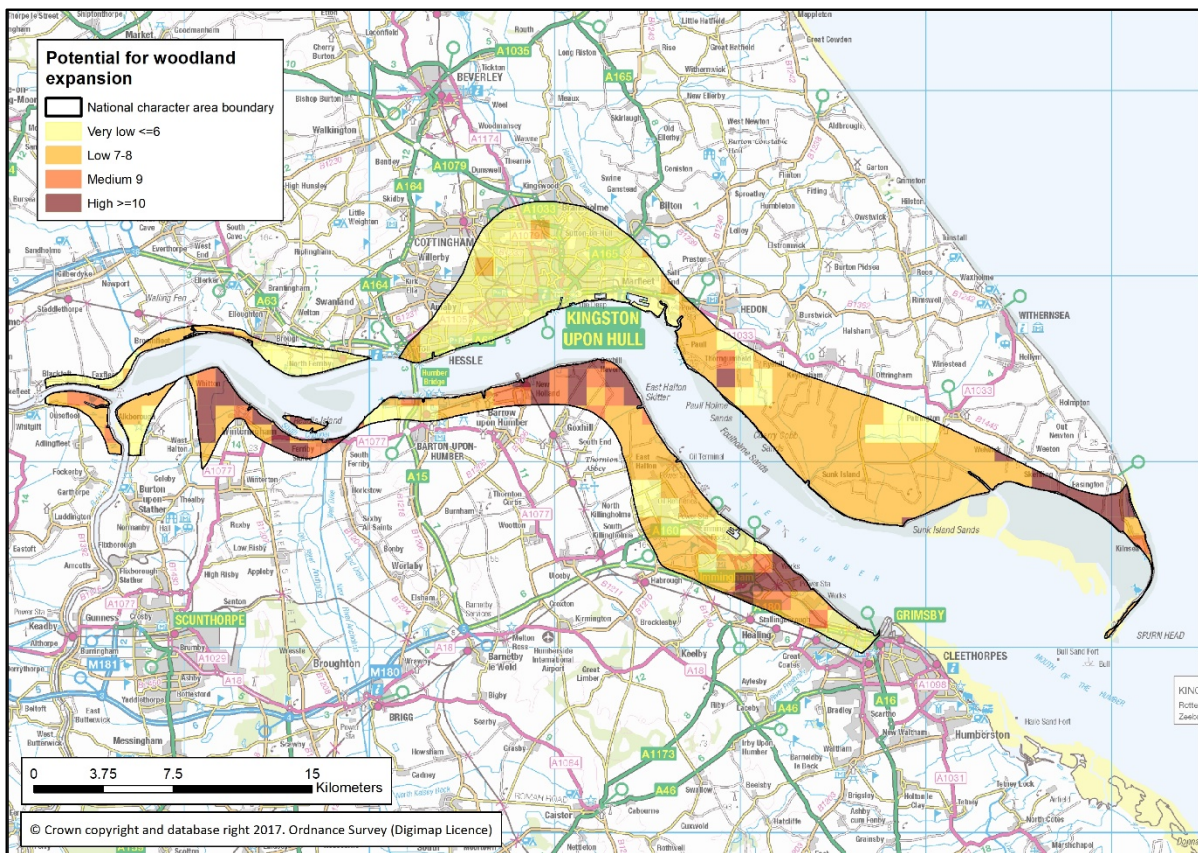
The Historic Environment Character

The estuary has been a key trade and communication route to the North Sea since prehistoric times. The soils contain significant palaeoenvironmental and archaeological evidence. Finds include Bronze Age boats, suitable for both river and sea use, and fishtraps have been discovered in the intertidal areas. There is archaeological evidence for early settlement on higher, drier land, from where the wetlands could easily be exploited for fishing and hunting. There was an important crossing point across the Humber, for the road from York to Lincoln, between the Roman towns of Brough and Winteringham. The area seems to have been largely agricultural in the Roman period though there is also evidence for pottery production. Drainage of the marshes may have begun in this period, and local abbeys began to promote drainage schemes in the 12th century. Hull was founded as a town in the later medieval period, becoming a royal borough at the end of the 13th century when it was named Kingston upon Hull. It had a market and fairs, but its main value was as a port. As well as exports of wool, Hull was important as a fishing port and it engaged in coastal trade. The wetlands around the Humber Estuary began to be drained, reclaimed and enclosed on a large scale from the 17th century. On the south side, flood defences were built to protect the developing towns and industrial areas. Later parliamentary enclosures produced a landscape of regular, geometric fields, mostly enclosed by dykes, with associated large brick-built isolated farmsteads.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The NCA profile does not identify any opportunities for woodland expansion within the area. The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes, however, suggests there is a medium potential for new woodland, perhaps because of the low baseline of woodland cover. Even so, areas where the mapping suggests there is potential for woodland are very restricted, mainly to the fringes of the industrial areas along the south bank and on the peninsula leading to Spurn Head. Any designs for new woodland would have to take account

of the open character of the NCA, as well as the potential for archaeological and palaeo-environmental remains.



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