

NCA 43 Lincolnshire Wolds

Overview

The NCA is an open, rolling landscape, with plateaux, a west-facing escarpment, and steep steep-sided dry valleys. It is included within the Chalk and Limestone Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type and much of the area is within the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. Arable farming, particularly cereal in large rectangular fields with hedgerow boundaries, is a principal element of agriculture in the NCA, though there are also areas of mixed farming, with pastures in medium-size irregular fields. The settlement pattern is sparse, and is characterised by villages, often planned, tucked away in valleys or at the foot of the scarp slope. There are small market towns, such as Caistor, Spilsby and Horncastle, at the foot of the hills, but there are no significant towns within the NCA. The roads, too, reflect the sparsely populated rural character of the area, with very few main roads, rather a network of minor routes and lanes. Woodland cover is sparse, at only 5% of the NCA, of which just under 10% is ancient woodland. Woodland is found on the steep slopes of the valleys, though there is a mosaic of woodland, scrub and pasture to the north west. In the south, there is alder carr.

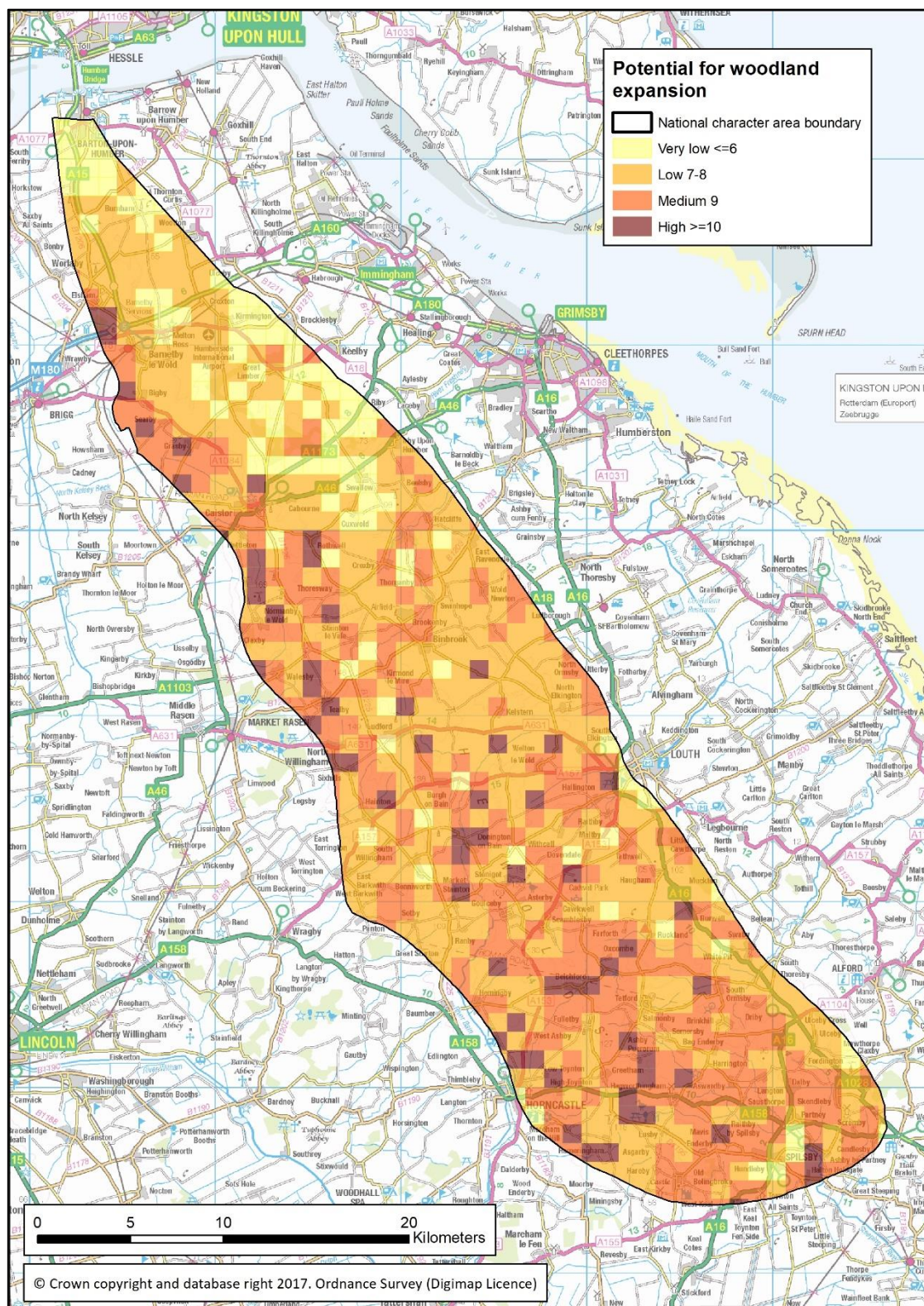
The Historic Environment Character

The earliest settlement is concentrated on the high Wolds, where there is evidence for Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements. There are many round barrows and long barrows on the hill tops. In the Roman period, Caistor and Horncastle were Roman towns, but there was also widespread rural settlement and several major roads crossed the NCA. In the later medieval period, there were numerous villages and associated common fields, though many were subsequently deserted. There were also several monastic estates in the Wolds, their wealth, and of many of the villages, was based on sheep and the wool trade. In the post medieval period, there was widespread enclosure and reorganisation of the landscape, leading to planned field systems of large, regular enclosures, and new estates and farms were established apart from the traditional village settlement pattern. Pasture remained important until the 20th century, when there was a shift to greater extents of arable.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes shows only a low level of potential for woodland expansion, though there are clusters of greater opportunity along the scarp slope of the chalk escarpment and in valleys, where there is already woodland. This suggests that the best opportunities lie in expanding existing woodland, and linking habitats, as outlined in the NCA profile. This involves the management and expansion of valley woodlands and alder carr. The NCA profile highlights opportunities to expand woodland in the north, though this is not fully reflected in the mapping, which only suggests limited areas along the edge of the NCA around Caistor. Any designs for new planting,

particularly in the areas identified by the NCA profile, should take account of the potential for Roman remains, as well as prehistoric remains on the hill tops.



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