

NCA 45 Northern Lincolnshire Edge with Coversands

Overview

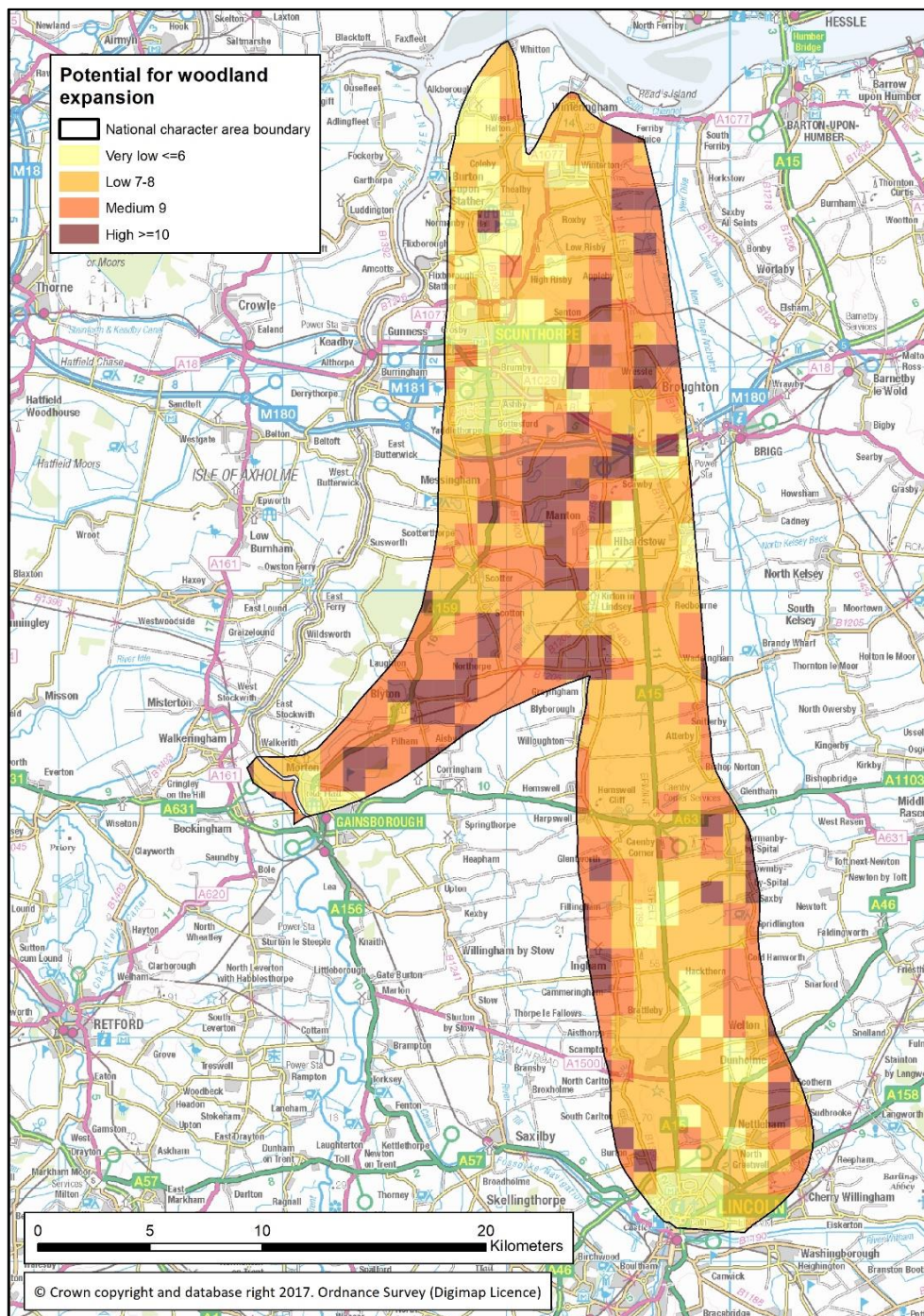
The NCA is a north-south orientated linear area, defined by a distinctive limestone scarp that runs down its centre. It is included within the Chalk and Limestone Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type. The soils are quite productive and agriculture is dominated by arable farming, including cereals, oilseeds, root crops, potatoes and some vegetables. There is a limited amount of livestock rearing, mainly pigs. The landscape is one of large, regular fields, with gappy hedgerows, though with smaller fields around settlements. The settlement pattern is nucleated, dominated by villages and towns, though there are also large individual farmsteads. At the northern end of the NCA is the industrial town of Scunthorpe, the market town of Gainsborough lies within a central spur to the west, and the southern end of the NCA includes the historic core of Lincoln. The area is an historic transport corridor as the A15, which follows the line of Roman Ermine Street, runs directly south from Humber Estuary to Lincoln. Lincoln is a road hub, and the M180 crosses the NCA near Scunthorpe, providing access to the industrial port facilities at Immingham. Woodland cover is low within the NCA, at 7% of the total area, of which only 8% is ancient woodland. Most of this lies in the northern half of the NCA and comprises large coniferous plantations from the 20th century.

The Historic Environment Character

There is evidence of early settlement along the limestone scarp, known as the Edge, including prehistoric burial mounds, enclosures and linear boundary features. The legacy of the Roman period is more visible, particularly the roads that converge on the fort and later colonia at Lincoln, such as Ermine Street that runs north-south along the full length of the NCA. Other Roman settlements were established along the line of Ermine Street, including villas. Lincoln was an important walled cathedral city in the medieval period. Gainsborough was a significant settlement in the Kingdom of Mercia in the early medieval period, and became a market town in the later medieval period, and it later became England's most inland port on the River Trent, transferring goods to the Humber Estuary. Elsewhere in the NCA, settlements were established along the springline below the western scarp in the medieval period, reflecting today's pattern of nucleated villages. The plateau above the Edge was largely unsettled, and was farmed as common pastures for sheep. The lighter soils of the Coversands were used as rabbit warrens. A process of settlement desertion and shrinkage from the end of the medieval period has left a legacy of settlement earthworks, for example Hackthorn and Sawcliffe. Enclosure began below the scarp from the 14th century, leading to a field pattern of small irregular fields, but the open commons were enclosed and improved for cultivation in the 18th and early 19th centuries resulting in large-scale rectilinear fields enclosed by hawthorn hedges or in a few places by limestone rubble walls. Industrial development in the 19th century led to the expansion of Scunthorpe as a centre for iron and steel, and subsequently for manufacturing and engineering works. The limestone plateau above the Edge became a focus for airfields in the First World War, and became a core part of Britain's east-facing deployment of bomber bases in the 1930s.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a low level of potential for new woodland. This is reflected in the NCA profile, which focuses on managing, restoring and enhancing existing woodland, although it does also recommend expanding woodland along the scarp slope, particularly fragmented woodlands, though not at the expense of acid and calcareous grasslands. Where the mapping does indicate opportunities for new woodland, this is in a belt across the central part of the NCA, extending from Gainsborough to Scunthorpe. This includes areas already under coniferous plantation and around the main concentration of surviving ancient woodland.



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