

NCA 47 Southern Lincolnshire Edge

Overview

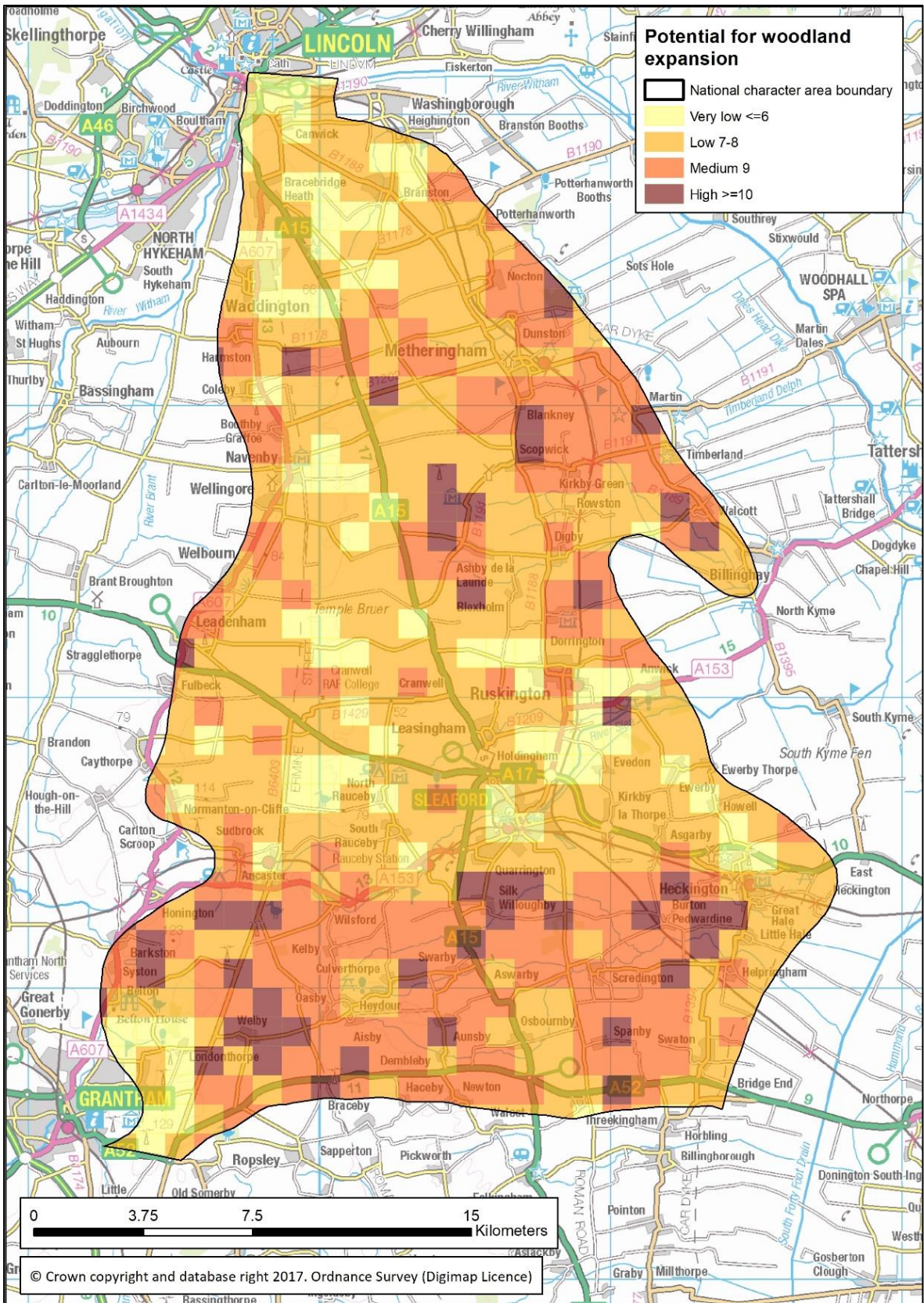
This small NCA stretches from Lincoln in the north, to Grantham in the south, and encompasses a gently sloping plateau of Limestone, defined by a sharp cliff on its western edge. It is included within the Chalk and Limestone Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type. On the higher land, agriculture is productive arable, with large, regular fields. On lower-lying areas to the south-west and on the east where the NCA meets the edge of the Fens, land is less free draining. Here, there is more livestock farming in smaller, less regular fields with hedgerows, parkland and woodland. The settlement pattern is predominantly one of villages, concentrated on the springline at the foot of the Limestone cliff to the west, and at the foot of the dip slope to the east. There is a higher concentration of settlement in the south, where the major urban centre of Sleaford is situated and where two major road arteries, the A15 and A17 meet. The central area is more open and sparsely settled. Woodland accounts for only 4% of the NCA, of which less than 10% is ancient woodland. It is concentrated in the less well-drained areas, off the agriculturally rich plateau.

The Historic Environment Character

The higher land has numerous monuments of prehistoric date, including burial mounds, linear boundary features, trackways, and from the Roman period, there are settlements, villas and the line of Ermine Street running south from Lincoln, which was a colonia and major urban centre. The modern settlement pattern has its origins in the medieval period, with the establishment of villages along the springline and on the lower claylands to the east. The plateau was heath used as common grazing, and wool production was an important part of the economy. The influence of large, wealthy estates can be seen in the number of country houses and parklands along the Edge. Through the influence of these estates, there was large-scale enclosure of the commons on the plateau from the late 18th century, which was followed by agricultural improvements, the establishment of model farms and a move to arable. The process intensified in the 20th century, leading to larger fields and the loss of field boundaries.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates that the opportunities for woodland expansion in the NCA are low, partly because of the high value of agricultural land on the central plateau. There are more opportunities in the south of the area, around Sleaford, and along the western and eastern edges, areas which have a more anciently enclosed pattern of smaller fields and hedgerows. New planting would help to link fragmented woodland habitats, and help to reduce erosion and water run-off. Woodland could also be increased on the grasslands of the scarp slope.



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