

# NCA 50 Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent

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## *Overview*

The NCA lies between the Peak District National Park to the west and the largely urban, mining areas of the Derbyshire Coal Measures to the east, and it is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. It is underlain mostly by the Carboniferous geology of the eastern Coal Measures to the east and by Millstone Grit sandstones in the west. The rivers, such as the Derwent, are of major importance for many reasons as they drain large volumes of rainwater from the Peak District, and they provided power to the early mills of the Industrial Revolution. The Derwent Valley Mills are designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, and the eastern fringes of the Peak District National Park extend into the NCA to the west of Chesterfield. Agriculture is mixed, with stock rearing on improved grassland, with arable farming on the lower valley sides towards the south of the area. Much of the area is Grade 4 agricultural land and used for rough grazing. On the lower-lying areas, fields tend to be smaller and irregular, bounded by hedgerows, whilst fields become more regular and bounded by drystone walls at higher elevations. The settlement pattern is one of small towns and villages, many with an historic industrial character, and are clustered along the sides of valleys. Belper is one of the main urban settlements. The area is quite well-wooded, at 10% of the NCA, of which over 30% is ancient woodland. Woodland cover is found along valley slopes and on farmland. Woods tend to be small to medium sized and often irregular in shape, with isolated copses and woodland on higher ground. There are also some large blocks of post-war commercial conifer plantation. Wet woodlands, a priority habitat, occur on the Coal Measures.

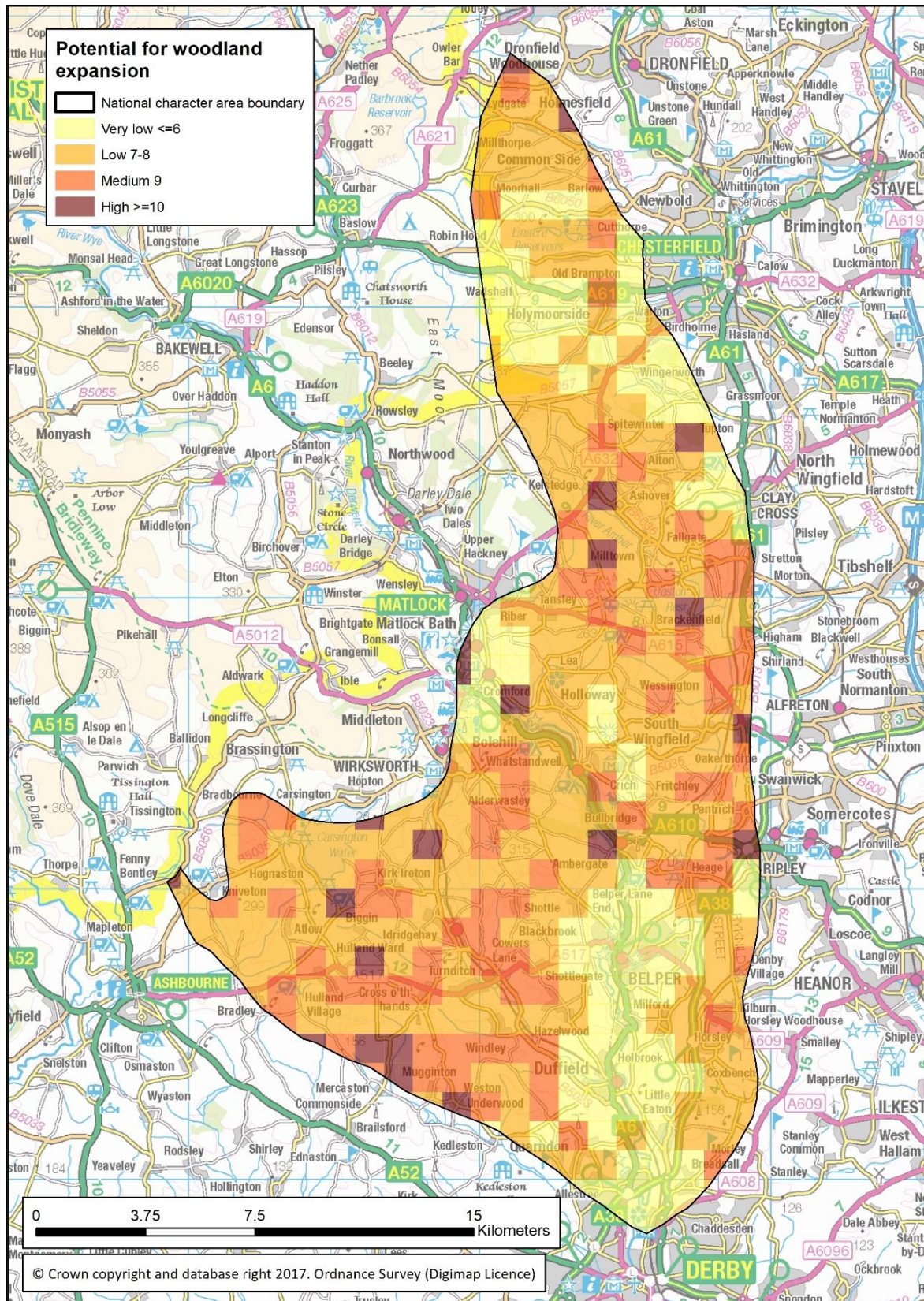
## *The Historic Environment Character*

Evidence for prehistoric settlement is found in the form of burial mounds and enclosures, whilst there was lead mining and an extensive pottery industry around Hazelwood in the Roman Period. The later medieval settlement pattern was village-based with common arable fields and large areas of common grazing, though there were also individual farmsteads with ancient closes. The area also had a Royal Forest, Duffield Frith, managed under a combination of grazing and managed woodland, which was used as a fuel for lead smelting. The area was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, with the establishment of Cromford's water-powered silk spinning mill in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the growth of industrial settlements. With the introduction of steam-power the industry became urban-based, leading to the expansion of existing settlements and creating a more urban character to areas of the NCA.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

Opportunities for new woodland are low according to the mapping of historic and natural environment attributes, partly as a result of the urban character of large areas of the NCA. The greatest opportunities for new woodland lie around the urban fringe, and in the Derwent Valley between Belper and Matlock. The valley sides of the Derwent are already well-wooded, but new planting would expand the woodland and create linkages between habitats, as highlighted in the NCA profile. This area is archaeologically and historically

sensitive, however, and the character of the early industrial landscape needs to be maintained.



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