

# NCA 52 White Peak

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## *Overview*

The White Peak NCA, which lies mostly within the Peak District National Park, is a raised Limestone plateau cut by deep valleys, which vary in shape and character. It is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type Agriculture. It is mainly improved pasture for grazing livestock and silage fields for dairy and beef cattle, with little arable land. The landscape has a distinctive patchwork of vivid green fields, unusual at this elevation, divided by grey limestone walls into very regular fields in open country and smaller strip fields of medieval origin nearer villages. The settlement pattern is a mixture of market towns, such as Buxton, Bakewell and the spa town of Matlock Bath, with small nucleated or linear villages and isolated farmsteads. There are no large urban centres. Roads are restricted mainly to the valleys and passes through the hills, and the NCA includes several main roads that are well-used by tourists. Only 6% of the NCA is covered by woodland, of which over 30% is ancient woodland. The largest areas of broadleaved woodland on the steep-sided valleys and dale sides, where important stands of ash woodland remain. There are also isolated patches of woodland on the plateau in small plantations and shelterbelts, particularly around farmsteads.

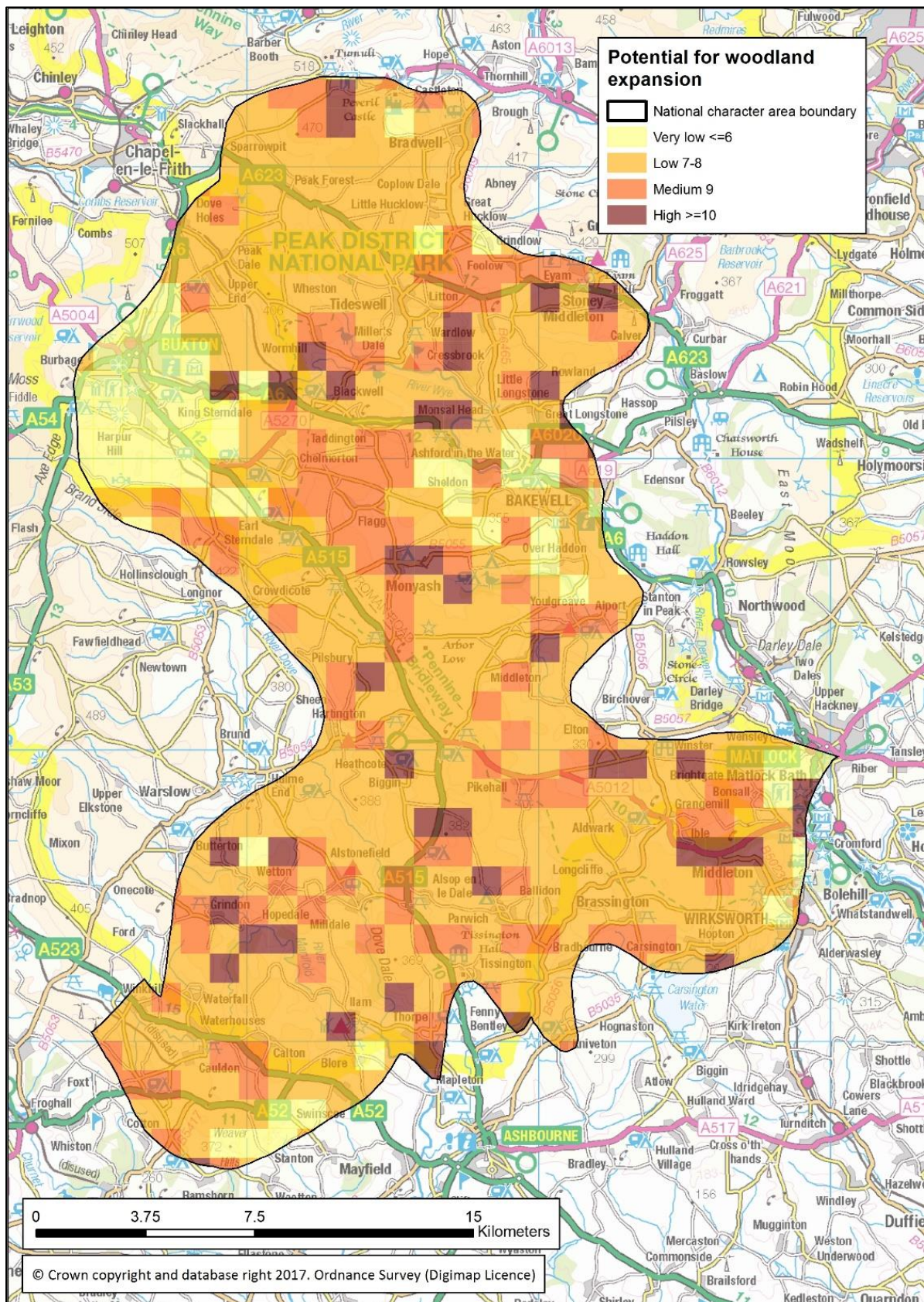
## *The Historic Environment Character*

There is a rich record of early human activity, and the NCA has nationally important monuments, such as Arbor Low henge and stone circle. In the Roman period, the area was used for stock rearing, and there are archaeological remains of stock pounds in the north and numerous farmsteads and settlements further south. The Romans established a settlement at Buxton, called *Aquae Arnemetiae* or 'the waters of the goddess of the sacred grove'. The current nucleated and linear settlement pattern generally developed through the later medieval period. The common field systems associated with the settlements began to be enclosed in the later medieval period, and was completed under the parliamentary enclosures from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The result was a field pattern dominated by large regular fields, though there is limited survival of earlier enclosures, in the form strip fields, and there is a high survival of intact ridge and furrow, especially to the south and west of Bakewell. The rich mineral and geological resources have been exploited for millennia, but particularly from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Lead mining has left distinctive landscape features including rakes, waste heaps, pits, engine sites and smelt houses. Other mining activities focused on copper, semi-precious Blue John, and limestone for construction, smelting and lime production. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Peak District became the principal source of fluorspar, and it was taken to Sheffield where it was an important component of steel manufacturing. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the textile industry spread to the area, with the construction of water-powered mills, at Cressbrook, Litton and Bakewell. A small part of the White Peak NCA falls within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. The area became a tourism destination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the railways opened, making the areas accessible to mass tourism. Spas developed at Buxton and Matlock Bath.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a low level of potential for new woodland, and opportunities are probably restricted to expanding and linking the dale-side woodlands and the small areas of plateau woodland. The NCA profile highlights

the importance of opportunities to buffer and link existing woodlands, both in the dales and the small areas on the plateau.



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