

# NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe

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## *Overview*

The NCA extends in a large arc around the north and east sides of the Manchester conurbation. It is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type and comprises Millstone Grit, with overlying Coal Measures in places. It is an upland landscape, deeply incised with steep-sided valleys. The rivers that flow through the valleys, including the Irwell, Roch, Goyt and Etherow, all of which played an important role in the development of settlement across the area. It is a highly urbanised landscape, with numerous industrial towns which run into one another through ribbon development and industrial developments. Many major roads run through the area, between the settlements but also linking Manchester to Lancashire towns and Yorkshire, via the M62 and M65 motorways. The M60 Manchester orbital motorway forms the southern boundary. Outside the settlements, the rural areas comprise variable quality pasture in irregular fields bounded by stone walls and hedges. Agriculture is livestock based, with dairy and cattle rearing towards the south of the area, and sheep farming further north. The proximity to large urban areas has led to farm diversification, including into recreational activities such as horse riding. There is a woodland coverage of 9%, of which only 1% is ancient woodland. Woodland is largely restricted to the steep clough sides. The NCA also has two Community Forest areas, the Red Rose Community Forest in the western part of the area, and the Pennine Edge Forest on the eastern fringe. The forests provide a network of green spaces and woodlands to enhance biodiversity and environmental quality, increase recreational opportunities and improve access to the countryside

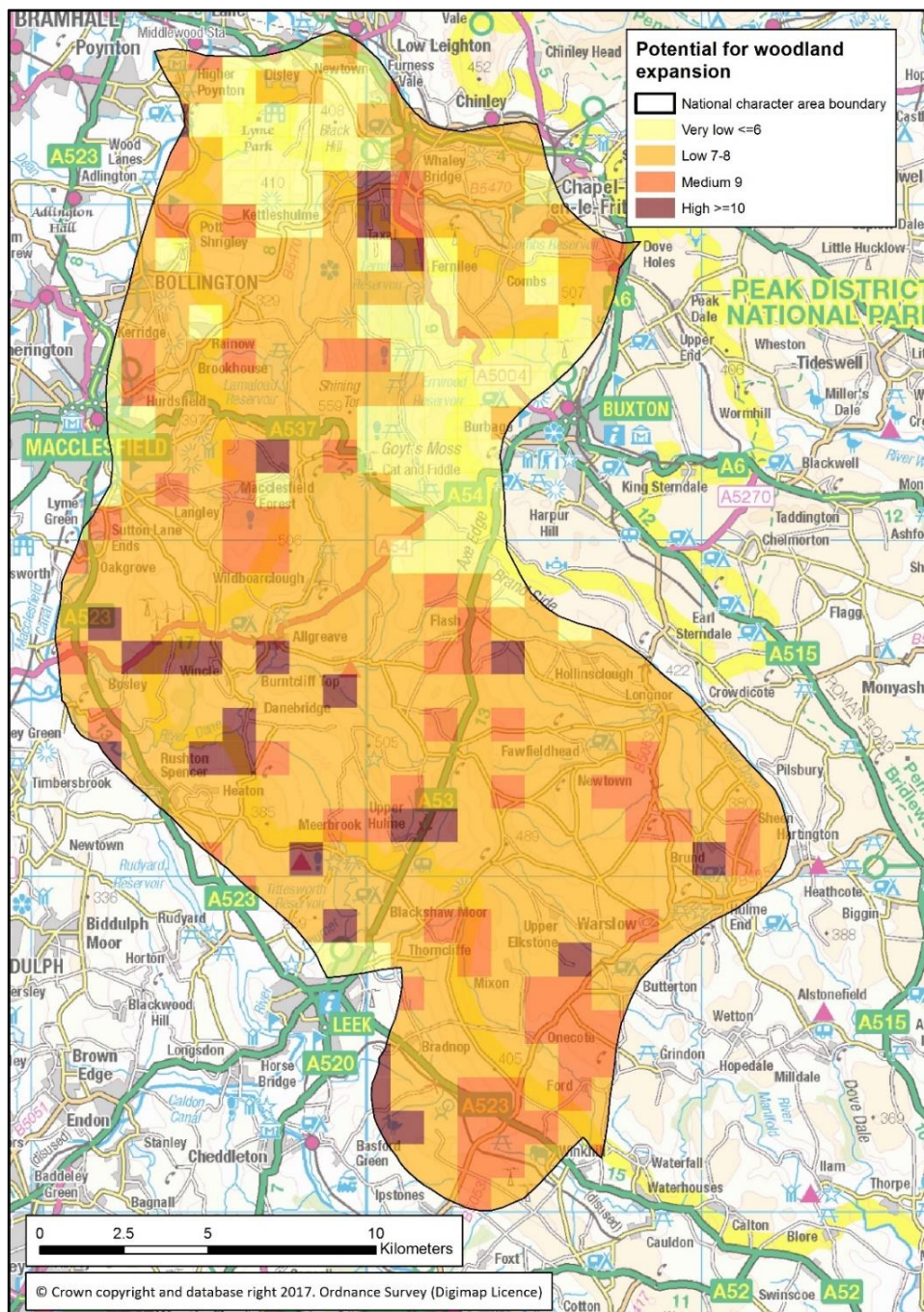
## *The Historic Environment Character*

Evidence for prehistoric settlement is mainly in the form of barrows on high ground. The NCA is crossed by several Roman roads, linking the fort at Manchester with Ribchester in the Lancashire Valleys as well as with Castleshaw and Ilkley in the Southern Pennines. A diverse landscape developed in the later medieval period, with a pastoral economy utilising the rough grazing of the upland commons. Arable cultivation was generally close to settlements, which were enclosed mostly by private agreement. The dominant historic character has been shaped by textile manufacture. Cloth was being made in the area from the medieval period, using wool from local flocks and flax from the Amounderness Plain. By 1700, each district within the NCA specialised in the production of one type of cloth. Marple, Hazel Grove and Ashton-under-Lyne produced linen cloth, Bolton was the centre for fustians, and most woollens and worsteds were manufactured in Bury and Rochdale. Cotton began to dominate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and with the introduction of water-powered mills, the process of industrialisation spread rapidly. The need to bring in raw cotton and take away the finished yarn or cloth spurred the development of the canal network, including the Rochdale Canal, Huddersfield Narrow Canal and Macclesfield Canal. Goods could then be transported on to Liverpool for international export. With the introduction of steam power, the canals were vital for the cheap transport of coal. Steam power meant that mills were no longer tied to the fast-flowing stream, but could be built near to lines of communications such as the canals, leaving the ruins of early mills in small Pennine valleys. Mills still required large amounts of water, and so were clustered around watercourses in the lower, wider valleys, sometimes constructing and maintaining their own reservoirs. The growth of the textile

industry led to a big increase in population, and stimulated urban growth. The development of the railway system drove urban expansion further. Places such as Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham and Glossop expanded, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had become important and productive mill towns. In the hinterland, agricultural production intensified.

*Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The opportunities for woodland expansion is very low in the NCA, as shown by the mapping of historic and natural environment attributes. This is a consequence of the intense urban development across the NCA. There are opportunities, as highlighted in the NCA profile, for expansion of clough woodland, and for linking community woodlands in the urban fringe.



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