

# NCA 69 Trent Valley Washlands

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## *Overview*

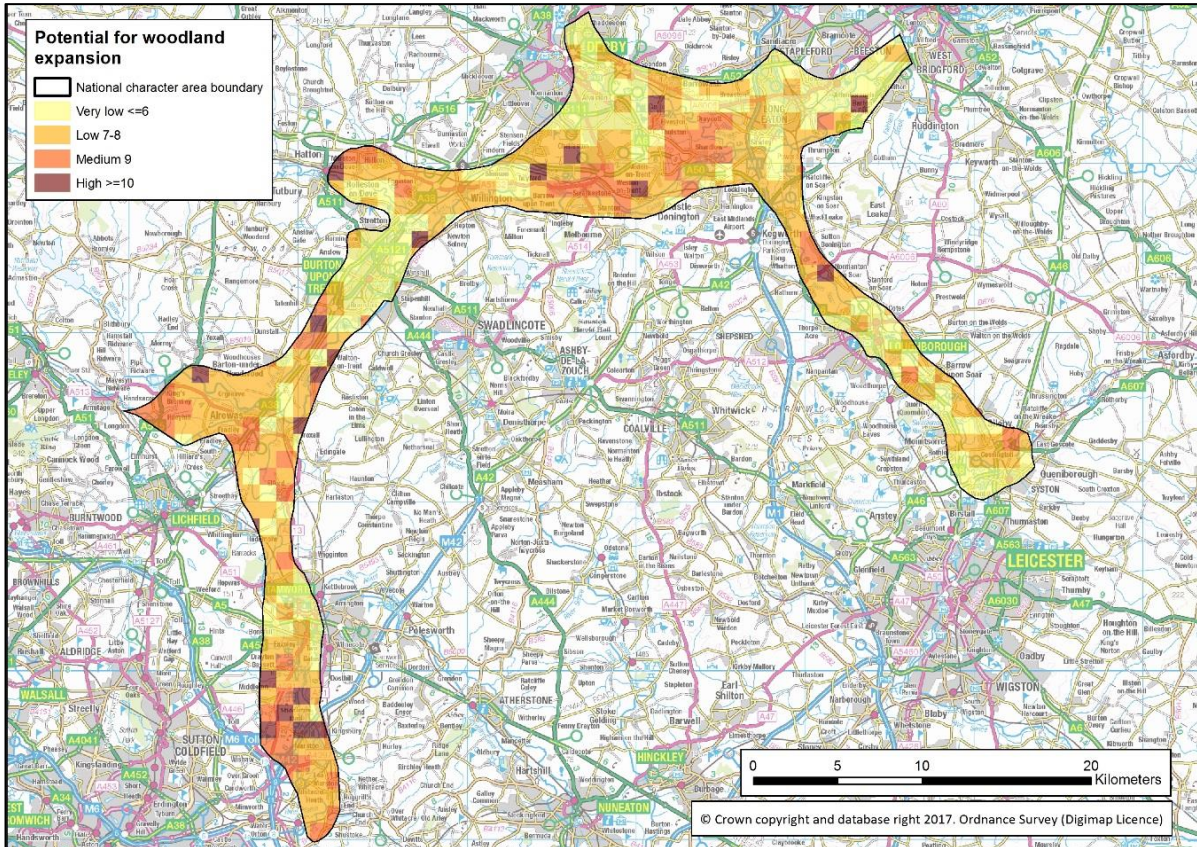
The Trent Valley Washlands NCA comprises a long, narrow corridor, comprising the flood plain corridors of the middle reaches of the River Trent and some of its major tributaries. It is low-lying landscape, included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type, and is often clearly delineated at its edges by higher ground, and it is largely comprised of the flat flood plains and gravel terraces of the rivers. Its stretches from the western outer suburbs of Birmingham's conurbation at its southern end, following the valley of the Rivers Tame and Trent north to the cities of Derby and Nottingham, with a corridor running south-east to the northern edges of Leicester, encompassing the valley of the River Soar. Agriculture within the NCA is largely arable on the free-draining river terraces and slightly higher land, with pasture on the meadows of the flood plains. The field pattern in the areas of arable tends to have larger, more regular enclosures, whilst those on the flood plain are smaller and more irregular. The NCA contains all or part of several towns, including Tamworth, Alrewas, Burton-on-Trent, Derby, Long Eaton and Loughborough. The valleys are important communication corridors, including the A38 from Lichfield to Derby, the A50, Stoke to M1 link, and the A6, as well as the Trent and Mersey Canal and Soar Navigation, and various main railway lines. Woodland cover is low, at only 4% of the NCA, of which 75ha, or just over 4% of all woodland, is ancient woodland. Trees are found mainly around settlements, on boundary steep slopes, in parklands, along watercourses and around former gravel extraction sites. Riparian trees, especially willows are considered to be of importance. The central section, between Burton-on-Trent and Alrewas, lies within the boundaries of the National Forest.

## *The Historic Environment Character*

The free-draining gravel terraces attracted settlement from Neolithic times, evidence for which survives as cropmarks and earthworks. There is a Bronze Age barrow cemetery near Swarkestone, and two log boats were found in a gravel pit at Shardlow. In the Roman period, there were settlements near the confluence of the Trent and Soar, and a fort at Sawley. The A38 follows the route of Ryknield Street, and the line of Watling Street crosses the NCA at Tamworth. In the medieval period, settlement developed around key river crossing points, such as at Tamworth, which was the principal royal and administrative centre of the Mercia and later became a burgh. Repton was a centre of early Christianity in Mercia, and it was here in AD 874 that the Viking Great Army over-wintered. Later medieval settlement was largely nucleated with associated common field systems, and extensive meadows inundated by seasonal flooding of the rivers.

## *Opportunities for Woodland Expansion*

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a very low potential for new woodland within the NCA. This means that most opportunities for woodland planting are likely to be in areas identified by the NCA profile, such as around existing and new development for screening. New wet woodland could also be planted as part of a strategy to improve riparian habitats, including in areas of former sand and gravel extraction. New woodland, however, should avoid areas of cropmarks and earthworks on flood plains, in particular.



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