

NCA 72 Mease/Sense Lowlands

Overview

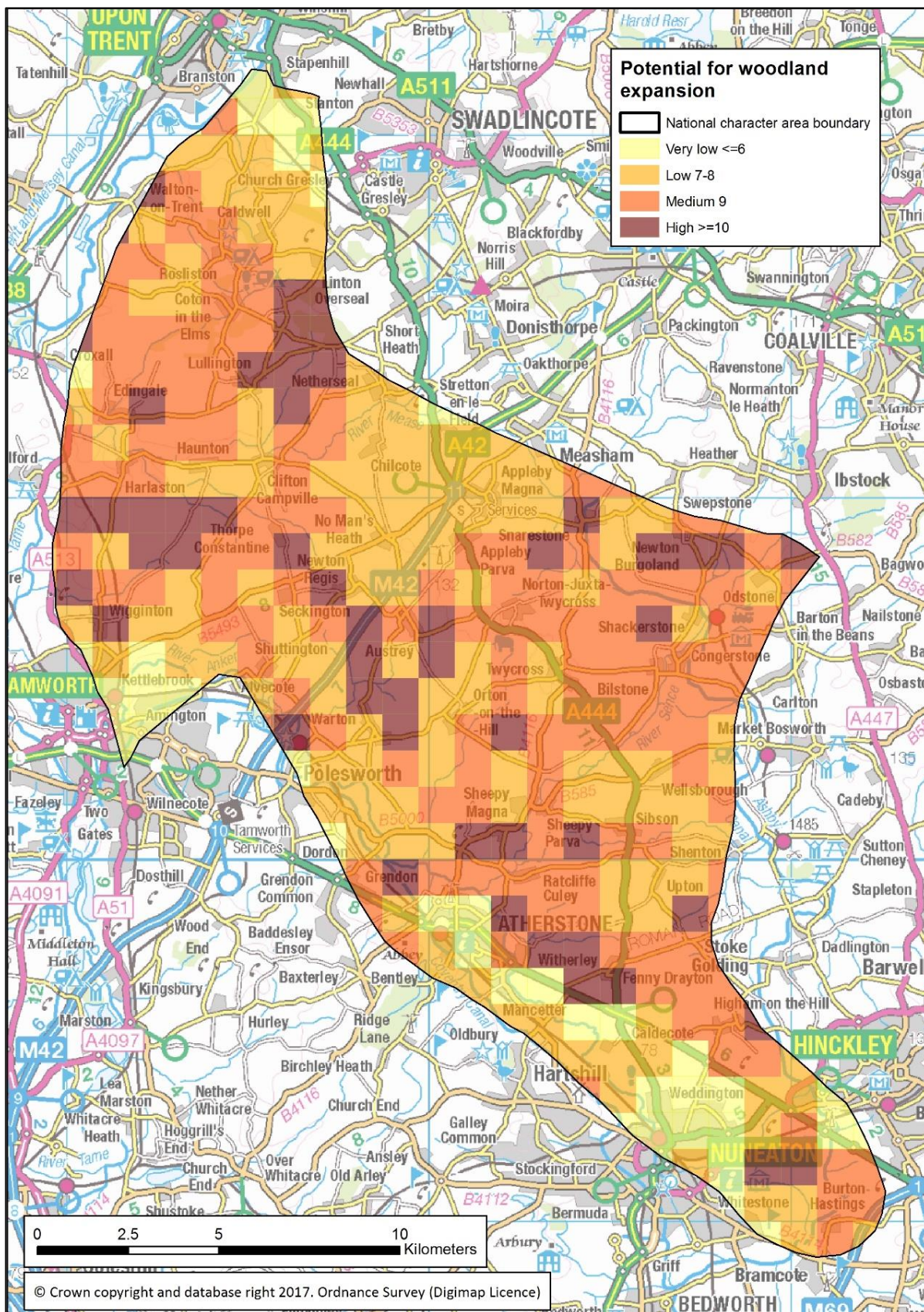
The Mease/Sense Lowlands is a sparsely settled rural area spanning four counties: Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire. It is included within the Western Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type and much of the area is under arable cultivation, particularly cereal, but there is dairying and beef farming on permanent pasture in areas with clay soils and steeper slopes. Field sizes vary, from regular post medieval enclosure to more irregular ancient enclosure, and the enclosure of former common fields. Atherstone is the main market town, and most settlement comprises well-spaced villages and dispersed farmsteads. Urban areas, such as Nuneaton and Burton-on-Trent, lie on the margins of the area, and are connected by major routes that cross the NCA. Main roads include the M42, A5 and A444, though the rest of the road network comprises minor roads and lanes. There is a very low level of woodland cover, at 5% of the NCA. Of this, just under 8% is ancient woodland. Woodlands are small and intermittent and commonly take the form of spinneys, copses and game coverts. The National Forest covers a part of the NCA, and have led to the extension of some existing woodlands. Small areas of ancient woodlands are particularly found in the clay valleys, and include oak, ash, field maple. A significant proportion of woodland is found within parkland, including important veteran trees including ancient oaks. There are willows and alders along minor streams.

The Historic Environment Character

There is a general background of prehistoric activity, including the earthwork remains of burial mounds, and near Atherstone there are the remains of a Roman villa and industrial complex. The dispersed settlement pattern reflects that of the medieval period, when agriculture appears to have been based on mixed farming, with areas of ancient enclosure. Where common fields did exist around villages, these seem to have been enclosed in the 18th century. There is some deserted settlement in the form of villages and moated sites. There was widespread enclosure and agricultural improvement in the 18th and 19th centuries, and many historic farmhouses appear to have been rebuilt at the same time.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a medium level of potential for woodland expansion, and opportunities may be provided by the National Forest Initiative. New planting could extend existing woodland, and link fragmented habitats, such as wet woodland along valley bottoms. As well as areas around existing woodland, the mapping indicates that woodland could be extended into other areas, such as around Atherstone and in a band spanning the M42. Part of the site of the Battle of Bosworth, a Registered Battlefield, lies within the NCA, and planting should avoid this, and any other archaeological sites, without further historic environment advice.



NCA 072 Mease/Sense Lowlands