

NCA 75 Kesteven Uplands

Overview

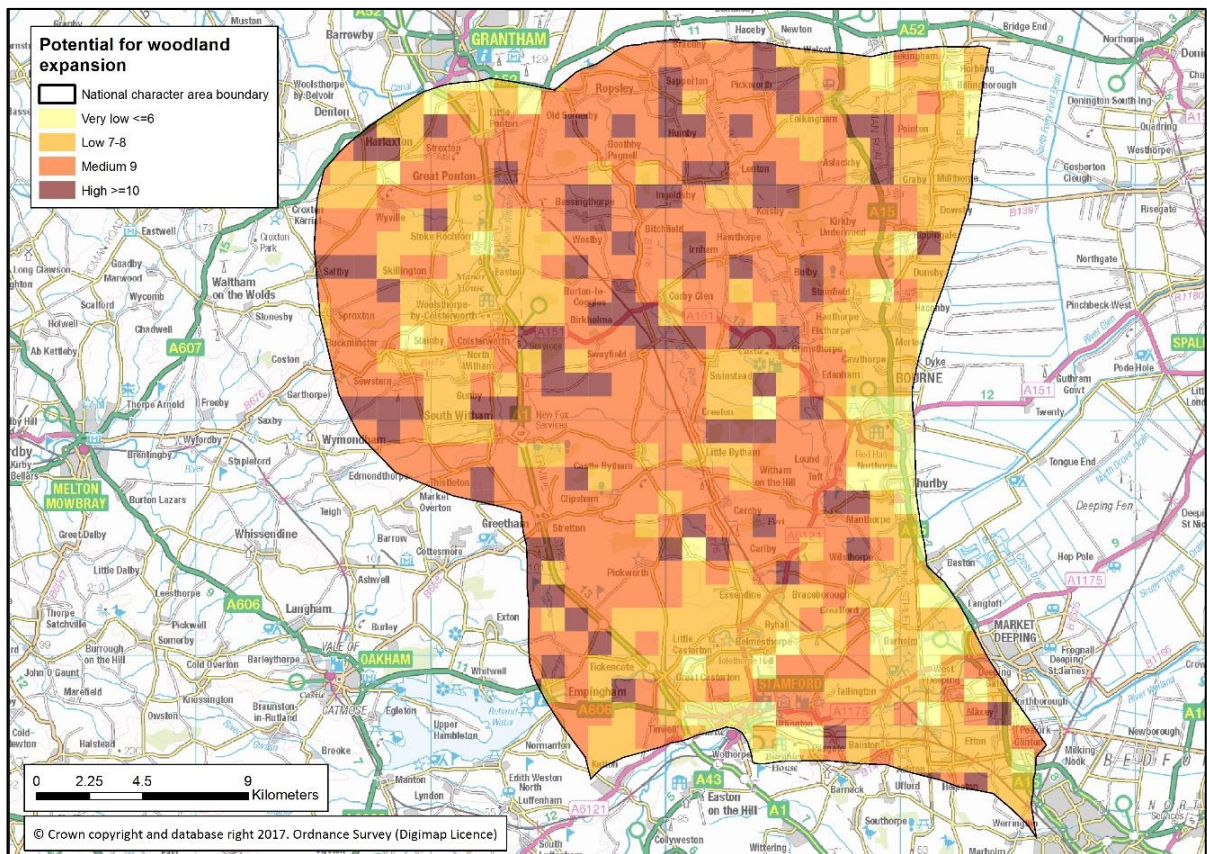
The NCA comprises a rolling landscape between the Leicestershire Wolds to the west and the Fens to the east. The Kesteven plateau is a watershed, with the Rivers East and West Glen flowing southwards and the River Witham flowing north. It is included within the Chalk and Limestone Mixed Agricultural Landscape Type, and agriculture is predominantly arable in large, regular fields enclosed by clipped hedges, whilst on the heavier valley soils there are smaller, irregular pasture fields. The settlement pattern is one of small nucleated villages, spread sparsely along the water courses and the fen edge. There are occasional farmsteads and country house estates. On the northern edge of the NCA is the market town of Grantham, and on the southern edge of Stamford, linked by the A1 which bisects the area. Woodland cover is low, at 6% of the NCA, but almost half of this is ancient woodland. There are many small- to medium-sized woodlands scattered across the NCA, many along watercourses and others form part of planting schemes within country estates and designed parkland.

The Historic Environment Character

The NCA is bisected by the Roman road, Ermine Street, providing the focus for settlement both in the Roman period and later, including for monastic institutions in the later medieval period. The present-day settlement pattern was established in the medieval period, with villages along the fen edge and along rivers. By the end of the medieval period, many villages, especially in the north and west, were deserted or shrank and their common fields converted to pasture, as a sheep- and wool-based economy dominated. Ancient, medieval enclosures survive around the villages, but the sheep pastures, particularly in the uplands were enclosed on a large scale in the late 18th and 19th centuries, creating a pattern of large regular fields. This was accompanied by the reorganisation of the former open fields, the building of new farmsteads within the reorganised fields, and the replacement of older farms by new, model farmsteads. The line of Ermine Street continued as a major feature of the landscape, becoming the Great North Road between London and Scotland. The towns of Grantham and Stamford, on the boundaries of the NCA, became important staging posts along the road in the post medieval period.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes suggests that the potential for woodland expansion is low within the NCA, though there are areas of opportunity along the river valleys and along the western edge, where it abuts the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds. The NCA profile notes opportunities to expand and manage existing areas of woodland, and this would fit with the mapped areas of higher potential. Care should be taken to avoid areas of historic settlement and field systems, which may not be particularly legible in the modern landscape because of post medieval landscape improvements, but which have high archaeological potential.



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