

NCA 79 North East Norfolk and Flegg

Overview

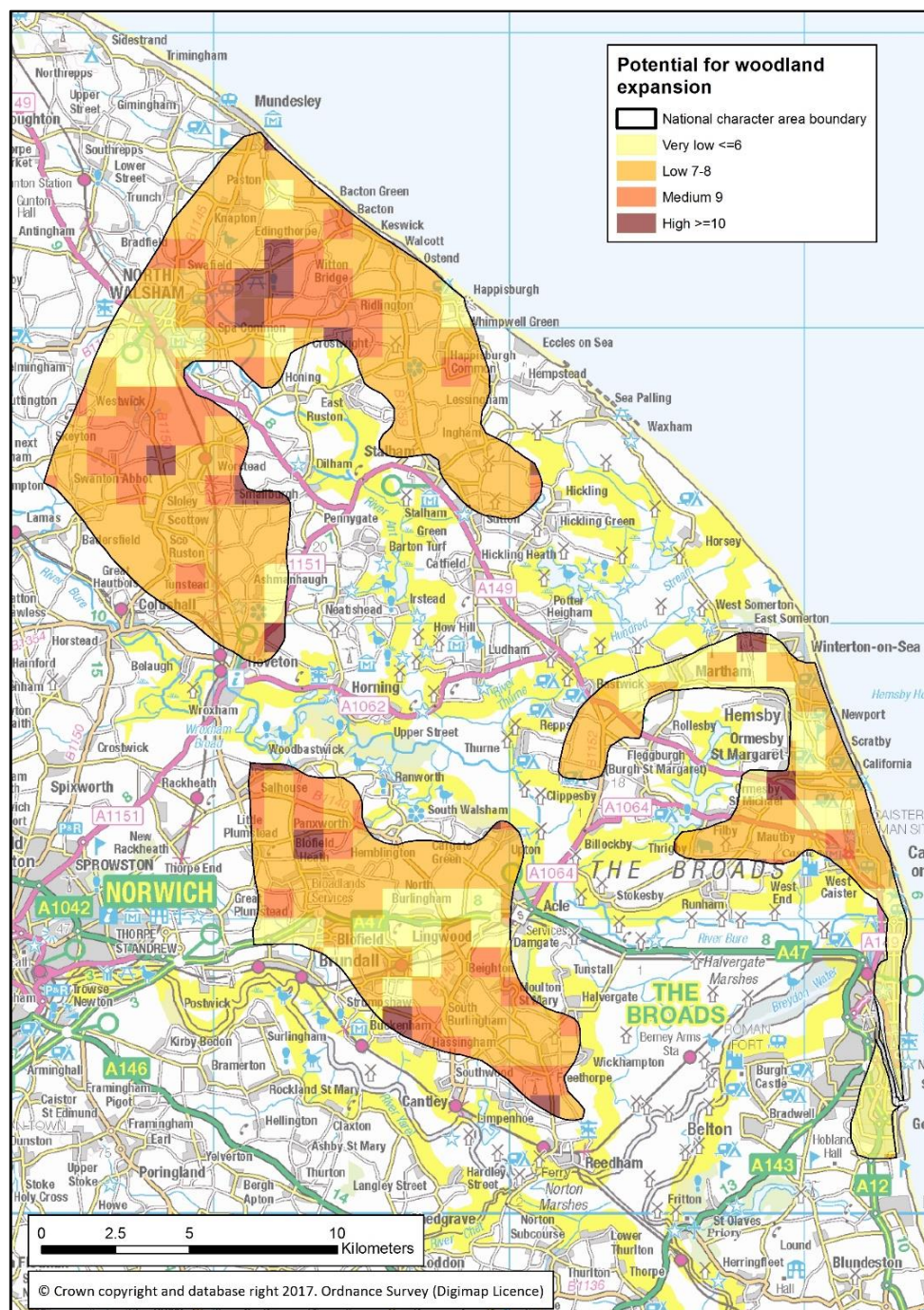
The NCA comprises three discrete parts, separated by The Broads NCA. Two parts lie adjacent to the coast with the third lying entirely inland between the valleys of the Bure and Yare. It is a low-lying, fertile landscape, and is included within the Eastern Arable Agricultural Landscape Type. It is flatter than central Norfolk and protected from the North Sea by high sea walls or sand dunes. The fertile soils mean that most of the area is under intensive arable cultivation, and there has been significant enclosure boundary loss in the 20th century the result of a process of rationalisation and field enlargement. The settlement pattern has substantial villages such as Martham, Blofield and Brundall, which are growing commuter villages, intermixed with hamlets and numerous scattered farmsteads. North Walsham is a principal market town and acts partly as a dormitory town to Norwich. Church towers and spires are a key landscape feature, visible for long distances in the flat landscape. The southern coastal segment is highly developed in comparison to the other two areas, and contains the coastal resorts of Great Yarmouth, Gorleston-on-Sea, Caister-on-Sea and Hemsby, amongst others. Great Yarmouth also has a well-established river port and is a major industrial and commercial centre. The character of the landscape in this part of the NCA is influenced greatly by tourism, with large caravan and holiday parks dominating the coastal strip. Woodland cover is low in the NCA, at only 5%, of which just under 2.5% is ancient woodland. Woodland is mostly found in small blocks, though there are a few areas, such as Bacton Wood, which are more substantial and on the margins of the Broads, particularly in the south-western inland portion. Bacton Wood is now planted with conifers but is thought to have once been pasture woodland.

The Historic Environment Character

The northern coastal portion of the NCA has an active coastline, with erosion providing sediment for the formation of coastal habitats further south as it erodes over time. It has exposed the oldest known human footprints, 850,000–950,000 years old, at Happisburgh. The NCA includes the Saxon Shore Fort at Caistor-on-Sea, dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. There also appears to have been significant Anglo-Saxon settlement at Caistor from the 7th century onwards. The light, sandy soils facilitated clearance for agriculture, and the area appears to have been well settled in the early medieval period. To the south of the NCA, Great Yarmouth was a borough by the 11th century, and became a walled town, and a major trading centre with an important herring fishery in the later medieval period. It began to develop as a seaside resort from the mid-18th century. In the countryside, piecemeal enclosure for individual farmsteads was a feature of the later medieval period, and was largely complete by the 14th century. Surviving areas of heathland were enclosed in the 19th century, but common grazing was linked to exploitation of the neighbouring marshlands of the Broads. Sheep dominated, for the production of wool and woollen cloth.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes suggests only a low level of potential for woodland expansion, which is linked to the importance of the area for arable cultivation. The NCA profile does identify some opportunities, however, relating to the restoration of some areas of conifers to deciduous woodland, the planting of wet woodland and linking existing woodland habitats. The profile recommendations reflect the few small areas of higher potential identified by the mapping, which are restricted to areas around existing woodland. It is important to maintain the open, flat landscape character of the NCA, and this should be taken into account with any new planting schemes.



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