

NCA 152 Cornish Killas

Overview

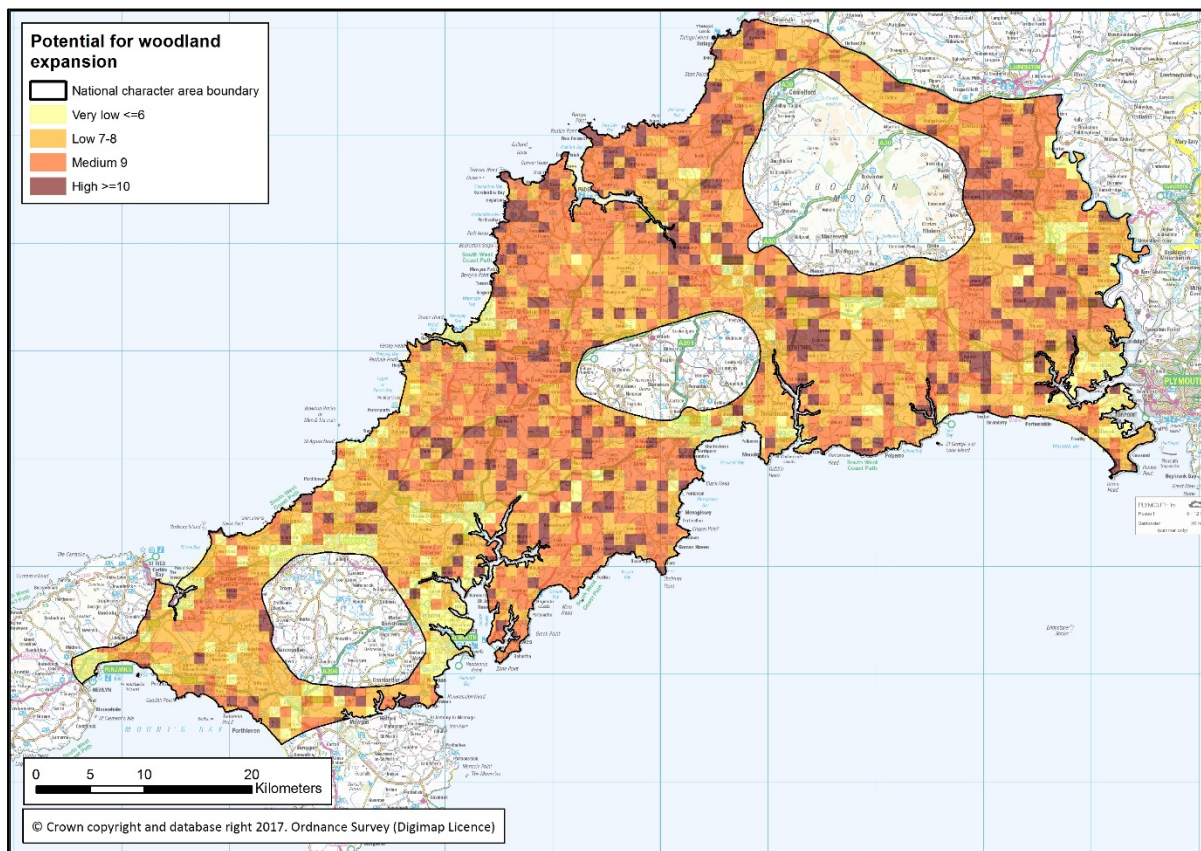
The NCA comprises the main part of the Cornish landmass around the granite outcrops of Bodmin Moor, Hensbarrow, Carnmenellis, Penwith, and The Lizard. It extends from the Tamar Valley, and the county boundary with Devon, in the east, and includes much of the county's coastline. It is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type. Large parts of the coastline are contained within the Cornwall AONB, accounting for around 20% of the total area. The Tamar Valley AONB also crosses into the NCA. Most of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site lies within the NCA, apart from the eastern part of the Tamar Valley, which is in Devon. The field pattern varies widely across the NCA, including areas of regular and large-scale enclosures, but the overwhelming pattern is one of anciently enclosed, small and irregular enclosures, bounded by hedgerows or hedgebanks. Farming is mixed, mainly with grazing livestock, dairying and some cereal production. The settlement pattern is a highly dispersed one of farmsteads and hamlets, but intermixed with small nucleated settlements and several towns. Many of the towns grew as a result in industrial expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries, whereas the coastal towns and villages originated as ports and fishing villages but are now mainly tourism destinations and resorts. The main road pattern runs along the peninsula, connecting the major settlements, such as St Austell, Truro and Penzance, but the rest of the road system is made up of minor roads. The woodland coverage is 10%, of which almost 28% is ancient woodland. Ancient woodland sites are found on valley sides, particularly along the south coast, contrasting with a largely treeless landscape further north.

The Historic Environment Character

The Cornish Killas NCA has a remarkable and visible legacy of archaeological monuments from the Neolithic period onwards. The first farming villages date from the Middle Bronze Age, in the form of groups of round houses set amongst fields. This type of settlement continued into the Roman period, though from the late Iron Age, round houses enclosed by a substantial bank and ditch, known as rounds, were introduced. There are also late prehistoric hillforts found throughout the NCA, including on coastal headlands. Rounds continued in the Romano-British period, but fell out of use in the early medieval period. By the Norman Conquest, the current pattern of farmsteads and hamlets had been established. Medieval open fields were established around the settlements, but were enclosed piecemeal mostly from an early date. Industry began to be developed from the medieval period, particularly tin and copper, dominating the world market by the mid-19th century. From the early 19th century, the extraction of china clay also became a major industry. There was a rapid growth of industrial communities from the late 18th century, all linked to coastal ports, markets and the processing of metal ores. The extraction of tin and copper had a significant impact on the landscape, leaving some of the most extensive industrial archaeological remains in the country, and this is reflected in the extensive area designated as the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site.

Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a medium level of potential for woodland expansion within the NCA, particularly within the central section and along the eastern edge of the NCA. These are generally around areas which have good woodland coverage, especially along the river valley slopes. The NCA profile emphasises the need for the sustainable management of existing woodlands and the reintroduction of coppicing, it also highlights the possibility of planting trees to reconnect fragmented habitats. The NCA is a particularly sensitive area for archaeological remains, and even though the mapped clusters of high potential are away from the World Heritage Site, care must be taken to respect ancient field patterns and archaeological monuments and their settings.



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