

NCA 154 Hensbarrow

Overview

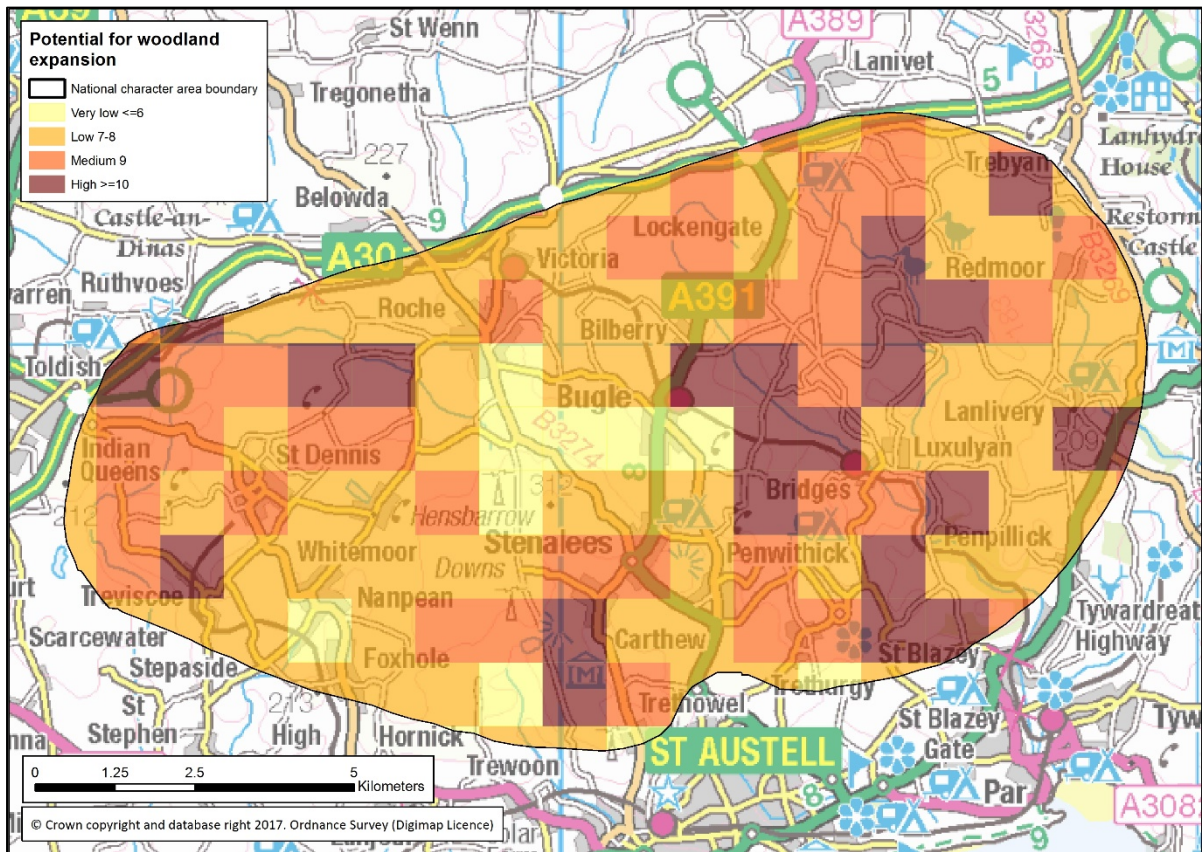
Hensbarrow NCA is a small oval area, surrounded by the Cornish Killas NCA. Lying within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type, it is dominated by granite geology and is the centre of the china clay industry. The significance of the NCA's industrial past is reflected in the inclusion of the area between Luxulyan and St Blazey in the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. It is bounded by the urban areas of St Austell and St Blazey to the south, and by the A30 to the north. The Hensbarrow NCA includes areas of open moors with granite tors, heath and willow carr, though there are also large areas of enclosed land. The field pattern is one of irregular enclosures bounded by large stone-faced hedgebanks, and agriculture is dominated by livestock farming. The settlement pattern is one of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets, with larger settlements that grew as industrial villages. The A30 trunk road skirts the northern edge of the area, and the A391 crosses the NCA, linking the A30 to St Austell. All other roads through the area are minor routes and lanes. Woodland cover is quite high across the NCA, at 14% of the total area, though less than 4% of this is ancient woodland. Trees are scarce on the higher moorland, but is found on lower ground, within valleys and as shelterbelts around farmsteads. The high percentage of woodland cover, however, is largely the result of programmes of tree planting around old spoil heaps and disused china clay pits.

The Historic Environment Character

The dominant historical features within the NCA relate to the china clay industry, which developed rapidly from the 18th century, following the introduction of porcelain production in Britain. Rural industrial communities grew rapidly as a result, and from the late 19th century the whole industry expanded hugely. By the early part of the 20th century, Cornwall was producing around half of the world's china clay, around three quarters of which was exported through the port that developed at Charlestown, to the south of the NCA. The legacy of the industry is a landscape characterised by the spoil tips of china clay waste, which have a symmetrical conical form, and are known as 'the Cornish Alps'. More recent extraction, using modern extractive technology, has left vast terraces and platforms over large areas, along with large open cast quarries, some of which are now water-filled. Much of the production has ceased, but its effects still dominate the landscape.

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 around the deeply incised valleys, and around the edges of moorland to the north east of Luxulyan, where there are existing areas of woodland. The broadleaved woodlands and carr woodland of this area is highlighted by the NCA profile as having environmental potential for restoration and improved management. The profile indicates that new woodland can be planted to aid water retention, reduce soil erosion and to filter views around developments. Where there is new woodland planting, however, it needs to be designed to respect the ancient enclosures of the historic field patterns.



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