

# NCA 157 The Lizard

---

## *Overview*

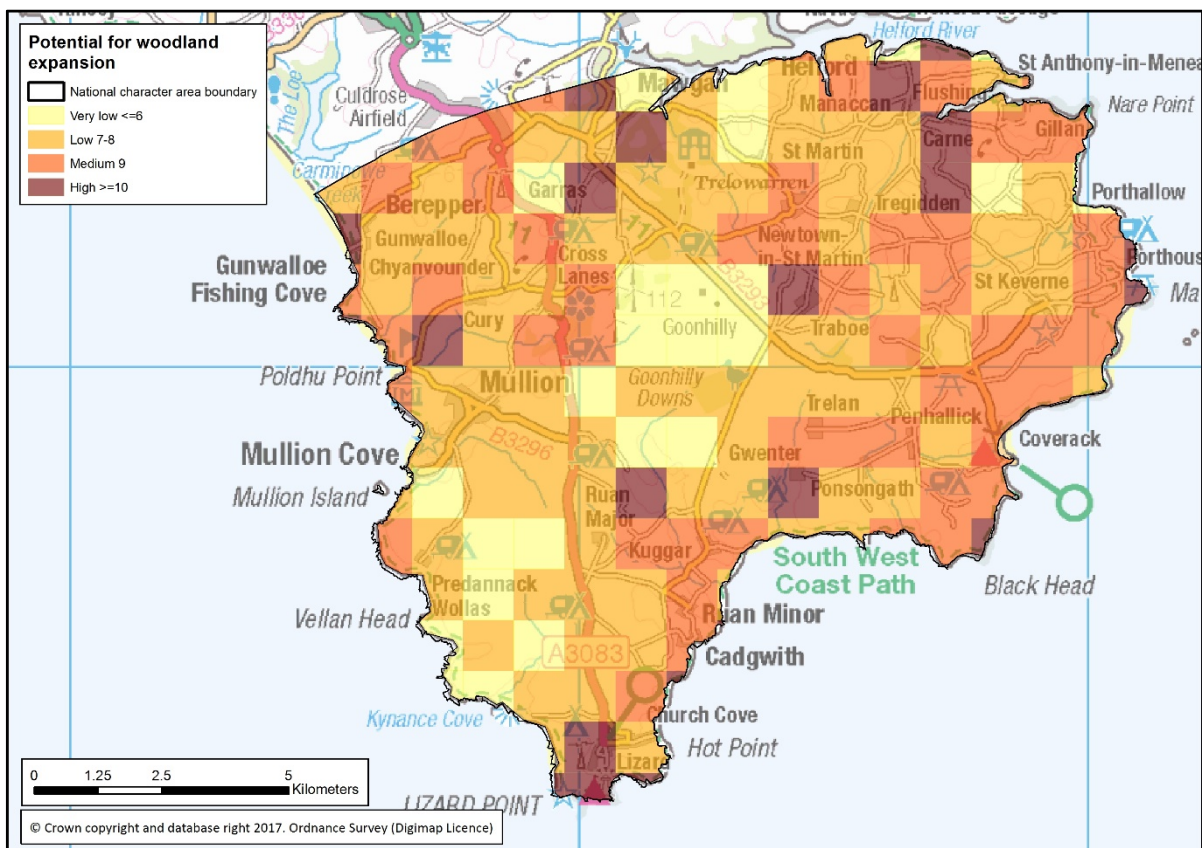
The Lizard peninsula forms the southernmost point of mainland Britain, almost all of which lies within the Cornwall AONB. It is a gently undulating plateau cut by narrow river valleys, and with a rugged coastline of cliffs, coves and small rocky islands. It is a sparsely populated rural area, with large tracts of moors and heaths given over to grazing. It is included within the Upland and Upland Fringe Agricultural Landscape Type, and livestock farming is the dominant form of agriculture, though there is also some cereal growing and horticulture. There are larger, more regular fields resulting from later enclosure on the higher land around the heaths and moors, but the overall field pattern is one of small- to medium- sized and irregular enclosures. Settlement is dominated by dispersed farmsteads and hamlets across the plateau, with nucleated villages and hamlets mostly next to coves and inlets on the coast. There are no urban areas within the NCA, the main settlements comprising villages such as Lizard, Mullion, St Keverne and Helford, all of which are now tourist destinations. The area has been an important centre for communications from the early 1960s, with the establishment of the radio communications site on Goonhilly Downs, and which is now known as the Goonhilly Satellite Earth Station. There is also a significant military presence in the area, as Predannack Airfield, south of Mullion, is a satellite airfield for the Royal Naval Air Station at Culdrose, just to the north of the NCA. The road network is one of minor roads and lanes, with one main route crossing the NCA from the town of Helston to the north down to the Lizard, the most southerly point on the UK mainland. The NCA has a total woodland coverage of 9%, of which less than 10% is ancient woodland. Broadleaved woodland is located on the sides of the steep valleys that dissect the moorland, and there are small woodland areas in the sheltered valleys of the lowlands. The plateau is mostly treeless, apart from a few recent conifer plantations.

## *The Historic Environment Character*

There is a rich record of well-preserved prehistoric archaeological monuments within the NCA, including Neolithic chambered tombs, Bronze Age barrows, standing stones, Iron Age and later defended settlements known as rounds, and prehistoric field systems. Place-name evidence is indicative of pre-Conquest origins for many settlements, with anciently enclosed land around the dispersed pattern of farmsteads and hamlets. The large areas of heathland and moors ensured that extensive rough grazing of cattle was widespread in the medieval period, and numerous routes survive, which linked the farms to the open rough grazing land. In the eastern part of the NCA, there is evidence of more mixed farming, though by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many areas of arable was laid to grass or turned over to the production of fodder crops. There is evidence for the expansion and contraction of cultivated land around the edges of the moor, dependent on changing environmental and economic conditions. The agricultural economy has always been supplemented by fishing and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, stone quarrying became a significant form of additional income. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the economy has also been based on defence, telecommunications and tourism.

## Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

The mapping of historic and natural environment attributes indicates a low to medium level of potential for woodland expansion within the NCA, with clusters of higher potential mainly around the coast, close to areas of existing woodland within valleys. Even though the mapping indicates some potential for woodland expansion, the NCA profile highlights the need for scrub and woodland removal from historic monuments and surrounding areas, to improve their condition and their settings. The profile does, however, also highlight the potential to create links between woodland habitats, including valleys woodlands.



NCA 157 The Lizard