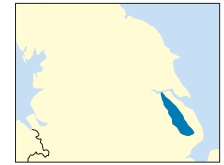


Lincolnshire Wolds



Key Characteristics

- Rolling upland arable landscape of strongly cohesive identity.
- Pronounced scarp edge to north and west, comprising rough pasture and scrub, affording fine panoramic views to Central Lincolnshire Vale.
- Combination of elevated plateaux and deep steep-sided dales to chalk areas.
- Large rectilinear fields with clipped and degraded hedgerows from late enclosure. Occasional shelter belts, concentrated on steeper sided valley and scarp slopes, emphasising landform.
- Sparse settlement pattern of small nucleated villages, often in sheltered valleys and associated with modest country houses and small parklands. Diverse geology gives rise to variety of building materials.
- Broad verges to some roads and tracks provide valuable herb-rich habitats.
- Archaeologically rich with ancient trackways, deserted villages and burial mounds.
- Broader south-west valleys of river Lymn and Bain. Associated alder carr woodland, and tree-lined watercourses.

Landscape Character

The Lincolnshire Wolds lie in the north-east of the county of Lincolnshire, mid-way between Lincoln and the coast. Rising to over 150 m along their western edge, the Wolds form the highest ground in eastern England between Yorkshire and Kent. To the west they overlook the Central Lincolnshire Vale while to the east they are separated from the North Sea by the Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes. To the north, the Wolds meet the Humber estuary at Barton-upon-Humber and to the south they fall to the level Fens. The Wolds are an intensively farmed arable landscape. The scenery is characterised by a range of varied yet unified

features including open, arable, plateau hilltops, strong escarpments, deep dry valleys with hanging beechwoods, isolated ash and beech trees on skylines and modest country houses. The area is sparsely settled with many villages hidden within the folds of the landscape. A multitude of fine sweeping vistas, both within and from the area, entice the spirit. It was of these refreshing qualities that Tennyson, native of the area, wrote in the stanza:

‘Calm and deep peace on this high wold
And on these dews that drench the furze
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold.’

There are four subdivisions within the landscape. Firstly, the pronounced and sinuous north-west-facing Chalk scarp which runs from South Ferriby on the Humber down to North Willingham. The slopes present a steep and hummocky appearance lined by attractive and compact spring-line villages at the foot of the slope. Rough pasture, scrub and woodland areas clothe the scarp along which are dramatic views.



MIKE WILLIAMS/COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION

Settlements tend to nestle in the numerous dry valleys within the Wolds plateau, as for example here at Stainton-le-Vale. Prominent development around Binbrook Airfield can be seen in the background.

The second subdivision is the Wolds, which comprise a high, open, arable plateau stretching from the Humber down past Louth. Within this upland rolling plain are a series of inward facing valleys, eg at Rothwell and Cuxwold on Laceby Beck. The planting of woodland on the steep slopes serves to emphasise the valley features. A series of villages are located in the dry valleys which face eastwards.

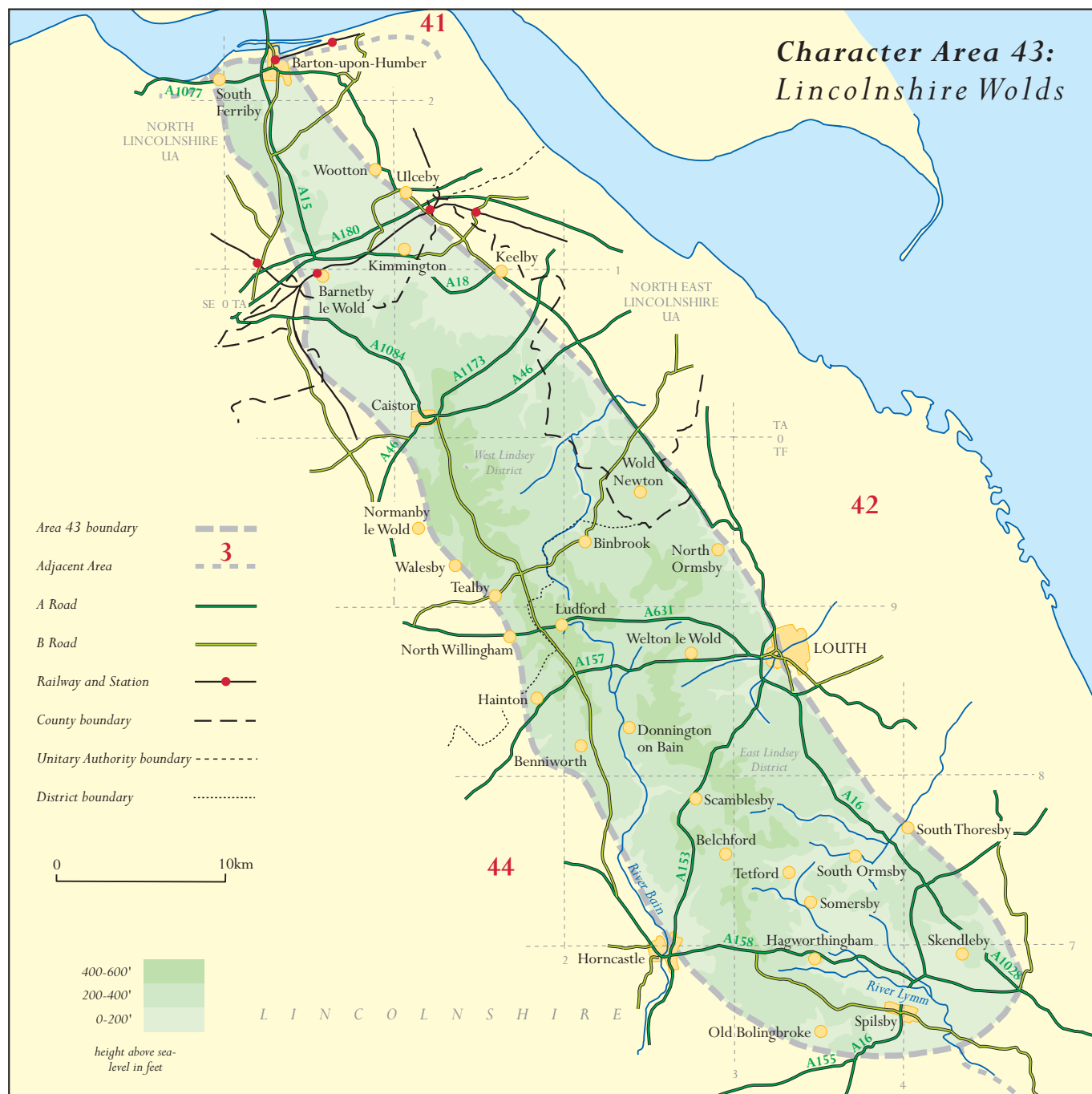
The third sub-area lies south-west of the Bluestone Heath Road which marks the edge of the Chalk outcrop. Between the villages of Donington on Bain and Tetford, an internal escarpment faces south-west overlooking ridges of glacial drift and valleys cut into sandstone. Three rivers - the Bain, Waring and Lymn - drain southwards through these valleys. Many river valley floors are marshy and alder carr woods are common.

Finally, to the south-east, the chalk ridge is masked by clay

till which creates more rounded forms as the Wolds fall down to the Middle Marsh around Alford. Ancient oak and ash woodlands give this area a distinctive feel.

Physical Influences

The Lincolnshire Wolds are dominated by a west-facing Chalk escarpment some 50 m high. The underlying Lower Cretaceous strata are revealed in the bottoms of the valleys and at the foot of the scarp slope. These strata include ironstone, limestone and sandstone which create a hummocky landscape punctuated by springs and isolated landslips, for example at Nettleton and Hainton. To the south-east, the overlying glacial till creates a rounded edge broken only by the deep valleys at Louth and Calceby. Towards the southern end of the Wolds, the Chalk cap has been removed to reveal the Lower Cretaceous sands, clays



and ironstones which form a series of low hills with gravel terraces. Within the valleys of the Bain and Lymn, Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay create the marshy poorly-drained vales.

The bedrock was extensively moulded by glacial and periglacial action during the last Ice Age, when the drainage pattern was altered by the deposition of sands, gravels and clay till. The previous pattern of eastward drainage was locally blocked by ice tills which resulted in the cutting of several glacial meltwater channels particularly in the south.

The soil patterns are a close reflection of the solid and drift geology. To the north, plateau tops are dominated by light chalky soil. On the west scarp edge there is a striking variation of colour and texture reflecting the underlying Red Chalk and Lower Cretaceous beds. To the south-east the clayey tills give rise to heavy, seasonally waterlogged soils whereas near the Lymn Valley, Spilsby Sandstone provides the parent material for well-drained, sandy loams. In the Bain valley there are deep, coarse permeable loams except where the presence of Kimmeridge Clays give rise to localised wet areas.

Human and Cultural Influences

The Lincolnshire Wolds have produced evidence of some of the oldest human remains in Britain. In the Neolithic period, early settlement concentrated on the highest drier ground. Later, in the Bronze and Iron Ages, settlement extended onto chalk in the southern Wolds, for example at Skendleby. The evidence of visible archaeology is strong and many barrows cap the hill tops, such as Six Barrows at Tathwell.

From the Iron Age the chalk uplands had a well-established network of trackways, for example High Street and Bluestone Heath Road. The Romans built east-west roads to access the coastal salt industry. However, it was in the Saxon period that most permanent and extensive settlement began. Village names with *ham* or *ton* are probably Saxon, while names ending in *by* or *thorpe* are of Danish origin. From the 12th century however, widespread depopulation and village desertion began due to the Black Death and the growth of the wool industry. Numerous deserted village locations have now been identified, like that at Calcethorpe. Post-medieval ironwork sites have been identified, for example at Claxby. Winceby was the site of a battle in 1643 during the Civil War.

Between 1760 and 1850 the landscape was utterly transformed by the parliamentary enclosures sweeping away the common pasture and huge open fields. Miles of hawthorn hedges were planted and new Georgian manors, parks and farmsteads were created often away from villages. Through a new interest in hunting and shooting, shelter belts and avenues were planted in the hitherto open landscapes. Broad drove roads up to 20 m in width were created to provide grazing for sheep as they were herded to the coastal grazing marshes. The development of estates

continued through the Victorian period and evidenced itself by estate workers' cottages like those at Wold Newton. Twentieth century influence has been less marked but includes wartime airfields, for example Binbrook, and a national motor racing circuit at Cadwell Park.

Alfred Lord Tennyson was born in Somersby in the Lymn valley and later attended school in Louth. He left the Wolds in 1837 but its landscape provided a source for many of his poems including *In Memorium AHH*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *Maud*, and *The Brook*. The painter Peter de Wint (1784-1849) married a Lincolnshire woman and views of the Wolds during the enclosures were amongst his favourite subjects.

In the 20th century, with the advent of the car, the quiet beauty of the Wolds has slowly been discovered by the tourist but, because of the limited number of 'honey-pot' sites, the peaceful character is still retained. In 1990, the Wolds again provided a setting for literature in A S Byatt's novel *Possession*, where she wrote:

"The valleys are deep and narrow, some wooded, some grassy, some ploughed. The ridges run sharply across the sky, always have ... These slightly rolling hills appear to be folded out of the surface of the earth, but that is not the case, they are part of a dissected tableland. The villages are buried in the valleys, at the end of blind funnels."



JOHN TYLER/COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION

A rich archaeological heritage of ancient trackways, deserted villages and burial mounds is evidence of the Wolds long history of settlement and communications. Earthworks, such as these at North Ormsby, are best protected through continuation of traditional grazing management by sheep.

Buildings and Settlement

The Wolds have maintained a very sparse and dispersed settlement pattern over the last few centuries. The density is marginally higher in the south-west river valleys while on parts of the high Wold there is no settlement. In the north

the villages are simple and nucleated while in the south a rectangular plan is found with lanes enclosing a central area of cottages, farmhouses and paddocks in villages like Old Bolingbroke.



JOHN TYLER/COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION

The pattern of enclosure and land cover gives the Lincolnshire Wolds a simple but strikingly bold character, which accentuates the rolling landform beneath. This view is near Binbrook.

Settlements tend to follow physical features, such as the foot of the north-west scarp as at Tealby and Claxby, or the deep valleys within the chalk uplands as at Rothwell. To the south-west, villages such as Hemingby and Telford are located in the river valleys. There are no great parklands but a series of smaller estates, for example at Harrington and South Ormsby. These often include gracious but modest Tudor or Georgian country houses with Victorian farmsteads and farmworkers' cottages. Old Bolingbroke Castle, birthplace of Henry IV, is now in ruins but occupies a prominent setting at the foot of the southern sandstone scarp.

There are no major urban areas within the Wolds but a series of small market towns lie at the foot of the hills including Horncastle, Spilsby, Louth and Caistor.

The Wolds are not distinguished by a unified pattern of building materials or styles. The local chalk is generally a poor building material, being crumbly and weak, so brick or stone has been preferred. In the north-west, the locally quarried Tealby Limestone and Claxby Ironstone can be seen. At Nettleton, where the buildings are a rich ochre colour, the ironstone is utilised whereas at Tealby and Walesby the paler limestone is in use. These materials, evidenced in churches and houses, further distinguish the north-west scarp. To the south, the distinctive green or brown Spilsby Sandstone, although rather soft, is used in the more ornate 14th and 15th century churches built from the wealth of the woollen industry. For domestic buildings,

brick and render walls with pantile roofs are most common. There are also a few surviving examples of mud and stud cottages. The Louth architect, James Fowler, is noted for his work in local churches, particularly at Binbrook and Ludford. The only major new building has occurred near Binbrook where extensive housing was introduced to serve the airfield.

Land Cover

The land cover is predominantly arable. Large rectilinear fields on the rolling plateau are enclosed by clipped and gappy hawthorn hedges. Woodland cover in these areas is sparse, particularly to the north, while to the south sinuous beech woods and younger mixed plantations follow the steeper slopes of the deep valleys. Isolated beech and ash trees form occasional markers. On the north-west scarp there is a mixed pattern of woodland, scrub and pasture created by the hummocky landform and poorer nature of the soils. To the south-west there is a more complex pattern of medium-sized irregular fields where grazing combines with crop cultivation. The proportion of woodland is at its highest to the south-east. The extensive mixed woodlands of the Brocklesby Estate to the north-east provide the other major area of woodland cover. Here some 3,000 acres of woodland were planted between 1750 and 1950.

Because of the extensive arable areas there are limited semi-natural habitats remaining. The key ones are the isolated chalk grasslands located on the steepest uncultivated slopes and the broad herb-rich road verges along ancient trackways and drover roads. There is only one semi-natural woodland remaining, at Tetford Wood, an ancient hazel/ash/wych elm wood. The woods on the clay tills in the south-east are typically ancient oak/ash/hazel woods, for example Hoplands Wood. The valley marshes of the river corridors also support valuable semi-natural habitats including acidic mires and alder carr. These are more common along the Lymn and Bain.



DAVID BURTON/COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION

Tealby Church is built from the locally quarried Tealby limestone with its distinctive pale honey colour. Newer building can have a significant impact on the character of existing settlements, both through their location and the materials used.

Extensive chalk quarries exist in the north of the Wolds at South Ferriby, Melton Ross and to the south at South Thoresby.

The Changing Countryside

- Agricultural intensification, and farm amalgamation to create larger units, have caused the removal of hedgerows, remnant unimproved grassland and field corners (now largely halted).
- Loss of drove road verges to scrub and planting.
- Neglect of existing woodland and shelter belts. Increase in mixed conifer/deciduous planting to steeper slopes.
- Abandonment of isolated farms and cottages together with gentrification and extension of properties for holiday lets.
- Loss of meadows along river Lymn and conversion to large arable fields.
- Depopulation of villages, except for those in easy reach of Grimsby and Lincoln which have been subject to infill pressures.
- Development of redundant second world war airfields, eg Kirmington has become Humberside International Airport.
- Pressure on water resources resulting in an increasing number of irrigation reservoirs to support cropping.

- Mineral and landfill development on chalk areas.
- Construction of M180/A180(T) between Scunthorpe and Grimsby and A15 to the Humber Bridge.
- Proliferation of telecommunication masts.
- Light and noise pollution from roads and adjacent settlements.
- Recreational pressures, for golf courses for example.

Shaping the Future

- Chalk grasslands would benefit from grazing especially on the scarp slope, valley sides and around areas of archaeological interest.
- Selective felling and tree planting to overmature woods on steep slopes, prominent hill top clumps and in roadside shelter belts (but not in verges) would give continuity and a modest increase in woodland cover. The continued management of larger woodlands to the south-east is important.
- There is scope for continued selective hedgerow restoration and verge management on drovers roads, along ancient routes like Bluestone Heath Road and Caistor High Street and within larger estates.
- The after-use of redundant airfields and their assimilation into the rural landscape should be



The north-west facing scarp slope of the Wolds, seen here at Nettleton Hill, is a dramatic landscape feature with a steep and hummocky appearance. The variable geology results in many spring lines with associated 'wet flush' grassland which, along with woodland and scrub, clothes the scarp slope.

addressed. A combination of tree planting, agriculture and sympathetic development might be appropriate.

- There are opportunities to enhance river corridors to the south-west by increasing grassland management and riverine tree planting. The visual integration of irrigation reservoirs is important.
- Phasing of extraction and landfill operations with appropriate restoration would respect geological value, groundwater and visual appearance.
- The difficulties of siting telecommunication masts and potential windfarms on high ground should be addressed.

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Glossary

carr: a marshy copse