



Location and Context

Extending from the northern coast of Aberdeenshire, down to the village of New Pitsligo, including the north-west facing slopes of Mormond Hill, the low-lying *Coastal Farmland with Ridges and Valleys* Landscape Character type forms a transition between the dramatic sculpted sandstone ridges to the west and the flatter, lower coastal plain to the east.

Key Characteristics

- Pattern of low ridges and broad shallow valleys.
- Pockets of more complex landform in the Boyndie area.
- Mormond Hill, on the south-eastern boundary of this Landscape Character Type, forms a prominent backdrop and key landmark feature with diverse vegetation cover.
- Small neat undulating pastures close to parts of the coast.
- Scarcity of woodland, with only occasional shelterbelts and semi-natural woodland in wetter areas.
- Moss and rough grassland in broader basins, fringed mainly with willow scrub and birch.
- Widely scattered small farms, linked by minor roads, with buildings sited on drier small hillocks.
- Communication infrastructure on some higher ridges and hills.
- Proximity of the coast perceived in the strong sense of openness, lightness and space.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Coastal Farmland with Ridges and Valleys* is a low-lying landscape of subtle ridges rarely rising over 100 metres and broad shallow valleys with a predominantly north-west to south-east orientation and with the landform falling gently seawards with pockets of slightly more complex landform in the Boyndie area. It forms the backdrop to Fraserburgh, although the settlement itself is orientated towards the sea.

Mormond Hill, an outcrop hill formed of resistant quartzite rises to over 200 metres and lies on the south-eastern boundary of this character area. It forms a prominent backdrop to this landscape as well as a key landmark feature, widely visible across much of the lower-lying farmland and coast in north-east Aberdeenshire.

Landcover

Small neat undulating pastures enclosed by low boulder walls occur close to the coast near Rosehearty at the transition with the Aberdeenshire Moray Firth cliffs, with generally more open large fenced fields of pasture and occasional arable crops occurring inland.

The open character of the landscape is emphasised by the subtle delineation of fences, scrubby gorse boundaries and occasional broken stone dykes and by the scarcity of woodland which is generally limited to occasional shelterbelts of spruce and small areas of semi-natural woodland associated with wetter areas. The wooded policies of Boyndie accentuate the more complex rolling landform evident in the western part of this character area.

Moss and wetter rough grassland fill some of the broader basins and are fringed with willow scrub and birch and, in some areas, clumps of spruce. Mormond Hill supports a more diverse vegetation cover with mosses, heather, broadleaf woodland and some remnant Scots pine on its north-west facing slopes.

Settlement

Widely scattered small farms are strung along minor roads which criss-cross the landscape and are commonly cocooned by clumps of wind-worn spruce. Buildings are often sited on small hillocks within areas of moss and poorly drained land. The moorland character of the landscape is also evident in the naming of farmsteads such as Heath Hill, Moss-side and Cranbog. There are a number of derelict farms. The hamlets of Mid-Ardlaw and Memsie are the only minor settlements in the area. Gravel quarries are located in this landscape and masts and other communication infrastructure is a feature on Mormond Hill and occasional higher ridges near the coast.

Perception

The proximity of the coast is perceived in the strong sense of openness, lightness and space, the exposed nature of this landscape and reinforced by glimpses of the sea from higher roads. Flocks of geese graze on low-lying fields, which often contain pools of water during winter, and add to this experience.

This is one of 390 Landscape Character Types identified at a scale of 1:50 000 as part of a national programme of Landscape Character Assessment republished in 2019.

The area covered by this Landscape Character Type was originally included in the Banff and Buchan LCA (Cobham Resource Consultants), published 1994; and Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Review (Carol Anderson Landscape Associates), published 2014.