



Location and Context

The *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills* Landscape Character Type forms a broad swathe of gently rolling farmland lying between the *Farmed and Wooded River Valleys* to the west and the *Farmed Basins* Landscape Character Types to the south. It is generally more elevated and hillier than the more open plains of the *Undulating Agricultural Heartlands* which lie to the east of the Deveron. In places, this landscape is punctuated by narrow undulating higher ridges of the outcropping *Outlying Hills and Ridges*.

Key Characteristics

- Softly rounded hills and ridges forming rolling topography with sweeping curves.
- Narrow valleys with small watercourses.
- Simple pattern of medium large rectilinear arable fields and pasture.
- Geometric forests on hill sides.
- Shelterbelts on ridge tops.
- Broadleaf woodland on lower valley sides and dens.
- Farms on lower hill slopes, often with large outbuildings.
- No settlements of significant size.
- Abundance of stone circles.
- Open character, with long views from elevated roads to backdrop of hills to the south and south-west.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The smoothly rounded ridges and broad open hill tops of the *Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills* landscape have an even height of between 200-300 metres and are divided by numerous yet insignificant water courses, weaving through the hills and cutting narrow valleys. These feed the neighbouring Deveron, Ythan and Bogie rivers. The softly rounded hills, with convex slopes and broad ridges form smooth sweeping curves that draw the eye across the terrain.

Landcover

The landscape has a rolling topography which is overlaid by a bold simple pattern of medium large rectilinear arable fields and pasture predominantly enclosed by low fences giving a distinct openness to the landscape. Their cultivation extends to water course edges. The farmland is generally well managed with pockets of poorer quality.

Woodland, which is sparse and more concentrated in the west, largely comprises geometrically shaped coniferous forests on hill sides. Even in more open areas small mixed woodland blocks stand out as simple patterns on smooth hill slopes and long broadleaf and conifer shelterbelts are commonly lined on ridge tops emphasising the rolling landform. The broadleaf woodland occurs on some lower valley sides and within rare narrow and deeply incised dens cutting into the rolling terrain.

Settlement

A regular scattering of farms, often with large outbuildings, nestles on lower hill slopes or in dips in valleys and are sheltered by small blocks of woodland. Tracks along shallow valleys lead to the farmsteads. There are no settlements of significant size within this Landscape Character Type. Small groups of tall wind turbines are a recurring feature, sited on ridges and higher hills, and transmission lines and a dense network of narrow roads cross this landscape.

Notable historic features include numerous stone circles, including Upperthird, Mains of Hatton, North Pitglassie, Cairn Riv, Blackhill of Drachlaw, Yonder Bognie, Cairntree, Raich and Loanhead. This part of north-east Scotland is known for its recumbent stone circles, a type which is rare elsewhere. They are typically situated on the shoulders of broad hills. There are also the ruins of Gight Castle, east of Fyvie and the 17th Century Mounie Castle and garden.

Perception

Long views are possible from elevated roads where the smoothly rolling hills and ridges have a strong rhythmic quality, being seen as successive undulating layers. A distinct sense of space and light can be experienced in this landscape heightened by the openness of farmland.

The backdrop of hills to the south and southwest give a visual 'edge' to this character type, containing views. The uplands appear as a series of raised horizons, with the Foudland Ridge to the fore and the prominent profiles of Bennachie and Tap o'Noth rising up behind.



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 South and Central Aberdeenshire LCA (Environmental Resources Management), published 1998; and Aberdeenshire Landscape Character Review (Carol Anderson Landscape Associates), published 2014.