

1 Cliffs of the North and South East Coasts

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **High**

Narrow coastal strip between Cullen and Fraserburgh, and south of Peterhead, comprising a diverse landscape of sandy beaches and dunes, as well as rocky headlands and sheer cliffs.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Coastal cliffs are similarly found on the east coast of Aberdeenshire, south of Peterhead, but those on the north coast are more cohesive and form a defined edge to the headland.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Trees and woodland are limited in this windswept landscape. Fields are enclosed by hedgerows and stone dykes, with large farm buildings. Coastal villages are intact.

Wildness **Medium**

Accessible and well settled, but dominated by the influence of the sea and the elements, lending the landscape qualities of greater wildness.

Scenic qualities **High**

Although narrow, this landscape feels open and large scale due to the influence of the sea and sky, with high headlands, sheer cliffs, narrow inlets, occasional sandy bays and attractive villages.

Enjoyment **High**

A popular destination, with tourist accommodation in fishing villages and caravan parks. Accessible via coastal walks and NCN 1, which runs between Cullen and Banff before heading inland.

Built heritage assets **High**

Traditional fishing villages constructed in local stone, many of which are Conservation Areas eg Sandend, Portsoy, Banff, Gardenstown, Crovie and Pennan. Several scheduled monuments including Pitsligo Castle (near Rosehearty), Dundarg Castle (NW of New Aberdour) and Castle of Findon (fort & castle south west of Gardenstown).

Cultural qualities **High**

Shipyards at Macduff. Slains Castle near Cruden Bay was said to give Bram Stoker the inspiration for Count Dracula's castle. 'Local Hero' was filmed in Pennan. Cornhill Highland Games (near Banff).

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

The Troup, Pennan and Lion Heads are of high nature conservation and geological interest, in particular for coastal breeding birds. Troup Head is a Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve. There is some Ancient Woodland eg associated with Duff House estate.

Settlement setting **High**

There are frequent settlements along the coastline, from large fishing ports to small fishing villages crammed at the base of cliffs, where many of the houses are end-on to the sea. Banff occupies a position at the mouth of the River Deveron.

Views **High**

Expansive views of sea and sky from the prominent headland. Views towards landmark buildings in Banff. Several scenic viewpoints with visitor facilities eg parking areas and signage.

Connectivity **High**

Interface between land and sea. Coastal walks connect with the Moray Coast Trail to the west.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Some variety in landform eg lower lying bay at Sandend contrasts with higher headland and cliffs at Troup Head, but otherwise consistent.

Landscape relationships

A self-contained coastal strip with a strong relationship with the sea and sky.

Other designations

The Findochty Cullen Coast AGLV in Moray extends along the coast west of Cullen.

CA, GDL, SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Coastal Zone, Regeneration Priority Area and the Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

2 Western Coastal Farmland

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

A large scale landscape to the south of Portsoy, with sweeping plains rising to infrequent rounded hills eg Durn Hill, Hill of Culburnie.

Rarity / Uniqueness Low

Coastal farmland is relatively common, stretching around the north and eastern coasts of Aberdeenshire, and has similar qualities to inland farmland.

Intactness and condition Medium

An exposed and windblown landscape. Largely agricultural, with large arable and pastoral fields enclosed by post and wire fencing and occasional stone dykes. Forestry weakens the coastal influence. Deciduous trees are a feature around farmsteads and villages.

Wildness Low

Largely agricultural, with farmsteads, small settlements and a road network including the A95, A97 and A98.

Scenic qualities Medium

Undulating, large scale agricultural landscape with some visual diversity. The sea has an influence, particularly in the northern half of the area.

Enjoyment Low

Part of NCN 1 traverses the north west corner, and there is some evidence of tourism eg accommodation.

Built heritage assets Low

Dunn Hill fort. The 18th Century planned village of Fordyce is a Conservation Area, with a castle at its centre.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

An agricultural landscape, with some features of interest eg mosses south east of Cornhill and some areas of Ancient Woodland.

Settlement setting Low

Villages eg Fordyce tend to be set into small valleys.

Views Medium

Some coastal views, particularly in the north of the area. There are panoramic views from the scenic viewpoint at the Hill of Maundaylea.

Connectivity Medium

Network of forestry and small burns.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

In the west large plantations reduce the influence of the coast.

Landscape relationships

Association with the narrow coastal strip to the north.

Other designations

CA, GDL, SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Regeneration Priority Area.

3 Knockhill and Aberchirder

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **Medium**

Distinguished by a pattern of mixed agriculture and scattered woodland, with similarities to the Moray foothills in the west.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Low**

Mixed farmland and woodland is relatively common across Aberdeenshire, although this landscape is more strongly rolling eg at Knock Hill on the border with Moray.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Shelterbelts and clumps of mature deciduous trees including beech and sycamore frame settlements. Long avenues of trees line fields and roads, particularly in the east. Fields divided by post and wire fencing or hedges of gorse. Some forestry.

Wildness **Low**

A predominantly agricultural landscape with a network of roads (A95, A97) and scattered farmsteads.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Shelterbelts and clumps of trees emphasise the smoothly undulating landform.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Opportunities for walking eg Knock Hill, and forest walks around Aberchirder.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

The 18th Century planned village of Aberchirder is a Conservation Area.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **Medium**

Mainly agricultural with some features of natural heritage eg Moss of Crombie and some Ancient Woodland, mainly around Aberchirder.

Settlement setting **Medium**

The largest settlement is Aberchirder, which is located on a plateau which slopes down to the Burn of Arkland.

Views **Medium**

Views from within the lower valley are enclosed by the smoothly undulating landform. Some widely visible landmarks eg Knock Hill in the west.

Connectivity **Medium**

Network of habitats eg woodland and the tributaries of the Deveron Valley.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

The landscape has a rougher, more moorland character in the west (Knock Hill).

Landscape relationships

Relationship with the Deveron Valley to the south and the foothills of Moray to the west.

Other designations

CA, SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

4 Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Elongated river valley extending south from Banff, along the Deveron to Turriff and along the Ythan to Fyvie. From Turriff the Deveron runs west to the Aberdeenshire boundary.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Medium

River valleys are common across Aberdeenshire, although the Deveron is a more intact valley with visual diversity.

Intactness and condition

High

The valley sides of the Ythan are flat to gently sloping, becoming steeper along the Deveron Valley. Farmland runs up to the rivers edge, delineated by fences or beech/hawthorn hedges. There is mixed woodland along the Deveron Valley.

Wildness

Low

Well settled with a network of roads merging at the small town of Turriff.

Scenic qualities

High

The rivers and their tributaries meander through a low lying valley bounded by rolling wooded hills, which are particularly attractive south and west of Turriff.

Enjoyment

High

Campsites and picnic spots along the river valley. NCN 1 runs between Banff and Turriff in this area, along a minor road.

Built heritage assets

High

Prominent houses on the valley sides. Includes a number of small wooded estates and castles including Duff House, Forglen House, Hatton Castle and Fyvie Castle (all GDLs). There is a Historic Battlefield at Fyvie.

Cultural qualities

Medium

Folk song 'Bonny Lass o'Fyvie' (Anon).

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Mainly agricultural and woodland land uses including rough sheep grazing, hay fields, cereals, commercial forestry and deciduous woods. The Deveron and Ythan river valleys and their tributaries are important landscape features.

Settlement setting

High

Houses and villages are located on the valley floor and sides such as at Fyvie, Turriff and Bridge of Alvah. Farm buildings tend to be enclosed by pronounced stands of woodland. Castles and mansion houses contribute to architectural diversity.

Views

Medium

Views are contained by the valley landform, although the area is visible from some key routes, including NCN 1 and the A947 route to coastal areas.

Connectivity

High

Comprising the Deveron and Ythan river valleys and the watershed between them.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

The Deveron Valley is steeper than that of the Ythan, and is more intact.

Landscape relationships

A self contained landscape.

Other designations

CA, HB, GDL, SSSI, GCR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Regeneration Priority Area.

5 Coastal Farmland East of Macduff

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Small area of exposed rolling fields emerging from the coastal plain, south of the high cliffs between Macduff and Gardenstown. Heavily influenced by the sea.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Low

Undulating coastal farmland is common across Aberdeenshire and is similar to inland farmland.

Intactness and condition

Low

Mostly large arable fields, with some pasture, typically unenclosed or with scrubby boundaries comprising post and wire fencing or broken lines of gorse hedging. Occasional clumps of broad leaved and coniferous trees and shelterbelts.

Wildness

Low

Bleak and windswept, with an almost complete absence of woodland. Intensive farmland, with roads (A98) and tracks, and some farmsteads.

Scenic qualities

Low

Subtle landscape which lacks strong definition and has limited visual diversity.

Enjoyment

Low

Limited opportunities for enjoyment, visitors will most likely be heading towards the coast.

Built heritage assets

Low

Limited visual influence.

Cultural qualities

Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Low

Predominantly farmland, with little woodland cover or features of interest.

Settlement setting

Low

No large settlements.

Views

Medium

Little change in height or definition. Occasional views of the sea. Visible from the A98 which passes through the area.

Connectivity

Low

No woodland or rivers of note.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Consistent.

Landscape relationships

Some intervisibility with the coastal strip to the north.

Other designations

SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Regeneration Priority Area.

6 Sandstone Ridges and Valleys South of Troup

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Striking landscape of exposed hill tops and enclosed valleys, south of the prominent Troup Head.

Rarity / Uniqueness

High

Unusual combination of landcover including arable farmland, moorland, bog, rough grazing and small wooded valleys.

Intactness and condition

Low

Farmland, with some moorland on steeper slopes and hill tops, and some boggy areas with birch and gorse. Fields tend to be undefined or enclosed by post and wire fencing. Some fields appeared unused or used for rough grazing. Woodland confined to the Tore of Troup and a few blocks of coniferous plantation eg north of Windyheads Hill.

Wildness

Medium

Most wild in areas of moorland, bog and rough pasture. Otherwise a farmed and settled landscape.

Scenic qualities

Medium

Distinct landform of open hill tops and enclosed wooded valleys, higher and hillier than the surrounding plains.

Enjoyment

Low

Limited opportunities for enjoyment, visitors will most likely pass through to get to coastal areas.

Built heritage assets

Low

Scheduled monuments at Windyheads Hill, Strath Howe and Glenhouses although none are very visible in the wider landscape.

Cultural qualities

Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

High

Semi natural landcover includes heath and moorland. The Tore of Troup is a distinctive wooded valley. Ugie catchment has a high concentration of lowland raised bogs.

Settlement setting

Low

The planned village of New Aberdour in the east is the main settlement.

Views

Medium

Views from hill tops and plateaus eg Windyheads Hill. Conifer plantations are distinctive on the skyline when viewed from lower lying areas. The landscape may form the skyline in long views from other character areas due to its elevation.

Connectivity

Medium

Network of woodland and burns. Access to the coast.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Consistent.

Landscape relationships

Distant backdrop to neighbouring LCTs. The edges of the landscape fade into surrounding farmland.

Other designations

SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Regeneration Priority Area.

7 North East Coastal Farmland

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Vast, open agricultural plain stretching down from the coast to the village of New Pitsligo and the north western slopes of Mormond Hill.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Low

Continuous with neighbouring farmland (the Eastern Coastal Agricultural Plain).

Intactness and condition

Medium

Large, open arable fields bounded by fences, scrubby gorse and stone dykes. More diverse landcover of moorland and moss on the slightly higher ground inland. Large farms and some industrial buildings.

Wildness

Low

Intensive agriculture, with some wilder moorland areas inland.

Scenic qualities

Low

Uniform, gently undulating plateau with few features of interest.

Enjoyment

Low

Limited opportunities for enjoyment, visitors will most likely pass through to get to coastal areas.

Built heritage assets

Low

Of limited visual influence.

Cultural qualities

Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Some inland moorland, rough pasture and woodland. Ugie catchment has a high concentration of lowland raised bogs.

Settlement setting

Low

No large settlements.

Views

Medium

Views to and from Mormond Hill across the LCT. Visible from the A98 and other coastal routes.

Connectivity

Low

Limited woodland cover, no major burns.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Gentle change in elevation as you move inland, with some moorland on the higher slopes inland.

Landscape relationships

Contained by low hills to the south east (including Mormond Hill).

Other designations

SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Regeneration Priority Area.

8 Agricultural Heartland

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Extensive, gently rolling farmed landscape with large scale plantation woodland.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Low

Character type is extensive throughout Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition

Medium

Large fields bound with post and wire fencing, some smaller scale fields with stone dykes. Moorland is a feature to the north, around New Pitsligo, and there are some large plantations and shelterbelts. Red sandstone is a feature in the west of the area.

Wildness

Low

Agricultural landscape with a network of roads.

Scenic qualities

Medium

Vast, open and gently rolling landscape, contained by some small hills.

Enjoyment

Medium

NCN1 traverses the landscape between Turriff and Maud, along minor roads. The Formartine and Buchan Way passes between Strichen and Maud.

Built heritage assets

Low

The Culsh monument is visible in the landscape, particularly from the east.

Cultural qualities

Medium

White Horse on Mormond Hill. New Deer is the birthplace of the Rev. James Bruce Duncan (1848-1917) who co-collected the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection, consisting of over 3000 versions of songs about Aberdeenshire, including 'Barnyards o'Delgaty' (Anon).

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Scattered broadleaved trees frequently found in shelterbelts along hill ridges and around farms. Nature reserve at Gight Woods. Some unimproved grassland. Cluster of lowland raised bogs in the south which are part of the Ythan catchment.

Settlement setting

Low

The landscape is of limited importance to the setting of settlements, although the area is well settled, with a number of villages dotted throughout e.g. Strichen, New Deer, New Pitsligo and Cuminestown.

Views

Medium

Open, with long views to neighbouring character areas including Bennachie in the Grampian Outliers. Few landmarks with the exception of Culsh Monument, from where there are expansive views eastwards across the LCT. Views to the White Horse on Mormond Hill in the neighbouring LCT are available.

Connectivity

Low

Some woodland cover.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

More wooded in the north.

Landscape relationships

Merges into adjacent areas.

Other designations

CA, HB, GDL, SSSI, GCR.

Policy context

9 Wooded Estates Around Old Deer

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

Well wooded, farmed landscape, stretching from Mintlaw in the east to Maud in the west along the South Ugie Water.

Rarity / Uniqueness High

Distinctive character created through the concentration of two remaining estates (Aden, Pitfour) spread along gently rolling hills either side of the South Ugie Water. It is unusual within Aberdeenshire for woodland to dominate the landscape.

Intactness and condition Medium

Well mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland along ridgelines, valley bottoms and hill slopes adds to the enclosed sheltered character and undulating landform. Beech and hawthorn hedgerows common and highly distinctive. Less intact in the west.

Wildness Low

Intensively farmed and wooded.

Scenic qualities Medium

Gently rolling, wooded hills with large estates.

Enjoyment High

Crossed by NCN 1 and the Formartine and Buchan Way which follows the route of the South Ugie Water. Opportunities for camping and resting. Visitor attractions include Aden Country Park and the Observatory at Drinnie's Wood.

Built heritage assets High

Old estates of Aden and Pitfour are a key feature in the vicinity of Old Deer. Old Deer is a Conservation Area with traditional stone buildings. Abbey and walled garden at Old Deer.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Woodland is a key feature.

Settlement setting Medium

Well settled, with a concentration of villages along the valley of the South Ugie Water including Mintlaw, Old Deer and Maud.

Views Medium

Views from the A950 and the winding B roads which pass through the area change continually.

Connectivity High

Strong network of woodland, South Ugie Water, Formartine and Buchan Way.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Less wooded in the south and west.

Landscape relationships

The South Ugie Valley is relatively self contained, with the outer edges of the LCT blending into neighbouring farmland.

Other designations

CA, CP.

Policy context

10 Eastern Coastal Agricultural Plain

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Low coastal plain composed of a broad sweep of gently undulating land. Exposed and windswept with constant views of the sea.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Low

Typical rolling farmland which is found around coastal Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition

Medium

Large open fields with post and wire fencing, with some areas of rough grazing and conifer plantation. Some areas of intact woodland and hedgerows.

Wildness

Low

Farmed and settled landscape with a network of roads including the A90 and A952 trunk roads. Includes the outer edge of Peterhead. Some wilder areas around mosses eg at Cruden, St Fergus and Rora.

Scenic qualities

Medium

Some locally scenic pockets, but otherwise a typical agricultural landscape with few landmarks except Mormond Hill in the north west.

Enjoyment

Low

Access to coastal locations eg the Loch of Strathbeg. The Formartine and Buchan Way passes through the area, between Mintlaw and Peterhead, and north from Mormond House to Fraserburgh.

Built heritage assets

Medium

Some features, including the 19th Century designed landscape at Crimonmogate.

Cultural qualities

Medium

White Horse and Stag on Mormond Hill. Folk song 'Mormond Braes' (Anon).

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Mainly intensive farmland, with occasional mosses, often associated with plantation. Some wetland on the fringes of the Loch of Strathbeg (SWT Reserve).

Settlement setting

Medium

Settlement includes small 19th century villages eg Hatton, Longside and New Leeds. Villages tend to be set into valleys. The LCT also forms the backdrop to Peterhead.

Views

High

Wide and open, with constant views of the sea. Few visual landmarks except the masts on Mormond Hill and the St Fergus Gas Terminal (mostly in the neighbouring coastal LCT). The landscape is visible from the A90 which passes through the area.

Connectivity

Medium

Valleys provide connectivity through the coastal plain. Crossed by the Formartine and Buchan Way long distance walking route.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

A large area, unified by its land use / landcover. Flatter in the north and hillier in the west.

Landscape relationships

Merges into the coastal landscape to the east.

Other designations

CA, GDL, Ramsar, SSSI, GCR, LNR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Coastal Zone, Energetica Development Corridor, Regeneration Priority Area and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

11 Dunes and Beaches from Fraserburgh to Peterhead

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **High**

A distinctive coastal strip with a strong sense of place, running south-east from Fraserburgh, with huge sweeps of deserted sand backed by rolling dunes.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

A more gentle transition from dunes to sea than the cliff sections of the coast. Some unusual features including the Loch of Strathbeg and dune systems.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Vegetation is limited to coastal grassland and marram, with occasional pockets of scrubby woodland, grading into farmland to the west. Post and wire field boundaries predominate. Settlement and industry have had a major impact, most notably the towns of Fraserburgh and Peterhead, and the St Fergus Gas Terminal.

Wildness **Medium**

Large scale industry contrasts with smaller villages. St Fergus Gas Terminal, Peterhead Power Station and Ron Lighthouse are dramatic features. Radio masts are also prominent. Some areas of greater wildness along the coast eg Loch of Strathbeg.

Scenic qualities **High**

Huge sweeps of sand backed by rolling dunes with strong elemental qualities. Less dramatic than other sections of coast, but more expansive.

Enjoyment **High**

Short sections of the Formartine and Buchan Way pass through Fraserburgh and Peterhead. Visitor attractions include a nature reserve at the Loch of Strathbeg, coastal paths and links golf courses.

Built heritage assets **High**

Traditional fishing villages, coastal castles and towers, ruined church at Rattray.

Cultural qualities **Medium**

Large fishing port.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Of high nature conservation and geological interest. Features include beaches and dune systems, and the Loch of Strathbeg which is the largest dune lake in Britain and important for bird life (SWT Reserve).

Settlement setting **High**

Important to the setting of the large fishing ports of Fraserburgh and Peterhead and smaller coastal villages.

Views **High**

Uninterrupted views out to sea. The area is visible from the A90 which mainly passes through the neighbouring coastal farmland LCT. Landmarks include the St Fergus Gas Terminal.

Connectivity **High**

Coastal strip, connecting land and sea. Includes one of the longest stretches of beach in Europe.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Occasional rocky sections, but otherwise sandy dunes and beaches. The settled / developed areas contrast with the wilder beaches.

Landscape relationships

Fades into coastal farmland to the west.

Other designations

CA, Ramsar, SSSI, GCR, LNR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Coastal Zone, Energetica Development Corridor, Regeneration Priority Area and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

12 Formartine Links and Dunes

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness High

Flat hinterland with occasional low raised beaches, and the vast Forvie Dunes at the mouth of the River Ythan.

Rarity / Uniqueness High

Distinctive sandy coast which is similar to the coastline south of Aberdeen, but nationally rare.

Intactness and condition Medium

Bare dunes are tufted with marram grass, with scrubby gorse and grasses behind the sands. Rough grazing encroaches into the sandy coastal fringe. Occasional solitary trees or groups of trees around buildings.

Wildness Medium

Windswept and open, dominated by rough grazing, scrubby sand flats and dunes. The Forvie National Nature Reserve has a wilder appearance.

Scenic qualities High

Vast dunes and expansive views to open sea. Wide estuary at the mouth of the River Ythan, at Newburgh.

Enjoyment High

Visitor attractions include Balmedie Country Park, coastal paths, beaches / dunes, links golf courses and Forvie NNR, with car parks providing access.

Built heritage assets Medium

Parts of wooded estates such as Foveran House and Menie House are present, but not a significant landscape feature.

Cultural qualities Medium

T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia) lived in Collieston. Rich nautical history, including smuggling, fishing (Collieston Spelding) and houses named by Clipper captains after destinations.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets High

Features include Forvie NNR, the Ythan Estuary and small bits of estate broadleaf woodland. The area is important for bird life.

Settlement setting Medium

Newburgh has grown around the Ythan estuary, leeward of the dune system and is contained by the valley sides to the south. The sandy cove and steep coastal cliffs around Collieston are key to its sense of place.

Views High

Long expansive views along beaches and across the sea, heavily influenced by the elements. The Ythan Estuary is visible from the A975, particularly where it passes through Newburgh.

Connectivity High

Interface between land and sea.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

The Forvie Dunes are of different character to farmland areas inland.

Landscape relationships

Strong relationship with the sea.

Other designations

CP, Ramsar, NNR, SSSI, GCR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Aberdeen City Greenbelt, Coastal Zone, Energetica Development Corridor and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route passes through this area.

13 Formartine Lowlands

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

An open, expansive, gently rolling farmed landscape that forms a backdrop to coastal farmland.

Rarity / Uniqueness Low

Similar to agricultural heartlands LCT, although views of the sea are an aspect of its character and farmland is more mixed.

Intactness and condition Medium

Large, open geometric fields of mixed farming, bordered by post and wire fencing and derelict dry stone dykes. Condition varies, with some exposed/marginal areas.

Wildness Low

A farmed landscape crossed by roads and transmission lines, the latter are often very visible.

Scenic qualities Medium

A colourful, gently rolling lowland plateau with small hills.

Enjoyment Medium

The Formartine and Buchan Way and NCN 1 pass through the area. Visitor attractions include Pitmeddon Gardens.

Built heritage assets Medium

Numerous archaeological remains including carved stone ball and pictish monuments, although their visual influence is limited. Estate landscapes.

Cultural qualities Medium

Newmachar is the birthplace of schoolmaster Gavin Greig (1856–1914) who co-collected the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection, consisting of over 3000 versions of songs about Aberdeenshire. Oldmeldrum Highland Games.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Some woodland associated with estate policies. Prominent lines of trees eg Pitmeddon and Auchmacoy estates. Part of Forvie NNR. Meikle Loch SWT Reserve. Ythan catchment.

Settlement setting Medium

Settlement scattered throughout, most farms unsheltered by trees. Compact settlements include Pitmeddon, Newmachar and Oldmeldrum. Ellon is the largest settlement, located in the valley of the River Ythan.

Views Medium

Land rises to west, and long views across much of the area are available, although landmarks are few.

Connectivity Medium

Woodland structure.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Slightly hillier in the west.

Landscape relationships

Other designations

CA, HB, GDL, Ramsar, NNR, SSSI, GCR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Aberdeen City Greenbelt, Energetica Development Corridor and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route passes through this area.

14 Ythan Strath Farmland

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Typical agricultural landscape with a strong woodland structure, bisected by the River Ythan.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Low

Located along the Ythan Valley.

Intactness and condition

Medium

Small scale, traditional field pattern and dry stone dykes with patches of birch scrub. Haddo Country Park is well kept.

Wildness

Low

Farmed landscape with estate woodland.

Scenic qualities

Medium

Undulating lowland centred around the shallow strath, where rock exposures are a feature. Haddo House is a well maintained estate with broadleaf woodland.

Enjoyment

High

NCN 1 passes through the area between Tarves and Quilquox. Haddo House Country Park is an important visitor attraction. Riverside walks are available along the Ythan from Methlick.

Built heritage assets

High

Haddo House GDL is an 18th Century wooded estate landscape. The Prop of Ythsie is a distinctive local landmark on the Hill of Ythsie to the east of Tarves.

Cultural qualities

Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Diverse land cover includes small pastoral fields, scrubby areas of gorse and broom, wet hollows with moss and unimproved pasture. The River Ythan is an important feature.

Settlement setting

Medium

Only settlements are small village of Methlick and hamlet of Ythanbank, of which the valley forms the setting.

Views

Medium

Views towards neighbouring landscapes are a feature from the periphery of the area. The Prop of Ythsie east of Tarves is visible from the surrounding area.

Connectivity

Medium

Woodland network, River Ythan and its tributaries.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

More wooded around Haddo Estate. More upland characteristics in the north of the area.

Landscape relationships

Merges into adjacent farmland.

Other designations

CP, GDL.

Policy context

15 Northern Rolling Lowlands

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

Four distinct areas, comprising farmland which extends into the Deveron Valley to the north and Glens of Foudland to the south. Large arable and pastoral fields, with some woodland.

Rarity / Uniqueness Low

Common across Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition Medium

Well wooded, with thick woodland shelterbelts and coniferous plantations following the landform. Occasional scruffy and gappy skyline shelterbelts. Simple pattern of large rectilinear fields contained by post and wire fencing with occasional hedging.

Wildness Low

Farmed landscape with man made influences including wind farms.

Scenic qualities Medium

Large scale, simple landscape with large rounded rolling hills.

Enjoyment Medium

Part of the Braes of Gight nature reserve.

Built heritage assets Low

Of limited visual influence.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Some areas of Ancient Woodland.

Settlement setting Low

No settlement of note. Farmsteads tend to be clustered in sheltered valleys and on lower slopes.

Views High

Open and distant views. Visible from the A96 which passes through parts of the area.

Connectivity High

Some parts are well wooded. River Don crosses.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Four distinct areas. More elevated around the A96 / Glens of Foudland.

Landscape relationships

The Grampian Outliers provide a backdrop to parts of the area.

Other designations

SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Huntly to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

16 Upland Ridges South of the Deveron

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

Two areas located in west Formartine, either side of the river valleys of the Deveron, the Ythan and their tributaries. Characterised by rounded slopes of broad hill ridges, of similar height, divided by occasional streams.

Rarity / Uniqueness Low

Similar to the Northern Rolling Lowlands LCT, forming an extensive area of similar character.

Intactness and condition Medium

Cultivation has been carried out up to the waters edge. Tree cover is sparse, although scattered deciduous trees occasionally fringe the skyline. Predominantly post and wire boundaries, with occasional stone dykes and hedges.

Wildness Low

Farmed landscape with a network of minor roads and scattered farmsteads.

Scenic qualities Medium

Broad hill ridges with rounded slopes and narrow streams.

Enjoyment Low

No features or facilities of note.

Built heritage assets Low

Roman camps at Ythanwells, but few visible remains.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Sparse tree cover. Contains part of the River Ythan and its tributaries.

Settlement setting Low

No settlements of note. Scattered and infrequent farmsteads nestle against hill slopes or dips in the valleys.

Views High

An open landscape with very long views eg from the B9001.

Connectivity Medium

The Ythan and its tributaries.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

In two distinct areas, either side of the Ythan.

Landscape relationships

With the Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys LCT.

Other designations

SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

17 Insch Basin**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

Extensive area of rolling farmland, hilly in the middle and largely flat to the east and west, dominated by large rectilinear fields. A varied landscape of arable and pastoral farming and small conifer plantations.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Low**

Common agricultural landscape across Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Strong farmland character. Tumbledown dykes replaced or reinforced by post and wire fencing.

Wildness **Low**

An agricultural, well settled landscape.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Gently rolling farmland with a chain of prominent conical hills through the middle. Some scenic features.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Visitor attractions include gardens, a golf course and local walks.

Built heritage assets **High**

Rich in archaeological remains, mostly recumbent stone circles eg Loanhead of Daviot, and Iron Age forts. Wooded estate landscapes include Leith Hall, Williamston House and Newton House. Parts of Harlaw and Barra Historic Battlefields fall within the area. Dunnideer Fort is a prominent local landmark west of Insch.

Cultural qualities **Medium**

Ballad 'Battle of Harlaw' (Jeannie Robertson). Oldmeldrum Highland Games.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **Medium**

Diverse landscape enhanced by small clumps of broadleaved and coniferous woodland on hill tops, shelter belts, wooded burns, beech avenues and unimproved grassland on steeper hills.

Settlement setting **Medium**

Houses, farms and villages scattered densely across the landscape. Insch is the main town, and the surrounding hills are important to its setting.

Views **Medium**

Views to Bennachie are an important feature. Views to and from the prominent Dunnydeer Fort are also important. Views from Loanhead Stone Circle, north of Daviot, to Garioch and Formartine.

Connectivity **Medium**

Tributaries of the Bogie.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Flatter in the east, more hilly in the west (with local variations).

Landscape relationships

Backed by the Grampian Outliers, including Bennachie.

Other designations

CA, HB, GDL, SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Huntly to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

18 Deveron and Bogie Straths

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **High**

Follows the course of the Deveron and Bogie rivers, joining in Huntly. Fields drop gently towards the rivers or extend across a wide flood plain. Strath Bogie and Huntly have a strong sense of place.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Upland river valley, including areas of upland fringe farmland are relatively uncommon in Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Mosaic of diverse land uses includes rough grazing, hay, commercial forestry and deciduous woodland. Loose network of hedges, shelterbelts and small woodland clumps. Woodland comprises conifer covered knolls and broadleaf woodland lining rivers. Post and wire fences are a common field boundary.

Wildness **Low**

A settled and farmed landscape.

Scenic qualities **High**

The valley is narrow in the west, with attractive wooded slopes and local landmark hills. North and south of Huntly the valley widens.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Local walks. Huntly has a Nordic and Outdoor Centre.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

Traditional farm buildings, influence of estates, Huntly Castle.

Cultural qualities **Medium**

'Alec Forbes of Howglen' (published 1865) was likely set in the author George MacDonald's childhood home in Huntly.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **Medium**

Agricultural landscape, with riparian woodland and river habitats.

Settlement setting **Medium**

Well settled in the valley, associated with road corridors. Huntly is the main settlement and is contained by the surrounding hills.

Views **Medium**

Very visible from key routes including the A920. Overlooked by the Grampian Outliers to the south west.

Connectivity **High**

Transport corridors, Deveron catchment, woodland network.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

The Deveron has more thickly coniferous wooded slopes north and west of Huntly. The landscape is of a more intimate scale around Glass in the west. North east of Huntly the landscape has a more upland fringe feel.

Landscape relationships

With the adjacent hills.

Other designations

CA, GDL, SSSI.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Huntly to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

19 Daugh of Cairnborrow

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **Medium**

Area of upland fringe farmland (with some forestry), between Keith and Huntly on the border with Moray.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Arable farmland is common across Aberdeenshire, although scrubby pasture is less common.

Intactness and condition **Low**

An upland fringe landscape of grassland and occasional small fields, unenclosed or enclosed by post and wire fencing or scrubby gorse. Wooded hills in the east eg the Bin. Occasional wooded farms have a more intact feel.

Wildness **Medium**

Farmed but relatively unsettled landscape.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Rocky, upland area of shallow rolling hills and valleys. The Bin and the Balloch form small wooded hills which are locally distinctive and enhance the upland character of the landscape, creating a dark background to lower lying farmland.

Enjoyment **Low**

Walking opportunities in forestry commission land. Peregrine centre at the foot of the Bin.

Built heritage assets **Low**

Traditional farm buildings.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **Medium**

Some small broadleaf woodland on hill tops and in valleys, some unimproved grassland.

Settlement setting **Low**

Settlement not a feature, only the hamlet of Cairnie. The wooded Bin forms a backdrop to Huntly in the neighbouring Deveron and Bogie Straths LCT.

Views **Medium**

Views channelled along valleys, some long, open views from the low hills. The area is visible from the A96.

Connectivity **Medium**

Woodland network.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

A varied landscape with distinct valleys, more arable farming and forestry in the east, with more pasture in the west.

Landscape relationships

With the Deveron and Bogie straths to the south and east.

Other designations

SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

20 Grampian Outliers

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **High**

Transition between the high mountains of the Cairngorms and the low farmland of the north east coast. Series of moorland spurs that extend into the farmed landscape, forming a dark backdrop. Integral to Aberdeenshire's landscape identity eg Bennachie, Tap o'Noth.

Rarity / Uniqueness **High**

A character type only found in the west of Aberdeenshire, on the edge of the Cairngorms National Park. Includes summits (Bennachie, Tap o'Noth etc) which are iconic within Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition **High**

Extensive tracts of conifer plantation, mixed to varying degrees with patches of heather moorland.

Wildness **Medium**

Some of the more remote and wild feeling parts of the county, although commercial forestry decreases the sense of wildness.

Scenic qualities **High**

Smooth moorland spurs which form dark ridges across the skyline. Occasional dramatic outcrops eg at Bennachie and Tap o'Noth. The purple heather contrasts with the green of the farmed lowlands.

Enjoyment **High**

Hill walking to popular summits.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

Iron Age forts on hill tops eg around Bennachie contribute to landscape character.

Cultural qualities **High**

Folk song 'Back o'Bennachie' (John Imlach). Iron age forts.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Uniform landcover of heather and conifer plantation. The Correen Hills near Lumsden are an important bird area.

Settlement setting **Medium**

Settlements are restricted to edges of the areas, occasional isolated houses and derelict buildings. The hills forms the backdrop to settlement in farmed straths, including Huntly, Alford and Tarland.

Views **High**

A very visible landscape, forming a dark backdrop when viewed from the lower lying farmland. Promontories present spectacular views over surrounding lowland. Communication masts are a dominant feature within skyline views.

Connectivity **Low**

Discrete units which are not directly connected. River Don crosses south of Bennachie.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Fragmented areas, but forming a visually continuous backdrop of heather and forested highland ridges and peaks. Different areas have different qualities eg some are more dramatic than others.

Landscape relationships

With the farmed landscape below and the Cairngorms National Park to the west.

Other designations

Abuts the Cairngorms National Park in the west.

GDL, SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Huntly to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

21 Lumsden Valley

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

Division between the watersheds of the River Bogie to the north and River Don to the south. Characterised by a convoluted landform of small hummocks and depressions, giving rise to a small scale landscape of paddocks, rough pasture and arable fields. The valley is self contained, with a strong sense of place.

Rarity / Uniqueness Medium

An upland valley landscape, but with no major river course.

Intactness and condition Medium

Fields enclosed by gappy dykes, fences and sheltered farms and cottages. Woodland tends to be shelterbelts and small plantations. Small fields defined by drystone dykes.

Wildness Medium

Farmed landscape with road corridors and settlement in the valley floor. A strong association with upland areas with some uncultivated ground.

Scenic qualities High

Compact landform, winding roads and small fields produce a small scale landscape pattern which contrast with the backdrop of the Grampian Outliers LCT. Numerous glacial features eg moraines and eskers and some attractive woodland features.

Enjoyment Low

Limited, although the area provides access to adjacent hills eg the Buck, the Correen Hills.

Built heritage assets Low

Some estate features eg gates, walls.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Upland fringe habitats including small wooded areas, wetland, uncultivated ground and rocky outcrops.

Settlement setting Medium

Small evenly spaced grey stone houses and farms. The valley forms the setting to Lumsden, the main settlement.

Views Medium

Views of moorland plateau pronounced, notably Tap o'Noth to the north. Visible from the A941 and the A97.

Connectivity High

Watershed between the Bogie and the Don.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Two valleys at the watershed.

Landscape relationships

The Grampian Outliers LCT forms a backdrop on both sides of the valley.

Other designations

SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

22 Donside**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

Extends from the Cairngorms National Park boundary east of Strathdon to the edge of Howe of Alford. Follows steep sided gorges which are lined with dense broadleaved woods associated with estates.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Upland valleys are relatively uncommon in Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition **High**

Fields and broadleaved woodland appear well maintained and in good condition.

Wildness **Low**

Farmed landscape, with main roads and settlement in the valley floor.

Scenic qualities **High**

Rolling hills and valleys, varying between narrow steep sided gorges and wider straths. Richly wooded with beech and other broadleaves providing seasonal colour. Traditional farmsteads add to the harmonious pattern of the landscape.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Scenic drives along the Highland Tourist Route, providing a route west to the Cairngorms National Park. Kildrummy castle and gardens are well signposted.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

The ruins of Kildrummy Castle and adjacent estate.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Patches of conifers on middle slopes, gradual transition to more densely wooded ridges above. Wooded valley, not intensively farmed.

Settlement setting **Low**

Relatively small villages.

Views **Medium**

Contained views to forested slopes or moorland hills. Views of the area from the A97 / Highland Tourist Route.

Connectivity **High**

River corridor with a network of woodland, connecting with the Cairngorms National Park to the west.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

The north eastern spur is a narrower, more enclosed valley. Broader in the south.

Landscape relationships

Contained by the Grampian Outliers.

Other designations

Abuts the Cairngorms National Park.

GDL, SAC.

Policy context

23 Cromar Farmlands**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness****Medium**

Principally an agricultural landscape, lying at the foot of the long slopes of Morven. Low lying hills and broad undulating valleys on the fringes of the Cairngorms.

Rarity / Uniqueness**Medium**

Similar to, and continuous with the Howe of Cromar. Backed by Morven and other peaks within the Cairngorms.

Intactness and condition**Medium**

Predominantly pastoral fields. Fields on the valley floor have a strong geometric pattern, accentuated by shelterbelts and coniferous plantations. Arable fields divided by fences, tumbledown stone walls and occasional hedges and shelterbelts.

Wildness**Medium**

Settled farmland, increasingly remote to the west where it abuts the Cairngorms. Abandoned steadings prominent at the foot of Morven.

Scenic qualities**Medium**

Low lying hills and broad undulating valleys, occasionally interrupted by small knolls of sandy, glacial deposits which form focal points, colonised by Scots pine and birch. A colourful landscape, where bright green of improved pasture contrasts with muted heather and grass moorland on the hillsides and dark coniferous shelterbelts and woodlands. Has an attractive backdrop of hills in the neighbouring Cairngorms National Park.

Enjoyment**Medium**

Gateway to the Cairngorms National Park. A97 Highland Tourist Route.

Built heritage assets**Low**

Tillypronie GDL.

Cultural qualities**Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets**Medium**

River Dee catchment. Birch woodland softens the margins of some plantations and extends up the lower slopes of Morven.

Settlement setting**Low**

No settlements of note.

Views**High**

Visibility to/from Morven and the Cairngorms. Views from the A97.

Connectivity**Medium**

Upper reaches of the Dee catchment. Network of forests.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Farmlands and plantations of the lowland areas contrast with the open hill slopes. Farming is more extensive in the upper valleys. Some areas are less undulating.

Landscape relationships

Character area continues into the CNP.

Other designations

Abuts the CNP.

GDL, SAC.

Policy context

24 Howe of Cromar

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

Characterised by large rectilinear fields, occasional blocks of neat plantation woodland and evenly scattered farmsteads.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Medium

Similar to, and continuous with, the adjacent Cromar Farmlands.

Intactness and condition

Medium

Large scale patchwork of rectilinear fields emboldened by crop patterns, thick shelterbelts and conifer plantations.

Wildness

Low

Farmed and settled, with a network of roads.

Scenic qualities

Medium

Wide sweeping basin with rising sides contrasting with the flat to gently rolling relief at heart of the area. Contrasts with the imposing backdrop of dark moorland ridges.

Enjoyment

Medium

Some visitor accommodation in Tarland.

Built heritage assets

Medium

Numerous archaeological remains, particularly carved stone balls.

Cultural qualities

Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Agricultural landscape with blocks of plantation wood. Some policy woodlands around Tarland. River Dee catchment.

Settlement setting

Low

Tarland is the main settlement at the heart of the area.

Views

High

Best viewed from the Queens View where the land falls away into a wide sweeping basin.

Connectivity

Medium

River Dee catchment, woodland network.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Consistent within itself.

Landscape relationships

Strongly influenced by the encircling skyline of dark moorland ridges which frame views within it and form an imposing backdrop. Continuous with the Cromar Farmlands to the west.

Other designations

None.

Policy context

25 Muir of Dinnet**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

Moorland and forestry, including part of the River Dee, on the fringes of the Cairngorms National Park.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Diverse landscape which has more in common with the Cairngorms than Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Contains part of the River Dee corridor in the south, with moorland, heath and forestry in the north.

Wildness **Medium**

Increasing wildness on upper hill slopes, away from the Dee corridor and the A93.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Varied, from the lower lying Dee corridor in the south to irregular hills in the north.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Deeside Way, parallel to the A93. Gliding airfield on the Dee floodplain.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

Some cairns and ancient field systems.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Heather and bracken on the rolling hills, meandering River Dee.

Settlement setting **Low**

Sparsely populated.

Views **High**

Views from the A93 across the Dee to the south and north into the forested hills.

Connectivity **High**

Gateway to the Cairngorms National Park.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Varies between the Muir of Dinnet / Dee corridor in the south and more upland hill slopes in the north.

Landscape relationships

The Muir of Dinnet extends into the Cairngorms to the west.

Other designations

GCR.

Policy context

26 Howe of Alford

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

Forms a wide concave bowl of farmland, flat at its centre and bisected by the River Don, rising gently at the periphery into moorland and upland farmland. Strong sense of place.

Rarity / Uniqueness Medium

Shares some characteristics with the Howe of the Mearns, but otherwise relatively uncommon.

Intactness and condition Medium

Intensive farming. Open patchwork of fields interrupted by sparse lines of trees and gappy hedgerows.

Wildness Low

Settled agricultural landscape.

Scenic qualities Medium

River Don, flat bowl rising to moorland and upland farmland. A colourful landscape with much visual interest.

Enjoyment Medium

Tourist facilities in Alford. Haughton House Country Park. The Don is a route into the Cairngorms to the west.

Built heritage assets High

Shelterbelts, walls and beech avenues signify presence of estates which flank the River Don. Numerous archaeological remains, particularly Neolithic, notably recumbent stone circles and carved stone balls. Alford Historic Battlefield (west of Alford). Castle Forbes GDL.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Predominantly broadleaved woodland. Wetland areas along the River Don.

Settlement setting Medium

Regularly scattered settlements, including Alford at its centre. Concentrated along the River Don. The surrounding Grampian Outliers are more important to the setting of Alford than the howe itself.

Views Medium

Landmarks such as castles are an important focus for views and are visible from the A944. Open views to the Grampian Outliers (eg Bennachie) are available.

Connectivity Medium

River Don corridor.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Consistent.

Landscape relationships

Framed by dark moorland ridges of the Grampian Outliers.

Other designations

HB, CP, GDL.

Policy context

27 The Cromar Uplands

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

An undulating landscape of farmed moorland edge, located amongst the Grampian Outliers. A landscape of mixed character, but with a strong sense of place within Aberdeenshire.

Rarity / Uniqueness Low

Stronger variations in character than a typical farmed moorland edge landscape.

Intactness and condition Medium

Large fields of mixed arable and pasture contained by broken stone dykes reinforced with post and wire fencing, and some gorse. Small pockets of more intact landscape which are well maintained.

Wildness Low

Farmed, settled landscape.

Scenic qualities Medium

Small scale landscape of variable relief, including compact landform of small valleys and mounds, as well as wide open basins. Encroached by ridges of moorland plateaux which form an imposing backdrop. More intact, wooded areas provide visual diversity.

Enjoyment Medium

Craigievar Castle is a popular local attraction.

Built heritage assets High

Granite villages. Several castles and ruins, including Craigievar Castle and the Peel of Lumphanan.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets Medium

Broadleaf woodland, pasture, River Dee catchment.

Settlement setting Low

Few small villages along the A980. Learney Hill forms the backdrop to Torphins. The Grampian Outliers are more important to the setting of settlement than the Cromar Uplands.

Views Medium

Open areas present wide visibility and long views to adjacent hills.

Connectivity Medium

Wooded habitat network, River Dee catchment.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Highly variable in character and overall quality.

Landscape relationships

Grampian Outliers surround and have a strong influence by forming an imposing backdrop.

Other designations

Policy context

CA, GDL, SSSI.

28 Central Wooded Estates

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

Substantial farmed and well wooded area to the east of Bennachie between the Dee and Don Valleys, extending to the western edge of Aberdeen.

Rarity / Uniqueness Low

Typical Aberdeenshire farmland, although more wooded than other areas.

Intactness and condition Medium

Diverse landscape, with the common feature of woodland, ranging from wooded policies to small clumps. Mixed farmland with varied field pattern, from large fields associated with intensive farming to traditional fields bounded by stone dykes. Quarrying occurs.

Wildness Low

Farmed and settled, on the fringes of Aberdeen. Settlement is more notable towards the north. Eastern area notably void of settlement, particularly given the distance from Aberdeen.

Scenic qualities Medium

Topography varies from broad sweeping valleys and hills to pockets of confined, small scale / hillier relief. A colourful landscape, with farmland contrasting with wooded hills and the backdrop of the Grampian outliers in the west.

Enjoyment Medium

Deeside Way runs across the southern part of the area. Visitor attractions include Castle Fraser, Loch of Skene and Inverurie which is a tourist hub.

Built heritage assets High

Features associated with numerous large estates include walls, buildings, gates and traditional farm buildings. Estates include Keith Hall, Monymusk, Cluny Castle, Castle Fraser, Dunecht House, Drum Castle, Park House.

Cultural qualities Medium

Parts of 'The Queen' (2006) filmed at Castle Fraser.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets High

Deeside corridor - river valley, mixed woodland and deciduous trees. Strong woodland structure, associated with estate policies. Clumps of trees, often atop mounds and hillocks. Areas of lowland moss with birch and pine. Loch of Skene (bird area). River Dee in the south and Don in the north.

Settlement setting Medium

Well settled including sizeable settlements such as Inverurie. More prolific in the north.

Views Medium

Occasional long and open vistas into neighbouring character areas eg south to the Mounth, west to Bennachie. Views to/from stately homes / castles.

Connectivity High

River Dee and Don and other watercourses. Woodland network.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

More settled towards the north. A varied landscape, with estates having a local influence.

Landscape relationships

With the Grampian Outliers to the west.

Other designations

CA, HB, GDL, Ramsar, SSSI, GCR, LNR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Aberdeen City Greenbelt, Energetica Development Corridor and Huntly to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route passes through this area.

29 Deeside

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **High**

River Dee bisects the lower half of the character area and is associated with a rich vein of estates, woodlands and attractive small towns. Lower Deeside is pastoral, but the landscape has a more highland character in Mid Deeside, with steep wooded sides rising to moorland. The landscape has a strong sense of place.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Well wooded valley landscape.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Pockets of open, scrubby upland fringe (arable and pasture) along the Water of Feugh contrast with woodland along the Dee.

Wildness **Low**

Well settled and wooded landscape.

Scenic qualities **High**

Generally a narrow valley expanding into more open land around Strachan. Sparkling, shingly river, especially where the course runs through a limestone outcrop around Aboyne. Striking autumn colours.

Enjoyment **High**

Numerous visitor facilities. Deeside Way runs east-west through the area.

Built heritage assets **High**

Numerous estates and castles with fine buildings, grand gatehouses, thick stone boundary walls and long avenues lined with beech eg Inchmarlo, Crathes Castle.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Richly wooded landscape with a great diversity of trees and rich under storey. Thick broadleaf woods around and to the west of Banchory. River Dee.

Settlement setting **High**

Well settled area. Banchory is the largest town.

Views **High**

More open views in the Feuch valley where there are long views to upland areas. Views from the A93 and visible from adjacent hills.

Connectivity **High**

River Dee catchment, corridor for wildlife and people.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Lower Deeside is mainly pasture and woodland, grading into a more highland landscape character in Mid Deeside, with steep wooded sides rising to moorland. More open agricultural basin between the River Dee and Water of Feugh.

Landscape relationships

Relationship to the Mounth hills to the south.

Other designations

CA, GDL, SSSI.

Policy context

30 Upper Deeside Estates**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

A small area on the fringes of the Cairngorms National Park, characterised by the long, curving strath of the Dee in the north and extensive woodland on hills in the south.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Continuous with adjacent Deeside character types to the east and west, though extensively wooded.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Extensive woodland gives unity and distinctiveness. Some small pasture and occasional arable fields within the woodland, often enclosed by stone dykes.

Wildness **Medium**

Increasingly wild towards the Cairngorms National Park boundary, although contains most of the small town of Aboyne.

Scenic qualities **High**

Broad River Dee is a prominent feature around Aboyne in the north. Attractive wooded hills in the south.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Deeside Way follows the A93.

Built heritage assets **High**

Aboyne Conservation Area. Stone walls, gate houses and the many bridges over the River Dee are also important features in the landscape.

Cultural qualities **Medium**

Aboyne Highland Games.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Broad River Dee is a prominent feature within the strath, and has a convoluted meandering path. Hill slopes forming the strath occasionally cut by tributary valleys which are deep and gorge like in places. Extensive ancient woodland covers the majority of hills and often the flatter floor of the strath. Policy woodlands of Scots pine, larch and spruce are characteristic.

Settlement setting **High**

Relatively sparsely populated. Aboyne is the largest settlement in the Dee Valley.

Views **High**

Views from the A93 / Deeside Way along the Dee Valley.

Connectivity **High**

Gateway to the Cairngorms National Park to the west.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Less wooded in the north, along the Dee.

Landscape relationships

Dee valley continues east and west.

Other designations

Borders the Cairngorms National Park.

CA, GDL.

Policy context

31 The North-eastern Hill Ranges

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness Medium

A small part of a much wider area of rolling moorland hills and valleys which extends south west into the Cairngorms National Park and south east into the Mounth.

Rarity / Uniqueness Medium

Similar characteristics to those found in the neighbouring Mounth character area, although this area on the NP boundary has even less habitation.

Intactness and condition High

Upper slopes predominantly heather clad, with the heather forming an even, low-growing blanket. Large areas of peat hag on upper, shallow slopes.

Wildness High

Strong sense of remoteness, little habitation. The upper end of the Water of Feugh valley feels very remote.

Scenic qualities High

Low rounded summits, gentle slopes and long, smooth interlocking spurs of purple heather. Small burns inside the hillsides, flowing into rivers within valley floors. Birch woodland is a feature.

Enjoyment Medium

Numerous old routeways now used as footpaths for walkers and marked on OS maps.

Built heritage assets Low

Of limited visual influence.

Cultural qualities Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets High

Heather moorland with large areas of peat hag. The Forest of Birse along the Water of Feugh (a River Dee tributary) is important for bird life.

Settlement setting Low

Settlement sparse and confined to valley floors.

Views High

An open landscape with extensive horizons.

Connectivity Medium

Upland habitat network connecting with vast tracts of moorland in the Cairngorms. Tributary of the River Dee.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Consistent.

Landscape relationships

Continues into the Cairngorms (although separated by a watershed) and the Mounth.

Other designations

Borders the CNP.

NNR, SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

32 The Mounth**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

Characterised by a great expanse of moorland plateaux, where the foothills of the Grampians extend almost to the coast at Stonehaven. Substantial highland outcrop forming prominent undulating ridges that dominate views south of Aberdeen, and almost forms a natural boundary to Aberdeenshire.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Similar to the North eastern Hill Ranges LCT to the west, but a larger upland area.

Intactness and condition **High**

Lower slopes are forested, plateau is covered by heather moorland which extends west into the Cairngorms. Encroaching patchwork of green pasture on some fringe slopes associated with isolated villages and hamlets. Occasional derelict stone cottages. Forestry in the east.

Wildness **High**

Almost completely absent of habitation on upland ridges, crossed by only two roads including the B974.

Scenic qualities **High**

Strong rolling relief with ridges receding into the distance. Smooth, colourful heather moorland dissected by shallow carved gullies often lined with mossy clumps of birch and rowan.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Numerous old routeways now used as footpaths for walkers and marked on OS maps. Cairn O'Mount Scenic Viewpoint is a popular vantage point. Mountain biking in Forestry Commission land.

Built heritage assets **Low**

Occasional hill forts.

Cultural qualities **Medium**

Drumtochty Highland Games.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Heather moorland and grasses with heavily forested edges particularly in the north east and around Glen Dye.

Settlement setting **Medium**

Small clustered farms shelter on the lower slopes, otherwise uninhabited. Contributes to the setting of the Howe of the Mearns and Dee Valley, including the setting of Banchory.

Views **High**

A very visible landscape, with commanding views into tranquil farmed lowland of Howe of the Mearns. Views from the Cairn O'Mount Scenic Viewpoint.

Connectivity **Medium**

The landcover and topography extend west into the Cairngorms National Park.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Plateau foothills are more diverse, with a smaller scale and more intricate character. Greater wildness in the west. More forest in the central and eastern areas.

Landscape relationships

Backdrop to the Dee Valley, Howe of the Mearns and Garvock and Glenbervie.

Other designations

SAC.

Policy context

33 Kincardine Plateau

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness

Medium

An open landscape, with widespread arable farmland on the eastern edge. No distinct sense of place.

Rarity / Uniqueness

Low

A plateau like landscape with lots of forestry, and pasture in the north.

Intactness and condition

Medium

Diverse land cover varying from enclosed fields, to gorse scrubland, regenerating woodland and tumbledown dykes. Pasture and marginal farmland with rocky outcrops and scrubby marshland patches. Derelict pasture with encroaching gorse and weeds. Hills with windblown trees.

Wildness

Low

Settled agricultural landscape.

Scenic qualities

Low

Undulating landform falling towards the coast. Limited diversity, with few visual foci.

Enjoyment

Medium

NCN runs from Portlethen south to Stonehaven, via Auchlunies and Cookney. RSPB reserve at Red Moss of Netherley.

Built heritage assets

Low

Traditional farm buildings.

Cultural qualities

Low

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets

Medium

Unimproved pasture and rough grassland, not intensively farmed. The Red Moss of Netherley is an important bird area.

Settlement setting

Medium

Backdrop to Portlethen and coastal settlements.

Views

Medium

Rolling hills and sloping relief provide opportunities for long distance views, including views to the Mounth and across the Dee to Peterculter and the outer edges of Aberdeen.

Connectivity

Medium

Watershed between the Mounth and the Dee.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Reasonably consistent pastoral and arable farmland. Transition from upland to coastal edge.

Landscape relationships

With the Mounth to the south west and the coast to the east.

Other designations

SSSI, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Aberdeen City Greenbelt and Laurencekirk to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route passes through this area.

34 Kincardine Cliffs**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness High**

Approximately 30km of coastline between Aberdeen and Inverbervie, within the Highland Boundary Fault. Steep, rugged slopes and cliffs merging into farmland around Garvock and Glenbervie and the Kincardine Plateau. A strong sense of place with recognisable features.

Rarity / Uniqueness Medium

Typical coastal and farmed landscape, but with some high cliffs lending distinctiveness.

Intactness and condition Medium

Farmland on coastal edge, grass and scrub covered slopes on shallower cliffs and bare rock on steep slopes. Exposed, with a few windblown trees.

Wildness Medium

Farmland extends to the edge of the cliffs. Extensive new development at the edge of coastal towns. Major communications corridors behind the cliffs, notably the A90 and east coast railway line. Elemental qualities created by being in proximity to the sea.

Scenic qualities High

Steep weathered coastal cliffs with stacks and arches especially between Stonehaven and Aberdeen. Many coastal landmarks including lighthouses.

Enjoyment High

Coastal paths, fishing, beaches. NCN 1 north of Portlethen, south of Stonehaven. Coastal Tourist Route.

Built heritage assets High

Dunnottar castle south of Stonehaven. Several coastal villages and towns have Conservation Areas eg Catterline, Stonehaven, Muchalls.

Cultural qualities Medium

Stonehaven Fireball Festival at Hogmanay. Stonehaven Highland Games.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets High

Cliff habitats. Fowlsheugh SWT Reserve.

Settlement setting High

Densely inhabited, particularly north of Stonehaven which has an estuary setting. Old fishing villages are located in sheltered coves or nestled on cliff tops.

Views High

Sea views are fundamental to character, providing an immense sense of scale when viewed from the cliff tops and coastal routes including the A90.

Connectivity High

Interface between land and sea.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Consistent.

Landscape relationships

With the sea.

Other designations

CA, SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Aberdeen City Greenbelt, Coastal Zone and Laurencekirk to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

35 Garvock and Glenbervie**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

Dominated by an extensive area of open, rolling farmland encompassing Garvock Hill and also including the farmland around Glenbervie at the edge of the HBF.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Low**

Rolling farmland is common across Aberdeenshire, although incised valleys are locally distinctive eg Arbuthnott, Glenbervie.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Large fields of arable land and pasture and red soils, presenting an array of colours. Some conifer plantation and scrubby woodland.

Wildness **Low**

Farmed and settled landscape.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Large scale, colourful landscape with open rolling ridges and visual diversity. Settlement, turbines and masts are visible.

Enjoyment **Medium**

Parts of NCN 1 and local footpaths.

Built heritage assets **High**

Numerous archaeological remains, including recumbent stone circles and carved stone walls. Glenbervie House and Arbuthnott House GDLs. Traditional farm buildings.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **Medium**

Broadleaf woodlands are found in the incised valleys.

Settlement setting **Medium**

Host to numerous villages located along the Bervie Water. Evidence of built development pressure particularly around existing settlements on major communication routes.

Views **High**

Sweeping, rolling hills present distant views up and down the terrain and to the sea. From the east, views into the Mearns and across Strathfinella Hill and the Kincardine Plateau are dramatic, emphasising the scale of this area. Long distance views across the Howe of the Mearns and the Mounth.

Connectivity **Medium**

Main coastal route between north and south.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

More intimate wooded valleys.

Landscape relationships

Contained by the Mounth.

Other designations

CA, GDL, SSSI, GCR.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Laurencekirk to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route passes through this area.

36 Howe of the Mearns

RANKED CRITERIA

Typicality / Representativeness **High**

Almost uniformly flat, with steep moorland slopes rising up behind marking the line of the HBF.

Rarity / Uniqueness **Medium**

Distinctive character derived from large scale flat landscape of farmland and woodland.

Intactness and condition **High**

Mature beech woodlands and straight beech avenues with stone walls associated with scattered estates. Small coniferous plantations and pockets of rowan and birch coppice stand out within the expanse. Appears well maintained.

Wildness **Low**

Intensive agricultural landscape with a wealth of villages, farms and estates. Corridor for road and rail links.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Colourful landscape with visual diversity created by red soils, dark green pastures and yellow wheat fields.

Enjoyment **Low**

Some campsites, access to glens.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

Estate landscapes eg Fasque House and The Burn. Traditional villages (eg Fettercairn) and farm buildings.

Cultural qualities **High**

Lewis Grassie Gibbon produced classics such as 'Sunset Song' whilst living in the Howe of the Mearns.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **Medium**

Broadleaf estate woodlands and shelterbelts, burns and watercourses, pockets of scrubby birch and moss.

Settlement setting **Low**

Small settlements set within farmland but setting more provided by adjacent hills.

Views **High**

Expansive views framed by surrounding upland. Highly visible landscape, can be seen from elevated locations eg moorland ridge in north and Garvock Hills in the south. Overlooked from the A90.

Connectivity **Medium**

Good woodland network. Few footpath / cycleway links but does provide links into adjacent hills.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA

Landscape consistency

Less wooded in the north east - more intensive farmland. Topography and landscape pattern are consistent.

Landscape relationships

Contained by the Mounth to the north. Strong relationship with the Highland Boundary Fault, encircling wooded foothills. Hill of Garvock to the south also contains the Howe.

Other designations

CA, GDL, SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within the Laurencekirk to Aberdeen Strategic Growth Area.

37 Kincardine Links**RANKED CRITERIA****Typicality / Representativeness** **Medium**

Flat, gradually rising to form a gently sloping stretch of land that extends into Garvock and Glenbervie. Raised beaches widen to create a gentle unison between land and sea. Not typical of the Aberdeenshire coast.

Rarity / Uniqueness **High**

Coastal farmland, with a distinctive wide coastal fringe. Only raised beach in Aberdeenshire.

Intactness and condition **Medium**

Raised beaches encompass open farmland (arable and pasture with fenced enclosures), marsh and reed bed, with little woodland, as well as a narrow sandy / shingly fringe. Cliff slopes are well vegetated with grasses and scrub.

Wildness **Medium**

Farmed up to coastal edge. Does not have ruggedness seen elsewhere but the open sea influences character.

Scenic qualities **Medium**

Extensive coastal fringe. Gently sloping agricultural hinterland descends gradually to cliffs or, where cliffs are low, almost to the sea. Raised beaches from 50m to 600m wide, backed by cliffs. Broad beach at St Cyrus.

Enjoyment **High**

NCN 1, beaches, fishing villages, caravan parks, coastal tourist route.

Built heritage assets **Medium**

Traditional farm buildings, estate buildings, old bridges eg Esk bridge and viaduct. Landmark church in St Cyrus.

Cultural qualities **Low**

None identified.

Naturalness and natural heritage assets **High**

Cliff slopes are well vegetated with grasses and scrub. Raised beaches encompass open farmland, marsh and reed bed, with little woodland, as well as a narrow sandy fringe. There is a National Nature Reserve at St Cyrus.

Settlement setting **High**

Well settled with villages located on the coast, or at St Cyrus, set back from the cliff edge on elevated rolling terrain. Extensive new housing development eg Inverbervie.

Views **High**

Long views, including panoramic views from headlands, and views out to sea eg from the A92.

Connectivity **High**

Coastal strip. Interface between sea and land. Movement corridor for people.

NON - RANKED CRITERIA**Landscape consistency**

Settlement contrasts with wilder raised beach.

Landscape relationships

With the farmed inland.

Other designations

CA, NNR, SSSI, GCR, SAC.

Policy context

Identified in the Proposed Aberdeenshire LDP 2016 as being within a Coastal Zone.