



Location and Context

The *Farmed and Wooded River Valleys* Landscape Character Type comprises the well settled, wooded and diverse valleys of the Rivers Deveron Bogie and Ythan. They form a significant feature within the extensive agricultural heartlands of Aberdeenshire, flowing out to the sea at Macduff. The landscape is attractive with a high degree of integrity.

Key Characteristics

- The Ythan has an open character between Turrif and Fyvie, in a broad shallow valley with fenced pasture floodplain. The river is narrow and straightened in this area. East of Fyvie, it is narrow, deeply incised and meandering, contained by steep slopes.
- The River Deveron, aligned through a relatively broad valley strongly contained by rolling hills.
- Wooded policies and small parklands in places.
- Little marginal or wetland vegetation on the floodplains, with farmland abutting both rivers except where semi-natural woodland comes down to the river banks in more inaccessible, steep-sided areas.
- Mixed woodland with policies of designed landscapes extending onto the rolling hills.
- Well settled hill slopes overlooking the valleys with relatively large farms.
- Villages and large market towns.
- Castles, mansion houses and historic built features.
- Quiet roads and paths giving a sense of seclusion, contrasting with the busy A947 Aberdeen to Banff arterial route.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

These rivers predominantly meander through relatively shallow valleys bounded by broad rolling hills although the Ythan flows through a narrow gorge, originally cut by glacial meltwater, to the east of Fyvie, and the upper Deveron west of Turriff passes through harder schist geology and consequently is also accommodated within a deeper valley.

Landcover

These straths are largely farmed with mixed pastures and arable fields set out on the flat floodplain and gently rolling sides. Farmland is interspersed with mixed woodlands on valley sides, many of these comprising policy woodlands associated with the estates which are a key characteristic of this landscape.

The River Ythan between Turrif and Fyvie has a more open character where the valley is broad and shallow, and fenced floodplain pastures dominate. The river is narrow and straightened in this area with occasional fringing wetlands either side of the channel, river terraces and small areas of scrubby vegetation providing some limited diversity.

The Bogie strath forms a wide saddle of fields between the high moorland ridges which lie to the east and west. Both the Bogie and the upper Deveron west of Huntly are more strongly contained by adjacent hills and are less intensively farmed.

The wooded policies and areas of parkland of the Hatton and Fyvie Castle estates are distinctive features in the valley south of Turriff.

The narrow and deeply incised upper Ythan east of Fyvie is different in character with the meandering water course strongly contained by steep slopes, its intimate scale accentuated by dense woodland, some of this comprising botanically rich semi-natural woodland, along the Braes of Gight.

The River Deveron, which extends from the Moray hills to Banff, is aligned through a relatively broad valley and is strongly contained by rolling hills for much of its length. Like the Ythan, this valley accommodates extensive estate policies including those of Duff House, Forglen and Netherdale.

There is little marginal or wetland vegetation on the floodplains of both rivers, with farmland largely abutting them, although semi-natural woodland comes down to the river banks in more inaccessible, steep-sided areas such as the narrowly constricted sections of the Deveron south of Banff.

Mixed woodlands contribute to the rich diversity of these valleys with the policies of designed landscapes extending onto rolling hill tops. Within the Deveron valley, well-managed woodland and belts of beech often cover steeper river scarps and are planted on natural terraces on lower valley terraces. Woodland is more mixed on higher slopes and on hill tops comprising spruce, pine and larch. Knolly river deposits are often planted with Scots pine and beech.

Settlement

Roads run alongside the rivers and small towns such as Fyvie, Turriff and Huntly are concentrated at confluences and key bridging points. Farms are evenly dispersed along these straths, usually sited on lower slopes and terraces raised above flat floodplains. Quiet roads and footpaths, particularly those along the Deveron valley, can provide a sense of seclusion and allow an appreciation of the rich scenic diversity of these valleys. In contrast, between Fyvie and Turriff the busy A947 Aberdeen to Banff arterial route is tightly aligned to

the Burn of Turriff, a tributary of the Deveron. Farmland on valley sides within the Deveron valley comprises mainly arable fields divided by beech and thorn hedges and fences. Fenced pastures are also present on the flat haughlands either side of the river.

Hill slopes overlooking these valleys are well settled with relatively large farms. The shelter afforded by the valleys has resulted in settlements including villages such as Fyvie which lines a bank above the Ythan and the large market town of Turriff, which occupies a bluff above the bend of the River Deveron. Castles and mansion houses and historic built features such as follies, bridges, gate houses and boundary walls contribute to the architectural interest of these valleys.

The area itself has attracted a small amount of wind turbine development, due to its small scale, valley landform and high landscape quality. Wind farms in neighbouring Landscape Character Types along the edges of the valleys are visible from this landscape.



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.