



Location and Context

The *Low Hills - Ayrshire* Landscape Character Type occurs in one area in South Ayrshire. It forms a stand-alone outcrop of settled and farmed hills to the north-west of the Girvan Water valley.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating band of low hills with long ridges.
- Relatively unmodified, open character.
- Hills cut by valleys.
- Prominent landmark hills on the periphery.
- Richly diverse landcover pattern on lower hill slopes of pastoral fields, hedges, small woodlands and shelterbelts.
- Heather moorland on upper slopes.
- Relatively well-settled.
- Main settlement of Maybole on elevated south-facing slopes.
- Provide setting for Culzean Castle and the Girvan and Doon valleys.
- Dramatic views from pronounced hills to the coast, Firth of Clyde, Ailsa Craig and Arran.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Low Hills - Ayrshire* comprise a 'stand-alone' band of relatively low hills. They form a generally gently undulating band with long ridges cut by valleys. A number of prominent 'landmark' hills occur on the periphery of these foothills, the most distinctive of these being the steep-sided basalt outcrops of Mochrum and Kildoon hills. Other hills with pronounced summits on the north side of the Girvan Valley include Craigfin, Kirk Hill and High Craighend. Landform becomes notably more complex and rolling in the north-east, forming drumlin-like small interlocking hills separated by pockets of flatter ground.

Landcover

Lower hill slopes and valleys are farmed, with pastures enclosed by hedges, and with roadside trees, small woodlands and shelterbelts contributing to an often richly diverse land cover pattern. Some large coniferous plantations occur within broader elevated basins. A number of hill tops feature more semi-natural heathery moorland, gorse and bracken with rough walled pastures on upper slopes.

Settlement

This landscape is relatively well-settled, with dispersed farms sited across much of the area apart from the wetter more elevated basins lying at the core of these hills. Maybole lies on elevated south-facing slopes at the heart of this area, surrounded by the rolling hills of these *Low Hills* and the nearby *Coastal Headlands*. In addition to the broad spread of farms across the area from at least the 18th Century, there is evidence of human activity from prehistory through to the medieval period, including notable sites such as Crossraguel Abbey.

Perception

These hills form highly visible backdrops to the coast, including Culzean Castle and its extensive designed landscape policies and the richly diverse Doon and Girvan valleys. Dramatic views can be gained from popularly accessed hills in this character type, such as Kildoon and Mochrum, and from minor roads and settlement within these foothills, to the coast, the Firth of Clyde, Ailsa Craig and Arran. A key view is that from the A719 south of Electric Brae to Culzean Castle and its designed landscape where these foothills form an integral part of its wider setting. The *Low Hills - Ayrshire* have a relatively unmodified and open character, unlike many other upland areas within South Ayrshire. There are gentler basins partially contained by higher hills.



This is one of 389 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 Ayrshire (Land Use Consultants), published 1998.