



Location and Context

The *Rugged Upland Farmland* Landscape Character Type, which shares many of the attributes of *Plateau Farmland – Glasgow & Clyde Valley*, is found in Kilmacolm, Johnstone and Neilston. It occurs in Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire local authority areas, north and west of Newton Mearns, where the smooth plateau farmlands and higher plateau moorlands give way to a more rugged farmland landscape, forming a transition to the rugged moorland area further north west.

Key Characteristics

- Rugged landform comprising rocky bluffs and shallow troughs.
- Reservoirs in flooded troughs.
- Dominance of pastoral farming.
- Frequent tree cover often emphasising landform, for example concentrated on bluffs and outcrops.
- Settlement limited to farms and villages.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Rugged Upland Farmland* landscapes are, for the large part underlain by millstone grits and carboniferous limestone with peripheral, higher areas of basalt. They are characterised, to a greater or lesser degree, by a rugged, hummocky landscape of steep, craggy bluffs interspersed with gentler farmland. Many of the troughs and valleys are flooded, providing reservoirs for urban areas to the north. The area south of Gleniffer Braes is more gentle and plateau-like.

Landcover

Woodland cover is relatively extensive, providing an important structural element, with many of the rugged hillocks covered in stands of beech or pine. The more hospitable areas are mostly improved pasture (mainly given over to sheep farming). Beech hedgerow trees are a

distinctive feature in many parts of this landscape, often associated with past estates.

Settlement

Farms and villages tend to be concentrated in more sheltered areas, particularly near the northern edge of these areas. Scattered farms tucked into the hillsides are an important landscape feature. The majority are white-washed with gabled, grey slate roofs and comprise a 1- or 2-storey house closely surrounded by byres and other farm buildings.

The Johnston and Neilston areas are sparsely populated and do not contain any large settlements. The Kilmacolm area contains a number of small towns or villages including Kilmacolm, Bridge or Weir, Houston, Quarriers Village and Erskine. Kilmacolm and Bridge of Weir have village cores containing traditional vernacular buildings, surrounded large areas of high quality 19th and early 20th Century villas. Quarriers Village is a distinctive group of late 19th Century villas designed to house orphaned and destitute children in family-sized units. The villas are laid out in spacious landscaped grounds planted with individual shrubs and small trees and are distinguished by the lack of fences, hedges or other boundary treatments between the buildings.

The Kilmacolm area contains a number of designed landscapes, many of them relatively complete. Two, Duchal House and Formakin are listed in the Inventory of Gardens and designed Landscapes. The Duchal House landscape incorporates formal early 18th Century planting and informal 19th Century planting. The Formakin landscape contains an important number of picturesquely-grouped Scots Renaissance style buildings by the architect Sir Robert Lorimer. All parts of the Landscape Character Type contain the remains of 18th and 19th Century policy planting from less intact estates.

Scheduled hillforts, mottes and other defensive sites, typically located on prominent rocky knolls or hilltops are located throughout this Landscape Character Type. These are most numerous in the Kilmacolm area. Although locally prominent in the landscape the undulating topography means that they tend to be less visible from a distance.

Although this area does not include urban areas, influences include electricity infrastructure and masts, particularly around Gleniffer Braes, some forestry, isolated suburban development, settlement expansion and the aural impact of aircraft approaching or leaving Glasgow Airport. Highcraig Quarry to the south of Johnstone is also still in use as a site for roadstone preparation. This influence, as well as that of the M8, contributes to lower levels of tranquillity. Southern areas are more peaceful. A mix of single wind turbines of varying heights is located in the area, as well as the four turbine Neilston Community Wind Farm. Several are lit at night.

Perception

Views are relatively contained within the western areas of this landscape, which are fringed by higher ground. The valley of Strathgryffe channels views locally. To the south and east there are longer views, where features such as Gleniffer Braes are prominent in views from the south. From the northern part of this area fine views are possible over the Glasgow conurbation (and well beyond).

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 Glasgow and Clyde Valley LCA (Land Use Consultants), published 1999.