



Location and Context

The *Dipslope Farmland* Landscape Character Type in Tayside is located to the south-east of the Sidlaws and the Forfar Hills, and north of the Montrose basin. It forms an extensive area of lowland farmland sloping gently towards the Angus coast.

Key Characteristics

- Extensive area of lowland farmland running parallel to the coastline, generally sloping from Sidlaws and Forfar Hills in north-west to near sea level in the south-east.
- Dominated by productive agricultural land, it has an open, medium-scale character which is predominantly productive arable land use with simple geometric field patterns.
- Low woodland cover, except on large estates which have pine shelter belts and hedgerows, and along river corridors. Where located on the slopes it reinforces the change in gradient.
- Variety of historic sites from different eras ranging from prehistoric, Roman to Medieval, including castles, a number of historic estates and designed gardens which create a rich diverse character and strong local cultural identity.
- Dispersed settlement pattern, including some suburban development which extends outwith the historic settlement confines
- Infrequent single and small clusters of a range of domestic and medium scale commercial turbines along the elevated slopes, prominent due to their elevation and the lack of significant woodland cover.
- Variety of views from within the landscape, but typically, given the broad fall of slope to the east, there is a strong visual relationship with views along the coast and wide panoramas out to open sea. Intervisibility across the Tay firth to the Fife coast is pronounced around Dundee and reduces in clarity with distance and prominence further north.

Landscape Character Description

Landform

The *Dipslope Farmland* area in Tayside is dominated by Lower Old Red Sandstone, though there are patches of igneous rocks, forming low outliers of the Sidlaws. The areas fall from up to 180 metres in the north-west to about 50 metres along the coastal strip. The dipslope blends almost imperceptibly into the southern slopes of the Sidlaw and Montreathmont Hills.

Landcover

This is one of the most fertile and productive agricultural areas in Scotland, with much of the land being categorised as Classes 1 or 2. It is not surprising, therefore, that intensive agriculture, based on cereals, is the dominant land use. Fields tend to be large and rectilinear. Woodland cover is low or even absent in some areas, particularly closest to the coast, creating an open, exposed landscape in places. Elsewhere, particularly on some of the larger estates more extensive woodland survives, comprising a mixture of shelterbelts (for example stands of Scots pine or beech) and hedgerow trees. Where these survive, the landscape enclosed and structured. Often the trees are wind-trimmed and bent slightly away from the coast. Semi-natural woodland is limited to steeper valley sides, for example along the Lunan Water.

Settlement

The fertility of the land has given rise to a dense distribution of archaeological and historic sites. There are many important ceremonial cursus monuments from the Neolithic, when farming was introduced to Scotland. Bronze Age burial sites include that at Dickmountlaw just to the north of Arbroath, and the very large mound at Maryton, looking north over the Montrose Basin. Right across the coastal plain, later prehistoric settlements of the Bronze Age and Iron Age are represented by enclosure and groups of roundhouses and souterrains. The prehistoric settlements in the Lunan valley, though not easily visible, form one of the densest distributions in Scotland. There are Roman sites such as the camp at Kirkbuddo near Whigstreet, and medieval castles including Braikie Castle and Gardyne Castle near Friockheim and Colliston Castle to the south. Designed landscapes are also important in this area. A dense scatter of more recent farmsteads, often visible over considerable distance because of the reduction of woodland cover, is supplemented by a number of isolated houses or groups of houses, reflecting the proximity to Dundee and Arbroath. Both settlements are, however, relatively well-hidden in this otherwise open landscape. Dundee is screened from the north by a ridgeline running parallel to the Firth of Tay, while Arbroath occupies lowland at the mouth of a shallow valley. The *Dipslope Farmland* has a network of main and minor roads, which are generally small-scale and fit with the grain of the landscape. The exception is the busy A90 which runs north from Dundee, which has a considerable landscape and aural impact.

This low-lying area has electricity transmission lines which serve Dundee and Arbroath, which are prominent in this open landscape with relatively sparse woodland cover. There are also developments of single and small clusters of a range of domestic and medium scale commercial wind turbines located along elevated slopes. Whilst infrequent, their prominence is reinforced by their elevation and the lack of significant woodland cover.

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 Tayside LCA (Land Use Consultants), published 1999.

