

APPENDIX B

Published Landscape Character Assessments (Extracts)

Scottish Natural Heritage (National) Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

Banff and Buchan (County) Landscape Character Assessment (Review) (1997)

Scottish Natural Heritage (District) Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy in
Aberdeenshire (2014)



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 Turrif 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 Turriff 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.

**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



No 37

**National programme of landscape character
assessment: Banff and Buchan**

Cobham Resource Consultants

1997

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

R E V I E W

- 3.33 The frequent scattering of broad-leaved trees in shelterbelts along hill-ridges, around farms and, more occasionally, in small coniferous blocks, combine to enliven the landscape and prevent any feeling of bleakness in this vast agricultural plain. Field boundaries vary, including fence-lines, beech and thorn hedges to the south and east, and the occasional stone walls and consumption dykes to the north near Strichen.
- 3.34 Farmsteads are frequent in this relatively well-settled landscape, as are small hamlets such as New Byth. Larger villages include Strichen, a fine example of a planned village, set in the sheltered North Ugie valley; New Deer, set on a ridge overlooking rolling farmland; and Cuminestown, the plan of which resembles the letter Z.

Area 11 : Wooded Estates Around Old Deer

- 3.35 The concentration of remaining estates which cluster in this pocket of land overlooking the coastal plain to the east give this area a very distinctive character. These estates are spread along gently rolling hills lying on either side of the South Ugie Water which, as it is little more than a stream at this point, is visually insignificant. Restricted views are channelled along the narrow twisting roads which follow the landform.
- 3.36 The comparative dominance of woodland, which is unusual in the District, adds to the enclosed, sheltered character and undulating landform of this area. Coniferous and deciduous planting is generally well-mixed and sensitively laid out, occurring along ridge lines, in valley bottoms and on hill-slopes. Hedgerows are a dominant and highly distinctive type of field boundary in this area; although beech is most common, some are of mixed hawthorn and beech. Many of these hedges are further emphasised by avenue planting of mature beech trees.
- 3.37 This is a well-settled area, with a concentration of planned villages such as Stuartfield, Mintlaw and Fetterangus, numerous farmsteads and prosperous manses and farmhouses. The old estates of Aden and Pitfour, and the ancient Abbey of Old Deer, add to the sense of a long history of settlement and prosperity (1).

The River Valleys

- 3.38 The major river valleys within Banff & Buchan tend to be well-settled, wooded and visually diverse areas. Although in some ways, this area is similar in character to the wooded estates around Old Deer, it differs as a result of the visual dominance of the Deveron and upper Ythan rivers.

Area 12 : Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys

- 3.39 Incised through the plain of Banff & Buchan, the Deveron and upper Ythan rivers and their adjoining major tributaries meander through predominantly shallow valleys, bounded by broad and rolling hill ridges to either side. Occasionally these valley sides become steeper as the River Deveron flows northwards to the sea.

- 3.40 The river valley slopes are well vegetated. The layout of the mixed deciduous and coniferous trees is generally responsive to the landform and provides a major contribution to the character of these valleys. Fences, and hedges of beech and thorn, divide the agricultural land which almost invariably leads up to the river's edge. There are few significant areas of marginal vegetation along the water courses, although woodland approaches the riverbanks in more inaccessible areas, such as at the Bridge of Alvah, and at Fyvie and Gight.
- 3.41 The hill ridges overlooking the valley bottoms are well settled by frequent farmsteads. Settlements include villages such as Fyvie, which lines a bank above the Ythan, and the large and prosperous market town of Turriff. Built of red sandstone, it occupies a bluff enclosed by the burns of Putachie, Knockie and Turriff, above the Deveron river. Castles and mansion houses, such as Delgatie, Fyvie, Forglen and Duff House, contribute to the architectural diversity of this area.

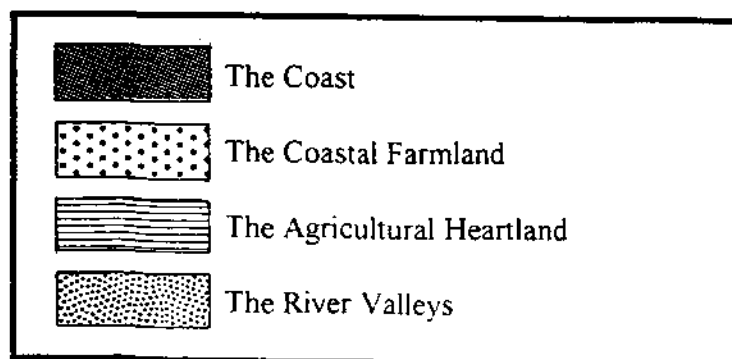
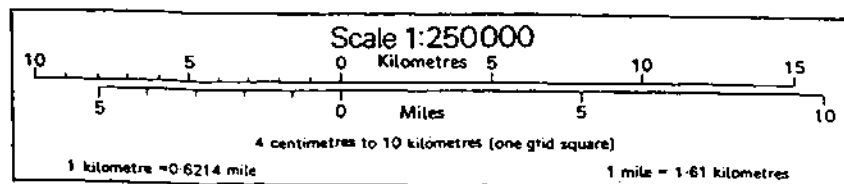
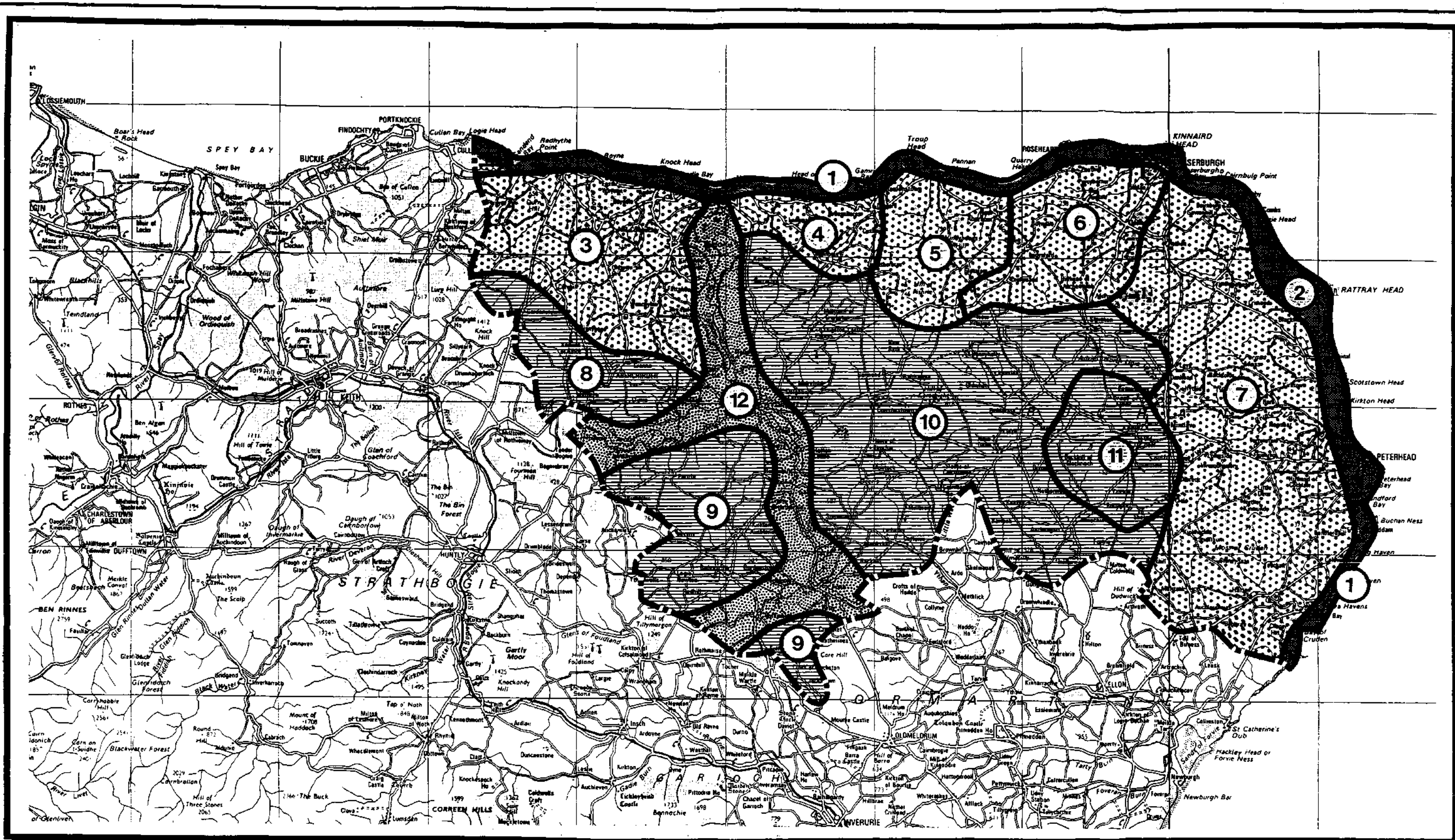


FIGURE 5
LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER AREAS

7.0 KEY ISSUES

Overview of Issues

- 7.1 The previous chapter considered the effect of past change on the present appearance of the landscape of Banff & Buchan. Potential pressures for change and development in the landscape were also assessed and a number of interrelated issues arising from these pressures can be identified. The key issues affecting the landscape of Banff & Buchan can be summarised as:

- **The changing character of the agricultural landscape.**

The visual impacts of set aside land and, to date, the inhibiting effect of the policy on positive schemes aimed at improving landscape diversity are important issues in Banff & Buchan, where uptake is relatively high. Future agricultural policy changes will be vital in determining the appearance of the countryside in the long term.

- **Continued threats to semi-natural habitats throughout the District.**

It has been shown that characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows, heather moorland and lowland mosses have been dramatically reduced in the past. Threats continue to be posed to the remaining mosses, areas of sand dunes, rivers and some areas of semi-natural woodland, as a result of pressures for peat extraction, coastal recreation, continuing trends towards agricultural intensification, and over-maturity and/or lack of management of policy woodlands.

- **A lack of landscape diversity and distinctiveness within intensively farmed land in many parts of the District.**

As farm units have increased in size, and agriculture has become more intensive, hedgerows, woodland and semi-natural vegetation have diminished, leaving much of the Banff & Buchan landscape uniform in appearance.

- **A gradual deterioration and erosion of existing distinctive features.**

Features which make a great contribution to landscape character in some parts of Banff & Buchan include stone walls, beech avenues and hedges, and mixed species roundels. Many of these are under threat of decline due to a lack of management, or removal for development. Distinctive architectural details, for example traditional colour finishes and indigenous building materials, are not generally used in new buildings, which reduces landscape distinctiveness in some areas.

- **The impacts of present and potential new housing development on the fringes of existing settlement and within the countryside.**

Poorly sited and designed housing detracts from and diminishes landscape distinctiveness. The demand for new housing in rural locations throughout Banff & Buchan is likely to continue and there is a need for any further development to reflect more closely local traditions in settlement layout and built form.

- **The potential pressure for new rural development.**

There is likely to be future pressure for the development of windfarms and large-scale forestry. The potential for increasing mineral extraction has also been identified in the Structure and Local plans, but this is likely to be on a relatively small scale, given the distance from major markets.

Guidelines for Landscape Conservation and Enhancement

- 7.3 The main objectives in recommending landscape guidelines for Banff & Buchan should be the **conservation** of landscape features which make a positive contribution to landscape character, together with the **enhancement** of those landscapes which lack diversity and distinctiveness, or where there has been an erosion of character. In addition to these objectives, future development needs to be appropriately planned and sensitively accommodated without detriment to landscape character. Landscape priorities and issues throughout the District include:

- the protection and revitalisation of distinctive landscape features in the District;
- the encouragement of appropriately sited and well-designed new woodlands and forestry planting, particularly in areas where there are opportunities to reinforce or enhance existing landscape character;
- the encouragement of farm conservation schemes on a larger scale;
- the promotion of good design practice in the siting and detail of new development within rural settlements and in the countryside;
- the direction of large-scale rural development, such as windfarms, to the less visually sensitive areas of the District.

Each of these themes is developed below.

The Conservation of Existing Landscape Features

- 7.4 The distinctive landscape features of Banff & Buchan have been previously outlined, and these include natural elements such as the coastal landscapes, rivers and the lowland peat mosses. Man-made features include estate plantings, hedgerows and stone dykes.

- 7.5 While the protection of much of the coast of Banff & Buchan from large-scale development and detrimental change has largely been assured through the planning policies of the District Council, the gradual decline of other landscape

features, such as estate woodlands, distinctive hill-top copses, hedgerows and avenues is occurring as a result of a lack of management and restocking. These features are prominent in areas such as Turriff, the northern Deveron Valley, and around New Deer/Mintlaw, and are important in contributing to a sense of place and landscape distinctiveness. The instigation of a programme of management and restocking is therefore vital to ensure that the features are not ultimately lost. In addition, the conservation of stone dykes should be encouraged in areas such as the northern coastal strip, where they are sufficiently intact to make a valuable contribution to landscape character.

- 7.6 Lowland mosses, although considerably reduced in area since 1940, make an important contribution to the landscape character of the District, for example, within the St. Fergus area and near Mid Ardlaw. It is likely that an increase in the designation of some of these mosses will occur, following a current review by SNH. More sympathetic farming methods need to be encouraged at the perimeter of these mosses to ensure that nutrient run-off and changes to drainage do not affect their condition in the long term. Where peat is extracted from mosses, traditional extraction methods should be used to minimise the impact on the habitat value of the mosses, and to conserve the visual characteristics of these valuable features.

Opportunities for New Planting

- 7.7 The likely future increase in woodland cover in the District can be seen as a positive opportunity, as sensitively located and designed woodlands and forests have the potential to enhance the character of the landscape by increasing diversity. The promotion of forestry is viewed by Grampian Regional Council as a way forward in counteracting agricultural decline and encouraging new landuses and processing industries into the District. Much of Banff & Buchan would be well suited to growing coniferous species on a commercial scale. Broad-leaved species are unlikely to attain a high economic value, because of climatic restrictions, although they would bring important amenity benefits.
- 7.8 The planting of new woodlands and forests could provide opportunities for reinforcing existing landscape character and for enhancement in areas where the landscape lacks diversity. The location and scale of new planting will need to be carefully considered in order to protect landscape features such as valuable moorland or other areas of nature conservation importance.
- 7.9 There is scope for medium to large-scale coniferous and mixed woodlands to be sensitively located on the large-scale open coastal agricultural land. Well-designed and scaled woodlands in these areas could add diversity to this agricultural landscape and, provided that the correct proportion of open space is retained, it should be possible to conserve the broad open character and long views which are positive features of this area. The design of the forest edge will be particularly important in these flatter landscapes and should include a high proportion of broad-leaved species.
- 7.10 In the more undulating agricultural heartland small-to-medium scale mixed species woodlands and shelterbelts could be planted, linking with fragments of estate plantings in the Turriff area, for example, and with hedgerows and copses occurring in localised areas, such as near Cuminstown. This would not only reinforce the existing landscape character, but also optimise the visual benefits of the new woodland.

- 7.11 Towards the west of the District, for example to the north and west of Aberchirder, where coniferous woodlands are more evident in the upland landscape, new planting should be located to visually link with these, to help resolve problems of poor scale or design. Some existing woodlands lack diversity in this area, and extended planting of both coniferous and broad-leaved species could rectify design problems and make these woodlands more positive landscape features.

Farm Conservation Schemes

- 7.12 As much of the Banff & Buchan landscape is under intensive agriculture, farm-based conservation schemes offer a major opportunity for introducing diversity into landscapes requiring some enhancement. Recent improvements to the set aside policy could encourage larger scale and more widespread conservation schemes than those currently being undertaken. This could provide opportunities for farmers to establish a range of habitats; for example broad-leaved woodlands, species-rich grasslands, wetlands and hedgerows. The visual significance and conservation value of these new features could be maximised by linking with existing hedgerows, riverbanks, and semi-natural vegetation, and by integrating conservation proposals for adjoining farms where possible.
- 7.13 Priority should be given in farm conservation schemes to the management and restocking of existing woodlands and avenues, where these make a positive contribution to the landscape. The planting of new, medium-scale, broad-leaved and mixed woodlands would have a dramatic effect on the landscape in the future and should also be given an important emphasis in any guidelines. The main water courses of the District could be enhanced further through waterside habitat creation on land taken out of production, and should also be seen as a priority within the promotion of farm conservation schemes.

Housing in the Countryside

- 7.14 Future pressure for new housing is likely to continue to be concentrated in the countryside, although limited housing development will be located in some of the towns and smaller settlements.
- 7.15 New housing should be sensitively located, corresponding to the traditional patterns of settlement found in each character area. In rural areas traditional houses are often isolated and situated in dips or sheltered pockets of land. Exceptions to this occur for example, in the mosses south of Mid Ardlaw, where farmsteads tend to occupy elevated sites, often on hummocks. New housing in prominent locations should be avoided, for instance, on exposed sites above small coastal villages which are traditionally "contained" at the base of cliffs.
- 7.16 Many settlements in Banff & Buchan make an important contribution to landscape distinctiveness, serving as focal points with views across the countryside. These views should not be compromised, and new development should therefore be restricted to sites where landform, and existing as well as new planting offer opportunities for screening. The District Council's own planning guidance is clear in discouraging ribbon development in the countryside and the placing of buildings on prominent hilltop sites. Integration could be achieved by locating new development close to existing buildings,

shelterbelts, hedgerows and trees, wherever possible, or by planting native trees to replicate the copses traditionally planted for shelter around farmsteads. Coniferous hedges and fencing used for the plot boundaries of many new housing developments can be very intrusive in rural locations.

- 7.17 The detailed design of new building should reflect the distinctive forms and materials used locally. The simple forms of single and one-and-a-half storey farmsteads and village houses should be adhered to, although modern yet sensitive interpretations of these forms can provide opportunities to create attractive living spaces that do not adversely affect landscape character. The traditional proportions and style of windows and doors present examples of good design, while the building materials used should correspond to the differences found in the District, for example rendered wall finishes in and around many coastal villages, and the use of stone detailing in some inland areas. Opportunities for accentuating local distinctiveness should be encouraged and this might include the use of traditional colour details on new farm buildings and the construction of new stone dykes on roadside boundaries.

Other Built Development

- 7.18 New large-scale development in the countryside is likely to be confined to windfarms, mineral extraction and a limited extension to the St. Fergus Gas Terminal. While it is expected that the latter two developments will be limited in extent and have a fairly localised effect, the development of windfarms could have major implications for character.
- 7.19 Large-scale windfarm development would be inappropriate in Banff & Buchan, the overall landscape character of this medium-scale, settled and strongly agricultural area being unable to visually accommodate large numbers of turbines. If carefully sited, smaller farms could be accommodated in some parts of the District without detriment to landscape character. Any such development should be directed away from the character areas 3, 5, 10, 11 and 12. These landscapes are settled by small scale farms and clustered villages and, being more "domestic" in character, are thus highly sensitive to the intrusion of large-scale elements. The natural features and seascapes of the coastal landscapes would also be diminished by such a large-scale feature. Smaller numbers of turbines could, however, be accommodated in the more open, larger scale parts of character areas 4, 6 and 7. Overhead transmission lines providing connections between windfarms and the national grid could potentially have a significant negative visual impact in the generally uncluttered, wide and open landscapes of Banff & Buchan.
- 7.20 It is recommended that the building of additional radio masts, particularly in the Mormond Hill area, should be resisted, as a "saturation" level has already been reached in terms of their adverse effect on landscape character.

Further Design Information

7.21 More detailed design guidance applicable to the landscape of Banff & Buchan can be obtained from the following published sources:

- **Landscape/Woodland Design:**
 - Lowland Landscape Design, Forestry Authority 1992
 - Community Woodland Design, Forestry Authority 1992
 - Farm Woodland Planning, MAFF/Forestry Commission 1988
 - Forest Landscape Design Guidelines, Forestry Commission 1989
 - Conservation on Farms - Case Studies of Good Practice in Scotland, FWAG 1988
- **Windfarm Planning:**
 - Landscape Impact Assessment for Wind Turbine Development in Dyfed, Chris Blandford Associates, 1992
 - Planning Advice Note (PAN) 45 - Renewable Energy Technologies, Scottish Office (1994)
 - Wind Energy Development and the Landscape, Countryside Commission 1991
- **Rural Building Design:**
 - Housing in the Countryside, Design Guidance Booklet, Moray District Council 1993
 - Landscape and Building in the Countryside, Mainstream Publishing 1991.
 - The Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside, PAN 36 Scottish Office 1991.
 - Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape, PAN 44 Scottish Office 1994.
 - Farm and Forestry Buildings, PAN Scottish Office 1993.

Mechanisms for Change

- 7.22 Planning authorities, land-use agencies and conservation bodies all have an important role to play in devising mechanisms which will influence the future appearance of the Banff & Buchan landscape. The main mechanisms operating at present fall mainly under development control, and countryside management and enhancement. Future CAP reforms, favouring long-term conservation schemes on land taken out of production, offer the most scope for diversification and enrichment of the agricultural landscapes which form much of the District. There also appears to be scope for partnership initiatives to be instigated, using limited resources and directing more wide reaching landscape enhancement projects.
- 7.23 The landscape of Banff & Buchan has been shown in this study to display a range of different characters and have many distinctive landscape features. In parts of the District, however, intensive farming has diminished landscape

diversity and some new development, although limited in scale, has also adversely affected landscape character. A broad vision for the future of Banff & Buchan landscape should therefore aim to:

- maintain and enhance the traditional farm, estate and village landscapes, whose origins lie mainly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century settlement of the District;
- conserve the special natural character of the coastal area and traditional settlement patterns of the District by directing new development to build on existing visual and architectural character;
- sensitively site any new large-scale development so as to minimise impact on landscape character;
- encourage landscape enhancement through the expansion of natural habitats on farmland and through the creation of a more wooded landscape, particularly in the agricultural heartland.

7.24 Further discussion with countryside management staff within bodies such as the new unitary authority, the Forestry Authority, landowners and their advisors is now required in order to develop more detailed measures which can be undertaken in order to achieve this vision for the future.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The variety of landscapes in Banff & Buchan, has been formed as a result of both physical and human influences. The fertile, low lying land of the District contrasts with the highlands of much of northern Scotland, and this factor led to its attraction for settlement from early times. The original woodland cover of the area was gradually eroded as land was cultivated, giving rise to the notable openness of the farmed landscape which is characteristic of the District today. Human influences also had a strong effect. Banff & Buchan has a wealth of architecture stemming from its past prosperity in agriculture, fishing and trading.

Local Distinctiveness

- 9.2 The present-day landscape of Banff & Buchan has subtle variations, although the overall characteristics include wide views and a general openness. Towards the west, rounded hills form the edge of the uplands of Moray District and beyond, while the interior is undulating farmland and the east of the District is flatter and broader in scale. The coastline is a special feature of the Banff & Buchan landscape, with a dramatic mix of rocky cliffs, dunes and long beaches. It is important for both its scenic qualities and its nature conservation interest. Other natural features which stand out include the well-wooded river valleys of the Deveron and Ythan and the lowland mosses, which remain as isolated pockets within farmland, mainly in the east of the District.
- 9.3 Man-made features make an important contribution to the landscape of parts of the District, particularly the rich legacy of policy plantings, such as beech roundels, avenues and hedges. Strong field patterns formed by hedgerows and stone dykes are also characteristic of agricultural landscapes in some areas. The planned settlements, originating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are an acknowledged feature of the Banff & Buchan landscape, and these are complemented by a rich architectural tradition of farmsteads, grand houses and castles. The integrity of many of the settlements and the undeveloped nature of the landscape, suggest that the area has been, to some extent, by-passed by the modern world.

Landscape Change

- 9.4 The traditional character of the landscape has evolved through time, with the agricultural reforms of the late eighteenth century acting as a dominant influence. Significant change has also occurred since the Second World War. Intensification of agriculture has led to the enlargement of farms, a reduction in semi-natural landscapes such as mosses and heather moorland, and the decline of woodlands and hedgerows. More recently the CAP has effected change in farmland. New built development has also occurred, both within villages and in the countryside, and some of this has had an adverse effect on the landscape of the District.
- 9.5 Future pressures for change will centre on the agricultural landscapes of Banff & Buchan and will be largely dependent on national policy changes. Further decline in agricultural incomes would force some farmers to sell land, and this may encourage forestry on a larger scale than has previously occurred, with

further amalgamation of farm units. Demands for new housing development is likely to arise from local needs. Pressure for new large scale industry will probably be limited but may include significant windfarm development.

9.6 The main issues associated with trends for landscape change include:

- the gradual erosion and decline of some landscape features, for example, hedgerows, policy plantings, stone dykes, mosses;
- the need to accommodate significant new forestry planting;
- the lack of landscape diversity and distinctiveness within the intensively farmed lands in many parts of the District;
- the changing character of the agricultural landscape brought about by national policies such as set aside;
- the existing and potential visual impacts of poorly sited and badly designed housing and other built development.

Landscape Guidelines

9.7 The main objective in recommending landscape guidelines for Banff & Buchan should be to protect and build upon local distinctiveness. This would be realised through:

- an emphasis on local distinctiveness through, for example, the reinstatement of lost features and the encouragement of this aspect in the design in new buildings;
- the conservation of special features which make a valuable contribution to local landscape character through revitalisation and better management;
- the protection of positive landscape character through the sensitive location and design of new development;
- the enhancement of less visually diverse landscapes through woodland planting and the creation of new habitats on a more permanent basis.

9.8 Specific guidelines should now be developed for the different character areas within Banff & Buchan, with the aim of giving advice to all concerned with the preparation of development plans and in directing initiatives for landscape conservation and enhancement. This guidance should be based upon the ability of each landscape character area to accommodate change without visual detriment.

9.9 The strengthening of existing policies and introduction of new initiatives will be important in accomplishing this broad vision for the future. Collaboration between SNH, local authorities, SOAEFD and the Forestry Authority will be vital in guiding development plans and directing funding towards priority schemes for both landscape enhancement and conservation. Landowners and land managers, working within the constraints of national and EU agricultural policy, will also have a key role to play.

9.10 In summary, the landscape of Banff & Buchan has a distinctive and special character. It is a stimulating landscape because of its wide views, its

impressive coastline, and its variety of unusual landscape features. We hope that this report will help the landscapes of Banff & Buchan to enjoy greater recognition in future, and trust that efforts will be made to build upon and reinforce their traditional character. Action can be achieved through the sensitive planning and design of new development, by the positive conservation and management of the finest landscape features and through creative initiatives to restore and enhance the agricultural landscapes of the District.

LCT 24: RIVER VALLEYS

The River Valleys LCT is restricted to the northern area of Aberdeenshire. They are the distinctive valley landforms formed by the rivers whose source is the high moorland and Grampian Mountains in the west. Their principal characteristics are the river and valley. Medium to small in scale and enclosed, the type is relatively rare in distribution within north east of Scotland.

24 (i) DEVERON AND UPPER YTHAN VALLEYS

In Banff and Buchan is the *Deveron and Upper Ythan Valley*, which is a shallow valley that flows out to the sea at Macduff. Its sides are clothed with a mix of broadleaved and conifer woodlands and its floor has farmland running to the river's edge. Its shelter has resulted in settlements such as Turriff, Fyvie and large estates resulting in five HGDs. It is an attractive river valley with a high degree of integrity.



24(i) The broad, shallow valley landform and the River Deveron give this area a higher degree of sensitivity to wind energy development than the surrounding Agricultural Heartland farmland.

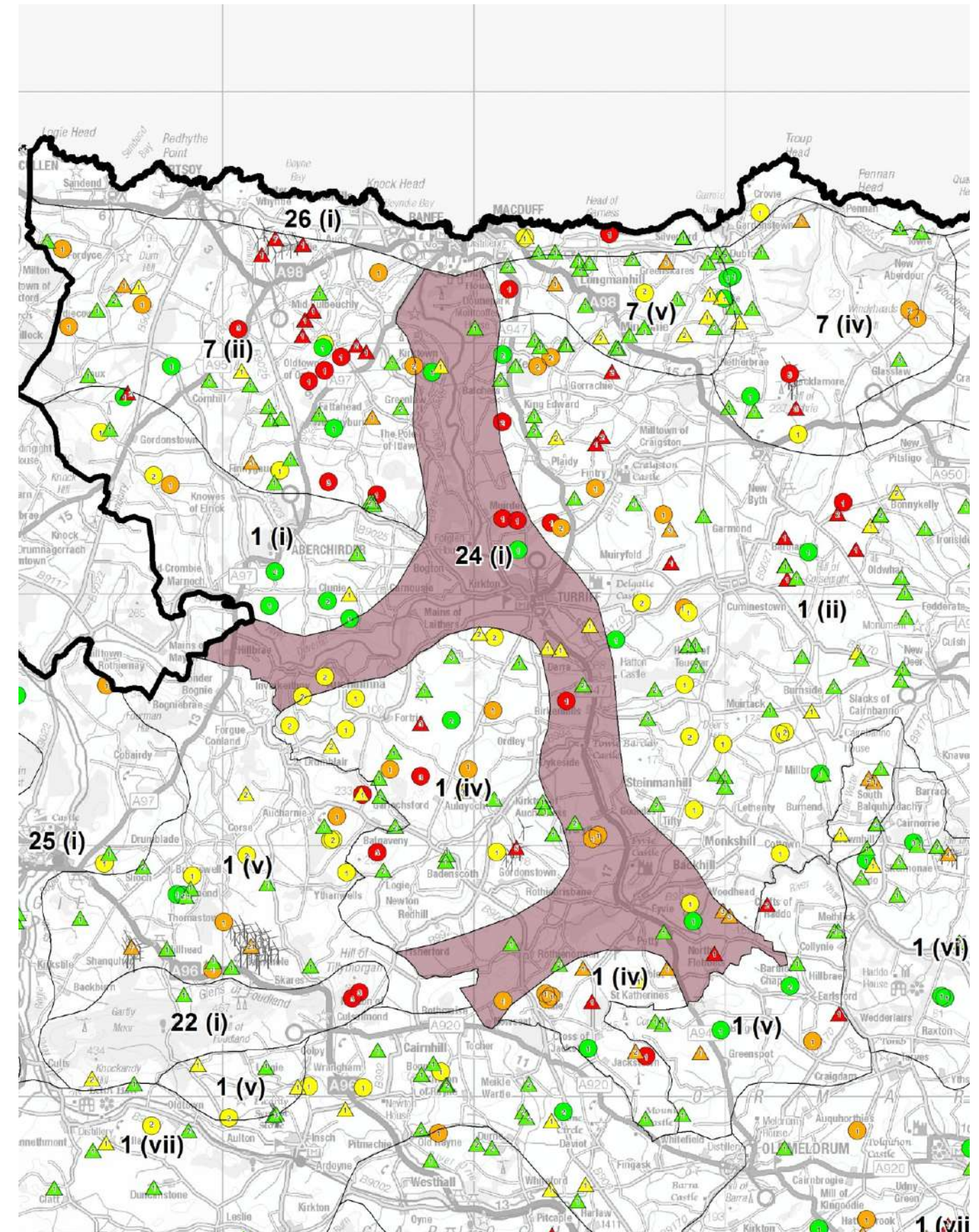


Table 6.1(j): Summary of Landscape Capacity, Cumulative Effects and Guidance for Future Wind Energy Development: River Valleys

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE: 24.RIVER VALLEYS																							
Key: <div><div></div> No Capacity</div> <div><div></div> Low Capacity</div> <div><div></div> Medium Capacity</div> <div><div></div> High Capacity</div>									Turbine Size: Small/Medium=15-<30m; Medium=30-<50m; Medium/Large=50-<80m; Large=80m+; Very Large=125m+														
BASE LANDSCAPE CAPACITY (ie. not taking account of current wind energy development)										CURRENT CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT									PROPOSED LIMITS TO FUTURE DEVELOPMENT (ie. proposed acceptable level of wind energy development)				
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development				Landscape Capacity (Related to turbine size)					Existing/ Consented Developments	Current Wind Energy Landscape Type(s)	Future Wind Energy Landscape Type(s)	Remaining Landscape Capacity (Related to turbine size)					Current Applications	Analysis & Guidelines (Refer to Detailed Guidance for Further Information on Siting and Design)					
Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	S/M	M	M/L	L	VL				S/M	M	M/L	L	VL							
24 (i) Landscape Character Areas: <i>Deveron and Upper Ythan Valleys</i>																							
Med/ High	Med/ High	Med/ High	Med/ High	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	One large, six medium/large, four medium and seven small/medium turbines consented. Adjacent wind farms at Hill of Tippetty (3 large), Hill of Culincraig (3 large) and Gordonstown (5 large), together with numerous predominately small/medium sited in adjoining LCAs along the edges of the valley visually influence this LCA.	<i>Straths and River Valleys with Occasional Wind Turbines/ with Wind Turbines/ Wind Turbine Straths and River Valleys</i>	<i>Straths and River Valleys with No Turbines</i>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	Proposals for three large, five medium/large, five medium and three small/medium turbines.	Landscape Analysis: This area is unsuitable for turbines due to its medium scale, valley landform, quality, pattern, high value and visual sensitivity. These areas would be unsuitable for wind turbine development beyond a domestic scale, less than 15m associated with farm buildings or tourist facilities and at the base of slopes. Comments on Consented and Proposed Turbines: This LCA has exceeded its capacity in the south. Proposals will further exceed capacity and result in a <i>Landscape with Wind Turbines</i> Additionally proposals for large, medium/large and medium turbines adjacent to <i>Deveron and Upper Ythan Valley</i>, located in neighbouring <i>Agricultural Heartland</i> and <i>Coastal farmland</i> LCUs would also exceed the landscape capacity of this LCA					
											<i>Max. Numbers in Group</i>												
											<i>Min Group Separation Distances (km)</i>												