

## **Character Type 5: Rolling Farmland and Forests**

### ***Introduction***

The Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) landscape character type is shown in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment as extending west/east across Moray, between the Spey and the Findhorn valleys, forming the transition between the uplands and coastal plain. To the south lies the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and to the north the low-lying Coastal Farmlands (4).

Due to the differences in context, character and scale of landscapes within the Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) character type, two sub-divisions have been identified for the purpose of this study:

- The 'Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys' (5a) which occurs between the Rafford valley and extends east to near Miltonduff, incorporating the upper Lossie and Pluscarden valleys.
- The 'Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills' (5b) which occurs to the west, where extensive deposits have created undulating and hummocky terrain and there is a distinctive pattern of alternating forest and fields.

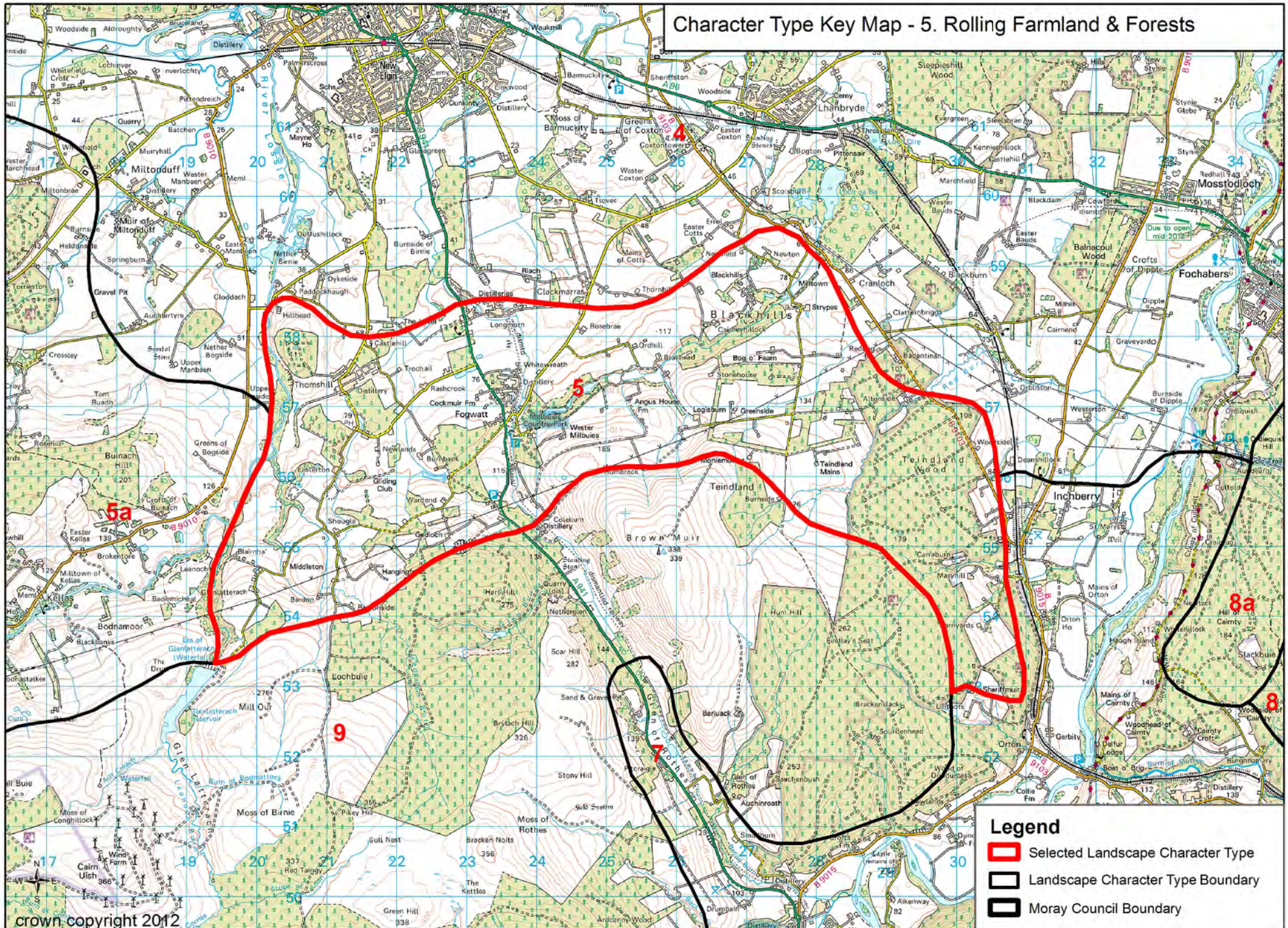
The eastern area of the Rolling Farmland and Forests between the Spey and Lossie valleys has been retained as character type 5 as it is closest in character to the original definition in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment. This landscape forms a relatively narrow band of small rolling hills fringing the broader Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). The sensitivity assessment which follows is for this character type.

### ***Existing/consented wind farm development***

No operational wind turbines were noted within this character type during the site visit.

The operational Rothes wind farm is located in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forest (9) character type and is visible in relative proximity from more open western parts of this character type. This development comprises 22 turbines, 100m high. An extension for 18 turbines, 125m high, has been consented to this wind farm.

# Character Type Key Map - 5. Rolling Farmland & Forests



**Character Type 5: Rolling Farmland and Forests – Sensitivity assessment for large and medium typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of large typology (80m-130m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of medium typology (50m-80m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	This landscape forms a narrow fringe of small rolling hills and slopes between the higher hills of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and the low-lying coastal plain of the Coastal Farmlands (4). While its well-settled and farmed character distinctly contrasts with (9) it merges more gradually with (4). The steep-sided landmark hill of Brown Muir located within the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) provides a prominent backdrop to this character type.	The narrowness of this landscape means that turbines of this size would impact on adjacent landscapes with impacts more likely to occur on the Coastal Farmlands (4) which, although extensive and open, is also well-settled thus reducing scale. Although the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) has a more expansive scale better able to accommodate this typology, turbines of this size could impact on the landmark hill of Brown Muir which provides a prominent backdrop to the Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) but also the Coastal Farmland (4).	<b>High-medium</b>	The narrowness of this landscape means that turbines of this size would impact on adjacent landscapes with impacts more likely to occur on the Coastal Farmlands (4) which, although extensive and open, is also well-settled thus reducing scale. Although the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) has a more expansive scale better able to accommodate this typology, turbines of this size could impact on the landmark hill of Brown Muir which provides a prominent backdrop to the Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) but also the Coastal Farmland (4).	<b>High-medium</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	The landform can be quite rolling and interlocking in places limiting scale and this, together with fairly extensive woodland cover, reduces openness. This landscape is well-settled with a dispersed pattern of small farms (a number of abandoned farm buildings on upper eastern slopes) and many new houses which, together with enclosed fields and small woodlands, provide ready scale references. Scale increases at the transition with the 'Upland Moorland and Forestry' (9) where settlement is sparser and hill	This typology would dominate the largely small to medium scale of this landscape. The consistent presence of small features, including dispersed settlement, is a further sensitivity.	<b>High</b>	This typology would dominate the largely small to medium scale of this landscape. The consistent presence of small features, including dispersed settlement, is a further sensitivity.	<b>High</b>

	slopes broader.				
<b>Landform</b>	This landscape has a very varied landform comprising gently undulating hills slopes with occasional more rounded small hills which rise gradually to the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) to the south. Pockets of more knolly landform occur and narrow valleys are filled with small water bodies at Millbuies and Blackhills.	Broader gently undulating hill slopes could more easily accommodate this typology although turbines of this size would detract from the more complex landform of knolls, narrow valleys with small water bodies and occasional small rounded hills.	<b>High-medium</b>	Broader gently undulating hill slopes could more easily accommodate this typology although turbines of this size would detract from the more complex landform of knolls, narrow valleys with small water bodies and occasional small rounded hills.	<b>High-medium</b>
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	Almost equal proportions of pasture and arable fields interspersed with small coniferous woodlands. Farmland is more marginal and the coniferous plantations become more extensive at the transition with the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). Small pocket of policy woodland occur at Blackhills although generally this landscape has limited diversity and few landmark features.	Sensitivity is reduced due to the relatively simple patterns of forest cover and farmland although this typology could detract from small pockets of policy woodland if sited close-by.	<b>Medium-low</b>	Sensitivity is reduced due to the relatively simple patterns of forest cover and farmland although this typology could detract from small pockets of policy woodland if sited close-by.	<b>Medium-low</b>
<b>Built environment</b>	This landscape is well-settled with a regular pattern of dispersed farms and houses and also some small settlements, including larger distillery buildings. Settlement is sparser at the transition with the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). Public roads are generally very narrow and winding.	More sparsely settled upper hill slopes would be less sensitive in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements and other built features although turbines of this size would be likely to be seen in relative proximity to built features given settlement density and pattern across this landscape. Narrow roads could result in landscape and visual effects associated with access improvements for vehicles required to transport this typology.	<b>High-medium</b>	More sparsely settled upper hill slopes would be less sensitive in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements and other built features although turbines of this size would be likely to be seen in relative proximity to built features given settlement density and pattern across this landscape. Narrow roads could result in landscape and visual effects associated with access improvements for vehicles required to transport this typology.	<b>High-medium</b>

<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	This is a well-settled and managed landscape with few naturalistic features and little sense of seclusion or distinct sense of place.	Wildland and other perceptual qualities are not pronounced and there would therefore be little effect on this sensitivity.	<b>Low</b>	Wildland and other perceptual qualities are not pronounced and there would therefore be little effect on this sensitivity.	<b>Low</b>
<b>Visual amenity</b>	Woodland and landform limits views from roads and settlement within this landscape although upper hill slopes provide extensive views over the Coastal Plain (4) to the Moray Firth. The backdrop of steeper edge slopes of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) forms a consistent feature seen from this landscape with the hill of Brown Muir being particularly prominent. This landscape forms a narrow band of hill fringes which are widely visible from roads and settlement within the adjacent Coastal Farmland (4) to the north.	Turbines of this size would form dominant features in views from settlement and roads in this and the adjacent open landscape of the Coastal Farmland (4). They could intrude on the sensitive skyline of the upland backdrop and detract from the focus provided by the hill of Brown Muir.	<b>High</b>	Turbines of this size could also form dominant features in views from settlement and roads in this and the adjacent open landscape of the Coastal Farmland (4). They could intrude on the sensitive skyline of the upland backdrop and detract from the focus provided by the hill of Brown Muir particularly if sited on upper hill slopes.	<b>High</b>
<b>Cumulative effects</b>	The Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity (4-6km) from the more open western slopes of this landscape.	Turbines of this size would be highly visible from both this character type and the open Coastal Farmland (4) and would be likely to be inter-visible with the operational Rothes wind farm with resultant cumulative effects on landscape character and on views.	<b>High</b>	Turbines of this size would be highly visible from both this character type and the open Coastal Farmland (4) and would be likely to be inter-visible with the operational Rothes wind farm with resultant cumulative effects on landscape character and on views.	<b>High</b>

**Character Type 5: Rolling Farmland and Forests – Sensitivity assessment for small-medium and small typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of small-medium typology (35m-50m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of small typology (20m-35m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	This landscape forms a narrow fringe of small rolling hills and slopes between the higher hills of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and the low-lying coastal plain of the Coastal Farmlands (4). While its well-settled and farmed character distinctly contrasts with (9) it merges more gradually with (4). The steep-sided landmark hill of Brown Muir located within the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) provides a prominent backdrop to this character type.	Turbines of this size would have less of an impact on adjacent landscapes due to their increased compatibility with the scale of the Coastal Farmland (4). The landmark hill of Brown Muir would still be sensitive to turbines sited nearby however.	<b>Medium</b>	With careful siting, this smaller typology would be likely to have minimal impacts on the landmark hill of Brown Muir. Effects on the Coastal Farmland (4) would also be reduced due to the relatively small size of turbines and their compatibility with the increased scale of this adjoining landscape.	<b>Medium-low</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	The landform can be quite rolling and interlocking in places limiting scale and this, together with fairly extensive woodland cover, reduces openness. This landscape is well-settled with a dispersed pattern of small farms (a number of abandoned farm buildings on upper eastern slopes) and many new houses which, together with enclosed fields and woodlands, provide ready scale references. Scale increases at the transition with the 'Upland Moorland and Forestry' (9) where settlement is sparser and hill slopes are broader.	This typology would appear very large in relation to the scale of landform, woodlands, land cover pattern and settlement within this landscape although impacts on smaller scale elements could be reduced if turbines were associated with more expansive upper hill slopes.	<b>High-medium</b>	Turbines of this size would have a better scale relationship to this landscape although smaller scale landforms would still be sensitive.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Landform</b>	Gently undulating hills slopes with occasional more rounded small hills rise gradually to the Upland Moorland	Broader gently undulating hill slopes could more easily accommodate this typology although turbines of this	<b>Medium</b>	There are increased opportunities to associate this size of turbine with less extensive slopes, small natural	<b>Medium-low</b>

	and Forestry (9) to the south. Pockets of more knolly landform occur and narrow valleys are filled with small water bodies at Millbuies and Blackhills.	size would detract from the more complex landform of knolls, narrow valleys with small water bodies and occasional small rounded hills.		terraces and the side of small hills. They would still detract from more complex knolls and narrow valleys and the tops of small rounded hills would also be sensitive.	
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	Almost equal proportions of pasture and arable fields interspersed with small coniferous woodlands. Farmland is more marginal and the coniferous plantations become more extensive at the transition with the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). Small pocket of policy woodland occur at Blackhills although generally this landscape has limited diversity and few landmark features.	Sensitivity is reduced due to the relatively simple patterns of forest cover and farmland although this typology could detract from small pockets of policy woodland if sited close-by.	<b>Medium-low</b>	Sensitivity is reduced due to the relatively simple patterns of forest cover and farmland although this typology could detract from small pockets of policy woodland if sited close-by.	<b>Medium-low</b>
<b>Built environment</b>	This landscape is well-settled with a regular pattern of dispersed farms and houses and also some small settlements, including larger distillery buildings. Settlement is sparser at the transition with the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). Public roads are generally very narrow and winding.	More sparsely settled upper hill slopes would be less sensitive in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements and other built features although turbines of this size would be likely to be seen in relative proximity to built features given settlement density and pattern across this landscape.	<b>High-medium</b>	This typology would have less of an effect on the setting of settlements. They could be sited relatively close to distillery buildings although would need to be set back from smaller buildings to avoid conflicts of scale and effects on setting.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	This is a well-settled and managed landscape with few naturalistic features and little sense of seclusion or distinct sense of place.	Wildland and other perceptual qualities are not pronounced and there would therefore be little effect on this sensitivity.	<b>Low</b>	Wildland and other perceptual qualities are not pronounced and there would therefore be little effect on this sensitivity.	<b>Low</b>
<b>Visual amenity</b>	Woodland and landform limits views from roads and settlement within this landscape although upper hill slopes provide extensive views over the Coastal Plain (4) to the Moray Firth. The backdrop of steeper edge slopes of the Upland Moorland and Forestry	Turbines of this size would form highly visible features in close views from settlement and roads in this landscape and parts of the adjacent open landscape of the Coastal Farmland (4). They could however be sited to avoid intrusion on the	<b>High-medium</b>	Turbines of this size would be less visually prominent in views from settlement and roads in this character type and would be likely to have minimal effects on views from the Coastal Farmland (4) providing they avoided small hill	<b>Medium</b>

	<p>(9) forms a consistent feature seen from this landscape with the hill of Brown Muir being particularly prominent. This landscape forms a narrow band of hill fringes which are widely visible from roads and settlement within the adjacent Coastal Farmland (4) to the north.</p>	<p>sensitive skyline of the upland backdrop and to avoid detracting from the focus provided by the hill of Brown Muir.</p>		<p>tops and were back-clothed by rising ground.</p>	
<p><b>Cumulative effects</b></p>	<p>The Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity (4-6km) from the more open western slopes of this landscape.</p>	<p>There is some limited scope to site turbines of this size to minimise cumulative effects with the operational Rothes wind farm as inter-visibility between developments from close views would be likely to reduce further east. The more open upper hill slopes of the western part of this landscape would be sensitive due to the proximity of the Rothes wind farm and also the transmission line where they could exacerbate the visual clutter of disparate structures in the landscape.</p>	<p><b>High-medium</b></p>	<p>There is increased scope to site turbines of this size to avoid significant cumulative impacts although the more open upper hill slopes of the western part of this landscape remain sensitive due to the proximity of the Rothes wind farm and also the transmission line where they could exacerbate the visual clutter of disparate structures in the landscape.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>



## Character Type 5: Rolling Farmland and Forests

### **Summary of capacity**

This landscape forms gently rolling hill slopes fringing the higher Upland Moorland Forest (9) to the south and gradually merging with the flatter and more open Coastal Farmland (4) to the north. Pockets of more complex drumlin-like knolls and narrow valleys filled with small water bodies occur in places. Coniferous woodlands and shelterbelts are a strong feature and are interspersed with small pastures and larger arable fields towards the more gently undulating transition with the Coastal Farmland( 4). This is a relatively well-settled area with many dispersed new houses, farms and small settlements. Distillery buildings are prominent features on the edge of some of these settlements.

The relatively small scale of the settled valleys, pockets of more complex interlocking landform and small water bodies and also the potential for cumulative impacts with nearby operational wind farm development, increase sensitivity within this landscape. There would be overall **High** sensitivity to the large (80-130m) and the medium (50-80m) typologies. Sensitivity would be **High-medium** for the small-medium typology (35-50m) and **Medium** for the small typology (20-35m).

### **Potential cumulative issues**

The operational Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity (4km) from the western edge of this character type. An 18 turbine extension to this wind farm has been consented. These turbines lie to the west of the original scheme and may additionally impact on views from parts of this character type. Key cumulative issues that may arise within the Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) are likely to include:

- The close inter-visibility between additional turbines located in the western parts of this character type and the operational Rothes wind farm where even the small typology (20-35m) would appear large in views from settlement and roads and could increase the visual clutter of turbines and also the transmission line which are prominent in views.
- An absence of rationale which could occur between existing large turbines clearly associated with less settled simple and more expansive upland areas and the same size of turbines also sited within this smaller scale landscape.
- Variations in the type and size of single and small groups of small turbines proposed within the landscape type.
- Sequential visual impacts experienced when travelling through this landscape.

### **Constraints**

- The small scale rolling landform and well-settled character of this landscape which increases sensitivity to larger turbines
- More complex knolly landform, intimately scaled valleys with water bodies and prominent small 'stand-alone' hills
- Policy landscape features in the Blackhills area
- Potential cumulative effects with the Rothes wind farm development which is seen in close proximity particularly in the western parts of this landscape.

### **Opportunities**

- Broader and more even hill slopes on the fringes of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) where rising ground could form a backdrop reducing the prominence of smaller turbines.

### **Guidance on development**

No scope for the large (80m-130m) and large-medium (50m – 80m) typologies has been identified in this landscape sensitivity assessment.

There is likely to be **limited** scope for the small-medium (35m - 50m) development typologies to be sited within this character type. Opportunities are limited to the more expansive and less well-settled gently graded upper hill slopes to the east of this character type where significant cumulative effects with the operational Rothes wind farm could be avoided. Turbines of this size could impact on the landmark hill of Brown Muir which forms a prominent backdrop to this character type and is seen extensively across the Coastal Farmland (4) and they should therefore be sited away from the more pronounced steeper slopes of this hill. Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, and care should be taken to avoid intrusion on sensitive skylines by siting turbines so back-dropped by rising ground. Turbines towards the lower height band of this typology would be likely to be less visually prominent. The adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) character type has been identified in the assessment as having scope for additional larger typologies and cumulative effects will therefore need to be reviewed as new proposals are considered in both these adjoining landscape character types.

There are increased opportunities for the small typology (20m –35m) to be sited in this character type. Turbines of this size could also be located on more gently graded slopes, but like the small-medium typology, should avoid being sited in front of the steeper more prominent slopes of the landmark hill of Brown Muir and within or close-by more complex knolly landform. There is scope to relate this size of turbine with larger distillery buildings and within broader farmland at the transition with the Coastal Farmland (4). Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, which should be limited to no more than three turbines.

Turbines of less than 20m in height could more readily be accommodated within the farmed and settled areas of this landscape type and would be less visible due to their increased ability to be screened by landform and woodland. They would also be likely to have fewer cumulative impacts where the operational Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity.

Micro siting should follow the guidance set out in Section 5 of the main study report.



*The operational Rothes wind farm is prominent in views from the western part of this character type.*



*Broad, gently rolling fields on lower hill slopes are interspersed with bands of woodland.*



*The 'landmark' hill of Brown Muir forms an immediate backdrop to this character type.*



*Distillery buildings and settlements are sited on lower slopes or sit within small folds and valleys in this landscape*

### ***Character Type 5: Rolling Farmland and Forest***

## **Character Type 5a: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys**

### ***Introduction***

The Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) landscape character type is shown in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment as extending west/east across Moray, between the Spey and the Findhorn valleys, forming the transition between the uplands and coastal plain. To the south lies the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and to the north the low-lying Coastal Farmlands (4).

Due to the differences in context, character and scale of landscapes within the Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) character type, two sub-divisions have been identified for the purpose of this study:

- The 'Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys' (5a) which occurs between the Rafford valley and extends east to near Miltonduff, incorporating the upper Lossie and Pluscarden valleys.
- The 'Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills' (5b) which occurs to the west, where extensive deposits have created undulating and hummocky terrain and there is a distinctive pattern of alternating forest and fields.

The eastern area of the Rolling Farmland and Forests between the Spey and Lossie valleys has been retained as character type 5 as it is closest in character to the original definition in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment. This landscape forms a relatively narrow band of small rolling hills fringing the broader Upland Moorland and Forestry (9).

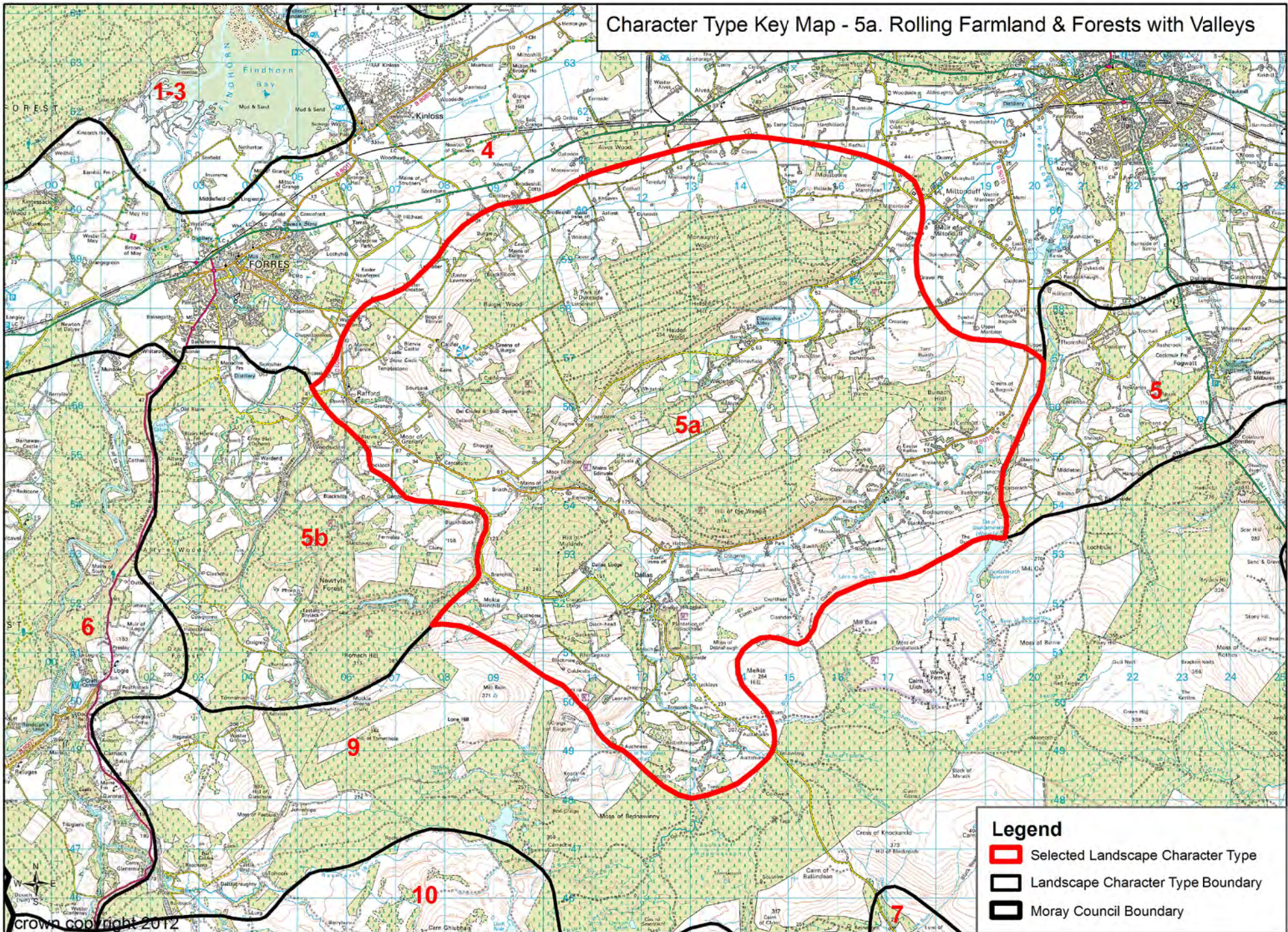
This section of the report is the landscape sensitivity assessment which has been undertaken for the sub-type Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys (5a).

### ***Existing/consented wind farm development***

No operational wind turbines were noted within this character type during the site visit. A consented 61m high turbine has been consented at Bognie Farm in the upper valley of Pluscarden

The operational Rothes wind farm is located in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forest (9) character type and is clearly visible from the valley of the upper Lossie in the Kellas/Dallas area. This development comprises 22 turbines, 100m high. An extension for 18 turbines, 125m high, has been consented to this wind farm.

# Character Type Key Map - 5a. Rolling Farmland & Forests with Valleys



**Character Type 5a: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys – Sensitivity assessment for large and medium typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of large typology (80m-130m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of medium typology (50m-80m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	This landscape comprises the broad valleys of Pluscarden and the upper Lossie and the two ridges which divide them. It forms a transition between the higher hills of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and the low-lying coastal plain of the Coastal Farmlands (4). This landscape is distinct from adjoining character types with the northern ridge of Heldon Hill forming a prominent backdrop to the settled Coastal Farmlands (4) and the Rolling Farmlands and Forest with Small Hills (5b) and the settled upper Lossie valley contrasting with the more open uplands of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) to the south. The ridges are also prominent from the Rolling Farmland and Forest (5) to the east.	The prominence of the distinct ridges of this landscape, together with the relatively small extent of this landscape type, limits scope to accommodate this typology without it impacting on adjacent landscapes (and particularly the Coastal Farmland (4) where views are more open). The valleys are more self-contained with views into them from surrounding areas limited.	<b>High-Medium</b>	The prominence of the distinct ridges of this landscape, together with the relatively small extent of this landscape type, limits scope to accommodate this typology without it impacting on adjacent landscapes (and particularly the Coastal Farmland (4) where views are more open). The valleys are more self-contained with views into them from surrounding areas limited.	<b>High-Medium</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	The northern ridge (which is most prominent from the Coastal Farmland (4)) only rises to around 230m. The southern ridge is slightly higher at 300m. The valleys are strongly contained by the ridges and occasional 'pinch points' occur where the valley is incised and constricted by steep densely wooded hill slopes. Extensive woodland cover limits openness. The more open valley floors and lower sides accommodate a dispersed	This size of turbine would detract from the relatively low relief of the northern ridge. It would also dominate the limited extent of the open valley floor. The presence of smaller scale features within the valleys increases sensitivity to this typology.	<b>High</b>	This size of turbine would have a better scale relationship with the relief of the ridges. It would however still be likely to dominate the limited extent of the open valley floor. The presence of smaller scale features within the valleys increases sensitivity to this typology.	<b>High-medium</b>

	pattern of small farms and houses, enclosed fields and woodlands.				
<b>Landform</b>	The landform of this character type comprises an alternate pattern of two ridges separated by the valleys of the Upper Lossie and the Pluscarden. Both ridges feature a steep south-east facing scarp slopes and long gentler dip slopes to the north-west. Ridge tops are narrow and very gently undulating with the Hill of the Wangie and Heldon Hill forming subtle rounded summits. The Hill of Mulundy forms a western outlier to the southern ridge. The valleys of the upper Lossie and Pluscarden have flat floodplains although narrow and deeply incised side valleys also occasionally occur. Small complex knolls and river terraces pattern the lower southern slopes of the Lossie in the Kellas area.	The ridges and the outlying Hill of Mulundy form prominent landform features and there would be physical constraints to siting this typology on steep scarp slopes, narrow ridge tops and confined summits. While this typology would be better able to be physically sited on gentler dip slopes and broader flat valley bottoms it could detract from the steep scarp slopes of the ridges and the flat open floodplain. The more complex landform of knolls and terraces associated with the Lossie and the narrow deeply incised side valleys would be highly sensitive to this typology.	<b>High-medium</b>	The ridges and the outlying Hill of Mulundy form prominent landform features and there would be physical constraints to siting this typology on steep scarp slopes, narrow ridge tops and confined summits. While this typology would be better able to be physically sited on gentler dip slopes and broader flat valley bottoms it could detract from the steep scarp slopes of the ridges and the flat open floodplain. The more complex landform of knolls and terraces associated with the Lossie and the narrow deeply incised side valleys would be highly sensitive to this typology.	<b>High-medium</b>
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	The ridges are largely forested, predominantly comprising coniferous plantations, but with some mixed and policy woodlands occurring on lower slopes on the edge of the valleys and within deeply incised side valleys. Flat valley floors and lower slopes are farmed and gently undulating pastures occur on the north-west facing long dip slopes of the ridges and at the transition with the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9).	The open farmed valley floors are important in the contrast they provide with the densely forested ridges and this size of turbine could detract from this and from occasional policy features. The more uniform coniferous forest cover is generally less sensitive.	<b>Medium</b>	The open farmed valley floors are important in the contrast they provide with the densely forested ridges and this size of turbine could detract from this and from occasional policy features. The more uniform coniferous forest cover is generally less sensitive.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Built environment</b>	The valleys are well settled and feature a regular pattern of small farms,	Settlement is focussed within the valleys and this size of turbine would	<b>High</b>	Settlement is focussed within the valleys and this size of turbine	<b>High-medium</b>

	cottages and small settlements such as Dallas and Rafford. There are a number of historic houses with associated designed landscapes, the 'landmark' feature of Pluscarden Abbey and archaeological features. Public roads are very narrow and private tracks are often steep within the forested ridges.	detract from the setting of settlements, historic houses, Pluscarden Abbey and archaeological features if sited within these areas. Sparsely settled upper hill slopes would be less sensitive in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements and other built features although turbines of this size would be likely to be seen in relative proximity to built features given settlement density and pattern across this landscape. Narrow roads and steep terrain could result in landscape and visual effects associated with access improvements for vehicles required to transport this typology.		would detract from the setting of settlements, historic houses, Pluscarden Abbey and archaeological features if sited within these areas. Sparsely settled upper hill slopes would be less sensitive in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements and other built features. Narrow roads and steep terrain could result in landscape and visual effects associated with access improvements for vehicles required to transport this typology.	
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	Although the valleys are strongly contained and can feel secluded in some places, they are generally well-settled. The presence of extensive forestry and also wind farm development and a transmission line visible from the upper Lossie valley lessens the sense of naturalness. The Pluscarden area has distinct historical associations.	This typology could affect the sense of seclusion and the historical dimension felt in parts of this landscape although in general wildland qualities are not pronounced.	<b>Medium</b>	This typology could affect the sense of seclusion and the historical dimension felt in parts of this landscape although in general wildland qualities are not pronounced.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Visual amenity</b>	The valleys are well settled and feature a network of narrow roads, some of these elevated and offering open views along and across the valleys to the ridges. Extensive woodland and the ridge landform limits open views in places although Forestry Commission	This typology would be highly visible if sited within the more open and well-settled valleys, significantly intruding on long views from roads and from settlement. Turbines of this size would be prominent from settlements and roads in this and	<b>High</b>	This typology would be highly visible if sited within the more open and well-settled valleys, significantly intruding on long views from roads and from settlement. Turbines of this size would be prominent from settlements and	<b>High-medium</b>



	<p>owned woodlands on the ridges appear well-used for recreation. A promoted viewpoint is located on the western end of the Heldon Hill ridge. The upper Lossie valley is particularly open and features views to the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) including the operational Rothes wind farm.</p> <p>The northern ridge of Heldon Hill is prominent from the settled Coastal Farmland (4) to the north and both ridges are seen from minor roads and settlement within the Rolling Farmland and Forest (5) to the east. Views are more limited from the west. The Hill of Mulundy forms a focal feature from the B9010.</p>	<p>adjacent character areas if sited on the ridges.</p>		<p>roads in this and adjacent character areas if sited on the ridges. There may be some limited scope to site turbines towards the smaller height band of this typology to avoid intrusion on prominent skylines and limiting views from the more settled valleys of this character type.</p>	
<b>Cumulative effects</b>	<p>The Paul's Hill wind farm can be glimpsed from the minor road at the upper end of the Pluscarden Valley near Hazelbank. The Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity (3-4km) to the upper Lossie valley. An extension to this wind farm has been consented and will increase the extent of turbines seen on the skyline particularly in the Dallas area. These wind farms are not visible from the more contained Pluscarden valley.</p>	<p>There would be close inter-visibility between any turbines located in the upper Lossie valley and the operational Rothes wind farm. Cumulative effects could also occur if this typology was located on the ridges of this character type where it would be seen together in longer views from the Coastal Farmland (4) and Rolling Farmland and Forest (5).</p>	<b>High</b>	<p>There would be close inter-visibility between any turbines located in the upper Lossie valley and the operational Rothes wind farm. Cumulative effects could also occur if this typology was located on the ridges of this character type where it would be seen together in longer views from the Coastal Farmland (4) and Rolling Farmland and Forest (5).</p>	<b>High</b>

**Character Type 5a: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys – Sensitivity assessment for small-medium and small typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of small-medium typology (35m-50m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of small typology (20m-35m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	This landscape comprises the broad valleys of Pluscarden and the upper Lossie and the two ridges which divide them. It forms a transition between the higher hills of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and the low-lying coastal plain of the Coastal Farmlands (4). This landscape is distinct from adjoining character types with the northern ridge of Heldon Hill forming a prominent backdrop to the settled Coastal Farmlands (4) and the Rolling Farmlands and Forest with Small Hills (5b) and the settled upper Lossie valley contrasting with the more open uplands of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) to the south. The ridges are also prominent from the Rolling Farmland and Forest (5) to the east. Operational wind farm development is visible in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9)	While the prominent ridges of this landscape would be sensitive to turbines of this size, the valleys are more contained and this typology could be located on more inward facing dip slopes without impacting visually on adjacent landscape types.	<b>Medium</b>	There are greater opportunities to site this size of turbine on lower slopes of the prominent ridges and within the valleys to minimise impacts on adjacent landscape types.	<b>Medium-low</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	The northern ridge (which is most prominent from the Coastal Farmland (4)) only rises to around 230m. The southern ridge is slightly higher at 300m. The valleys are strongly contained by the ridges and occasional 'pinch points' occur where the valley is incised and constricted by steep densely wooded hill slopes. Extensive	This typology could fit with the scale of less densely settled broader dip slopes of the ridges. Turbines of this size would still appear large in relation to the scale of relatively narrow flood plains and smaller landscape features within the valleys such as woodlands and buildings.	<b>High-medium</b>	There are increased opportunities for this size of turbine to fit with the scale of less densely settled broader dip slopes of the ridges. Turbines towards the lower height band of this typology <25m could also be accommodated on farmland on lower valley sides (but avoiding the open floodplain)	<b>Medium</b>

	woodland cover limits openness. The more open valley floors and lower sides accommodate a dispersed pattern of small farms and houses, enclosed fields and woodlands.				
<b>Landform</b>	The landform of this character type comprises an alternate pattern of two ridges separated by the valleys of the Upper Lossie and the Pluscarden. Both ridges feature a steep south-east facing scarp slopes and long gentler dip slopes to the north-west. Ridge tops are narrow and very gently undulating with the Hill of the Wangie and Heldon Hill forming subtle rounded summits. The Hill of Mulundy forms a western outlier to the southern ridge. The valleys of the upper Lossie and Pluscarden have flat floodplains although narrow and deeply incised side valleys also occasionally occur. Small complex knolls and river terraces pattern the lower southern slopes of the Lossie in the Kellas area.	The ridges form prominent landform features and there would be physical constraints to siting this typology on steep scarp slopes, narrow ridge tops and confined summits. The gentler dip slopes and broader flat valley bottoms would be less sensitive to this typology providing turbines were sited to avoid detracting on key views to the steep scarp slopes and the flat floodplain of the valleys. The more complex landform of knolls and terraces associated with the Lossie and the narrow deeply incised side valleys would be highly sensitive however.	<b>Medium</b>	Turbines of this size (and particularly those towards the lower height band of this typology) would be likely to have less of a detractive effect on key landform features. The prominent ridge tops, steep scarp slopes and more complex landform features would still be sensitive to any turbine sited on these features or nearby them.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	The ridges are largely forested, predominantly comprising coniferous plantations, but with some mixed and policy woodlands occurring on lower slopes on the edge of the valleys and within deeply incised side valleys. Flat valley floors and lower slopes are farmed and gently undulating pastures occur on the north-west facing long dip slopes of the ridges and at the transition with the Upland Moorland	The open farmed valley floors are important in the contrast they provide with the densely forested ridges and this size of turbine could detract from this and from occasional policy features. The more uniform coniferous forest cover is generally less sensitive.	<b>Medium</b>	There is more opportunity to site the smaller turbines of this typology to minimise effects on more notable land cover. The open farmed valley floor and policy features would still be sensitive to any turbine development however.	<b>Medium-low</b>

	and Forestry (9).				
<b>Built environment</b>	The valleys are well settled and feature a regular pattern of small farms, cottages and small settlements such as Dallas and Rafford. There are a number of historic houses with associated designed landscapes and the 'landmark' feature of Pluscarden Abbey. Public roads are very narrow and private tracks are often steep within the forested ridges.	Settlement is focussed within the valleys and this size of turbine would detract from the setting of settlements, historic houses and Pluscarden Abbey if sited within these areas. Sparsely settled upper hill slopes would be less sensitive in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements and other built features.	<b>Medium</b>	While the setting of key historic and archaeological built features would still be highly sensitive to intrusion, this typology would have less of an effect on other built features if sited either within less well-settled areas or if they comprised turbines towards the lower height band <25m.	<b>Medium-low</b>
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	Although the valleys are strongly contained and can feel secluded in some places, they are generally well-settled. The presence of extensive forestry and also wind farm development and a transmission line visible from the upper Lossie valley lessens the sense of naturalness. The Pluscarden area has distinct historical associations.	Wildland qualities are not pronounced and turbines of this size would be unlikely to have a significant effect on this, and other perceptual qualities, provided they were carefully sited.	<b>Low</b>	Wildland qualities are not pronounced and turbines of this size would be unlikely to have a significant effect on this, and other perceptual qualities, provided they were carefully sited.	<b>Low</b>
<b>Visual amenity</b>	The valleys are well settled and feature a network of narrow roads, some of these elevated and offering open views along and across the valleys to the ridges. Extensive woodland and the ridge landform limits open views in places although Forestry Commission owned woodlands on the ridges appear well-used for recreation. A promoted viewpoint is located on the western end of the Heldon Hill ridge. The upper Lossie valley is particularly open and features views to the	This typology would be highly visible if sited within the more open and well-settled valleys and could intrude on long views from roads and from settlement although there is increased scope to site turbines of this size in less well-settled areas to minimise visibility. Turbines of this size would be prominent from settlements and roads in this and adjacent character areas if sited on the ridges and particularly if seen on the skyline.	<b>High-medium</b>	Turbines of this size would have a reduced effect on views as they could be sited on lower hill slopes to avoid intrusion on long views from roads aligned through the valleys. Even turbines of this size would be intrusive however if sited on ridge tops so seen against the sky.	<b>Medium</b>

	<p>adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) including the operational Rothes wind farm.</p> <p>The northern ridge of Heldon Hill is prominent from the settled Coastal Farmland (4) to the north and both ridges are seen from minor roads and settlement within the Rolling Farmland and Forest (5) to the east. Views are more limited from the west. The Hill of Mulundy forms a focal feature from the B9010.</p>				
<b>Cumulative effects</b>	<p>The Paul's Hill wind farm can be glimpsed from the minor road at the upper end of the Pluscarden Valley near Hazelbank. The Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity (3-4km) to the upper Lossie valley. An extension to this wind farm has been consented and this will increase the extent of turbines seen on the skyline, particularly from the Dallas area. These wind farms are not visible from the more contained Pluscarden valley.</p>	<p>There would be close inter-visibility between this typology located in the upper Lossie valley and the operational Rothes wind farm and turbines of this size would still appear large when viewed from this character type. Cumulative effects could also occur if this typology was located on the prominent ridges where turbines would be seen together in longer views from the Coastal Farmland (4) and Rolling Farmland and Forest (5). The dip slopes of the ridges offer some limited opportunities to accommodate this size of turbine provided they could be sited to avoid impacts on sensitive skylines.</p>	<b>High-medium</b>	<p>There is increased scope to site turbines of this size to avoid significant cumulative impacts. The Lossie Valley remains sensitive however due to the close proximity of the Rothes wind farm.</p>	<b>Medium</b>

## Character Type 5a: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys

### **Summary of capacity**

This landscape comprises two pronounced ridges separated by the valleys of the Upper Lossie and Pluscarden. The ridges feature steep south-facing scarp slopes and long gentle dip slopes to the north. The northern ridge is especially prominent in views from the Coastal Farmlands (4) to the north, although the distinctive rhythmic landform of this pair of ridges is appreciated in 'end-on' views from the 'Rolling Farmlands and Forest' (5) to the east. The valleys are more visually contained and feature open farmed flat floodplains which contrast with the often heavily wooded valley sides. Settlement is focussed within these valleys with small settlements, large estate houses and dispersed farms and houses often located on lower valley sides. Occasional historic and archaeological features, such as Pluscarden Abbey, form landmark features in this landscape. The Upper Lossie valley is generally more open than the Pluscarden valley and it lies in close proximity to the operational Rothes wind farm sited within the adjacent 'Upland Moorland and Forestry' (9).

The relatively small scale of the settled valleys, the prominent backdrop provided by the ridges to surrounding landscapes and the presence of more complex or dramatic landform features, such as the steep scarp slopes increase sensitivity within this landscape. Visual sensitivity is increased by the prominence of the ridges but also the long views possible along the valleys. The potential for cumulative impacts with nearby operational wind farm development is also an additional constraint in the Lossie Valley. There would be an overall **High** sensitivity to both the large (80-130m) and the medium (50-80m) typologies. Sensitivity would be **High-medium** for the small-medium typology (35-50m) and **Medium** for the small typology (20-35m).

### **Potential cumulative issues**

The Rothes wind farm is seen in relative proximity (3-4km) to the upper Lossie valley. An extension to this wind farm has been consented and this will increase the extent of turbines seen on the skyline above the Lossie valley. This wind farm is not visible from the more contained Pluscarden valley. Key cumulative issues that may arise within the Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys (5a) are likely to include:

- The close inter-visibility between additional turbines located in the upper Lossie valley and the operational Rothes wind farm where even the small typology (20-35m) would appear large from settlement and roads and could increase the visual clutter of turbines and also the transmission line already prominent from this valley.
- An absence of rationale which could occur between existing large turbines clearly associated with less settled simple and more expansive upland areas and the same size of turbines also sited within this smaller scale landscape.
- Inter-visibility between any wind turbines located on visually prominent ridge tops or upper slopes, where they would break the skyline and be seen together with the Rothes wind farm in longer views from the Coastal Farmland (4) and Rolling Farmland and Forest (5).
- Variations in the type and size of single and small groups of small turbines proposed within the landscape type.
- Sequential visual impacts experienced when travelling through this landscape.

### **Constraints**

- The visual prominence of the ridges and Mulundy Hill - the long northern ridge of Heldon Hill is particularly prominent, seen widely from settlement and roads from the Coastal Farmlands (4) from the north.
- The low relief of the northern ridge, where tall turbines could dominate their scale, and the strong containment and limited extent of the valleys.
- Steep wooded scarp slopes of the ridges and smaller scale complex knolls and terraces occurring on the southern edge of the upper Lossie.
- The open farmed floodplain which contrasts with the densely wooded ridges and enhances the scenic diversity of this landscape.
- The setting of historic houses, such as Kellas and Dallas Lodge and their designed landscapes, and the setting of the 'landmark' feature of Pluscarden Abbey and also occasional archaeological features.
- The well-settled nature of the valleys within this character type and the recreational use of Heldon Wood which increases visual sensitivity.
- Potential cumulative effects with the Rothes wind farm development which is seen in close proximity to the upper Lossie valley.

### **Opportunities**

- The more gently graded dip slopes of the ridges where rising ground could form a backdrop reducing the prominence of smaller turbines.

### **Guidance on development**

No scope for the large (80m-130m) and large-medium (50m – 80m) typologies has been identified in this landscape sensitivity assessment.

There is likely to be **limited** scope for the small-medium (35m - 50m) development typologies to be sited within this character type due to the adverse impacts likely to occur on the small scale and setting of settlement and historic buildings within the valleys, on views of the prominent ridges but also cumulative impacts with the operational Rothes wind farm located in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) character type. Opportunities are limited to the more expansive and less well-settled dip slopes of the ridges. Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, and care should be taken to avoid intrusion on sensitive skylines by siting turbines so back-dropped by rising ground. Turbines towards the lower height band of this typology would be likely to be less visually prominent.

There is **some** scope for the small typology (20m –35m) to be accommodated in this landscape. Turbines of this size should also be located on gently graded dip slopes but could additionally be accommodated on the edges of pastures on valley sides which are often bordered by forest. Turbines should be set back from the open valley floor where they would be visually prominent in long views from roads and settlement but should avoid being set in front of the steep scarp slopes of the ridges. Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, which should be limited to no more than three turbines.

Turbines of less than 20m in height could more readily be accommodated within the farmed areas of this landscape type and would be less visible due to their increased ability to be screened by landform and woodland.

Turbines sited in these areas should avoid cumulative effects with the Rothes wind farm located in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). The upper Lossie valley will be particularly sensitive in this respect and it is recommended that only turbines below 20m height should be used in this area, and situated close to existing buildings, where close views of this operational wind farm are possible. Turbines should be sited to avoid impacting on the setting of historic built features and archaeology.

Micro siting should follow the guidance set out in Section 5 of the main study report.





*Occasional narrow valleys have an intimate scale and would be highly sensitive to turbines sited on the edge of upper slopes.*



*The long, densely wooded ridge of Heldon Hill comprises one of the two prominent ridges which separate the Lossie and Pluscarden valleys.*



*The upper Lossie valley, backed by the 'Upland Moorland and Forestry' (9)*



*Pluscarden Abbey forms a key focus in views – the steep scarp slopes of the ridge of Heldon Hill form an important part of its landscape setting.*

### ***Character Type 5a: Rolling Farmland and Forest with Valleys***

## **Character Type 5b: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills**

### ***Introduction***

The Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) landscape character type extends west/east across Moray, between the Spey and the Findhorn valleys, forming the transition between the uplands and coastal plain. To the south lies the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and to the north the low-lying Coastal Farmlands (4).

Due to the differences in context, character and scale of landscapes within the Rolling Farmland and Forests (5) character type, two sub-divisions have been identified for the purpose of this study:

- The 'Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys' (5a) which occurs between the Rafford valley and extends east to near Miltonduff, incorporating the Kellas and Pluscarden valleys
- The 'Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills' (5b) which occurs to the west, where extensive deposits have created undulating and hummocky terrain and there is a distinctive pattern of alternating forest and fields;

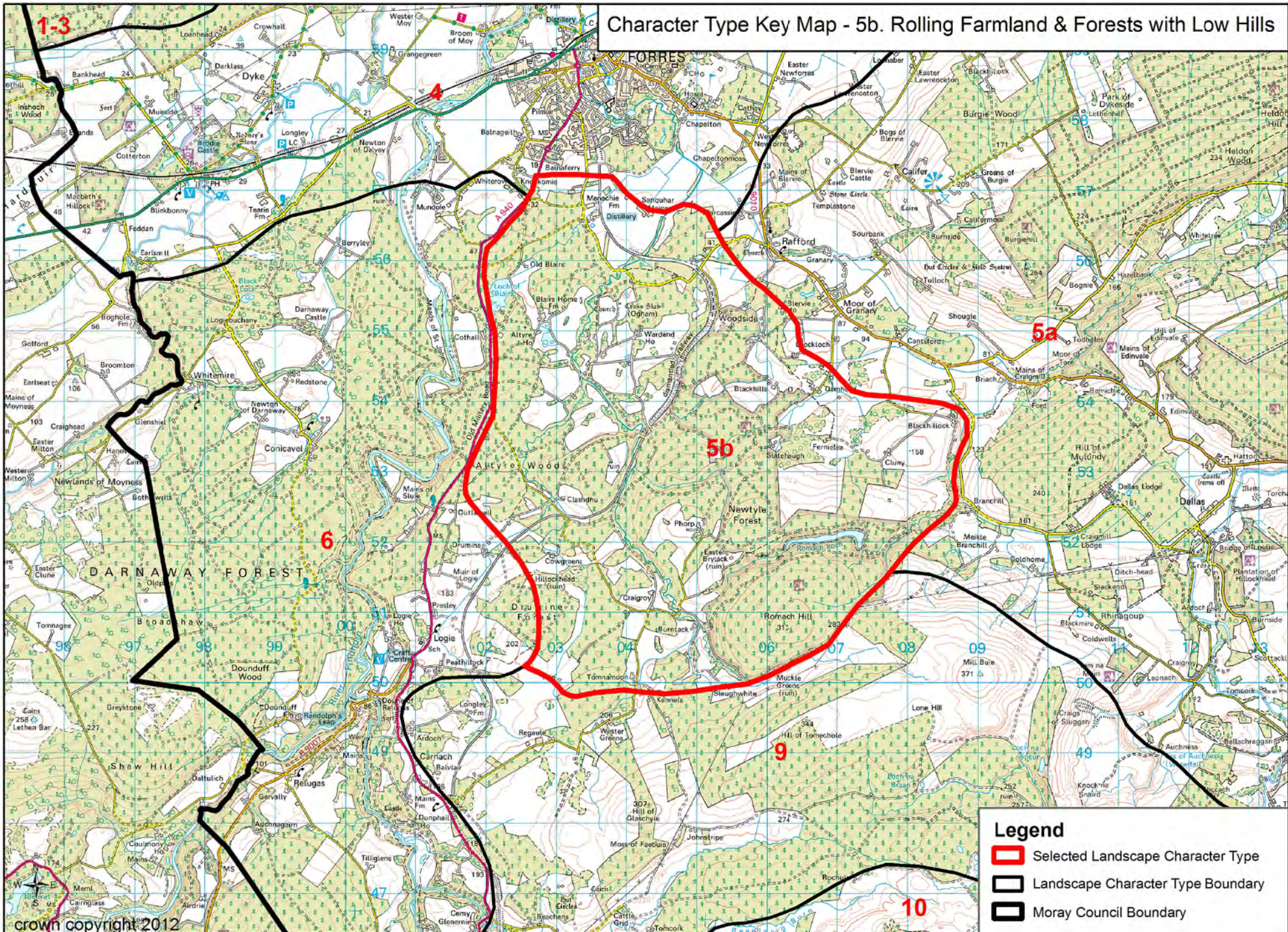
The eastern area of the Rolling Farmland and Forests between the Spey and Lossie valleys has been retained as character type 5 as it is closest in character to the original definition in the Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment. This landscape forms a relatively narrow band of small rolling hills fringing the broader Upland Moorland and Forestry (9).

This section of the report is the landscape sensitivity assessment which has been undertaken for the sub-type Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b).




### ***Existing/consented wind farm development***

No operational wind turbines were noted within this character type during the site visit.

# Character Type Key Map - 5b. Rolling Farmland & Forests with Low Hills



**Legend**

-  Selected Landscape Character Type
-  Landscape Character Type Boundary
-  Moray Council Boundary

**Character Type 5b: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills – Sensitivity assessment for large and medium typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of large typology (80m-130m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of medium typology (50m-80m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	<p>This landscape forms a transition between the higher hills of the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) and the low-lying valleys and coastal plains of Narrow Wooded Valley (6) and Coastal Farmlands (4). The undulating landforms and extensive woodland limit inter-visibility with adjacent landscape types, although the western edges are visible from the open spaces within the neighbouring Narrow wooded Valleys (6).</p> <p>The wider visual prominence of Romach Hill is an exception, as it forms a prominent 'landmark' hill which is easily recognisable outwith the area and is visible more widely across western Moray. It also provides a visual 'buffer' between the lowland landscapes and the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) to the south from some lower viewpoints including public roads.</p> <p>The relatively small scale of hill forms and spaces contrasts with larger hill forms and bolder pattern of extensive forest and open moor to the south.</p> <p>This landscape type is relatively small in extent.</p>	<p>The small extent of this landscape type limits scope to accommodate this typology without it impacting on the adjacent Narrow Wooded Valley (6) to the west or Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys (5a) to the east.</p> <p>Romach Hill is a landmark hill, easily recognisable and visible in views outwith this LCT. It is a sensitive feature because of its wide visibility and strategic role as a visual foreground to more extensive upland areas. Otherwise, this landscape character type is relatively self contained, with views into the type limited by the landform and woodland and partly hidden from the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) by Romach Hill.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>	<p>The small extent of this landscape type limits scope to accommodate this typology without it impacting on the adjacent Narrow Wooded Valley (6) to the west or Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys (5a) to the east.</p> <p>Romach Hill is a landmark hill, easily recognisable and visible in views outwith this LCT. It is a sensitive feature because of its wide visibility and strategic role as a visual foreground to more extensive upland areas. Otherwise, this landscape character type is relatively self contained, and partly hidden from the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) by Romach Hill.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	Very small scale, undulating and hummocky landform skirting around	This size of turbine would impact on the small scale of much of this	<b>High</b>	This size of turbine would impact on the small scale of much of this	<b>High</b>

	<p>the base of Romach Hill and extending north towards the outskirts of Forres. The small scale of this landscape is reinforced by the low relief, with landform undulating between 90m and 190m. The exception is Romach Hill, which rises in a pronounced dome to 315m.</p> <p>The extensive framework of mixed woodland, within which lie improved grass fields which appear to have been carved out of the forest, further emphasises the small scale. The constant presence of trees, and where there are open spaces, buildings provide consistent small scale features.</p>	<p>character type. In particular, this typology would dominate the low relief, small scale landform and pattern of small spaces characteristic of this landscape.</p>		<p>character type. In particular, this typology would dominate the low relief, small scale landform and pattern of small spaces characteristic of this landscape.</p>	
<b>Landform</b>	<p>This area has a consistent pattern of rolling small hills, knolls and hummocks, which are rounded in shape with smooth forms and gentle slopes.</p> <p>Landform can be more complex where deposit features interlock. There are occasional more pronounced knolls and higher hills, notably Romach Hill, which are more visually prominent.</p> <p>Fields tend to be more gently graded and sometimes relatively level.</p>	<p>The more prominent hills, the frequent low summits and the complex knolly and interlocking landforms are sensitive to this typology.</p> <p>Landform containment for this typology is limited by the lack of extended ridges and more extensive bowls of land.</p>	<b>High</b>	<p>The more prominent hills, the frequent low summits and the complex knolly and interlocking landforms are sensitive to this typology.</p> <p>Landform containment for this typology is limited by the lack of extended ridges and more extensive bowls of land.</p>	<b>High</b>
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	<p>This landscape is strongly characterised by the pattern of open grazed fields alternating with forested areas which creates a distinct and consistent spatial sequence.</p>	<p>The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for this typology, which would quickly dominate the</p>	<b>High</b>	<p>The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for this typology, which would quickly</p>	<b>High</b>

	<p>The mixed woodland, including broadleaves and mixed conifers as well as occasional policy-type mixes, and wide range of age structure, offers diversity which is further enhanced by the range of woodland – extending from small clumps of trees to more extensive forest.</p> <p>The open spaces are frequently irregular and often ‘organic’ in shape, increasing the sense of interlock. Occasional water bodies, including the deep trough of the Romach Loch, are features within this landscape.</p>	<p>sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the designed landscape around Altyre House is an additional sensitivity.</p>		<p>dominate the sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the designed landscape around Altyre House is an additional sensitivity.</p>	
<b>Built environment</b>	<p>This landscape is not heavily settled, with farms, houses and even small crofts generally located at the edge of the open spaces overlooking the fields. Altyre House and the associated estate, as well as occasional historical and archaeological features, including churches and distillery buildings add to the diversity of the built environment within this landscape.</p> <p>Both public and private roads are very narrow.</p>	<p>The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. This landscape type is however not well settled, although the settlement is focussed on existing open spaces, and more extensive wooded areas may therefore be less sensitive even to this size of typology in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements.</p> <p>The narrowness and winding character of the road network is likely to be compromised by improvements to accommodate the large vehicles required to transport this typology.</p>	<b>High-medium</b>	<p>The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. This landscape type is however not well settled, although the settlement is focussed on existing open spaces, and more extensive wooded areas may therefore be less sensitive even to this size of typology in terms of avoiding impact on the immediate setting of settlements.</p> <p>The narrowness and winding character of the road network is likely to be compromised by improvements to accommodate the large vehicles required to transport this typology.</p>	<b>High-medium</b>
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	<p>The self contained character of this landscape increases the sense of</p>	<p>This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>	<p>This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>

	seclusion in a landscape which, because of the degree of enclosure, can quickly feel 'set apart' from the rest of Moray. This is reinforced by the sparse network of public roads, with opportunities to explore the forests largely limited to non-vehicular access. Travelling through the well defined spatial sequence is a particular experiential characteristic of this landscape which is strongly linked to its identity.	The pattern of spaces is a particular quality of this landscape, and this typology could easily dominate and reduce the contrast of the open spaces to the forested areas.		The pattern of spaces is a particular quality of this landscape, and this typology could easily dominate and reduce the contrast of the open spaces to the forested areas.	
<b>Visual amenity</b>	Views within this landscape type are very limited and are often intermittent due to the enclosure created by both landform and woodland.	The low hills and woodland often screen parts of this landscape, so that views from the roads, for example, are intermittent. However, the height of this typology means that it is likely to appear above many of these smaller features and may be relatively widely and consistently visible.	<b>High-Medium</b>	The low hills and woodland often screen parts of this landscape, so that views from the roads, for example, are intermittent. The smaller height of this typology means that while it is likely to appear above many of these smaller features and may be relatively widely and consistently visible, but less so than the 'Large' typology.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Cumulative effects</b>	Views of wind farms are limited from within this enclosed landscape type, where visibility is severely restricted by woodland and containing landform, including Romach Hill. The four turbines at Findhorn, in Coastal farmland (4), can be seen from some locations.	There is only limited inter-visibility between this typology and any development in neighbouring LCTs	<b>Low</b>	There is only limited inter-visibility between this typology and any development in neighbouring LCTs	<b>Low</b>

**Character Type 5a: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills – Sensitivity assessment for small-medium and small typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of small-medium typology (35m-50m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of small typology (20m-35m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	<p>This landscape forms a transition between the higher hills of the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) and the lowlying valleys and coastal plains of Narrow Wooded Valley (6) and Coastal Farmlands (4). The undulating landforms and extensive woodland limit inter-visibility with adjacent landscape types.</p> <p>The wider visual prominence of Romach Hill is an exception, as it forms a prominent 'landmark' hill which is easily recognisable outwith the area and is visible more widely across western Moray. It also provides a visual 'buffer' between the lowland landscapes and the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) to the south from some lower viewpoints including public roads.</p> <p>The relatively small scale of hill and spaces contrasts with larger hill forms and bolder pattern of extensive forest and open moor to the south.</p> <p>This landscape type is relatively small in extent.</p>	<p>This landscape character type is relatively self contained, with views into the type limited by the undulating landform and woodland and partly hidden from the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) by Romach Hill.</p> <p>While the landscape type is relatively small in extent, this typology could be located in the interior without impacting visually on adjacent landscape types.</p> <p>Romach Hill remains a sensitive feature, however, even to this size of typology, because of its wide visibility and role as a visual foreground to more extensive upland areas.</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>This landscape character type is relatively self contained, with views into the type limited by the undulating landform and woodland and partly hidden from the Upland Moor and Forestry (9) by Romach Hill.</p> <p>While the landscape type is relatively small in extent, this typology could be located without impacting visually on adjacent landscape types.</p>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	<p>Very small scale, undulating and hummocky landform skirting around the base of Romach Hill and extending north towards the outskirts of Forres.</p> <p>The small scale of this landscape is</p>	<p>This size of turbine would impact on the small scale of this character type.</p> <p>In particular, this typology would appear tall compared to the low relief and smaller open spaces</p>	<b>High-medium</b>	<p>This size of turbine might impact on the small scale of some of the more intimately scaled areas of this character type.</p> <p>There is likely to be most scope to</p>	<b>Medium</b>



	<p>reinforced by the low relief, with landform undulating between 90m and 190m. The exception is Romach Hill, which rises in a pronounced dome to 315m.</p> <p>The extensive framework of mixed woodland, within which lie improved grass fields which appear to have been carved out of the forest, further emphasises the small scale.</p> <p>The constant presence of trees, and where there are open spaces, buildings provide consistent reference points.</p>	<p>characteristic of this landscape. The consistent presence of small features – including trees and buildings – would make it difficult to accommodate this size of typology without it appearing much larger than these features.</p> <p>More open, larger spaces associated with rising ground and along the lower slopes of larger hills offer more potential for this typology.</p> <p>The smaller turbines in this typology range would have less impact on scale.</p>		<p>accommodate turbines of this type in the larger open spaces, along the lower slopes of larger hills, with turbines towards the lower height band of this typology having the least potential impact.</p>	
<b>Landform</b>	<p>This area has a consistent pattern of rolling small hills, knolls and hummocks, which are rounded in shape with smooth forms and gentle slopes.</p> <p>Landform can be more complex where deposit features interlock.</p> <p>There are occasional more pronounced knolls and higher hills, notably Romach Hill, which are more visually prominent.</p> <p>Fields tend to be more gently graded and sometimes relatively level.</p>	<p>The more prominent hills, the frequent low summits and the complex knolly and interlocking landforms are sensitive to this typology.</p> <p>Long evenly graded and gentle slopes with occasional terraces are likely to offer more potential than areas of intricate and complex landform.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>	<p>The more prominent hills, the frequent low summits and the complex knolly and interlocking landforms are sensitive to this typology.</p> <p>Long evenly graded and gentle slopes with occasional terraces are likely to offer more potential than areas of intricate and complex landform. There is likely to be additional potential to accommodate this typology on the side slopes of gentle, less prominent low hills.</p>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	<p>This landscape is strongly characterised by the pattern of open grazed fields alternating with forested areas which creates a distinct and</p>	<p>The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for this typology,</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for</p>	<b>Medium-low</b>

	<p>consistent spatial sequence. The mixed woodland, including broadleaves and mixed conifers as well as occasional policy-type mixes, and wide range of age structure, offers diversity which is further enhanced by the range of woodland – extending from small clumps of trees to more extensive forest. Although woodland is commercially managed, it is mixed in character, and often managed as continuous cover or with small fellings. The open spaces are frequently irregular and often ‘organic’ in shape, increasing the sense of interlock. Several water bodies, including the deep trough of the Romach Loch, are features within this landscape.</p>	<p>which could dominate the sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the designed landscape around Altyre House is an additional sensitivity. More open and simple land cover, especially more extensive grazing, may provide some scope for this typology.</p>		<p>this typology, which could dominate the sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the designed landscape around Altyre House is an additional sensitivity. More open and simple land cover, especially more extensive grazing is likely to provide scope for this typology. This size of typology is less likely to interrupt or fragment the landcover pattern than taller typologies</p>	
<b>Built environment</b>	<p>This landscape is not heavily settled, with farms, houses and even small crofts generally located at the edge of the open spaces overlooking the fields. Altyre House and the associated estate, as well as occasional historical and archaeological features including churches and distillery buildings, add to the diversity of the built environment within this landscape. Both public and private roads are very narrow.</p>	<p>The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. This landscape type is however not well settled, although the settlement is focussed on existing open spaces, therefore there is likely to be opportunities to site this size of typology without impacting on the setting of settlements. There is likely to be scope to site this typology where it does not relate to the small size of the buildings.</p>	<b>Medium-low</b>	<p>The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. This landscape type is however not well settled, although the settlement is focussed on existing open spaces, therefore there is likely to be opportunities to site this size of typology without impacting on the setting of settlements. The height of this typology is likely to relate to larger farm buildings and there is likely to be scope to site this typology where it does not relate to the size of smaller buildings.</p>	<b>Low</b>

<p><b>Perceptual qualities</b></p>	<p>The self contained character of this landscape increases the sense of seclusion in a landscape which, because of the degree of enclosure, can quickly feel ‘set apart’ from the rest of Moray. This is reinforced by the sparse network of public roads, with opportunities to explore the mixed woodland forests largely limited to non-vehicular access. Travelling through the well defined spatial sequence is a particular experiential characteristic of this landscape which is strongly linked to its identity.</p>	<p>This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape. The pattern of spaces is a particular quality of this landscape, and this typology could dominate and reduce the contrast of the open spaces to the forested areas. Elsewhere, on larger areas of open farmed and settled land, there is likely to be less impact on these qualities.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p>This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape. The pattern of spaces is a particular quality of this landscape, and this typology could dominate and reduce the contrast of the open spaces to the forested areas. Elsewhere, on larger areas of open farmed and settled land, there is likely to be less impact on these qualities.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>
<p><b>Visual amenity</b></p>	<p>Views into and within this landscape type are very limited and are often intermittent due to the enclosure created by both landform and woodland.</p>	<p>The low hills and woodland often screen parts of this landscape, so that views from the road, for example, are intermittent. Views of this height of turbine are therefore likely to be intermittent and reduced by the screening effects of landform and trees, although the sensitivity assessment recognises that trees will be felled, opening up new views for a period. The smaller turbines in this typology range would have less visual impact.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p>The low hills and woodland often screen parts of this landscape, so that views from the road, for example, are intermittent. Views of this height of turbine are therefore likely to be intermittent and reduced by the screening effects of landform and trees, although the sensitivity assessment recognises that trees will be felled, opening up new views for a period. The lower height of this typology reduces potential visual impact. The smaller turbines in this typology range would have less visual impact.</p>	<p><b>Medium-low</b></p>
<p><b>Cumulative effects</b></p>	<p>Views of wind farms are limited from within this enclosed landscape type, where visibility is severely restricted by</p>	<p>There is only limited inter-visibility between this typology and any development in neighbouring LCTs</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p>There is only limited inter-visibility between this typology and any development in neighbouring LCTs</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>

	woodland and containing landform, including Romach Hill. The four turbines at Findhorn, in Coastal farmland (4), can be seen from some locations.				
--	---	--	--	--	--

## Character Type 5b: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills

### **Summary of capacity**

Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b) extends across undulating deposits which create hummocky and free draining terrain, rising to low rounded hills, the highest of which is Romach Hill. The area forms a transition between the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and the town of Forres. It also forms the western edge of the Rolling Farmland and Forests with Valleys (5b), and the eastern edge of the narrow wooded valley (6), overlooking the forests and farmland of Logie and Darnaway. The hummocky terrain, the undulations and low rounded hills are well wooded, with pasture fields appearing to be carved out of the forest, creating a sequence of spaces which provide a well defined and consistent character. The enclosure and extensive woodland creates a secluded character.

Settlement is dispersed, with small farms, crofts and other houses are located at the edge of fields and woodland clearings, but there is a more extensive designed landscape at Altyre. The few roads are narrow and winding, although there is extensive access along forest tracks and farm roads. The Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5a) character type is only partially settled and not extensively roaded. Views within the area are limited by landform and the woodland which forms extensive enclosure offering intermittent views of the opens spaces and limiting long views across the type. Romach Hill is a prominent landmark hill, and it can be widely seen from outwith the area, forming a foreground feature to the more extensive neighbouring Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) when viewed from the north.

The low relief, small scale and occasionally interlocking pattern of the low hills and hummocky terrain, the frequent small summits, the intricate and consistent pattern of small open spaces set within enclosed woodland and the secluded character of the landscape are key sensitivities of this character type. This landscape therefore has a **High** sensitivity to both the large (80m – 130m) and the medium (50m – 80m) typologies, **High Medium** sensitivity to the small-medium (35m – 50m) typology, which reflects the sensitivity to scale in this landscape, and **Medium** sensitivity for small (20 – 35m) typology, reflecting that there are likely to be more opportunities to accommodate smaller turbines which with careful siting are less likely to impact on the small scale and seclusion of the landscape character.

Turbines of less than 20m in height could readily be accommodated within the farmed areas of this landscape type.

### **Potential cumulative issues**

There is some potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects to arise in the future with turbines located in adjacent character types, as the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) has been identified as having some potential for wind turbines, including the large and medium typologies.

Romach Hill offers a useful visual buffer as it stands between the higher, but more extensive plateau of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) to the south and the low-lying and smaller scale landscapes of the Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5a).

The farmed clearings which are likely to be the focus for the smaller typologies identified as being the most appropriate for this landscape type are dispersed and not easily inter-visible, which is likely to minimise potential for simultaneous cumulative visual impacts. The effects of turbines on sequential visual impacts when travelling through the landscape from space to space should be carefully monitored. Care should be taken to develop a careful and consistent approach to turbine style and siting to avoid negative impacts on landscape character. This will also mitigate against visual clutter in smaller spaces where settlement is concentrated in smaller spaces.

Well-sited turbines of less than 20m and a consistent relationship between these small turbines and the farm cluster are likely to further minimise potential cumulative impacts. Small turbines are also more readily visually screened by topography and woodland, which is likely to limit their cumulative visual impact.

Key cumulative issues that may arise within the Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b) are likely to include:

- Variations in the type and size of single and small groups of small turbines proposed within the landscape type;
- Visual confusion and an absence of rationale which could occur between large turbines sited in less settled simple and more expansive upland areas and the same size of turbines also sited within this smaller scale landscape;
- Visual clutter created by an inconsistent relationship with other elements in this relatively well structured landscape;
- Sequential visual impacts experienced when travelling through the landscape

### ***Constraints***

- The small scale of the landscape – low relief, small landforms and hummocky terrain characteristic of much of this landscape
- The tops of the low rounded hills where turbines would form prominent features if sited on them;
- The small scale of the fields and clearings within the forest, surrounded by trees, the enclosure reinforcing a sense of intimacy and discovery when travelling from space to space
- The centre of the open spaces and clearings in the woodland, where turbines will be more likely to be visually prominent and become the focal point of views into the spaces
- The sense of seclusion reinforced by the degree of enclosure and extent of the woodland
- The widespread visibility and prominence of Romach Hill, and its strategic role in separating the small scale low-lying terrain from the more extensive uplands
- The setting of individual buildings, within the irregular clearings which appear to have been carved out of the forest;
- The setting of Altyre Estate, its built features, waterbodies and its designed policies;
- The deep trough of Romach Loch and its setting.

### **Opportunities**

- The more gently graded lower slopes of Romach Hill, which forms a larger scale setting for the turbines;
- The edges of clearings, next to farm buildings, which create 'clusters' of development;
- Larger stretches of moor or open fields, especially when back-dropped by higher land or the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) landscape type

### **Guidance on development**

No scope for the large (80m-130m) and large-medium (50m – 80m) typologies has been identified in this landscape sensitivity assessment.

There is likely to be **limited** scope for the small-medium (35m - 50m) development typologies to be sited within this character type due to the adverse impacts likely to occur on the small scale landscape and the sense of seclusion. Scope is limited to the larger spaces associated with more extensive fields or moorland, associated with the transition with the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) or the lower fringes of Romach Hill. Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, and care should be taken to avoid cumulative effects with turbines on adjacent upland character types.

There are some opportunities for the small typology (20m – 35m) to be located on gently graded slopes and the edges of farmland within the Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b). Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, which should be limited to no more than three turbines. Turbines sited in these areas should avoid intruding into the centre of the open spaces, the setting of key features and the summits of low hills.

Well sited turbines of less than 20m could be sited to reflect the scattered settlement pattern, and would fit in well with the scale of this landscape.

All turbines should be located to avoid impacts on the settings of, and views from and to, features and sites of historical or archaeological interest. Micro siting should follow the guidance set out in Section 5 of the main report.



*This character type is dominated by small spaces carved out of woodlands*



*Built development is arranged around the edge of the fields in these spaces*



*Woodland is under continuous cover management with some small scale fellings which change the pattern of open space and views*



*Policy woodland enclosing spaces on the Altyre estate*

### ***Character Type 5b: Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills***



## **Character Type 6: Narrow Wooded Valley**

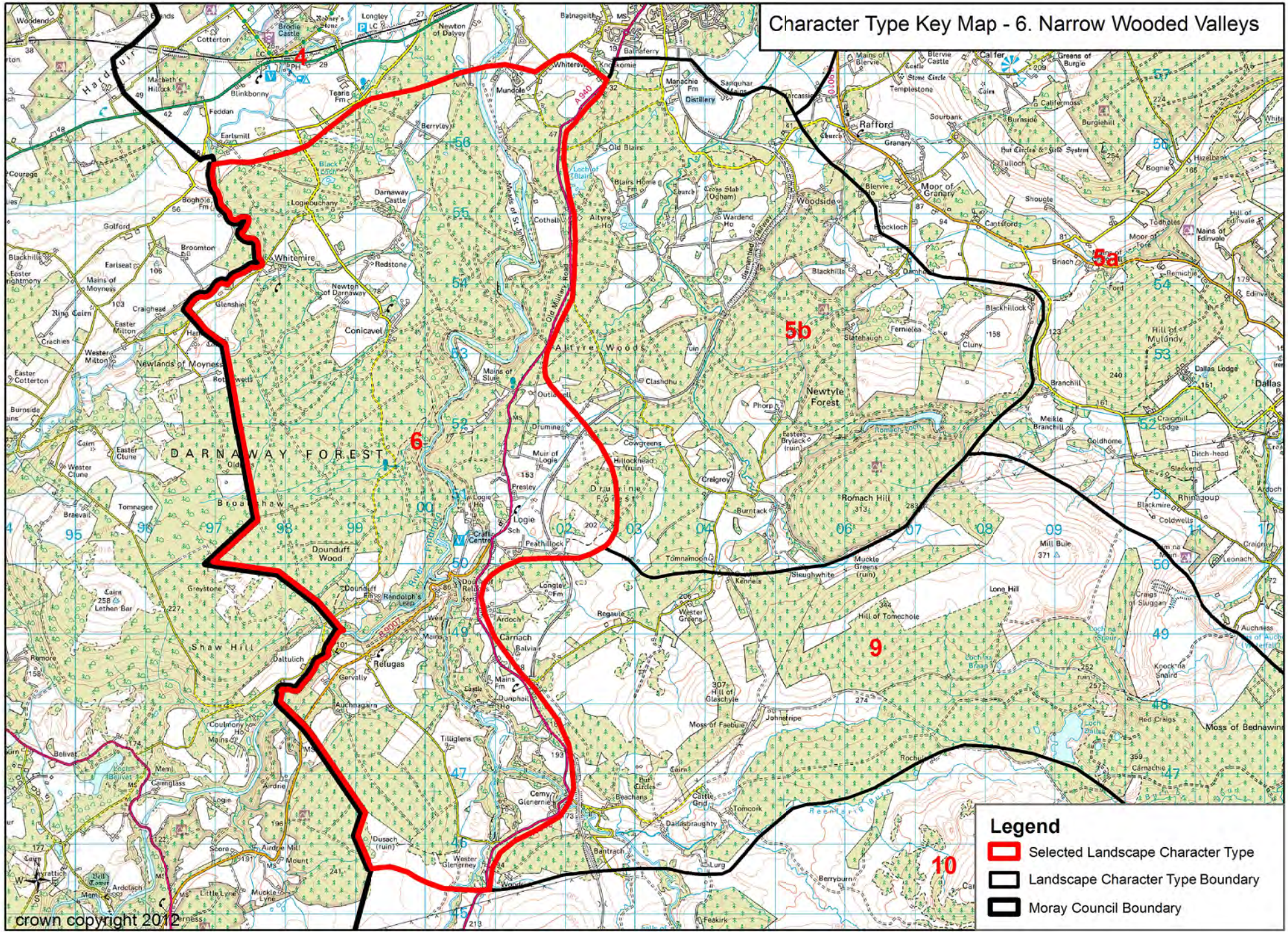
### ***Introduction***

The Narrow Wooded Valley (6) landscape character type extends either side of the River Findhorn and its significant tributary, the Divie Burn, from just south west of Forres to the Council boundary. It forms the western edge of Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b) and is partly overlooked by the western end of Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). Broad undulating slopes frame the deeply incised river valleys and extend widely across the area. The landscape is extensively wooded, although there are large open areas of arable fields across elevated slopes. The character is strongly influenced by the management priorities and setting of the sequence of individual estates located along the valley.

### ***Existing/consented wind farm development***

No operational wind farms or turbines were noted within this character type during the site visit.

# Character Type Key Map - 6. Narrow Wooded Valleys



- Legend**
- ▭ Selected Landscape Character Type
  - Landscape Character Type Boundary
  - Moray Council Boundary

**Character Type 6: Narrow Wooded Valley – Sensitivity assessment for large and medium typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of large typology (80m-130m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of medium typology (50m-80m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	<p>This landscape lies at the western boundary of Moray, and is relatively self-contained. Low-lying, it forms the western edge to Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5a) and also marches with Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and Open Uplands (10), along its south-eastern corner. This LCT, especially to the south, is overlooked from high points, including the Knock of Braemoray and is inter-visible with the low western hills of the Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). The wooded character merges slightly with the adjacent Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b), and the valley itself extends into neighbouring Nairn. Nevertheless, this landscape type is relatively small in extent. The valley of the Dorback Burn/the Divie, forms a key 'gateway' to Moray from the south, with A940 extending over the dramatic open expanse of the Dava Moor and then descending into the wooded valley.</p>	<p>This landscape character type is relatively self-contained, with views into this type from neighbouring LCTs limited by the woodland, although higher hills on adjacent types to the south overlook this low-lying character type. The small extent of this type would be quickly dominated by this typology. Turbines of this size would also impact on the approach and sense of arrival to Moray.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>	<p>This landscape character type is relatively self-contained, with views into this type from neighbouring LCTs limited by the woodland, although higher hills on adjacent types to the south overlook this low-lying character type. The small extent of this type would be quickly dominated by this typology. Turbines of this size would also impact on the approach and sense of arrival to Moray.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	<p>Although landform creates only a modest level of enclosure along the gentle, upper valley side slopes, the woodland creates considerable containment reducing the scale of the</p>	<p>This size of turbine would impact on the small scale of much of this character type. In particular, this typology would dominate the low relief, the medium to small scale</p>	<b>High</b>	<p>This size of turbine would impact on the small scale of much of this character type. In particular, this typology would dominate the low relief, the medium to small scale</p>	<b>High</b>

	<p>experience of this landscape. The scale of the landform becomes progressively smaller as the undulations become more complex and the valley becomes narrower and more enclosed, closer to the rivers. The medium to small scale of the topography is reinforced by the low relief, with landform generally undulating between 100m and 150m in elevation, although it is lower to the north and a more prominent hill at Dusach, on the very southern boundary forms the high point for the area.</p> <p>The medium sized fields, which are relatively open and flat, reinforce the sense of medium scale on the upper slopes.</p> <p>The constant presence of trees and buildings provide consistent reference points against which size of turbines can be judged.</p>	<p>landform and the open spaces within this landscape.</p> <p>The consistent presence of small features – including trees and buildings – would make it difficult to accommodate this size of typology without it dominating these features.</p>		<p>landform and the open spaces within this landscape.</p> <p>The consistent presence of small features – including trees and buildings – would make it difficult to accommodate this size of typology without it dominating these features.</p>	
<b>Landform</b>	<p>Gently undulating terrain, including occasional level fields along the upper sides of the valley contrasts with the steep slopes of the steep-sided incised river valleys.</p> <p>Landform is more complex at the conjunction of the rivers and tributaries.</p> <p>While there are no prominent landmark hills, the rounded profile of the hill at Dusach marks the southern edge of Moray.</p>	<p>The more irregular and smaller scale landforms, steep sided river valleys and their immediate setting and the higher hill at Dusach are all sensitive to this typology.</p> <p>More level and gentle slopes, where they are extensive, may offer scope for siting this typology, although landform containment for this typology is limited by the lack of extended, higher ridges and more extensive bowls of land.</p>	<b>High-medium</b>	<p>The more irregular and smaller scale landforms, steep sided river valleys and their immediate setting and the higher hill at Dusach are all sensitive to this typology.</p> <p>More level and gentle slopes, where they are extensive, may offer scope for siting this typology, although landform containment for this typology is limited by the lack of extended, higher ridges and more extensive bowls of land.</p>	<b>High-medium</b>

<p><b>Landscape pattern</b></p>	<p>This landscape is strongly characterised by the variety of woodland, which ranges from extensive pine forest of different ages, to riparian woodland and policies. The woodland alternates with cultivated and grazed fields, some of which are relatively small pockets and some of which are larger more extensive areas of open fields. These open spaces are frequently irregular and 'organic' in shape, increasing the sense of interlock. The rivers are a particular feature, forming sinuous and well-defined gorges with steep sides clothed with broadleaved woodland. Feature trees are associated with some of the policy woods and designed landscapes, including Darnaway and Relugas are extensive.</p>	<p>The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for this typology, which would quickly dominate the sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the policy woodland, and the setting of the dramatic gorges and their wooded surroundings is additionally sensitive.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p>	<p>The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for this typology, which would quickly dominate the sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the policy woodland, and the setting of the dramatic gorges and their wooded surroundings is additionally sensitive.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p>
<p><b>Built environment</b></p>	<p>This landscape is not extensively settled, with farms and houses generally located at the edge of the open spaces overlooking the fields. Historic houses – such as Logie, Darnaway and Relugas are strongly associated with the river valleys, often located to overlook dramatic stretches of gorge. There are additional buildings and built features associated with these estates, including the bridge at Relugas. The main A940 extends through the eastern side of this character type, in places overlooking the steep sided</p>	<p>The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. The historic buildings and their settings are an additional sensitivity. This landscape type is however not extensively settled, although the settlement is focussed on existing open spaces, therefore there may be opportunities to site even this size of typology without impacting on the immediate setting of settlements if the open spaces are avoided. The narrowness and winding</p>	<p><b>High-medium</b></p>	<p>The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. The historic buildings and their settings are an additional sensitivity. This landscape type is however not extensively settled, although the settlement is focussed on existing open spaces, therefore there may be opportunities to site even this size of typology without impacting on the immediate setting of settlements if the open spaces are</p>	<p><b>High-medium</b></p>

	river valley. Some of the public and private roads are relatively narrow and winding.	character of some of the road network is likely to be compromised by improvements to accommodate the large vehicles required to transport this typology. It is also unlikely that large vehicles could negotiate the historic bridges.		avoided. The narrowness and winding character of some of the road network is likely to be compromised by improvements to accommodate the large vehicles required to transport this typology. It is also unlikely that large vehicles could negotiate the historic bridges.	
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	The more extensive woodland creates a sense of seclusion in this landscape because of the degree of enclosure. This is reinforced by the sparse network of public roads, with opportunities to explore the forests largely limited to non-vehicular access. The most striking features are the steep-sided river valleys, which are dramatic and naturalistic in character. Travelling through the sequence of open spaces, while not as pronounced as the neighbouring Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b) type, is nevertheless a key experience of this character.	This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape, and the sense of naturalness and drama associated with the river gorges. The sequential pattern of spaces is a quality of this landscape and this typology could easily dominate the open spaces and reduce the contrast between the open spaces and the forested areas	<b>Medium</b>	This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape, and the sense of naturalness and drama associated with the river gorges. The sequential pattern of spaces is a quality of this landscape and this typology could easily dominate the open spaces and reduce the contrast between the open spaces and the forested areas.	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Visual amenity</b>	The woodland limits wide visibility, although there are views from open spaces to the higher ground in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). The occasional long views, especially to the pronounced hills of Open Uplands (10) and the Knock of Braemoray, a landmark hill, at the southern end of the valley, are unexpected and revelatory.	The woodland often screens parts of this landscape, so that views from the A940, for example, are intermittent. However, the height of this typology means that it is likely to appear above many of these smaller features, or encroach upon the setting of key visual features and may be relatively widely and	<b>High-Medium</b>	The woodland often screens parts of this landscape, so that views from the A940, for example, are intermittent. However, the height of this typology means that it is likely to appear above many of these smaller features, or encroach upon the setting of key visual features and may be relatively widely and	<b>High-Medium</b>

	<p>Views within this landscape type are partly limited and are often intermittent due to the enclosure created primarily by woodland, but also containment created by landform along the spine of the river valleys.</p> <p>Views along the rivers; from bridges and access routes; to and from the historic buildings; and from the A940, including the arrival into Moray, are all important.</p>	consistently visible.		consistently visible.	
<b>Cumulative effects</b>	No existing or consented wind farms can be seen from within this landscape type	There is no inter-visibility between this typology and any existing development in neighbouring LCTs	<b>Low</b>	There is no inter-visibility between this typology and any existing development in neighbouring LCTs	<b>Low</b>

**Character Type 6: Narrow Wooded Valley – Sensitivity assessment for small-medium and small typologies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary description</b>	<b>Assessment of small-medium typology (35m-50m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>	<b>Assessment of small typology (20m-35m)</b>	<b>Sensitivity rating</b>
<b>Landscape context</b>	<p>This landscape lies at the western boundary of Moray, and is relatively self-contained. Low-lying, it forms the western edge to Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b) and also marches with Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and Open Uplands (10), along its south-eastern corner. The extensive woodland limits wide inter-visibility. As a result the occasional long views, especially to the pronounced hills of Open Uplands (10) at the southern end of the valley, are unexpected and revelatory. The wooded character merges slightly with the adjacent Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b), and the valley itself extends into neighbouring Nairn. Nevertheless, this landscape type is relatively small in extent. The valley of the Dorback Burn/Divie, forms a key 'gateway' to Moray from the south, with A940 extending over the dramatic open expanse of the Dava Moor and then descending into the wooded valley.</p>	<p>This landscape character type is relatively self-contained, with views into this type from neighbouring LCTs limited by the woodland. While the landscape type is relatively small in extent, this typology could be located in the interior without impacting visually on adjacent landscape types, however the approach and sense of arrival to Moray remains a key contextual sensitivity.</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>This landscape character type is relatively self-contained, with views into this type from neighbouring LCTs limited by the woodland. While the landscape type is relatively small in extent, this typology could be located in the interior without impacting visually on adjacent landscape types, however the approach and sense of arrival to Moray remains a key contextual sensitivity.</p>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Scale and openness</b>	<p>Although landform creates only a modest level of enclosure along the gentle, upper valley side slopes, the woodland creates considerable</p>	<p>This size of turbine would impact on the small scale of much of this character type. In particular, this typology would</p>	<b>High-medium</b>	<p>This size of turbine might impact on the small scale of some of the more intimately scaled areas of this character type.</p>	<b>Medium</b>



	<p>containment reducing the scale of the experience of this landscape. The scale of the landform becomes progressively smaller as the undulations become more complex and the valley becomes narrower and more enclosed, closer to the rivers. The medium to small scale of the topography is reinforced by the low relief, with landform generally undulating between 100m and 150m in elevation, although it is lower to the north and a more prominent hill at Dusach, on the very southern boundary forms the high point for the area.</p> <p>The medium sized fields, which are relatively open and flat, reinforce the sense of medium scale on the upper slopes.</p> <p>The constant presence of trees and buildings provide consistent reference points against which size of turbines can be judged.</p>	<p>dominate the low relief, the small scale landforms and the open spaces within this landscape. The consistent presence of small features – including trees and buildings – would make it difficult to accommodate this size of typology without it appearing much larger than these features. The smaller turbines in this typology range would have less impact on scale.</p>		<p>There is likely to be most scope to accommodate turbines of this type in the larger open spaces, along the lower slopes of larger hills, with smallest size of turbines having the least potential impact.</p>	
<b>Landform</b>	<p>Gently undulating terrain, including occasional level fields along the upper sides of the valley contrasts with the steep slopes of the steep-sided incised river valleys.</p> <p>Landform is more complex at the conjunction of the rivers and tributaries.</p> <p>While there are no prominent landmark hills, the rounded profile of the hill at Dusach marks the southern edge of Moray.</p>	<p>The more irregular and smaller scale landforms and the steep sided river valleys and their immediate setting are sensitive to this typology. More level and gentle slopes may offer scope for siting this typology. Long evenly graded and gentle slopes with occasional terraces are likely to offer more potential than areas of intricate and complex landform.</p>	<b>High-Medium</b>	<p>The more irregular and smaller scale landforms and the steep sided river valleys and their immediate setting are sensitive to this typology. More level and gentle slopes may offer scope for siting this typology. Long evenly graded and gentle slopes with occasional terraces are likely to offer more potential than areas of intricate and complex landform.</p>	<b>Medium-low</b>

				There is likely to be additional potential to accommodate this typology on the broad, gently graded side slopes of the wider valley.	
<b>Landscape pattern</b>	This landscape is strongly characterised by the variety of woodland, which ranges from extensive pine forest of different ages, to riparian woodland and policies. The woodland alternates with cultivated and grazed fields, some of which are relatively small pockets and some of which are larger more extensive areas of open fields. These open spaces are frequently irregular and 'organic' in shape, increasing the sense of interlock. The rivers are a particular feature, forming sinuous and well-defined gorges with steep sides clothed with broadleaved woodland. Feature trees are associated with some of the policy woods and designed landscapes including Darnaway and Relugas are extensive.	The diversity of the pattern of vegetation and the importance of the open spaces within the woodland limits opportunities for this typology, which could dominate the sense of openness within the spaces. The integrity of the policy woodland, including individual or small group landmark trees and the setting of the dramatic gorges and their wooded surroundings is additionally sensitive. More open and simple land cover may provide some scope for this typology.	<b>Medium</b>	The integrity of the policy woodland, and the setting of the dramatic gorges and their wooded surroundings is sensitive. The integrity of the policy woodland, including individual or small group landmark trees and the setting of the dramatic gorges and their wooded surroundings is additionally sensitive. More open and simple land cover may provide some scope for this typology. This size of typology is less likely to interrupt or fragment the landcover pattern than taller typologies.	<b>Low</b>
<b>Built environment</b>	This landscape is not extensively settled, with farms and houses generally located at the edge of the open spaces overlooking the fields. Historic houses – such as Logie, Darnaway and Relugas are strongly associated with the river valleys, often located to overlook dramatic stretches of gorge.	The small size of many of the houses and farms are a constraint as this typology is likely to dominate the small size of the built features. Historic buildings and their settings are an additional sensitivity. This landscape type is however not extensively settled, therefore there may be opportunities to site even this	<b>Medium-low</b>	This landscape type is not densely settled, therefore there are likely to be opportunities to site this size of typology without impacting on the setting of smaller buildings. Care should be taken to site turbines where they do not create visual clutter. The height of this typology is likely	<b>Low</b>

	<p>There are additional buildings and built features associated with these estates, including the bridge at Relugas. The main A940 extends through the eastern side of this character type, in places overlooking the steep sided river valley. Some of the public and private roads are relatively narrow and winding.</p>	<p>size of typology without impacting on the immediate setting of settlements. There is likely to be scope to site this typology where it does not relate to the small size of the buildings.</p>		<p>to relate to larger farm buildings. Historic buildings and their settings remain an additional sensitivity even for turbines of this height.</p>	
<b>Perceptual qualities</b>	<p>The more extensive woodland creates a sense of seclusion in this landscape because of the degree of enclosure. This is reinforced by the sparse network of public roads, with opportunities to explore the forests largely limited to non-vehicular access. The most striking features are the steep-sided river valleys, which are dramatic and naturalistic in character. Travelling through the sequence of open spaces, while not as pronounced as the neighbouring Rolling Farmland and Forests with Low Hills (5b) type, is nevertheless a key experience of this character.</p>	<p>This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape, and the sense of naturalness and drama associated with the river gorges. The sequential pattern of spaces is a quality of this landscape and this typology could dominate smaller spaces and reduce the contrast between the open spaces and the forested areas. On larger areas of open farmed and settled land, there is likely to be less impact on these qualities.</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>This typology could affect the sense of seclusion in this landscape, and the sense of naturalness and drama associated with the river gorges. The sequential pattern of spaces is a quality of this landscape and this typology could reduce the contrast between small open spaces and the forested areas. On most areas of open farmed and settled land, there is likely to be less impact on these qualities.</p>	<b>Medium-low</b>
<b>Visual amenity</b>	<p>The woodland limits wide visibility, although there are views from open spaces to the higher ground in the adjacent Upland Moorland and Forestry (9). The occasional long views, especially to the pronounced hills of Open Uplands (10) and the Knock of Braemoray, a landmark hill, at the southern end of the valley, are unexpected and revelatory.</p>	<p>The woodland often screens parts of this landscape, so that views from the A940, for example, are intermittent. Views of this height of turbine are therefore likely to be intermittent and reduced by the screening effects of landform and trees, although the sensitivity assessment recognises that trees will be felled, opening up</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<p>The woodland often screens parts of this landscape, so that views from the A940, for example, are intermittent. Views of this height of turbine are therefore likely to be intermittent and reduced by the screening effects of landform and trees, although the sensitivity assessment recognises that trees will be felled,</p>	<b>Medium-Low</b>

	<p>Views within this landscape type are partly limited and are often intermittent due to the enclosure created primarily by woodland, but also containment created by landform along the spine of the river valleys.</p> <p>Views along the rivers; from bridges and access routes; to and from the historic buildings; and from the A940, including the arrival into Moray, are all important.</p>	<p>new views for a period.</p> <p>From more open areas, the height of this typology means that it is likely to appear above many of the smaller features, or encroach upon the setting of key visual features and may be relatively widely visible.</p> <p>Key visual sensitivities, such as the settings of the gorges and the historic buildings, remain sensitive to even this typology.</p> <p>The smaller turbines in this typology range would have less visual impact.</p>		<p>opening up new views for a period.</p> <p>From more open areas, the height of this typology means that it is likely to appear above many of the smaller features, or encroach upon the setting of key visual features and may be relatively widely visible.</p> <p>Key visual sensitivities, such as the settings of the gorges and the historic buildings, remain sensitive to even this typology.</p> <p>The smaller turbines in this typology range would have less visual impact.</p>	
<b>Cumulative effects</b>	No existing or consented wind farms can be seen from within this landscape type	There is no inter-visibility between this typology and any development in neighbouring LCTs	<b>Low</b>	There is no inter-visibility between this typology and any development in neighbouring LCTs	<b>Low</b>

## Character Type 6: Narrow Wooded Valleys

### Summary of capacity

This character type forms broad undulating slopes which extend either side of steep-sided gorges enclosing the River Findhorn and the Dorbach Burn. It is located on the western boundary of Moray, adjacent to the Rolling Farmland with Low Hills (5b), Upland Moorland and Forestry (9) and a sliver of the Open Uplands (10). To the north it lies next to the Coastal Farmland (4). The undulating terrain and broad slopes are well wooded, with fields on gentle slopes forming open spaces which vary in size from a single field to larger areas occupied by several farms. The sequence of open space to enclosed woodland forms a key characteristic.

The area is managed by several estates, and this strongly influences the historic character of this landscape, which is punctuated by historic buildings and features. The gorges themselves are a key focus, with several large houses overlooking dramatic bends in the rivers. Otherwise, the area is sparsely settled, with farms associated with the clearings.

The Narrow Wooded Valley (6) character type is only partially settled and not extensively roaded. Views within the area are limited by woodland which forms extensive enclosure offering intermittent views of the open spaces. However, where long views can be experienced, for example to Knock of Braemoray, these are sensitive. Additional sensitivities include views from the A940 and the 'gateway' to Moray from the Dava Moor, the setting of the gorges and historic features.

The dramatic gorges and their setting, the low relief, the pattern of spaces set in woodland and the historic character of this landscape are key sensitivities of this character type. This landscape therefore has a **High** sensitivity to both the large (80m – 130m) and the medium (50m – 80m) typologies, **High-Medium** sensitivity to the small-medium (35m – 50m) typology, which reflects the sensitivity to scale in this landscape and the setting of historic features, and **Medium-low** sensitivity for small (20 – 35m) typology, reflecting that there are likely to be more opportunities to accommodate smaller turbines which with careful siting are less likely to impact on the small scale and historic character of the landscape character.

Turbines of less than 20m in height could readily be accommodated within the farmed areas of this landscape type and would be likely to be less visible within the woodland and landform of this character type.

### Potential cumulative issues

There is limited potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects to arise in the future with turbines located in adjacent character types. While the Upland Moor and Forest (9) has been identified as having some potential for wind turbines, including the large and medium typologies, the boundary with this type is small in extent, and inter-visibility is limited to views of the low western hills which can be seen from open spaces within this character type and from the A940.

The farmed clearings which are likely to be the focus for the smaller typologies identified as being the most appropriate for this landscape type are dispersed and not easily inter-visible, which is likely to minimise potential for simultaneous cumulative visual impacts. The effects of turbines on sequential visual impacts when travelling through the landscape from space to space should be carefully monitored. Care should be taken to develop a careful and

consistent approach to turbine style and siting to avoid negative impacts on landscape character.

Well-sited turbines of less than 20m and a consistent relationship between these small turbines and the farm cluster are likely to further minimise potential cumulative impacts. Small turbines are also more readily visually screened by topography and woodland, which is likely to limit their cumulative visual impact.

Key cumulative issues that may arise within the Narrow Wooded Valley (6) are likely to include:

- Variations in the type and size of single and small groups of small turbines proposed within the landscape type;
- Inconsistent relationship with other elements in this landscape which has frequent historic features, and which has a strong integrity and could be come fragmented;
- Sequential visual impacts experienced when travelling through the landscape

### **Constraints**

- The low relief, small landforms and steep sided gorges which characterise of much of this landscape
- The open spaces, particularly the smaller spaces surrounded by trees where the enclosure reinforces a sense of intimacy and discovery when travelling from space to space
- The centre of the open spaces and clearings in the woodland, where turbines will be more likely to be visually prominent and become the focal point of views into the spaces
- The sense of naturalness and drama associated with the wooded gorges
- The setting of historic buildings, features and wider designed landscapes which contribute to the character of this area
- Views from the A940, and the 'gateway' to Moray on arrival from the south over Dava Moor
- The occasional long views out of this area to low adjacent hills, and especially the landmark hill of Knock of Braemoray

### **Opportunities**

- Gently graded slopes set away from the more complex landforms and setting of the gorges;
- The edges of clearings, next to farm buildings, which create 'clusters' of development;
- Larger stretches of open fields, especially when back-dropped by higher land or forestry

### **Guidance on development**

No scope for the large (80m-130m) and large-medium (50m – 80m) typologies has been identified in this landscape sensitivity assessment.

There is likely to be **limited** scope for the small-medium (35m - 50m) development typologies to be sited within this character type due to the adverse impacts likely to occur on the small scale landscape, the historic character and features and the setting of the gorges.

Scope is limited to the larger spaces associated with broader, very gently sloping landform within or adjacent to the more extensive wooded areas. Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, and care should be taken to avoid cumulative sequential effects.

There are some opportunities for the small typology (20m – 35m) to be located on gently graded slopes and the edges of farmland within the Narrow wooded valley (6). Individual turbines are likely to be easier to accommodate than groups, which should be limited to no more than three turbines. Turbines sited in these areas should avoid intruding into the centre of the open spaces, the setting of key features and the setting of the gorges or other more complex landforms.

Well-sited turbines of less than 20m could be sited to reflect the scattered settlement pattern, and would fit in well with the scale of this landscape. Turbines should be located to avoid impacts on the settings of, and views from and to, historical buildings and features, including sites of archaeological interest.

Micro siting should follow the guidance set out in Section 5 of the main study report.



*The narrow wooded gorges are a key characteristic, attracting historic development, such as estate houses and fine bridges*



*The 'landmark' hill of the Knock of Braemoray, seen from an elevated section of public road between the Findhorn and Divie valleys*



*Mixed and policy woodland framing rare farmed open spaces*



*Extensive designed landscapes and wider policy woodlands form the setting to mansion houses and castles associated with these valleys*

### ***Landscape Character Type 6: Narrow Wooded Valleys***