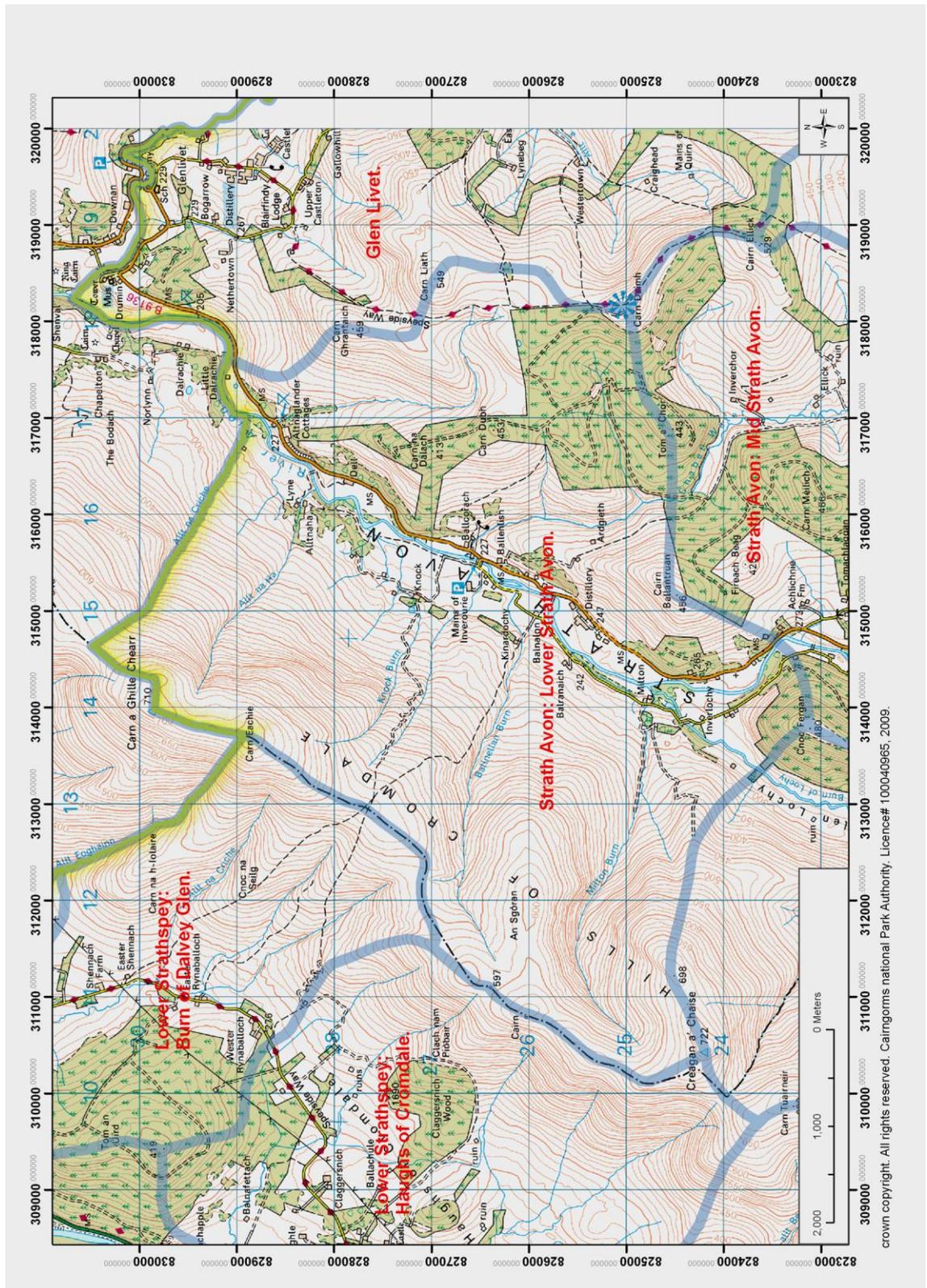


I.1 Strath Avon: Lower Strath Avon



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

A narrow, linear strath, orientated north-north east/south-south west, contained by smooth, relatively evenly graded slopes which extend down from rounded ridges and summits

The high Hills of Cromdale to the west are subtly subdivided by watercourses, but nevertheless form a formidable flank of hillside which stops abruptly at the edge of the narrow strath floor

To the east, lower hills are subdivided by a series of parallel side valleys. The River Avon meanders across the valley floor, carving out long river terraces and working deposits into a flat floodplain

Heather moor across the Hills of Cromdale has been managed as grouse moorland, with extensive patches and broad bands of burnt heather moor

Birch woodland occupies the lower slopes of the broadly west facing valley side, with some additional conifer woods planted for shelter, and extending along the upper slopes on former heather moorland

Riparian woodland, dominated by dark coloured alder extends along the River Avon, but groups of mature, large alder are also located on the terraces

Straight-edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, often formerly walled but now fenced and enclosing grassland, extend along the floor of the strath

Where these fields extend up onto the lower slopes they have often reverted to rougher grassland on the east facing slopes, but are still improved on the west facing slopes

The relatively even spaced farms of similar vernacular style are located along the edge of the strath floor, or on elevated terraces above the floodplain

While on close inspection there is evidence of earlier land use and settlement, for example prehistoric settlement, including traces of round houses and field systems on the upper west facing slopes, it is not widely visible

The Tomintoul distillery, large buildings sited on a river terrace, is a landmark feature, as is the church of St Michaels located close to where Glen Lochy joins Strath Avon

The roads are aligned parallel with the strath and are slightly elevated on terraces above the strath floor

There are several car parks along the strath, providing access to way marked walks

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The linear shape of the strath, and its relative narrowness, encourage views along its length

The strath feels very enclosed, because the level floor and flat topped terraces create visual foreshortening, which makes the vertical sides of the valley appear closer together than they are

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is relatively self-contained.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The linear form of this strath is reinforced by the abrupt boundary between the hillsides and the relatively level valley floor. Long river terraces, riparian woodland which is emphasised by the presence of dark coloured alder, and the improved fields which extend along the length of the valley floor, all emphasise the linearity of this glen.



Approaching lower Strath Avon from the north, these interlocking spurs and woodland form a 'gateway' to this part of the glen



The wide river terraces along the strath floor are subdivided into late 18th/19th century fields, with large areas of broadleaved woodland along the west facing slopes



Long river terraces carved into the deposits, behind which is moorland across the lower slopes of the Hills of Cromdale



Alder trees, some of which are very large, are a particular feature of this strath