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I INTRODUCTION AND METHOD STATEMENT

I.1 Purpose of LCA

This landscape character assessment was commissioned by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), in partnership with the British Geological Survey, in June 2009. It was undertaken over a period of six months. The aims of this study, as expressed in the brief, were:

- To produce an accurate and detailed description of the landscape types (LCTs) and areas (LCAs) within the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) that encompasses the many formative influences upon that landscape
- To make the description clear and understandable to a wide range of users
- To be able to utilise the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as a fundamental building block for all policy and activity of the CNPA and its partners in delivering the 4 aims of the National Park

The brief also had three other requirements which informed the method and outputs:

- The LCA would be required to underpin the Park's proposed Landscape Framework, which was envisaged as a tool for both engaging the public and identifying landscape management priorities as required;
- The Park was keen to see how geological information, provided by the British Geological Survey (BGS), could be incorporated usefully within the LCA; and
- The LCA was also required to take into account, and if possible integrate, the Historic Land Use Assessment for the Park, which was available from the Royal Commission for Historic and Ancient Monuments in Scotland (RCHAMS)

I.2 Benefits of this LCA

A landscape character assessment (LCA) for the Cairngorms area was prepared in 1996¹. This LCA preceded designation of the National Park. While it covered the area which was later designated, other LCAs² also assessed landscapes which were later incorporated into the Park. As a result, in some parts of the Park, two LCAs – the Cairngorms LCA and another, regional

¹ Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership, 1996. Cairngorms landscape assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 75

² Areas which were included within the National Park boundary when it was designated have also been assessed within other commissioned LCAs. In particular, the Angus Glens were included in the Tayside LCA, "Land Use Consultants, 1999. Tayside landscape assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 122"

based LCA – have already been undertaken, but have used different methods of assessment, and have been commissioned by different authorities before the Park was established.

Against this background, commissioning a new, Park-wide LCA has offered the opportunity to:

- Provide an assessment that has as its main purpose the needs of the Park, its policies and management priorities
- Apply a single assessment methodology consistently Park-wide, including the proposed south west extension to the Park
- Undertake a more detailed study than the earlier LCAs commissioned in the 1990s
- Incorporate additional information, such as the HLA, which had not been available at the time of earlier studies, into a new LCA; and
- Take advantage of new technology, most notably the advances in GIS

1.3 Approach to assessment

The assessment method has evolved specifically to meet the needs of the Park.

1.3.1 *Landscape character areas*

It was decided early on that the most appropriate way to do this was to focus on undertaking a ‘landscape character area’ based approach. This approach aims to divide the landscape up into distinct and recognisable ‘places’, which are named, as far as possible, according to local place names.

These landscape character areas are all different, but within each one there is a consistency of character formed by the topography, land use, history, settlement and development pattern and the way the landscape is experienced. They are mapped and their differences are drawn out using field work supported by desk-based review.

A description of the landscape characteristics and the landscape experience of each area is provided in written text, along with a succinct summary of what makes the character area distinctive from elsewhere in the Park. The character descriptions of the landscape areas are set out as bullet points, and broadly follow a description of topography and geomorphology, followed by comments on vegetation pattern and current land use, settlement pattern, relevant historic land use and infrastructure.

1.3.2 *A spatial framework for delivery of the Park’s objectives*

At the heart of defining these character areas is the need to provide a robust spatial framework for advice which the Park might be required to give on future land management.

The character areas were therefore selected with two main objectives in mind.

Firstly, they should, as far as possible, be areas that most people would recognise and understand. This required the method to identify, as far as possible, areas that people would be able to relate to, and give these areas names that would, as far as possible, be familiar to people. This latter was not always possible, as sometimes there was no clear single place name associated with an area.

Secondly, the character areas needed to be able to provide a spatial framework for the delivery of the Park's own responsibilities, duties and policy priorities. Each landscape character area therefore has a consistent and identifiable character. This should allow any future landscape management advice to relate to the character area as a whole, as far as possible.

1.3.3 *Boundaries*

Boundaries were identified where the character of the landscape, and potential future landscape management priorities, were likely to change. However, as with most assessments of this type, it should be noted that there is always an area of 'character transition' around the boundary. Around the boundary, the landscape often adopts characteristics from the character areas either side of the boundary, and so it should be interpreted as a 'permeable' line.

1.3.4 *Settlements*

The character of individual settlements and their immediate setting were not analysed as part of this study. Landscape 'capacity' studies for the towns and villages in the Park have already been carried out relatively recently. These studies included landscape character assessments of the setting and surroundings of the towns, as well as an analysis of townscape and architectural style at a more detailed level than could be accommodated in this LCA. It was therefore decided to exclude these areas from this study.

1.4 **Presentation**

Two separate 'sets' of character areas have been defined. These have been mapped on separate GIS layers. They are:

- Lowland areas. These are the most inhabited straths and glens of the Park. Seventy eight landscape character areas were identified.
- Upland areas. These are the hills and mountains, and interior glens. Twelve landscape character areas were identified.

1.4.1 *Lowland areas*

These are areas where most people live. They are the places where there is most 'human activity', infrastructure and pressure for built development. These areas are where the Park's advice will be required on housing, industry, infrastructure, agriculture, woodland diversity and water and wetland management, all of which are likely to change the landscape. In short, these are the areas where the largest potential variety of pressures for landscape change are most likely to occur.

1.4.2 *Upland areas*

The upland areas are the least inhabited areas of the Park – although there are occasional remote settlements and farms in addition to some estate houses which may be inhabited for at least part of the year.

In these areas, land management is more likely to influence landscape character than built development. In upland areas, it is usually also the case that a small number of management issues are likely to influence landscape change over a wide area. As a result, the upland character areas tend to be larger than the lowland character areas.

1.4.3 *Areas of overlap between lowland and upland*

Finally, the maps for each of these assessments – one for lowlands, and one for uplands – illustrate that there is an area of the landscape which contributes to both. This ‘transitional’ area of landscape, generally the hill slopes, provides the visual containment, the open grazing land, the visual backdrop, and sometimes even the extent of the water catchment, for the lowland areas. But it is also the ‘periphery’ of the upland areas, and it acts as both ‘threshold’ and ‘buffer zone’ for the more remote hinterlands.

This area of overlap contributes to both the uplands and the lowlands, and decisions about its future management will affect both the upland, mountain areas and the lowland straths and glens. It therefore seems appropriate for it to be included, as an area of overlap, on the maps for both the upland and lowland character areas, and in its dual role subsequently explained in the text which accompanies the character area descriptions.

1.5 **Using the Historic Landuse Assessment (HLA)**

The brief for this study noted that *‘the historical development of the landscape is a key consideration...of landscape character’*. The consultants were required to use the HLA provided by RCHAMS, who also provided support in its interpretation.

The data provided by the HLA is extensive, with 59 historic ‘land use types’ recorded on a GIS database. Every part of the Park has an historic land use type allocated to it.

Some historic land use types have more influence on the landscape character of the CNP than others. These are most obviously historic land use types which even today influence the settlement or field pattern, road alignment, the woodland distribution and species choice, for example. But there were also areas of abundant remains, such as extensive areas of townships, pre-improvement field systems, shielings and prehistoric sites, which were relatively easy to encounter within the landscape. Even without particular archaeological knowledge, the extent

and integrity of these areas, some of which were surprisingly large, had a strong influence on the experience of the landscape.

For the purposes of this study, it was necessary to identify the historic land use types which were most influential on the landscape character of the CNP.

The consultants carried out an assessment of all 59 historic land use types in the HLA and, through a process of selection and amalgamation, identified a list of 12 historic land use types which were considered most influential in terms of landscape character. These were then mapped on a single GIS base layer by the RCHAMS, and used in field work and assessment when defining the character areas and describing the characteristics of the landscape.

A more detailed description of how the HLA was interpreted and incorporated into the LCA can be found in a separate report 'Cairngorms Landscape Character Assessment – Using and Interpreting the Historic Landuse Assessment' which is also an output from this study.

1.6 Using information provided by BGS

The brief also required the consultants to work with BGS to analyse and explain how geology and geomorphology influenced the landscape character of the Park. It is recognised that the 'raw resource' of geography underpins many of the historic and present day decisions on land use, settlement pattern and development.

The BGS provided a summary of the influence of bedrock on the major features of the Park. This was provided in map form with accompanying text.

In addition, a list of simplified drift, or superficial deposit, features which have particular influence on the character of the landscape and how it has been used by people, was identified. These features were then mapped on a 'digital terrain model' base. The resulting map and accompanying text, provided by BGS, combines the simplified superficial deposit with the topographical detail of the Park.

All this information was used in field work and assessment when defining the character areas and describing the characteristics of the landscape.

A more detailed description of how the BGS sourced material was interpreted and incorporated into the LCA can be found in a separate report 'Cairngorms Landscape Character Assessment – Using and Interpreting information on the Geology and Geomorphology of the Park' which is also an output from this study.

I.7 Integrating the data provided by RCHAMS and BGS

The aspects of geography and historic land use which are considered most relevant to the landscape character and its future management have been integrated into the text for each individual landscape character area. Sometimes this information has taken the form of explanation and information, but more often it has only been used where it is a defining characteristic, or a key feature within the character area.

I.8 Executive summary

This landscape character assessment (LCA) has been carried out specifically to meet the needs of the Cairngorms National Park. It has been the intention to provide a document which is engaging and inspiring as well as accessible and informative. The LCA is detailed, combining information sourced from the Historic Land Use assessment, geological material provided by the British Geological Survey, extensive fieldwork and the knowledge of experienced consultants to provide a comprehensive character assessment. The LCA subdivides the landscape into character areas which aim to both reflect 'place' and provide a robust spatial framework for the proposed Landscape Framework.

Disclaimer

The content of this report reflects the views of the contractor, Alison Grant, and associate consultants, Carol Anderson, landscape architect, Jill Harden, consultant archaeologist, and Dr Adrian Hall, geomorphologist. The content does not necessarily reflect the views of the CNPA. Alison Grant, the lead consultant, is responsible for any errors in final drafting.

Acknowledgements

This assessment would not have been possible without generous input of time and advice from staff at the British Geological Survey and the Royal Commission of Historic and Ancient Monuments in Scotland. In addition, the consultants are grateful for the advice from the technical steering group, which comprised:

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Peter Fraser, Aberdeenshire Council

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT:

LOWLAND AREAS

These lowland character areas are the most inhabited straths and glens of the Park. Seventy eight landscape character areas were identified and these have been grouped into nine 'regions'. Many of the character areas have been named with a prefix which relates to the character area used in the original Cairngorms LCA (1996), which allows for cross-reference to this original document. The character areas are illustrated on the following map, and have been numbered as follows:

Spey Headwaters, Ardverikie and Upper Spey Farmlands

- 1 Arverikie: Glen Shirra
- 2 Ardverikie: Pattack Glen/Strath Mashie
- 3 Spey Headwaters: Upper Glen of the Spey
- 4 Spey Headwaters: Spey Dam
- 5 Upper Spey farmlands: Coul Farm pinch point
- 6 Upper Spey Farmlands: Laggan Strath
- 7 Upper Spey Farmland: Loch Uvie pinch point

Badenoch and Strathspey

- 8 Badenoch: Upper Strath
- 9 Badenoch: Upper Glen Banchor
- 10 Badenoch: Lower Glen Banchor
- 11 Badenoch: Newtonmore to Kingussie
- 12 Badenoch: Insh Marshes
- 13 Badenoch: Inshriach Forest
- 14 Badenoch: Kinraig to Loch Alvie
- 15 Badenoch: Loch Alvie to Inverdrue
- 16 Rothiemurchus Forest
- 17 Glen More
- 18 Strathspey: Inverdrue to Pityoulish
- 19 Strathspey: Pityoulish to Boat of Garten
- 20 Strathspey: Boat of Garten to Craggan
- 21 Strathspey: Craggan to Grantown on Spey

- 22 Abernethy Forest
- 23 Strathspey: Dulnain Strath
- 24 The Slochd

Lower Spey and Cromdale

- 25 Lower Strathspey: Glen Beg to Dava Moor
- 26 Lower Strathspey: Glen of the Allt an Fhithich
- 27 Lower Strathspey: Castle Grant and Tomvaich
- 28 Lower Strathspey: Auchnagallin and Blar Mòr
- 29 Lower Strathspey: Strathspey
- 30 Lower Strathspey: Burn of Dalvey Glen
- 31 Lower Strathspey: Haughs of Cromdale
- 32 Lower Strathspey: Tomintoul Road

Strath Avon and Glen Livet

- 33 Strath Avon: Mid Strath Avon
- 34 Strath Avon: Lower Strath Avon
- 35 Glen Livet
- 36 Glen Livet: Braes of Glen Livet
- 37 Glen Livet: Inchnacape
- 38 Glen Livet: Delnabo
- 39 Glen Livet: Conglass Water

The Lecht and Strathdon

- 40 The Lecht
- 41 Strathdon: Corgarff and Cockbridge
- 42 Strathdon: Upper Strathdon
- 43 Strathdon: Mid Strathdon
- 44 Strathdon: Glen Nocht
- 45 Strathdon: Glen Buchat
- 46 Strathdon: Waters of Deskry, Carvie and Conrie

Deeside, Muir of Dinnet and Cromar

- 47 Upper Deeside: Linn of Dee
- 48 Upper Deeside: Mar Lodge Policies
- 49 Upper Deeside: Allanaquoich Haughland
- 50 Upper Deeside: Invercauld
- 51 Upper Deeside: Invercauld Bridge to Inver
- 52 Upper Deeside: Inver to Cambus o' May
- 53 Upper Deeside: Glen Gairn

- 54 Upper Deeside: Lower Glen Muick
- 55 The White Mounth: Upper Glen Muick
- 56 Upper Deeside: Glen Tanar
- 57 Muir of Dinnet
- 58 Cromar Farmlands

Angus Glens

- 59 Angus Glens: Upper Glen Esk
- 60 Angus Glens: Glen Doll
- 61 Angus Glens: Upper Glen Clova
- 62 Angus Glens: Mid Glen Clova
- 63 Angus Glens: Upper Glen Prosen
- 64 Angus Glens: Upper Glen Isla

Glen Shee, Glen Beag and Glen Clunie

- 65 Glen Shee: Upper Glen
- 66 Glen Shee: Head of Glen Shee
- 67 Glen Beag: Lower Glen
- 68 Glen Beag: High Pass at Cairnwell
- 69 Glen Clunie: Upper Glen
- 70 Glen Clunie: Lower Glen

Atholl, Glen Garry, Cathàr Mòr and Glen Truim

- 71 Glen Fender
- 72 Glen Garry: Lower Glen and Blair Atholl
- 73 Glen Garry: Mid Glen
- 74 Glen Garry: Upper Glen
- 75 Drumochter Pass
- 76 Glen Truim: Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie
- 77 Cathàr Mòr
- 78 Glen Truim

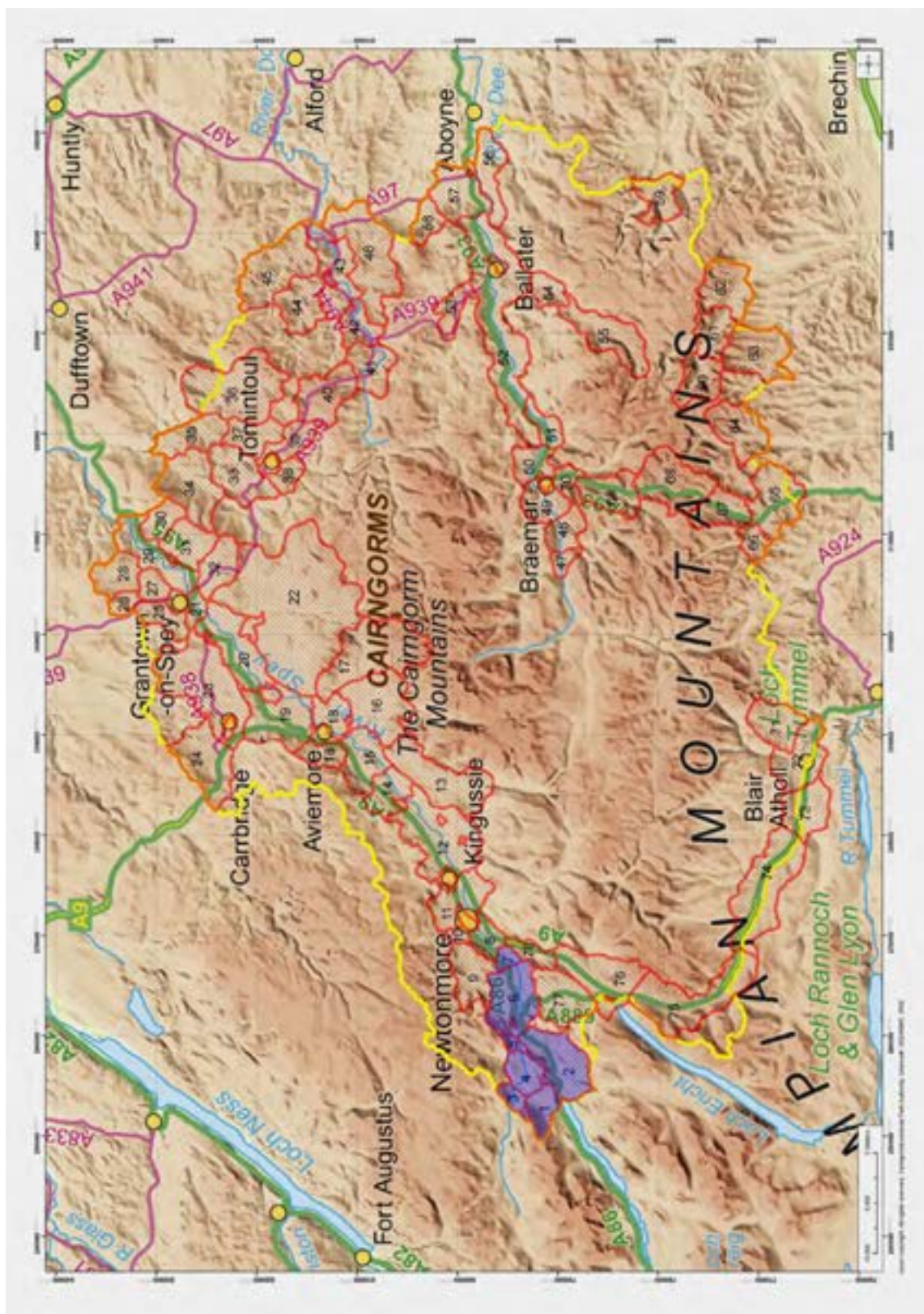


2 SPEY HEADWATERS, ARDVERIKIE AND UPPER SPEY FARMLANDS

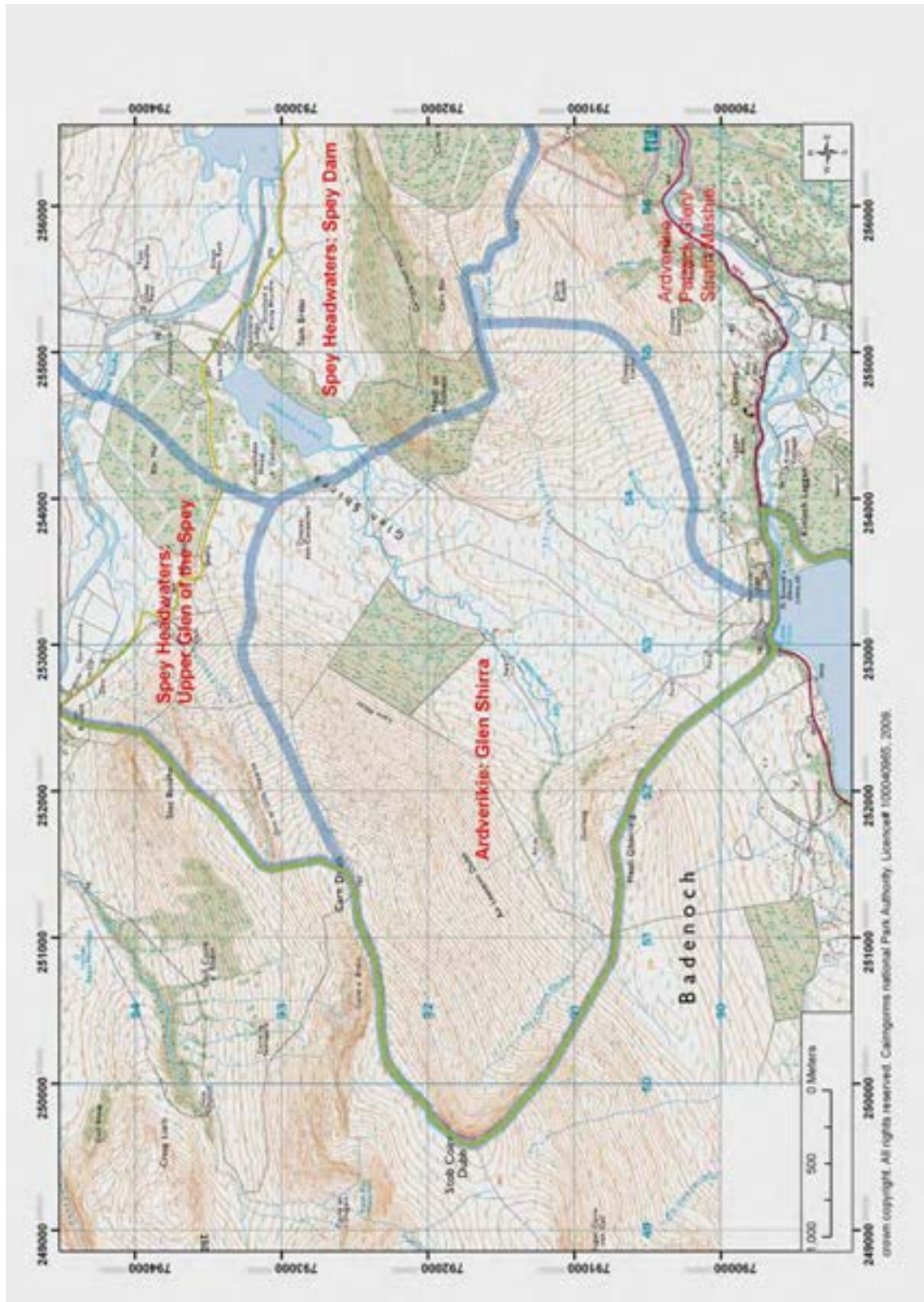
This section of the LCA includes the straths and glens which lie at the western most edge of the Park. This character assessment is presented, working from west to east, as follows:

1. Ardverikie: **Glen Shirra**
2. Ardverikie: **Pattack Glen/Strath Mashie**
3. Spey Headwaters: **Upper Glen of the Spey**
4. Spey Headwaters: **Spey Dam**
5. Upper Spey Farmlands: **Coul Farm pinch point**
6. Upper Spey Farmlands: **Laggan Strath**
7. Upper Spey Farmlands: **Loch Uvie pinch point**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



2.1 Ardverikie: **Glen Shirra**



2.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- This wide glen, straddled between steeper slopes, is orientated broadly southwest to northeast
- The landform is dramatically sweeping, with even side slopes extending up to slightly craggy hill tops
- The valley floor is wet and drained by several small burns to Loch Crunachdan in the north and Loch Laggan to the south
- The vegetation is sparse and visually simple, dominated by wet pasture and wet heath, and with no distinct boundary between the valley floor and its sides
- Remnant birch woodland is associated with a steep-sided burn and less accessible crags
- There is one area of geometrically shaped conifer woodland, located on a gently rising, south east facing side slope
- There is evidence of pre-improvement farming along the middle stretch of the Crunachdan burn around Camas Cilean on Loch Laggan and on the slopes above this bay, although the remains are slight bumps in the ground and more obvious in winter
- Access is by tracks only, both of which are elevated above the wet glen floor

2.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area is relatively secluded, due to the lack of development, low key access and the perceived naturalness of vegetation, as well as its quiet, tranquil context.

2.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is relatively self contained, but views north to the Upper Spey Valley, and extensive views south west across to Ardverikie estate and the Mamores enhance scenic quality and provide a contrast to the simplicity of this glen.

2.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This area is dominated by the sense of seclusion and the simplicity of the landform, which is reinforced by the apparent limited number of elements and visually simple vegetation pattern.



Views south to Loch Laggan, illustrating the visually simple vegetation pattern of wet grassland, and more dramatic terrain to the west

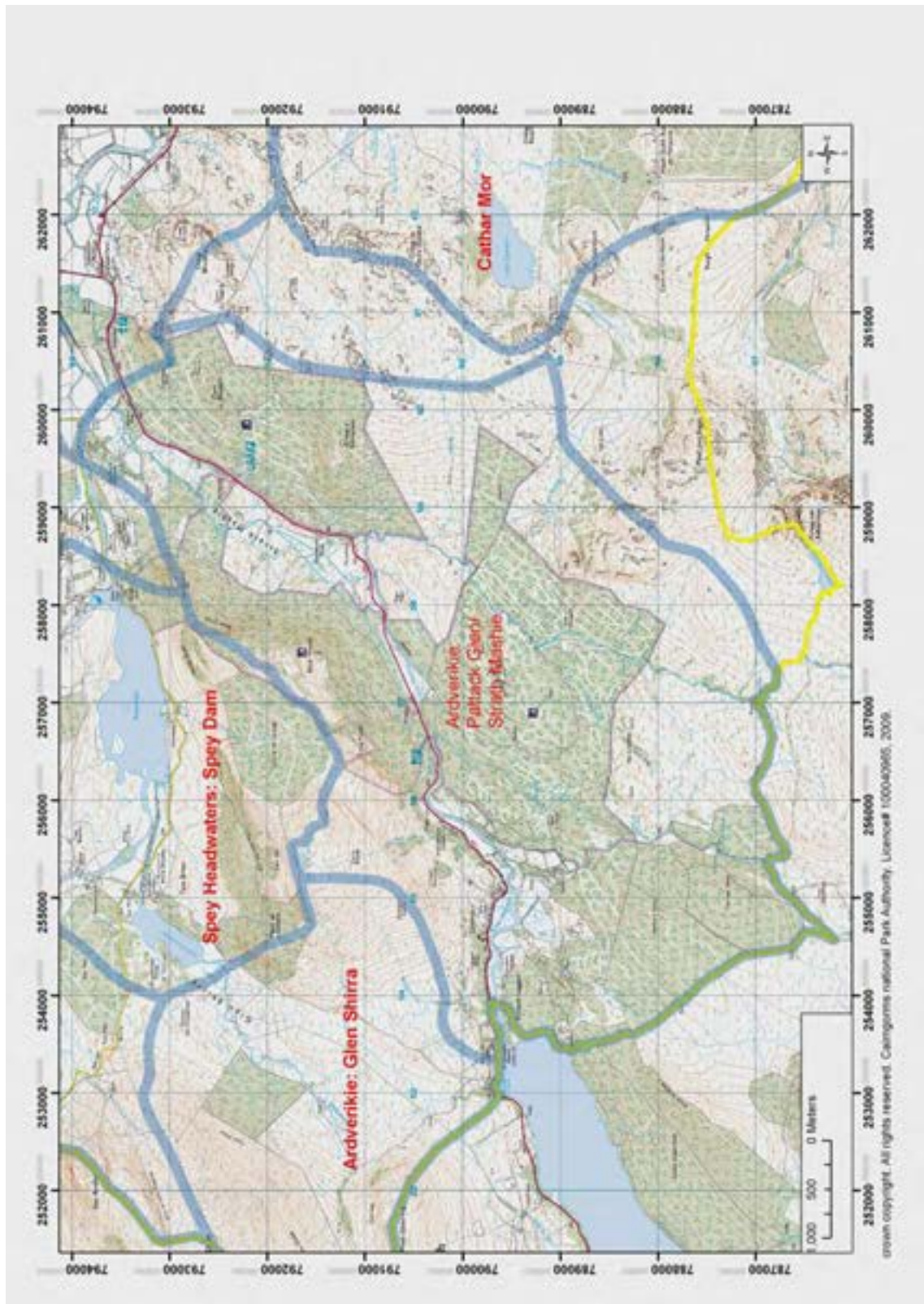


Views across the sweeping glen northwards



The openness of the landscape when viewed from the north

2.2 Ardverikie: Pattack Glen/Strath Mashie



2.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- Long, gentle slopes and rocky ridges to the south and hills to the north which have been steepened and roughened by glacial erosion contain this glen occupied by the meandering Rivers Pattack and Mashie
- The glen is generally orientated west/east, but then curves north eastwards to meet the Spey
- Bands and prominent outcrops of relatively erosion resistant rock, often partially covered by deposit, extend across the strath floor
- Glacial-fluvial deposits form ridges at the sides of the strath
- In places, the rivers meander across the glen floor, but the rivers are also in part canalised, and the glen floor has been partially drained
- This floor is grazed, permanent pasture, interspersed with wetter grassland and fenced, 18th/19th century improved fields, the latter particularly associated with settlement
- To the north the small hills support mixed conifer woodland which extends close to the summits
- Very extensive conifer woodland also dominates the broad, sweeping southern slopes, and in places also extends onto the floor of the strath
- Small groups of mature mixed broadleaved trees and pine occupy the well defined hummocks
- There is riparian woodland along the River Pattack
- Settlement, often sheltered by small woods, is limited to scattered estate-style housing, associated with road or along the woodland edge at the break in slope
- The gorge at Kinloch Laggan creates a dramatic pinch-point and acts as a portal to the sudden view of Loch Laggan when travelling west

2.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The narrow road sits along slightly higher land, tucked hard against the break in slope, so that travelling on it reinforces the experience of the land form and the sense of 'winding' through the glen
- The sequence of spaces experienced from the road, created by moving between alternating open grazed pastures and enclosed woodland, reinforce the intimate scale of the glen
- 'Pinch points' created by narrow passes at Kinloch Laggan and at Feagour are key thresholds within the glen, emphasised by tall trees and the sense of enclosure created by topography
- Together these 'pinch points' also contribute to a sense of arrival to the National Park from the west, and the 'gateway' to Loch Laggan when travelling from the east.

2.2.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is largely self-contained, although there is occasional inter-visibility with higher hills to the south and glimpses of the Monadhliath to the north.

2.2.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

On the road, the experience of this area is dominated by travelling through an alternating sequence of open grazed land and enclosing woodland. As an important gateway to the Park, the way the A889 winds through the enclosure created by rock cliffs at the western end reinforces the ‘threshold’ experience. The erosion resistant rock underpins many of the striking smaller scale features along the floor of the strath.



Extensive conifer woodland on the hill slopes, with hummocky terrain along the sides of Strath Mashie



Groups of trees on rocky outcrops overlain with deposit

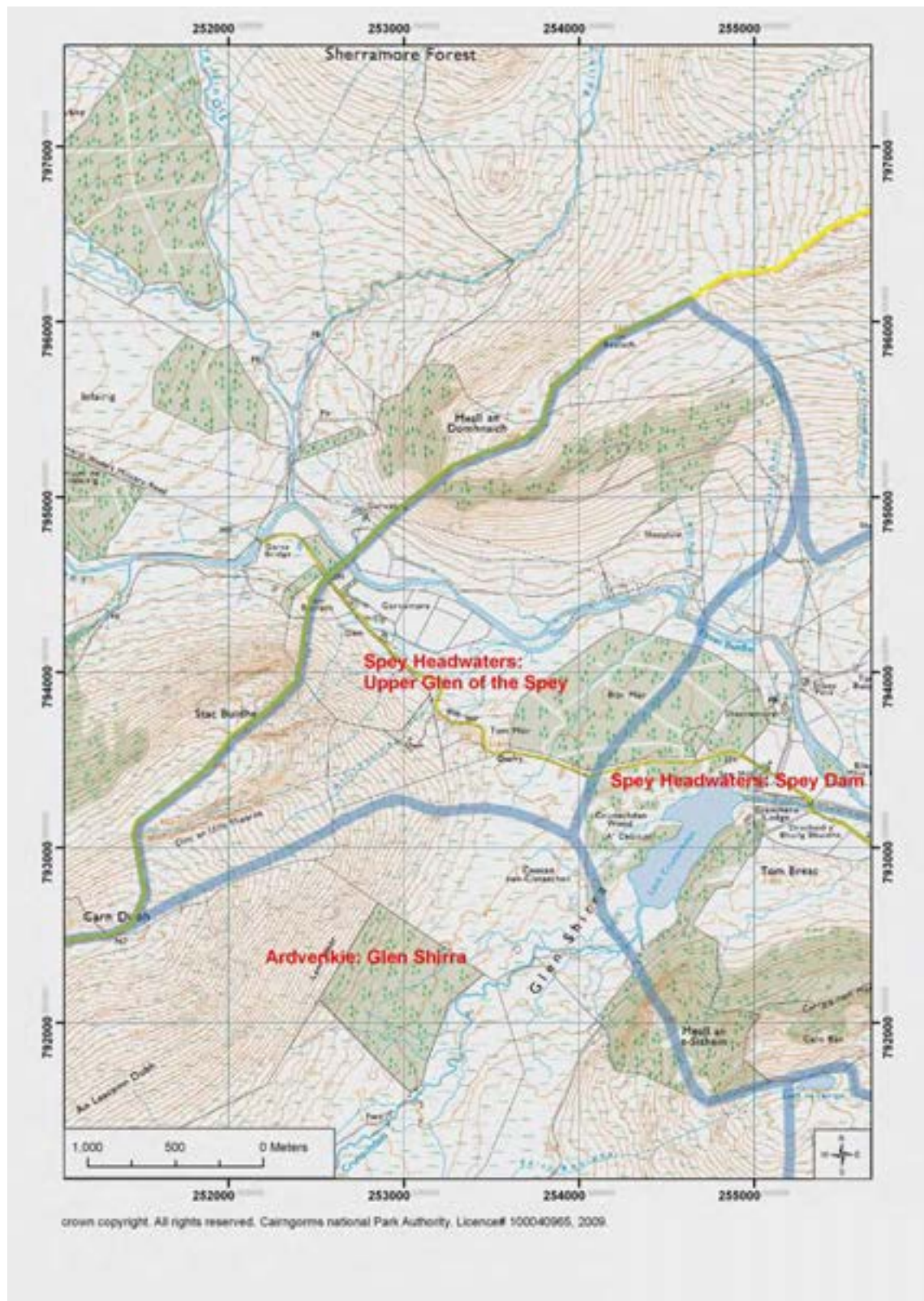


Road and housing sits on a terrace above the flood plain



Open spaces, where the floodplain widens and there are areas of grazing, alternate with the enclosure of the woodland

2.3 Spey Headwaters: Upper Glen of the Spey



2.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- Steep slopes rise to medium-scaled hills which rise either side of a flat bottomed glen, which is orientated west/east
- The sense of enclosure is limited by the conjunction of glens and side valleys which breach the side slopes and allow views to spill out to the west and north west.
- Rocky and boulder strewn hilltops and slopes of shattered debris, as well as glacial deposits, reflect past glacial activity, while long terraces demonstrate the further re-working of deposits by the River Spey
- Several tributaries feed into the meandering river, which is characterised by reaches of both slabby bedrock and braided, gravelly deposits
- There are substantial conifer shelter woods which extend beyond the western edge of the Park, into relatively inaccessible hinterland
- There is scattered conifer woodland, perhaps remnants of a larger wood, along the upper, south facing hill slopes
- The valley floor is pasture, with some wetter grassland
- Broadly rectilinear, fenced 18th/19th century improved fields at the farm at Garvamore create a contrasting nucleus of more intensive management on the glen floor
- The narrow road is part of the Wade Military road through the Corrieyarrick Pass, linking Fort Augustus with Ruthven Barracks and Dalwhinnie. This stretch links Garva Bridge, a historic 'Wade' bridge built in 1731 and the recently repaired Kingshouse at the farm at Garvamore, originally built around 1740 for military and civilian travellers and later used by drovers

2.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The experience of arrival at the Park is reinforced by the narrowing of the glen at Garvamore to create a tentative 'threshold'
- There is a real sense of being at the edge the Park, as the topography takes on the character of individual mountains and rugged skylines, especially to the west, more normally associated with the west of Scotland

2.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is partially inter-visible with the Glen Shirra character area, but is mostly orientated towards the rugged mountains beyond the Park to the west. A large block of conifer woodland straddles the boundary between this area and the neighbouring Spey Dam character area,

2.3.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

This area is dominated by the conjunctions of several glens and side valleys, radiating north and west from Garva Bridge as well as the merging of Glen Shirra with the Upper Glen of the Spey – these reinforce the sense of a ‘pass’, which is further emphasised by the historic Wade Road and associated infrastructure and history.



Wide, grazed glen floor



Garvamore, sitting within improved fields and sheltered by woodland



Conifer woodland on the hill tops to the north of this area, above a well defined river terrace occupied by housing



Large hummocks of free draining glacial deposit along the edge of the strath

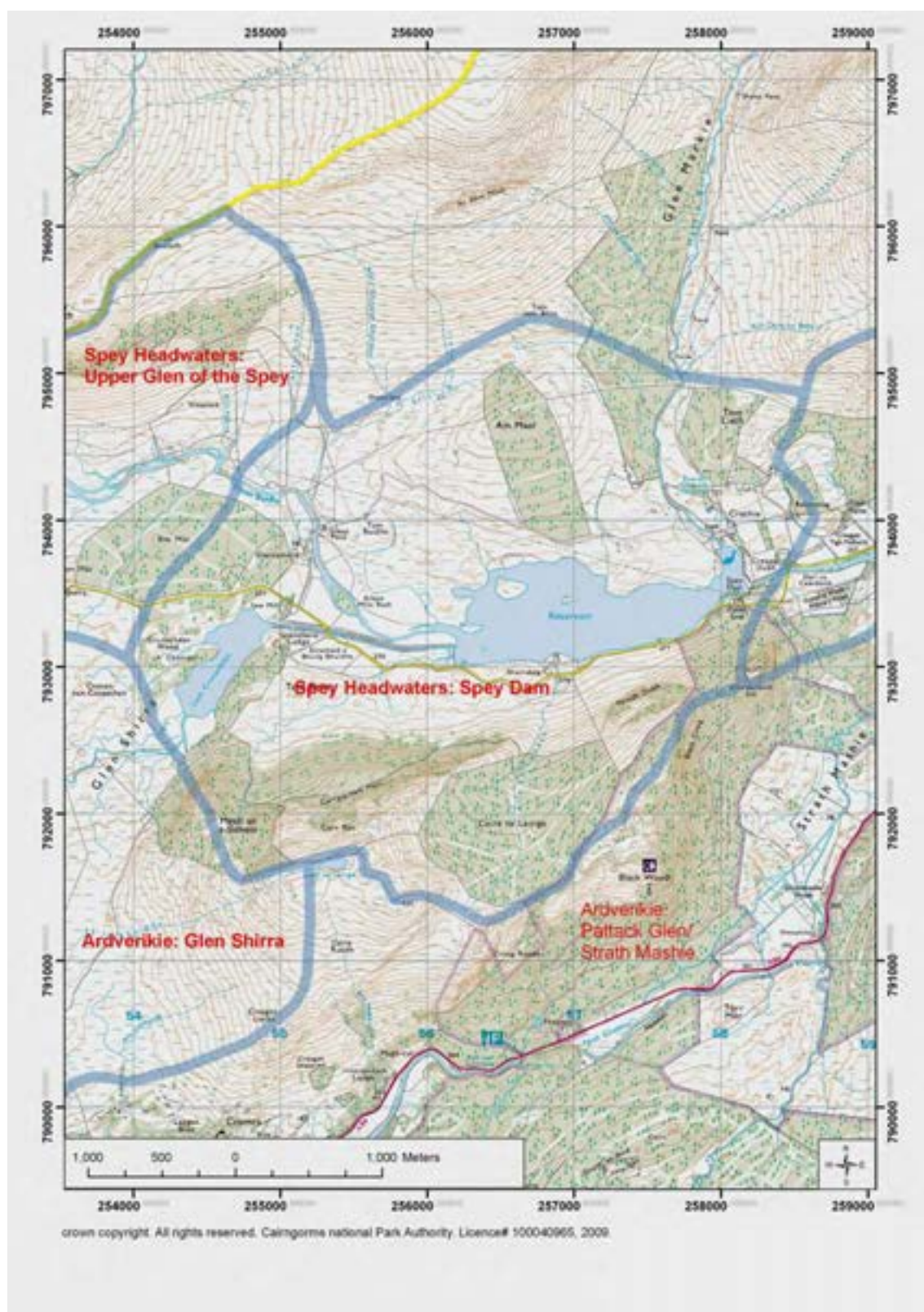


Conifer woodland straddles the boundary between this area and the Spey Dam



Small conifer shelter woods, here on well-drained terraces which extend outwith the Park

2.4 Spey Headwaters: **Spey Dam**



2.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- This relatively contained glen, orientated west/east, is enclosed by sharply rising slopes to the south and a low hill to the north, behind which rises the Monadhliath
- There are shattered rock faces high up on the north facing slopes steepened and roughened by glacial erosion
- There are numerous glacial-fluvial deposits, some of which form substantial, rounded hummocks
- Loch Crunachdan lies at the conjunction of the Spey glen with Glen Shirra, framed by the 'parabolic-shaped' side slopes
- The shallow, dammed 'Spey' reservoir extends along much of the floor of the main glen
- There is extensive evidence of previous settlement, with small townships and traces of medieval and post-medieval land use associated with the tributaries and well drained gravelly deposits, especially along the gentle, south facing slopes
- There are several large conifer shelter woods, and an area of more extensive woodland across steep, north-facing upper slopes, which merges with semi-natural birch woodland
- The limited area of valley floor is pasture, generally extensively grazed, although each cluster of present-day settlement is surrounded by late 18th/19th century improved fields, now enclosed with fences, and occasionally punctuated by single specimen trees or small groups of mature broadleaved trees
- Grassland extends onto the well-drained lower hill slopes with no distinct change in vegetation
- Estate buildings at the western end of the reservoir are prominently located on hummocks overlooking Loch Crunachdan and are surrounded by shelter woods and groups of trees
- The infrastructure associated with the dam – canalised river, concrete bridges, the dam wall, levees and embankments – reinforce that this is a man made waterbody.
- The narrow 'Wade Military' road is slightly elevated above the glen floor following the break in slope as it winds around hummocks, apart from where it sits on top of straight embankments at the western end of the reservoir
- The eastern end of the reservoir is overlooked by the dramatic ridgeline of Black Craig on top of which is Dun-da-lamh fort

2.4.2 Landscape experience

- This part of the glen can appear cluttered, and the location and design of more recent infrastructure and woodland pays little regard to either topography or the extensive historic land use
- The extensive evidence of past land use and settlement is clearly visible, although it can be more evident in low side light and under winter vegetation
- The elevated road allows views down to and across the reservoir

2.4.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is relatively self-contained, but there are views into the hinterland of the Monadhliath to the north, and there are framed views to Glen Shirra, with Loch Crunachdan in the foreground, a focal point of views from the lodges at Glenshero or Sherramor.

2.4.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

When travelling along the road, the dam and its associated infrastructure dominate, however on closer inspection, the evidence of extensive past settlement is very apparent.



Loch Crunachdan and the steep sided, wooded, southern hills of this part of the Spey



Infrastructure associated with the dam

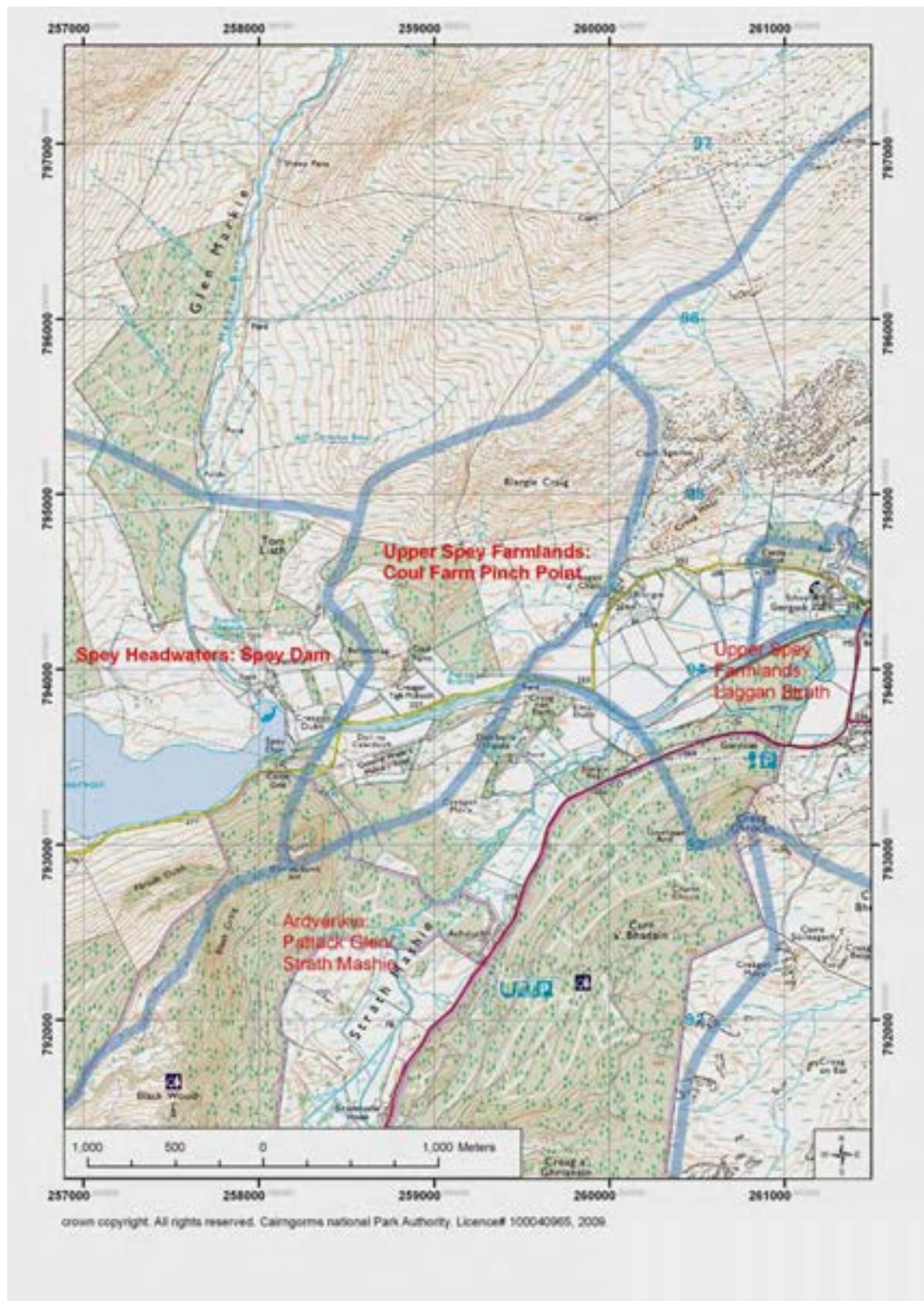


Settlement and associated woodland on hummocks



Evidence of past land use

2.5 Upper Spey Farmlands: **Coul Farm pinch point**



2.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- This small area is strongly influenced by a bed of rock which has been relatively resistant to erosion and weathering and now forms the precipitous slopes of Black Craig to the south and the rocky outcrops at the edge of the Monadhliath to the north
- The narrowness of the strath at this point forms a gateway to the upper reaches of the Spey
- The tapering form and narrow summit of Black Craig forms a dramatic focal point in the landscape, and is also the location of the Dun-da-lamh Iron-age or Pictish fort which overlooks the junction of Strath Mashie, the glen of the upper Spey and Laggan strath
- Where it extends as a band across the floor, the resistant rock has been dramatically scoured by glaciers to form low, rounded ‘roches moutonnées’ which reinforces the sense of enclosure when travelling along the road
- Conifer shelter blocks and more extensive woodland around Black Craig further reinforce containment
- The River Spey, which is relatively straight at this point, is bordered by riparian woodland, and there is also an avenue of broadleaved trees along the approach to Coul Farm and a line of poplar trees, which form a additional features
- Pasture, with some fodder crops, occupies small, level, straight-edged 18th/19th century improved fields along the valley floor which fit snugly around the rocky outcrops
- The road follows the banks on the north side of the river, while the ‘Wade Military’ road stays south of the River
- Settlement, both at present and in the past, is set well back from the road, clustered along the edges of knolls, away from the fields

2.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The dramatic sense of ‘threshold’ between the flat strath floor to the east, and the more upland character of the Spey Headwaters to the west, is pronounced and reinforced by the ‘gateway’ of dramatic topography created by the resistant rock forms and further reinforced by woodland

2.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is small and is very much a ‘threshold’ between three different character areas which meet at this point.

2.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The relatively erosion-resistant rock formations of this landscape dominate the topography, including the drama of the towering, narrow ridge of Black Craig to the south and the crags of Blargie Craig to the north, along with the exposed rocky outcrops across the valley floor. The small scale settlement is consistently placed at the edges of these rounded, rocky outcrops.



Black Craig, topped by Dun-da-lamh fort, overlooks this area



Rocky outcrops – roches moutonnées – frame the flat fields

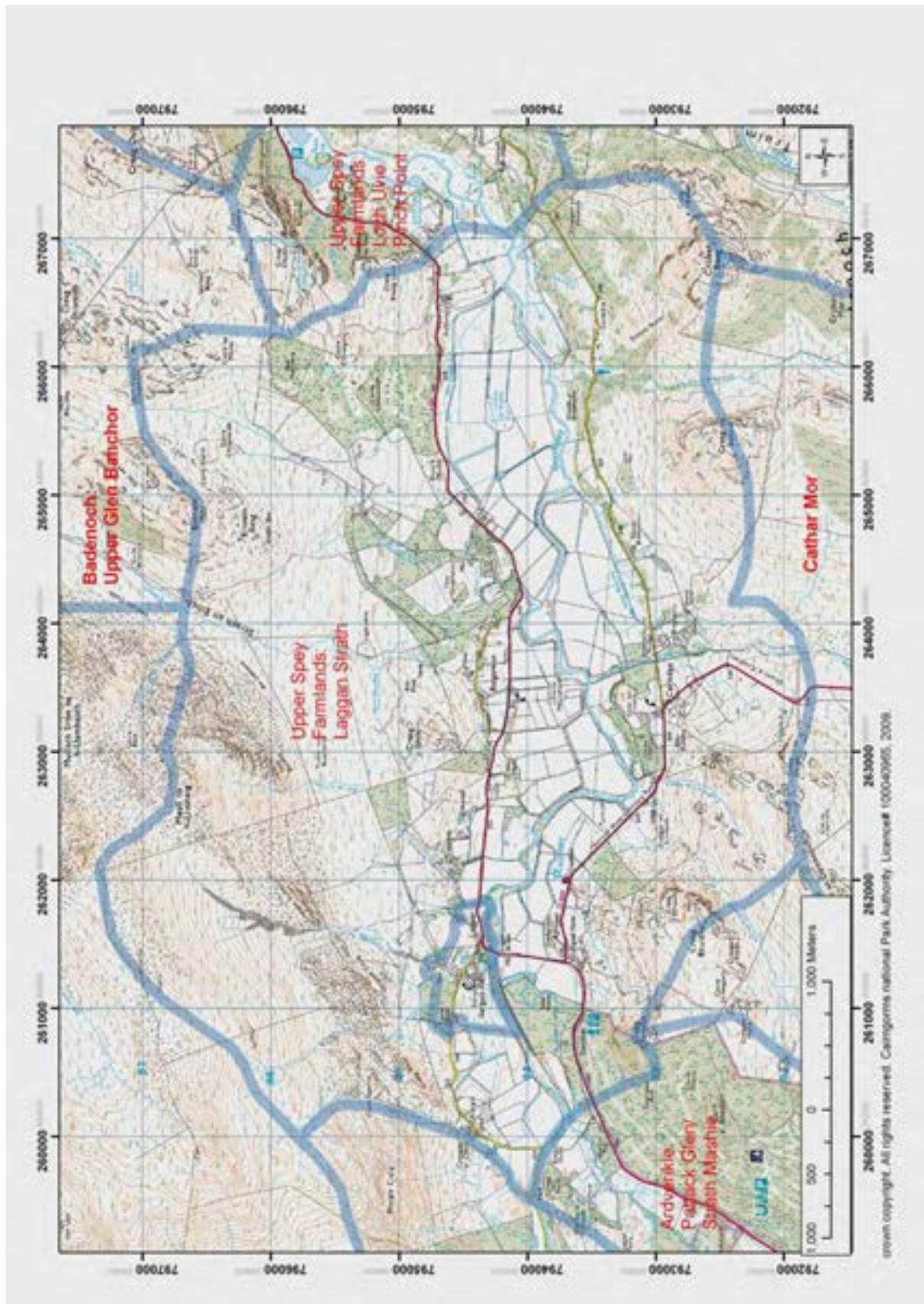


Settlement tucked back against the rocky outcrops



The River Spey – with riparian woodland at either side

2.6 Upper Spey Farmlands: **Laggan strath**



2.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- The River Spey has worked the glacial-fluvial deposits to create a nearly-flat strath floor, edged with well drained gravelly terraces and hummocks, and further constrained by low, craggy hills. This is an inner valley set within an older, broader strath.
- The steep rock slopes that define the inner valley and which also form the break in slope that leads up to the high tops have been steepened and roughened by glacial erosion, with the formation of crags that face to the east.
- The strath is orientated east-west
- The hill summits consistently display exposed cliffs below which lie the accumulated loose rocks from rockfall and frost-shattering
- The River Spey, contained by pronounced embankments to discourage flooding, meanders across the strath floor, which is criss-crossed with drainage ditches dug in the 18th/19th centuries.
- The lines of the main drains have been fenced, creating straight-edged late 18th/19th century improved fields, some of which have reverted to wetland where drainage has been abandoned. Fields above the flood plain, generally on its north side, also reflect 18th/19th century improvement but tend to be slightly less rectilinear
- Grassland and fodder crops dominate those fields which are still cultivated, some of which extend up onto the well drained gravelly deposits along the sides of the strath
- Planted conifers become more dominant at the western end of the strath where there is also one single larger block of conifer on the strath floor
- Otherwise, woodland is varied, with small woodlands associated with individual farms, occasional policy features, more extensive mixed woodland, particularly at Cluny Castle, and semi-natural woodland, especially on north-facing slopes, creating a diverse mix
- On the south side of the floodplain, between and within these woodlands, the north-facing slopes retain traces – humps and bumps on the ground – of pre-improvement century farming
- Laggan is a focal settlement, located near a bridge crossing and road junction, and Catlodge is a cluster of buildings next to a road junction
- More scattered individual farms and houses are largely strung along the roadside – or follow the line of an earlier road – strongly linked to lower slopes but still elevated land, back against the break in slope
- Balgowan has a settlement pattern formed by a close sequence of individual farms and linear fields extending down across the strath

Buildings are kept off the better land but close to the road, reinforcing the edge between free draining cultivatable land and rough grazing

- The public roads are elevated above the strath floor, often located at a break in slope between high terraces along the lower edge of the hills
- The occasional hill summit is occupied by a cairn, monument or trees

2.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- The roads, often located hard against the break in slope and elevated above the floodplain, wind around spurs and rocky outcrops, so that the effect when travelling is of a direct experience of the 'lie of the land'
- The small scale of the landscape is reinforced by the surrounding low rocky hills, the hummocks of glacial-fluvial deposit and the varied pattern of fields and woodland

2.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

There is consistent visual interaction with the surrounding character areas, particularly the Monadhliath to the north and the Ardverikie Hills and Cathar Mor to the south, all of which provide a backdrop to the immediate strath. Much of the strath is overlooked by the dramatic summit of Black Craig and the fort at Dun-da-Lamh.

2.6.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The pronounced contrast between the low, rocky, rugged, irregular hill tops and the level plain dominates. This juxtaposition is emphasised by the smooth texture of the cultivated fields across the floor of the strath which contrast with the rougher textures of the vegetation on the hill slopes. Settlement, the road and other infrastructure generally occupies a very particular location, sitting on the hummocky terrain between the two.



The level strath floor framed by extensive glacial-fluvial deposits



Long terraces provide a backdrop for settlement



Black Craig and the fort of Dun da Lamh overlook the western end of the strath



Drainage ditches in the foreground and woodland on the lower hill slopes

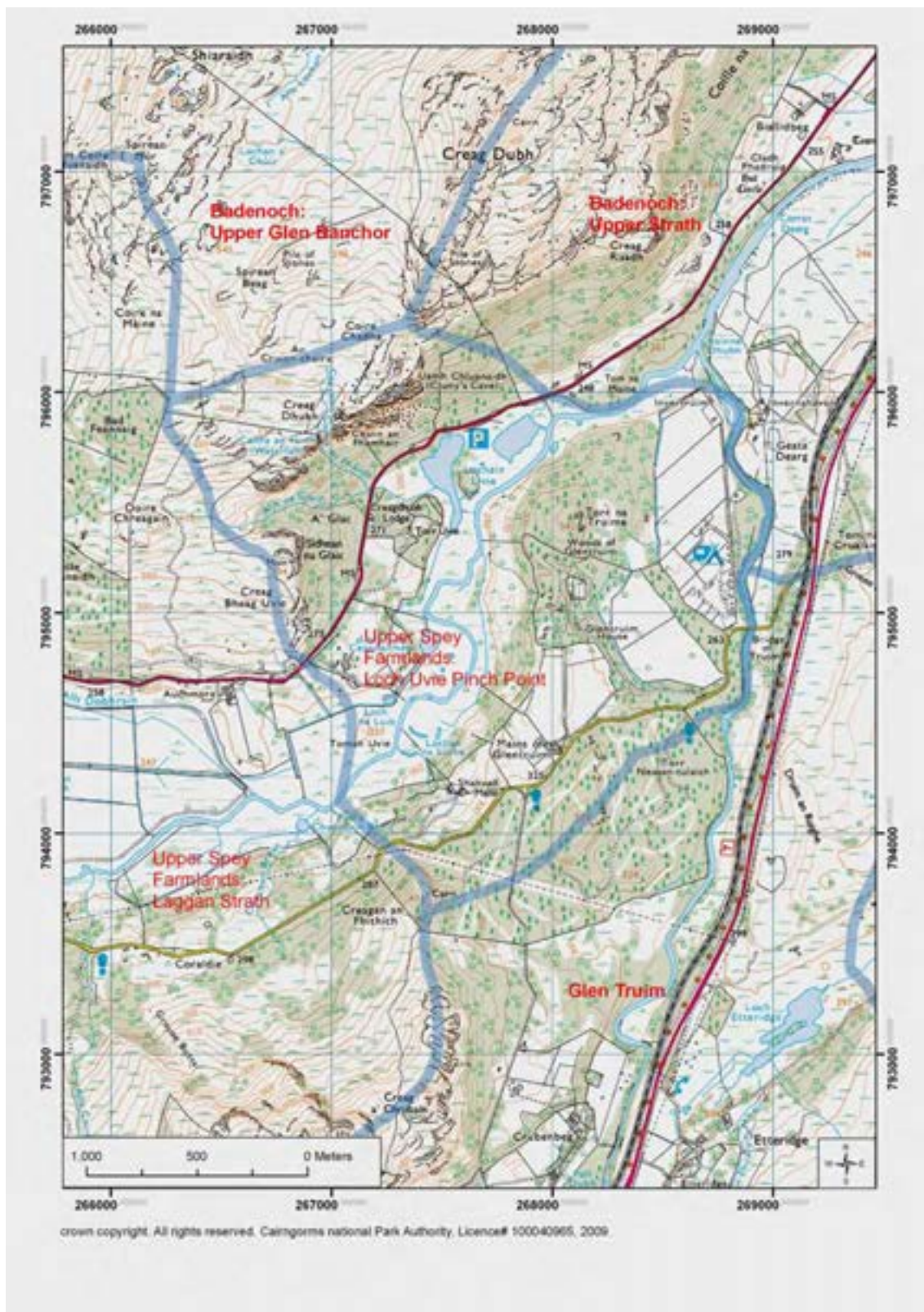


Monuments top some of the hill tops



Policy woodland around Cluny Castle

2.7 Upper Spey Farmlands: Loch Uvie pinchpoint



2.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- This narrow, contained 'pinchpoint' between two sections of wider strath is located close to the confluence of the River Spey with the River Truim
- Dramatic, exposed steep cliffs, shattered rock faces and block slopes, especially to the north, were quarried by a huge glacier which exited northwards from the much wider Laggan strath
- To the south, there is a high terrace, backed by further rocky slopes
- The strath floor is narrow, occupied by the meandering Spey and a sequence of sheltered lochans lying within kettle holes and contained by gravelly deposits, many appearing as sinuous ridges
- Swathes of semi-natural mixed broadleaved woodland extend across the steeper slopes and terraces, and the upper slopes around Glentruim are occupied by fine stands of well thinned Scots pine
- Mature policy woodland and parkland are associated with two large houses and their designed landscapes – at Glentruim House and Torr Uvie
- There is a relatively seamless transition between the semi-natural woodland, the policy woodland and the managed Scots pine which is achieved by 'merging' one into the other
- The remaining land is grazed pasture across the parkland, subdivided into straight-edged 18th/19th century improved fields on the flat, elevated terraces around Glentruim House, Mains of Glentruim and Invertruim
- Settlement is strictly associated with the estates, with the main houses occupying well defined topographical features
- The roads generally follow the break in slope, hugging the base of steeper slopes
- There is a caravan and campsite at Glentruim

2.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- The dramatic sense of 'pinchpoint' is emphasised by the towering rock features especially as experienced from the A86. The vertical scale is further reinforced by travelling between the tall, narrow conifer trees adjacent to the road at Torr Uvie, which reinforces the sense of arrival both into and from the neighbouring Laggan strath.
- The drama of the topography and setting contributes to high scenic quality and the lochans, dramatic cliffs, well-thinned woodland and policies combining to create a unified, well-composed landscape.

2.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is small and is very much a 'threshold' between different character areas, being at the juxtaposition between three other character areas.

2.7.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The sense of a 'pinchpoint' is overwhelming, with tall trees reinforcing the enclosure created by the topography. Every element has a clear link with the landform or topography – fields on level land, lochans contained by sinuous terraces, woodland located on steeper slopes, settlement sited on elevated hillocks – all of which create a unified landscape character.



The 'pinch point' seen from Laggan strath – the floor of the strath becomes more hummocky as it extends east towards the pinchpoint



Kettle holes filled with lochans



Rocky hills and crags create dramatic enclosure



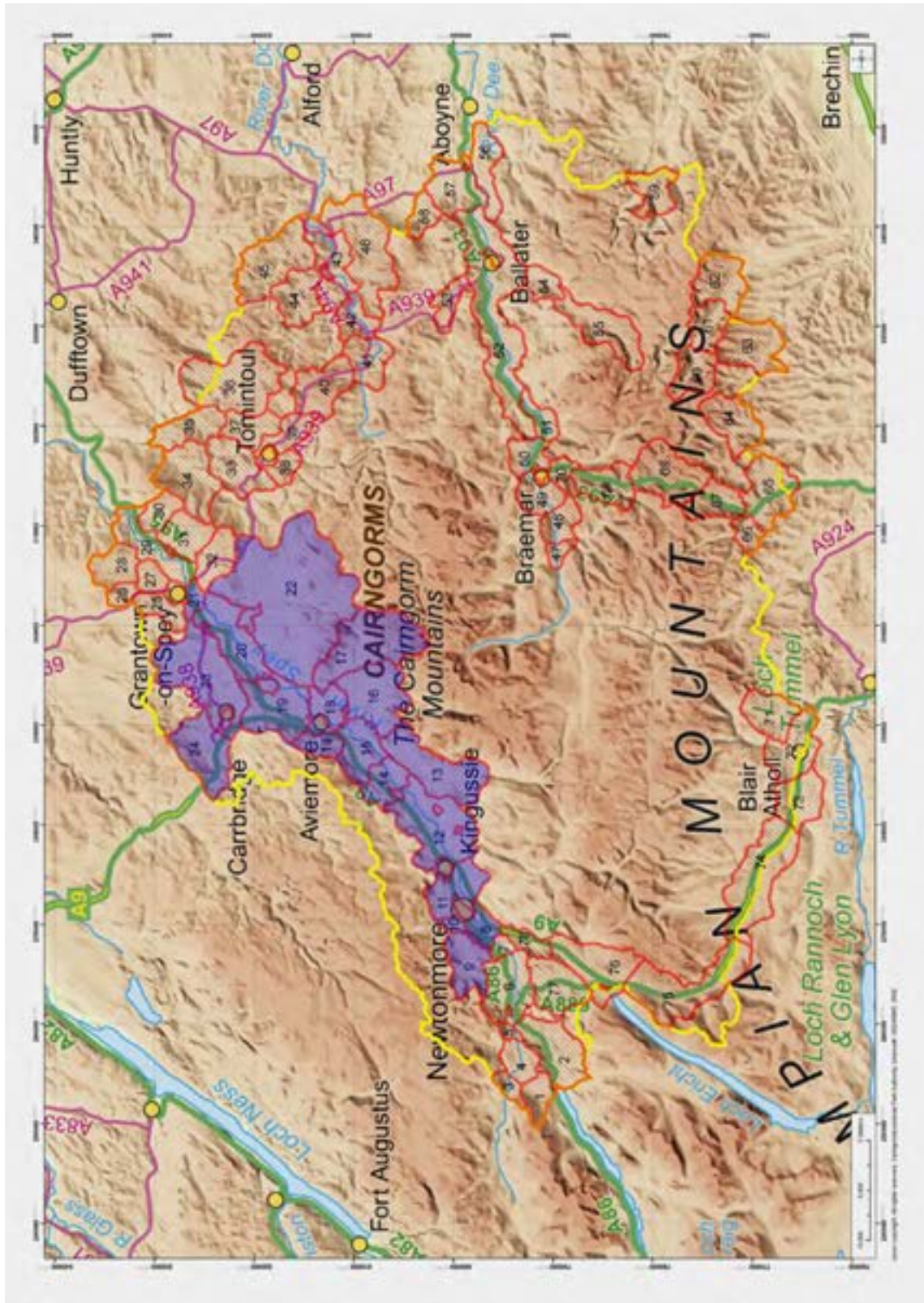
Parkland at Truim house

3 BADENOCH AND STRATHSPEY

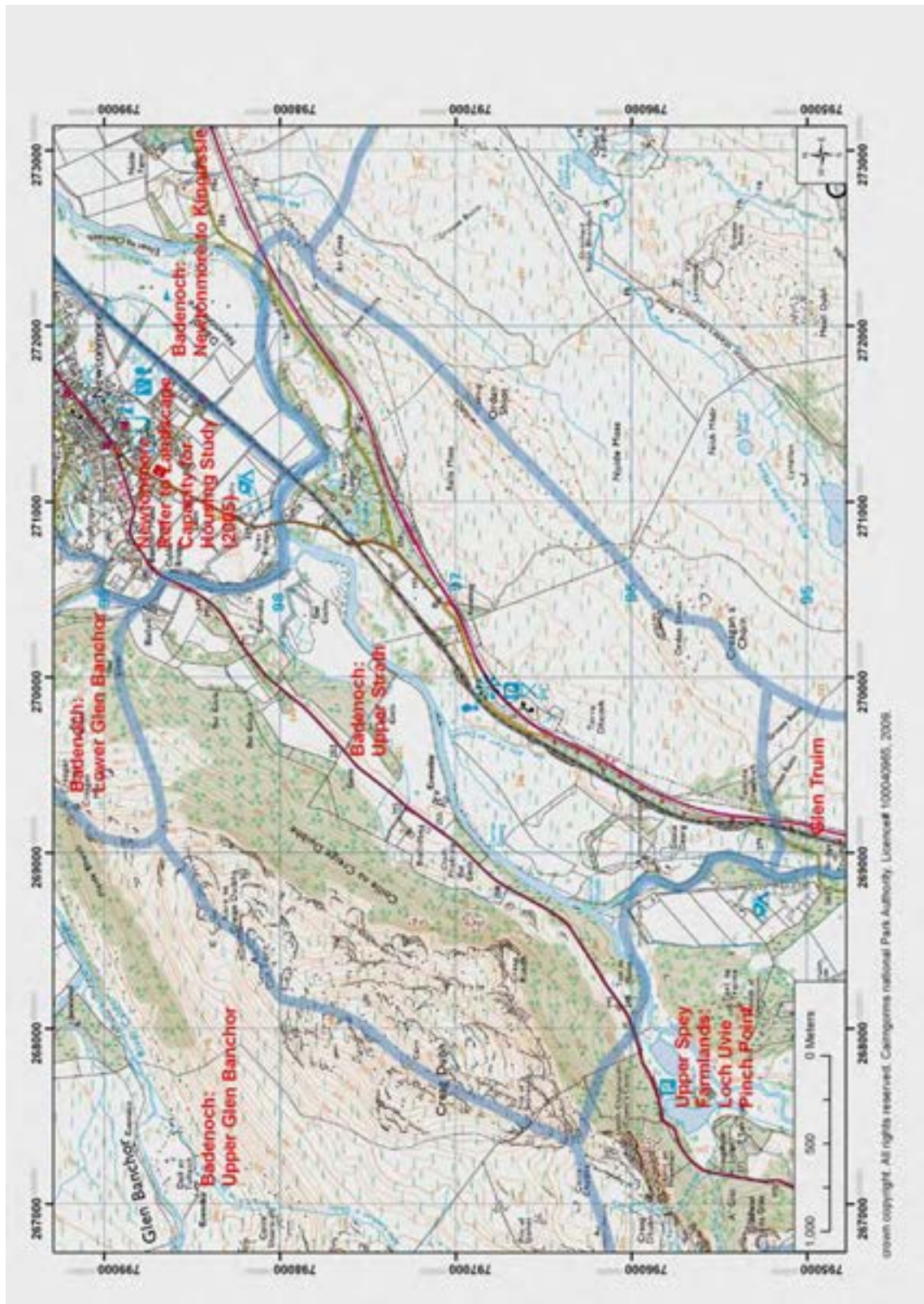
This section of the LCA includes the strath of the River Spey from Glentruim north to Kincaig, which we have called 'Badenoch' and then from Kincaig north to Grantown on Spey, which we have called 'Strathspey'. This character assessment is presented, working from south to north, as follows:

8. **Badenoch: Upper Strath**
9. **Badenoch: Upper Glen Banchor**
10. **Badenoch: Lower Glen Banchor**
11. **Badenoch: Newtonmore to Kingussie**
12. **Badenoch: Insh Marshes**
13. **Badenoch: Inshriach Forest**
14. **Badenoch: Kincaig to Loch Alvie**
15. **Badenoch: Loch Alvie to Inverdrue**
16. **Rothiemurchus Forest**
17. **Glen More**
18. **Strathspey: Inverdrue to Pityoulish**
19. **Strathspey: Pityoulish to Boat of Garten**
20. **Strathspey: Boat of Garten to Craggan**
21. **Strathspey: Craggan to Grantown on Spey**
22. **Abernethy Forest**
23. **Strathspey: Dulnain Strath**
24. **The Slochd**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



3.1 Badenoch: Upper Strath



3.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- This fertile strath of extensive well drained fluvial deposits, worked relatively level by the River Spey, is contained by well drained glacial-fluvial terraces and hummocks which extend along the edges of the strath floor
- Beyond this to the south east, the strath is only loosely contained by undulating moor and striking streamlined rock ridges with crags at their northern ends which are evidence of a glacier exiting north eastwards through the strath
- Behind these features lies the very distinct trough of the Erich-Laidon fault and steep slopes which form the edge to extensive low, rounded hills, the foreground to views to the high Cairngorm mountains
- To the north west, the steep, rocky summit and ridgeline of Creag Dubh, rising above rock falls, forms a well-defined enclosure to the strath
- The River Spey forms subtle bends across the strath, its line sometimes reinforced by riparian woodland
- The floor of the strath is grazed, with some straight sided, late 18th/19th century improved fields, and extensive areas of rough grazing punctuated by scattered semi-natural broadleaved woodland and possibly wood pasture
- The fenced, improved fields extend northwards onto the numerous hummocks and gentle slopes below Creag Dubh
- Very extensive native broadleaved woodland clothes the steeper slopes of Creag Dubh, regenerating across less accessible slopes and screes
- Planted conifer shelter woods are located along the floor of the strath
- There is extensive and readily visible evidence of pre-improvement settlement and agriculture, some with extant remains of earlier, medieval and/or prehistoric farms, associated with gravelly river terraces
- Contemporary buildings are limited to the farm at Baillidbeg and scattered buildings associated with the old A9, which are tucked into woodland on the hummocky terrain and terraces along the south eastern edge of the strath
- The A9, railway line and pylon line extend along the southern side of the strath, which is a major communication corridor, on slightly elevated ground, often hidden within hummocky terrain and visually screened by extensive semi-natural, birch dominated woodland

3.1.2 Landscape experience

- The area is experienced as relatively open from the A86, despite the woodland, because of the extensive, unobstructed views south and east across a variety of topography to the Cairngorm mountains
- In contrast, the A9 is relatively enclosed and views out are limited
- There is a sense of arrival associated with leaving either Glen Truim or the Laggan area from the south and arriving at this more open, less defined strath of the River Spey

3.1.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

There are views to the much more extensive, and relatively distant, mountain areas to the south and east.

3.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

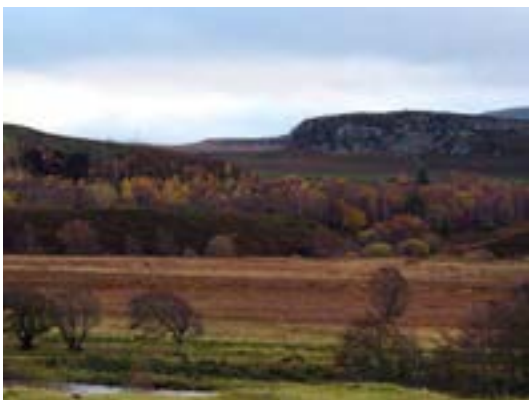
Although well contained by steep, craggy slopes to the north-west, the sense of openness dominates across the strath despite extensive woodland around the A9. This is because low relief to the south east of the strath allows long views to the massive bulk of the Cairngorm mountains. In addition, there are extensive areas of historic settlement and land use, which are evident as lumps, bumps and shallow depressions in the now improved field system.



Steep craggy slopes with woodland regenerating onto scree above hummocky terrain, occupied by the road and farm



Gently undulating strath floor, largely grazed but with woodland hiding the A9 in the distance

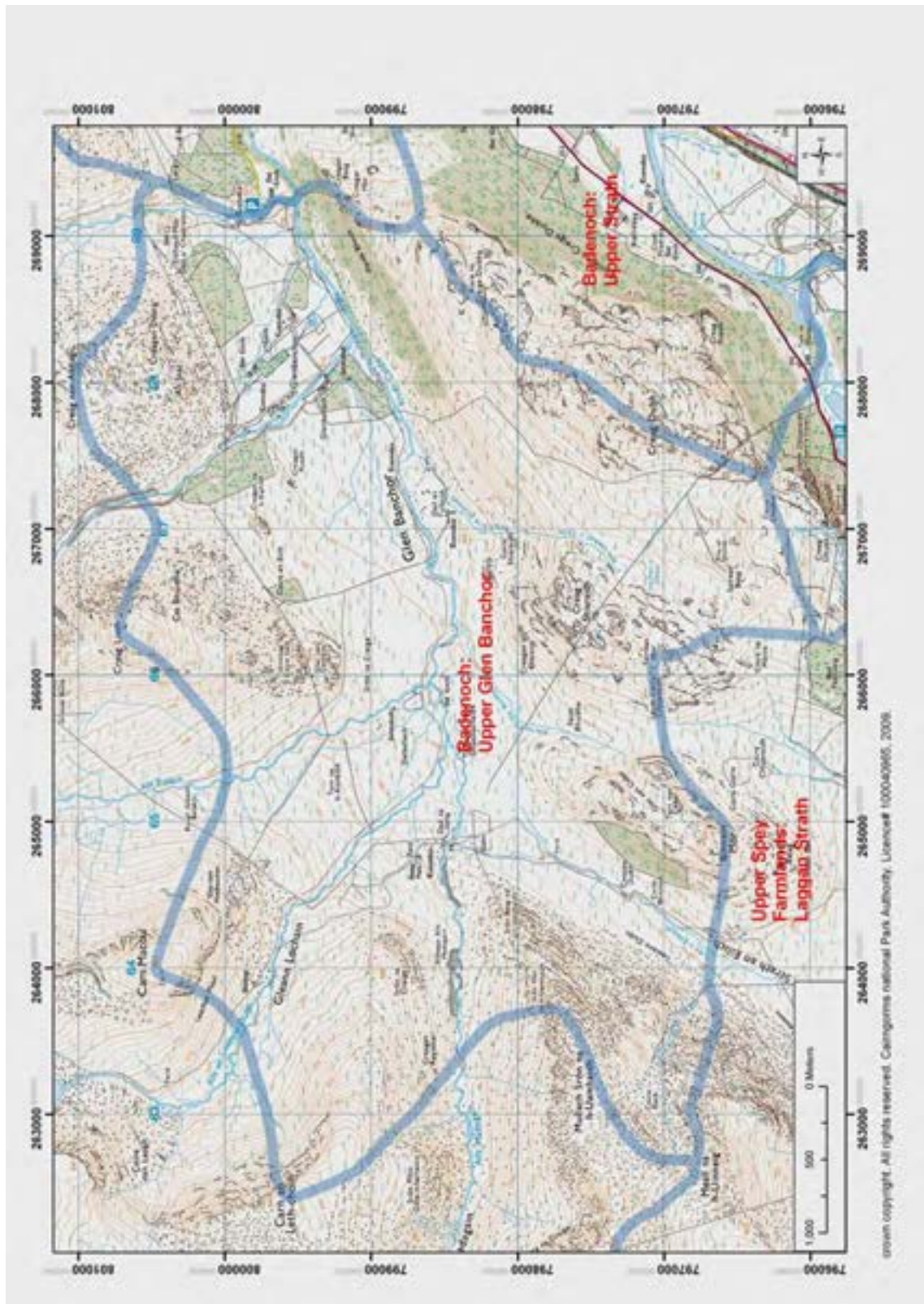


Streamlined rock ridge with crags at its northern end



Evidence of pre-improvement agriculture is very visible

3.2 Badenoch: **Upper Glen Banchor**



3.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- This surprisingly broad glen has a relatively level floor contained by steep hillsides
- The hillsides are strewn with shattered rocks and boulders left behind when glaciers melted and the support for the rockfaces was undermined
- The slopes rise to rugged, rocky summits of individual hills
- Several large well-drained glacial-fluvial terraces are located at the mouth of well defined side valleys, deeply cut between the hills
- A series of tributaries feed into the braided boulder bed of the River Calder which extends along the south side of the glen floor
- Most of the lowlying land is unimproved pasture on blanket peat, although a few fields of more improved grassland are located on the extensive alluvial fans and areas of well-drained gravelly, fluvial deposit
- There are a number of geometrically shaped conifer shelter woods around the fields and along the side slopes at the eastern end of the glen
- The north facing slopes are clothed with semi-natural broadleaved woodland which is regenerating across the hillside
- There is extensive evidence of past settlement, including prehistoric hut circles with associated field systems as well as pre-improvement townships, farmsteads, turf walled enclosures, a fort and, in side glens, associated seasonal shielings (with origins in medieval or earlier times), all closely related to the free-draining gravel and alluvial outwash of the tributaries of the River Calder
- The remaining settlement is sparse, with a few individual houses located where there was once more extensive settlement at Glenballoch and Glenbanchor
- The bulk of the glen is not accessible on public roads, although there is a network of tracks and footpaths
- The area is popular for local recreation, being relatively accessible from Newtonmore

3.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area is secluded and very self-contained, partly due to its 'hidden' location and the visual restriction created by the enclosing hills
- There is clear evidence of extensive past settlement which influences the perception of the landscape

3.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The area is very self contained, although most likely to be accessed from the east through lower Glen Banchor, which forms a transition area between this 'hidden' glen and Strathspey.

3.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This glen has a strong sense of seclusion, although there is clear evidence of extensive early settlement and land use on well-drained, gravelly land over a long timescale. The dramatic contrast between the level strath floor and the craggy surrounding hillsides also contributes to a distinctive sense of place.



The unusually broad, almost level, floor of this side valley, encircled by steeper slopes with conifer shelter woods in the foreground



Rivers cut into the flat valley floor

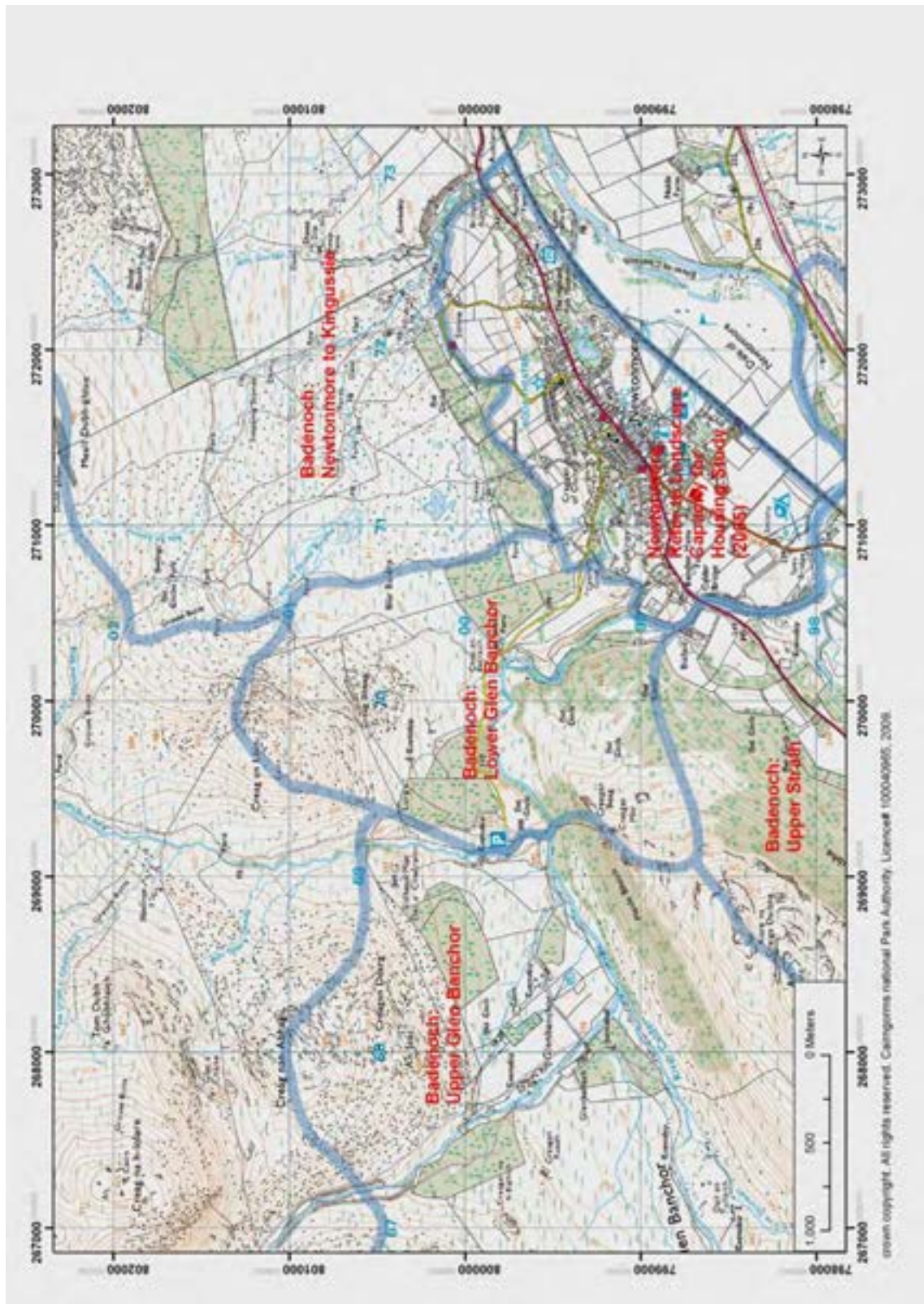


Extensive birch woodland across the north west facing slopes of Creag Dubh



Traces of past settlement and land use on the alluvial fan of one of the tributaries to the River Calder

3.3 Badenoch: Lower Glen Banchor



3.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- This area forms the 'transition' between Newtonmore and Strathspey and the more hidden glen of upper Glen Banchor
- Although comparatively low-lying, it is still significantly elevated above Strathspey
- The fast moving River Calder has cut through terraced, gravelly fluvial deposits to create a well defined and dramatic deep, steeply sided gorge, with several waterfalls
- The hillside of Creag an Loin is strewn with shattered rocks and boulders left behind when glaciers melted, but it rises from more hummocky terrain of gravelly deposits and moraine ridges which lies north-east of the gorge
- Two large areas of straight-edged conifer woodland are established on the lower slopes
- Birch dominated woodland along the River Calder is supplemented by recent planting along the steep slopes of the river valley
- More extensive birch woodland occupies the east facing slopes of Creag Dubh which reinforce the containment of the gorge of the River Calder
- The lower glen, although still elevated, is a relatively level terrace above the gorge
- Most of these lower slopes and level land is extensive but partially improved grassland, with some wood pasture, including occasional, prominent clumps of substantial birch trees
- There is extensive and visible evidence of past settlement across this grassland, including pre-improvement townships, numerous turf walls, enclosures and clearance cairns on the open, free draining ground
- There is no contemporary settlement
- The area is very popular for local recreation, being easily accessible from Newtonmore, and there are several benches placed along the glen to take advantage of views to the river

3.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area provides a pronounced transition or 'threshold' to the upper reaches of Glen Banchor
- The sound of the river pervades the space, especially when in spate
- There is clear evidence of extensive past settlement which influences the perception of the landscape

3.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The area forms a transition area between the 'hidden' glen of Upper Glen Banchor and Strathspey. In addition, there are fine views across Strathspey to the Cairngorm massif from much of this area.

3.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The drama of the river, cutting its way through a steep sided small glen within this area and framed by semi-natural woodland, is a focal point and a scenic feature. The scattered woodland and wood pasture is a particular characteristic of this landscape, as are the numerous and easily visible remains of pre-improvement farms and associated enclosures.



The slopes of Creag and Loin rise up from hummocky, well drained glacial-fluvial deposits which support grassland



Woodland along the steep sided gorge of the River Calder which has cut through the gravelly deposit

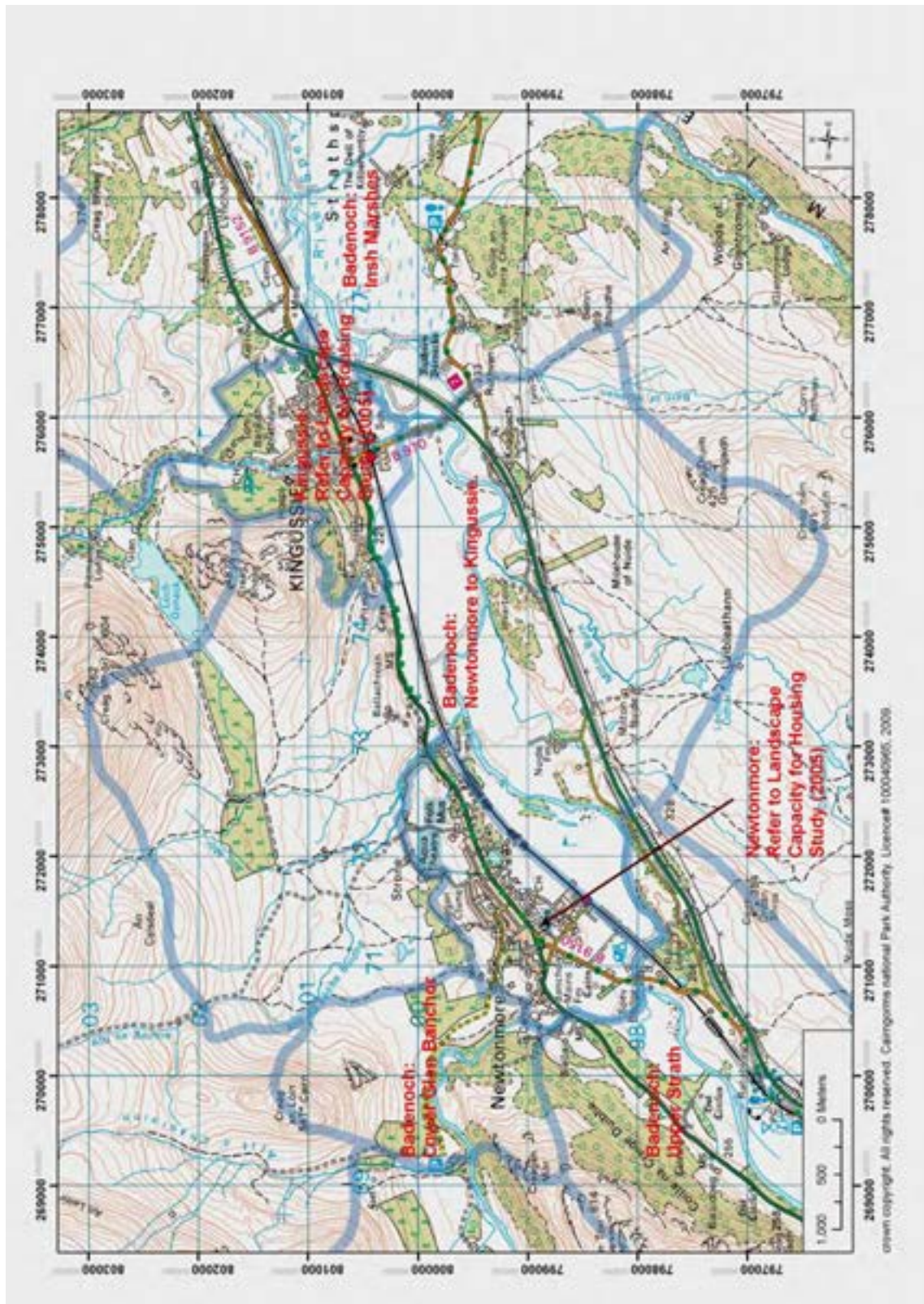


Clumps of mature birch trees – 'wood pasture' on the grassland



The remains of a circular enclosure – one of many traces of extensive past settlement and land use

3.4 Badenoch: Newtonmore to Kingussie



3.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- This wide strath, where the River Spey has worked the gravelly glacial-fluvial deposits into a relatively flat floodplain, is enclosed by gently graded side slopes leading to low hills which can be identified as individual rocky summits
- To the north, the flat plain is contained by well drained terraces which form a well-defined steep edge to the strath floor
- Along the southern edge of the strath there is an extensive area of complex, interlocking hummocks, terraces and ridges of glacial-fluvial deposit are interspersed with lochans and small flats of farmed land
- Shallow basins and gentle gradients along the upper side slopes and subtle side glens, such as the valley of the Milton Burn, which follows the line of the Ericht-Laidon fault, reinforce the sense of expansiveness
- The strath floor is partially drained and cultivated, with regularly shaped late 18th/19th century improved fields, and now used for improved grassland, fodder and arable crops
- There is a golf course south of Newtonmore, which occupies part of the floodplain
- There is some woodland on the side slopes, including a large area of conifer woodland near Loch Gynack, but scattered trees across the strath and along the river flats, and birch woodland on the more hummocky terrain are a more pronounced characteristic
- There are additional trees associated with field boundaries and riparian woodland, and occasional narrow conifer shelter woods cross the extensive hummocky terrain along the southern edge of the strath
- Settlement avoids the floodplain, and the two larger towns – Newtonmore and Kingussie – are clearly linked to the alluvial fans of large tributaries of the Spey
- Individual houses and farms are set on elevated terraces and tucked in between hummocks of gravelly deposit, especially on the southern side of the strath, with the ruins of pre-improvement farmsteads and field systems in evidence across elevated, south facing slopes
- The A9 strikes through, and is often hidden by, the hummocks and terraces of deposit on the south eastern side of the strath
- To the north of the River, the old road hugs the sinuous line of the break in slope, its slight elevation offering extensive views, while the railway sits on top of an embankment above the flood plain

3.4.2 Landscape experience

- The broad scale and expansiveness of this wide stretch of strath is reinforced by the relative openness maintained by the cultivated fields of the floodplain and the low surrounding topography
- The complex, intricate terrain of interlocking hummocks and terraces enclosing small areas of wetland, pools and farmed flats along the south eastern edge of the strath creates a small scale landscape which contrasts with the more expansive main valley floor. It is easily experienced from the A9.

3.4.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

The openness of the strath allows frequent views of the adjacent character areas, particularly the more mountainous hinterland of the Monadhliath and the Cairngorms.

3.4.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The small scale, complex terrain of hummocks, terraces, wetland and cultivated flats and its juxtaposition with the simple level floodplain of the River Spey is a key feature of the area.



The expanse of the grazed strath – the railway is elevated on and embankment



Hummocky terrain and terraces of glacial-fluvial deposit on the southern side of the strath

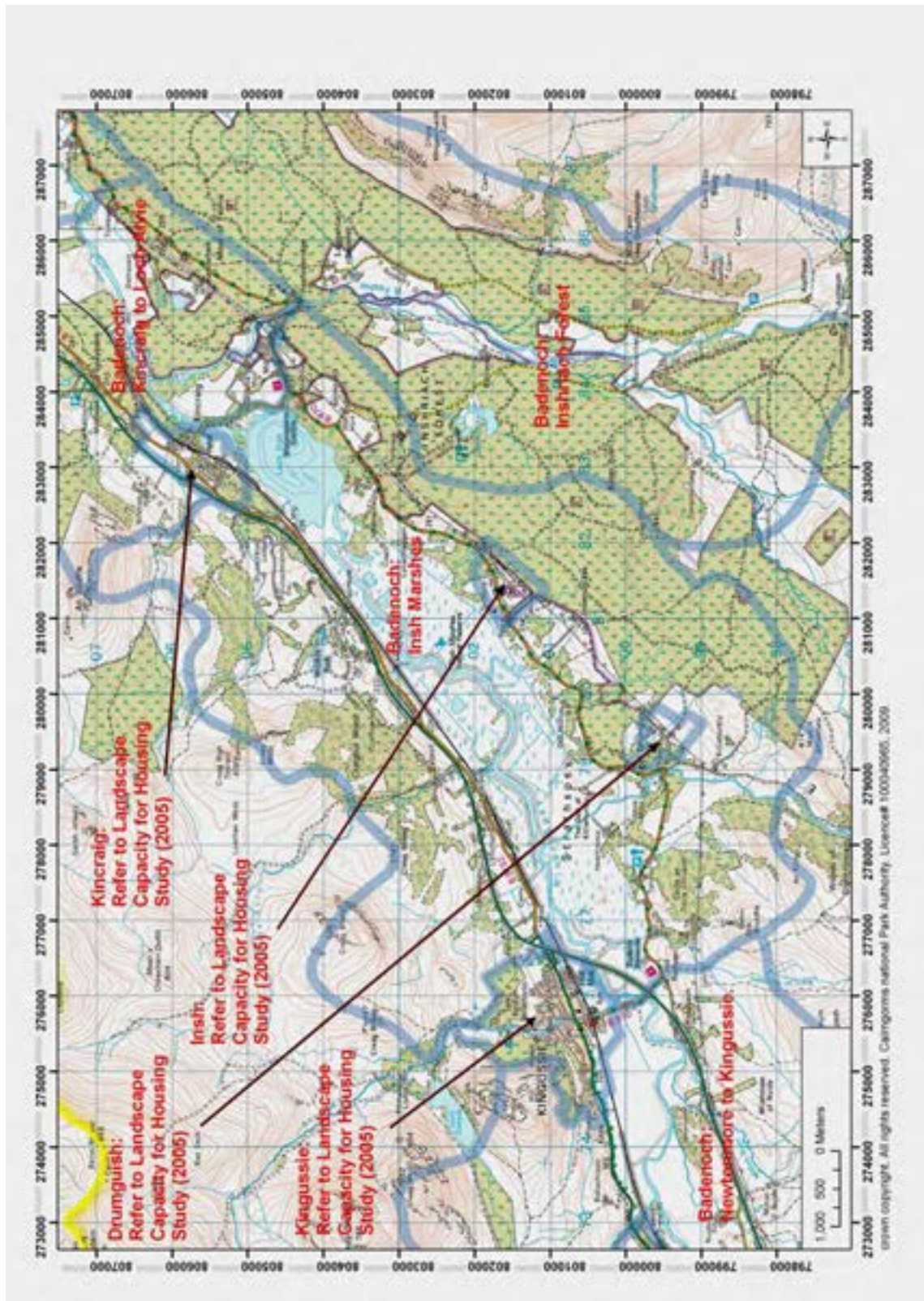


The A9 cuts through the hummocky terrain



The road between Kingussie and Newtonmore hugs the bottom of a well defined terrace

3.5 Badenoch: Insh Marshes



3.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- Extensive wetland, marsh and occasional pools reach across most of the floor of this wide stretch of strath, interrupted by occasional hummocks of gravelly deposit
- The floodplain is framed on both sides by wide terraces and elevated, sometimes complex and undulating slopes of well-drained glacial-fluvial deposits
- The north western side of the strath is then contained by low, rocky hills along the edge of the Monadhliath, while along the south eastern edge, the vast conifer woodland of Inshriach forest extends across low, undulating terrain
- More extensive, well drained deposits are supplemented by an extensive fan of gravelly outwash from the River Tromie at the mouth of Glen Tromie
- The River Spey meanders in generous loops across the strath floor, pools indicating the line of past meanders, to join with the calm expanse of Loch Insh to the north. The river seasonally floods to transform the strath into a vast shallow, temporary loch
- The floodplain is largely rough textured reeds and wetland vegetation, with occasional scrub
- There are large, better drained meadows on the gravelly outwash from the river Tromie at the Dell of Killiehuntly and Invertromie, within broadly straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields
- Extensive woodland, much of it semi-natural, occupies the immediate edges of the wetland, rising up onto the low terraces which enclose the strath floor and over the low rocky hills to the north and at the mouth of Glen Tromie
- Geometrically shaped, improved fields sit on top of the well drained terraces and frequently appear surrounded by broadleaved woodland
- Smaller fields, indicating a period of pre-improvement enclosure, cluster around the settlements of Balnespick, Inveruglass and Drumguish to the south of the strath
- There are small holdings at Insh, although the former linear field pattern has largely disappeared
- Large lodges, at Balavil and Dunachton, and more prominent farms occupy the south facing slopes above the A9, where conifer shelter woods, occasional policies, roundels and specimen trees add to the diversity of the vegetation pattern
- Ruthven Barracks is a prominent landmark feature sitting on the remnants of a kame terrace at the south-western end of the marshes,

while Insh church, a small white kirk, possibly on the site of an earlier Christian chapel, is a focus on the shores of Loch Insh

- The roads clearly occupy land which is elevated above the flood-prone strath, and are often enclosed in woodland, while the railway sits, at least in large part, on top of an embankment across the floodplain
- The Insh marshes are a visitor attraction, as is the Highland Wildlife Park, which is largely hidden in woodland, and Ruthven Barracks

3.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The extensive wetland, rushes, willow scrub and numerous pools create a large area of semi-natural appearance, emphasised during periods of flooding
- The dominance of natural forces is further reinforced by the flood prone river which introduces an unpredictable and dynamic element
- The experience of travelling along the roads, through a sequence of enclosed woodland and open farmland is particularly striking on the south side of the Spey
- Views of the marshes are surprisingly infrequent as they are surrounded by trees, through which there are only glimpse views. However, they are very visible from the train, which is elevated on embankments.

3.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The marshes are an extensive semi-natural contrast to the managed strath floor elsewhere along the Spey.

3.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The naturalistic and dynamic, unpredictable character of the flood-prone marshes is a striking feature, which is reinforced by the extensive areas of semi-natural woodland.



Level, marshy land, subject to dramatic flooding but punctuated with occasional hummocks of well drained gravelly deposit



Extensive woodland, much of it semi-natural, along the hummocky terrain which frames the marshes



The meandering River Spey leads into Loch Insh, largely contained by trees



The Insh marshes in flood

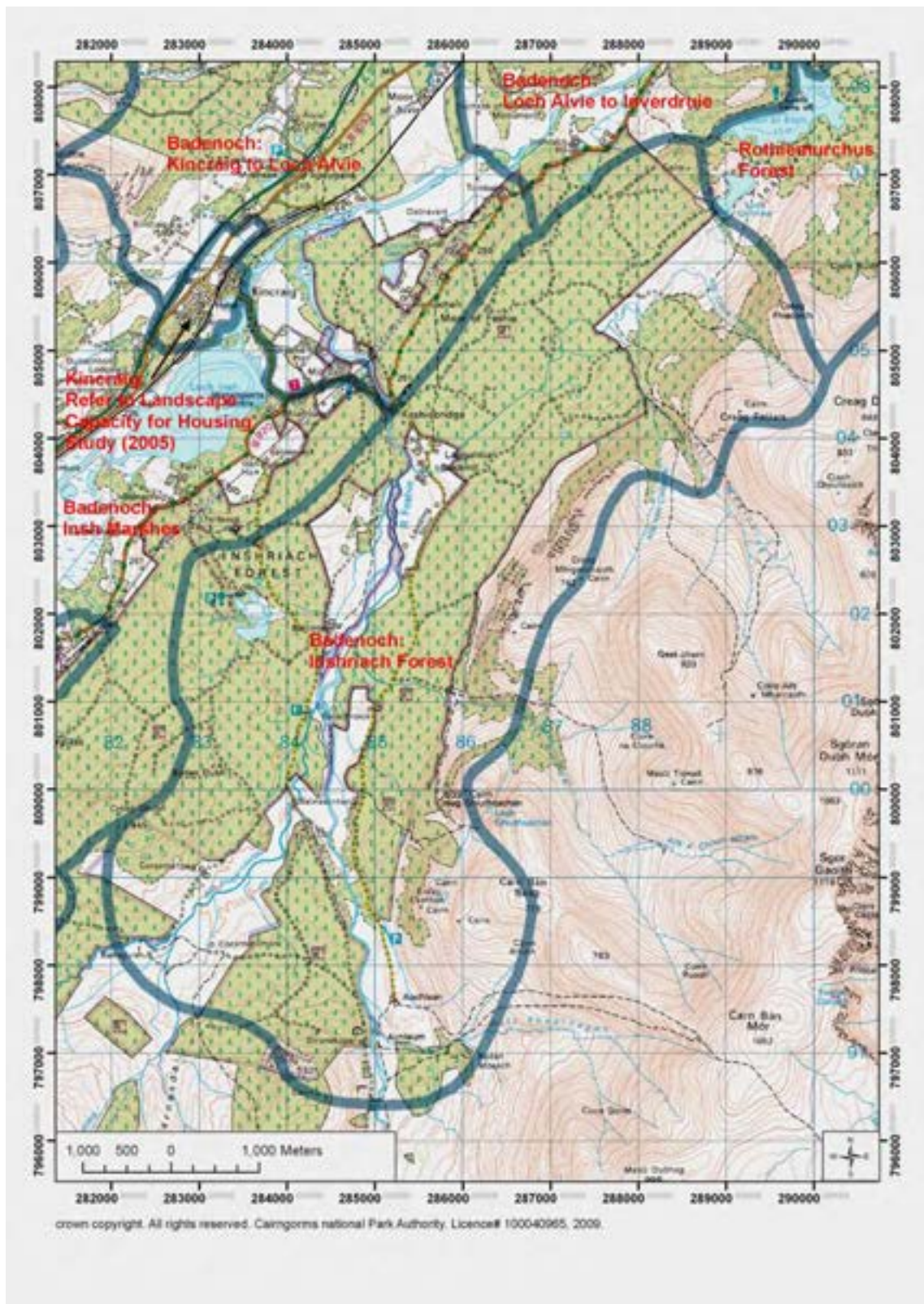


Specimen trees and roundels on designed landscape at Balavil



Farmland on well drained, elevated land at the mouth of Glen Tromie

3.6 Badenoch: Inshriach Forest/Mouth of Glen Feshie



3.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- This elevated platform of land extends either side of the mouth of the River Feshie, forming the threshold to the inner Glen Feshie
- The undulating landform of this area rises to a low summit at Creag Dhubh and is strongly contained to the east by the sheer, scree slopes of Carn Ban Beag and Creag Mhigeachaidh. The hills to the west of the River Feshie are less high with gentler slopes gradually merging with lower moorland and forest
- There are well-drained glacial-fluvial deposits supplemented by extensive outwash from the River Feshie which forms large fans of gravelly deposit
- The River Feshie is renowned for its dynamism, evident in its braided form and banks of deposited gravel with no pioneer vegetation.
- This is an extensively forested area with largely commercially managed conifers
- There are mature pine on the steep western hill slopes of Carn Ban Beag and Creag Mhigeachaidh, with extensive natural regeneration of young native pine and broadleaves across the steep scree slopes
- Heather moorland extends beyond this area and across small low-lying flats adjacent to the River Feshie
- A sequence of spaces, with small fields of pasture contained by the forest, sits on terraces either side of the River Feshie and its tributary the Allt Fhearnasdail
- Small farms, on sites of earlier settlement, are associated with these pastures
- Uath Lochan, an interlocking cluster of peat-black pools surrounded by mixed pine, birch and tall Douglas Fir, forms a focus within Inshriach Forest. The shattered cliff face of Creag Far-Leitire, colonised by contorted Scots pine, birch and rowan, provides a backdrop to these pools and contributes to the rich diversity of this area
- A loose cluster of low dwellings and an outdoor education centre are situated at the northern end of the open land at the township of Lagganalia and Blackmill and are partially screened by the forest
- A larger area of grassland is used by a gliding school at Lagganlia
- Public roads extend either side of the Feshie, both ending at small settlements and, on the western side of the valley, the private road of the Feshie Estate continues up the glen
- The area is popular for walkers and cyclists with parking at Uath Lochan, which is a focus for recreation, and on the eastern side of the River Feshie, where access to a number of Munro peaks is possible

- The Spey Way traverses the area via Uath Lochan and the western bank of the Feshie

3.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- The constant rushing sound of the River Feshie, which increases when it is in spate, can extend well beyond its immediate setting
- The dynamic nature of this flood-prone river, which can often change its course, creates a sense of naturalness and unpredictability
- The sheer slopes of Carn Ban Beag and Creag Mhigeachaidh, patterned with scree and extensive native pine and broadleaves, are orientated to capture the evening light and are also highly visible from the A9 and Kingussie
- A strong sequence of spaces is experienced when travelling through the lower glen as open pasture around small farm buildings alternates with enclosed forest

3.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

While this character area is visible from and forms a forested backdrop to character areas along Strathspey, the gently undulating platform that the forest occupies is foreshortened in these views and its scale is not appreciated from afar. This area forms the threshold between Strathspey and the remote inner Glen Feshie and the Cairngorm mountains.

3.6.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The extensive woodland cover provides localised containment, although the sequence of spaces created by open farmland in the forest are valuable as a contrast to enclosed forested areas and allow views of the River Feshie. The River Feshie forms a focus due to its dynamic, unpredictable and powerful nature.



Scree slopes of Carn Ban Beag and Creag Mhigeachaidh, with an esker in foreground



Regenerating pine over moorland



Pasture, often associated with small farms, here a granite stone building, provides open spaces within this largely wooded area



Uath Lochan, a kettle hole lake which is a focal point within the forest

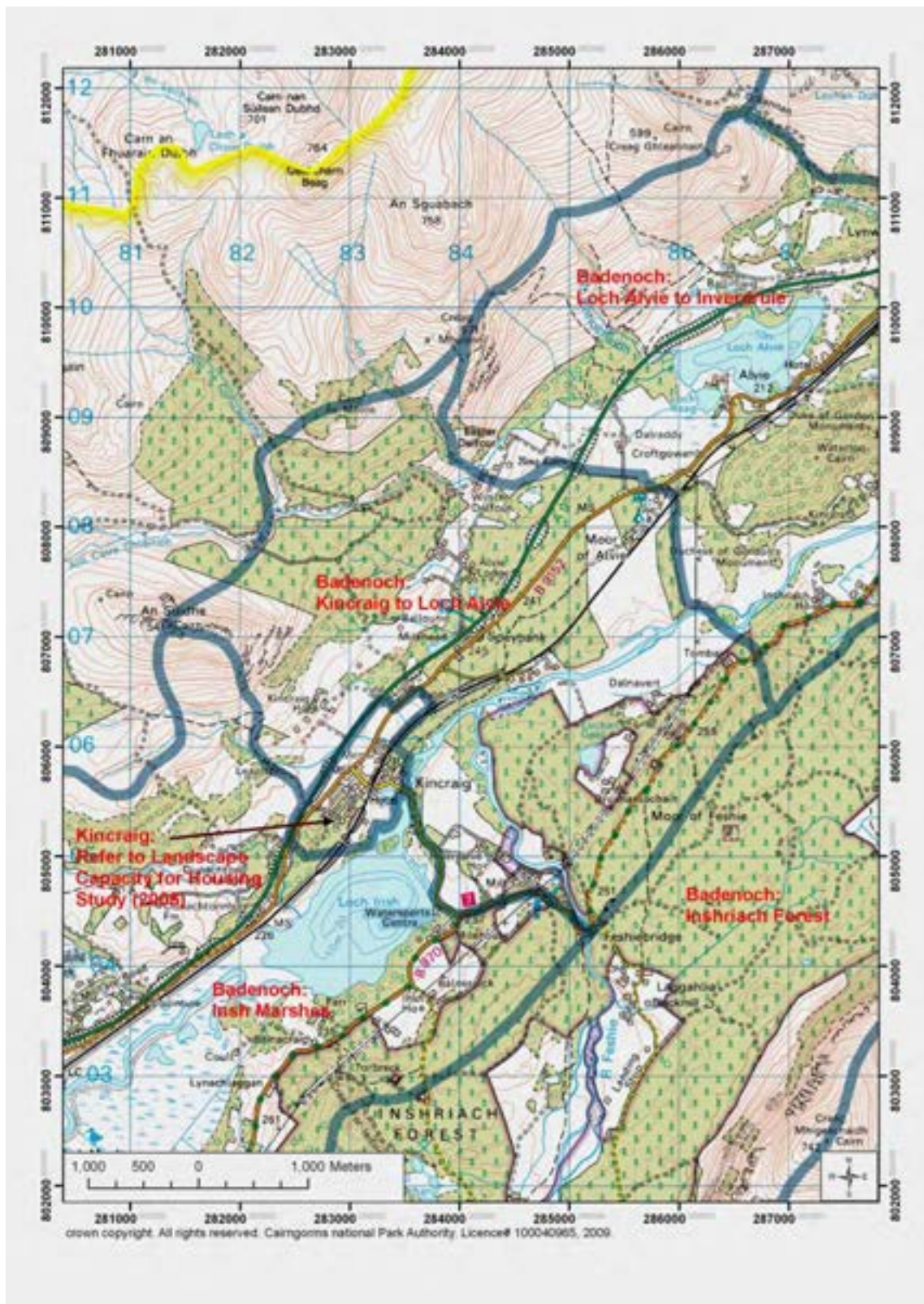


Open space along the River Feshie



Braided reaches of the River Feshie – riverbank vegetation is sparse as it is washed away by seasonal spates

3.7 Badenoch: Kincaig to Loch Alvie



3.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- This area is contained to the north west by hill slopes which have been steepened by the flow of ice along the strath to form the edge of the Monadhliath
- Containment to the south east is dominated by the densely wooded slopes of Inshriach Forest, which sit below the ice roughened crags of Creag Mhigeachaidh.
- Gravelly glacial-fluvial deposits underpin a series of well-drained ridges and terraces stepping up from the floodplain of the Spey.
- Extensive commercially managed pine forest planted either side of the river conceals the hummocky landform of dips and knolls.
- Farmland occupies a long, level terrace at the foot of the Monadhliath and on open land south of the Spey. The rectilinear, late 18/19th century improved fields are enclosed by fences, although dykes are a particular feature across farmland around Kincaig House.
- Wetter un-grazed fields and areas of scrub fringe the meandering River Spey in places
- Roundel plantings and richly diverse woodlands of the Allt an Fhearna are evidence of a formerly more extensive designed landscape associated with Alvie Lodge, with further designed landscape at Invereshie House.
- A fragmented pattern of development is a feature of this character area. Gravel extraction, estate sawmill and fish farming activities are well-screened by terraces in a dip at the foot of the Monadhliath while a chalet park and quarry are located within the forested areas but more visible from elevated areas and transport routes.
- Estate farms and cottages are located at intervals possibly associated with former settlement and elevated above the farmland along the foot of the Monadhliath, buildings often set on localised hummocky terrain
- Two small linear settlements of mainly newer bungalows are located on terraces either side of the Spey floodplain at Speybank and Dalnavert.
- Communications are relatively close together within this character area. The A9, B9152 and railway pass through dense woodland on the north side of the Spey while the B970 takes a more circuitous route on the edge of Inshriach Forest.

3.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- Transport routes, and much of the development, are frequently enclosed by dense woodland and hummocky landform, which also limits views of the River Spey and floodplain farmed areas.

- The A9 emerges into open, grazed land at Kincaig, which contrasts with the generally enclosed experience from the road
- The Alvie Estate and the deeply cut valleys and craggy hill slopes of the foothills to the Monadhliath is more secluded.

3.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

Extensive forestry restricts the visibility of adjacent character areas from low level viewpoints although views over Strathspey, Inshriach Forest and the western edge of the Cairngorms massif are possible from the slopes of the Monadhliath.

3.7.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

Dispersed development, including industrial and chalet development and several transport routes, can give this area a slightly cluttered character in some places, although it is not always highly visible. The presence of extensive commercial woodland extending onto the floor of Strathspey is an unusual feature. This hides the subtle undulations of the landform and inhibits views of the River Spey and its more open floodplain.



Elevated view from above Alvie Lodge illustrates the dense expanse of woodland in this area, and farms tucked along the better drained land at the foot of the Monadhliath



Development is often hidden by land form and trees

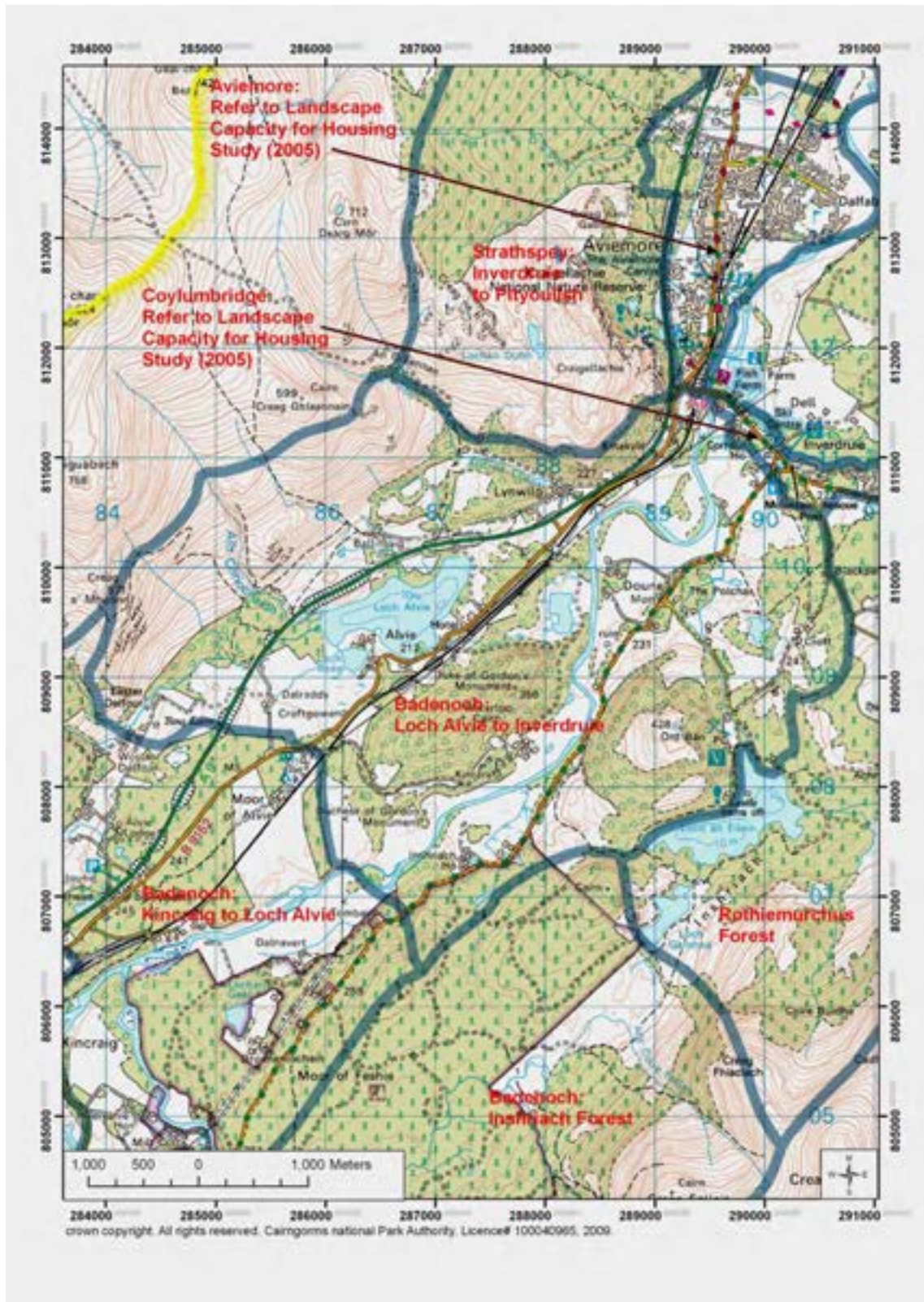


Farm located on hummocky terrain, surrounded by fields enclosed with walls on slopes near Kincaig house



The A9 emerges from woodland near Kincaig, but is largely enclosed in cuttings. Hummocky terrain is revealed across grazing land around Kincaig

3.8 Badenoch: Loch Alvie to Inverdrue



3.8.1 *Landscape Character*

- A series of steep sided, densely wooded, prominent outcrop hills which are large “roches moutonnées” of erosion resistant rock, including Ord Ban and Torr Alvie rise abruptly from the level strath of the River Spey, constricting the floodplain.
- Steep sided, irregularly shaped hills contain the area to the north-west, while to the south east, the undulating terrain of Inshriach and Rothiemurchus extend either side of the prominent Ord Ban
- There are several smaller lochans in addition to the larger Loch Alvie, set in rough, scrubby wetlands, probably lying above deep rock basins
- This character area has a richly diverse vegetation cover comprising naturalistic wetlands and extensive policy woods as well as juniper and birch scrub and extensive broadleaved and native pine woodland
- Straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, surrounded by woodland, are sited on well-drained hummocky terrain at the edge of the strath floor
- Generous policy influenced planting is associated with the designed landscapes of Doune of Rothiemurchus, Kinrara and Inshriach. Beech woods cling to steep, curving banks above the flood plain of the Spey. Avenue trees of lime, oak and beech line the B970 and estate roads and ornamental conifers punctuate broadleaved woodlands at the foot of Torr Alvie.
- An area of parkland surrounds the late 16th – 19th century mansion house of Doune, an old clan chief centre, and its adjacent medieval motte which are located on a flat floodplain contained within a loop of the Spey.
- The designed landscape of Doune includes centuries of historic land use focussed round this ancient, fortified site and extends to the indented western shore of Loch an Eilean, where plantings of beech and chestnut mingle with extensive native pine.
- Mansion houses and estate buildings, gate lodges, Alvie church and other built features such as hill-top monuments and stone walls have a strong architectural integrity and add significantly to the visual diversity and cultural interest of this area
- Small settlements, of a handful of houses or a cluster of farm buildings, are located predominantly on the north side of the strath
- Where the deciduous woodland cover is patchy south of the Polchar the slight humps and bumps of small areas of prehistoric farmed landscapes can be seen, a feature that must have been common before agricultural improvements and afforestation

- The B970 is elevated on the south-eastern edge of the strath, edged by a low stone wall and skirting the sinuous floodplain of the Spey.
- The A9 is frequently in cuttings through this character area, and both it and the railway are often hidden in woodland
- Loch an Eilean is a focus for recreation and the Spey Way passes through this area. Tracks and paths are overgrown on Torr Alvie and access may be restricted around the designed landscapes of Doune of Rothiemurchus and Kinrara.

3.8.2 *Landscape experience*

- The steep-sided, densely wooded hills of Ord Ban and Torr Alvie create a very pronounced sense of enclosure within Strathspey which is accentuated by the dense woodland cover of this character area
- The occasional openness of the grazed land and fields offers a contrast to the dominant enclosure created by woodland throughout this area
- A strong sense of seclusion can be experienced within the core parts of this character area, particularly within the Spey floodplain which is not readily visible from public roads
- The wetlands tucked at the foot of the outcrop hills and fringing the Spey and the extensive mixed woodlands covering Torr Alvie and Ord Ban have a natural appearance, contrasting with the more formal designed elements of the landscape
- While open views from the B970 are rare, glimpses of the meandering Spey and the intricate pattern of wetlands and pastures on the floodplain backed by the wooded Torr Alvie are highly scenic in their contrast of form, texture and colour
- The B9152 offers more open views of Torr Alvie and Loch Alvie than the A9 which is frequently in cutting. Views of the pronounced hills rising suddenly above the farmed strath are quite dramatic when they are suddenly revealed on the rare, open stretches of road.
- There is much visual and cultural interest in the rich policy woodlands, designed landscapes and historic buildings

3.8.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained, although this intimate, enclosed landscape contrasts with the huge scale and rugged mountainous core of the Park, and the relative openness of wide floodplains elsewhere along the Spey.

3.8.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The abrupt steepness of Ord Ban and Torr Alvie, rising from the floor of the strath is a striking feature. The pattern of these small hills, the meandering River Spey and the indented Loch Alvie contribute to the intimate scale of the area. The broadleaved woodlands, wetlands, parkland and avenues as well as the built estate features further contribute to the rich scenic diversity.



The outcrop hill of Torr Alvie to the right, with the Duke of Gordon's monument on top



There are wetlands, as well as small lochans, across the strath floor



Characteristic occasional glimpse views of the strath floor



Loch Alvie, a feature and a focal point for dispersed settlement

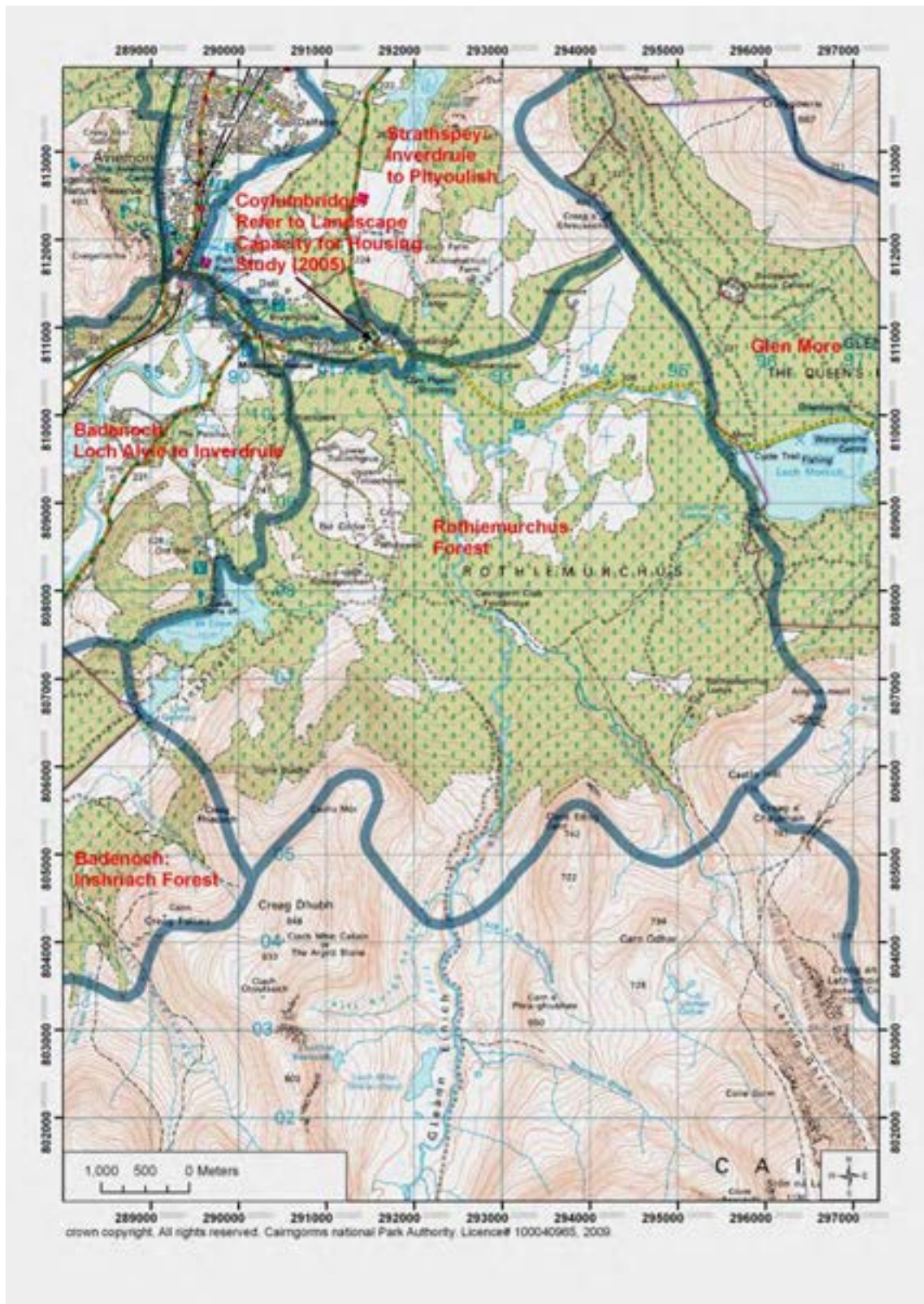


Open, grazed fields permit views to the outcrop hills



The A9 is frequently in cutting, limiting views out

3.9 Rothiemurchus Forest



3.9.1 *Landscape character*

- This landscape is raised above Strathspey, lying in the lower part of a bowl-shaped landform which continues east with the Glen More character area, at the foot of the Cairngorm massif, contained by granite-rich hills to the south
- The floor of the basin shows a lot of landform detail. The last ice movement was from South West and North East, leaving behind a series of long, sinuous esker ridges of deposit, interspersed with winding melt water channels
- Large areas of planted and regenerating native Scots pine, of varied age and density, extend over this area, colonising up the steep slopes of the surrounding hills, and into adjacent glens along the southern edge
- Heather moorland, often speckled with young regenerating birch and pine, occupies the numerous more open spaces within the woodland
- Loch an Eilean, with its 15th to 17th century island castle, forms a picturesque focus on the western edge of this character area, its deeply indented shoreline fringed by diverse native pine woodland with an under-storey of birch, rowan, heather and juniper
- There are occasional stands or individual ‘specimen’ trees of mature pine
- An open area of pasture is located on the low, rounded hill of Tullochgrue within the heart of the Forest. Straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, and dispersed clusters of farm buildings occupy this land which also has evidence of prehistoric farming, suggesting continuity of land-use across at least three millenia.
- Hidden in the forest by the Allt Druidh is a pre-improvement summer shieling area, indicative perhaps, of more unrecorded shielings along watercourses elsewhere in the forest
- The area is well used by walkers and cyclists. A network of tracks and paths through Rothiemurchus Forest link to the dramatic passes of Gleann Einich and the Lairig Ghru which penetrate deep into the Cairngorm massif
- The ‘ski road’ undulates across the ridges of glacial-fluvial deposit

3.9.2 *Landscape experience*

- The western expanse of the Rothiemurchus Forest has a pronounced natural character emanating from its extensive and diverse native woodland of varying ages and density as well as the moorland
- The eastern part of the forest has a more commercial forest character, in part due to stands of more even-aged woodland
- The Cairngorms massif, and its associated deeply cut passes and glens, is striking in its huge scale and bold form and can be appreciated from the many open areas within the Forest, for example on the road to Whitewell
- The area is very popular for recreation and while this reduces the sense of seclusion experienced, the forest and the varied terrain has the ability to absorb the many people who visit
- A feeling of timelessness can be experienced within the long-settled parts of the forest, for example in the Tullochgrue area. This is complemented by the long history of forest management.
- The mature native pinewood-fringed Loch an Eilean is highly picturesque and displays a typical 'Highland' scene to the many visitors who walk in this easily accessible area. It has a 'romantic' character enhanced by the ruined castle set on an island and the mountainous backdrop to views.

3.9.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The enclosure of woodland cover generally limits visibility to adjacent character areas, but when views of Strathspey, the Glen More area and the mountains are revealed from the open elevated areas, these can be dramatic as well as defining wider containment.

3.9.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The diverse mosaic of naturalistic native pine woodland interspersed with open heather moorland, juniper scrub and pockets of long-established farmland are the key distinctive features of this landscape, especially to the west. Where the forest is open, there are striking views of the dramatic northern face of the Cairngorms and the Lairig Ghru.



The long, sinuous esker ridges can be seen under the woodland across the floor of the bowl



From clearings within the forest, there are views of the Cairngorms massif and the major glens



Small fields of pasture at Tullochgrue, and views across Strathspey



Pine woodland and heather understory



View to the deeply cut valley form of Lairig Ghru



Buildings at Tullochgrue

3.10 Glen More



3.10.1 *Landscape character*

- This is the upper part of a bowl-shaped landform, extending east from the Rothiemurchus character area, contained by the arc of the high granite “pluton” of the Cairngorms massif to the south and the Kincardine Hills to the north-east.
- On the slopes that rise around Glenmore there are some very large moraines and melt water channels, which are often hidden in the woodland, but where they appear above the forest, for example at Ryvoan, they appear as dramatic, large steps on the hillside.
- When exposed by rivers or manmade excavations, the gravelly deposits are revealed.
- The huge scale and bold form of amphitheatre-like corries, deeply cut valleys and ridges of the bulk Cairngorms create a dramatic skyline
- Glenmore Forest covers much of the gently dished lower ground of this character area. It is predominantly composed of pine and is largely commercially managed.
- Larger ‘specimen’ native pine fringe Loch Morlich and young native pine regeneration is evident on the upper slopes of the Kincardine Hills, increasingly creating a more naturalistic, fragmented upper margin to the forest.
- Occasional mature ‘granny’ pine can be found as small stands or individual trees within the forest
- Loch Morlich forms a focus within the forest, its simple, rounded form, sandy beach and light-reflective surface standing out amidst the extensive dark green coniferous cover.
- This character area is sparsely settled, with a single focus of settlement at Glenmore, where development is often related to recreational use of the forest and surrounding mountains
- Summer shielings can be found on the east slopes of Airgiod-meall ridge. There are likely to be others hidden in the forest, along the main rivers and burns
- Loch Morlich is a focus for recreation with a large camp site and water sports facility abutting the sandy beach on its eastern shore. Glenmore Forest accommodates a network of well-used tracks and footpaths popular with cyclists and walkers. A plethora of signs marks a range of other recreational and commercial facilities accessed from the public road to the Cairn Gorm ski centre, which passes through the forest.
- The ‘ski road’ climbs upwards from Loch Morlich on the steep lower slopes of Cairn Gorm in a series of looping, switch-back bends which

offer glimpse views of gravel banks where the river is eroding old glacial deposits

- A large car park is sited at the foot of the funicular railway and the ski slopes which are marked by snow fences, metal gantries and ski lifts. It offers expansive views across the basin of Glenmore Forest and Strathspey.

3.10.2 *Landscape experience*

- Glenmore Forest, Loch Morlich and the Cairngorm mountains are a focus for recreation and as such it is difficult to experience a strong sense of seclusion within this character area, particularly in the more popular areas, and with skiing infrastructure extending onto the mountain slopes
- While the presence of the ski road, which provides access high up onto the slopes of the northern Cairngorm Massif, reduces the degree of remoteness experienced it does allow spectacular views into the deep valleys and corries of the mountains and enables an accessible appreciation of their huge scale and dramatic form
- The northern corries offer an accessible but alpine experience of corrie, lochan and crag, dominated by the dramatic vertical scale of the corrie faces
- Adverse weather conditions at any time of the year can emphasise the scale and elemental qualities of the mountains, even from the exposed car park at the head of the ski road
- The Cairngorm massif, its skyline, corries and major glens, forms a dramatic backdrop seen from Loch Morlich and from footpaths within the Kincardine Hills

3.10.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This landscape is strongly contained by woodland and views of adjacent character areas are only possible from the open upper slopes of the Cairngorms and the Kincardine Hills. This landscape forms a transition between the more managed and settled Aviemore/Strathspey area and the mountainous core of the National Park.

3.10.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

There is a strong sense of being surrounded by the massive bulk of the Cairngorm mountains in this area, and the sense of enclosure is reinforced by the woodland. While the dramatic landform of the north face of the Cairngorms looms dramatically into views, often quite suddenly, Loch Morlich also forms a visual focus within the dense cover of darker woodland.



The 'bowl' of the Glen More area, as seen from the ski lift car park



Loch Morlich and the Cairngorm massif, with high summits and rounded profile of glens and corries



Recent felling of woodland creates a fragmented upper edge above which are the stepped moraines of Ryvoan



Signage along the road to the ski lifts at Glenmore

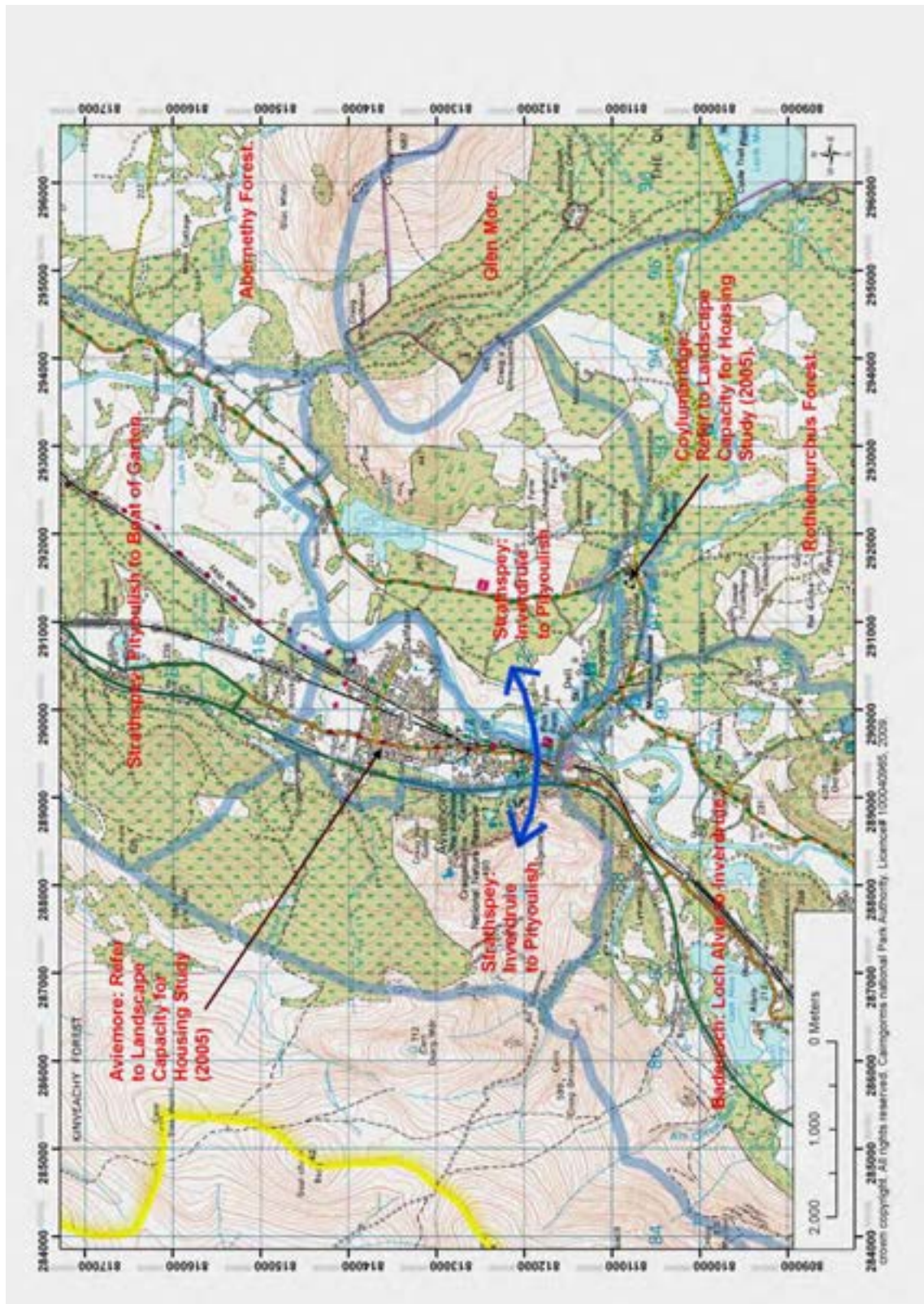


Woodland across corrugated landform of long ridges, moraines and melt water channels



Upper forest margin of regenerated pine in the foreground, with planted upper margin in the background

3.11 Strathspey: Inverdrue to Pityoulish



3.11.1 *Landscape character*

- This character extends across Strathspey and includes the setting of Aviemore. It is contained by the steep, craggy wooded slopes of Craigellachie, an ice-roughened schist ridge, to the west and Pityoulish Hill to the east, both of which have proved resistant to erosion
- The Spey forms wide meanders across the slightly undulating floor of the strath. Well-drained, glacial-fluvial terraces extend along either side of the strath floor
- Extensive low and fertile flats, associated with the Spey at the Dell, and extending south from Loch Pityoulish, are contained by steep-sided river terraces and hummocky terrain of glacial-fluvial deposit
- Between these, there is a raised, undulating gravelly terrace occupied by moorland and pine woodland at An Camus Mor
- Regularly shaped, straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields are located on the flat splay of alluvial deposit at the confluence of the Spey and the Druie, along the elevated terrain below Pityoulish and on the terraces and slopes east of the B970
- Conifer woodland extends over much of the undulating floor of the strath and the hill slopes north of Craigellachie, partially fragmented by heather moorland
- Hummocky deposits north of Aviemore, some close to the edge of the settlement, are covered with birch woodland which contrasts with more open level grazing land
- Loch Pityoulish nestles at the foot of steep slopes, its deeply indented form fringed by policy woodland and wetlands. Purple beech and oak woodlands together with occasional groupings of ornamental conifers occur around the well-screened estate buildings. The pronounced knoll of Callart Hill further contains the Loch.
- Aviemore is located on a terrace west of the Spey, and has been extended to the north and onto low terraces near to the river
- More recent development has extended under the A9 onto the lower slopes of Craigellachie
- Clusters of linear settlement and commercial development, set within woodland, sit along much of the length of the B970 between Aviemore and Coylumbridge.
- The elevated A9 is largely hidden within cuttings and woodland, and uses a slot-like glacial valley to pass through the ridge of Craigellachie
- The narrow B970, east of the Spey, travels through a sequence of enclosed woodland and open space of moor and farmland.

- Although few formal footpaths and recreational facilities are evident in the eastern part of this area, Craigellachie National Nature Reserve and the River Spey are important recreational resources easily accessible from Aviemore.

3.11.2 *Landscape experience*

- The eastern part of this character area appears 'tucked away' and relatively quiet, contrasting with the bustle of nearby Aviemore which is largely screened from the B970 by the raised landform of An Camus Mor and woodland, and is separated by the river.
- A 'pinch point', where the River Spey comes close to Pityoulish Hill, is further reinforced by Loch Pityoulish and policy woodland which marks the threshold into this landscape in the north at Pityoulish estate
- The twisting, narrow B970 accentuates the intimate scale and scenic qualities experienced in this area
- The B970 offers striking long views towards the Cairngorms massif
- There are limited views of the mountains from the A9 in this area, but Craigellachie looms into view when travelling south
- On arrival to Aviemore from the north, there is a fine view of the massif which is partially obscured by trees and recent development

3.11.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is fairly contained with only brief glimpses of the northern face of the Cairngorm massif.

3.11.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

This landscape combines the bustle, activity and infrastructure of Aviemore and satellite settlements on the 'ski road', with a quiet and less developed landscape to the east of the Spey. The mix of extensive woodlands, moorland, policy features and farmland, set against the dramatic local features of Craigellachie, Callart Hill, Loch Pityoulish and the Spey and combined with occasional views of the Cairngorms massif, form a fine setting to these developments.



The raised, slightly undulating terrace with woodland of diverse age structure at An Camus Mor hides Aviemore in views from the B970



Steep sided Callart Hill on the left, with a low lying, level plain of farmland framed by river terrace in the foreground, leading to Loch Pityoulish



A low lying fertile flat of farmed land, with hummocky terrain in the background



Loch Pityoulish framed by trees and hills



The A9, within cuttings and further enclosed with woodland, and Craigellachie looming into view



Northern edge of Aviemore, with birch on hummocky deposits

3.12 Strathspey: Pityoulish to Boat of Garten



3.12.1 *Landscape character*

- This area of undulating terrain is contained by steep wooded slopes to the west and north and gentle slopes adjacent to the basin-like landform of Abernethy Forest to the east
- The Spey meanders through a fairly narrow floodplain between expansive areas of hummocky, undulating terrain of glacial terraces, moraine ridges and kettle holes which extend over the wide strath floor where Strathspey converges with the shallow glen which heads towards The Slochd
- An extensive area of commercially managed pine woodland occupies much of the strath floor between two railway lines
- Low lying, raised moorland lies on similarly undulating terrain to the west of the Spey. Although this is largely covered with heather, regeneration of young pine and birch is evident.
- Occasional lochs and smaller lochans can be found within the woodland and this moorland, as well as in the more open farmland
- Birch colonises ground sloping down to the Spey around the edge of the moorland and extends onto the golf course south of Boat of Garten
- Extensive conifer woodland, often fringed with birch, covers the upper terraces and hill slopes containing this area to the west and north, hiding a series of burial cairns on what is likely to have been the northern skyline
- Straight edged, 18th/19th century improved fields, most of which are grazed, are located on the narrow floodplain of the river or on well-drained elevated terraces along the B970, where farms probably reflect a pre-improvement settlement pattern
- The farmed land on the western side of the strath combines later prehistoric and pre-improvement field systems with later improved, but small, fields
- There is a line of farmsteads set back against the break in slope immediately north of the A95, while an evenly dispersed pattern of small farms and houses set in woodland is strung along the B970
- Other buildings are often clustered in small groups and are generally sited on elevated ground, for example around Avie Lochan or at Street of Kincardine. Settlements are frequently in very wooded settings, merging with the adjacent woodlands

- The junction of Strathspey and the road north to the Slochd is overlooked by a prehistoric fort (Tor Beag) near Avielochan to the west, which is now hidden in forestry
- This junction means that this section of the strath is a focal point for transport links and in addition to the A9, the A95, minor roads and two railway lines extend through the length of this area
- The A9 is frequently hidden in cuttings and woodland
- The southern part of the Speyside Way crosses the low-lying, undulating moorland west of the river and the openness allows panoramic views of the dramatic northern face of the Cairngorm massif
- This area is popular with walkers and cyclists and the seasonal operation of the steam train provides a further recreation focus

3.12.2 *Landscape experience*

- When travelling on the B970 and the A9, the dense enclosed woodland alternates with areas of open farmed land
- The slightly raised, undulating moorland and birch woodland at the core of this area has a semi-natural character
- The heather moorland at the core of this area, close to the Spey, and the woodland across the strath floor, is an unusual feature, contrasting with the predominantly farmed land close to the river
- The open character of the undulating moorland allows striking views to the Cairngorms massif
- The settlements and fields within this extensively wooded area often have a feeling of being carved out of the forest

3.12.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

While views of the Cairngorms massif are possible from the open moorland at the core of this character area, the dense woodland restricts visibility of other character areas.

3.12.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The extensive woodland stretches into the floor of the strath, but the openness of the adjacent heather moorland allows people crossing the moor to view the Cairngorm massif. The distinct patterns of settlement, including regularly spaced farms and buildings and villages set within woodland are a particular feature, as is the strong sequential pattern of travelling through enclosed woodland alternating with open grazed fields.



A gravel terrace, with open moorland of heather in the valley floor offering fine views to the surrounding hills



Pastures located on well drained undulating terrain at the edges of the strath, with extensive woodland across the strath behind. There is a wet floored kettle hole in the foreground



Settlement at Avelochan (the loch is hidden behind the trees), tucked into hummocky deposits overlooking the loch



Other settlement is often located within a wooded setting

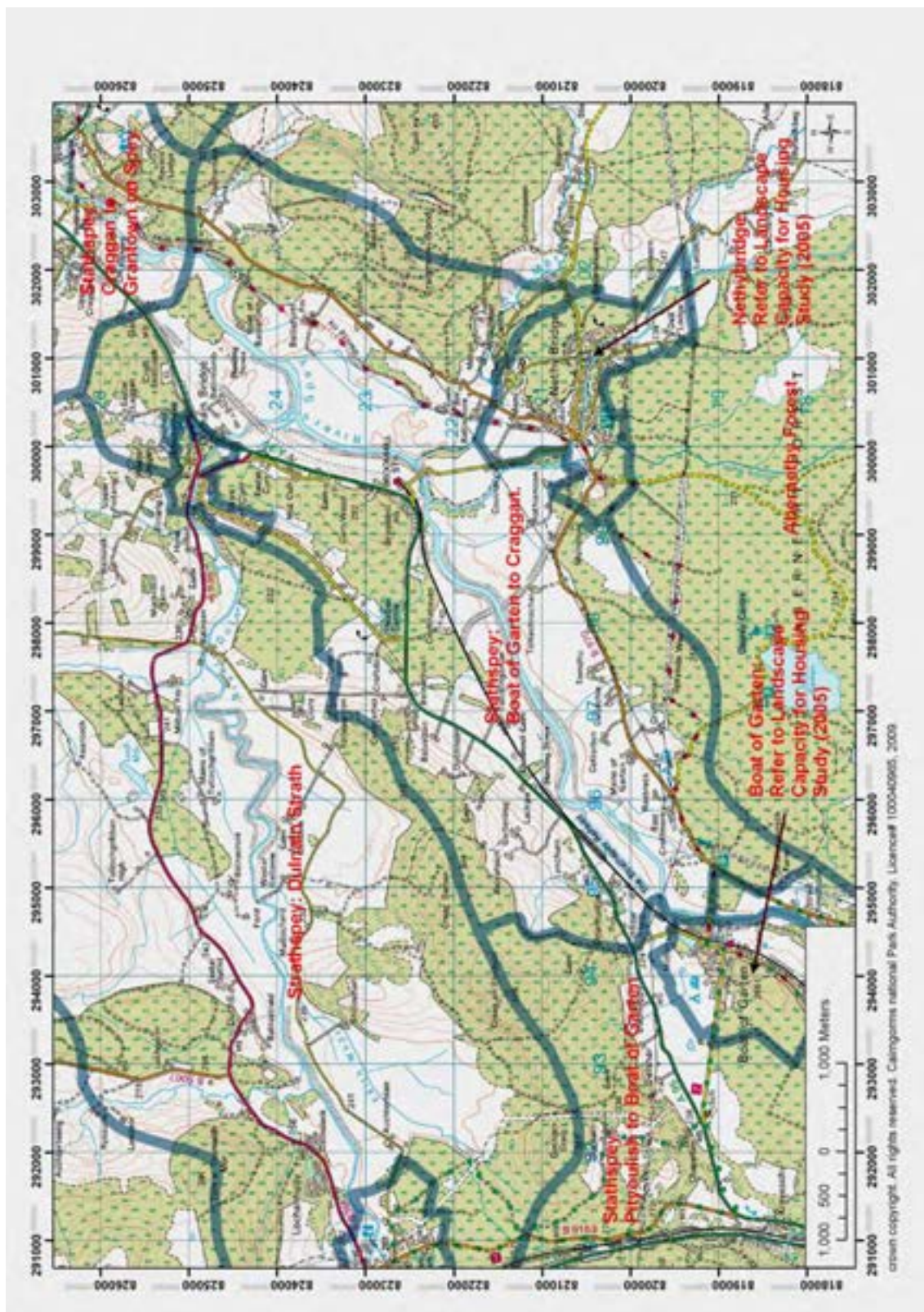


The narrow B970 winds through the woodland



B970 crossing open farm land alternating with woodland

3.13 Strathspey: Boat of Garten to Craggan



3.13.1 *Landscape character*

- This broad, open strath with its extensive floodplain, low terraces and shallow sloped sides is loosely contained by low wooded ridges to the north and south
- Terraced and occasionally rolling landform of glacial-fluvial deposit is evident on the edge of the floodplain, and distinct outcrops of gravelly deposit stand above the floodplain. These are occasionally quarried
- The wide River Spey forms a key focus within the open, farmed strath floor, its gently meandering alignment accentuated by flood embankments along much of its route
- Commercially managed pine woodlands cover the gently rounded hills containing this area to the north-west while the extensive Abernethy Forest lies to the south-east in a less visible gently sloping basin.
- Occasional small conifer shelter woods and ribbons of broadleaves are located on the strath floor
- Some riparian woodland fringes the Spey, especially at the south-western end of this area, where it coalesces to give the appearance of a well-wooded landscape in places
- Large, regularly shaped late 18th/19th century improved fields of drained and fenced pasture and some arable land, as well as areas of haugh and wetland, occupy the floodplain and low terraces.
- The field size tends to decrease on the more elevated side slopes and well drained terraces at the edge of the strath
- Grazing land extends up onto the lower north-western hill slopes, above the A95, where fields are occasionally enclosed by stone dykes
- Although there are a number of prehistoric standing stones and burial cairns on the floodplain, settlement consistently avoids this area
- Dispersed individual farms and dwellings are sited on knolls and terraces, clearly set above the floodplain at the very edge of the strath
- North of the A95, individual farms and houses are dispersed, located on subtle individual hummocks and ridges across the elevated slopes
- Smallholdings at Skye of Curr, partially in-filled with housing to create a linear settlement, lie along the length of the minor road south from Durnain Bridge, the fields contained by conifer woodland
- The A95 is elevated above the strath, its long straights alternating with sweeping curves through forest and overlooking the strath floor
- In contrast, the B970 winds its way along the very edge of the strath floor, raised on the terraces and linking access roads to the many houses and farms located on this free draining terrain

- An electricity transmission line and associated sub-station are located on the south-eastern edge of the strath. The Cairngorms Steam Railway line is located above the Spey, often on embankments.

3.13.2 *Landscape experience*

- The farmed landscape and occasional wetland maintains openness across the floodplain, which allows views across this landscape and to the dramatic backdrop of the Cairngorms massif.
- Side light along the strath picks out the clusters of hummocky deposits
- Panoramic views are a particular experience from the elevated A95

3.13.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained although the Cairngorm massif forms a backdrop to views from the A95. The extensive farmland and open views across the floodplain of the strath contrast with some of the more enclosed landscape character areas experienced within the wider Strathspey area.

3.13.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The extent of fields and enclosures form a regular pattern across the whole breadth of the floodplain. This pattern is further emphasised by the lack of settlement or major infrastructure across the floodplain. The dimpled hummocks of gravelly deposit are a particular feature, visible across the open strath.



The wide expanse of farmed strath. With long, low wooded ridges providing some containment



Distinct dimpled hummocks of gravelly deposit above the floodplain

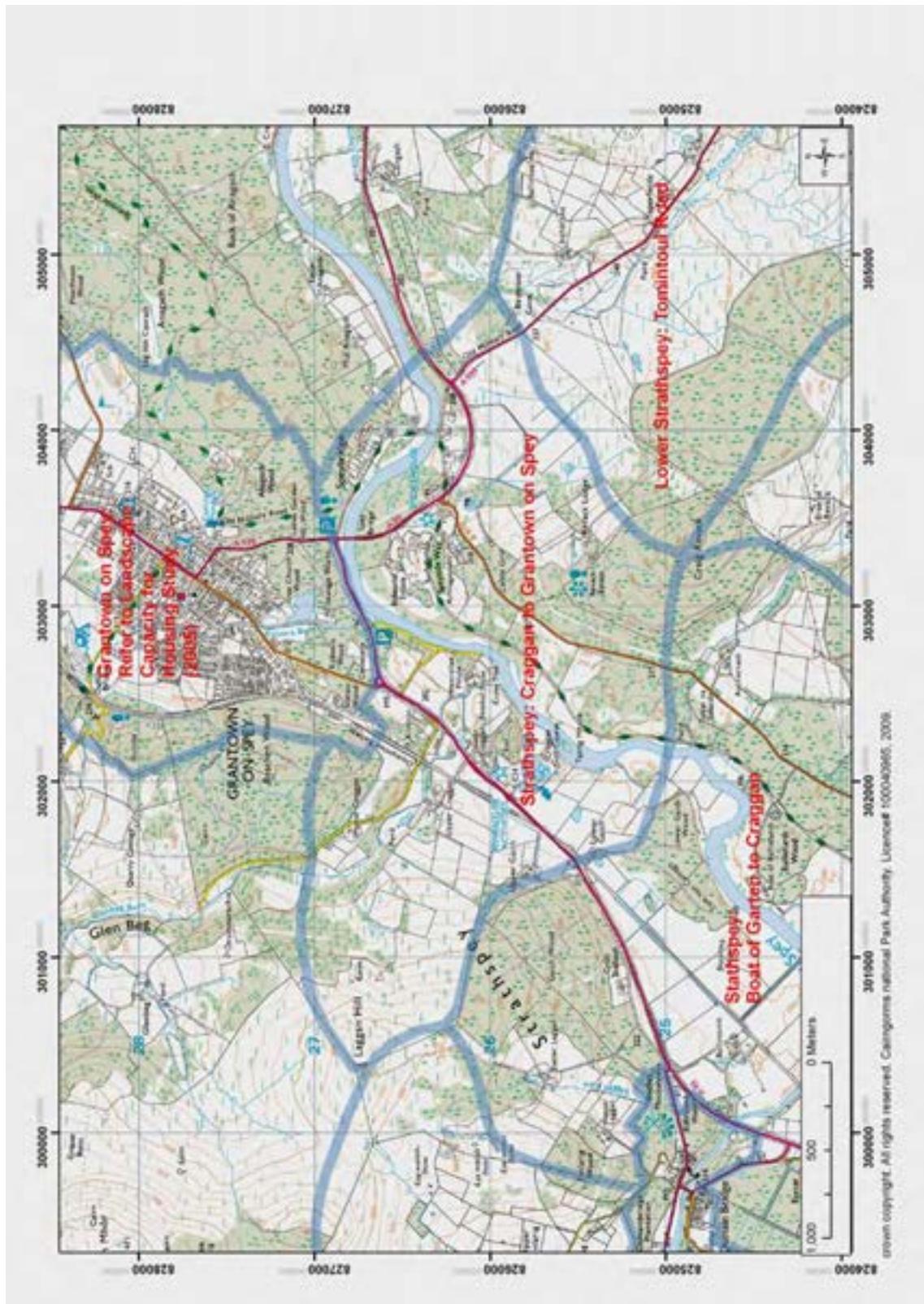


Settlement, perched along the well drained terraces and hummocks along the edges of the strath floor



The wide river Spey, and associated riparian woodland, is occasionally visible from the road – more so when in flood

3.14 Strathspey: Craggan to Grantown on Spey



3.14.1 *Landscape character*

- The River Spey swings in a wide curve just south of Grantown on Spey, contained by a narrowing of the flat floor of the strath between Craig Revack and the mouth of Glen Beg
- Extensive glacial-fluvial deposits create irregular terrain, including eskers, hummocks and terraces on the lower slopes above the narrow floodplain
- The hills are low but well defined summits, framing this focal point in the strath, where several side glens meet with Strathspey and major roads converge near to the crossing point of the River Spey
- There is extensive conifer woodland, especially across upper slopes and hill summits, although pine wood is a particular feature on the free-draining and gravelly, hummocky glacial-fluvial deposits on the outskirts of Grantown on Spey
- Large areas of broadleaved woodland extend along lower slopes and up the valley sides of Glen Beg
- There is almost continuous riparian woodland along the River Spey
- Mature pine are a specific feature often associated with hummocks and eskers along the strath floor
- The open land is largely divided into straight sided, late 18th/19th century improved fields, currently growing improved grassland and fodder crops
- There are a number of key archaeological features in this area – including a prehistoric fort – which although not key characteristics, perhaps indicate the importance of this area as a junction point in the strath
- Settlement is scattered, following no particular pattern except that it avoids the floodplain and is largely associated with the fields, with small farms located on the upper slopes around the mouth of Glen Beg
- There are several major developments in this character area, perhaps because of its proximity to road junctions and Grantown on Spey, including recreational development at Craggan and Revack, the industrial estate at Achnagonalin and Station Road, and the Spey Valley Smokehouse
- The A9 is partially elevated and relatively open, but other roads are largely hidden in woodland
- The Speyside Way passes through this area on a disused railway line

3.14.2 Landscape experience

- This area is experienced as a junction point, with glens converging on the main valley from several directions, and roads converging on both the former and current crossing points of the Spey
- The area is heavily wooded, with both broadleaved woodland and pine forming a unifying element in what can be quite a confusing pattern of development and infrastructure
- There are views along the River Spey from the bridge and walking routes

3.14.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area forms a gateway between the lower Spey and the main Spey valley, and so sits at the conjunction of several other character types.

3.14.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The area is dominated by the scale and diversity of the woodland, which provides a setting for the numerous and diverse developments which have taken advantage of the conjunction of glens and roads at this point on Strathspey.



Extensive areas of birch woodland extend along the lower slopes of the strath and up Glen Beag, around improved grassland fields



There is a fort hidden in woodland on this hummock, adjacent to the golf course at the outdoor centre at Craggan

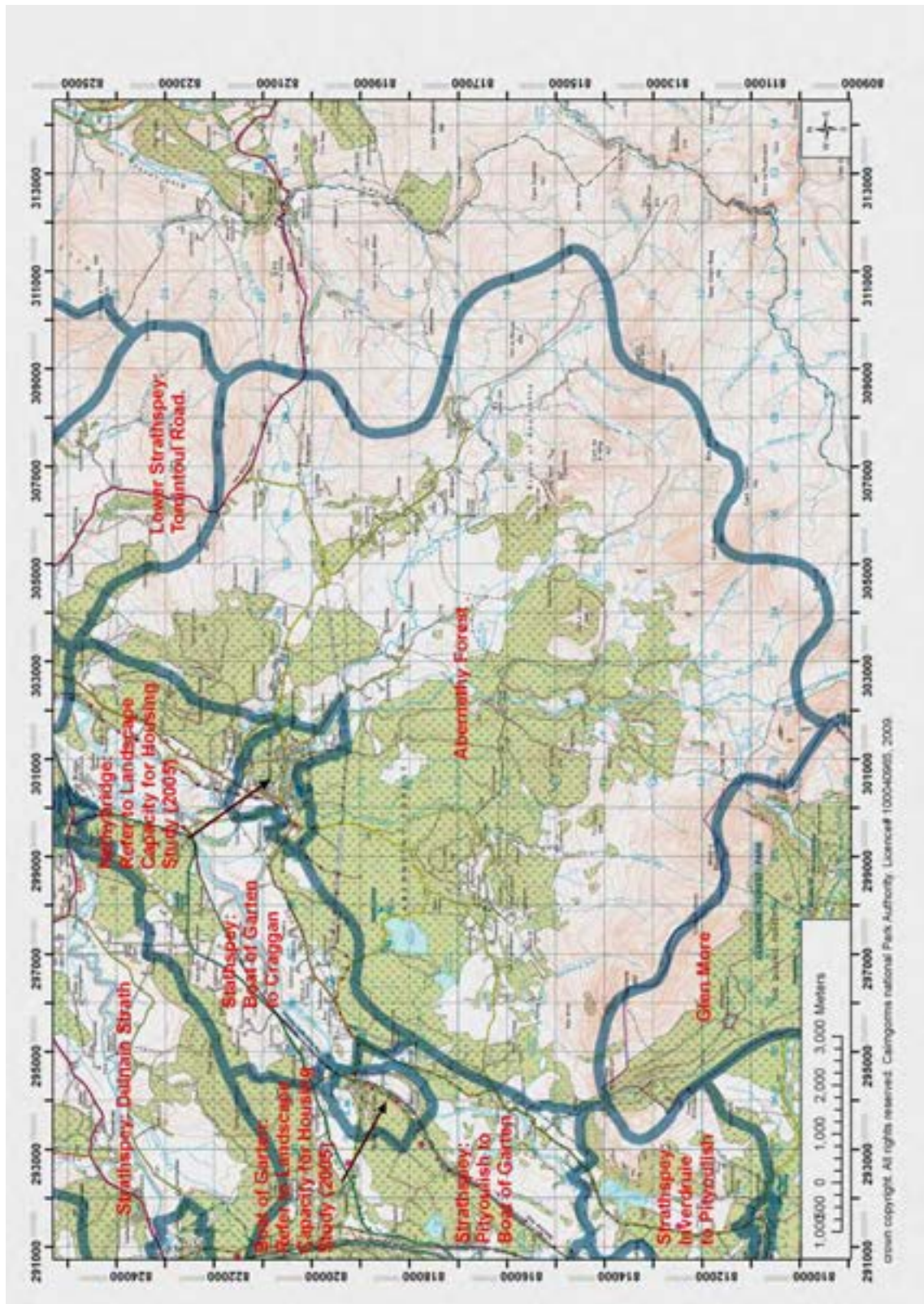


The River Spey and associated riparian woodland



Mature pine associated with well drained gravelly deposits

3.15 Abernethy Forest



3.15.1 *Landscape Character*

- This character area lies above the Spey valley and comprises a north-west facing basin contained by an arc of hills which rise to the high Cairngorms Massif.
- Watercourses radiate from glens within the steep slopes of the encircling hills, converging south of Nethy Bridge before draining to the Spey. The River Nethy is the most significant of these, issuing through the deeply incised gorge of Strath Nethy from the Cairngorms Massif before tightly meandering across the undulating basin of Abernethy
- The rivers have broad floodplains, and their dynamic systems have braided reaches and little vegetation as it is often washed away
- The detail of the terrain is complex, reflecting the varied underlying lithology as well as glacial and fluvial activity. Extensive areas of well-drained glacial and fluvial deposit and river worked gravels alternate with peat.
- Overall, however, while there are prominent, low, rock hills, the basin floor is remarkably flat, appearing vast from elevated viewpoints
- The steep slopes of the Kincardine Hills and Braes of Abernethy which immediately contain this area are eclipsed by the huge scale of the Cairngorms massif.
- The area is extensively forested, predominantly with native pine. It has a strongly naturalistic appearance with trees of varied ages and a diverse ground flora of heather, juniper and blaeberry. Areas of wetland occurring within the forest are marked by stunted pine and bog vegetation
- There are occasional shelter woods in farmed areas, often associated with settlement
- Heather moorland dominates the hill slopes and extensive regeneration of pine is evident on the upper slopes of the Kincardine Hills
- Drained, broadly straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields along the shallow valley of the Dorback Burn stand out as bright green patches against the muted colours of flatter wetlands and moorland
- Small pastures associated with scattered farms and settlement are found in clearings within and on the more fragmented southern fringes of the forest.
- Farms and shelterbelts within the more extensive farmed areas to the east are dispersed, located on well-drained fluvial deposits and drier ridges above the Dorback burn with some less regular, pre-improvement fields and ruined buildings on the slightly higher slopes

- Settlement sited within or on the fringes of Abernethy Forest to the south tends to be more clustered, forming groups of up to 5 small dwellings and individual small farmsteads. These small clusters are tucked in around the low hills and are often hidden by the forest; an array of name-posts the only evidence of their existence from public roads.
- Minor roads fan out from Nethy Bridge and follow the river valleys with dispersed farms along their length. Some of these roads continue as estate tracks through the upland area linking to Glen More and the eastern fringes of the Cairngorm plateau.
- An electricity transmission line crosses through the forest and the open moorland before running parallel to the A939 to the east.
- Loch Garten is a visual and recreational focus within the forest, its indented shore edged by overhanging mature pine and birch.

3.15.2 *Landscape experience*

- The fringing hills and high mountains ring this low lying basin of land and provide a striking panoramic backdrop to views from the open farmland and moorland of the Dorback Burn area
- The drama of the vast scale of the basin is only fully appreciated from more elevated viewpoints, such as from the A939, from where the open expanse of moorland reinforces the sense of distance
- The high mass of the mountains is also appreciated from the open farmland and moorland, accentuated by the juxtaposition between the vast horizontal expanse of the basin and the huge vertical scale of the massif
- The diverse composition of Abernethy Forest feels very natural. The forest can also feel secluded in many areas, despite the presence of popular recreational facilities and dispersed settlement
- The pattern of tree cover and occasional farmland clearings within Abernethy Forest provide a diverse experience of light and shade, enclosure and openness when travelling in the area

3.15.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The extensive forest cover characteristic of this area limits inter-visibility with adjacent character areas. The vast extent of this character area is not readily appreciated from the adjacent Spey valley due to the gentle landform which leads to a foreshortening effect. The more open farmland and moorland and elevated roads offer panoramic views to the Cairngorm massif.

3.15.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

Lying within an arc of dramatic, high mountains, the vast scale of the basin and its openness and sense of space is best appreciated from more elevated and open spaces within and around the woodland. This expanse contrasts with the small scale detail of the diversity and naturalness of Abernethy Forest, and the pattern of farmed open spaces which extend along the river valleys and in a band around the fringes of the forest.



Extensive areas of native pine woodland



Open moor and small upland farms create open space within the forest, allowing views over this vast basin to the Cairngorms

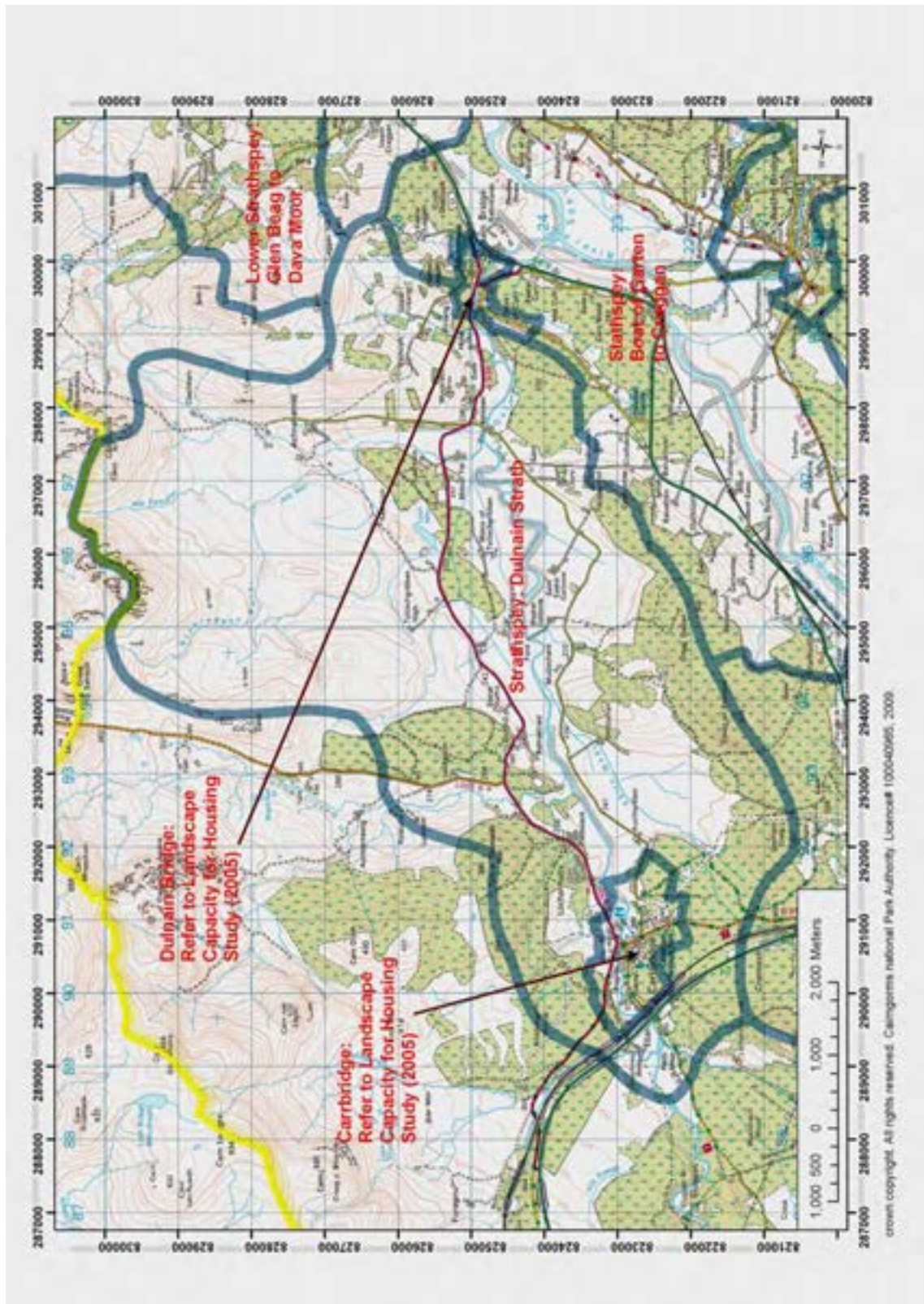


Loch Garten



Small rock hills within the forest, along the southern edge, stand proud of the more level basin floor

3.16 Strathspey: **Dulnain Strath**



3.16.1 *Landscape character*

- This area, orientated east/west is contained by the steep slopes of the rugged Strathdearn Hills to the north and the low ridgeline of rounded hills associated with Creag an Fhithich to the south.
- The River Dulnain winds through a broad flat floodplain. This floodplain has an irregular form, curving round the outlying hill above Shillochan and narrowing where the A9 crosses the river at Ellan
- Flood embankments are conspicuous along the length of the river and emphasise its notably sinuous course to the east.
- Occasional hummocks of glacial-fluvial deposit, as well as small melt channels create a slightly undulating relief to the east and around Feith Mhor tributary
- The river valley is constricted by hills relatively resistant to erosion at Dulnain Bridge, which also separate the strath from Strathspey
- Commercial conifer woodland extends along the whole length of the hill ridge to the south and managed pine woodland extends down the lower hill slopes to the north, alternating with heather moor
- This conifer woodland extends onto the low lying land right across the strath at Carrbridge
- Riparian woodland is largely confined to the western end of the strath, where birch woodland also extends around the fields and is scattered around the settlements
- An extensive area of birch woodland is situated on the small hill near Shillochan which rises abruptly from the strath floor.
- The pattern of regularly shaped late 18th/19th century improved fields across the strath floor and the sloping terraces at either side of the strath. The different crop colours, including arable, emphasise the regular field pattern.
- Pasture dominates the elevated and undulating floor of the expansive and surprisingly green south-facing Alt Mor valley, where dispersed farms at Achnahannet are located on low hummocks
- There is wetland, and sometimes scrub, in less well drained locations along lower lying parts of the strath
- Prehistoric burial cairns create somewhat unexpected focal points along the southern side of the floodplain
- Carrbridge is set within extensive conifer woodland at a crossing point on the River Dulnain
- Relatively large farms are located on raised ground across the strath floor, sometimes apparently surrounded by floodplain.

- Clustered settlements at Duthil and Dalbuiack are located in woodland along the A95, favouring the south-facing slopes and terraces above the strath.
- The estate lodge of Finlarig and Muckrach Castle, a recently restored 16th – 18th century castle, are located on the south-facing slopes above Dulnain Bridge. The small church at Duthil is a landmark feature widely visible across the open strath.
- Policy woodlands surround Finlarig and former parkland and avenue trees are a feature around Clury, on the minor road along the south side of the strath
- Development from Carrbridge spills west along the strath, under the railway and the A9 which are elevated to cross the river

3.16.2 *Landscape experience*

- The extensive farmland on the strath floor, along with areas of wetland, maintain the openness of the strath
- The backdrop of wooded slopes and hills and the rugged, heathery hill tops to the north provide strong containment to the area and contrast with the smooth texture and regular field pattern of farmland on the strath floor
- The River Dulnain is a key feature visible from public roads and settlement in this largely open landscape
- Muckrach Castle is a landmark feature as the strath narrows towards its confluence with the Spey
- Elevated views to Carrbridge and the western side of the strath are a particular feature from the A9 and the railway, revealed suddenly when they exit the woodland onto elevated crossings of the River Dulnain

3.16.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained with views of adjacent character areas being limited by intervening hills, although the Monadhliath hills provide a setting to the strath to the west.

3.16.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The openness of the consistent and widespread pattern of regular field shapes of the farmland on the broad strath floor contrasts with the enclosure of the forest on the surrounding hills and the wooded settings of the settlements.



The edge of the strath is contained by low wooded hills, with riparian woodland along the river Dulnain

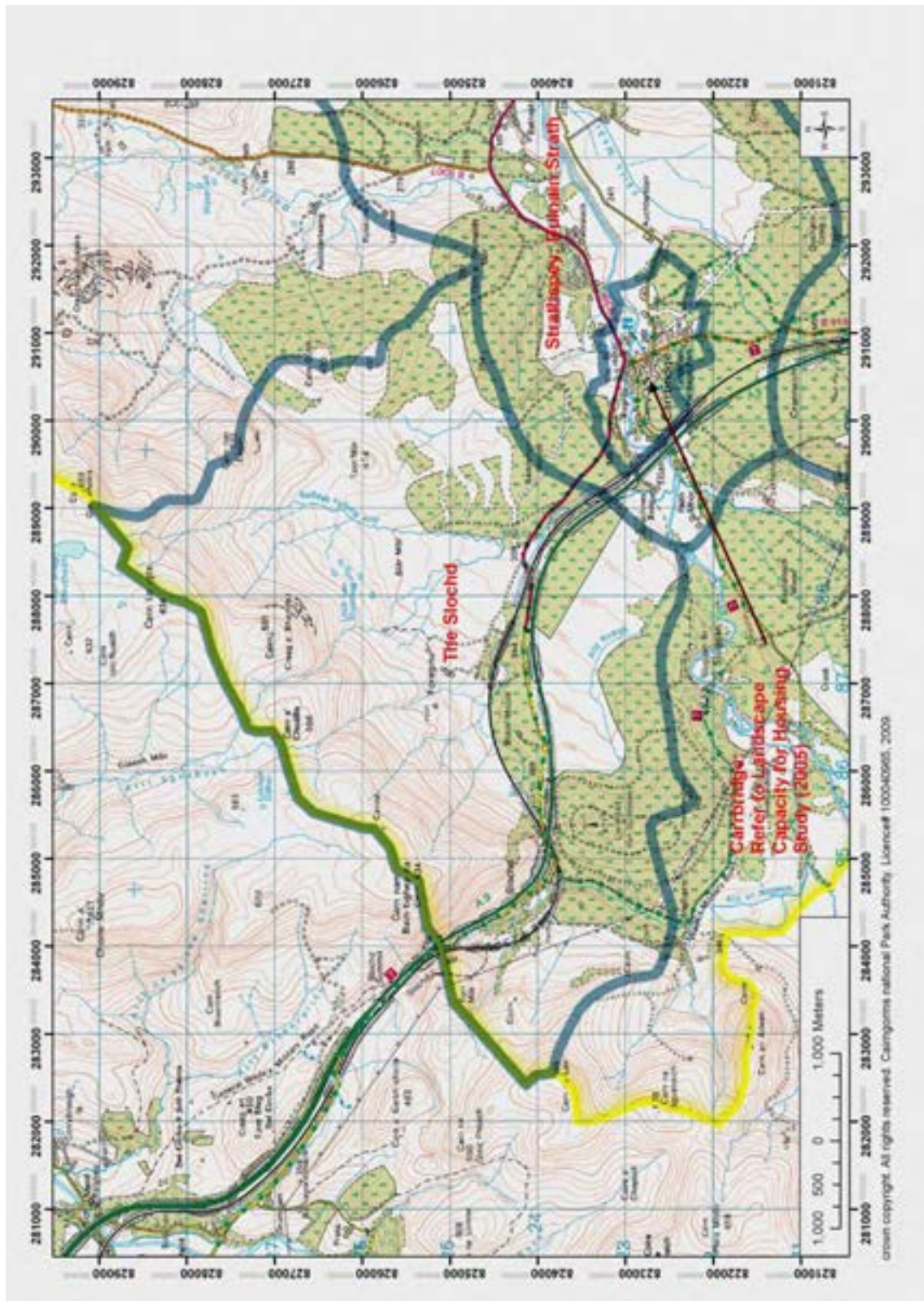


Near Dalbuiack, fields appear 'carved' out of woodland



Views west along the strath from the elevated A9, which crosses the River Dulnain at a 'pinchpoint'

3.17 The Slochd



3.17.1 *Landscape character*

- This wide, elevated basin of deep glacial-fluvial deposit, contained to the west, north and more tentatively to the east by surrounding low hills, slopes southwards to the steep sided valley of the Dulnain River
- The northern edge of the basin is formed by a pronounced escarpment, that rises to the undulating plateau which marks the edge of the Park. This plateau represents a northern extension of the great Monadhliath tableland.
- A deep, steep sided gorge where a large melt water channel has cut through this escarpment creates a dramatic pass which has been widened to accommodate the A9, as well as earlier roads and the railway
- The rounded western hills are covered with conifer woodland, but the the northern hill slopes are covered with heather moorland
- The basin floor is largely gently undulating heather moor, partly on peat, but conifer woodland extends across this moorland, and is regenerating across ungrazed heather
- Birch woodland extends up watercourses, regenerating along less accessible reaches
- Pockets of more regularly shaped, late 18th/19th century improved fields sit on flatter land on the lower hill slopes, associated with abandoned farmsteads
- A small number of properties at the pass at Slochd sit overlooking the gorge and tucked below the A9
- The older road hugs the edge of the gorge, while the railway sweeps in wide arcs, crossing the river on a high arched bridge. The A9 is elevated above them all, sitting in cuttings above the gorge before curving across the floor of the basin
- Two telecommunications masts are prominent on the skyline on arrival to the Park along the A9 from the north

3.17.2 *Landscape experience*

- The drama of travelling from the north through the narrow Pass and then emerging through the trees onto the expanse of open moor, with panoramic views to the south, creates a fine sense of arrival to the Park
- The drama is reinforced by the contrast between the enclosure of the gorge and associated woodland and the openness of the basin
- The gorge acts as a threshold when travelling in either direction
- The elevation of the basin offers panoramic views south

- When travelling along the old road, the narrowness and depth of the gorge is easily experienced, emphasised by the sound of the fast moving river far below

3.17.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area offers widespread views to the Monadhliath and more distant Cairngorm mountain areas, across the northern reaches of Strathspey.

3.17.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The contrast between the narrow enclosure in the Pass and the open expanse of the basin creates a dramatic entrance or exit to the Park.



The A9 curves through the Pass above the narrow gorge, its enclosure reinforced by woodland



The elevated basin and open moorland offer the opportunity for a dramatic panorama



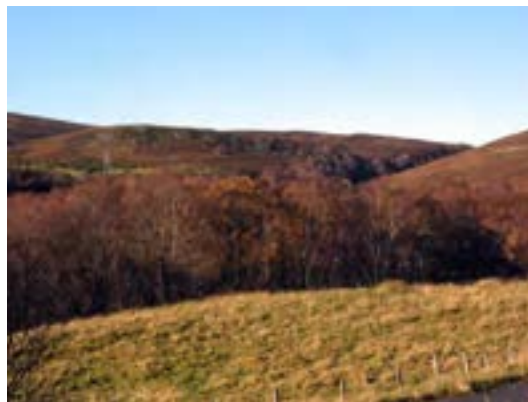
Woodland over the western hills, and some regenerating pine



The high arches of the railway bridge over the gorge



Heather hills to the north and east, with a band of grazing land on the lower slopes



Broadleaved trees regenerating up the water courses

4 LOWER SPEY AND CROMDALE

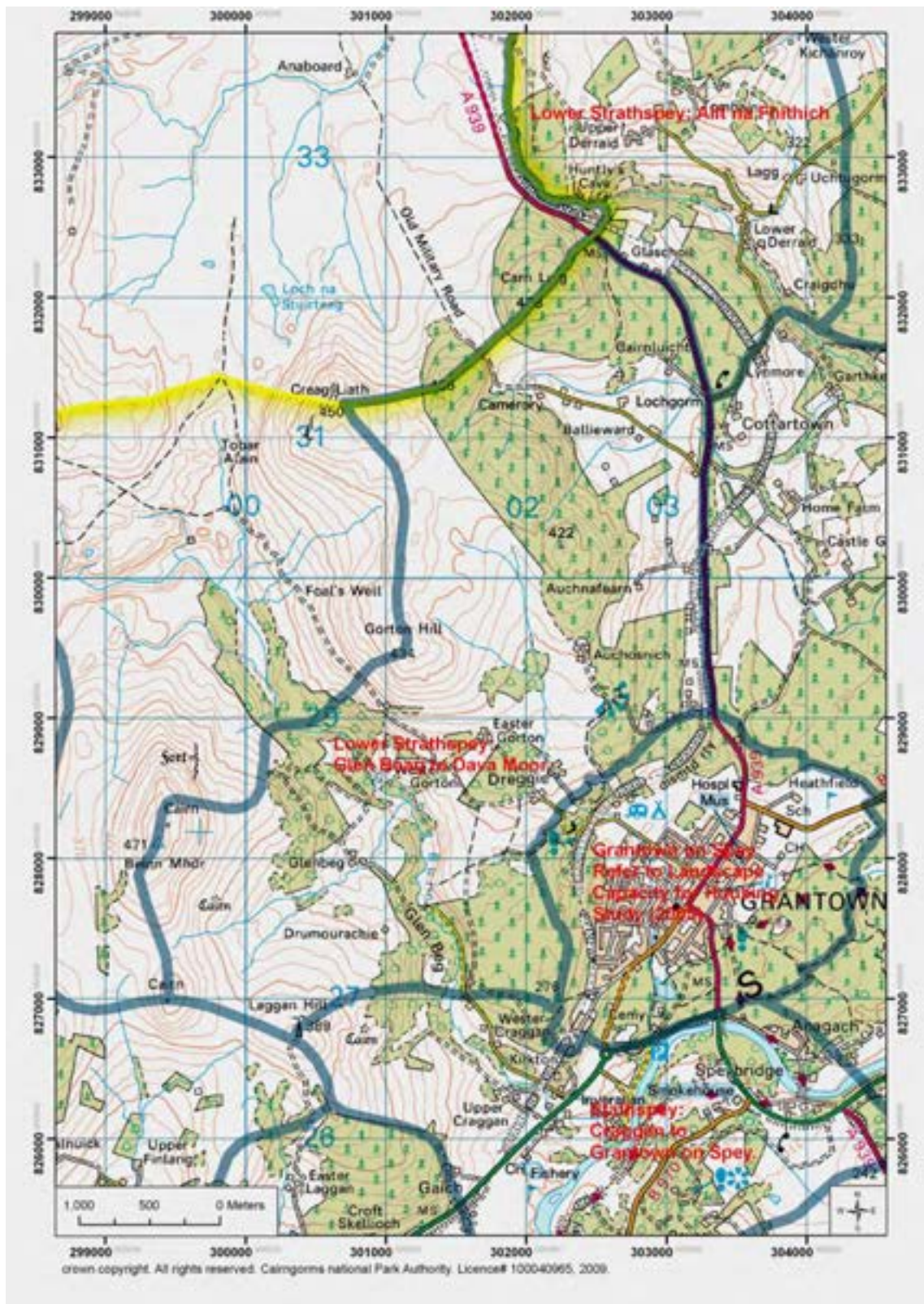
This section of the LCA includes Strathspey north east of Grantown on Spey, including the strath as it follows the length of the River Spey, the Haughs of Cromdale and the glens which extend northwards into the Strathearn Hills. This character assessment is presented as follows:

25. Lower Strathspey: **Glen Beg to Dava Moor**
26. Lower Strathspey: **Glen of the Allt an Fhithich**
27. Lower Strathspey: **Castle Grant and Tomvaich**
28. Lower Strathspey: **Auchnagallin and Blar Mòr**
29. **Lower Strathspey: Strathspey**
30. Lower Strathspey: **Burn of Dalvey Glen**
31. Lower Strathspey: **Haughs of Cromdale**
32. Lower Strathspey: **Tomintoul Road**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



4.1 Lower Strathspey: **Glen Beg to Dava Moor**



4.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- These elevated, eastern orientated slopes and shallow valleys are part of the more complex surrounding landscape of undulating terrain, ridges and occasional steep sided gulleys which extend across the lower slopes of the Strathdearn Hills north of Grantown on Spey
- Undulating valley floors and better drained slopes are covered by relatively thick glacial deposits and are contained by low hills to the west, but slope downhill to lower Strathspey to the east
- Conifer woodland extends downhill from containing ridges and hills, often fragmenting into shelter woods and more extensive scattered broadleaved woodland between the individual farms
- More extensive broadleaved woodland in upper Glen Beg is established on steeper slopes and along watercourses between grazed fields
- The pattern of rectilinear, late 18th/19th century improved fields is still very evident on better drained slopes, although in places the fields are reverting to rough grazing or disappearing under regenerating woodland
- The valley floors are often poorly drained, with previous pasture and fields sometimes reverting to wetland punctuated by loose clumps of woodland or even individual trees
- Across the whole area are dispersed late 18th/19th century farmsteads, located on slightly higher ground or at the edge of drier farmed land, often surrounded by improved fields.
- Some of these farms have now been replaced with new houses occupying the same sites, and several have also been abandoned, especially where access is difficult
- There is a row of more recent housing, associated with small fields which may have been former small holdings, along the base of the glen, parallel to the A939
- Access, apart from the A939 which skirts the eastern edge of this area, is limited to narrow public roads and a network of farm tracks
- The embankment and structures associated with the former railway line which continues north over Dava Moor are a feature in the floor of the glen

4.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area is elevated and 'upward facing', and as a result feels relatively detached from Grantown which lies in the strath below
- Views from these elevated slopes focus east to the Hills of Cromdale and are panoramic, as there is very little topographical containment

- More enclosure, created partly by woodland and partly by the embankments of the railway line, is experienced when travelling along the lower slopes on the A939
- The arrival into the Park from the north along the A939 is reinforced by the sense of enclosure created by the low wooded hills which form the southern edge of Dava moor

4.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area offers panoramic views to the east and south. The backdrop to these panoramas are hills from more distant, mountainous character areas. Travelling into the Park from the north, the sense of arrival is further emphasised by the contrast between the enclosed woodland and small scale field pattern of this character area relative to the wide, open expanse of moorland across Dava Moor.

4.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This area is strongly influenced by the agricultural improvements of the late 18th/19th centuries, which have informed the distribution of farms and shapes of the fields. However, former fields are in places reverting to wetland and new houses are replacing small farmsteads.



Improved fields interspersed with areas of birch woodland on steeper slopes and along burns at the top of Glen Beg



Houses on farm sites set on higher, drier ground above pasture which is reverting to wetland

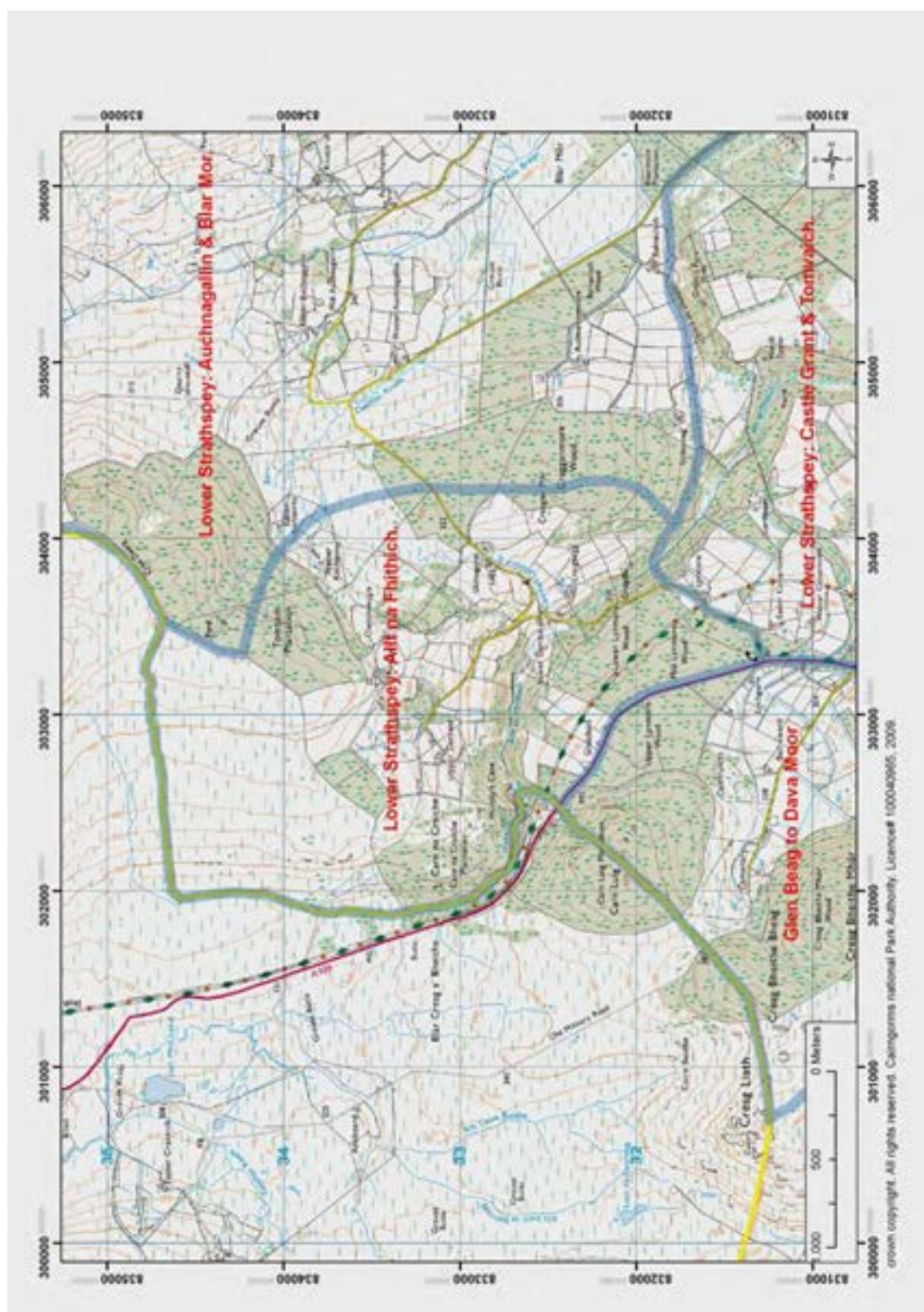


Farms located on upper slopes, and conifer woodland extending down from the containing hills



From across these elevated slopes there are panoramic views east to the Hills of Cromdale

4.2 Lower Strathspey: **Glen of Allt an Fhithich**



4.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- Convex shaped slopes, locally overlain with glacial till rise above a complex land form of knolls, ridges and uneven terraces which leads down to the deep, narrow, sometimes rocky gorge of the fast flowing Allt an Fhithich – a former channel for glacial meltwater
- Open to the south, this landscape is backed by steeper, forest-covered slopes to the north, and is a complex mixture of interlocking farmland and woodland
- Diverse woodland, including dense broadleaves along the steep sided gorge, modest scattered birch woods between the fields and more extensive conifer woodlands across the upper slopes and ridgelines, adds to the overall visual complexity of the landscape
- The improved, rectilinear-shaped, late 18th/19th century fields are relatively small
- These grassland fields are enclosed by ruined dykes which are now being replaced by fences
- Elevated farmsteads are clearly placed at the brow of the convex upper slopes, evenly spaced at a similar height above long sweeps of pasture, or sited directly above the river gorge on hummocks or raised terraces at the very base of the hill slopes
- Several abandoned farms have been renovated for residential use
- The narrow public road winds sinuously through this complex terrain, up and down the steep slopes and around the ridges, linking a network of farm access tracks
- The cliffs at Huntly's Cave are regularly used by practising climbers

4.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The tight interlock of topography, fields and woodlands reinforce the intimate scale and the complex topography along the lower slopes
- The small scale of the landscape is readily experienced from the narrow winding roads, which weave around the topography
- The views from the upper slopes are orientated southwards, where there is no topography to obstruct fine views to the Cairngorms
- Despite its relative proximity to Grantown, this area is relatively secluded, an impression which is reinforced by the narrow, often steep roads with light traffic

4.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The lower slopes of this character area are confined and self contained, while the upper slopes offer views of 'borrowed landscapes' well to the south of this character area.

4.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This is a diverse landscape of complex topography where there is a strong contrast between the elevated upper slopes with their panoramic views and the intimately scaled landform and pattern of fields and woodland reaching down to the steep sided gorge of the Allt an Fhithich. The complexity of this landscape is experienced on the narrow roads which wind between the hummocks and ridges.



The more complex land form around the narrow gully of the Allt an Fhithich



High up farms are located at the brow of the convex slope, above pastures



From the upper slopes there are fine views to the south. A fence replaces a dyke in the foreground

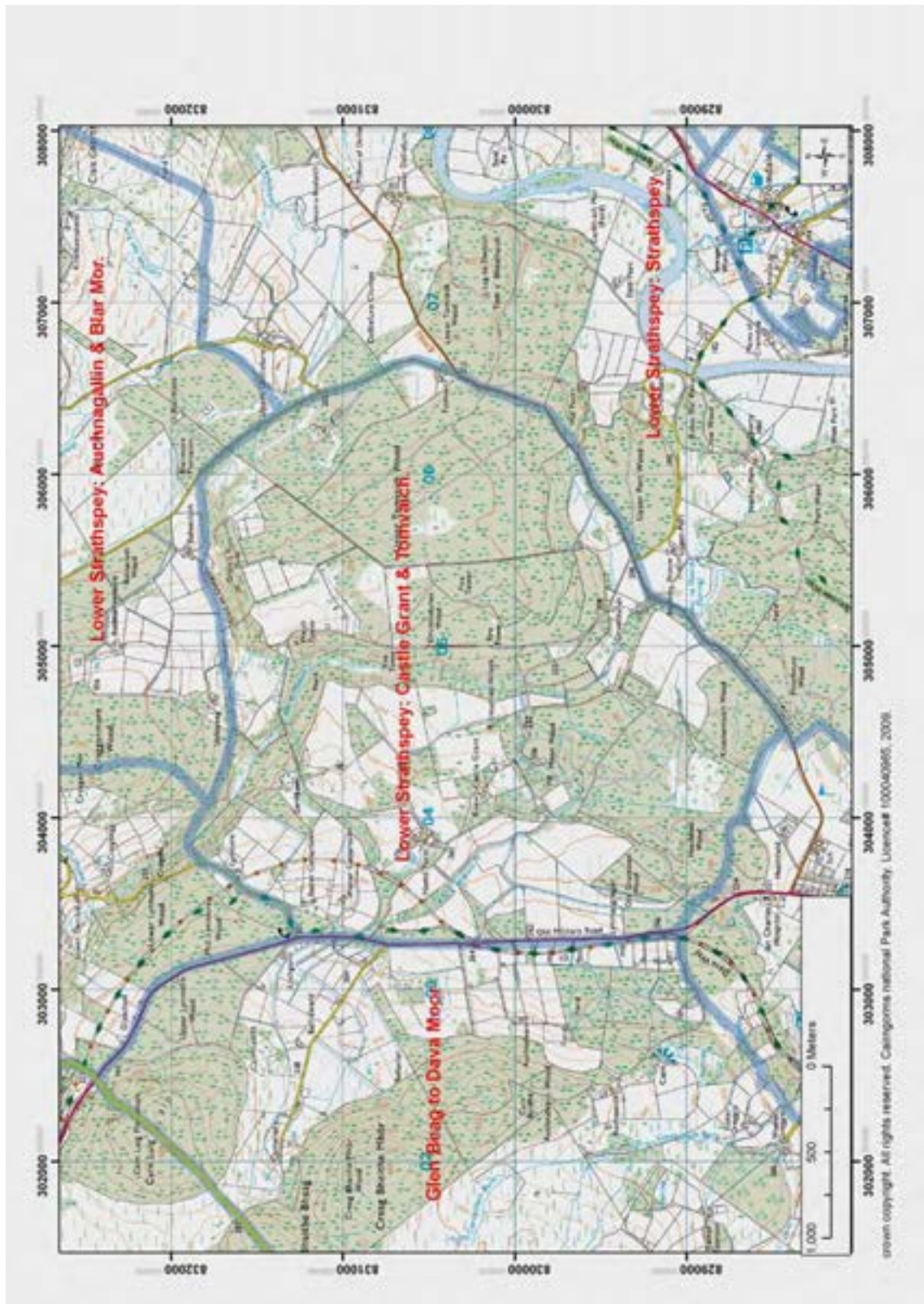


Upper pastures on convex shaped slopes above the wooded river valley



Narrow roads wind through the complex landform

4.3 Lower Strathspey: **Castle Grant and Tomvaich**



4.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- This area of very low, rounded hills and a lower storey, undulating terrain of glacial-fluvial deposits separates Strathspey from the pass which extends up onto Dava Moor from Grantown on Spey
- The undulating terrain and long, low ridges with often interlocking land forms, creates a landscape of relatively small scale, hidden areas tucked in around the smooth, rounded hill slopes
- The Allt na Fhithich cuts through the middle of this area, the gorge, a former melt water channel, through which it cuts forming a dramatic feature to the north, before relaxing into a more gentle river valley as it extends south
- Extensive pine and broadleaved woodland, and smaller conifer shelter woods, alternate with large, regularly shaped 18th/19th century improved fields and occasional policy woods to reinforce the complexity of the landscape
- There are frequent stands of mature pine and broadleaved woodland associated with the wider policies of Castle Grant, while parkland provides the immediate setting for the castle. The designed landscape includes centuries of historic land use focussed round this ancient, fortified site
- Castle Grant, re-designed in the mid-late 18th century, is located on a long-established, elevated site and is visible from a number of surrounding hill sides
- The outer policies of the estate can be traced along a stone wall, which encircles a large part of this character area, and is reinforced by formal architectural features, such as stone gateposts and gatehouses at key entrances, all of which were added in the mid-late 18th century re-design
- While many of the buildings in the interior of this area are associated with Castle Grant, there are several houses and farms on the periphery
- The area is only accessible on private roads and vehicle tracks, as well as access tracks used by walkers, especially through the woodlands

4.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a sense of privacy experienced in this area, in part because of the undulating land form and extensive woodland, which hides much of the area, and in part because of the long estate wall, surrounding the long established estate policies and in part limiting access
- The sense of enclosure and small scale of the landform is reinforced by the hummocky terrain and the extensive woodland

4.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is relatively self-contained, especially from within, although it is overlooked by adjacent, more elevated character areas, especially from the north and west

4.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This area is strongly influenced by the unifying sense of seclusion or privacy, including the extensive woodland and the subtle but containing landform and estate style architectural features, including the encircling stone wall.



Large fields, here subdivided by a wall, on gently undulating terrain set within woodland



The complexity of the glacial-fluvial deposits within this character area, and the pattern of fields within woodland

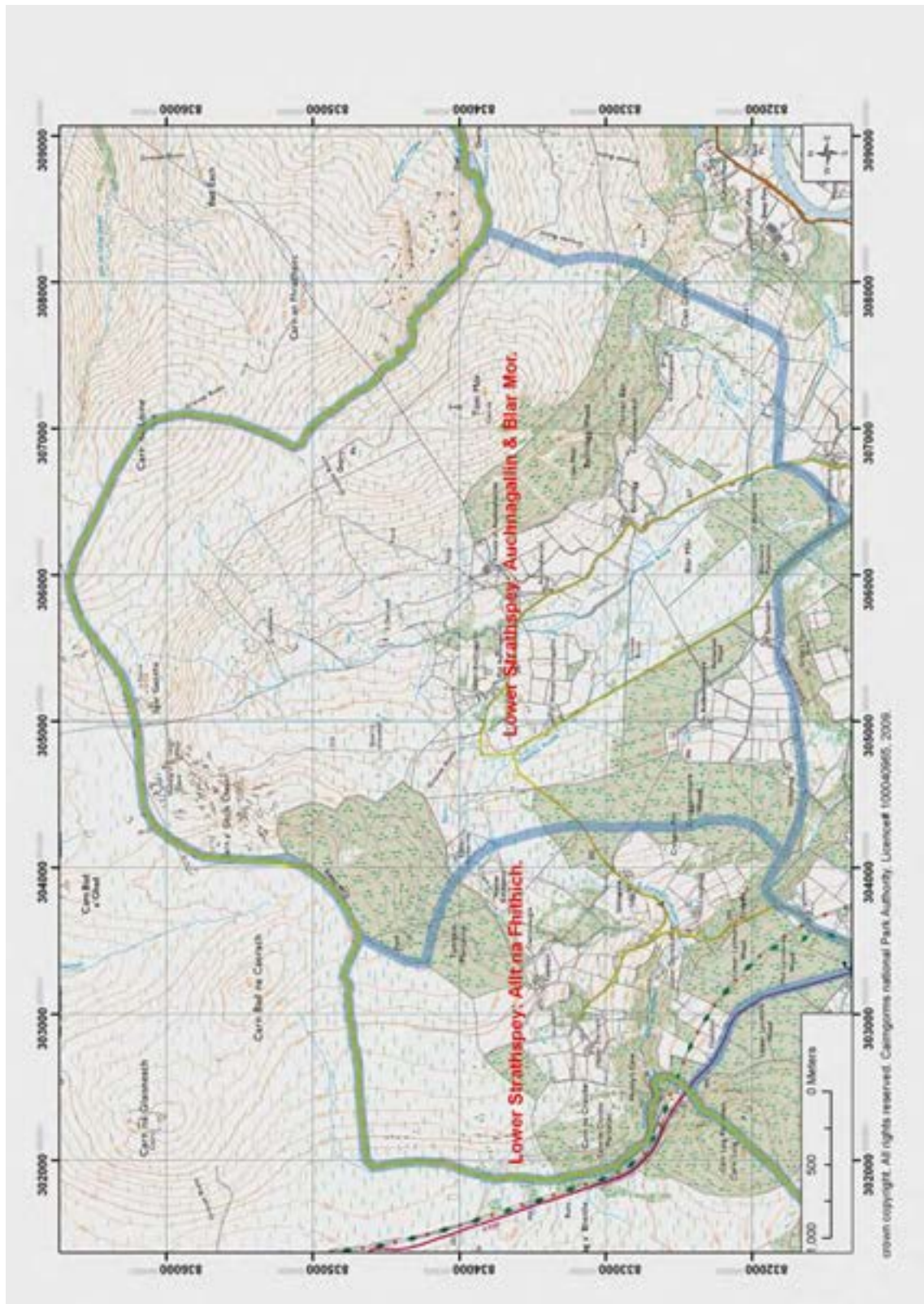


Stands of mature pine are located across the area



A gatehouse – one of the most obvious architectural features which also reinforce the sense of 'privacy'

4.4 Lower Strathspey: **Achnagallin and Blar Mòr**



4.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- This wide shallow bowl, which spills open into Strathspey to the south, is contained by low ridges with occasional, subtle summits
- A band of slightly hummocky, better drained glacial-fluvial deposit straddles the wide basin, below which lies an expanse of lowlying wetland, and above which rise steeper, heathery slopes
- Late 18th/19th century improved fields, subdivided by walls, extend over these drier and less steeply graded gravelly deposits. Many of the walls are now neglected, and the field pattern is disappearing
- Occasional patches of bright green improved grazing sit across the elevated moorland to the north
- Conifer woodland extends along the length of the ridges to the east and west of this basin, while open moorland extends north, merging with Dava Moor beyond the Park
- Pockets of birch woodland, many of which are mature, large, well formed trees, are associated with watercourses or scattered in loose clumps across the farmland
- Some young conifer trees as well as birch and willow are seeding onto the lowlying Blar Mòr, an expanse of wet heath and rush which sits on peat
- There are also extensive areas of wet unimproved grazing on lower lying land at the mouth of the basin, where it meets with Strathspey
- Settlement, largely of late 18th/19th century farmsteads is dispersed across the accessible pasture on the band of well drained gravelly deposit and avoids the wetter land to the south and north of this band
- Hedges, dominated by hawthorn, have been recently planted around many of the fields and along the roadsides, replacing field dykes or enclosing more expansive areas of unimproved grassland
- The narrow public road skirts around the wetter lowlying moor linking the farms

4.4.2 *Landscape experience*

- The wide shallow basin and low relief of surrounding ridges creates a sense of openness which is reinforced by the expansive views south to the Cairngorms from elevated roads and settlement
- Despite its relative proximity to Grantown, this area is relatively secluded, an impression which is reinforced by the narrow roads which limit traffic

4.4.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is inter-visible with the Hills of Cromar. The openness and relative simplicity of the land form of this glen provides a marked contrast to the containment and complexity of the land form in the adjacent Glen of the Allt an Fhithich.

4.4.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The large stature of the birch trees is a striking feature of this glen, as is the relative naturalness of the Blar Mòr. There is a strong and clearly visible relationship between the band of well-drained, gravelly glacial deposit and the location of the settlement and fields.



The field pattern, marked out by dykes, with conifer woodland above



Wetland of Blar Mòr, with woodland beginning to encroach

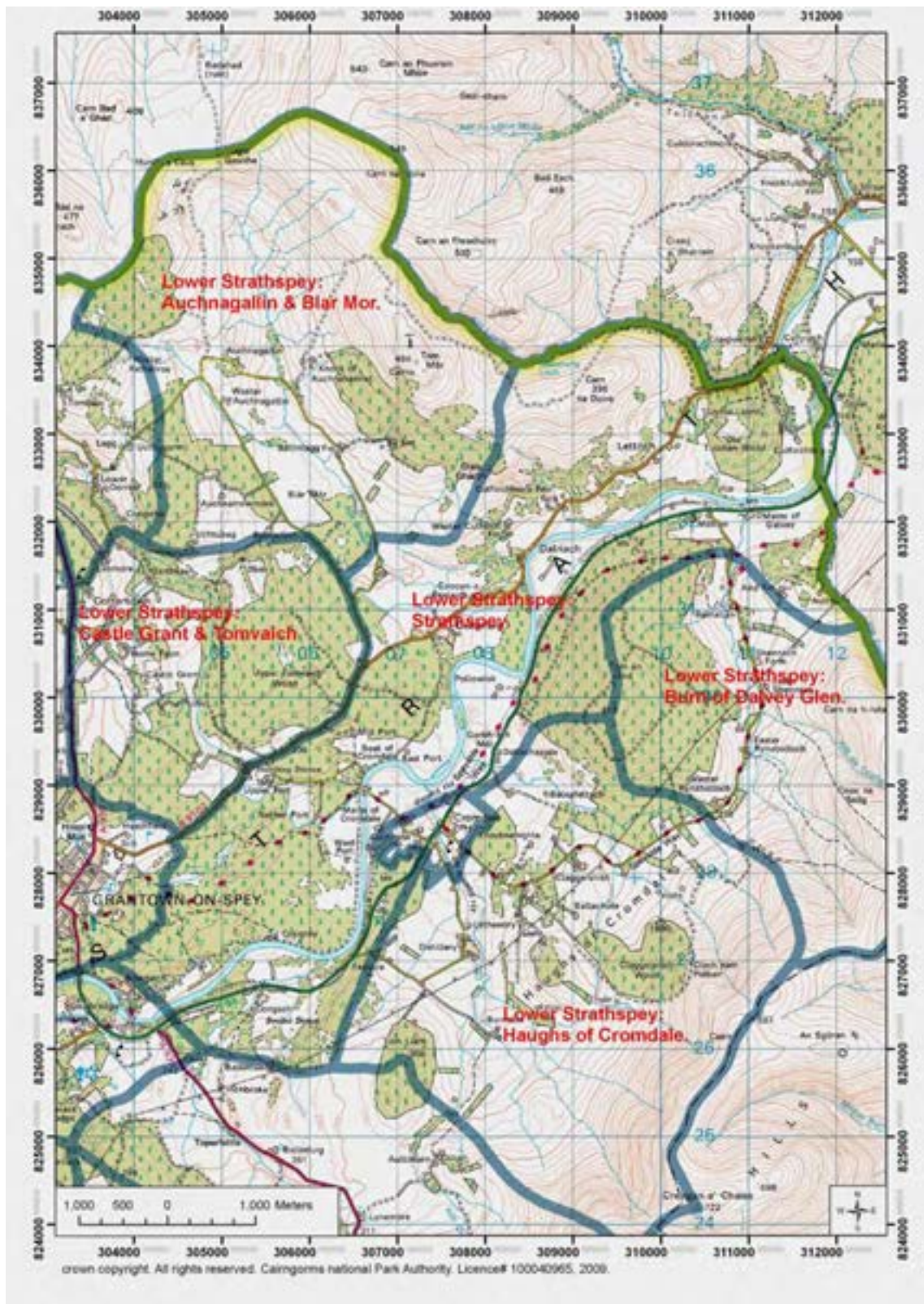


Rough grazing with birch woodland in the foreground, and fields and farms on the band of better drained land



Woodland scattered across the improved grassland with a new hedge in the foreground

4.5 Lower Strathspey: Strathspey



4.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- The River Spey forms a rhythmical series of wide meanders along this part of Strathspey, having worked glacial-fluvial deposits to create a sequence of bow-shaped flats within the bends of the river, each contained by elevated terraces or sloping hillsides
- The strath is at this point much narrower than Strathspey south of Grantown, and is framed by steep hillsides, with several prominent summits, between which side valleys extend into the Hills of Cromdale to the south east and the Strathdearn Hills to the north west
- North west of the River Spey, extensive, hummocky fluvial deposits and river terraces are largely hidden from view under conifer woodland
- The sides of the strath, and even some of the river flats, are also densely wooded, with extensive areas of commercial conifer forest, including pine, and occasional large broadleaved woodlands
- In addition, a network of linear woodland features, such as riparian woodland, shelter woods and woods associated with the steep banks of terraces, criss-crosses the farmed land
- Relatively regularly shaped, late 18th/19th century improved fields are confined to the most level areas of land, including the river flats, some well-drained glacial-fluvial terraces and gentle slopes associated with mouths of the side valleys
- The farmed land is largely grassland, but includes arable crops and some areas of wetland and rough grazing, with scattered birch woodland occasionally encroaching onto the less grazed land
- Large 'forest' trees, such as oak and ash, and occasional policy woodland associated with lodges and larger farms add to visual diversity
- Settlement, with the exception of the village of Cromdale, is dispersed, with large farms even on the lower river flats as well as the upper terraces, and lodges with associated estate buildings and infrastructure placed on elevated sites, overlooking the river
- Cromdale is located on a well-drained terrace beside the mouth of a side glen, at the confluence between the Burn of Cromdale and the Spey and close to a crossing point of the Spey
- The A95 tends to occupy the elevated terraces on top of steep banks above the river flats east of the River, but travels close to the Spey, constrained by the hills on the eastern side of the valley
- The B9102 follows a course generally much more distant from the Spey to the west, loosely following a break in slope at the edge of the strath

- The pine woodland, especially Anagach wood, is well used for informal recreation, and the Speyside Way follows the line of the strath, although it is almost entirely set within woodland

4.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- A pronounced sequence of enclosed forest followed by open, relatively level farmed terraces is experienced when travelling on the elevated roads, although views are in part screened by regenerating woodland
- The elevated A95 also offers occasional glimpse views of the river and lower terraces, but frequently views are obscured by roadside woodland

4.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained, although there are occasional glimpses into side valleys from elevated viewpoints. It provides a narrower, more densely wooded contrast to the more open Strathspey south of Grantown.

4.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The rhythmic spacing and distinct shape of the bow-shaped river flats is a particular feature of this part of the Spey, the rhythm of which is partly complemented by the alternating sequence of farmed open space and enclosed woodland experienced when travelling along the roads.



The network of linear woodland features criss-crosses the farmed land along the strath floor



The low lying river flats are sometimes farmed, or, as in this case, are reverting to wetland and woods

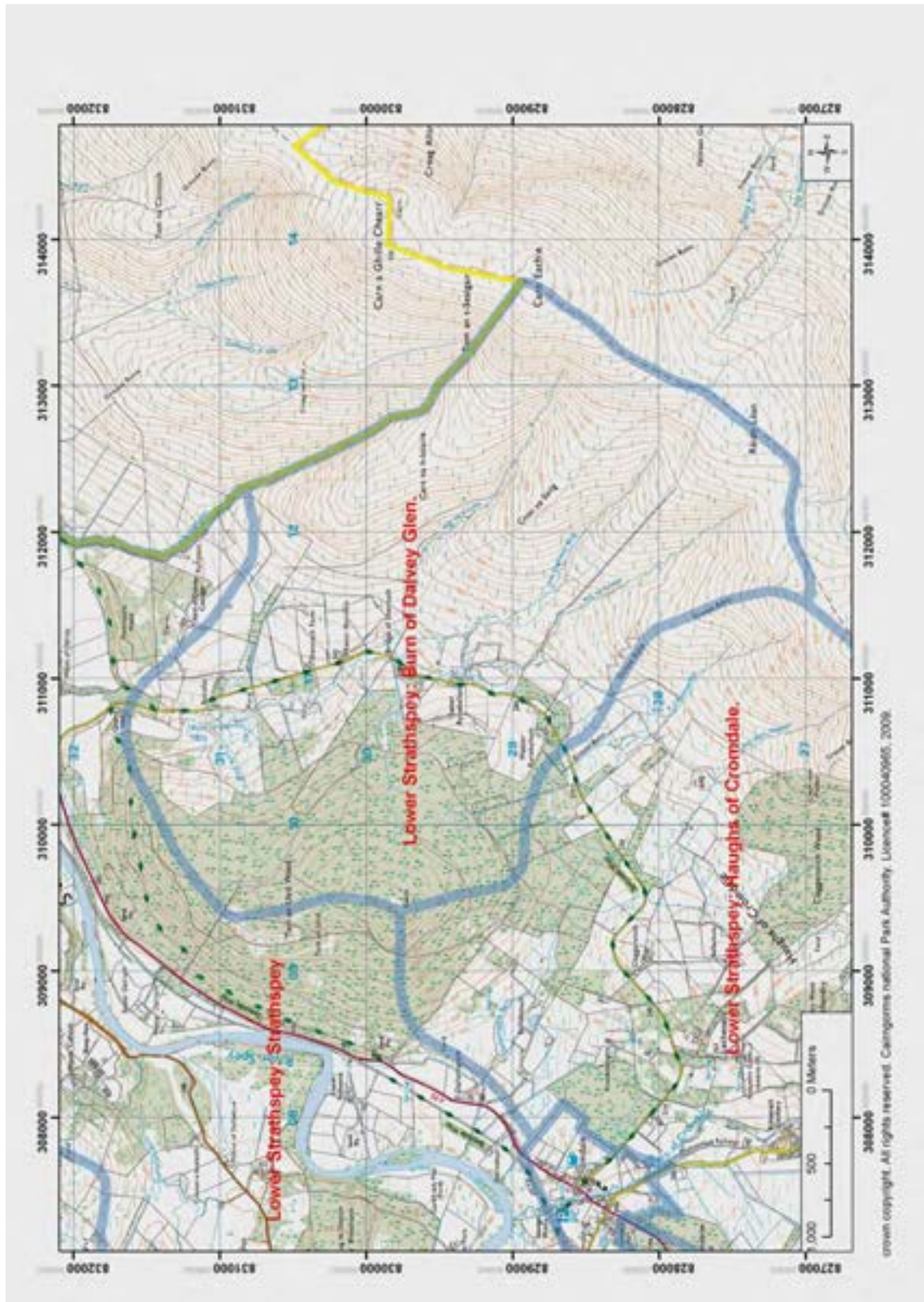


Settlement is located on the farmed land, here on a pronounced river terrace



Riparian woodland along the river, and conifer woodland across the steeper hill slopes

4.6 Lower Strathspey: Burn of Dalvey Glen



4.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- This relatively narrow, north/south winding valley sits between the steep sided, concave spurs which form the formidable north-western face of the Hills of Cromdale and the concave slopes of Tom an Uird Hill
- The glen floor is a narrow strip of fluvial-glacial deposit which slopes down to the burn, while there are more gentle gradients across the glacial till on upper slopes. It may well be an ancient meander of the River Spey, and it has not been greatly affected by glacial erosion
- The hill of Tom an Uird is entirely covered with conifer forest, which also extends in sporadic blocks down to the glen floor, creating shelter woods between farms and fields
- In addition, there are occasional small woodlands adjacent to the road which further enhance shelter
- The relatively flat, bulky face of the Hills of Cromdale is divided by a series of deep valleys cut by watercourses to form dry ridges which are covered in heather which is actively burnt to maintain grouse moor
- Small fields sit on both the sides of the burn, sheltered in the narrow glen, and occupying better drained land
- The broadly rectilinear, late 18th/19th century improved fields are larger on the more expansive flanks of hillside at the mouth of the glen
- Crops include re-seeded grassland and unimproved grassland, but several have also reverted to heather and wetland, or have been planted with conifers, creating a diverse mixture of colours and textures
- Late 18th/19th century farmsteads are frequently and relatively evenly dispersed along the narrow public road. Many, but not all, are still in use, and broadly retain their original compact architectural style
- The narrow public road sits relatively high up the west side of this narrow glen, linking the farms

4.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- This area is secluded, 'hidden' away from the main roads and is not densely settled
- The survival of the well defined, pattern of the late 18th/19th century distribution of regular fields and farms, as well as the period architectural style, creates a landscape of relative historic integrity

4.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is relatively self-contained, although the wide sweep of the Hills of Cromdale is a strong presence.

4.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The pattern of compact, late 18th/19th century farms and their associated relatively small fields along the length of the glen is a consistent and unifying characteristic. The small scale of the glen, fields and farm buildings contrasts with the looming presence of the Hills of Cromdale.



Small fields along the Dalvey Burn, partially enclosed by the conifer woodland extending down from Tom an Uird



Small farms close to the road

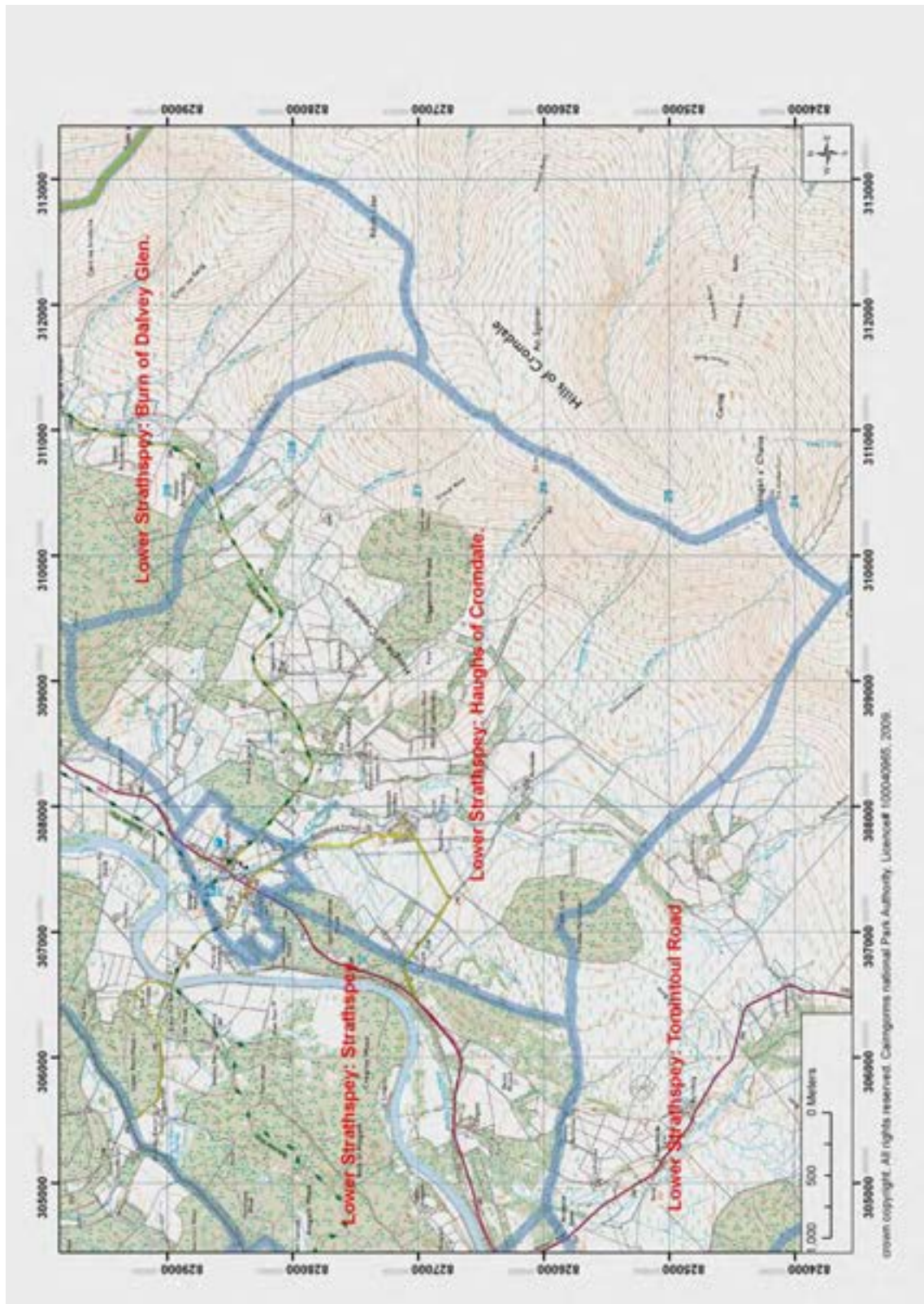


Fields fringe the edge of the moorland along the base of the Hills of Cromdale



The narrow road sits above the burn, overlooking the small fields

4.7 Lower Strathspey: **Haughs of Cromdale**



4.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- These two shallow side glens extend at right angles from the main valley of Strathspey in a south easterly direction, towards the lower slopes of the smooth, rounded ridges of the Hills of Cromdale
- The glens are wide bowls, containing glacial till, flanked by low ridges and hills and drained by a series of small burns which flow into wet, boggy low lying basins at the mouth of each glen. They may well be an ancient floor of the River Spey
- Conifer woodland occupies some of the low hills and ridges, but the steep, north west facing slopes of the hills of Cromdale are actively managed heather grouse moor
- There are occasional conifer shelterbelts on the farmed land, and broadleaves, largely associated with Lethendry, where there are also remains of a castle and designed landscape
- The late 18th/19th century improved fields are large and regularly shaped, located on drier sloping ground above the wetland, in a wide band along the sides of the glens
- Grassland dominates, but there are also some arable crops, as well as signs of reversion to unimproved grassland and wetland on the less well drained slopes.
- Settlement is in clearly defined clusters at Feabuie and the distillery, associated with drier ridges, although more recent development has strayed onto wetter land
- The village of Cromdale, adjacent to the Burn of Cromdale, sits where the side glens meet Strathspey
- Farms, including occasional abandoned farm sites, are dispersed across the drier slopes, often located above the pastures, overlooking the glens, with areas of pre-medieval/prehistoric farming even higher up-slope along the 300m contour
- These slopes were the location for the Battle of Cromdale – the closing confrontation between Jacobite and Government troops in the first rising of 1689-90
- The public roads are narrow, and skirt the edges of the wetland, linking the main settlements on slightly higher ground

4.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- This dramatic, steep, north western face of the Hills of Cromdale provides a formidable backdrop

- The sparse woodland across the floors of the glens combines with the wetland to emphasise an open character, which is further reinforced by the lack of high enclosure to the north west
- The reversion of fields to wetland creates an impression that the land is in transition, and slowly reverting to a more natural character

4.7.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is strongly influenced by the Hills of Cromdale, which are a powerful presence, and in contrast, the area is relatively open to the north, where views extend to the more distant landscape of the Strathdearn Hills.

4.7.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The formidable backdrop of the Hills of Cromdale, as well as the sense of a landscape which is undergoing change – particularly reverting to a more natural, wetland dominated valley floor – are dominant characteristics.



The formidable flanks of the Hills of Cromdale rise above fields subdivided by occasional conifer shelterbelts



Wetland across lower lying slopes and the bottom of the basin, and views north across Strathspey to the Strathdearn hills

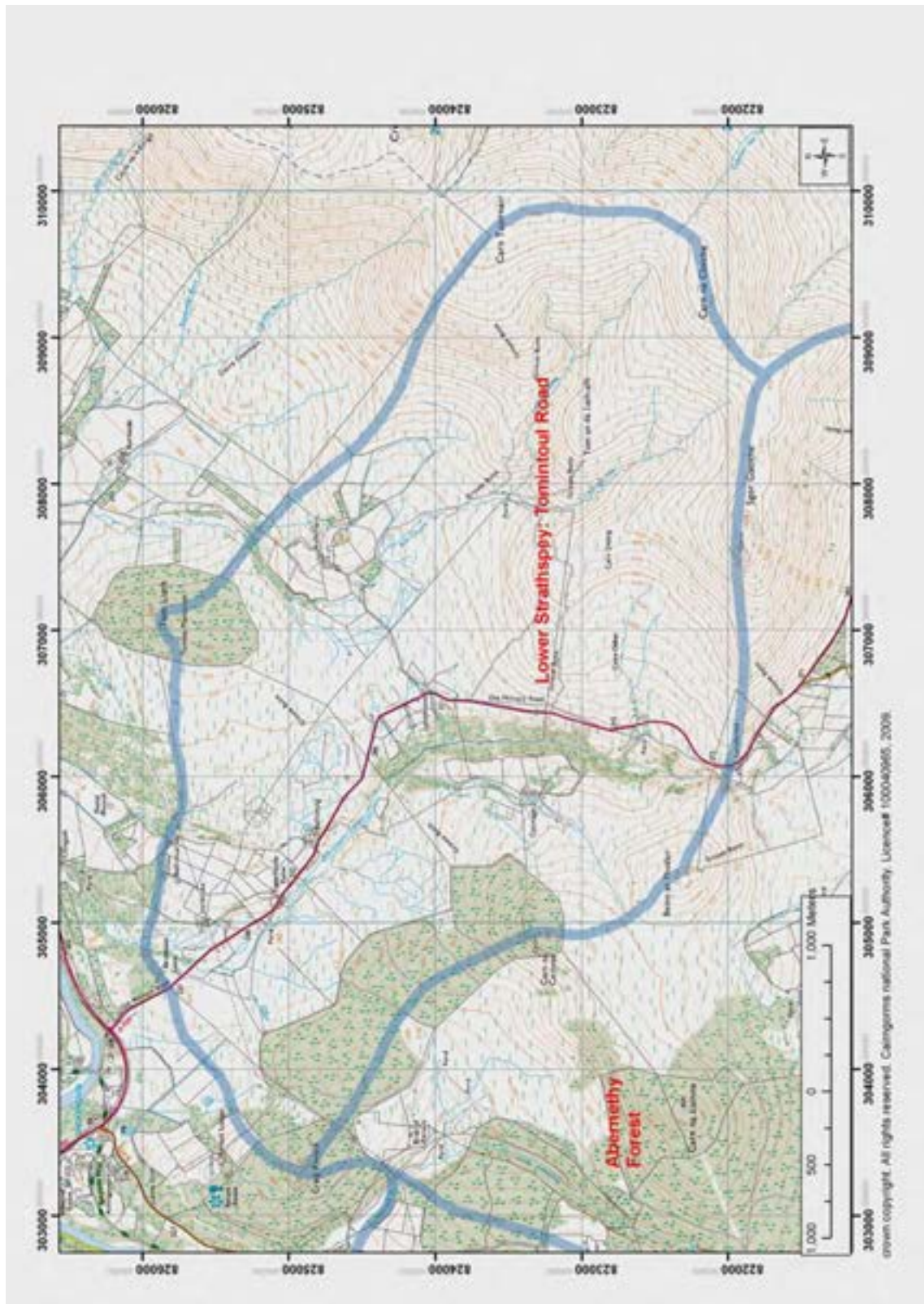


Settlement occupies very subtle ridges of higher land above the wetland



Arable crops, as well as grassland, are grown on drier slopes in this area

4.8 Lower Strathspey: Tomintoul Road



4.8.1 *Landscape Character*

- This shallow basin faces north west, elevated above a steeply incised gorge with low ridges to the east and west providing subtle containment, and the steep flanks of the Hills of Cromdale forming a dramatic enclosure to the south
- This an older valley, which has been left elevated above Strathspey by glacial erosion deepening the trench of the main strath as the ice flowed from Grantown northwards across Dava Moor
- The side slopes are gentle and elevated, with occasional, small, drier ridges sitting slightly above shallow bowls of poorly drained wet heath
- The gorge of the Allt Choire Odhair becomes steeper and more incised towards the watershed where it has incised a well defined and dramatic steep sided pass, a former melt water channel, at Lynebreck,
- The upper reaches of the gorge are hidden within dense broadleaved woodland
- Conifer woodland is located on some of the low summits which contain the bowl, reinforcing the subtle enclosure
- There is widespread woodland regeneration, extending up tributary watercourses from the Allt Choire Odhair, and across the moorland at the head of the glen
- In addition, there are a few small stands of Scots pine, largely associated with farm buildings, which form slightly overgrown shelter woods
- Late 18th/19th century farmsteads with associated straight-edged improved fields are located on free draining ridges along the upper edge of the river valley, although Aultcharn is perched at a higher level
- Each patch of fields is bright green, a contrast to the heather moorland
- The two lane A939 sits east of the gorge, set back from the immediate edge, partially following the line of the old Military road

4.8.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a dramatic sense of arrival when reaching the narrow pass at Lynebreck, when travelling in either direction along the A939
- The sense of ascent and descent up and down the A939 through this basin is emphasised by the continuous, even gradient of the road
- There are panoramic views over Strathspey and north to the Strathdearn Hills when descending the A939
- Outwith the deep, steep-sided river valley, the shallow glen seems open and expansive

4.8.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This shallow glen is a threshold between the expanse of Abernethy and the rounded, convex slopes of the hills to the south and the approach to Strathspey to the north.

4.8.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

Settlement is largely limited to the individual farmsteads, which form a clear pattern sitting within bright green improved fields on drier ridges, contrasting with the heather. There is a strong sense of drama which builds up as a traveller approaches the pass at Lynebreck, and the views either north or south are suddenly revealed.



The wide shallow basin of the valley, with the Hills of Cromdale in the background



The dense broadleaved woodland in the gorge



Extensive conifer woods across the upper slopes to the west of the gorge



The farm at Aultcharn, on a drier ridge, with a shelter wood of pine above late 18th/19th century improved fields



Regenerating pine in the foreground of the view north at the dramatic pass at Lynebreck. Green fields perched on the edge of the gorge in the middle distance

5 STRATH AVON AND GLEN LIVET

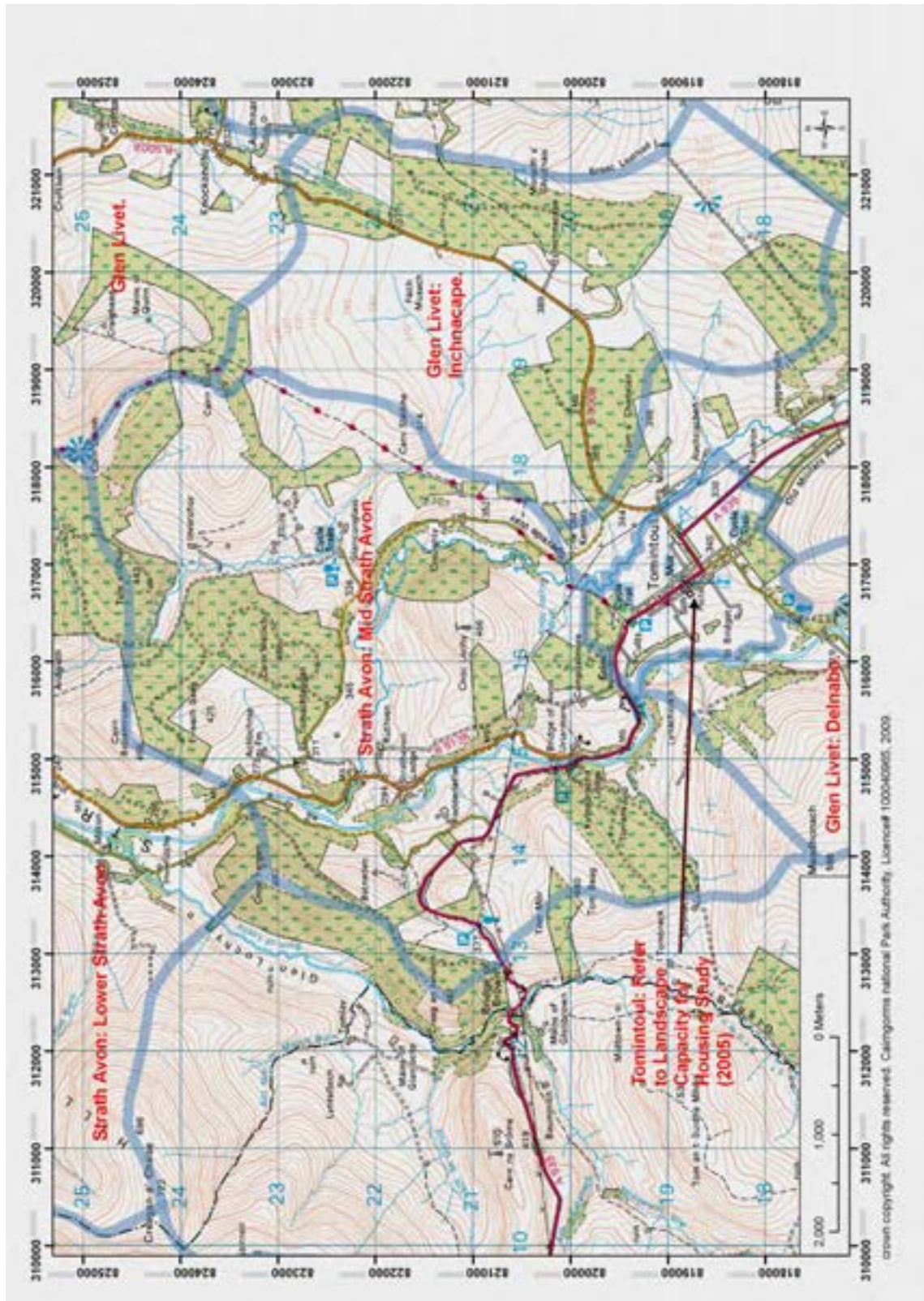
This section of the LCA includes Strath Avon and Glen Livet as well as the glens south of Tomintoul. This character assessment is presented, working from north to south, as follows:

- 33. Strath Avon: **Mid Strath Avon**
- 34. Strath Avon: **Lower Strath Avon**
- 35. **Glen Livet**
- 36. Glen Livet: **Braes of Glen Livet**
- 37. Glen Livet: **Inchnacape**
- 38. Glen Livet: **Delnabo**
- 39. Glen Livet: **Conglass Water**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



5.1 Strath Avon: Mid Strath Avon



5.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- The quartzite bedrock locally forms smooth, rounded upper slopes and low hills within this complex topography
- The upper slopes rise above narrow, deep glens where fluvial deposits have been partially worked to create narrow floodplains
- Sandy soils, locally covered by deposits and in places underpinned by limestone and black schist, create a more fertile soil than that which lies across surrounding metamorphic rocks, allowing fields to extend quite far up the side slopes
- Conifer woodland on the upper slopes extends over the hill summits on former heather moorland
- Broadleaved woodland is established on steep sided slopes, including banks of possible former river terraces, and along the narrow glens of the watercourses
- Fenced, late 18th/19th century improved fields of arable and improved grassland occupy well-drained lower slopes, but also extend up onto elevated, gently graded slopes, shallow bowls and terraces. These higher fields are in places reverting to unimproved grassland.
- The side glen of the Conglass Water is an exception to the more generally farmed landscape, as the river meanders across a level floodplain of wetland and rush
- Farms are generally located on level terraces or natural breaks in slope on the upper slopes, surrounded by fields
- There is a widespread network of narrow, winding roads which follow the glen floors or traverse the upper slopes along an elevated contour line

5.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- The topographical complexity of this area creates small scale enclosure along the glen floors
- This complexity is easily experienced from the narrow roads and farm access routes along the valley floor which wind around hummocks and along terraces
- There are contrasting panoramic views from the upper slopes, including from elevated roads

5.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This complex topography of this area contrasts with the relative simplicity of the linear lower reaches of Glen Avon to the north. The intensity and extent of the improved fields, farmed

land and conifer woodland also contrasts with the more simple, moorland dominated landscapes to the east.

5.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

This area is strongly influenced by the complex topography which creates a landscape of intimate scale. This complexity is complemented by the diverse pattern of strongly rectilinear fields of varied crops combined with different types of woodland, which includes very naturalistic as well as strongly managed elements.



The complex topography, with the narrow river valley hidden in broadleaved woodland, and fields extending over upper slopes.



Conifer woodland over the summits of rounded hills and smooth slopes improved pasture fields

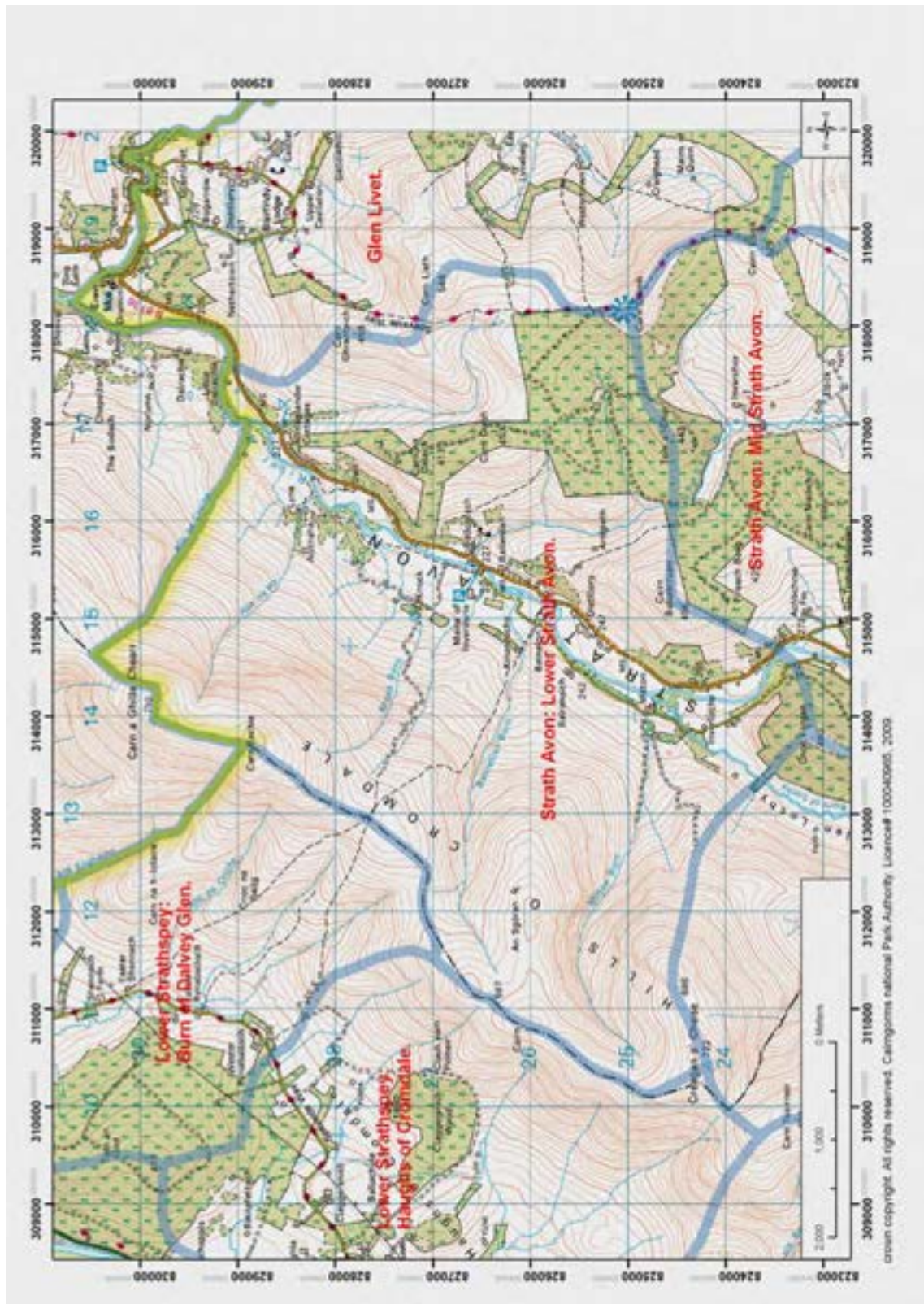


Along the valley of the Conglass Water, the meandering river has worked deposits into a level floodplain of wetland and rushy pasture



Extensive fields system, enclosed in the 18th/19th centuries with farms often located on the upper slopes surrounded by fields

5.2 Strath Avon: Lower Strath Avon



5.2.1 *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

5.2.2 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

5.2.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This character area is relatively self-contained.

5.2.4 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

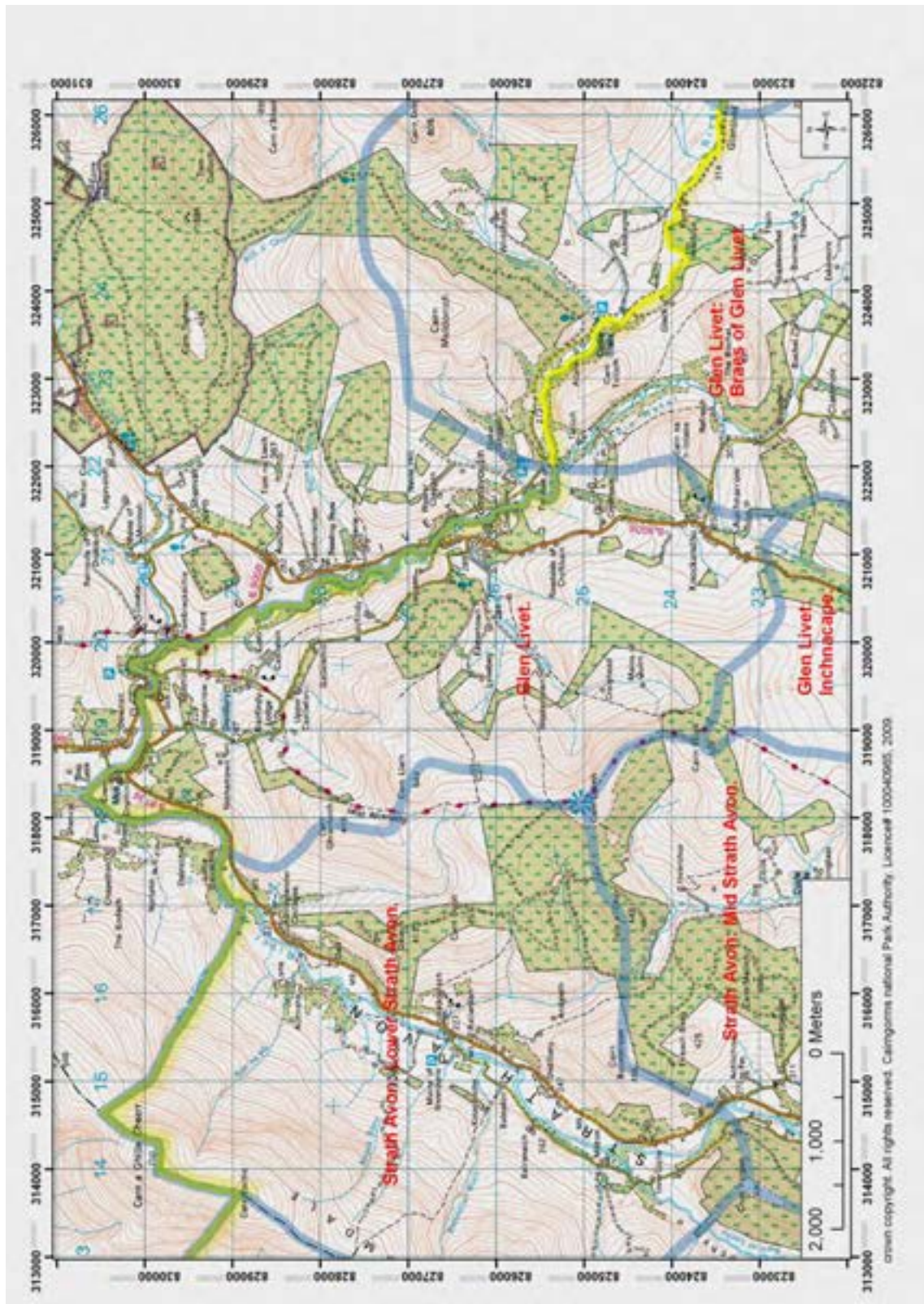


Long river terraces carved into the deposits, behind which is moorland across the lower slopes of the Hills of Cromdale



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

5.3 Glen Livet



5.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- This wide, deep river valley, which includes the valley of the Cattach Burn and the middle reaches of the River Livet, is oriented south/north, enclosed by the relatively gentle, sometimes convex shaped flanks of dome-shaped hills
- The Cattach Burn tumbles down a narrow, steep sided upper valley to join the River Livet where three valleys converge within complex, rolling land form of glacial-fluvial deposits
- The River Livet meanders across a floodplain within the trough of the river valley
- There is extensive birch woodland in these river valleys, which sometimes extends up the lower flanks of the hills and along burnside well up the valley sides
- There is some conifer woodland on steeper slopes, as well as many linear conifer shelter woods, some of which are strung horizontally round the hill slopes
- Many lines of broadleaved trees and hedges of hawthorn and beech, some of which are overgrown, reinforce the pattern of the fields and linear form of the watercourses. The line of the River Livet is also picked out by alder to the north
- Whin and juniper also extend along the river valleys or on disturbed ground – juniper most obvious in the less grazed side valleys
- Late 18th/19th century improved fields, their large regular shapes enclosed by fencing and hedges, contain grassland and arable crops, and extend far up the hillsides on the gentle gradients – particularly across the west facing slopes, which are outwith the Park but easily visible from it
- In the more elevated side valleys, the improved land is in part reverting to more open grazing
- Farms are dispersed across the slopes, but are often located on small, natural terraces, on a tiny ridge or at a subtle change of gradient across the relatively even slopes. Within the elevated side valleys, there are some abandoned farmsteads
- There are two clustered settlements linked to the distilleries at Glenlivet and Tomnavoulin
- There is a cluster of historic sites overlooking the confluence of the Livet with the Tervie and the Avon, where there is also a convergence of long-established routes through accessible passes

- These include the ruins of Drumin Castle, overlooking the dramatic confluence of the Avon and the Livet and the remains of Blairfindy castle, as well as older sites, such as the Doune of Dalmore
- The B9008 is tucked against the break in slope above the steeper valley sides or on a terrace above the floodplain, while the narrower side road adheres strictly to a break in slope, elevated above the glen, at the point where the fields stop and more open grazing land starts
- There is an extensive network of waymarked footpaths

5.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The complexity of the landform where the Livet is joined by tributaries adds considerable to the diversity of this glen, as the form and intimate scale of the interlocking folds contrasts with the more straight form of the valley overall
- The upper side glens are relatively secluded

5.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is relatively self contained.

5.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The lines of trees, narrow woodlands and in particular, hedges, reinforce the pattern of the fields and the watercourses within this landscape. The complexity of the topography where the glens converge creates areas of land form diversity which are complemented by the small scale pattern of lines of trees, hedges, woodland and scattered settlement tucked in and around the land form.



The lines of hedges and trees, associated with the field boundaries and the watercourses, extend across smooth, rounded, sometimes convex slopes



Complex landform where three valleys converge near the Cattach Burn



In elevated side valleys, the pattern of fields is less distinct as the land has in part reverted to unimproved grazing around some abandoned farmsteads



A hedge – no longer in leaf – in the foreground, with improved grassland adjacent to moorland

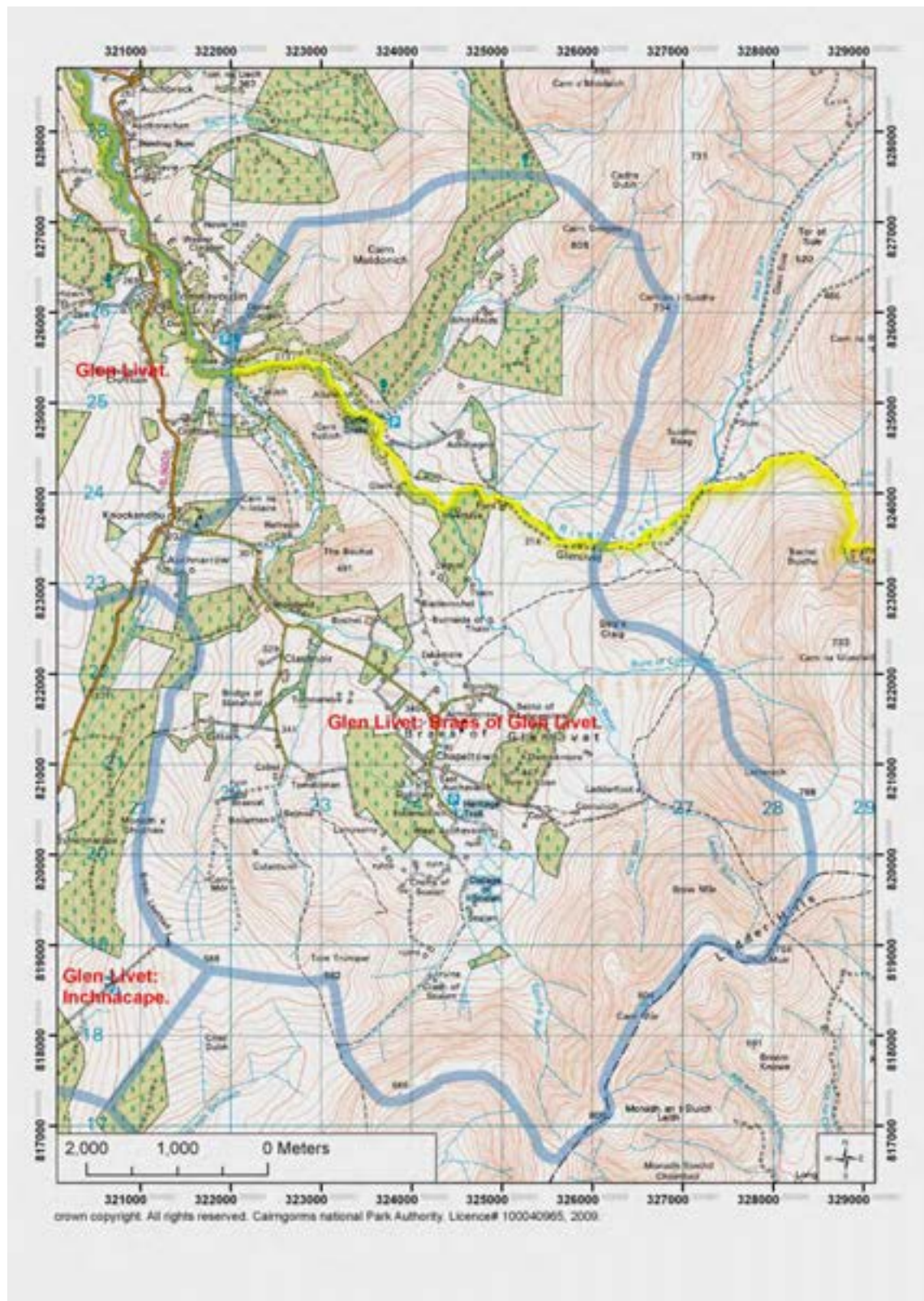


The linear network of trees and hedges associated with field boundaries and watercourses, with farms set on natural ledges within the rounded land forms



The distillery and settlement at Tomnavoulin, tucked into the valley floor in a wooded setting

5.4 Glen Livet: **Braes of Glen Livet**



5.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- This expansive howe or basin is developed in granite set amid metamorphic rocks, although a band of metamorphosed limestone forms Glen Suie to the north east
- The basin floor retains a deep layer of poorly sorted fluvial-glacial deposit resting on glacial till. This creates elevated and gently graded terrain of smooth low ridges and low hills almost completely encircled by steeper, higher hills, including the Ladder Hills
- The entrance to the Braes is marked by a narrower pass along the Crombie Water, which winds between steep sided hills forming a strong sense of 'threshold' between the Braes and Glen Livet
- Many burns wind tightly on narrow floodplains and through wetland along the base of the subtle shallow valleys to converge with the River Livet
- There are several areas of conifer woodland, on drier hills or on areas of peat within the basin, as well as smaller shelter woods
- Conifer woodland has also been planted along the burnsidings, and there are clumps of trees, sometimes pine, associated with each individual farmstead
- The steep hills form a relatively abrupt edge to the valley floor, and are clad in heather, the marks of management by burning clearly visible on the slopes
- Extensive areas of late 18th/19th century improved fields, fenced and rectilinear in shape, and small or medium sized, are draped over the gently sloping land form
- While most of the ground is used for grazing, there are also some arable and winter fodder crops
- There is also extensive, still apparent, evidence of field systems which pre-date amalgamation of the late 18th century – where field shapes are narrow, long and smaller than later fields
- There are many small, late 18th/19th century farmsteads, relatively evenly dispersed across the slopes, sometimes perched on the subtle ridges
- Older farmsteads, including former crofts, possibly created in the 20th century, are scattered across the farmed land, but are most apparent at the peripheral edge of present-day cultivation, where buildings have been abandoned and their former fields have reverted to hill land
- There is a cluster of buildings at the Chapelton distillery, located at the head of one of the shallow glens and surrounded by woodland

- The College of Scalán – a seminary for Catholic priests during the 18th century – is located at the very end of a winding narrow road, tucked into the folds of the land form to keep its location discrete
- Narrow, winding roads extend up the shallow glens and links to a network of smaller farm tracks which criss-cross the whole basin

5.4.2 Landscape experience

- The narrow entrance to the Braes, along the Crombie Water reinforces the sense of seclusion experienced in this self-contained area, which appears very 'cut off' from Glen Livet.
- There is a sense of 'surprise' at the wide extent of the Braes, which only becomes evident after travelling through the narrow winding glen of the Crombie water
- This sense of secrecy is reinforced by the knowledge that the area supported the Catholic faith when it was oppressed during the 18th century
- The extent of the basin is very evident, with the low hills and ridges forming only subtle containment within the backdrop of steep hillsides

5.4.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is very self-contained, with little inter-visibility with surrounding areas beyond the immediate Ladder Hills

5.4.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The sense of seclusion is very pronounced, reinforced by the 'gateway' created by the narrow glen of the Crombie Water and the sudden revelation of the expanse of relatively fertile, gently graded terrain. The field systems today reflect a complex post-17th century history including, in the furthest reaches, abandoned small holdings. Much of the settlement and field pattern today follows patterns and forms laid down in the 18th century.



The approach to the Braes of Glen Livet is through a narrow glen



The Braes are a series of gentle undulating ridges, encircled by higher hills. Farmsteads tend to be small and elevated.



Grass fields, established during the late 18th/19th century improvement period, across gentle gradients. Conifer woodland predominates, even planted along the sides of the watercourses



The distillery and settlement of Chapelton, set in woodland

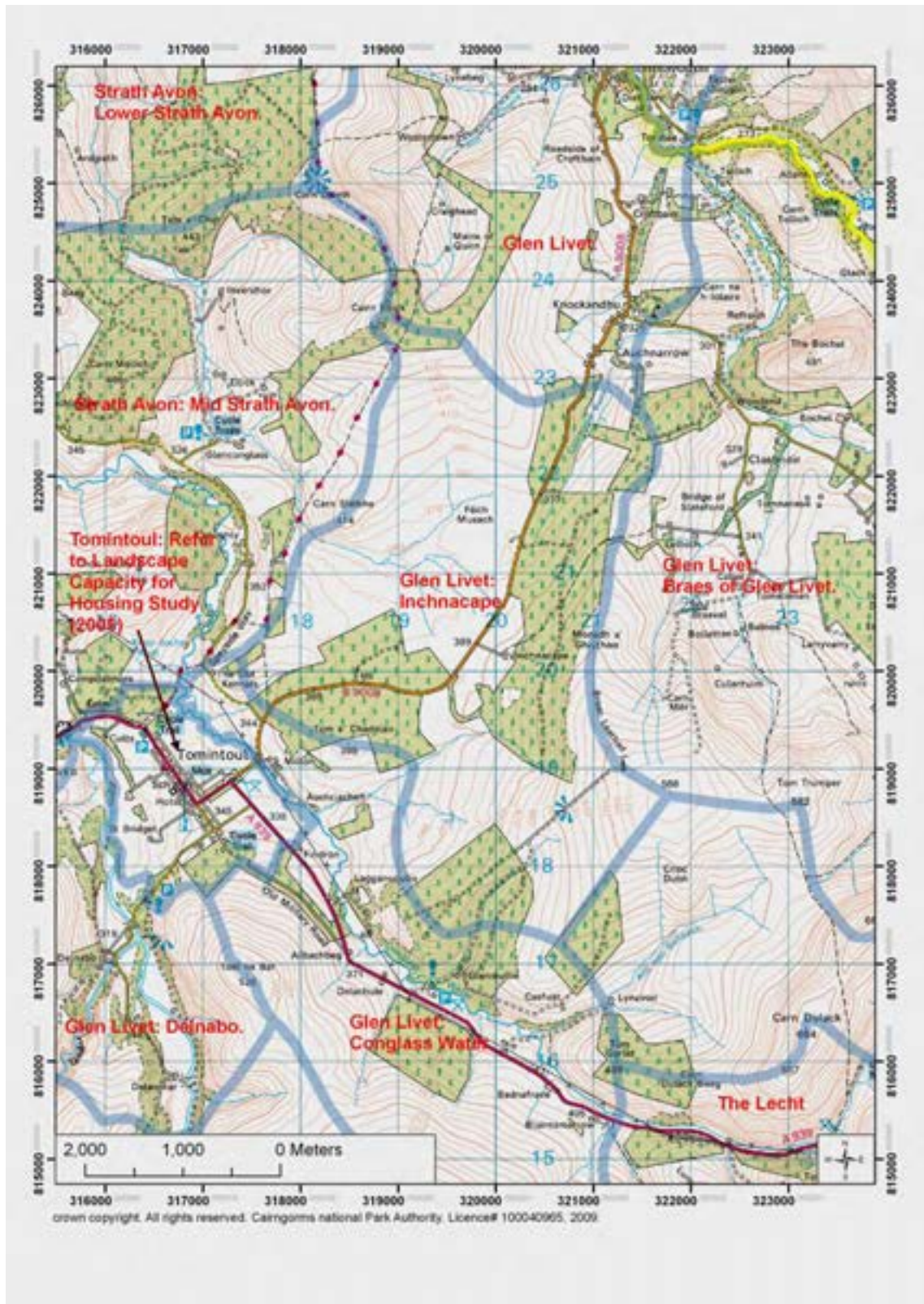


Former crofts, now abandoned with the land reverting to rush pasture



The well hidden seminary of Scalan

5.5 Glen Livet: Inchnacape



5.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- This elevated expanse of blanket peat covers a broad, shallow valley, aligned south west/north east, straddled between higher hills with elongated, gently sloping flanks and domed summits
- The area is largely wetland, with upland grass and patches of heather moor across the east facing hillsides
- Extensive areas of conifer woodland, mostly spruce with some pine, extends over the steeper west facing hill slopes and where the land falls away towards Glen Livet in the north and Tomintoul in the south
- Regenerating pine on the moorland to the north, along with scattered birch and juniper, create a more natural character
- A couple of mature pines are all that remains of old roundels, or small shelter woods on the tiny area of farmed fields
- A line of rectangular, presumably 19th century improved fields, now reseeded and fenced, sits on slopes sheltered by woodland adjacent to the B9008 overlooked by the small farm of Inchnacape
- Peat extraction on the moss reveals the dark brown worked layer of peat. The machinery and stockpiles of excavated peat are highly visible in the open landscape
- The B9008 is a series of long straights linked by sweeping bends

5.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The openness and expanse of this landscape is fully revealed when emerging from the forest onto the elevated moss
- The landscape is relatively simple in structure, although the peat works and conifer woodland in particular break up the uniform expanse of the moor
- The sense of elevation is reinforced by views of the tops of surrounding hills, appearing over the edge of the moor

5.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area provides a contrast to the much more complex and diverse landscape of Glen Livet to the north. Its elevation encourages views to the surrounding mountain areas.

5.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The contrast between the enclosure of the woodland at the edges of the moor and the openness of the highest section of the moor reinforces the sense of elevation. The relative simplicity, and extent, of the mosaic of moorland vegetation reinforces the upland character.



Conifer woodland on the lower slopes on the approach to the upper moorland of this area



The open moor, with excavated peat in the middle distance



The farm of Inchnacape, set above a line of improved fields and back against woodland



Machinery and stockpiles of excavated peat

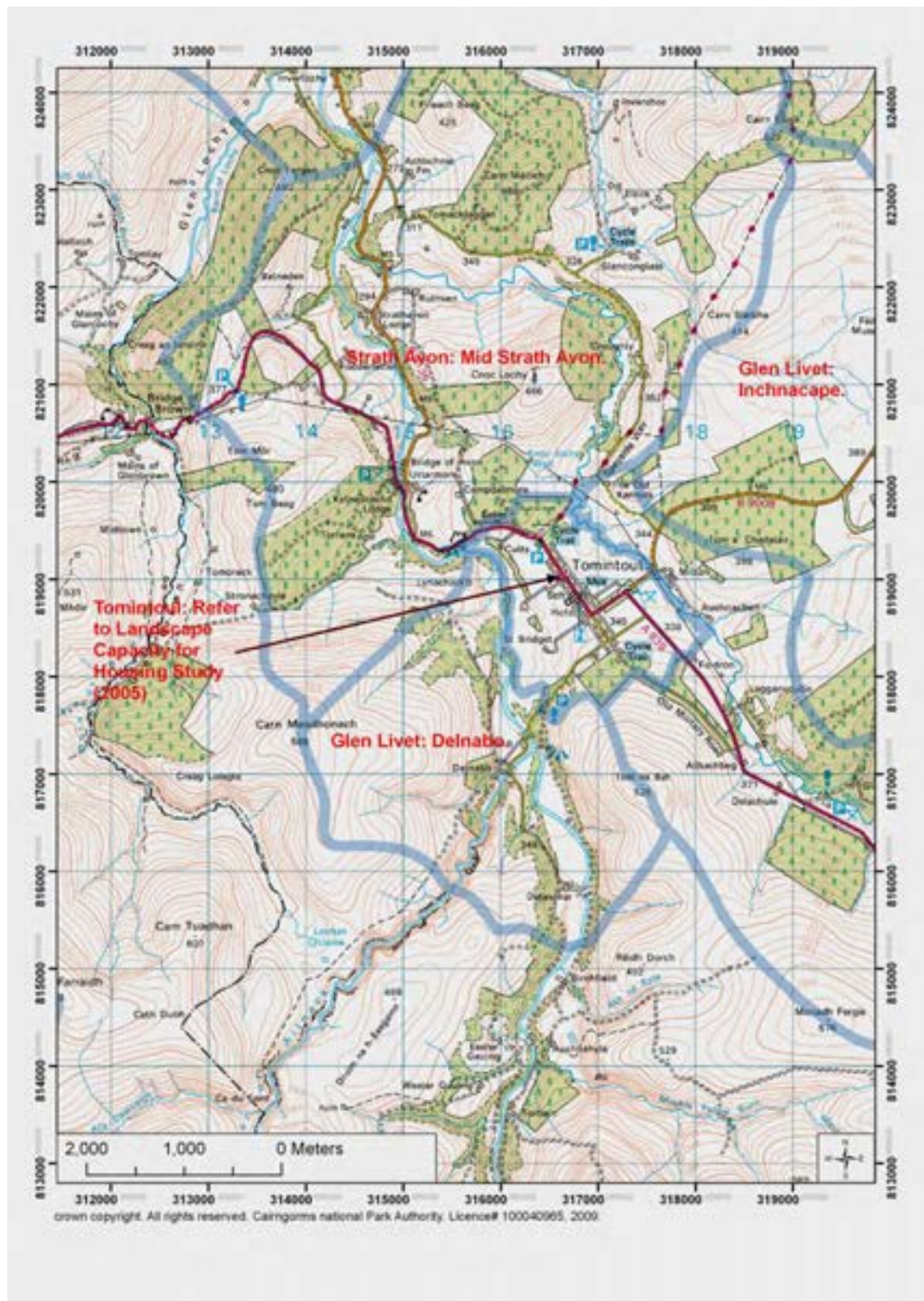


Regenerating pine and birch across the moorland to the north



Views of the tops of high mountains appearing over the edge of this elevated valley

5.6 Glen Livet: Delnabo



5.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- These are the upper reaches of Strath Avon, where the river has carved its way through a narrow valley northwards to eventually form a wide strath with a level floodplain just west of Tomintoul
- The floodplain is well defined by long, flat topped terraces and steep slopes which rise abruptly from the level floor of the strath
- To the south west lies the mouth of the steep sided Ailnack gorge, deeply cut into Devonian sediments
- Extensive birch-dominated broadleaved woodland, and some conifer woodland, occupy the steeper side slopes of the glen, reinforcing enclosure of the floodplain
- Policy woodland, associated with Delnabo Lodge, adds to the woodland diversity
- The strath is subdivided into large, often bright green and fertile looking, regularly shaped late 18th/19th century improved fields, which enclose grassland and some arable crops.
- These occasionally, although rarely, extend up onto the slopes above the floodplain, where there are better drained hummocky deposits
- There are traces of the curved field boundaries and early enclosures of pre-improvement and prehistoric field systems as well as later farmsteads on well-drained hummocky deposits and sheltered upper slopes within the inner glen
- A dispersed pattern of farms, lodges, and other buildings occupy the terraces above the floodplain, generally sitting at the very edge of a terrace adjacent to a tributary overlooking the strath, sheltered by surrounding woodland
- The narrow public road hugs the undulating landform and generally follows a break in slope
- The public road extends only a short distance up this glen, but there is a car park at Queens Cairn, overlooking the river, where a bridge crosses the river and there is a cluster of built estate-style features is associated with Delnabo
- Remaining access is on estate roads and tracks, which link the many dispersed hill side farmsteads and provide some access onto the flanks of the higher hills

5.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a strong sense of enclosure within the inner glen, created by the pronounced containment of the valley sides which is often reinforced by woodland

- This secluded glen is quiet and ‘tucked away’
- The access to the dramatic Ailnack Gorge, perhaps the most spectacular canyon in the eastern Grampians, is concealed behind Delnabo Lodge, reinforcing the sense of discovery when it is encountered
- The narrow road is elevated as it leaves Tomintoul, offering fine views of the wide floodplain at the north end of this strath

5.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This sheltered glen and fertile floodplain is a marked contrast to the more exposed moors and open landscapes around much of the rest of Tomintoul.

5.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The presence of the river and the abrupt transition from the flat flood plain to the steep enclosure of the valley sides are a particularly dramatic feature of this glen. This is further emphasised by the difference in vegetation pattern, with bright green fields on the flat floodplain, extensive semi-natural broadleaved woodland on the enclosing side slopes and farmsteads perched on the edges of the glen.



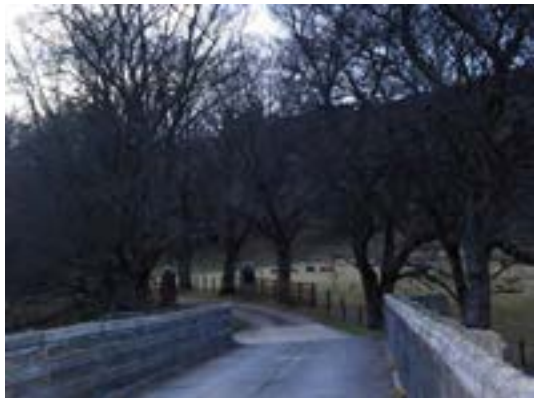
The wide mouth of this floodplain just west of Tomintoul



The floodplain narrows as the glen extends south into the hills, with the improved fields on the floor of the valley

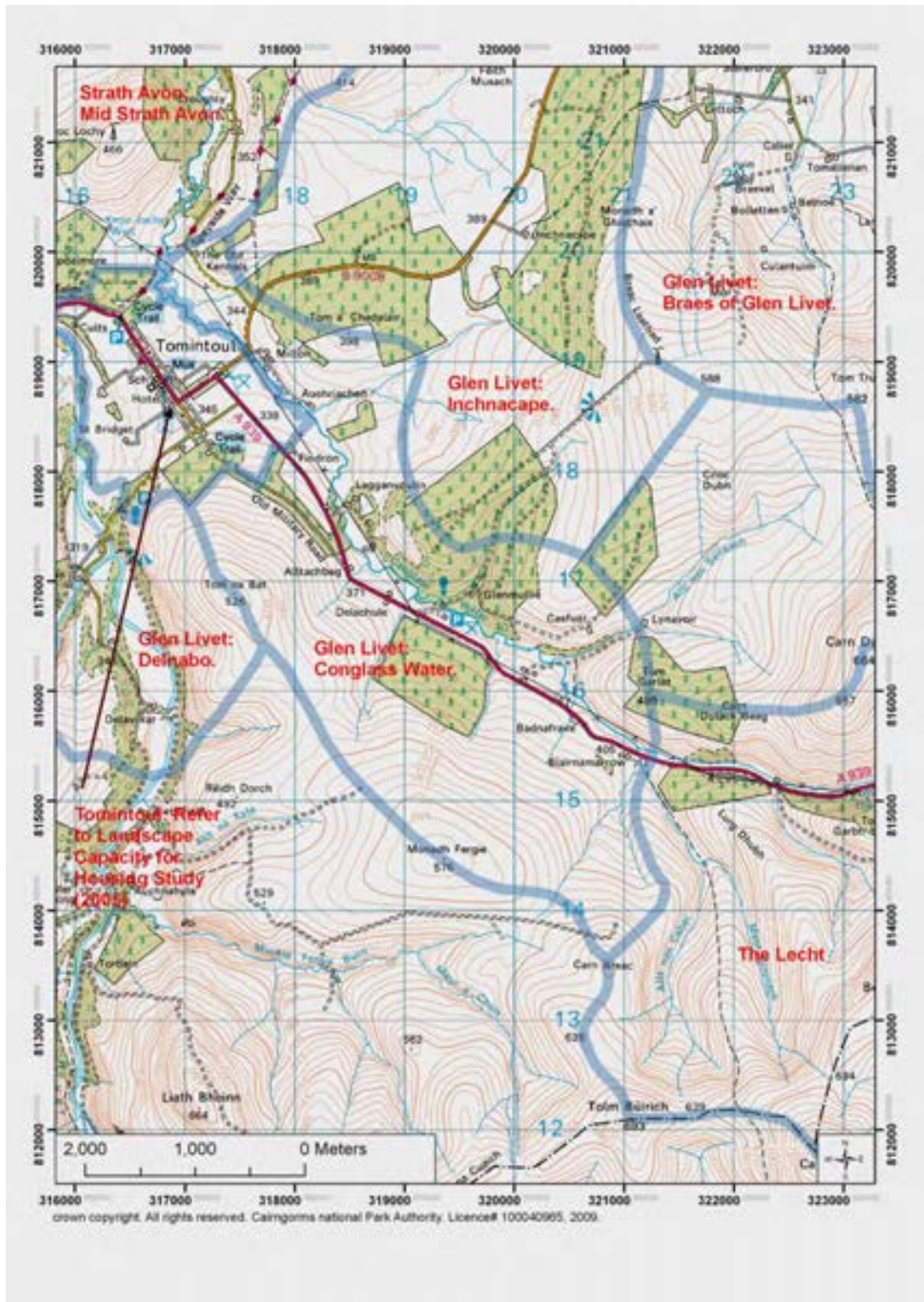


Occasionally, the improved fields extend up onto better drained rolling terrain. There is extensive birch woodland along steeper side slopes



An avenue at Delnabo, and built features associated with the estate

5.7 Glen Livet: Conglass Water



5.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- This elevated, broad, flat bottomed glen, orientated north west/south east sits framed by well defined valley sides carved out of deep deposit by the Conglass Water. The valley narrows, and the sides become steeper, as it extends south east into the hills
- Although the domed hills with gently graded side slopes provide very little containment, several deep side valleys, with much steeper slopes, have been formed by tributaries to the main river
- The Conglass Water meanders across the floodplain, although to the north it sits firmly to the north east side of the valley, leaving a wide stretch of level valley floor available for cultivation
- There are several blocks of conifer woodland, not clearly associated with any particular land form feature, and some broadleaved, semi-natural woodland along the river valleys and steep valley sides
- The remaining hill sides are heather moor with some upland grassland
- The valley floor has been subdivided into 18th/19th century improved fields, now fenced, around each of the farms, alternating with stretches of unimproved grazing and wetland
- The former pattern of long, narrow, linear fields around the planned village of Tomintoul is now barely visible as the fields are reverting to unimproved pasture, or being managed more extensively
- More extensive, linear fields on the flat river terrace behind Milton take advantage of well drained deposits
- Farms are clearly located at the mouths of the individual side valleys, above small alluvial fans, and fields sometimes extend up onto higher hillsides close to the farmsteads
- There is a tiny linear settlement, perched on the top of the river terrace, at Milton, set in sheltering woodland
- The A939 is relatively straight, generally following the line of the old military road, usually located at the break in slope, elevated above the lower valley and floodplain

5.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a sense of openness in this relatively expansive landscape, which feels exposed despite the conifer woodland and the well-defined river terrace providing some containment
- Despite the cultivated fields, there is a perception of being in an upland area, with marginal farmland, at the edge of cultivation

5.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This landscape forms a transition between Strath Avon/Glen Livet and the high pass at the Lecht, and reflects this transition, with cultivation and fields extending into an elevated river valley which narrows to become a pass.

5.7.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The elevated glen floor, with its profile of a level floodplain contained by steep sided river terraces forms the context for marginal farmland which creates a sense of being at the transition between sheltered lowlands and exposed uplands.



The relatively level, broad valley floor of the Conglass Water



The settlement of Milton, set on a river terrace above the floodplain, with fields on the elevated terrace behind the settlement

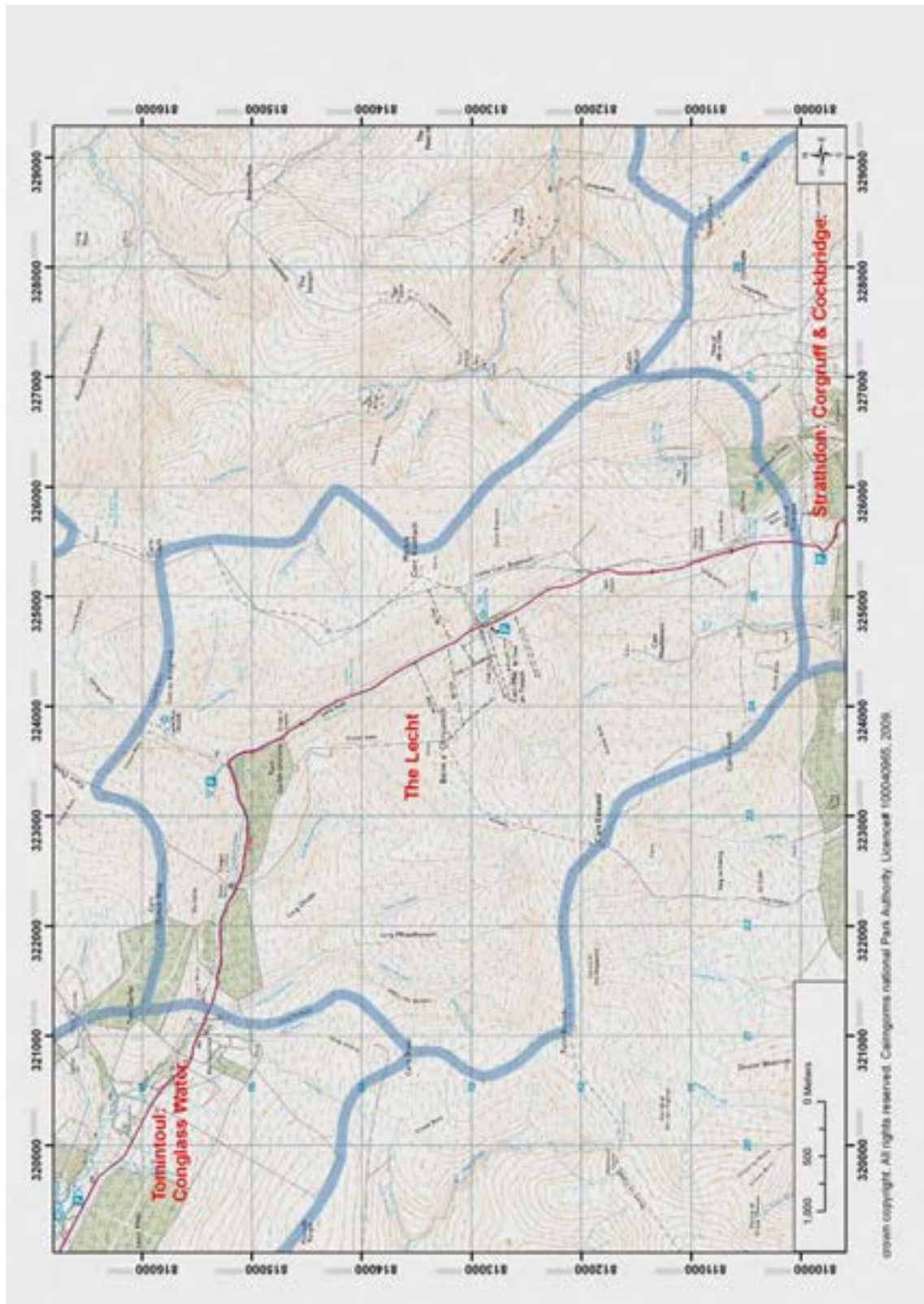
6 THE LECHT AND STRATHDON

This section of the LCA includes the Lecht and Strathdon. This character assessment is presented, working from west to east, as follows:

40. **The Lecht**
41. Strathdon: **Corgarff and Cockbridge**
42. Strathdon: **Upper Strathdon**
43. Strathdon: **Mid Strathdon**
44. Strathdon: **Glen Nocht**
45. Strathdon: **Glen Buchat**
46. Strathdon: **Waters of Deskry, Carvie and Conrie**



6.1 The Lecht



6.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- This high pass is formed by a deep, steep sided river valley which cuts through the bulky but rounded hill summits and long, smooth ridges of the Ladder Hills
- The summits and upper slopes are a mosaic of heather, patches of burnt heather moor and swathes of pale upland grassland
- To the north, the pass is further contained by conifer woodland as it narrows
- The road, following the route of an old military way, climbs on a long even gradient along the upper edge of the deep river valley, elevated well above the valley, at times even perched on a ridgeline
- The ski centre at the Lecht is close to the highest point on the road, and some of the lifts and other infrastructure are seen on the skylines of the long ridges
- The cluster of buildings and car parks associated with the ski centre sit either side of the road, although they are focussed on a single stretch of road
- The only other feature is the 'Well of the Lecht' and the old mines, which are accessible on foot from an associated car park at the northern end of the pass

6.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a sense of openness in this expansive and elevated landscape
- The high road offers panoramic views and easy, vehicular access to a landscape of mountain and upland character
- The landscape is still in essence simple and sparse, despite the woodland and ski centre as well as other infrastructure such as the overhead line
- The upland hill forms are bold and formidable, creating a sense of solidity and 'bulk' in the landscape which dominates over the human interventions

6.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This upland, relatively sparse landscape is in marked contrast to the diverse valley landscapes in the glens and straths on either side.

6.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The sense of openness, the semi-natural vegetation, the elevation, and the strong 'presence' of the formidable heft of the landform still dominates this upland landscape despite the infrastructure, ski centre buildings and the forestry.



Rounded hills, clad in moor mottled with burnt heather, enclose the deep river valley



The road sits on the edge of the valley, sometimes on an exposed ridge



Infrastructure associated with the ski centre, as well as the pylon line, clustered at a high point on the road

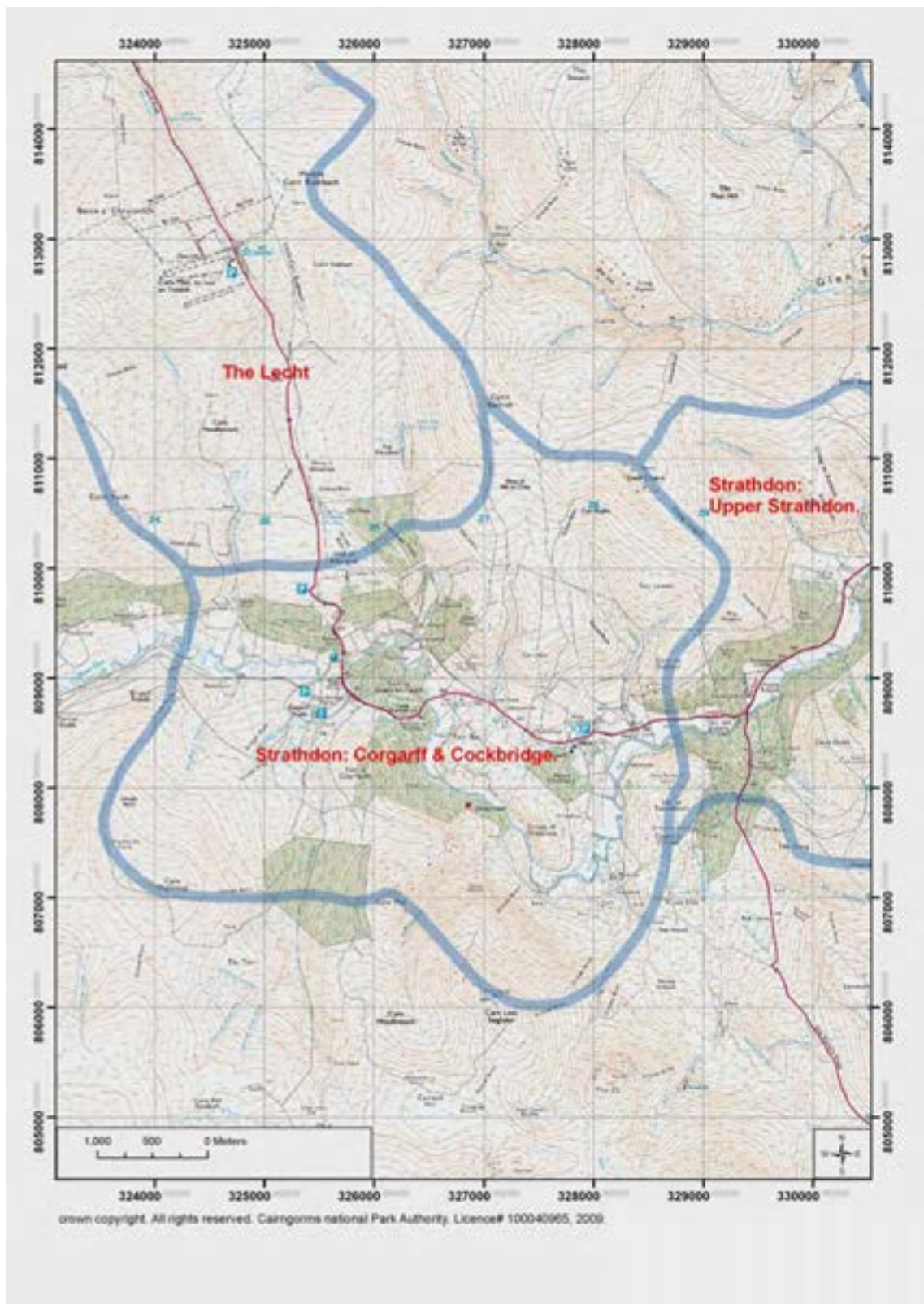


The Well of the Lecht, and the former mid-nineteenth century mine which was the largest manganese mine in Scotland



Conifer woodland at the northern end of the pass

6.2 Strathdon: **Corgarff and Cockbridge**



6.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- This wide, shallow, elevated glen is contained by steep hills with rounded summits and narrow side valleys
- The very meandering River Don winds across a narrow, flat floodplain, but this sits within a wider valley floor of extensive undulating glacial-fluvial deposit which has been eroded to form smooth ridges
- The landscape is relatively open, but there are some large areas of conifer woodland at the western end of the character area, particularly on steeper side slopes which frame the lower valley
- Heather moorland, with patches of burnt heather, and upland grassland extend over the unplanted hillsides, with rough grazing even on lower slopes and along the floor of the glen
- Small groups of trees are associated with the farms and other buildings, and there is the occasional conifer shelter wood
- Late 18th/19th century improved fields, fenced and grazed, are interspersed with rough grazing and fields which are reverting to wetland and unimproved grassland. These tend to be on the south facing slopes in places well above the river
- Farms and individual houses are dispersed across the farmed land, on the terraces or higher ground above the floodplain
- The white painted Corgarff castle is a landmark building at the conjunction of Strath Don and the pass to the Lecht. It sits on an alluvial fan, surrounded by bright green improved fields
- From the east, the A939 sweeps through this landscape in long curves undulating with the gentle curvature of the landform before striking uphill in a series of switch back bends to the high pass at the Lecht
- The A939 in part strikes well away from the winding river, deviating from the route of the old military road

6.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- This landscape feels marginal in terms of agriculture, as many of the fields are interspersed with rough grazing, and former improved land is not being intensively farmed
- The striking colour contrast between the white painted Corgarff castle and its setting of bright green fields reinforces its 'pivotal' location within the valleys and its role as a landmark feature
- There are dramatic views of the strath from the elevated A939 where it begins to climb up to the pass towards the Lecht

6.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area forms a 'transition' between the more diverse and fertile lower reaches of Strath Don and the upland areas and high pass at the Lecht, and therefore has characteristics which reflect both these neighbouring character areas.

6.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The mixture of enclosed fields and rough grazing alternating across the floor of parts of the strath reflects its location as a transition between upland and lowland areas. The strategic placement of Corgarff castle at the conjunction of the strath and the pass to the Lecht within its setting of green fields, combine to create a striking landmark feature.



Fields on more gentle slopes, with heather moorland on the upper slopes



There is more woodland to the west of this character area

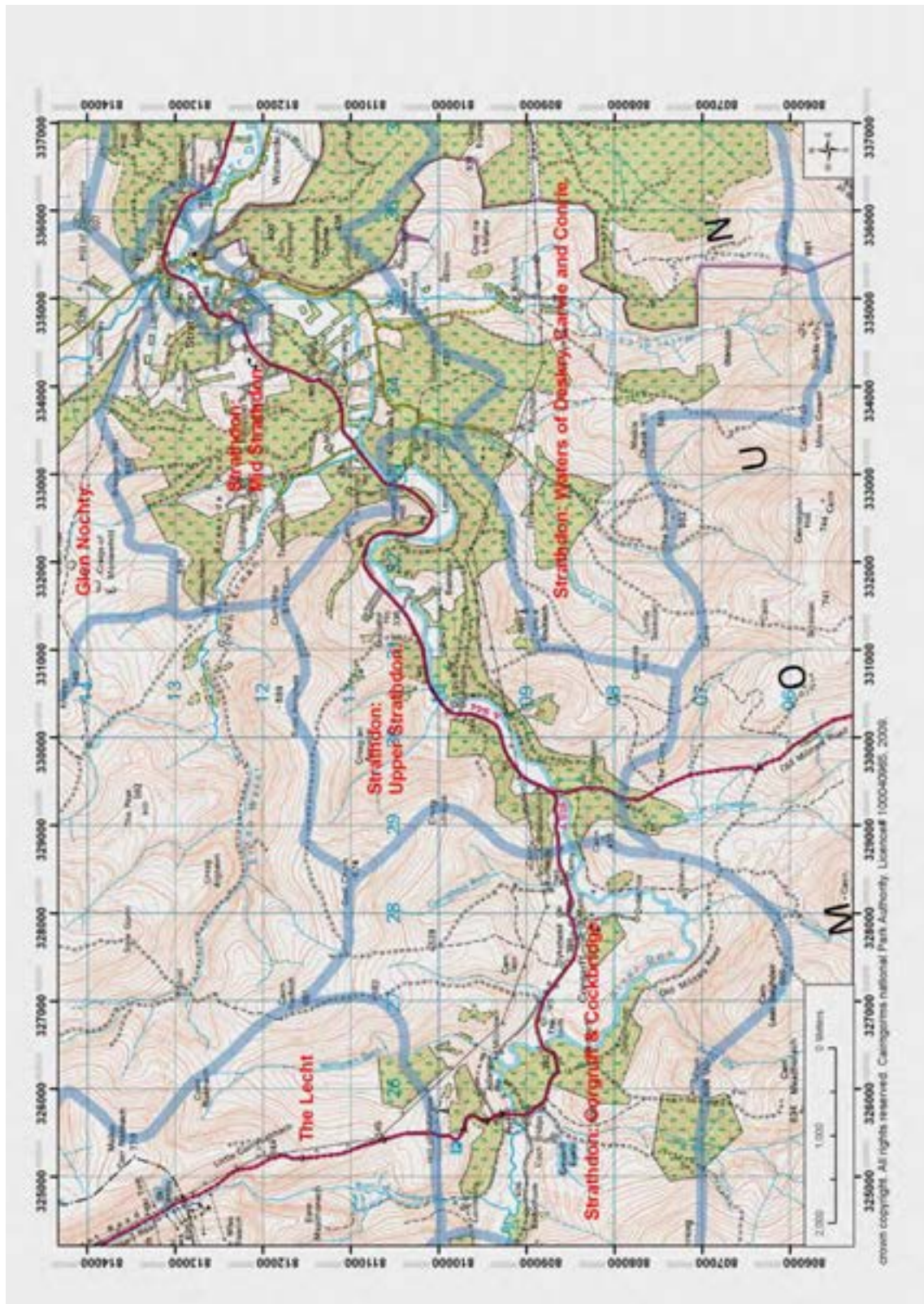


Corgarff castle surrounded by green fields



The road sweeps through the undulating land form. The farms are often sheltered by small groups of trees

6.3 Strathdon: **Upper Strathdon**



6.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- This narrow section of valley, a 'pass' carved by the River Don, winds broadly west/east between steep sided hills with rounded, often domed summits
- Bands of scree on some of the slopes have been created by glacial erosion exposing bands of bedrock which have subsequently been subject to frost weathering, resulting in rockfalls
- The steep valley sides stop abruptly at the edge of a narrow, very flat flood plain, although they also alternate with arcs of more gentle gradients along the length of the valley, creating a complex topography which reflects the underlying diverse lithology
- At Lonach Hill the River Don carves a fine, incised meander where the floodplain is contained within the higher amplitude bends of the valley
- The north facing slopes of this valley are covered with conifer forest, which often reaches down to the edge of the floodplain
- On the south facing slopes, the conifer woodland focuses around the narrowest sections of the 'pass', where the side slopes are steepest, and where again woodland comes down to the edge of the floodplain
- Occasional policy woodland features – such as the avenue at Skellater House – add some diversity to this landscape
- Late 18th/19th century improved fields, often enclosed by walls, occupy the more gentle gradients of the side slopes, regardless of aspect
- These small fields of grassland and some arable alternate with the woodland on the steeper slopes
- Most of the very level floodplain is also subdivided into small, fenced 18th/19th century improved fields, but these alternate with areas of wetland which are subject to frequent flooding
- Remarkably, there are a couple of farms located on the edge of the narrow floodplain, but otherwise, farms are sited on the gentle, farmed upper slopes, overlooking the strath. This part of the valley of the River Don is not heavily settled.
- At the narrowest sections of valley floor, the A944 hugs the very edge of the steeper slopes, right on the edge of the floodplain, where it has a stone retaining wall along the upside of the roadway

6.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The sense of winding through a narrow pass is reinforced by the dense conifer woodland

- There is a sequence of open farmed land associated with more gentle gradients alternating with woodland on steeper side slopes which is experienced when travelling through the valley
- The flat floodplain, and its abrupt juxtaposition with steep side slopes 'channels' views along the valley, although they are never far-reaching

6.3.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is very self contained, although it provides a sense of a 'pass' between the settled, diverse lower strath and the upper reaches of the River Don west of Corgarff.

6.3.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The drama of the flat floodplain framed by the steep valley sides is reinforced by the alternating sequence of woodland and farmland, a pattern which is closely allied to slope gradient. A similar alternating sequence of farmed land and wetland along the floodplain creates a further rhythmic pattern to this landscape.



Conifer woodland on the steeper slopes enclose the narrow, level floodplain



There are fields, framed by woodland, across the more gentle slopes, alternating with woodland on the steeper slopes

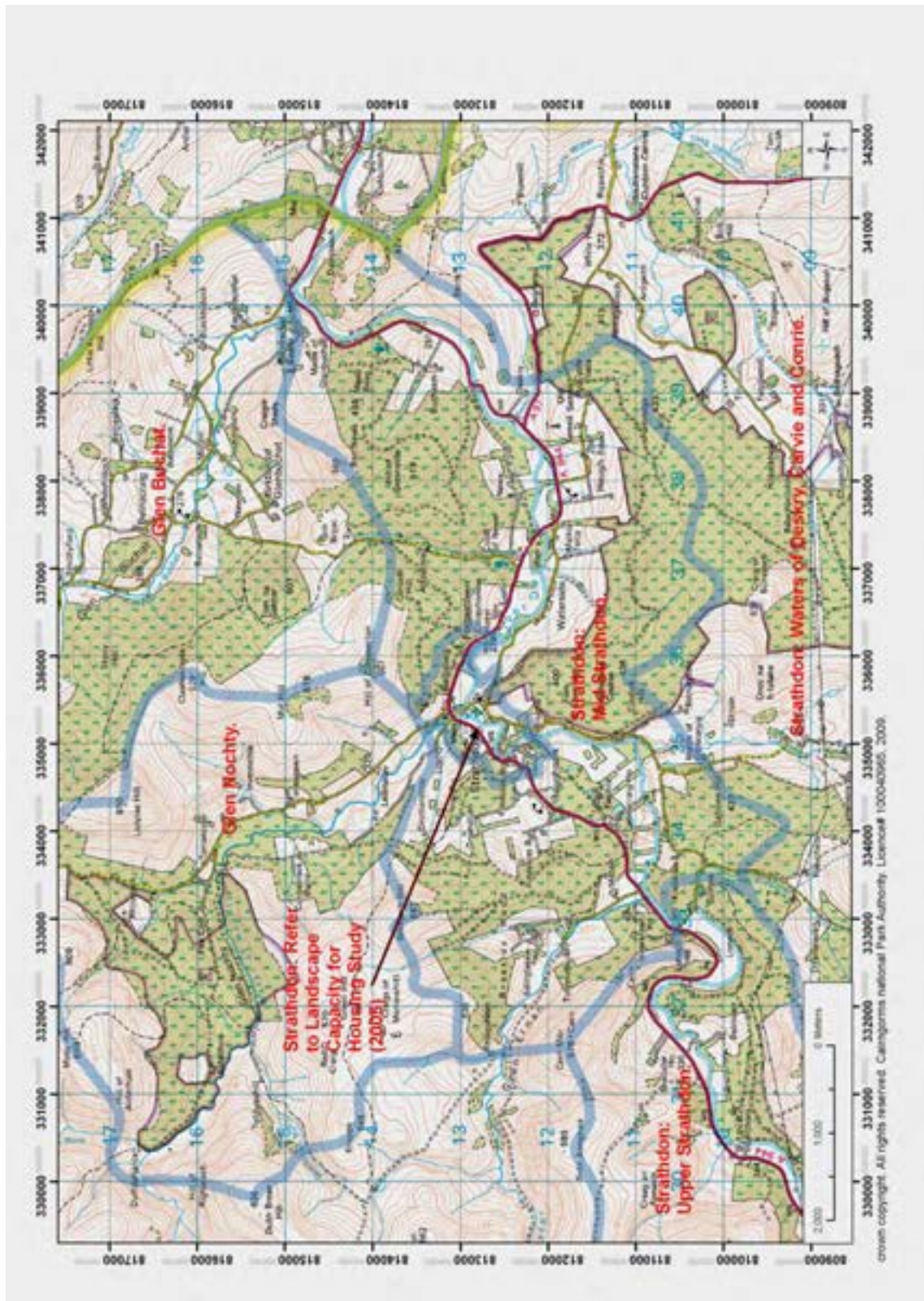


Scree created by frost weathering on bands of bedrock which have been exposed by glacial erosion



An avenue of mature broadleaves at Skellater

6.4 Strathdon: **Mid Strathdon**



6.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- This winding valley is relatively narrow, contained by gently sloping and rounded lower slopes beneath steeper, enclosing upper slopes
- Rounded hill summits and long ridges form the pronounced containment of the valley, with only the narrow-mouthed side glens occasionally breaching the valley sides
- The winding River Don meanders in long loops from side to side across the floodplain. This varies in width, lying between undulating slopes of glacial-fluvial deposit
- Extensive mixed conifer woodland covers most of the upper, steeper slopes, occasionally linked seamlessly to narrow shelter belts which reach down to the floor of the strath
- Several designed landscapes of policy woodland and planted features, including beech and lime in the species mix, avenues, occasional clumps of parkland trees on the floodplain and specimen trees, add to diversity
- These wooded designed landscapes associated with a number of estate mansions create a pattern of woodland on steep slopes alternating with farmland on gentle slopes along the sides of the strath
- Gaps in the woodland means that in places farmland extends well up the hill sides, with relatively small, late 18th/19th century improved fields on well drained and gently graded slopes, regardless of aspect. These are sometimes contained by walls
- The lower fields, some of which are quite large, enclose arable crops as well as grassland, but occasionally on the very highest slopes there is some reversion to more poorly drained, unimproved grassland
- The area is well settled. Four or five small linear settlements are located along the valley sides
- Loose clusters of estate and farm buildings are sited at intervals, often associated with the sites of now ruined castles. The architectural style of individual estates adds to the diversity of built structures
- Strathdon and Bellabeg are associated with the conjunction of glens combined with an ancient crossing point of the River, which is further marked by the striking pre-historic motte and more recent church. This pattern is repeated at the mouth of the Buchat
- Dispersed farms are often located on the upper slopes
- The A944 winds along this strath, following the sinuous river valley.
- All the roads are very tightly located against clearly defined 'breaks in slope', slightly elevated above the floodplain. Several have stone retaining walls along the upside of the roadway

6.4.2 *Landscape experience*

- The sinuous form of this strath creates a sense of 'intrigue', as when travelling along the length of the valley, the landscape is revealed only in small stages, and it is impossible to see the valley as a whole
- The roads wind through a sequence of woodland alternating with patches of open farmland which increases the sense of anticipation as the landscape is revealed and views change at each bend in the road and at every new open space
- The strath is very diverse, in large part due to the influence of the individual estates, some of which occupy very old sites, and have well established designed landscapes and many individual features

6.4.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is very self contained, with only occasional views into other character areas along side glens.

6.4.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

Small fields extend high up the smooth, undulating side slopes of the strath, reinforcing the sequence of open farmland alternating with enclosed woodland, some of which is associated with designed landscapes along the strath. Roads are firmly tucked into the winding 'break in slope', so that travelling through this strath reveals its sinuous form.



Rolling land form and gentle slopes support fields of grassland and arable land up the side slopes of the strath



Fields extend up higher slopes, although some are reverting to upland grassland and whin



Woodland, including shelterbelts and, on the level floodplain, 'roundels' of pine



A linear settlement – one of several – adjacent to the River Don, which is hidden within riparian woodland



The sequence of woodland and farmland along the glen



Walls around these fields, and some mature policy woodland

6.5 Strathdon: **Glen Nocht**



6.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- This steep sided glen is contained by low rounded hills and relatively even slopes divided by a series of small, quite deeply incised side valleys which are suspended above the main glen
- The steep side slopes frame dramatic river terraces along the floor of the main glen, and the narrow, V-shaped valley of the Water of Nocht where it branches west into the Ladder Hills
- The meandering Water of Nocht has carved river terraces into the deep deposit which fills this valley and which still fall away into the river after heavy rain
- The glen is heavily wooded, with conifer woodland over many of the side slopes, occasionally reaching down to the valley floor or stopping at the upper edge of the fields. It also extends over and closes around former fields in the narrow upper glens
- Small, fenced, late 18th/19th century improved fields, mostly under grass, lie across the more gentle gradients, particularly on the west facing slopes, and sit on top of the flat, well drained river terraces
- The floodplain of the river is narrow, framed by the terraces and occupied by wetland as well as grassland
- Dispersed farms are located prominently on the top of river terraces, or sit along the upper slopes, overlooking the mouths of the small, elevated side glens
- The roads are narrow, and are largely perched on the valley sides, elevated well above the river, except at the most northerly reaches, where it winds along the valley floor, hugging the slightly sinuous landform
- The 'motte' at Strathdon is a striking land mark feature at the foot of this glen

6.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The narrowness and containment of the glen is reinforced by the enclosure created by the extensive conifer woodland
- The river terraces are dramatic, and, with erosion still taking place, dynamic features along the valley floor
- The elevated roads offer fine views along the length of the glen and down to these features, as well as an elevated view of the dramatic 'motte'
- The farmed land offers some relief to the extent of woodland enclosure along this glen

6.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is relatively self contained and visually there is little relationship with any other character area.

6.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The elevated open views of the dramatic river terraces and the 'motte' are a striking contrast to the more densely wooded stretches of this glen. The consistent location of farms on either river terraces or at the mouths of side glens is a recognisable pattern.



Fields on the west facing slopes, with a farm located on the edge of a side valley



Woodland extends down to the upper edge of the fields, with a farm perched on the river terrace

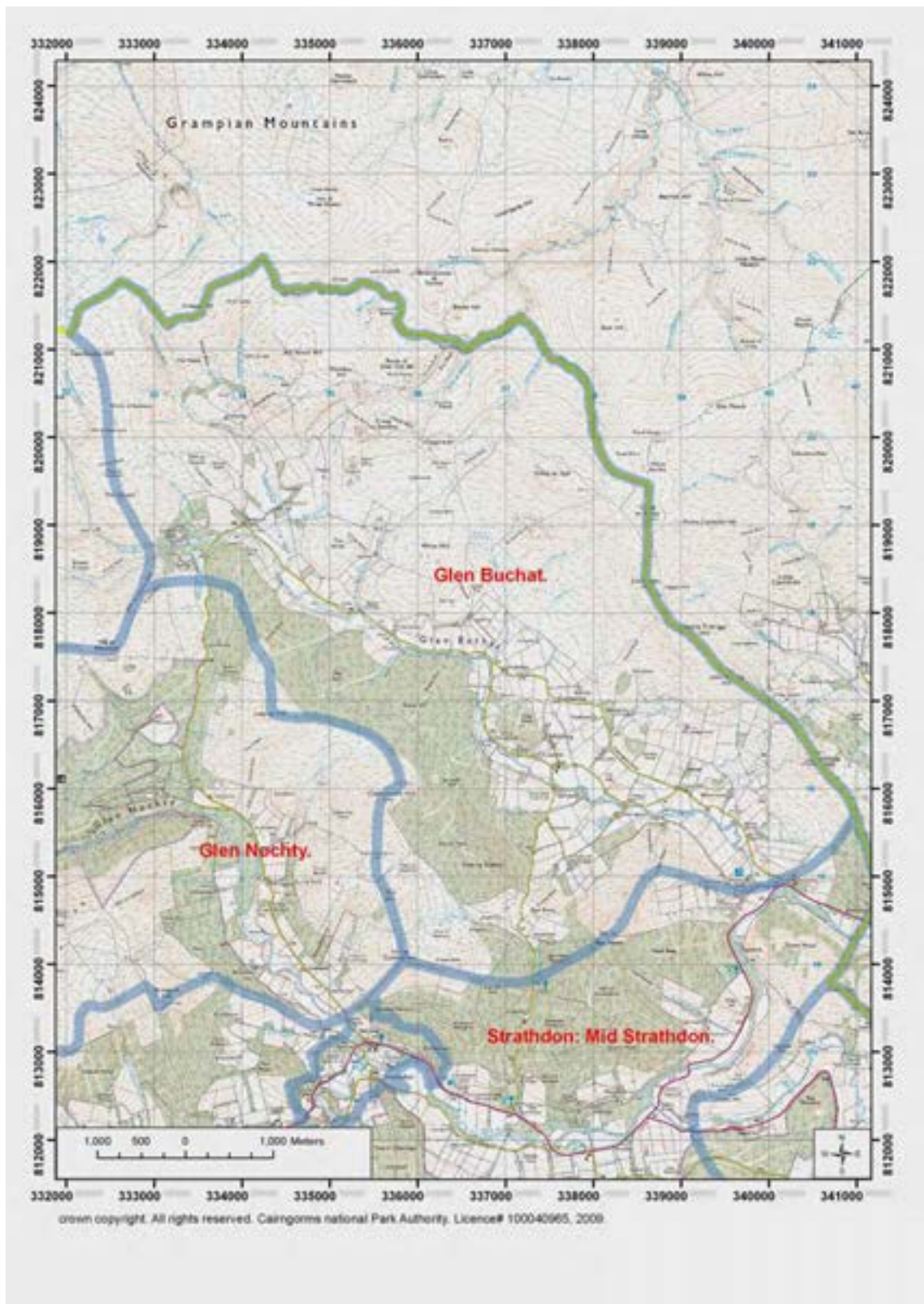


There is extensive conifer woodland in this glen



The Water of Nochty meanders through a narrow floodplain contained by dramatic river bluffs. The valley floor has been in filled by glacial deposits and then re-excavated.

6.6 Strathdon: **Glen Buchat**



6.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- The complex landform of this southeast/north west orientated glen is underpinned by a diverse lithology which shows very few signs of glacial erosion
- The wide glen is contained by low, smooth, rounded hill forms and undulating side slopes, and punctuated by small isolated hills
- The glen narrows part way up, to create a slightly steeper 'pass' linking the two wider sections of the glen. Here the river is contained by sloping ledges of bedrock covered by a thin layer of deposit between rounded hillsides
- There is extensive conifer woodland over the western hills, which occasionally extends down to the edge of the glen floor
- In addition, there are smaller conifer shelter woods across the floor of the strath, often associated with the small, individual hills, and sometimes along the sides of the Water of Buchat
- The eastern slopes are open, clad in heather moor with some upland grassland
- Numerous, straight-edged, small 18th/19th century improved fields, enclosed with walls or fences, extend across the whole width of the glen floor and up onto the gently graded side slopes and small hills
- Rich soils over basic igneous rocks underpin the southern part of the valley, and here the fields contain arable crops as well as grassland,
- The upper glen, on less rich bedrock, is more dominated by grassland and occasional rough grazing on lower slopes
- The many late 19th century farmsteads are dispersed across the glen, often located on higher slopes, with additional clusters of small settlement associated with river crossing points
- Areas of pre-improvement farming, with slight remains of buildings and shielings can be found on the open, unwooded south west facing slopes
- The northern head of the glen is marked by Glenbuchat Lodge, which is set in extensive conifer woodland, while the ruined Glenbuchat castle overlooks the mouth of the glen to the south
- There is a network of narrow public roads which criss-cross the wider parts of the glen, and link to an extensive network of estate and forestry tracks across the low hills on both sides of the glen

6.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- The complex landform of undulations, low hills and smooth interlocking ridges creates a small scale landscape

- The expanse of small fields, especially in the lower part of the glen, creates a colourful patchwork of diverse crops intermixed with small scale woodlands which complements the small scale land form features
- The contrast between the dark green conifer woodland on the north east facing slopes and the open, south west facing hill sides is pronounced
- The narrow, winding roads, which wriggle their way around the undulating topography, sometimes cross higher ridges, offering elevated views of the glen floor
- Although well settled, the area is slightly 'tucked away', and becomes more secluded especially towards the northern end of the glen

6.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained, with very little inter-visibility with adjacent character areas.

6.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The small scale of this landscape, created by the landform of a wide, undulating glen floor punctuated by individual hills, is further reinforced by the small size of the fields, the narrow winding network of roads and the small farms.



Low rounded hills across the wide floor of this lower part of the glen, with farmland and small shelter woods



Small fields contained by sloping ledges of bedrock, which are underneath a relatively thin layer of deposit, in the narrower part of the glen

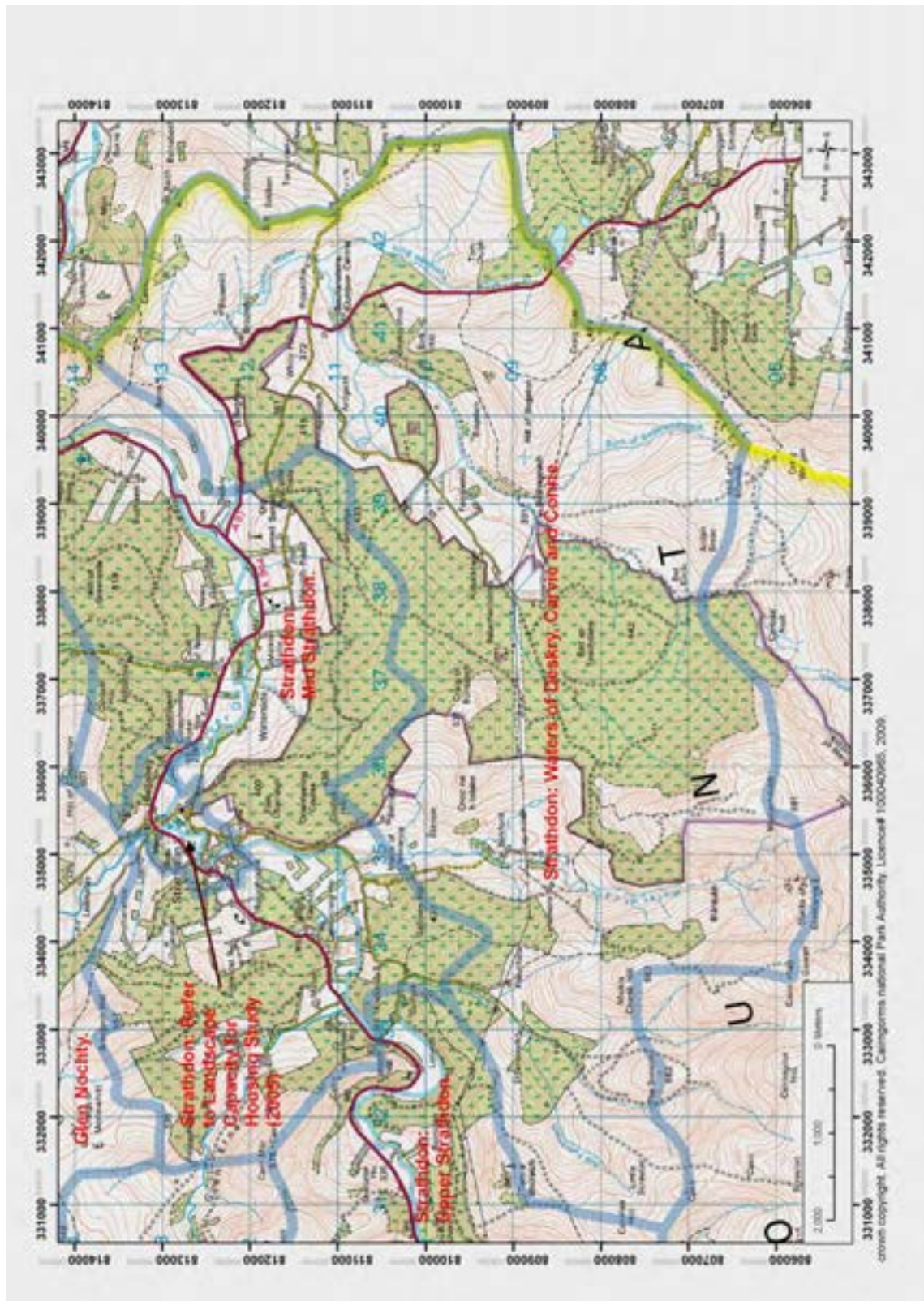


Some fields are enclosed with walls, and many are relatively small



Farms tucked in and around the small scale landform

6.7 Strathdon: Waters of Deskry, Glen Carvie and Glen Conrie



6.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- These three shallow valleys are elevated above the main valley of the Don, extending broadly south/south west from the main glen, contained by gently rounded hills and long ridges. This is a pre-glacial landscape, with little evidence of glacial erosion
- The watercourses meander tightly through narrow floodplains of wetland, although the lower courses are more incised as they drop down to the main valley. Occasional small pools and lochans can be found on the glen floors.
- There is extensive conifer forest on the side slopes and many of the hill tops, and smaller conifer woodlands and shelter woods in the glens
- There are small patches of pine woodland, often encountered as mature stands on hill tops, supplemented by more extensive regenerating pine across the moorland and grassland on the remaining unforested upper slopes
- There is extensive farmed land on the wide valley floors and gently graded lower slopes of these shallow glens
- Small, straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, some of which are enclosed with walls and some of which are now fenced, enclose grazing land with very occasional arable crops
- Frequent small, generally vernacular 19th century farmsteads, arranged in no particular pattern, but often sited to avoid the best land, are linked to the public road by short farm tracks
- There are several abandoned farmsteads within these glens, and some of the former improved fields are reverting to unimproved pasture
- The narrow, winding public roads are 'dead ends', petering out to become forest roads and estate tracks. Several have stone retaining walls along the upside of the roadway
- Although each glen is self contained, they are linked by a series of tracks and footpaths

6.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- The shallow landform generally limits enclosure, so that this landscape feels open, although the woodland creates some sense of containment, perhaps most obviously in Glen Conrie
- The small scale of the fields and frequency of the farmsteads creates an impression of a landscape of some historic integrity, in places less affected by later field improvements

- The glens feel secluded, although they are close to the Strath of the River Don, in part because of the narrow, dead end road which limits traffic

6.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

These glens are very self contained, with limited inter-visibility with other surrounding character areas, and a degree of detachment from Strathdon

6.7.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The secluded and marginal, upland character, and the apparent historic integrity of the small fields and pattern of dispersed but frequent late 18th/19th century farmsteads sets this area apart from the Strath of the River Don.



Wide, shallow valleys of farmed land



Watercourses in narrow, wet floodplains, and scattered pine regenerating on the upper slopes across moorland



Dispersed farmsteads, including abandoned buildings are scattered across the gentle slopes – hummocky deposit is revealed by the grassland in the foreground



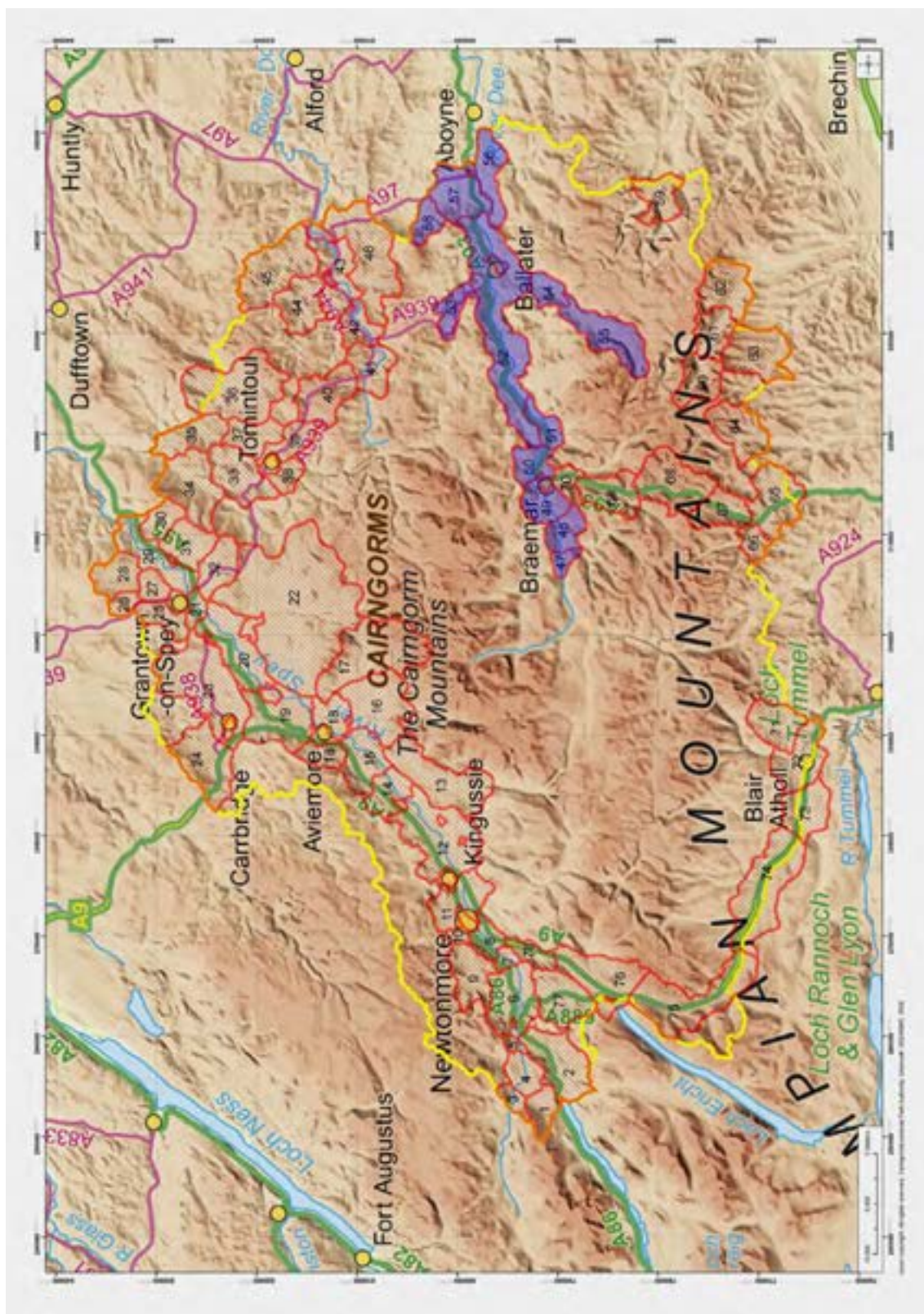
Stone retaining walls along the 'upside' of the narrow roads

7 DEESIDE, MUIR OF DINNET AND CROMAR

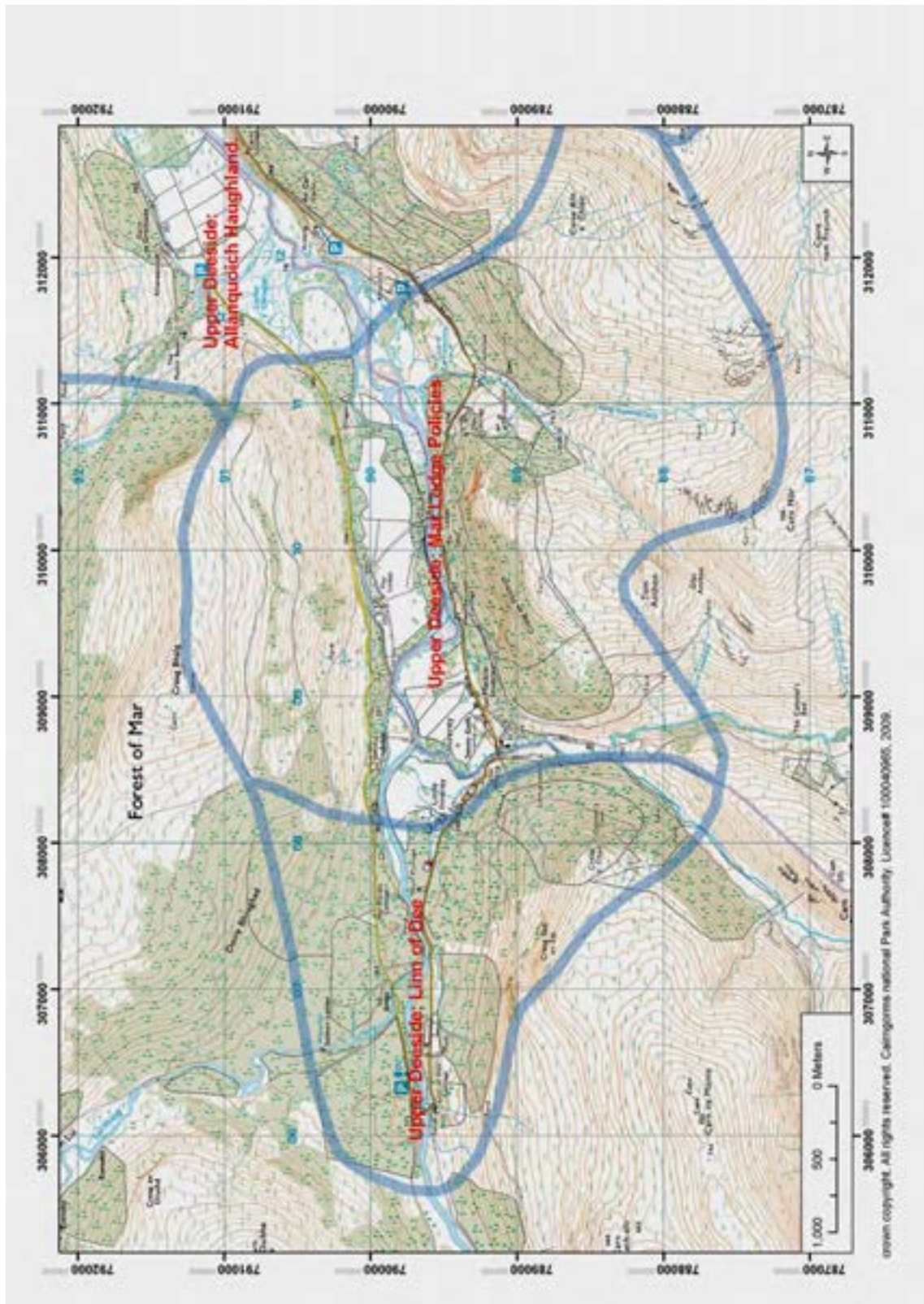
This section of the LCA includes the whole length of Deeside to Muir of Dinnet, then north to Cromar. This character assessment is presented as follows:

47. Upper Deeside: **Linn of Dee**
48. Upper Deeside: **Mar Lodge Policies**
49. Upper Deeside: **Allanaquoich Haughland**
50. Upper Deeside: **Invercauld**
51. Upper Deeside: **Invercauld Bridge to Inver**
52. Upper Deeside: **Inver to Cambus O' May**
53. Upper Deeside: **Glen Gairn**
54. Upper Deeside: **Lower Glen Muick**
55. The White Mounth: **Upper Glen Muick**
56. Upper Deeside: **Glen Tanar**
57. **Muir of Dinnet**
58. **Cromar Farmlands**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



7.1 Upper Deeside: Linn of Dee



7.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- This character area sits at the westerly end of Deeside, at the junction between Glen Lui and the main glen, just as the valley of the Dee narrows into a steep sided glen which then broadens again as it extends west into the interior of the Cairngorms
- The fan of glacial-fluvial and alluvial gravels at the mouth of the River Lui, framed by steep hillsides at the mouth of Glen Lui, spills onto the floor of the west/east orientated glen of the Dee, which is contained to the south by the steep hillside of Carn na Moine
- The River Dee thunders through a narrow, rocky gorge at the Linn of Dee to become a fast flowing, broad, but shallow, river with many small rapids and falls. Fractured rocky shelves and projecting boulders extend from its banks
- Conifer woodland at the mouth of Glen Lui extends across the hummocky terrain and then rises up the hillside of Doire Bhraghad
- Dense stands of mature, predominantly native pine cover the narrow floor of the glen and the steep banks of the River Dee. Small grassy glades occur within the woodland on the river banks
- A small number of individual estate cottages lie adjacent to the minor roads. The 19th century Linn of Dee Bridge forms an impressive gothic-arch of well-dressed granite.
- The narrow public road loops tightly over the bridge and provides access to an extensive network of well-used tracks leading north and west from upper Deeside into the mountain interior of the Cairngorms, as well through to Speyside and Atholl
- The Linn of Dee is a popular scenic destination attracting many visitors. A public car park is located within plantation woodland

7.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- A predominantly wooded area with a strong sense of containment. Overhanging mature pine and larch accentuate the intimate scale of the Linn of Dee where the focus is the dramatic rocky gorge and pounding water of the Dee
- This area lies towards the edge of the high Cairngorm plateau with its remote upland landscape of the upper Dee and Glen Geldie to the west.

7.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The strong enclosure of this wooded character area limits the influence of adjacent landscapes although long views are possible into the broad, open upland strath of the upper Dee to the west.

7.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The River Dee is a key focus, lying close to the public road, and dramatically funnelled through a rocky gorge. This area lies at the transition between settled Deeside and the more remote uplands and interior glens to the west and north.



Woodland encloses the narrowing glen of the Dee west of Mar Lodge



Extensive regeneration of pine on the hill slopes

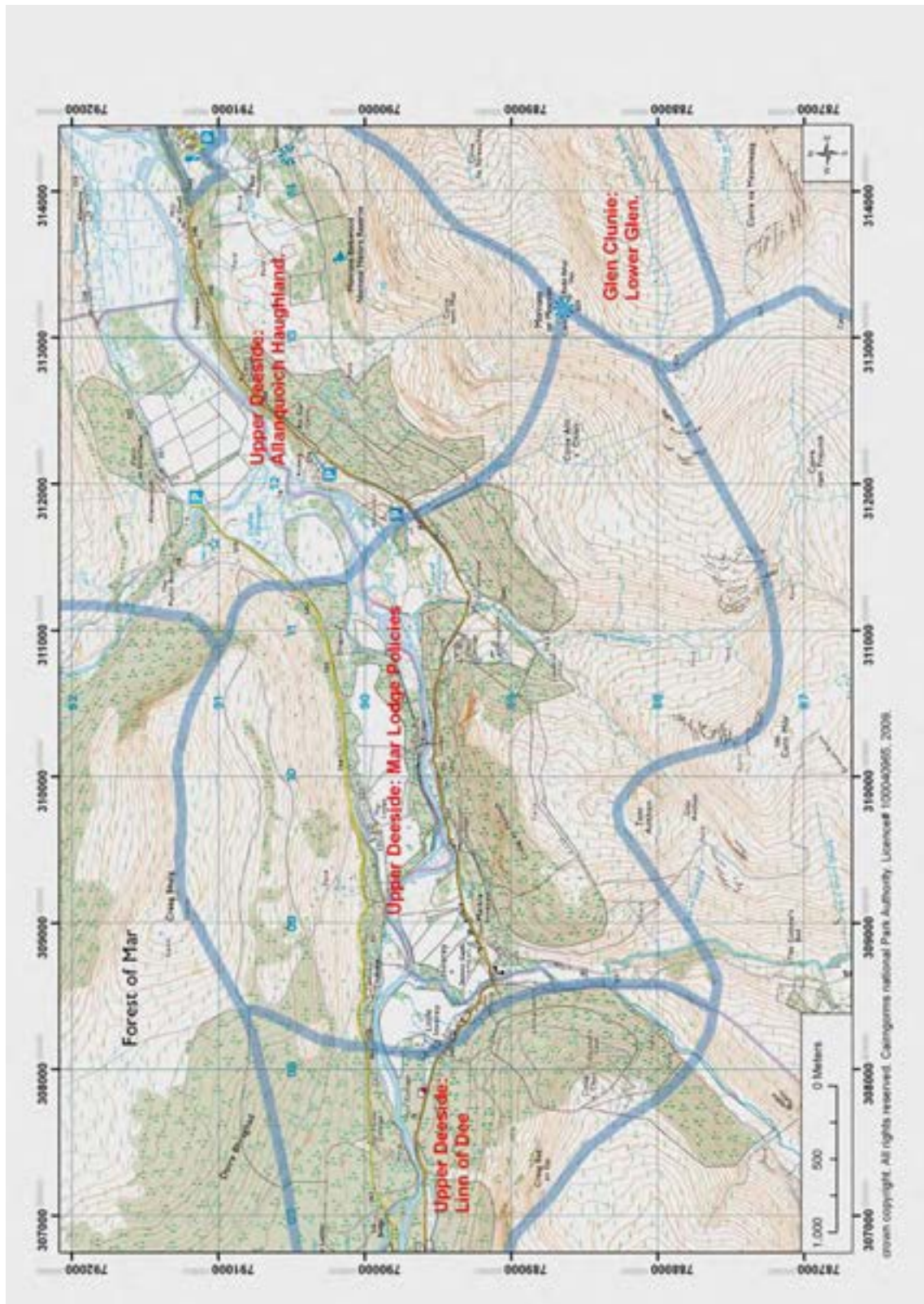


The dramatic deep chasm of the Linn of Dee



The Gothic style bridge of the Linn of Dee

7.2 Upper Deeside: **Mar Lodge Policies**



7.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- The policies of the late 19th century Mar Lodge occupy this section of the Dee valley, a wide floodplain of river worked deposit contained by hill slopes which, especially on the south side, have been steepened and roughened by glaciers
- The River Dee gently meanders through the parkland and pastures of this area. Gravel banks, shingle bars and braided reaches are increasingly a feature of the river in the east of this character area
- Open parkland extends across the flat valley floor and is punctuated by occasional specimen and clumps of trees, many of these recently rejuvenated by new planting. Avenue planting of lime, Douglas Fir and mature larch line the sweeping drive to the Lodge
- Fine specimens of mature larch and spruce occur amongst rocky outcrops on the hill slopes of Creag an Fhithich which contain the valley to the south
- The openness of the valley floor continues west of the Mar Lodge parkland and long narrow improved pastures extend across the flat alluvial fan of fertile ground at the confluence of the Ey Burn with the Dee
- This junction of glens is also the focus of settlement, with the small linear settlement of Inverey extending either side of the mouth of the narrow side glen, and the remains of Inverey Castle, a 17th century laird's house, on the floodplain below
- There is a less regular field pattern centred around a couple of estate houses associated with the shorter glen of the Corriemulzie burn
- Mar Lodge, originally built in the late 1890s, with its distinctive half-timbered style and red tiled roof, forms a focus within its parkland setting, visible in long views from the public road to the east. Victoria Bridge continues the tradition of ornate white painted bridges which provide key foci along the Dee
- The narrow public road sits squeezed between the foot of wooded slopes of Creag an Fhithich and the River Dee. Extensive estate tracks provide access for walkers and cyclists to the mountains north, south and west of the River Dee

7.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The artifice of Mar Lodge and its designed landscape contrast with the dramatic character of the mountain setting
- Glimpses up the glens, for example north to Beinn a Bhuird provide a reminder of the relative proximity of the mountain interior

- The Mar Lodge policies add to the diversity of experience when travelling on the minor public road west of Braemar, contrasting with the strongly contained wooded landscape of the Linn of Dee and the open wetlands, natural meanders and pasture around Allanaquoich to the east

7.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

Although this character area is generally contained, there are glimpsed views to the high mountains north and south of Deeside.

7.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The area is distinctive for its designed landscape features which are highly visible from the minor public roads. A rich combination of extensive parkland, ornamental plantings, native and managed woodlands and 19th/20th century buildings contrast with the dramatic and increasingly remote setting of uplands and the high Cairngorm Plateau.



Long views to Mar Lodge and its designed landscape contained by steep slope



Linear flat pastures stretching across the floodplain and low terraces behind the settlement of Inverey

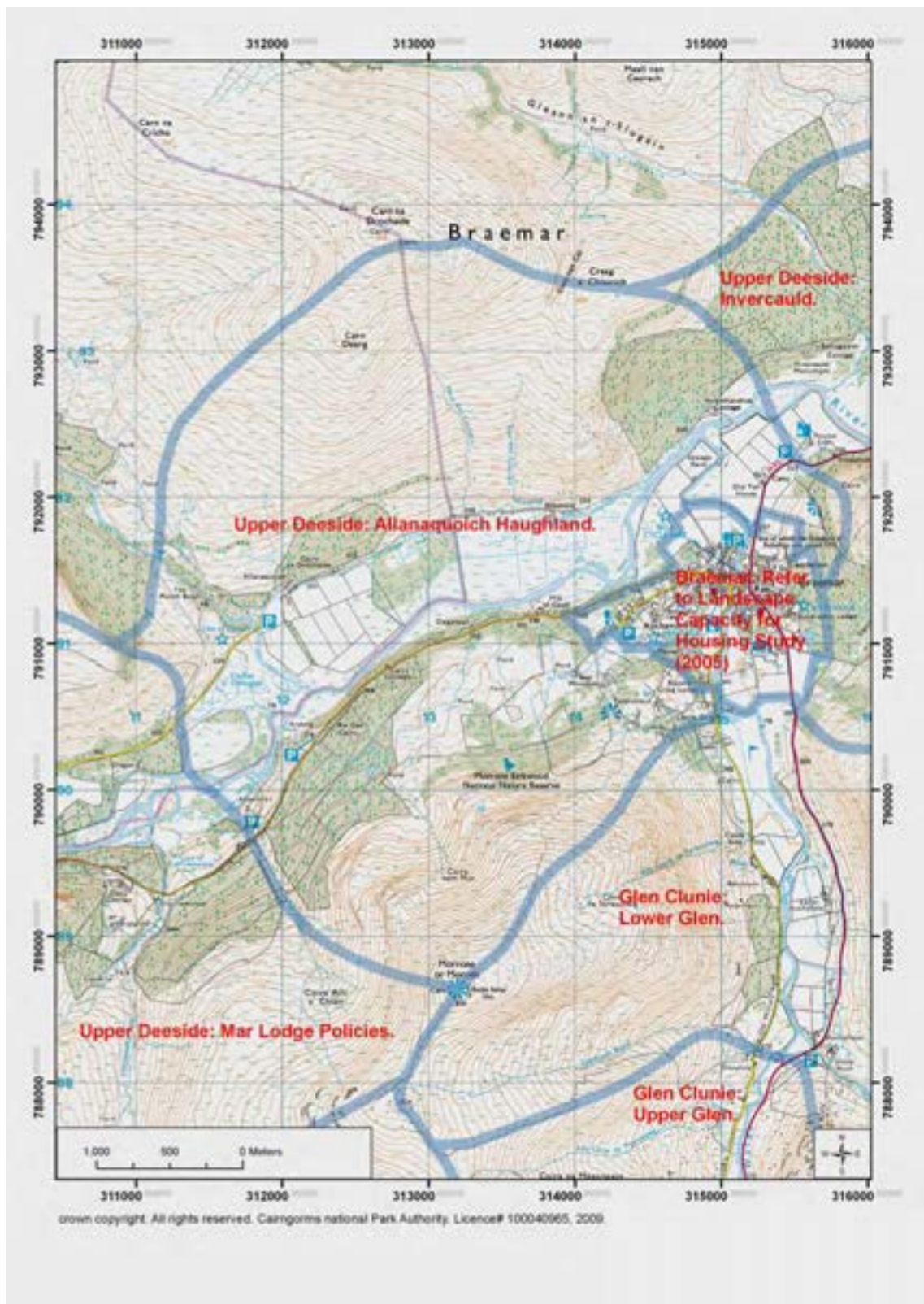


The ornate Victoria Bridge over the Dee at the entrance to Mar Lodge



The late 19th century Mar Lodge set within parkland

7.3 Upper Deeside: **Allanaquoich Haughland**



7.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- Bounded by the pivotal hill of Morrone or Morven at the junction of Glen Clunie and Deeside to the south and Carn na Drochaide to the north, this is where Glen Quoich joins the valley of the Dee
- The complex slopes of Morrone (Morven), which have been steepened and roughened by glacial erosion, rise above extensive slope deposits which sit on a rock bench elevated above the floodplain
- The broad, uniformly flat flood plain forms a sharp juxtaposition with the steep slopes which contain the trench-like inner valley
- The River Dee has a wide, meandering channel in this area. It is edged by gravel bars and small isolated pools. Numerous linear drainage channels criss-cross the valley floor
- The Quoich Water tumbles through the gorge of the Linn of Quoich before dividing into a braided channel where it crosses the valley floor to meet the Dee. These are conspicuous in this open landscape
- In the west the glen floor is largely open with extensive boggy, unimproved pastures. Areas of wetland and open birch and willow scrub increasingly cover the valley floor towards the confluence of the Dee and the Quoich
- Rectilinear 18th/19th century improved fields, south of the settlement of Allanaquoich, extend across the floodplain, contrasting with the more naturalistic pattern of the wetland. At Allanmore, formerly drained fields have already reverted to wetland
- The containing hill slopes to the north are covered with heather moorland with sporadic deciduous woodlands and coniferous plantation on lower slopes.
- Extensive birch woodlands cover the lower slopes of Morrone (Morven) to the south
- Allanaquoich, a complex of various white-painted former farm buildings, forms a prominent feature on the north side of the Dee
- A number of individual cottages and houses and the narrow public road are elevated on a steep terrace set above the floodplain
- There are several laybys created from the loops of an earlier road

7.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- There are striking views from the elevated public road across this area, and down onto the floodplain, where the openness of the extensive wetlands and pastures can be appreciated.

- The braided reaches of the dynamic Quoich Water are particularly prominent, and reinforce the sense that natural forces still have an important role in shaping this landscape
- These views also stretch to Mar Lodge and its designed landscape which provides a distinct contrast to this character area

7.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

There is inter-visibility between the Mar Lodge Policies and this area particularly in elevated views from the public road. Glimpsed views are also possible up Glen Quoich to Beinn a'Bhuird in the high Cairngorm mountains, south and south east to Lochnagar.

7.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The area is distinctive for the openness, the extensive scale, and the dynamic, semi-natural character of its wetlands, braided reaches of river and pasture and is unlike anywhere else in Upper Deeside.



Managed pine woodlands covering the south-facing hill slopes which delimit the haughs



Flat drained pastures and wetlands have an open and expansive character

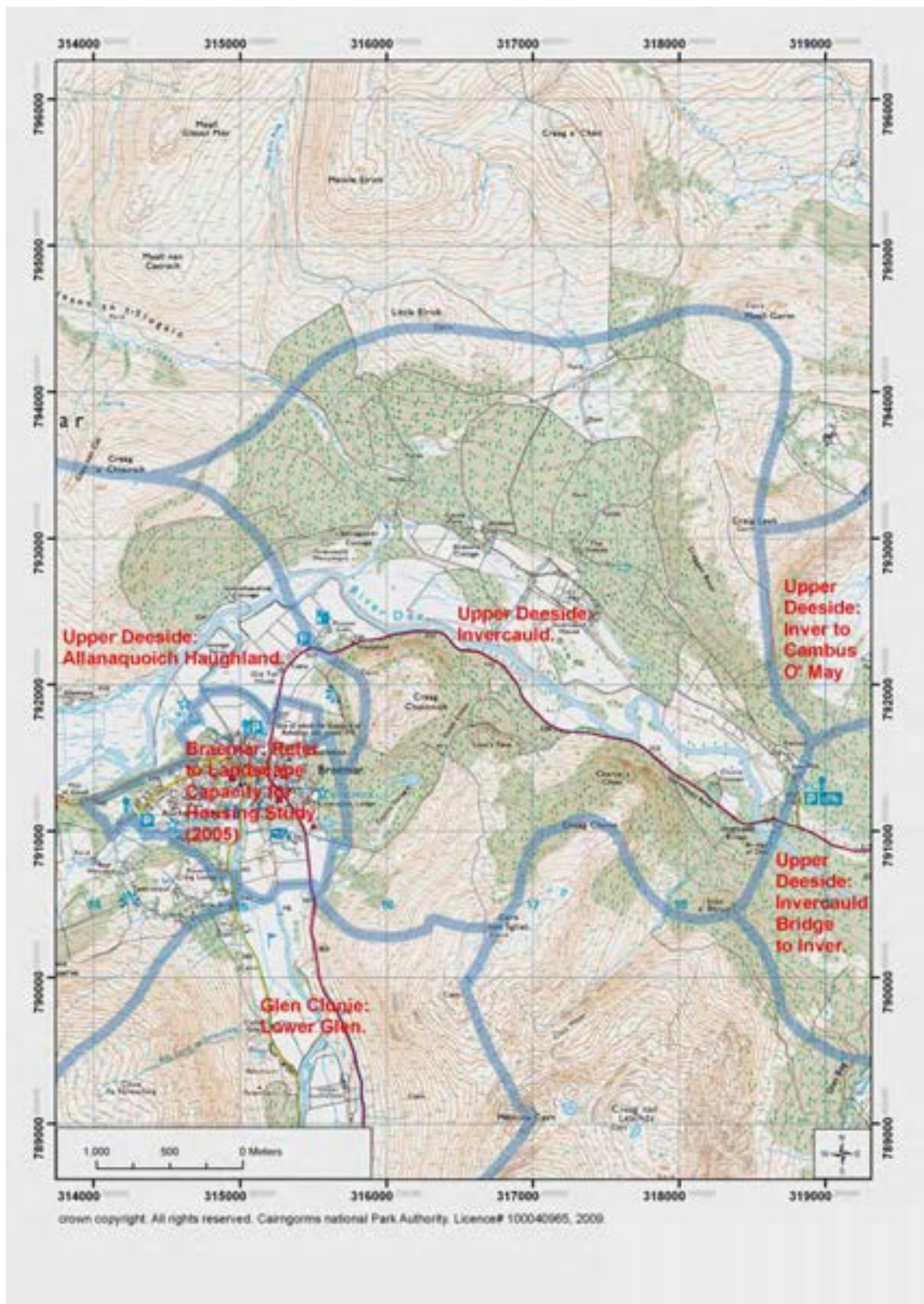


Braided reaches of the River Quoich in the middle of the haugh as it joins the Dee in the foreground



Glimpsed views to Beinn a Bhuird through Glen Quoich from the public road

7.4 Upper Deeside: Invercauld



7.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- The valley of the Dee swings round the small, craggy-topped conical quartzite hill of Creag Choinnich, a prominent feature at the junction between Glen Clunie and Deeside, to orientate northwest/south east
- Upper hillsides of exposed rock, particularly on the south side where there are large truncated spurs, were steepened and roughened by glacier activity
- Glaciers moving down Glen Clunie and converging with those along the Dee crowded towards the 'pinch point' of erosion through a resistant rock bar near Invercauld bridge. This resulted in major glacial erosion, forming cliffs and crags and the Dubh Clais mlt water channel in the granite on the southern flank of the valley
- These steep rock slopes contain the wide valley, with extensive glacial-fluvial deposits along the edges of the floodplain and forming a strong pattern of hummocks and terraces on the valley floor
- The River Dee meanders sluggishly across the gently undulating broad floodplain and is edged by snaking gravel banks
- This is an extensively forested area with a mix of managed conifer woodland and more naturalistic native pine woodland on the hill sides
- 18th century Invercauld House, refashioned in the Victorian period, is set on a broad terrace above the Dee
- The house is a key focus in the extensive designed landscape, developed after the Jacobite rising. It overlooks parkland of informal clump and roundel plantings of larch, beech and occasional specimen trees, generally planted on small knolls and terraces
- A number of follies and monuments form part of this designed landscape. Natural features such as the 'Lion's Face', a craggy rock face to the south of the A93, have been accentuated by planting of larch and pine to form an 'eyecatcher' in views
- The largely 17th century Braemar Castle is sited on a knoll close to the A93 and enclosed by trees. Its medieval site is located at the focal point between Glen Clunie and Deeside
- The A93 hugs the foot of steep hill slopes south of the Dee. Its sinuous route passes through an alternating sequence of woodland and open space, revealing views of Invercauld House and its designed landscape
- An extensive network of estate tracks provides access for walkers and cyclists in this area

7.4.2 *Landscape experience*

- From the A93, there are views of Invercauld House seen across a foreground of extensive parkland and contained by a backdrop of native and managed pinewood
- The openness of this landscape character area contrasts with the narrowing of the valley and dense woodland to the east
- Invercauld bridge, where the valley narrows to a 'pinch point', is a well defined threshold between two character areas along the Dee

7.4.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is fairly self-contained although some inter-visibility occurs with the settlement of Braemar and the Allanaquoich Haughlands where the landscape is more open in the west. The openness of this area contrasts with dense woodland to the east, and the parkland contrasts with the more naturalistic wetlands to the west.

7.4.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

Invercauld House and its policies make a highly visible contribution to the wider character of Upper Deeside where designed landscape and late Victorian architecture is a distinctive feature. Here, the rich combination of parkland and built features is enhanced by the backdrop of native and managed pinewoods on hill slopes which contain the valley.



Invercauld policies seen from Creag Choinnich



Parkland backed by the sheer wooded craggy hills which enclose the designed landscape to the south

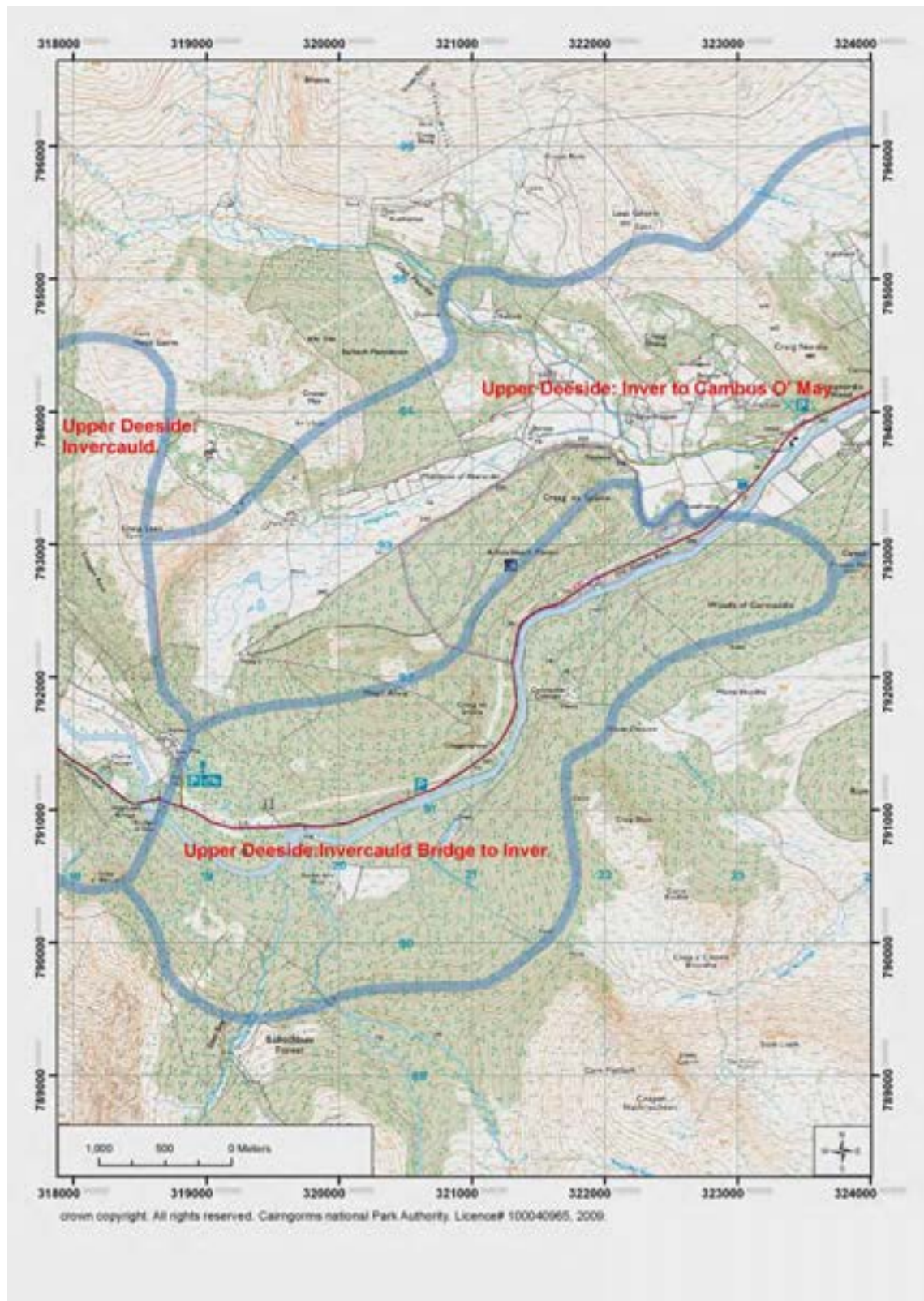


The floodplain with planting on glacial-fluvial hummocks in the middle ground of this photograph



Invercauld House and its designed landscape are prominent in views from the A93

7.5 Upper Deeside: Invercauld Bridge to Inver



7.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- The Dee valley is constrained by steep granite hill slopes east of Invercauld Bridge. The valley floor is often narrow, broadening only where alluvial outwash from rivers in side valleys join the Dee
- Meall Alvie, a curving elongated hill, contains the valley to the north while the southern hills form an arc of rocky summits rising from more gentle slopes south of the river
- The River Dee swings in a series of curves to orientate south west/north east. It is broad and fast flowing, the meanders alternating with straight stretches edged by occasional rocks and boulders
- Conifer woodland covers much of this character area, extending along the floor of the valley, over low hills and up into the side glens
- Scots pine trees, in thinned plantations, are notable for their straight, tall form and even spacing
- The gnarled spreading trunks of older pine feature along river banks, interspersed with birch, larch and rowan
- Only sporadic, small pockets of grassland occur within this predominant woodland; these mainly lie adjacent to the Dee.
- This area is very sparsely settled with just occasional estate cottages set in woodland
- The A93 is located very close to the River Dee through this area, although there is often woodland between the road and the river
- An extensive network of estate tracks is located through the native pine woodland of Ballochbuie Forest on the south side of the Dee.
- A white suspension bridge provides access for walkers and cyclists over the Dee to this area

7.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The stands of tall, straight pine are an interesting feature seen in close proximity from the A93. The combination of the comparatively straight stretch of road and river and upright trees gives a simple and ordered visual effect, yet an imposing experience, when travelling through this area
- This strongly enclosed wooded character area contributes to the pattern of light/shade and openness/enclosure experienced from the A93 within Upper Deeside
- A strong sense of seclusion and naturalness can be experienced in the extensive native pine woodland within Ballochbuie Forest to the south of the Dee

7.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This is a strongly contained forested landscape with no inter-visibility with adjacent character areas.

7.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This is a very simple landscape with few components. The extensive native and well-managed pine woodlands give it a strong sense of order.

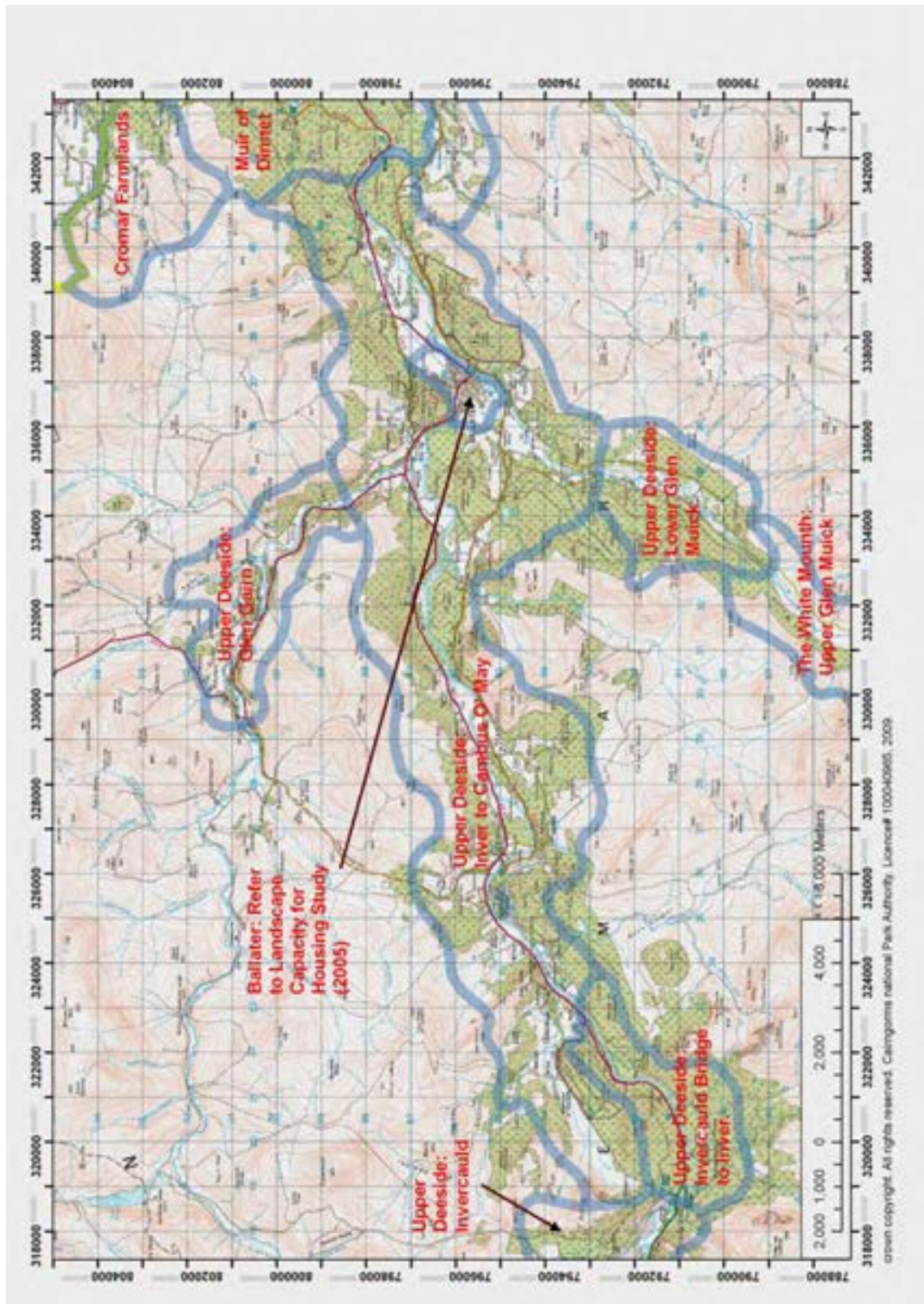


The River Dee runs a straight and even course and is fringed by more naturalistic woodland of mature pine and birch



Managed stands of pine lend a distinctive character to the woodlands seen from the A93

7.6 Upper Deeside: Inver to Cambus O' May



7.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- The complex terrain of isolated hills, irregular ridges and numerous long side glens, reflects the more diverse composition of the metamorphic and basic igneous bedrock which has been subject to varied degrees of erosion
- The hills, like Meall Alvie, Craig Gowan, Creag Ghiubhais and the Knock represent large roches moutonees and typically have crags on their eastern side. These tend to create occasional narrower 'pinch points' along the relatively wide valley
- The River Dee meanders in broad loops through a floodplain which varies in width, contained by side slopes of hummocky, glacial-fluvial deposit
- Managed pine woodlands cover the side slopes and isolated hills. The woodland occasionally merges together to cover the valley floor, often coinciding with areas of hummocky fluvial deposits. Oak woodlands occur close to Ballater
- Wood pasture and extensive birch covers hummocky lower side slopes and the upper slopes of the side valleys of Glen Gairn and Glen Feardar.
- Late 18th/19th century improved fields, often straight edged and fenced, woodlands and the Dee are inter-woven within this character area. Improved pasture and arable fields fill the flood plain where it is broad.
- Improved pastures on side slopes are often enclosed by stone dykes, while small pockets of slightly irregular, pre-improvement field boundaries are visible within Glen Feardar and Glen Felagie
- This is a relatively well-settled landscape with small settlements such as Inver, Crathie and the larger planned settlement of Ballater. Farms and estate cottages are dispersed throughout the area, although generally avoiding the floodplain
- Balmoral Castle, the site of a medieval stronghold is just visible above dense woodland. Policy woodland of exotic conifers and purple beech contribute to the setting of Balmoral
- Monuments mark the top of focal rounded hills around this very extensive designed landscape
- There is a strong estate influence in the style of buildings resulting in a distinctive architectural integrity with little new building evident
- Other, smaller designed landscapes surround the original sites of 17th century, or earlier, lairds' strongholds at Glenmuick, Monaltrie, Birkhall and Abergeldie

- Public roads avoid the floodplain, often sitting tucked against the break in slope. East of the Crathie, where the valley broadens, there are roads either side of the Dee. South of the Dee the road is quiet and narrow, contrasting with the busy A93
- Public car parks and tourist signage is prominent around Balmoral. The Deeside Way and designated cycle ways are aligned within this character area

7.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a rhythmic pattern in this landscape, of defined hills rising out of the floodplain and farmland alternating with woodland along the floor of the valley
- The River Dee is enhanced by long views to the mountainous landscape of the White Mounth from more open areas to the north
- Historic estates, such as Balmoral, Monaltrie, Glenmuick, Birkhall and Abergeldie are largely hidden from view although wooded policies, boundary walls and occasional visible turrets offer tantalising glimpses of what lies within, but the influence of estate architecture and land management is extensive

7.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained although views of the White Mounth are possible through southwards the side valley of Glen Muick.

7.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This mix of broadleaved, native and managed pine woodlands, open farmland and settlement is diverse and complex, reflecting the opportunities provided by the varied terrain. The overwhelming estate influence, evident in buildings and also in the composition and management of policy woodlands and farms gives a strong visual integrity to the character area.



Visitor facilities at Crathie



Woodlands occasionally extend across the valley floor although

are more dominant on the containing hills



Flat pastures along the Dee, backed by bands of birch on hummocky lower slopes



Defined rounded hills protrude onto the flat valley floor and are mainly wooded

7.7.1 *Landscape character*

- This narrow and deeply enclosed glen branching to the north of Deeside near Ballater, extends to Gairnshiel Lodge where the valley opens out with more gentle elevated side slopes
- The influence of glacial erosion is less marked than in the main valley of Deeside, and the winding pre-glacial form of the glen is still apparent
- Nevertheless, bands of scree on some of the slopes have been created by glacial erosion exposing bands of bedrock which have subsequently been subject to frost weathering, resulting in rockfalls
- The River Gairn winds along a narrow valley floor with small arcs of floodplain alternating either side, constrained by protruding hill spurs
- The steep hill slopes are largely covered with extensive birch woodland. Juniper forms clumps over open grassy slopes while drifts of native pine and birch cling to the scree slopes below Craig of Prony and the Hill of Candacraig.
- Late 18th/19th century improved fields, their rectilinear shapes enclosed by both stone walls and more recent fences, extend across the floodplains along the length of the glen
- These fields of improved pasture also extend up side slopes of rounded landform, particularly where side valleys meet the main glen
- Long slopes of south facing, fenced, broadly rectilinear late 18th/19th century improved fields extend more widely at the top of the glen, where slopes become less steep and the valley broadens
- Small farms are sited on slightly raised ground on the valley floor or in elevated locations at the junction with narrow side valleys
- The influence of policy woodland and estate architecture, so characteristic of Deeside, increasingly diminishes up the glen as planting is less diverse and buildings are more plain in style
- The A939 sits on a narrow terrace, elevated above the floodplain, becoming increasingly steep and windy mid-glen
- An elevated, dead end minor road east of the river offers long views

7.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- Glen Gairn has a very different character to Deeside because of its small scale and absence of designed landscape features
- Glen Gairn forms a transition between Deeside and the sparsely populated north eastern uplands of the Park

7.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The strong topographical containment of this landscape limits inter-visibility with adjacent character areas.

7.7.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The narrowness and enclosure of Glen Gairn contrasts with broader straths and valleys elsewhere in the Park. Small bright green fields associated with the dispersed compact farms are frequently surrounded by semi-natural woodland, moorland and rougher pasture, accentuating the intimate scale and semi-upland character of this glen.



Mixed woodlands cover the steep hill slopes which contain the lower narrower reaches of this glen



Small farms are often located at the foot of the narrow side glens which cut into Glen Gairn above sloping pastures



Rounded landform where a side valley meets Glen Gairn, are the focus for bright green pasture and a farm steading



Walls delineate these rectangular fields

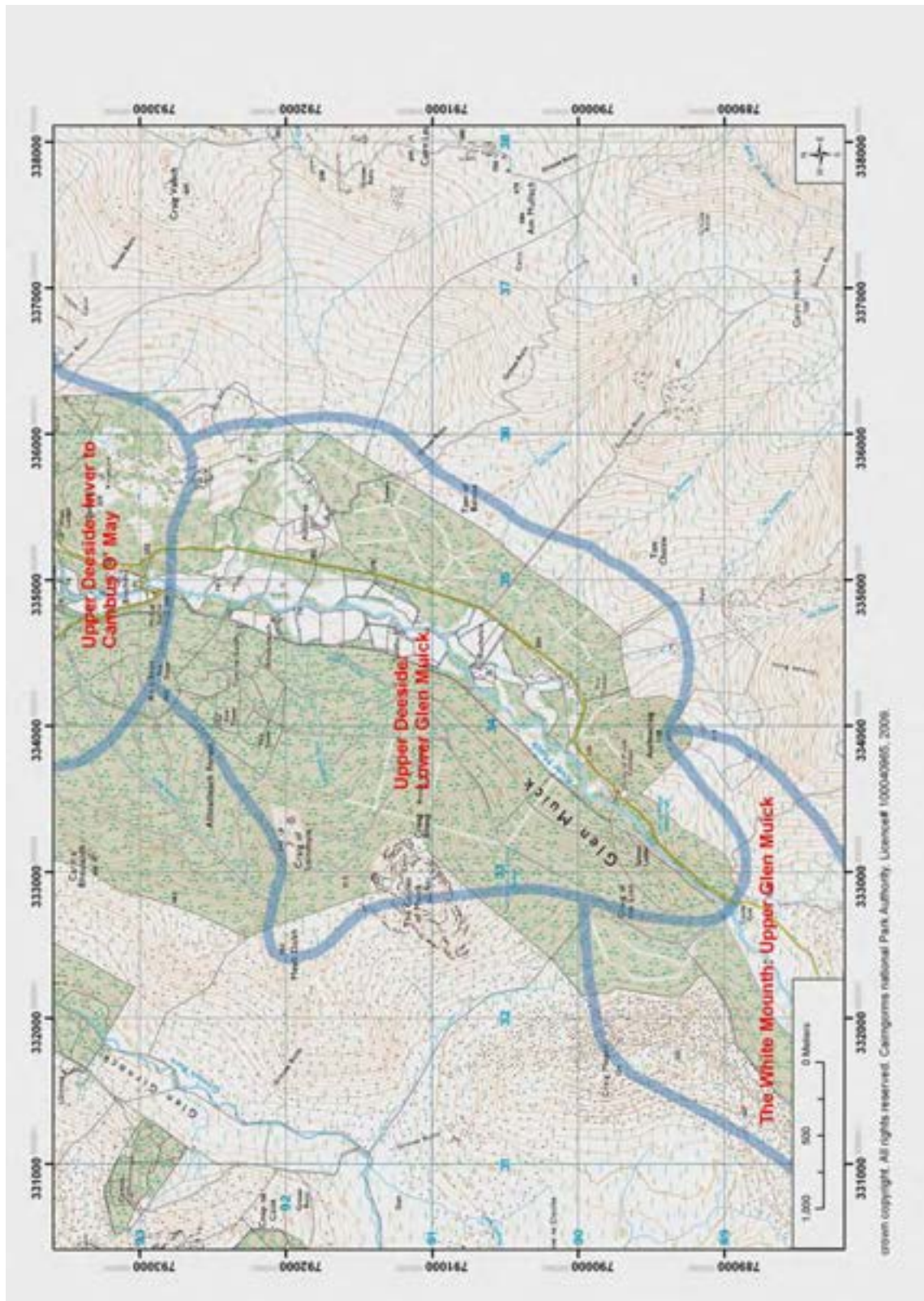


The broader upper valley, with improved fields and sometimes abandoned farm steadings on south facing slopes



Benches of scree created by frost shattering of exposed bedrock on the upper slopes at the southern end of the valley

7.8 Upper Deeside: **Lower Glen Muick**



7.8.1 *Landscape character*

- Lower Glen Muick extends south-south-west from Deeside at Birkhall, where the broad alluvial fan at the confluence of the Muick with the Dee is incised to form a trench-like valley which is contained by steep wooded slopes
- The valley floor is gently undulating in the north, with a narrow floodplain contained within glacial-fluvial deposit at the base of the steep slopes
- Numerous tributaries cut down the side slopes to join the River Muick as it winds its way through farmland, fringed by birch and willow riparian woodland
- The hill slopes which contain the glen are predominantly covered with conifer woodlands of pine, spruce and larch. The distinctive pointed peaks of The Coyles of Muick are exposed above this woodland
- Birch woodland increasingly dominates the glen floor to the south, and native woodland extends up the hill side to the north east
- The glen narrows further upstream to form a steep-sided 'V' shaped gorge, the Linn of Muick. The river falls dramatically over a rocky ledge to a deep pool at this point; a concrete fish ladder is sited on its western bank.
- Straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, enclosed by stone dykes and more recent fences, are arranged along the flat floodplain, sometimes tucked against the slight hummocks and woodland
- Small farmsteads are located on the floor of the glen, but are raised above the flood plain
- A single-track public road passes through Glen Muick and is well used by people accessing the mountains of the White Mounth and the Loch Muick area. It is particularly narrow and overhung with woodland at the Linn of Muick, reinforcing the sense of 'pinchpoint' in the glen

7.8.2 *Landscape experience*

- Lower Glen Muick feels sparsely settled and relatively tranquil
- Although the Linn of Muick is not visible or easily accessible from the minor public road to upper Glen Muick, the sound of pounding water can be heard. The engineered structure of the fish ladder appears incongruous in its juxtaposition with the elemental qualities of the waterfall.
- The wooded gorge of the Linn of Muick forms a 'pinch point' marking a distinct change between the narrow containment of the lower glen and the open and expansive upland character of Upper Glen Muick

7.8.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The strongly contained nature of this landscape limits inter-visibility with adjacent character areas.

7.8.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

Lower Glen Muick forms a narrow farmed valley which is increasingly contained by steep densely wooded hill slopes to the south. The Linn of Muick is a key feature although not readily seen. Small scale pastures and dispersed compact farms accentuate the small scale and semi-upland character of this glen.



The Linn of Muick set within a deeply incised wooded gorge



Valley floor pastures are increasingly interspersed with birch scrub higher up the glen

7.9.1 *Landscape character*

- Glen Muick transforms from a densely wooded gorge at the Linn of Muick to a broad, open upland glen with flat valley floor contained by the shallow heather-clad flanks of rounded hills
- In the upper reaches of the Glen, the hillsides steepen where Loch Muick fills a deep glacial trough, formed by ice which has moved eastwards from high up on the southern flanks of what is now the White Mounth
- The simple form of Loch Muick is contained by sheer boulder-strewn slopes, steepened and roughened by glaciation below a rim of bulging crags
- Deep erosion has left tributary valleys hanging at the surrounding high plateau, from where waterfalls drop into the trough of the loch and are a particular feature after heavy rain or following snow melt
- The River Muick flows from the loch to the Dee in a channel which meanders tightly across the wide valley floor, filled with glacial deposit which has been partly worked flat by the river
- Conifer woodlands of larch and pine on lower valley sides are arranged in long belts and isolated blocks on lower hill slopes. Mature native pine filter through these woodlands in places
- The valley floor is mire and boggy unimproved pasture
- This area is sparsely settled, with very occasional estate cottages and lodges largely sited on the south-east facing lower hill slopes at the mouths of side valleys, where there are small alluvial fans.
- The lack of improved fields contrasts with many other glens and straths at this general height in the Park, but there are small areas of pre-improvement field systems with remnants of irregularly shaped, walled enclosures at each of these individual settlements
- Glas allt Shiel lodge, located on the shore of Loch Muick and surrounded by woodland, has historical associations with Queen Victoria and provides an important visual focus
- The Glen is a focus for recreation with a large car park and visitor centre located at the Spittal of Glenmuick. The public road is often busy, and it is therefore a very visible feature in this relatively open landscape
- The Munros of Lochnagar and Broad Cairn are popular with walkers while tracks encircling the loch are used by both walkers and cyclists. The upland track of the Capel Road links Glen Muick with Glen Clova in the Angus Glens

7.9.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a strong contrast between the contained wooded gorge of the lower glen, the expansive scale and openness of the middle stretches of the glen and the drama of Loch Muick in its enclosed glacial trough
- The steep hill sides enclosing Loch Muick can cast dense shadow, increasing the sense of drama
- Views of the complex and dramatic mountains of the White Mounth are fully revealed and form a scenic backdrop to the upper glen
- While this area is not generally secluded due to its popularity, a sense of naturalness can be experienced from the paths around Loch Muick and it provides easy access to a dramatic upland landscape

7.9.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This landscape forms a transition between the managed and settled landscape of Deeside and the dramatic, more remote uplands of the White Mounth.

7.9.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The dramatic focus of the glacial trough of Loch Muick contrasts with the gentle, less containing side slopes of the middle stretches of Glen Muick. This glen offers an unusual opportunity to access the core of a mountain landscape, where a semi-natural character prevails, with relative ease.



The River Muick meanders tightly through rough pasture and mire



Linear woodlands on lower slopes and shelter woods on the glen floor



Public car park set amongst trees at the Spittal of Glen Muick

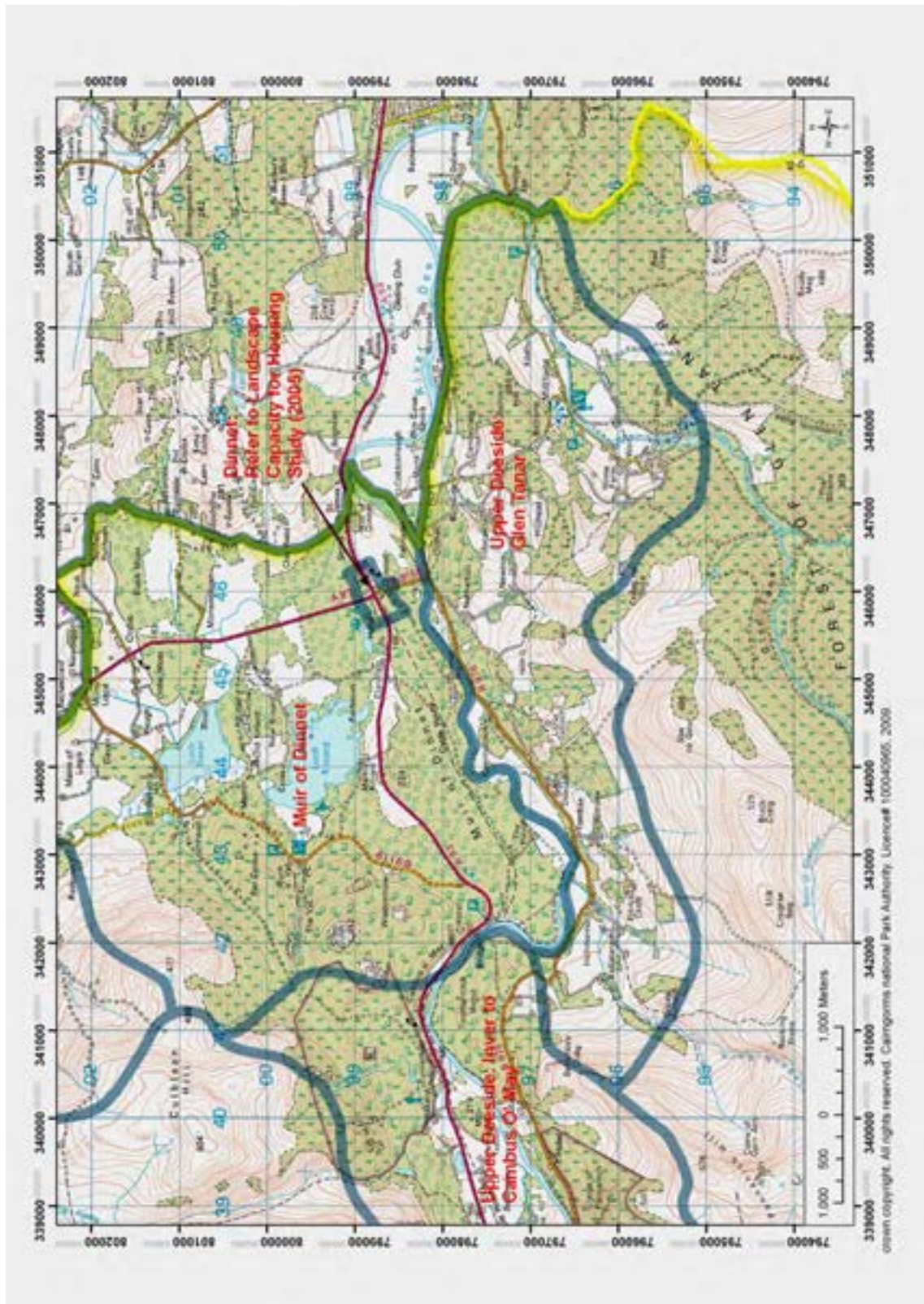


Loch Muick occupies a deep glacial trough



The granite domes and paps of Lochnagar seen from the plateau edge south of Loch Muick. The steep sides of the glacial trough are locally scree covered with cliffs along the upper slopes. The stream is deeply incised into glacial deposits before it drops into the trough floor

7.10 Upper Deeside: **Glen Tanar**



7.10.1 *Landscape Character*

- The flat valley floor and steep sides of Glen Tanar extend to a distinct 'pinch point' south of Glen Tanar House where the glen constricts to form a wooded 'V' shaped valley
- The valley has a flat floor and steep sides
- A line of low hills and north-facing slopes divides Glen Tanar from the Muir of Dinnet to the north. The complex topography of spurs and side valleys, long undulating lower slopes and irregular ridges reflects both the diverse bedrock and the varied effects of glacial and fluvial erosion
- The Water of Tanar cuts north-east from the uplands to the Dee then winds across a floodplain in the lower reaches of the glen. A number of tributaries flow into the Tanar from the branching side valleys at the head of the Glen
- This is an extensively forested area with mixed conifer woodland of managed pine, spruce and larch
- There is also oak and scattered birch woodland on the north facing Deeside slopes
- Flat pastures on the valley floor are enclosed by woodlands and occasional stone dykes. Linear fields also extend up the south facing hill slopes
- This pattern of small, broadly rectilinear late 18th/19th century improved fields on the flood plain extending up the more gentle hill slopes also occurs along the north facing slopes above Deeside, where they are often enclosed by stone walls
- These hill side Deeside pastures appear as if they have been carved out of woodland on the hill slopes, creating a complex mosaic of interlocking fields and woods
- A group of reed-fringed small shallow lochans border the River Tanar within the once extensive designed landscape of Glen Tanar House. Walled gardens and ornamental plantings of conifers are concentrated around the house while avenues and pockets of mixed policy plantings occur north-west of the Bridge of Tanar
- There is a strong estate influence in the use of local pink and grey granite, ornate detailing and dark green paint colour in the cottages, lodges and farmhouses within this character area
- A metalled road in the lower part of Glen Tanar sits against the foot of the wooded hill slopes

- A network of rough tracks criss-cross the lower gently rolling north-facing slopes above Deeside providing access to estate houses and farms, and linking to Glen Tanar over the low ridges.
- A road and network of estate tracks provide access for walkers and cyclists. The historic drover's route, the Firmounth Road, links Glen Tanar to Glen Esk within the Angus Glens

7.10.2 *Landscape experience*

- The extensive, interlocking pattern of fields and small woodlands, and the network of small roads and tracks, creates a landscape of surprising intimacy both in lower Glen Tanar and along the south side of the Dee
- The distinct architectural integrity gives a feeling of unity to the landscape, creating a fleeting impression of the landscape as it might have been a century ago

7.10.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

Glen Tanar is self contained with little visual connection to adjacent character areas, but the north-facing slopes above Deeside form the backdrop to Muir of Dinnet to the north.

7.10.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The intimate scale and interlocking pattern of small pastures, mixed woodlands, designed landscape features and strong architectural integrity of estate buildings contribute to the rich diversity of the area.



Flat valley floor pastures are fringed by hummocky lower slopes colonised by birch and pine

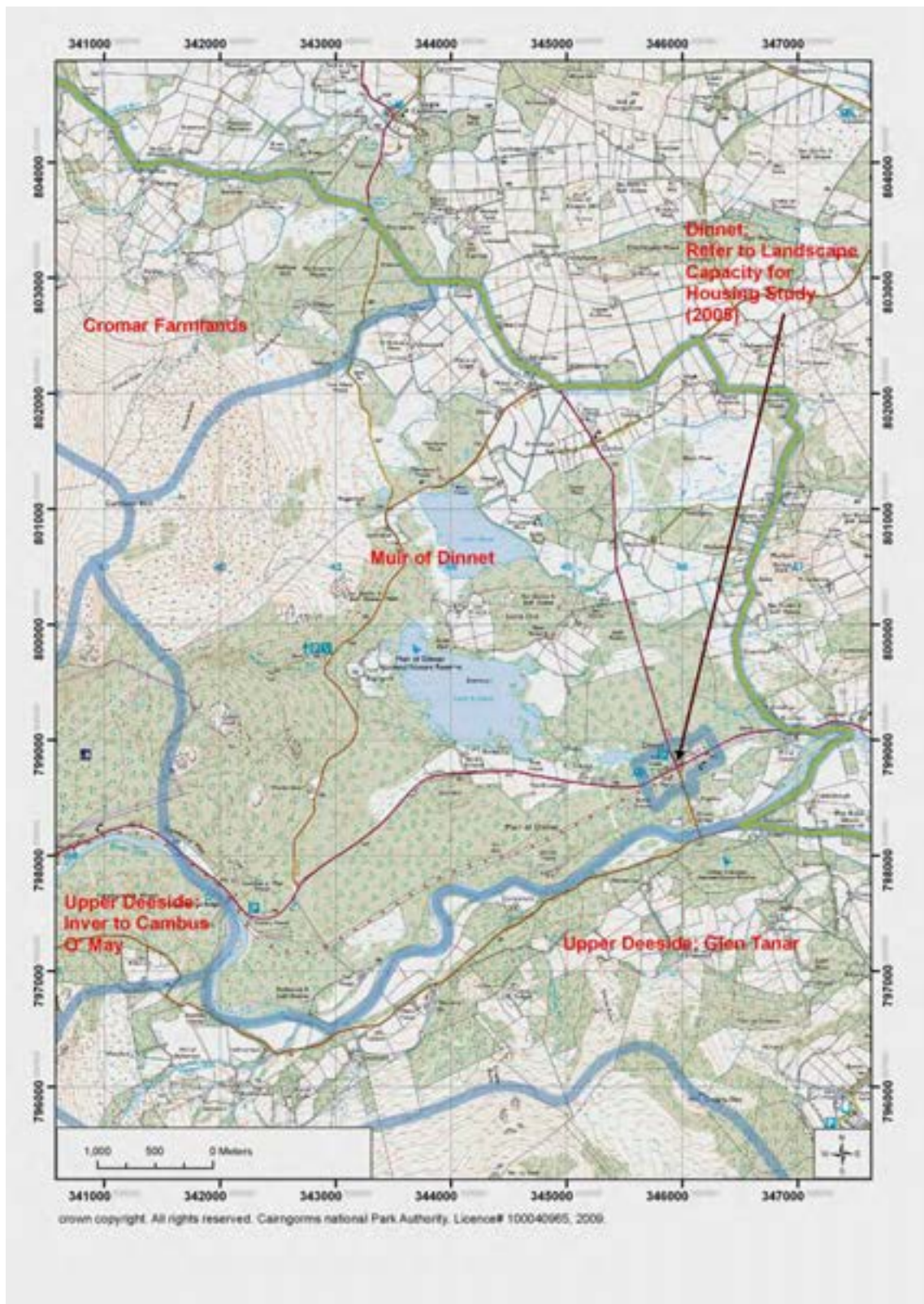


The hill slopes of the lower glen are covered with managed woodlands



Glen Tanar house surrounded by policy woodland

7.11 Muir of Dinnet



7.11.1 *Landscape character*

- The low-lying basin of the Muir of Dinnet lies in the western most howe of Deeside, the Howe of Cromartie is contained by the long gentle slopes of Culblean Hill to the west and by the small outcrops hills and more undulating ground outside the boundaries of the Park to the east
- Ice moved eastwards from Deeside across the basin floor and during the last ice age, still ice created Loch Kinnaird and Loch Davan, large kettle holes which lie at the core of this landscape, and the Burn o' Vat plunge pool within a former glacier melt water channel.
- The lochs are fringed by wetlands, merging into the surrounding low-lying farmland. Boggy woodlands of birch and oak enclose Loch Davan and much of Loch Kinnaird and are interspersed with wetlands and heath vegetation
- Extensive regenerating birch woodland extends across the Muir of Dinnet north of the River Dee
- Oak and birch woodland also covers the lower hill slopes which contain this area to the west. These are speckled with occasional Scots pine, which increase to merge with the more extensive coniferous plantings on the higher slopes of Creag Dubh
- Pockets of small, straight-edged, 18th/19th century improved fields enclosed by stone dykes occur on the fringes of the lochs and along drier ridges, particularly around the straightened Loggie Burn
- The narrow strips associated with the linear settlement of Ordie reflect its origins as a planned village
- This area is rich in archaeological features including a crannog, prehistoric earthworks and pre-medieval field systems. Traces of prehistoric round houses and fields systems and areas of remnant pre-improvement farmland with clearance cairns occur on higher ground between the lochs
- The granite walled chamber of the Burn o' Vat is a popular visitor attraction and an informal network of tracks provide access to Loch Kinord through the surrounding birch woodland and wetlands
- The A93 cuts through moorland to the south of Loch Kinord, contrasting with the network of narrow public roads around the lochs

7.11.2 *Landscape experience*

- The presence of abundant wildfowl on the lochs and wetlands of this area is a dramatic sight, producing an impression of a landscape dominated by nature

- More than 4000 years of past land use and settlement can be appreciated by the presence of many features which have survived in this wet area where improvements to farmland have been limited

7.11.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The extensive woodlands of this character area and the steep hill slopes to the west result in it being fairly contained although it has a visual relationship with the rolling farmland to the east which lies beyond the Park boundary.

7.11.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The sense of hill ground naturalness along with the extensive 'wetland' habitat influences much of this character area. The rich diversity of extensive native birch and oak woodlands, lochs and wetlands is enhanced by the presence of numerous relict archaeological features reflecting settlement over several millennia.



Extensive birch woodland and heather moorland are key features of this area



Loch Kinord set amongst woodlands and farmland

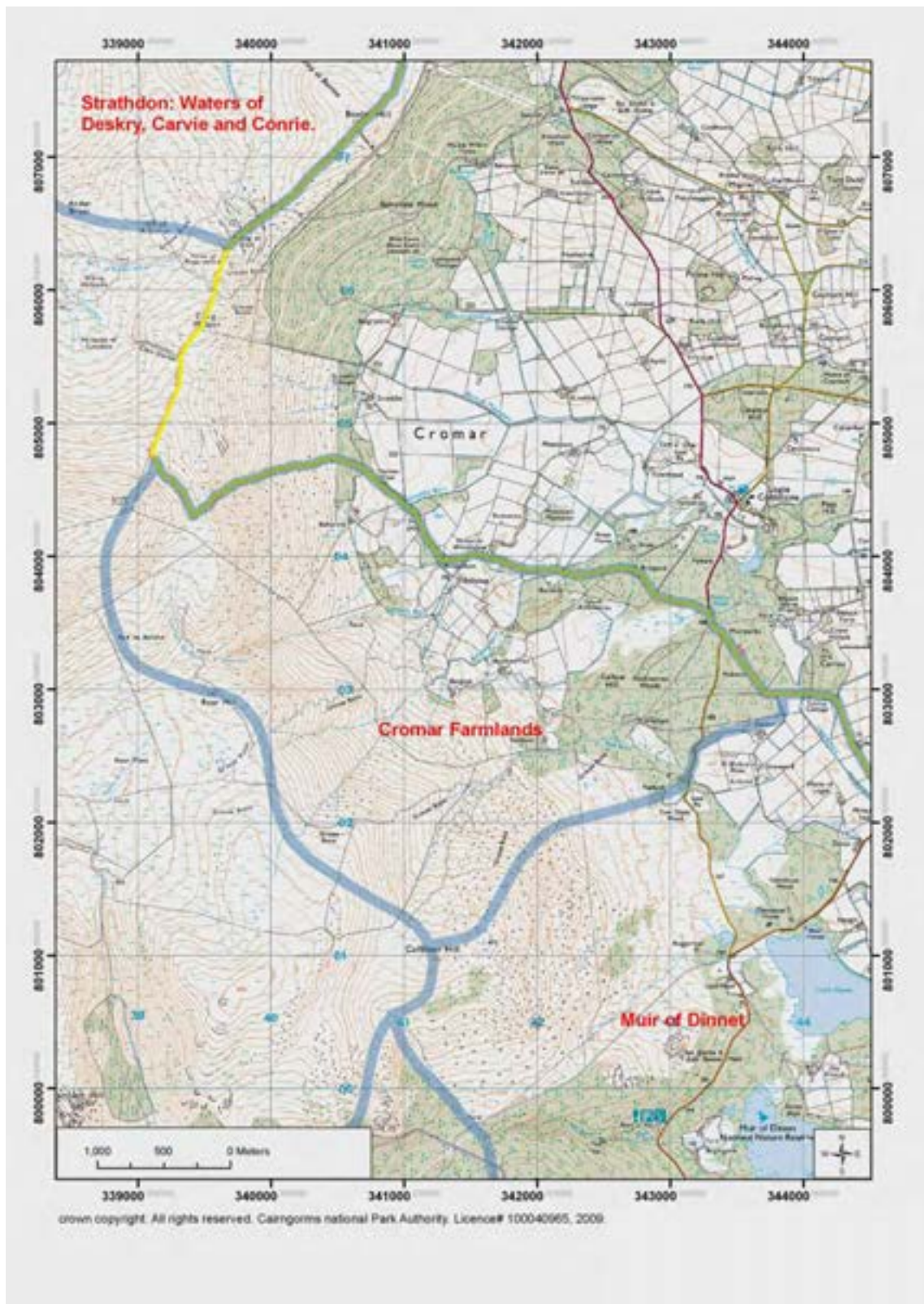


Pockets of farmland with pastures contained by stone walls occur around the lochs



Wetlands and willow scrub fringing Loch Davan

7.12 Cromar Farmlands



7.12.1 *Landscape character*

- Only a very small part of this character area lies within the Park and it extends to the east into the lowlands of Aberdeenshire
- There is a gradual transition to the south where this character area merges with the more low-lying area of the 'Muir of Dinnet'. Both lie within the ancient topographic basin known as the Howe of Cromar
- These extensively drained farmlands lie at the foot of a steep, east facing escarpment, cut by almost linear narrow river valleys which drain into the mire and former wetland along the lower slopes
- The gentle undulation of the landform is occasionally interrupted by small knolls of sandy, glacial-fluvial deposits and these form focal points, often accentuated by clumps of Scots Pine and birch
- The hill slopes are covered with heather, burnt in strips to manage as grouse moor and grass moorland
- Managed conifer woodland around Muirparks is located on a slight rise above the 'Muir of Dinnet' basin. Policy woodland influences are evident in the large larch and Douglas Fir retained along roadsides in this area
- Small shelterbelts mark the edge of improved pasture and hill land in the Ballabeg area
- The bright green, straight-edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, strongly associated with drained or drier land, wrap around the rougher grassland on the knolls and pockets of low-lying wet ground which are often colonised by birch
- Small farms are located on the lower hill slopes next to the burns which or are sited on knolls within the lower-lying area
- There are a number of prominent abandoned buildings in the area at the foot of the hill slopes, often surrounded by woodland

7.12.2 *Landscape experience*

- The part of this character area located within the Park gives a strong impression of being a marginal upland landscape; this reinforced by the presence of abandoned buildings and wetland interspersed with conifer woodland and pasture
- A feeling of seclusion can be experienced in this less-visited area of the Park

7.12.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area has a strong visual relationship to the extensive lowland farmlands to the east being contained to the west by the upland edge. There is a gradual transition to the south

where this character area merges with the more low-lying area of the 'Muir of Dinnet' north of Loch Davan.

7.12.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This more marginal farmland forms the fringes of the extensive lowland farmland to the east, outwith the Park. Some of its features are similar to those found within the Muir of Dinnet character area, reflecting its underlying tendency to wetland and mire, which is only kept at bay by extensive drainage.



The heather covered slopes provide the backdrop to these farmlands



Pine planted on one of the sandy knolls of glacial deposit on the flatter pastures



Small farms are generally located on knolls above the more level pastures



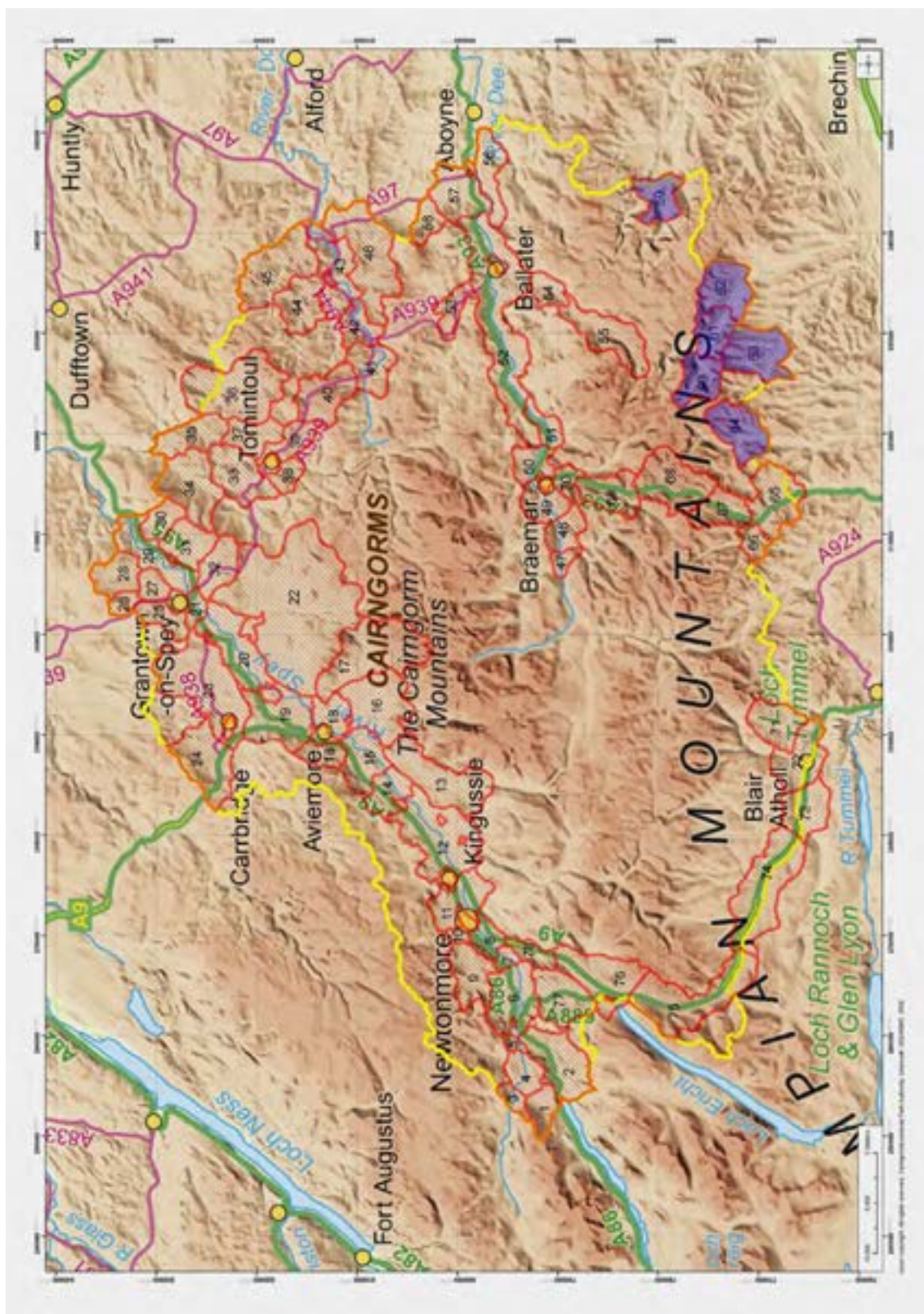
Conifer woodland located adjacent to wetter pasture

8 ANGUS GLENS

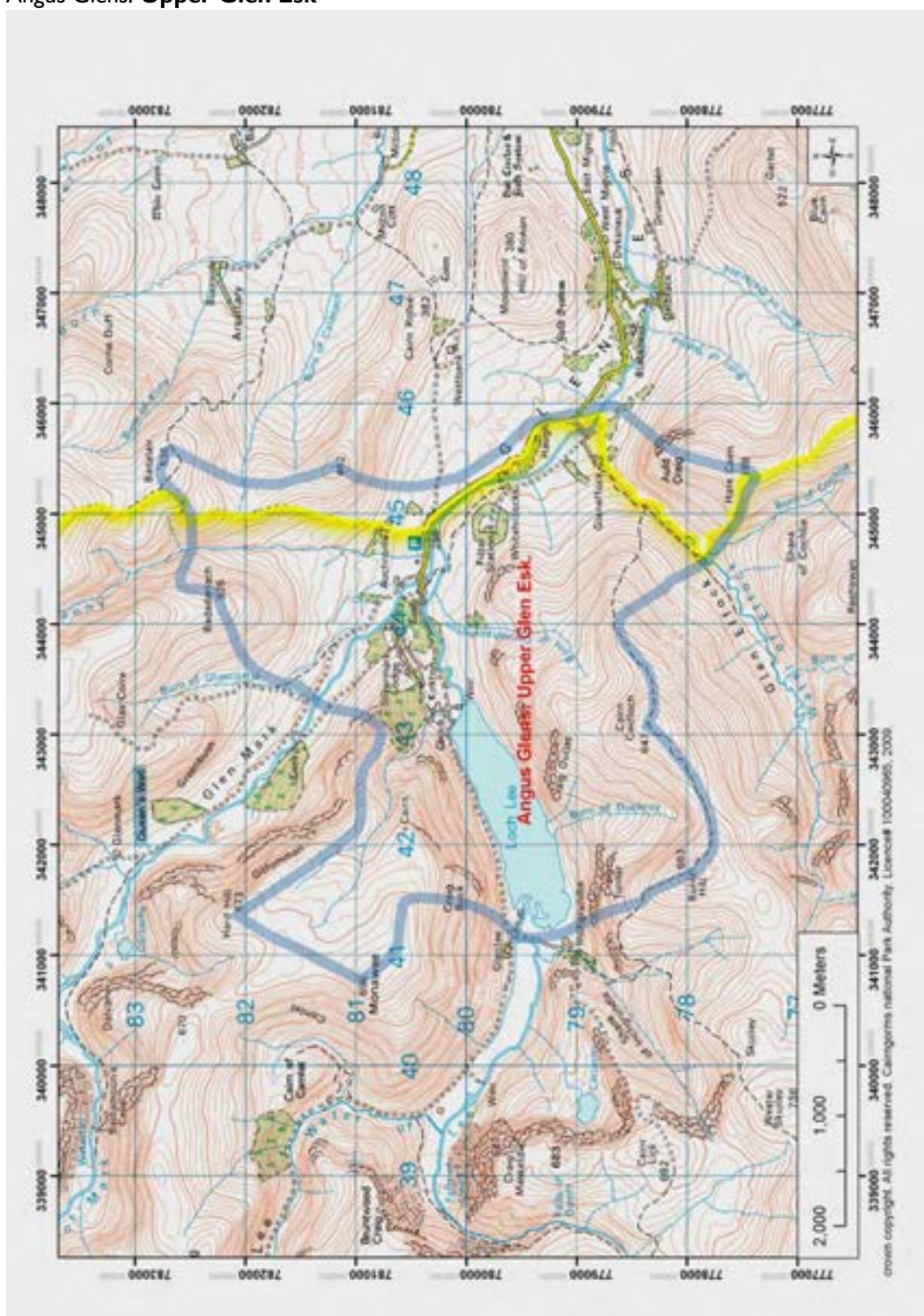
This section of the LCA includes those parts of all four of the Angus Glens, and their subsidiaries, which lie within the Park. This character assessment is presented, working from east to west as follows:

- 59. Angus Glens: Upper Glen Esk
- 60. Angus Glens: Glen Doll
- 61. Angus Glens: Upper Glen Clova
- 62. Angus Glens: Mid Glen Clova
- 63. Angus Glens: Upper Glen Prosen
- 64. Angus Glens: Upper Glen Isla

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



8.1 Angus Glens: Upper Glen Esk



8.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- The glen floor broadens at this junction between Upper Glen Esk, Glen Lee, Glen Mark and Glen Effock, where gently undulating glacial-fluvial deposits form well-drained and accessible slopes
- The glens are contained by slopes which have been steepened and roughened by glacial activity, which has left behind scree and exposed rocky crags, which extend along the glens into the mountain interior
- Loch Lee, a reservoir used to provide drinking water, occupies the whole of the trough-like lower Glen Lee, and has been included in this character area as it contributes to the diversity of the character type and is a focus for accessible recreation
- Generous and diverse woodland, including mature broadleaved woodland, riparian woodland, some conifer woodland and Scots pine shelter woods, extends widely across this area
- Upper slopes are managed heather grouse moor, with some upland grassland, occasional bracken and remnants of birch woodland or regenerating willow associated with watercourses and wetland
- The lower slopes and gravelly terrain along the glen floor are farmed, with broadly rectilinear-shaped, fenced late 18th/19th century improved fields are now largely used for pasture, some of which are reverting to wetland
- The landmark 14th century 'tower house' of Invermark Castle is strategically located at the junction of Glen Mark and Glen Lee, at the head of Glen Esk
- The area is the focus of settlement, indicating the final, habitable reaches of upper Glen Esk. The focus of settlement is around Invermark Lodge, and other estate buildings of a consistent architectural style
- Existing and abandoned farms have a very particular association with the mouths of the side glens, sitting at edge of the improved fields where both Glen Mark and Glen Effock join with Glen Esk
- The public road stops at a car park, from where there is easy access on foot and bicycle on vehicle tracks into the surrounding more remote glens and mountain interior

8.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area is both a 'destination' at the head of Glen Esk, and a 'threshold' to other, more secluded and remote glens and the mountainous hinterland beyond
- This part of Glen Esk is tranquil, although it is too busy to be secluded

8.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is a 'gateway' into the interior of the mountain areas of the north eastern hills, with views particularly along Loch Lee into Glen Lee and easy access to Glen Mark.

8.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This is a diverse landscape, with a range of woodland types, farmed land and the presence of Loch Lee contributing to a contemporary setting for historical features, such as Invermark Castle and the 17th century church on the shores of the loch.



Gentle gradients and wooded character



Loch Lee, a reservoir, fills the lower part of Glen Lee

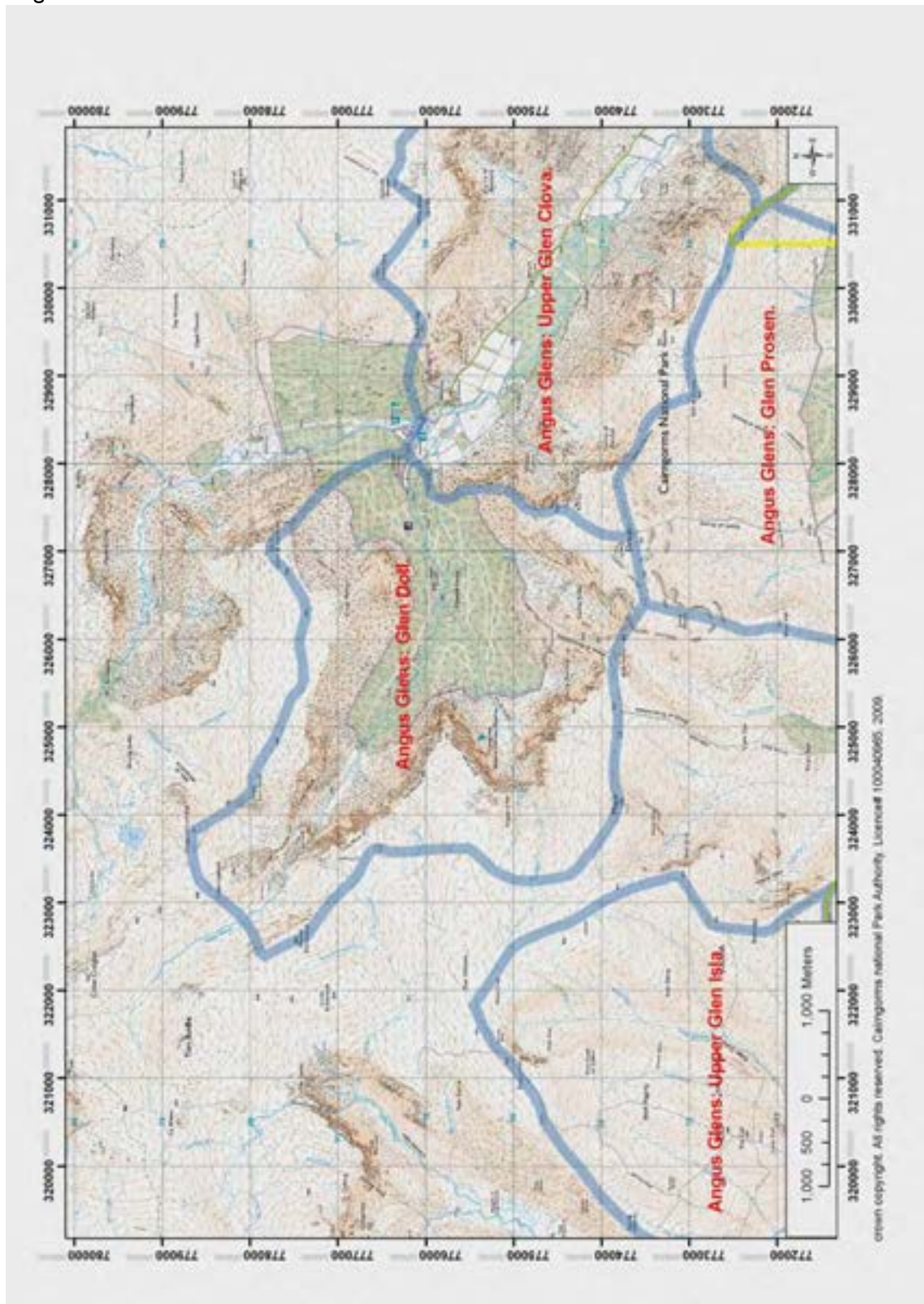


Fields, now partly reverting to wetland



Invermark Lodge – a landmark feature

8.2 Angus Glens: **Glen Doll**



8.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- Craggy slopes, steepened and roughened by glacial erosion, form the flanks of high hills, some of which are munros, and enclose this glen, extending in a band of exposed rock around the rim of the glen
- The glen is dominated by this exposed rock which creates massive, overhanging rocky outcrops and dramatic corries along the ridgeline, and rock falls across lower slopes
- The White Water and its tributaries tumble down the steep side slopes and down a narrow, steeply sloping, glen floor
- Upland grassland dominates the summits and upper slopes, with rare arctic alpines growing on a band of mineral-rich hornblende schist in Corrie Fee
- Extensive conifer woodland extends over all the lower slopes, which include extensive areas of gravelly glacial deposits often extending close to the base of many of the rocky outcrops
- There is little apparent historic settlement, although the evidence may simply be hidden by the extensive woodland and remain unrecorded
- The former youth hostel and a cluster of buildings at Acharn are located where the glen meets Upper Glen Clova
- There is no vehicle access, and the area is a focal point for recreation activity and the starting point to many walks of different degrees of difficulty, including access to Munros and over the high pass of Jock's Road to neighbouring glens

8.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The steep sided hills, emphasised by their height and dramatic, often overhanging rocky cliffs and corries, create a very pronounced sense of enclosure, reinforced by the woodland
- The area is secluded and forms a threshold to more remote mountainous hinterland
- The drama of arriving at the head of the glen is reinforced by the mass of the mountains at the head and sides of the glen, creating a very pronounced focal point when accessed from the south
- This is further reinforced when approaching this area through the high passes from the mountainous hinterland, where descending into the glen creates a sense of arrival

8.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The area is in part inter-visible with Glen Clova. There is a sense of arrival to Glen Doll which is experienced when travelling through Glen Clova towards this northern glen, with the twin summits of Craig Mellon and Cairn Broadlands visible from a distance, framed by Glen Clova.

8.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The drama of the sheerness of the side slopes and the height of the hills forms a very pronounced sense of enclosure and reinforces the sense of 'high pass' when walking or cycling up and down this glen. The rocky overhangs, corries and massive outcrops of rock reinforce the ruggedness of the upper slopes and mountain tops.

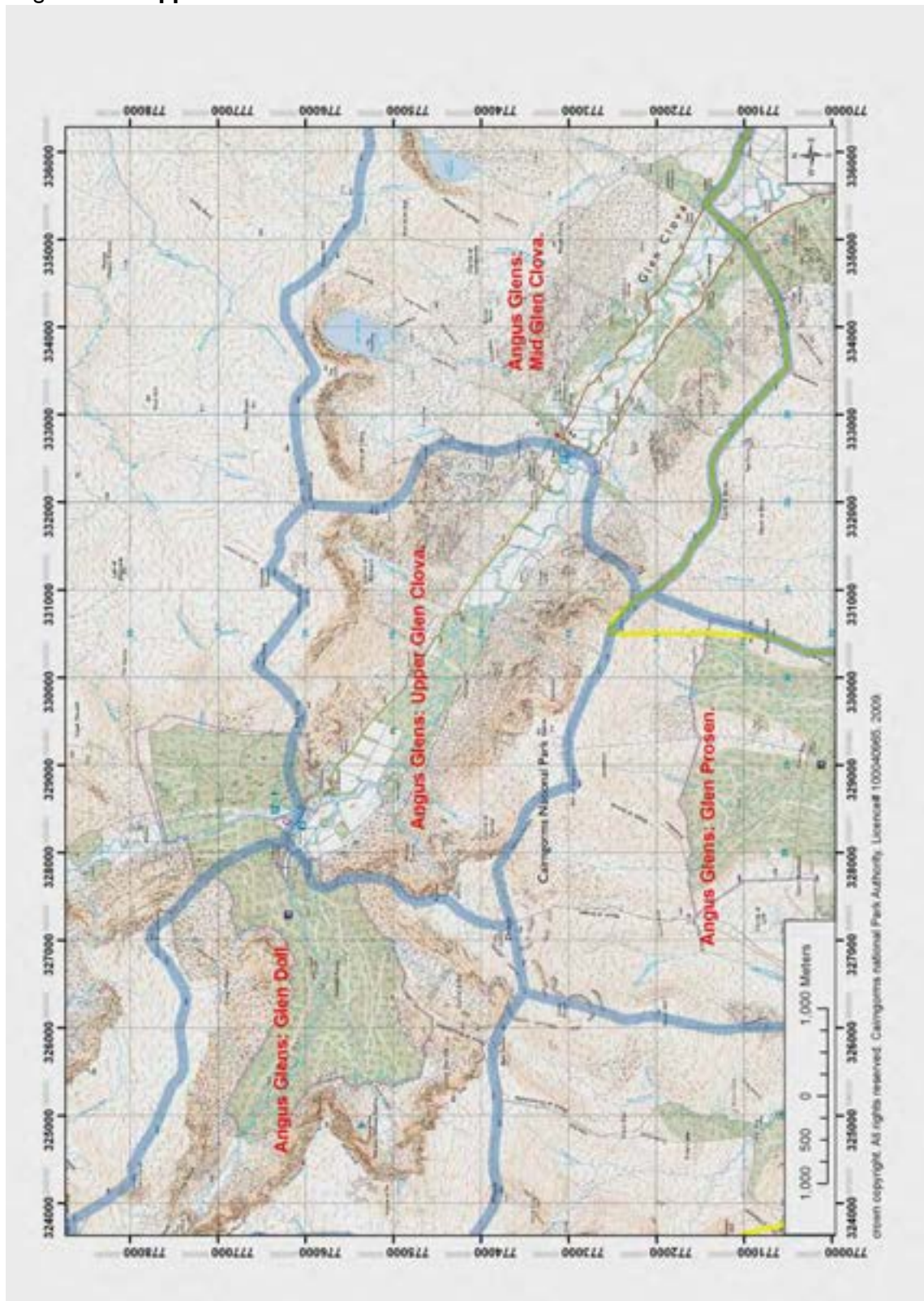


*Conifer woodland fills much of the floor of this glen, extending up to the base of the rocky cliffs
(photograph courtesy of Scottish Natural Heritage)*



*The dramatic Corrie Fee with massive rock outcrops
(photograph courtesy of Scottish Natural Heritage)*

8.3 Angus Glens: **Upper Glen Clova**



8.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- The relatively level floodplain along the glen floor is flanked by evenly graded, steep slopes rising to craggy summits and corries
- The side slopes have been steepened and roughened by glaciers retreating south east which has resulted in a rim of extensive craggy outcrops along the upper slopes above long screes and huge, bouldery rock falls
- The glen floor has been worked flat by the River South Esk, which meanders across the flood plain
- The well drained side slopes dominated by grassland and some regenerating or remnant birch woodland
- Where still farmed, the flat land is fenced into broadly square shaped, late 18th/19th century improved fields, the boundaries supplemented by the occasional dyke especially along the roadside
- A large part of the glen floor is planted with an extensive commercial conifer forest which increases enclosure and limits views
- There is a pronounced settlement pattern as nearly all farmsteads, some of which are now redundant due to afforestation, are located at the edge of the glen floor, where there is a break in slope.
- Many of these late 18th/19th century farmsteads are on the sites of older pre-improvement farmsteads, the earlier field systems of small fields, remnant walls and ruined buildings having survived above the floodplain
- An additional cluster of buildings congregates at the end point of the tarmac road, including farms and a lodge house, as well as a ranger station and the car park. All the buildings sit back against the steep glen sides
- The single track road hugs the break in slope on the northern side of the glen, set against the foot of the steep slopes

8.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The steep sided hills, emphasised by their height, create a very pronounced sense of enclosure
- The strongly linear alignment of the glen creates very focussed views along the glen floor, framed by the even gradient of the side slopes
- The woodland on the valley floor partially limits these views along the glen, and hides the level flood plain and settlement pattern

8.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is inter-visible with Glen Doll and mid Glen Clova. Views to these adjacent character area are dramatised by the 'framing' effects of the steep side slopes when viewed from the road in this part of the glen, although they are sometimes obscured by forestry.

8.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The 'linearity' of the glen is very pronounced, reinforced by the evenly graded side slopes, and relatively level ridgelines, creating long, well-framed views. The rock falls, which include huge boulders, are a dramatic feature. There is a strong, historic link between evenly spaced farmsteads and the break in slope.



Extensive woodland and grassland fields across the flood plain



The steep side slopes are frequently covered by extensive, dramatic bouldery rock falls

8.4



8.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- The side slopes of the glen are less steep and more irregular than those of the Upper Glen, with more varied gradients including gentle slopes and glacial deposits draped across ledges of erosion-resistant bedrock
- The upper slopes, steepened and roughened by glacial activity, rise above screes and boulder fields to a rim of corries and cliffs, especially on the northern side of the glen
- The glen floor is characterised by numerous, often interlocking, small hummocks of fluvial-glacial deposits which are interspersed by small stretches of floodplain, creating a complex, small scale topography
- The River South Esk meanders across the glen floor, winding between the knolls of deposit and occasionally working them flat, especially near the village of Clova
- The well drained hummocks are often topped by birch woodland over grassland, which may be remnant wood pasture
- There are a few linear late 18th/19th century improved fields on the level land near to Clova village, but most of the glen floor is more extensively grazed with loosely defined fenced fields
- Upland grassland extends up onto the side slopes, although extensive areas of broadleaves and some commercial conifer forest also occupy the lower slopes, particularly on slacker, more accessible gradients
- Settlement focuses on the village of Clova, which is clustered around the road junction and river crossing, above the flood plain
- There are also farms and houses located at intervals along the edge of the glen floor, where there is a break in slope, adjacent to the road
- These edges are also where earlier, pre-improvement farmsteads, with remnant walls of earlier field systems along with occasional ruined buildings have survived above the floodplain
- The roads hug the break in slope at both sides of the glen, winding up and over, as well as around, the hummocky terrain along the edge of the valley floor

8.4.2 *Landscape experience*

- The strongly linear alignment of the glen creates focussed views along the glen floor, framed by the side slopes
- The small scale of the hummocky terrain provides a contrast in scale with the expanse and height of the mountain ridges
- The roads follow the dips and ridges of the landform, allowing the traveller to feel the 'lie of the land'

8.4.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is inter-visible with Upper Glen Clova and the sides of the glen frame views north westwards to the twin summits of Craig Mellon and Cairn Broadlands in Glen Doll.

8.4.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The interlocking low hummocks of well-drained glacial deposit across the glen floor is very apparent and often reinforced by the presence of open birch woodland on the knolls. There is a clear pattern of dispersed settlement, tucked into the hummocky terrain at the edge of the floor of the glen.



The road follows the ups and downs of the underlying terrain

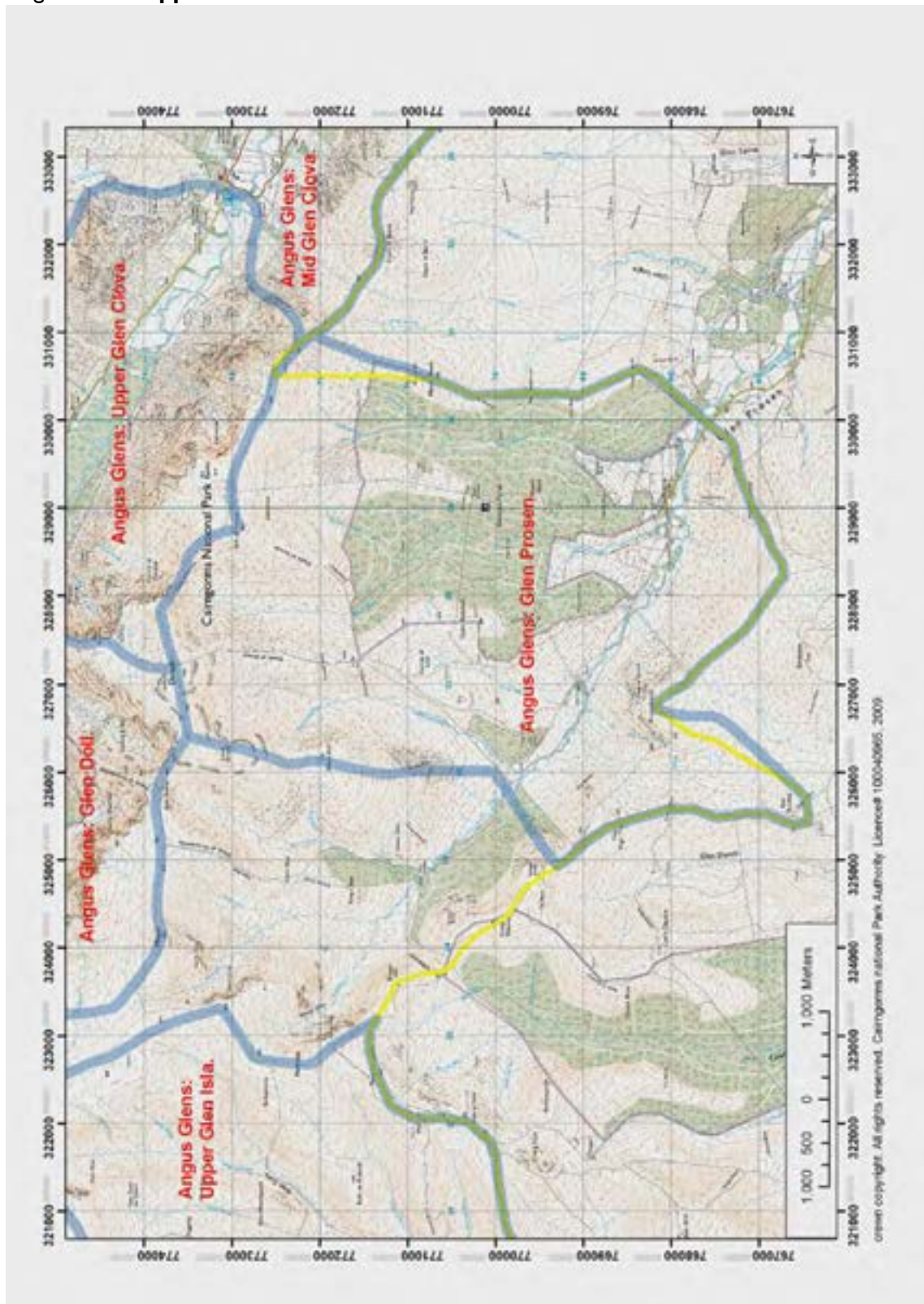


Possible remnant wood pasture on hummocks of glacial-fluvial deposit



Distinct hummocky, gravelly deposits

8.5 Angus Glens: Upper Glen Prosen



8.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- This wide glen is the least contained of all the Angus glens, with gentle slopes and shallow side glens leading to a sequence of individual, low summits and long ridges
- There are some craggy upper slopes and screes and boulder fields created by glacial retreat, most pronounced around the northern, inner most reaches of the glen
- The lower slopes and floor of the glen are characterised by extensive areas of poorly drained, clayey deposits
- The hill side vegetation is dominated by a mosaic of grass and heather moorland, actively burned, and extensive areas of conifer woodland, some reaching well into the glen
- Broadly straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, some of which are contained by drystone dykes, are located on irregular, well drained gravelly deposits towards the south of the glen
- There are occasional small shelter woods associated with the settlements
- Settlement is sparse, based at Runtaleave and Glenprosen Lodge, which are located at the end of the public road, with Old Craig a more remote lodge part way up the glen
- There is evidence of pre-improvement settlement and land use along the glen floor, including ridge and furrow patterns and turf dykes stretching far up this glen
- Access is limited to tracks and paths, some associated with forestry and shooting, others with access to higher surrounding munros and passes to neighbouring glens
- The narrow public road stops near Glenprosen Lodge

8.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area is secluded, but not remote
- The glen is not as enclosed as other Angus glens, an experience which is reinforced by the views along the side glens and long spurs as well as the gentle gradients of the lower slopes
- There is a pronounced sense of 'gateway' created by enclosing topography and a narrow glen floor, just at Glenprosen Lodge and the Park boundary

8.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The glen is relatively self contained, with little opportunity for inter-visibility with other character areas from lower levels.

8.5.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The shallow side glens reinforce the open, wide, shallowness of the glen, although this is in part counteracted by the enclosure created by the extensive woodland.



Woodland at Old Craig, with felled woodland on the slopes behind, extending into the interior of the glen



Improved pasture along the lower glen floor

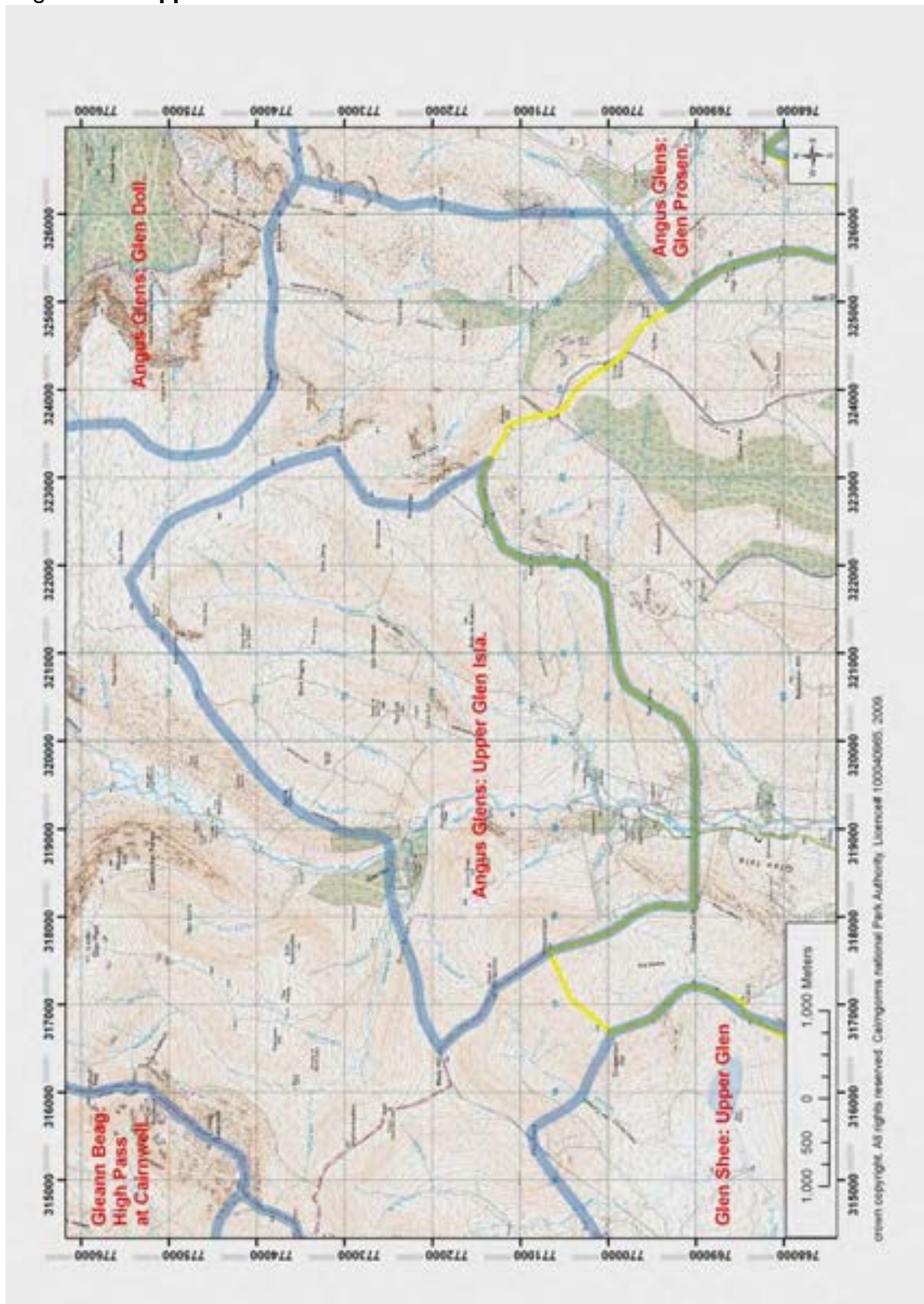


Evidence of pre-improvement land use, including rigs, and walls containing more recent late 18th/19th century improved fields



The glen narrows to create a 'gateway' at the Park boundary

8.6 Angus Glens: **Upper Glen Isla**



8.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- The narrow valley floor is contained by west facing side slopes which are smooth and often gently graded. The east facing slopes have been steepened and roughened by glaciers, resulting in craggy upper slopes above screes
- A series of narrow side glens carved by tributaries of the River Isla converge at the junction of Glen Cally and the upper Glen Isla
- The glacial-fluvial deposits along the glen floor have been worked into a narrow floodplain by the meandering River Isla
- A mosaic of heather and grass moor extends over the hill slopes, with pasture on the well-drained and gentle lower slopes as well as the floodplain
- There are shelter woods associated with the clusters of settlement, and a large area of conifer woodland surrounding Tulchan Lodge
- The few buildings, including Tulchan Lodge, are located at the confluence of glens, on alluvial fans associated with tributaries of the River Isla
- These well drained alluvial fans are the focus for the late 18th/19th century farmsteads, regularly shaped fields and small shelter woods
- The floodplain is often less well drained, and in many areas is rushy pasture or wetland, partially enclosed by fences including deer fences
- The well defined and striking pattern of dykes at the abandoned farm at Craigmekie, elevated on better-drained glacial-fluvial deposits, is a particular feature
- The narrow public road is tucked in against the western flank of the glen just above the floodplain as far as Auchavan, from where most of this area is only accessible by paths and private vehicle tracks
- The area is relatively popular for walkers, although there is little provision for parking or other facilities

8.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- The area is relatively open, with gentle gradients and views up side valleys limiting the experience of enclosure
- The area is a transition between the more cultivated and settled southern parts of Glen Isla and the more remote head of the glen

8.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is relatively self contained, but it provides a 'gateway' to the more remote and rugged head of Glen Isla, and therefore contributes to a gradual transition from a more settled and obviously managed landscape to a more remote hinterland.

8.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The abandoned, but nevertheless prominent, field system at Craigmackie is a distinctive singular feature in this area, although not a widespread characteristic. There is a strong relationship between the settlement, farmland and the well-drained deposits at the convergence of the two main watercourses.



Buildings sheltered by woodlands at the end of the narrow public road



Gentle side slopes, especially those facing west



Fields and pasture on better drained deposits the abandoned farm at Craigmackie sits on these slopes



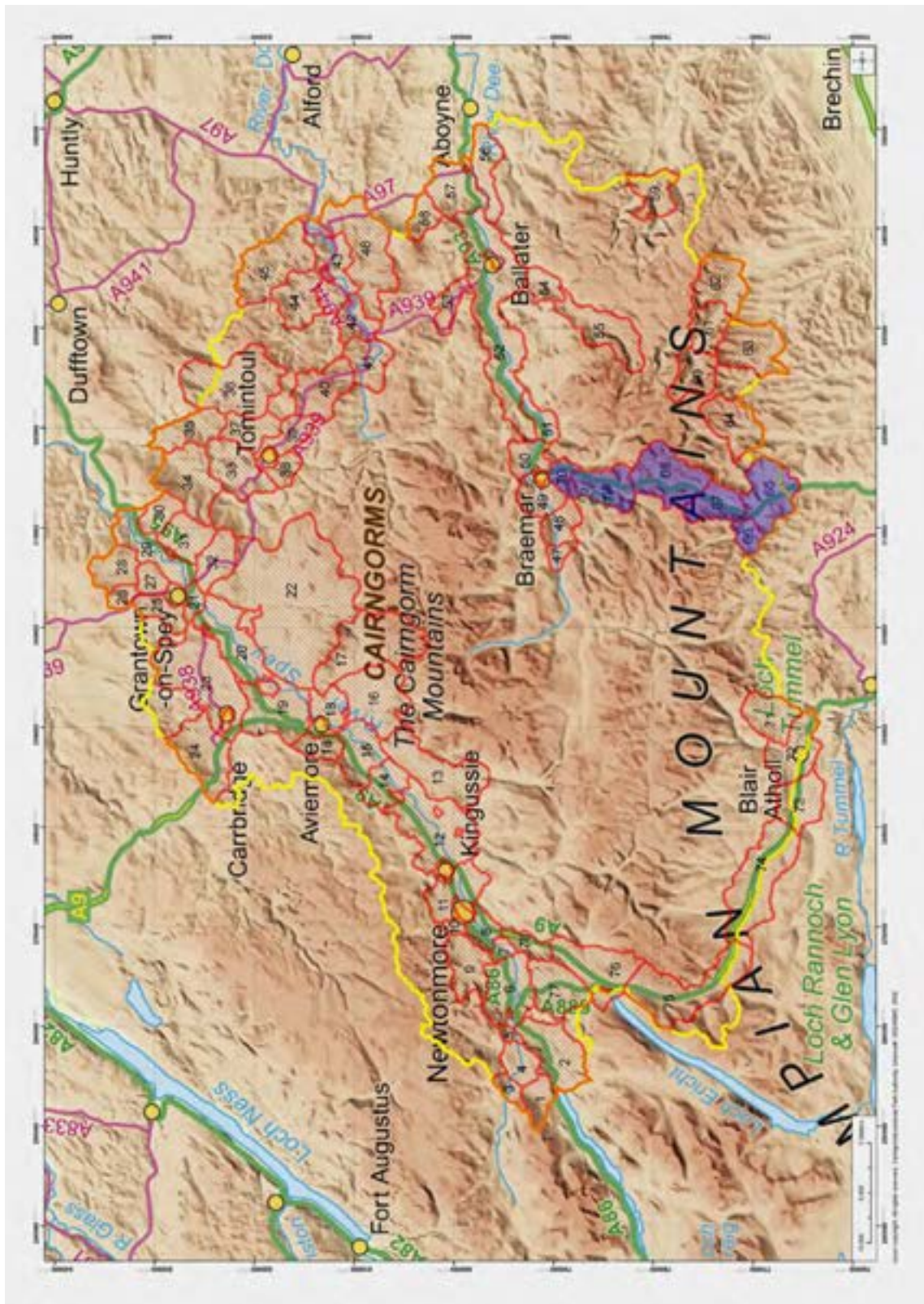
Settlement and shelter woods associated with the well drained alluvial fan and watercourses

9 GLEN SHEE, GLEN BEAG AND GLEN CLUNIE

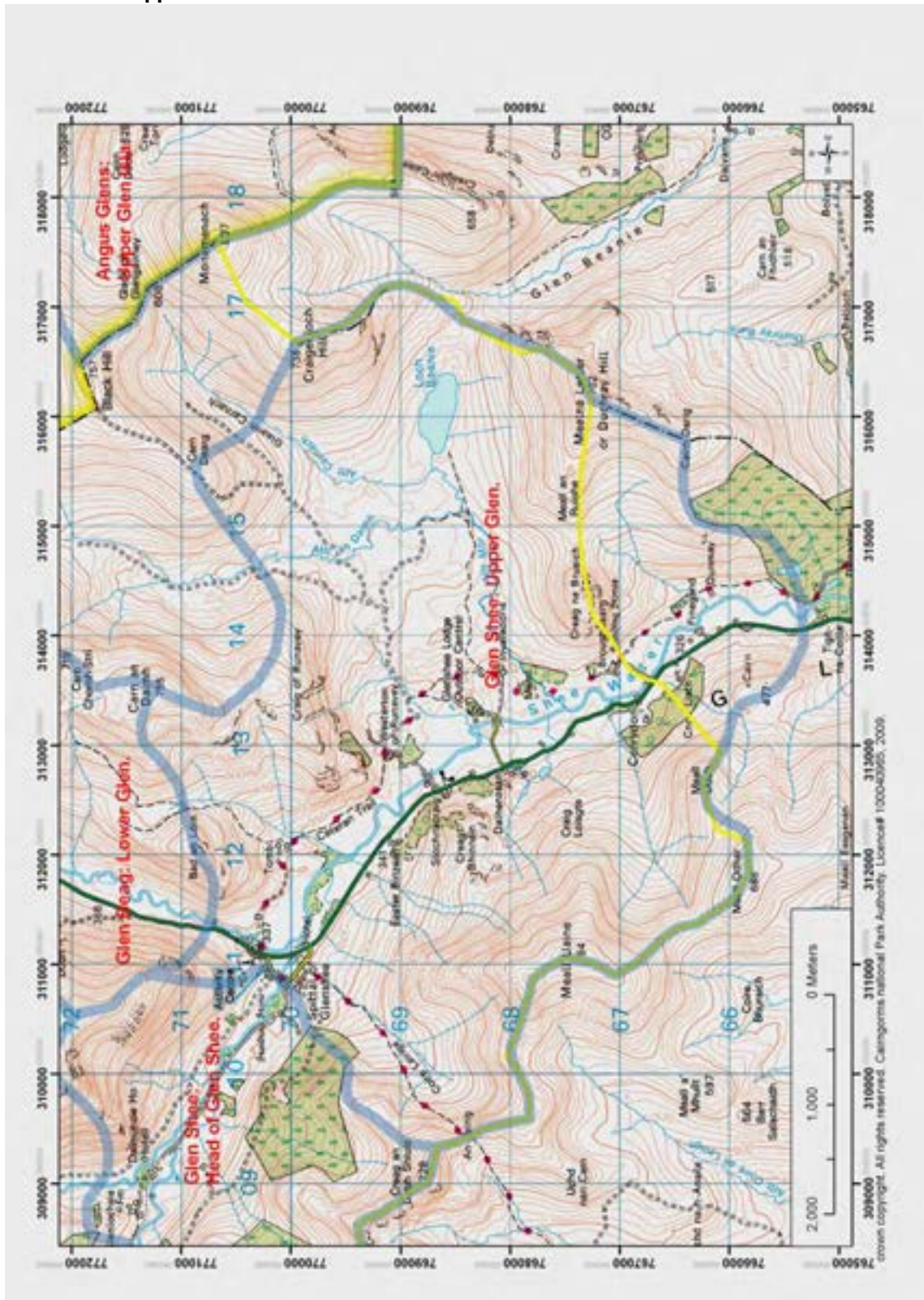
This section of the LCA includes the northern part of Glen Shee, which lies within the proposed new Park boundary up to the Glen Shee ski resort at Cairnwell (Glen Beag), and then northwards up to Braemar (Glen Clunie). This character assessment is presented, working from south to north, as follows:

- 65. **Glen Shee: Upper Glen**
- 66. Glen Shee: **Head of Glen Shee**
- 67. **Glen Beag: Lower Glen**
- 68. Glen Beag: **High Pass at Cairnwell**
- 69. **Glen Clunie: Upper Glen**
- 70. **Glen Clunie: Lower Glen**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



9.1 Glen Shee: Upper Glen



9.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- Steep sided upper slopes, often with rocky outcrops with forms that reflect the changing lithology and structure of the bedrock, rise to distinct summits
- Lower slopes are typified by more complex terrain of varied gradients, terraces, hummocks and subtle ridges where glacial deposits often mask the bedrock
- Level stretches of floodplain alternate with well drained gravelly hummocks, ridges and terraces in glacial-fluvial deposits which extend along the edges of the wide glen floor
- The Shee Water meanders in wide loops across the width of the glen floor, sometimes through extensive areas of rushy wetland
- The upper slopes are covered with actively burned heather moor
- 18th/19th century improved fields, now containing improved grassland, are shaped to fit around the steep-sided hummocks where unimproved grassland and occasional mature birch woodland provide a textural contrast
- The glen is diversely wooded, including riparian woodland, 'wood pasture' on hummocks, birch along the lower side slopes and occasional conifer woodland associated with individual settlements or established as shelter woods
- The fields, some of which are walled, extend onto more accessible, gentle gradients up the sides of the glen, to a 'head dyke' which largely follows the boundary between glacial deposit and revealed bedrock
- There is evidence that this area has been continuously settled for millennia and there are extensive remains of former, pre-improvement buildings and fields particularly along the lower slopes above the improved glen floor, although they are not widely visible
- Evenly and frequently distributed 18th/19th century farmsteads, located on the drier ground at the very edge of the glen floor, appear to be located on the sites of long-established settlements
- The Spittal of Glenshee is a focal settlement, located at the conjunction of three glens, with diverse architectural styles in part reflecting its role as a seasonal skiing base
- The road sits on higher ground, hugging the break in slope and following the dips and crests of the terrain along the western edge of the glen
- While there are several tracks – possibly used largely for sporting access – into the hills, the main public access is the Cateran Trail, a long distance walk which extends along the length of the glen

9.1.2 Landscape experience

- The glen appears to be well wooded, as from many viewpoints the individual areas of woods and mature trees visually merge to create a continuous mass of trees
- The wide glen floor, subdivided by small scale hummocks, woodland and fields, contrasts with the larger scale of the hills
- From the elevated road, there are good views across the glen floor, and the side slopes frame views to the prominent summit of Ben Gulabin when travelling north

9.1.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

The glen is largely self-contained, with little inter-relationship with other areas, although the Spittal forms a threshold settlement to the Head of Glen Shee and Glen Beag.

9.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The complex topography, varied woodland and small fields on the glen floor contrasts with the rugged, heather clad mountain slopes and summits. The settlement pattern appears to be little changed from the early 19th century farmstead distribution and architecture.



Small 19th century farms against the edges of the glen floor



A ridge of glacial-fluvial deposit with associated 'wood pasture' type grazing



Riparian woodland, and the faint outline of turf dykes



A variety of woodland – from open stands of birch to commercial conifer woodland

9.2



9.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- Extending north west from the main glen, this glen is accessed by passing through the Spittal of Glenshee, its entrance on the road indicated by a formal estate gateway
- The relatively narrow glen floor is framed by steep sided, concave slopes, with a more complex topography of rocky spurs and shallow corries facing north east
- The glen floor is hummocky, with glacial-fluvial deposits which extend along the lower slopes of the hills
- The Shee Water is gravel-bedded, with occasional braided reaches, but is relatively straight, constrained by the hummocky terrain
- 18/19th century improved fields, containing improved grassland and fodder crops, are located on the well-drained, hummocky glen floor
- There are several large areas of conifer woodland, including recent planting in a high corrie, and riparian woodland which blends with smaller shelter woods along the glen floor
- A prominent head dyke separates the fields from the actively burnt heather moorland and grazing on the steeper slopes
- Although past settlement, including numerous post-medieval farmsteads, has been widespread, evidence of this has largely disappeared
- Dalmunzie Hotel, a former shooting lodge, and associated buildings of similar architectural style at Glenlochsie Farm cluster on higher hillocks at the junction of Glen Shee and the side glens of Glen Lochsie and Glen Taitneach
- These buildings are also the focus of mature mixed woodland
- A nine hole golf course occupies terraced, well drained land immediately adjacent to the hotel, and there is a dismantled railway, once used for transporting goods and people to an upper Lodge in Glen Lochsie, which is a quirky feature
- The road to the hotel is single lane, and tracks, used for estate management as well as being signposted for public access, lead into the mountainous interior along the side glens

9.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The glen is secluded but not remote, although it forms a threshold to more remote country within the upper glens and mountainous hinterland

9.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is relatively self contained, although it provides a 'gateway' to the more mountainous interior of the higher hills and more remote glens.

9.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The settlement and field pattern demonstrates the establishment of an 'improvement period' sporting estate which has superseded 18th/19th century farmsteads, overlaid on the distinctive, hummocky topography of the lower slopes and glen floor.



The winding, braided, gravelly Shee Water



Glenlochsie Farm, perched on hummocky terrain, probably a moraine, at the very head of the glen

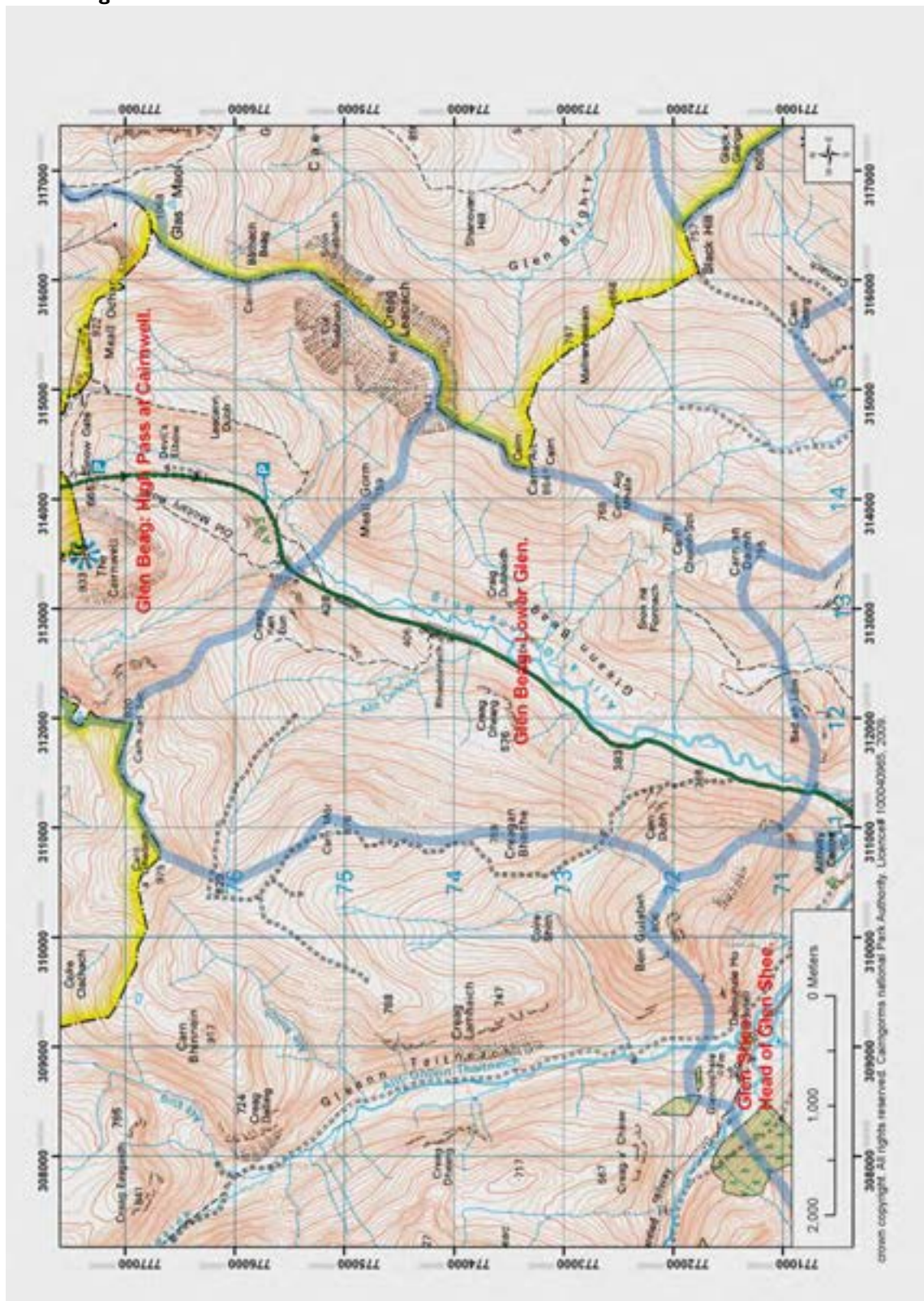


The prominent head dyke, with improved fields below, and conifer shelter woods.



Naturally regenerating vegetation along the riversides

9.3 Glen Beag: Lower Glen



9.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- The narrow southern ‘gateway’ to this upper glen, framed by the steep side slopes of Bad an Loin and Ben Gulabin, opens out into a wider glen floor before climbing to the high pass of the Cairnwell
- Orientated NNE/SSW, the glen is contained by a complex topography of shallow side glens, intervening rocky ridges and terraced terrain created by a glacial valley sitting within a much older, broader valley – the cliffs are spurs of the older valley truncated by glacial action
- The upper slopes are topped by distinct summits of individual hills, some of which have extensive areas of quartzite scree, while the eastern ridge is knobbly
- The well drained glacial-fluvial deposits on the lower slopes have in part been worked into terraces and a level floodplain by the meandering river
- Unimproved grassland extends along much of the glen floor, with the ruins of small pre-improvement farmsteads and field systems evident, particularly where grass is low and if there is strong side light
- The lower southern hill slopes of the glen are extensive unimproved grassland, while the upper, northern part of the glen is clothed with heather, which is managed as grouse moorland
- There is a prominent head dyke which marks the break in slope but which has been supplemented by a fence further up slope
- The evidence of past settlement is all the more striking because there is now no settlement in this part of the glen, apart from a single house and barn at Rhiedorrach, an elevated well drained terrace near to the road
- The road largely hugs the profile of the topography

9.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The glen is perceived as a strongly ‘upland’ character, in part due to the very pronounced contrast with the farmed Glen Shee to the south, and in part due to the elevation and simple vegetation pattern
- The ‘threshold’ to and from the glen from the south has a very pronounced sense of ‘gateway’ created by the narrow pass and the curve in the road, which reinforces the sense of ‘surprise’ on arriving at Glen Beag

9.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The glen is relatively self-contained, but as its character contrasts strongly with Upper Glen Shee, the sequence of travelling between the two creates a sense of drama.

9.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This glen has a pronounced 'upland' character. Sparsely and simply vegetated, it is dominated by the grazed, unimproved grassland and lack of contemporary settlement. The grazing and lack of trees helps to reveal the evidence of extensive past settlement and land use, as well as emphasising the profile and form of the topography.



This is the narrow pass between Glen Beag and upper Glen Shee, the light catching on a distinct terrace



The wide, but wet and uncultivated glen floor, edged with better drained glacial-fluvial and slope deposits

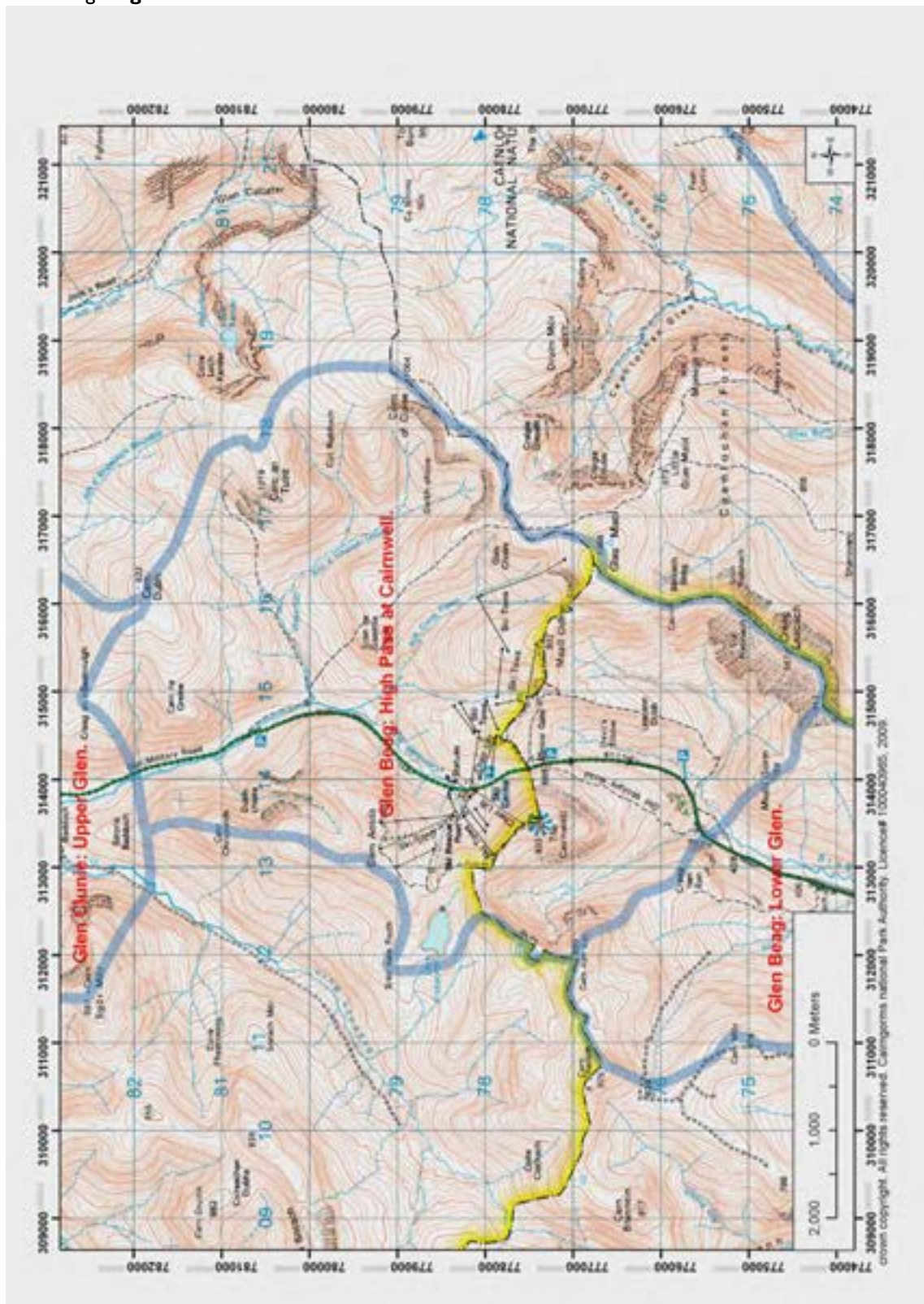


The road hugs the landform, following its ridges and dips, here the verge defined by a metal fence



Medieval and post-medieval settlement and field systems can be seen on these better drained areas

9.4 Glen Beag: High Pass at Cairnwell



9.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- This high pass curves around the massive bulk of the Cairnwell and is contained by broad flanks of rugged ridges and individually defined 'munro' summits
- Corries and cliffs sit along the south eastern edge of this character area, and Glas Choire is a fine 'snowbowl'
- The irregular topography of ridges and shallow glens reflects complex bedrock lithology and the extensive scree slopes have been created by post-glacial weathering of frost-susceptible quartz
- The crest of the pass is the focus of development associated with the seasonal ski resort of Glenshee, which includes several buildings and car parks, as well as an extensive tow system which reaches up onto the high tops and ridges
- The vegetation is heather moorland, possibly on glacial till overlying an acidic bedrock, fragmented by scree, some of which is managed by burning to create grouse moor
- Distinct and sometimes large, green patches around many burn sides, generally on the east side of the glen, indicate the location of pre-19th century shielings/shelters associated with summer grazings across the heather moorland
- There is some peat erosion associated with the ski runs
- There are occasional access tracks, some of which have been created informally through the use of ATVs
- Very occasional small fenced enclosures appear to be part of a research experiment in grazing impacts
- The road is relatively wide and very steep, marked out by numerous snow poles and signs, while its edges are reinforced on the southern side of the pass by concrete kerbing.

9.4.2 *Landscape experience*

- The steep sided hills and the sense of the surrounding 'mass' create a very pronounced sense of enclosure
- There is a very strong sense of 'upland pass' – it is clear that the road and the pass are higher than many other roads in Scotland, partly because of the long steep climb, and partly due to the sparse vegetation and lack of permanent settlement
- There is a sense of anticipation which builds up as a traveller approaches the crest of the pass
- The ski resort is a seasonal destination point in its own right, so there is also a sense of arrival experienced when reaching the 'high point'.

9.4.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is experienced very much as part of the transition of landscape character travelling between Glen Shee and Braemar, and therefore has strong sequential links with Glen Beag and Glen Clunie.

9.4.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The sense of elevation, and of crossing a pass, is very pronounced, a perception reinforced by the transition in vegetation and settlement pattern when travelling up from the glen floors at Deeside and Glen Shee, which then culminates in the crest of the pass. The ski resort, although tidy and well maintained, is a prominent and memorable feature. The green of the shieling sites, which can be found along the burnsides, can be a surprising encounter.



The road going up over the pass, with vegetation of moor and rough grazing emphasising the elevation



Approaching the Cairnwell from the north, the pass cuts behind a steep spur

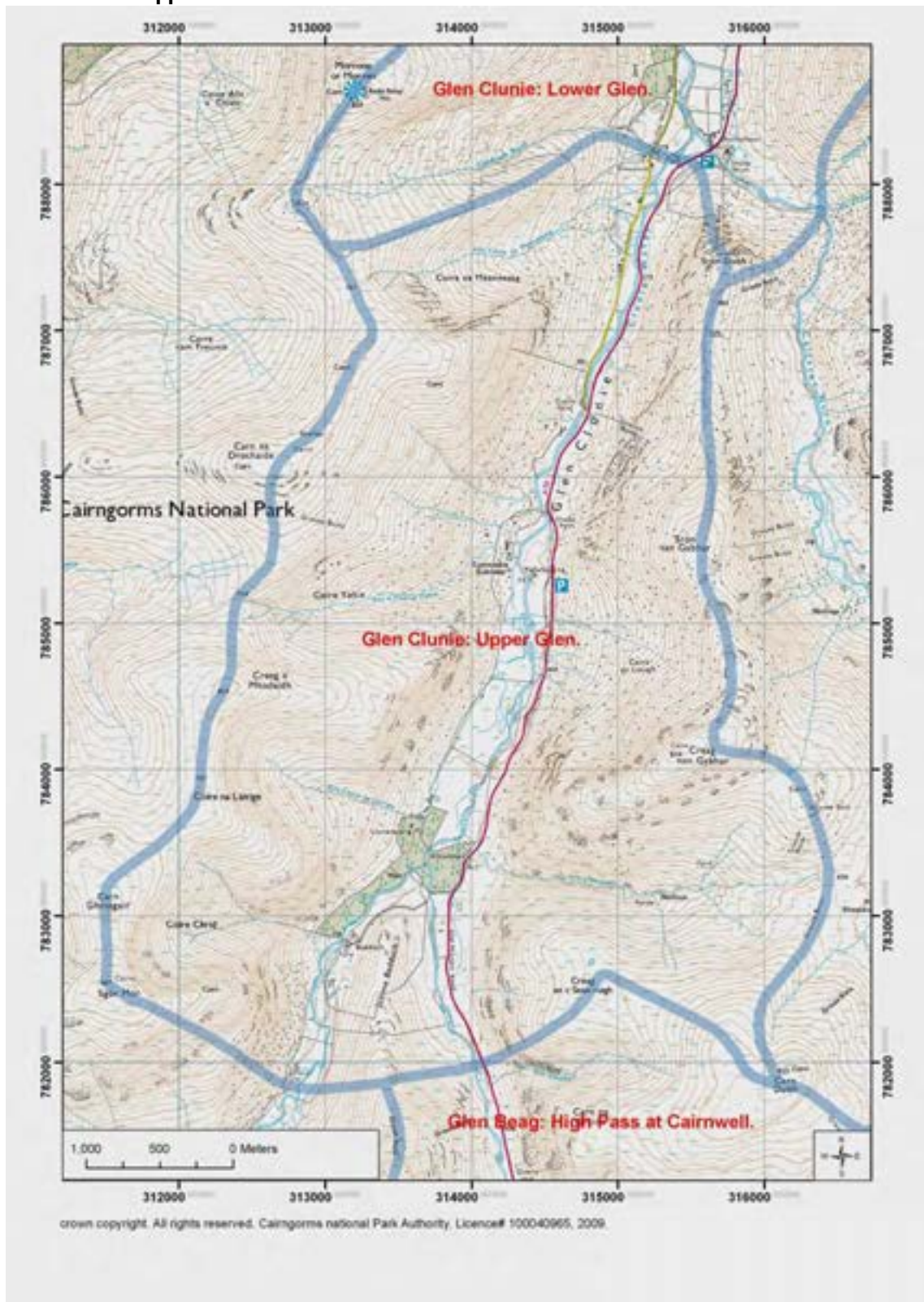


The ski resort and snow fences extend up the hillsides to screes across the silvery quartzite summits and ridges



Road side signs, concrete edges and barriers reflecting the high winter use of the road, combine to create visual clutter

9.5 Glen Clunie: Upper Glen



9.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- The north/south aligned Glen Clunie links the high pass of the Cairnwell and the wooded glens of Deeside
- The upper glen is framed by sweeping, concave-shaped hillsides interspersed with rocky ledges created by a glacial valley sitting within a much older, broader valley – the cliffs are spurs of the older valley truncated by glacial action
- The upper slopes of occasional screes of weathered quartzite sit below rugged summits
- The glen floor is generally a well defined, level floodplain, with intermittent deposits of well drained glacial-fluvial deposits largely limited to the northern end of the glen
- This upper glen is divided from the lower glen by the ‘threshold’ of a narrower section of glen just downstream from Newbigging
- The floodplain is subdivided into improved fields, although these have largely reverted to unimproved grazing and some wetland, with only occasional, drier fields on well drained deposit, being still actively managed at Newbigging and Auchallater
- The upper slopes are heathery, with actively managed grouse moor punctuated by shooting butts
- Woodland occupies the prominent conjunction between Glen Clunie and Glen Baddoch, which is also the location of several remnant 18th/19th century farmsteads, and evidence of both buildings and field systems is still readily visible
- The road hugs the base in slope, often sitting very close to the glen floor, and it is only elevated when passing Newbigging
- The bridge taking the old military road across the Clunie Water is a landmark feature, as well as offering a short but popular walking route which takes people past several ruined buildings

9.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- From the road, framed views north and south along the length of the glen reinforce the height and vertical drama of the hillsides
- The slight evidence of past settlement, especially when juxtaposed with the lack of present day development, suggests abandonment

9.5.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is experienced very much as part of the transition of landscape character travelling between Glen Shee and Braemar.

9.5.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The sparse vegetation pattern and lack of present day settlement in this upper part of Glen Clunie are key characteristics, while the simplicity of the vegetation particularly reinforces the profile of the topography, which stands out in views framed by the sweeping concave side slopes in views along the length of the glen.



Woodland straddles the conjunction of two glens at the southern end of Glen Clunie, where several improved fields are located on the glen floor



The glen is steep sided, but has a narrow level floor. The profile of the slightly concave side slopes formed by truncated spurs is easy to pick out



Remains of 18/19th century farms on the better drained, glacial/fluvial deposits

9.6



9.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- The north/south aligned Glen Clunie links the high pass of the Cairnwell and the wooded glens of Deeside
- The glen is framed by sweeping, concave-shaped hillsides rising to upper slopes of rugged rocky summits, with occasional screes reflecting post-glacial weathering
- The glen floor is a well defined floodplain worked flat by the Clunie Water and edged with hummocks and terraces of well drained glacial-fluvial deposits
- The floodplain is subdivided into regularly shaped, 18th/19th century improved fields which are fenced and grazed and, closer to Braemar, it is occupied by a golf course
- The upper slopes are heather moor, and there is one conifer woodland associated with more accessible lower slopes above the floodplain
- Occasional mature trees and sparse riparian woodland ensures that the glen appears open
- There is some conifer shelter wood on the lower side slopes, which changes to more extensive birch woodland approaching Braemar
- Settlement is limited to occasional late-18/19th century farmsteads, which appear to be on the sites of older settlements, located on the higher, free-draining hummocks of deposit at the edge of the glen
- The main public road, on the eastern side of the glen, is elevated, sitting on top of deposits at the edge of the glen
- The older military road on the western side of the glen, is a popular walking route and sits at the break in slope

9.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- The elevated main road affords panoramic views up and down the length of the glen
- The glen is relatively open, and its profile – a flat level floor contained by sharply defined, slightly concave flanks – is very simple and easy to read

9.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is experienced very much as part of the transition of landscape character travelling between Glen Shee and Braemar. It contrasts dramatically with the narrow, uncultivated upper glen of Glen Clunie, as it is wide and cultivated.

9.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The openness of the glen floor allows the pattern of small, but regularly shaped, 19th century improved green fields to dominate, particularly from elevated viewpoints, including the road. Further evidence of past settlement becomes quickly obvious on closer inspection, and appears to inform the location of the 19th century farmsteads, set on elevated hummocks at the edge of the strath.



The wide level floor is subdivided into 19th century improved fields, with only occasional mature trees remaining



Towards Braemar, a golf course occupies the glen floor, and semi-natural woodland extends across the lower glen sides



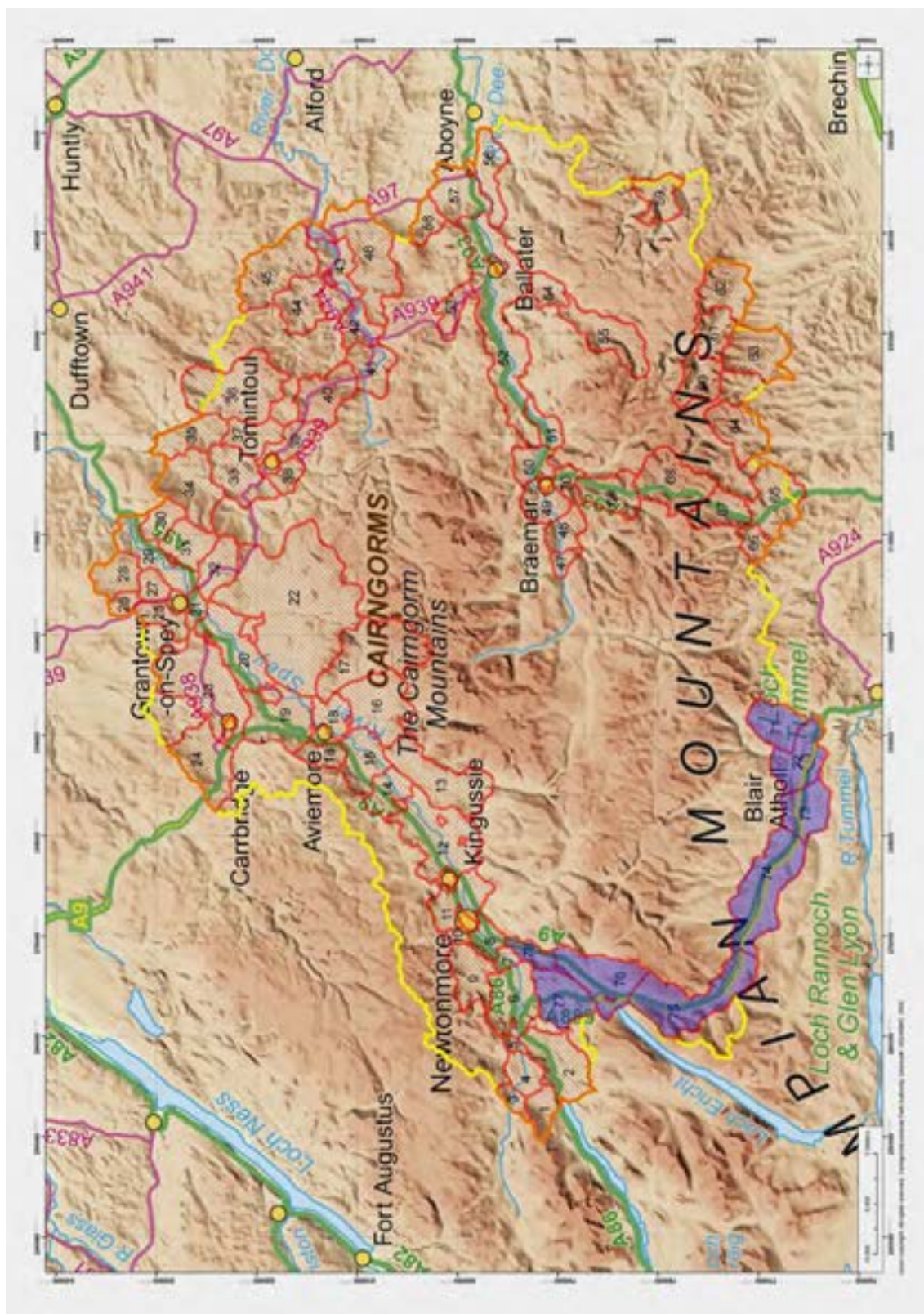
Settlement, largely associated with 18/19th century farmsteads, is located on the hummocky terrain at the edges of the glen floor

10 ATHOLL, GLEN GARRY, CATHÀR MÒR AND GLEN TRUIM

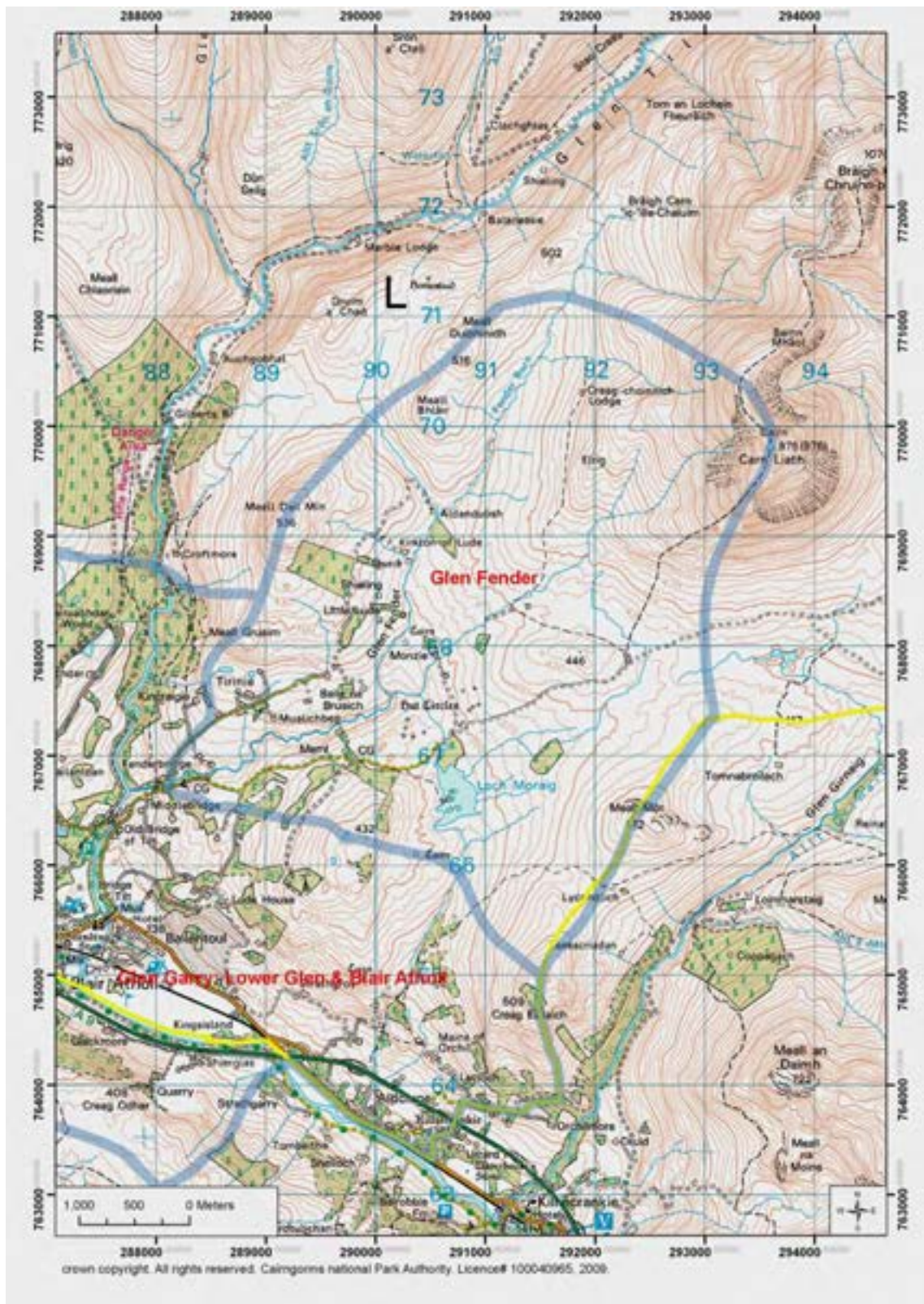
This section of the LCA extends northwards from the edge of the Park near Blair Atholl, following Glen Garry through the Drumochter Pass, to Dalwhinnie and the Cathàr Mòr and then north to where Glen Truim joins Strathspey. This character assessment is presented, working from south to north, as follows:

71. **Glen Fender**
72. Glen Garry: **Lower Glen and Blair Atholl**
73. **Glen Garry: Mid Glen**
74. **Glen Garry: Upper Glen**
75. **Drumochter Pass**
76. Glen Truim: **Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie**
77. **Cathàr Mòr**
78. **Glen Truim**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



10.1 Glen Fender



10.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- A wide, shallow upper bowl, with long undulating, gently graded slopes extending down to a narrow, steep sided river valley which is likely to pre-date the ice age
- This landscape has not been heavily worked by rivers, and in places retains a deep layer of glacial deposit
- The floor of the bowl is further diversified by alternating areas of rock ribs, moundy melt water deposits and drapes of glacial till
- The shallow side slopes are barely contained, often extending between the low surrounding hills onto expansive reaches of wet moorland which extend to the foot of the steep sided ridge of weathered scree at Carn Liath
- Orientated west/east, the long south facing slopes are farmed, despite elevations of between 350 and 400m, with 18th/19th century improved fields extending across the glacial till which is drained by a series of narrow tributaries to the main river
- The fields, now fenced, are used for grazing and fodder crops.
- Occasional conifer shelter woods are located around the farms or between fields, while the upper slopes of surrounding ridges are covered in moorland which has been burnt
- Broadleaves, birch dominated, occupy the steep sided river gulleys, and then extend in scattered groups across the unenclosed north facing slopes, where there are also more extensive areas of conifer woodland
- There is a head dyke of quarried stone and occasional individual specimen trees, reflecting the influence of the estate policies extending up from the lower land
- The farms, placed at regular intervals across the wider terraces on the north side of the river, still retain the form and scale of the original 18/19th century architecture, and seem to be largely still in use
- This pattern of 18th/19th century farmsteads is the most obvious contemporary evidence of a long history of past land use, but in the hinterland there are extensive areas of prehistoric hut circles and field systems, pre-improvement farmsteads and occasional abandoned 19th century farms

10.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- The sense of elevation – and a certain amount of surprise at seeing fields planned at such a high elevation within the Park – is reinforced by the extensive views north and across high plateaux to the mountain hinterland

- The survival of the well defined pattern of the 18th/19th century distribution of fields and farms creates a landscape of relative historic integrity
- The area is secluded, and feels 'set apart' from Blair Atholl below

10.1.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This shallow land form creates easy opportunities for 'borrowed' views into the mountainous interior north beyond Glen Tilt and westwards along Glen Garry. Most people would enter Glen Fender through Lower Glen Garry and Blair Atholl, reinforcing the sense of elevation.

10.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The elevated, improved field system and strong integrity of the 18/19th century pattern and form of the farm steadings are only the most recent manifestation of a long settled area, where people have taken advantage of the south facing, gentle slopes of deep, well drained deposits.



The gentle south facing slopes of deep glacial deposits have barely been eroded by rivers



North facing slopes are less enclosed, with rough grazing and scattered birch woodland

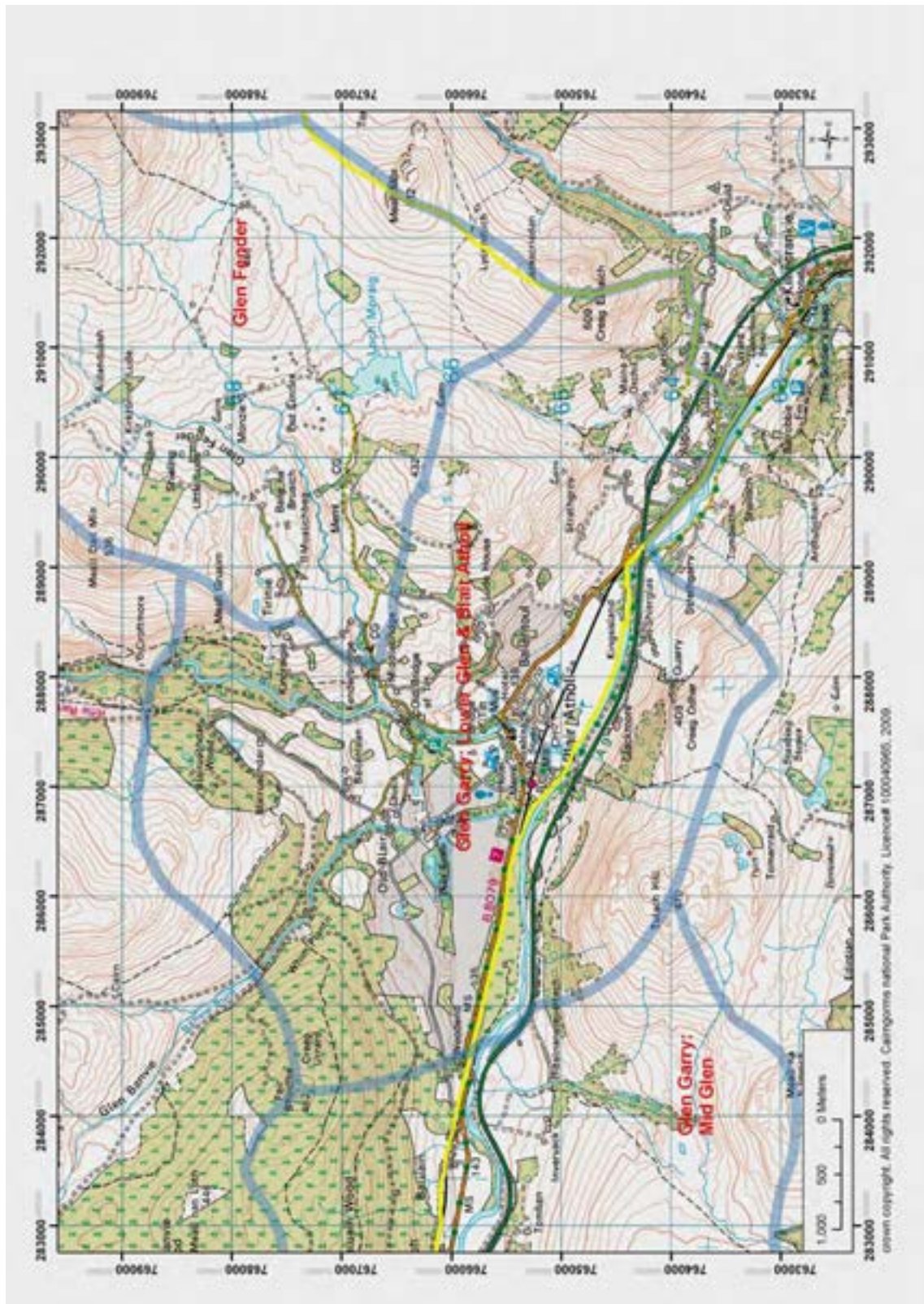


Moorland plateau and then the hills rise immediately from the elevated Glen Fender



Riparian woodland and a number of evenly dispersed 18th century farms across these elevated slopes

10.2 Glen Garry: Lower Glen and Blair Atholl



10.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- Surrounded by conical summits, the complex terrain of ridges, ‘false’ summits and undulations reflects the diverse composition of the metamorphic bedrock which has been subject to varied degrees of erosion
- The main valley has been deepened by glacial erosion, and the valley sides are rough and knobby where the bedrock is exposed
- Several rivers drop steeply from tributary valleys and converge to join the Garry at Blair Atholl
- This part of the glen combines gravelly glacial deposits with alluvial outlets from the tributary valleys forming terraces and mounds around an expansive basin of free-draining deposit which has been well-worked by the river systems along the floor of the glen
- The complex geomorphology is reflected in the diverse vegetation and land use, as well as a long history of settlement which has taken advantage of the south facing aspect, but it is also unified by the frequency and consistency of designed landscape features across a number of conjoined estates
- Policy woodland, specimen trees, parkland, field boundary trees, extensive commercial conifer woodlands on steeper slopes, semi-natural and riparian woodland are all present in this area
- The extensive designed landscapes form an easily recognisable element of wider 18th/19th century improvements, and regularly shaped fields occupy the undulating lower slopes and more level land
- These fields are often grazed, as is the extensive parkland, but there are also fields of arable crops adding further to visual diversity
- Small settlements are hidden within wooded settings, generally clustered around watercourses, while large houses, including Blair Castle, are located on more prominent sites
- The designed landscape of Blair Castle, an old clan chief base, includes centuries of historic land use focussed round this ancient, fortified site
- Built features associated with the designed landscapes are common – with walls and gateposts, bridges and walkways all combining to reinforce the extent of the individual estates
- The A9 occupies an elevated location along the southern side of the River Garry, and is partially screened by woodland
- North of the River there is a network of narrow roads on gravel terraces linking the tiny historic settlements and winding between small scale topographical features

- There are several waymarked access routes around Blair Atholl, as well as access to Blair Castle and visitor attractions in the villages.
- This character area is also the threshold to access into the heart of the southern Cairngorms, through Glen Tilt and lesser known passes, as well as south through the Pass of Killiecrankie

10.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- The influence of the designed landscapes is overwhelming, but travelling in and around the smaller roads and footpaths reveals the intimacy of the complex landform and the associated variety of features, both natural and historic, which reinforce the richness of this area
- The A9 gives fine views to the Beinn a' Ghlo massif to the east. Often this is where the first snow is seen on a winter journey north

10.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is relatively self contained, but does provide a 'threshold' to access routes into the hinterland of the Cairngorms massif, for example through Glen Tilt.

10.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The diversity of land form and land use, and the combination of prominent key focal points juxtaposed with features tucked away in more hidden, secluded settings, creates a rich landscape and experience. The designed landscapes created by individual estates underpin many of the distinctive features, and create a strong period setting.



Complex topography and diverse land use



This roundel of trees sits on a distinct gravel mound, while settlement is tucked into woodland

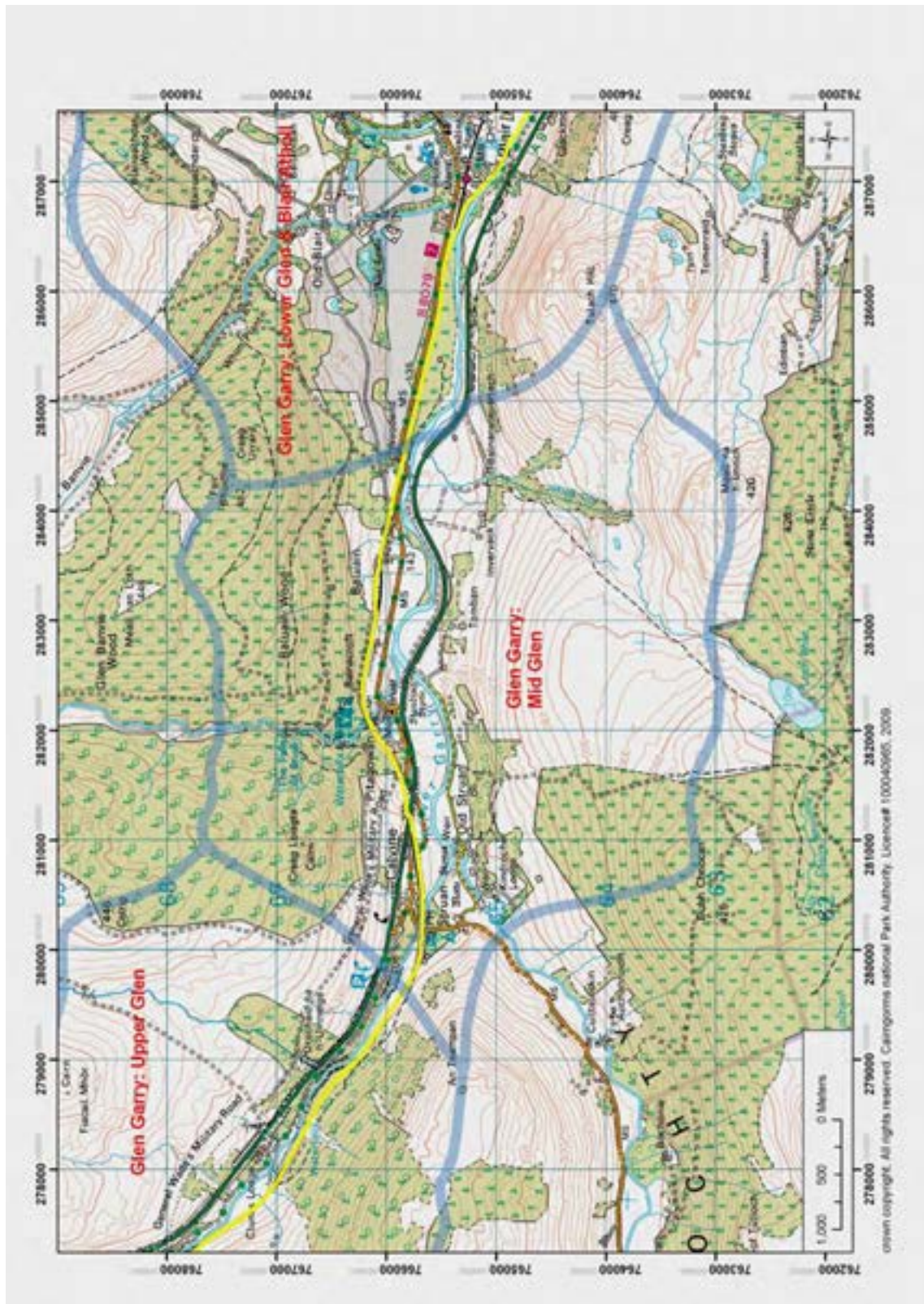


The River Tilt is one of several tributaries of the Garry



Blair Castle, elevated above the floodplain, and its policies

10.3 Glen Garry: Mid Glen



10.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- Two large glens – Glen Garry and Glen Errochty – merge to form a wide strath floor in this part of Glen Garry, aligned east/west, the confluence being marked by a striking medieval motte
- The side slopes of the glen are relatively evenly graded and simple slopes, extending down from ridges smoothed by glacier erosion which has also deepened the main valley
- Terraces and mounds of glacial-fluvial deposit sit along the edges of the strath floor
- The River Garry swings in wide meanders and has worked the gravelly deposits of the glen floor to form a relatively level floodplain
- Gravel builds up on the outer banks of the river, and the water flow is reduced by abstraction to reveal the gravelly riverbed
- Well established commercial conifer woodland extends along the south facing slopes of the glen, while the northern slopes are dominated by unimproved grassland and some heather, with naturally regenerating birch along the very lower slopes
- The level land along the strath floor, along with the most accessible gently graded lower slopes, are occupied by drained 18th/19th century improved fields
- These fields are fenced, with occasional sparse hedges or scant lines of trees reinforcing the regularity of the field pattern
- The line of the river and its tributaries stand out clearly as riparian woodland along the full extent of the glen
- Policy woodland around Kindrochat Lodge near Calvine and all the tiny settlements, as well as specimen trees of copper beech, ash, oak and sycamore reinforce the lowland character of this area
- Well settled, many of the regularly spaced farmsteads occupy sites likely to have been settled in an earlier periods, while the key villages – Calvine, Old Struan and Pitagowan/Bruar – are located at crossing points on the rivers which have been used for centuries
- The roads and railway converge at Calvine to crowd their way through a narrow part of the glen. Elevated on bridges and overpasses, these structures create some confusion and clutter, although this is partly absorbed by extensive woodland
- The visitor complex at Bruar offers an additional focal point for development, as well as provision for visitors to the Falls of Bruar, a spectacular gorge which has developed along a fault where the river drops steeply to the valley floor

- The glen is scattered with archaeological features, although they are only visible on close inspection

10.3.2 Landscape experience

- From the elevated A9, there are views across the strath to the north facing slopes, from where the regular spacing of the farmsteads is very easy to pick out
- The tangle of road and rail lines is most clearly experienced from more minor roads, from where the A9 seems out of scale with the detail of earlier settlement pattern and road network

10.3.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is largely self-contained, although it is partially inter-visible with the Lower Glen Garry character area, and provides a threshold to Upper Glen Garry when travelling north.

10.3.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The coherence of the 18th/19th century field pattern and associated regularly spaced farms, particularly on the north facing slopes, reinforces the historic character of this area. This is further emphasised by the clusters of small houses which are characteristic of the villages.



Terraces of gravelly deposit at the edges of the strath, and birch woodland on north facing slopes.



Extensive woodland on the south facing slopes overlooks the strath floor, worked level by the river



The River Garry, within riparian woodland, its gravel river bed revealed by the abstraction of some of its water



A 'motte' near the confluence of the rivers – one of a number of archaeological sites

10.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- The side slopes containing Glen Garry are gently graded, following the combined effects of glacial erosion and subsequent weathering of the bed rock into smooth, rounded, often elongated, forms
- These long smooth slopes and ridges frame a generally wide glen floor, although it narrows into a short section of more steeply sided and wooded pass around Clunes Lodge at its southern end
- The River Garry has worked glacial-fluvial deposits into a narrow floodplain, but abstraction has now reduced the water supply so that its gravelly riverbed is revealed
- Extensive woodland, including large areas of broadleaves and some of it relatively recently planted, extends across the side slopes
- This woodland is supplemented by small shelter woods associated with sparse settlement, naturally regenerating birch along the roadsides, distinctive clumps of remnant birch 'wood pasture' along the glen floor and riparian woodland
- There is evidence of past settlement along the valley floor, which extends back to medieval and post-medieval land use and settlement, but is most evident to day in the visible remains of 18th/19th century farmsteads, walled enclosures and the regular shapes of improved, grazed fields along the glen floor
- Settlement is now largely limited to a few large houses and buildings associated with managing shooting estates, with a series of lodges located on elevated land and set within woodland
- The A9 sits elevated and very close to the break in slope along the northern/eastern side of the glen, in part following the line of the Wade military road
- The railway is sited similarly hugging the bottom of steeper slopes along the western side of the glen

10.4.2 *Landscape experience*

- Travelling from the north, there is a marked sense of 'gateway' into Perthshire, as the narrow, enclosed Pass of Drumochter opens up into the wider Glen Garry
- Although they are visible from the A9, the remnant farmsteads and walled enclosures of the 18/19th century reward closer inspection and are an accessible reminder of more extensive historic land use

10.4.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This landscape area is relatively self contained, but its relative openness contrasts with the enclosed experience of the Drumochter Pass.

10.4.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The sense of openness, particularly when contrasted with the enclosure experienced in Drumochter Pass, contributes to the sequence of experience travelling along the A9, most significantly as a 'threshold' to the Perthshire side of the Cairngorms when travelling from the north. The remnants of historic settlement and land use – notably the ruins of farmsteads and the striking 'wood pasture' – are a feature of this glen.



The wide strath, low relief of the soil covered surrounding hills and shallow side valleys reinforce the sense of openness



Linear riparian woodland and wood pasture within unimproved grassland fields on gravelly terraces

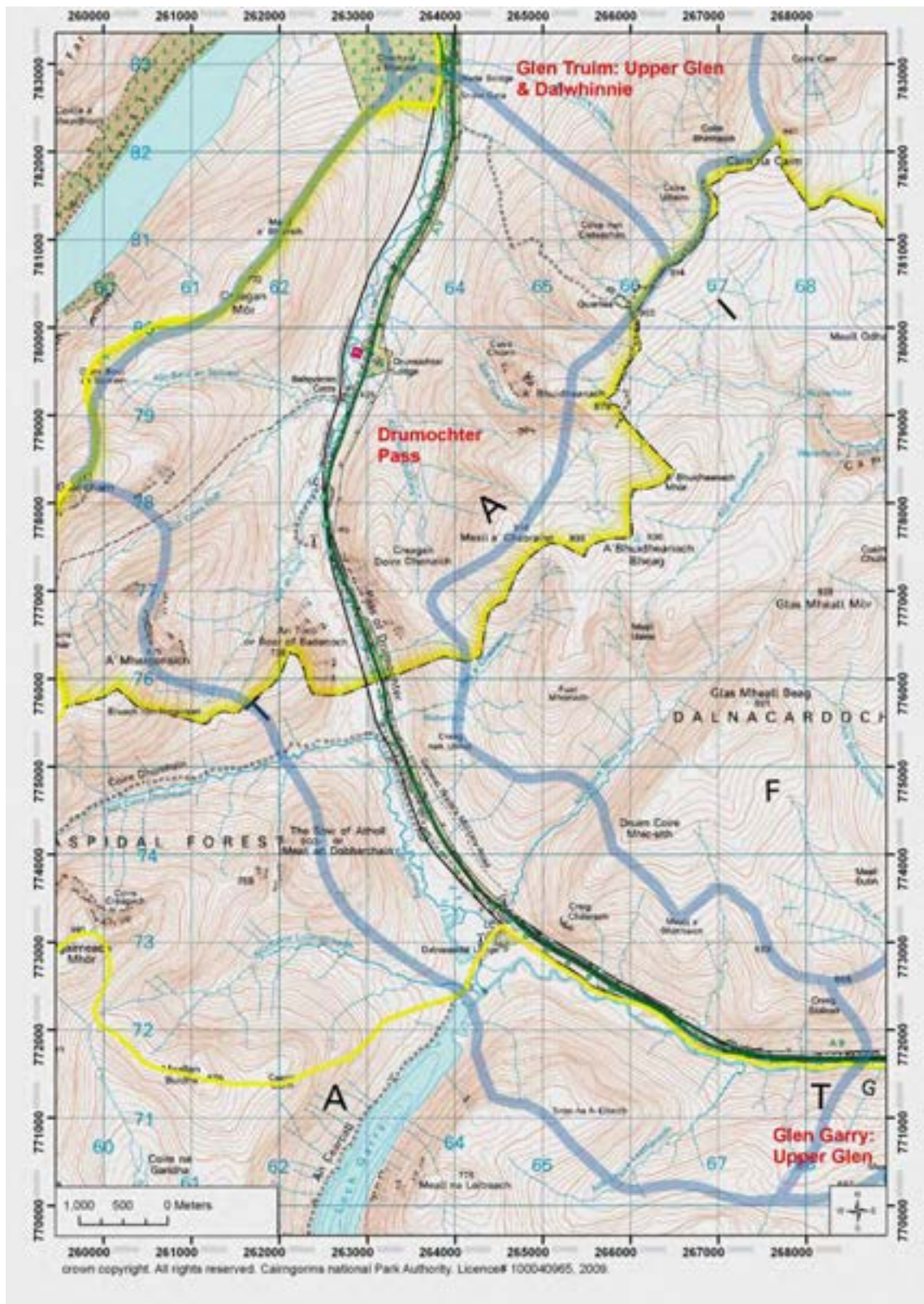


Several lodge houses, surrounded by shelter woods, punctuate the glen



Woodland regenerating along the railway line, and planted on side slopes

10.5 Drumochter Pass



10.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- Steep, at times verging on sheer, side slopes contain this narrow, elevated pass which links Speyside to the Perthshire glens
- The drainage pattern that existed before glaciation is apparent in the V-shaped form of many of the tributary valleys that join this main trunk valley. Some of these valley heads acted as accumulation areas for snow during the ice age, and are now corries
- There are extensive debris slopes pockmarked with active run-off chutes and landslips while smaller water channels often simply drop down the hillsides in shallow gulleys
- The lower slopes and the edge of the glen floor are often covered in extensive mounded glacial-fluvial deposits which are very prominent if side-lit or after snowfall. This is classic, hummocky moraine, where individual ridges mark standstills in the retreat of a glacier
- The rivers, braided channels and their tributaries meander across the glen floor, sometimes fragmenting into a network of smaller drainage channels and wetland
- Heather moorland over the sides of the pass, and unimproved grassland along the glen floor, create a simple vegetation pattern, which in detail reflects the small scale topography – with heather on drier hummocks
- Conifer woodland is limited to small shelter woods associated with the very sparse settlement, and linear belts aligned parallel to the A9, to provide protection from snow
- Settlement is extremely sparse, with occasional buildings and infrastructure associated with managing shooting estates and the railway located on alluvial fans where tributaries join the main river system
- The A9, partially dualled, the railway and the overhead pylon line are packed into the narrow pass
- Infrastructure – such as road signs and the telecommunications mast at Drumochter – are very visible in this sparse landscape
- There are opportunities to walk into the interior, and access to munros and other summits from estate tracks is made more possible through car parks and laybys located at intervals through the pass

10.5.2 *Landscape experience*

- The sense of drama related to travelling through such a pronounced 'pass' is reinforced by the narrowness of the glen and the precipitous side slopes, as well as the shadows cast by the steep flanks of this pass

- Views from the elevated A9 into side valleys – such as where Loch Garry joins the Pass – create some relief from the sense of enclosure
- A change in weather is often experienced when crossing through Drumochter between southern and northern Scotland
- The infrastructure associated with the road and communications create visual clutter in this sparse landscape

10.5.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

The pass is very self-contained, but as its character contrasts strongly with Perthshire to the south and Speyside to the north, the sequence of travelling between different characters heightens the sense of drama.

10.5.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

This pass has a pronounced ‘upland’ character. Sparsely and simply vegetated, wetland and low heath reveal the topography and the active scree slopes and land slips. Its simplicity has been compromised by the infrastructure, but the sense of travelling through an area where natural forces can dominate over human intervention prevails.



Hummocky terrain of glacial-fluvial deposits on the lower side slopes



The road and the railway on terraces above the glen floor, here above a stretch of wetland

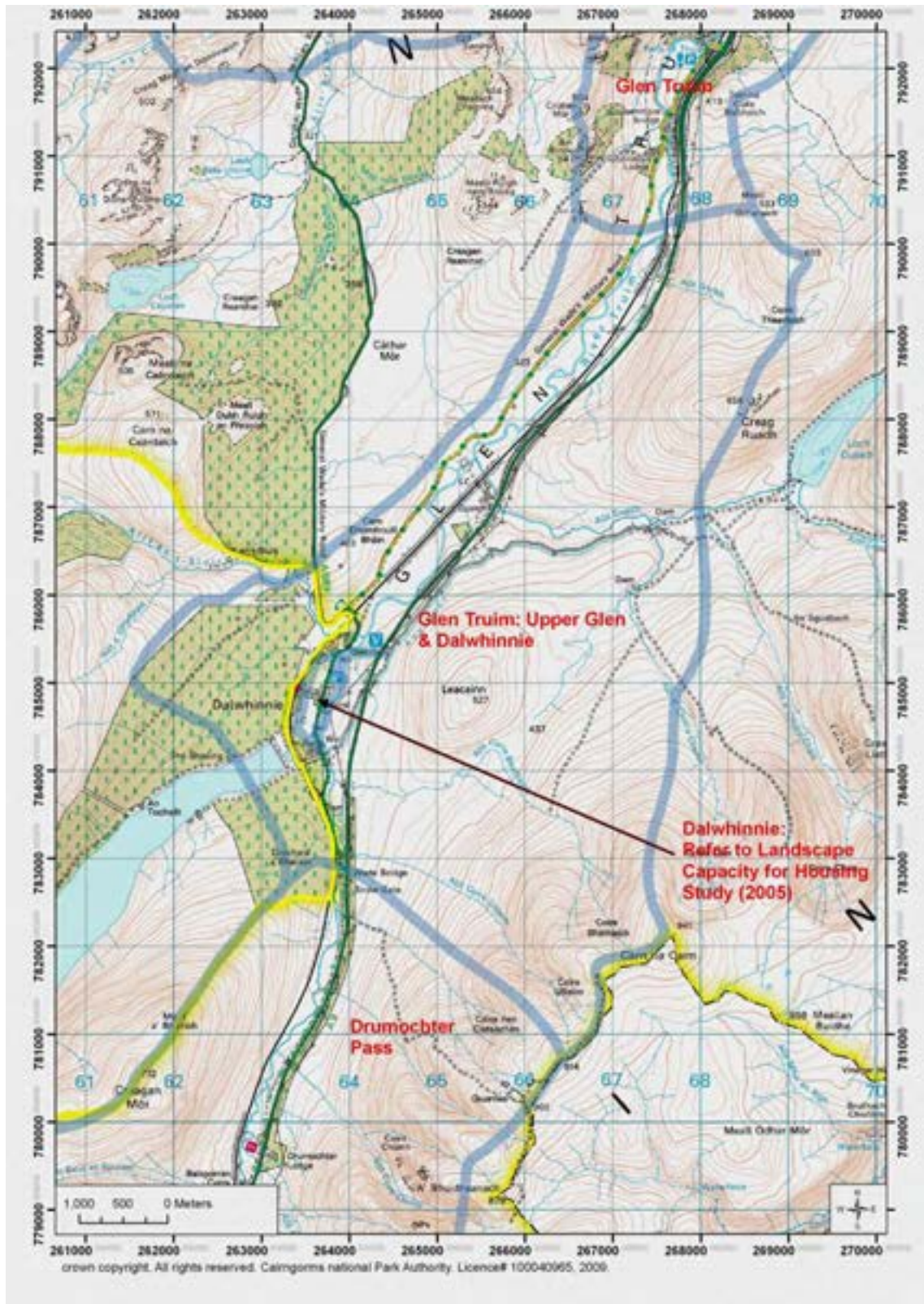


Loch Garry, visible in a relatively short glimpse view from the A9



The Pass closes in when travelling south from Dalwhinnie

10.6 Glen Truim: Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie



10.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- A wide floodplain contained by the shallow side slopes of Cathar Mor to the west and elongated rounded hills which sit in front of the steep escarpment which forms the edge of the Gaick plateau to the east
- The River Truim is fed by drains and tributaries as it meanders across the flat floor of this trench-like section of straight valley. It is prone to flooding and has braided reaches
- Occasional gravelly glacial-fluvial deposits and terraces at the edges of the glen floor stand out as features
- Sparsely vegetated, with little woodland – only scrubby willow and occasional broadleaves associated with the watercourses, as well as a single larger block of conifers – the glen floor is dominated by poorly drained grassland and wet heath, but is in part fenced into large fields
- The gently graded side slopes are dominated by heather moorland, but there are conifer woodland shelterbelts planted in horizontal strips east of the A9, to provide shelter from snow
- More extensive commercial conifer woodland extends over the east facing slopes to the south above Dalwhinnie and flanking either side of Loch Ercht, which is barely visible behind its dam face
- The A9, the railway, the minor road along the west of the glen, as well as the overhead pylon line, are all elevated above the strath floor, aligned lengthwise along the glen
- A series of rectangular settlement ponds, enclosed by embankments, are located towards the southern end of the glen and there are snow fences aligned parallel to the A9
- There is very little existing settlement, or even evidence of pre mid/late 19th century land use until Dalwhinnie, where several distinct ‘clusters’ of development, including the prominent white painted distillery, are located on the A889

10.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- The glen feels elevated, expansive, exposed and open, an impression emphasised by the sparse vegetation and lack of cultivated land from any period, as well as the shallow gradients of the side slopes and low relief of surrounding hills, especially to the west
- The semi-natural vegetation pattern, the exposure and the powerful dynamism of the river all combine to create a sense that human intervention is easily overcome by natural forces at this elevation
- The snow fences and shelterbelts add visual clutter to the otherwise sparse and simple landscape

- Views to higher hills, including into the Cairngorms, are often framed by the mouths of side glens, or extend across the adjacent Cathar Moor
- The openness also ensures that traffic and infrastructure is clearly visible

10.6.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This character area is inter-visible with surrounding character areas, with 'borrowed' views of Glen Truim, as well as south towards the Drumochter Pass.

10.6.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The sense of elevation and openness, and the relative dominance of natural processes such as flooding, is pronounced, despite the presence of infrastructure and the settlement at Dalwhinnie. The simplicity of the topography is complemented by the lack of pattern in the vegetation cover.



From the A9, the expanse of the strath is clearly visible and the openness is easy to experience



Relatively simple, semi-natural vegetation, dominated by wet pasture within a trench-like valley

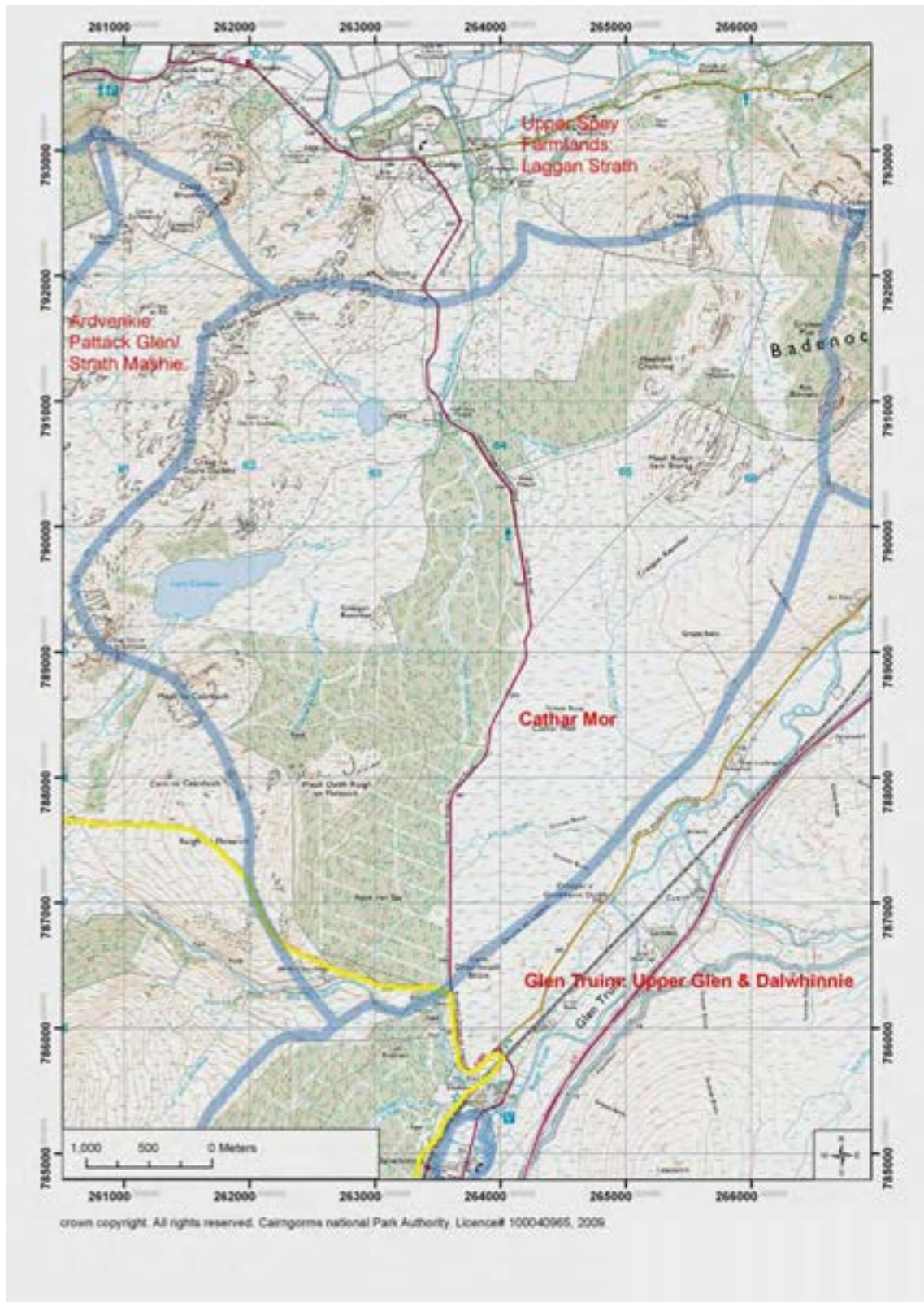


Dalwhinnie is located between the River Truim and afforested slopes



The River Truim, here in flood, is dynamic and can be unpredictable

10.7 Càthar Mòr



10.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- This expanse of undulating, raised moorland is an old valley floor which has largely escaped glacial erosion, because ice flow has tended towards adjacent valleys
- Flaggy Moine schist bedrock lies underneath a veneer of glacial deposits and peat bog, forming an irregular shaped bowl partially contained by craggy, irregular shaped hills, steepened and roughened by glacial erosion
- The ice-roughened hills to the east, around Cruben Beag, are particularly striking, with long slopes to the west and cliffs facing east
- Occasional hummocks of glacial deposits become more frequent to the north, where the terrain becomes more complex as it drops down to the Laggan Strath
- To the south west, a pronounced break in slope, up to 150m high, forms a well-defined edge to Glen Truim
- Long watercourses, with few tributaries drain to the Spey in the north and the Truim to the south
- Two lochs – Loch Caoldair and Loch Glas-Choire – are located west of the A889. The largest, Loch Caoldair is bounded by rocky crags
- Heather moorland, with occasional wet heath in shallow dips, extends over most of the moor, and is managed as grouse moor
- There is extensive conifer woodland across the moorland, in places reaching up to the rocky outcrops below the hill summits
- Settlement is limited to a single house next to the A889
- The A889 crosses the middle of moor on the line of one of Wade's military roads
- Several access routes and forest tracks lead into the hinterland especially to the west, including to Loch Caoldair

10.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- The moor feels open, expansive and often larger than it is in reality, despite the forestry, which is increasing the enclosure as it grows
- Travelling onto the moor along the A889, there is a strong sense of being elevated, which is reinforced by the steep slopes at either end, where the moor rises up above Glen Truim and Strathspey. This is most pronounced in winter, when snow drifts across the Cathàr Mòr corridor

- There are fine, panoramic views to the small enclosing hills and the more distant Cairngorms and the Monadhliath across the sweeping expanse of the moor
- Views down into the adjacent valleys are suddenly revealed when arriving at the crest of the elevated edges of the moor
- The simplicity of the vegetation and apparent lack of built structures means that occasional infrastructure, such as the telecommunications mast, is a visual feature
- The area around Loch Caoldair is relatively secluded, in part hidden from the road by woodland and well contained by hills

10.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This character area is very inter-visible with surrounding character areas, with 'borrowed' views of the surrounding mountains. In addition, it forms the southern boundary to the Laggan Strath, and partially contains Upper Glen Truim, and contrasts with these more settled, busier valleys

10.7.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This landscape is dominated by the sense of elevation and expanse, the visual simplicity of the vegetation pattern, and the lack of settlement and infrastructure.



From the A889, the expanse of the moor is obvious, here with the knobby skyline of the eastern hills outlined beyond



Moorland, developed on hummocky glacial deposits along the edge to Glen Truim

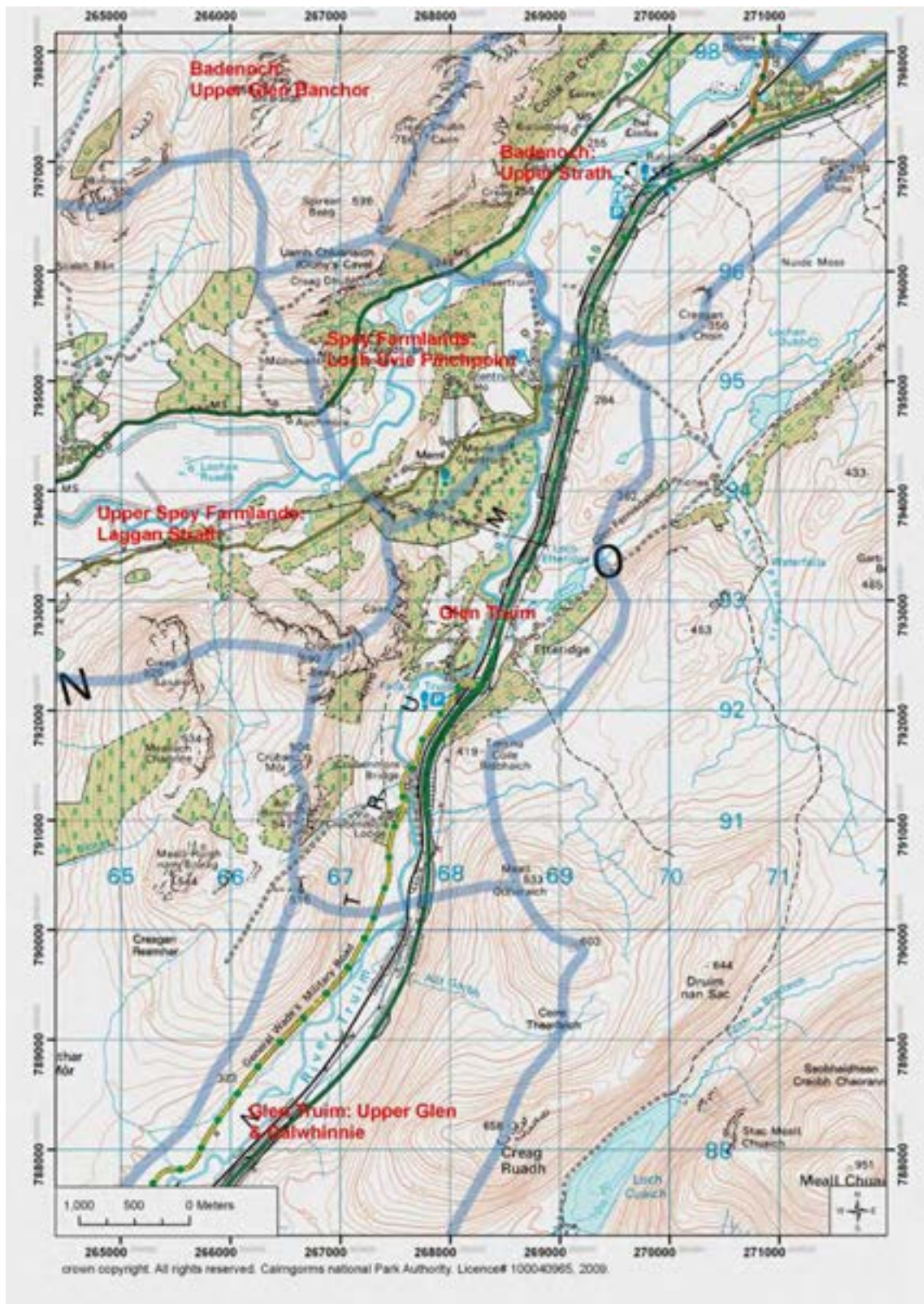


Autumn colour and young, planted forest where the terrain becomes more hummocky at the northern edge of the moor, before it drops down to Laggan strath



There is extensive woodland across the moor, partially obscuring views to the western hills at Ardverikie

10.8 Glen Truim



10.8.1 *Landscape Character*

- A sequence of low, rocky hill summits which have resisted erosion contain this slot like glacial valley to the west, while to the east, summits have been smoothed by glaciers into more rounded forms
- Glaciers retreated northwards through this narrow glen, leaving behind cliffs and over-steep slopes which resulted in post glacial rockfalls
- This glen sits just south of the confluence of the Spey and the Truim, and a small breach to the east joins with Glen Fernisdale, creating further physical complexity
- The River Truim winds across the narrow glen floor between gravelly terraces, dropping over a bench of rock relatively resistant to erosion at the Falls of Truim
- Planted woodland, including commercial conifer, occasional older belts of trees and recently established native woodland is supplemented by extensive regeneration of broadleaves and conifers along the steep slopes and the roadsides where grazing is limited
- Heather moorland extends over more open slopes
- Brighter green, 18th/19th improved fields, possibly overlying medieval and post-medieval agriculture, are still grazed on the flatter, better drained sections of gravelly fluvial-glacial deposits
- Three clusters of estate buildings – Etteridge, Crubenbeg and Crubenmore – are located on slightly raised, well-drained mounds, surrounded by these green fields and the abandoned fields of post-medieval farmsteads
- A Wade military road crosses this glen and goes through Glen Fernisdale, following the line of the Ericht-Laidon fault
- The A9 and the railway sit elevated, side by side, hugging the eastern edge of the glen floor
- Minor roads and access tracks extend access along the glens and there are routes up into the hills, possibly used largely for sporting access
- The Falls of Truim is a visitor attraction, from where there are way-marked walking routes to Laggan and around Glen Truim estate

10.8.2 *Landscape experience*

- Experienced from the A9, the glen appears to be well wooded, but from more minor roads and footpaths, the glen is experienced as an intimate scaled pattern of woodland and open ground which reflects the small scale diversity of the landform

- There is a sense of travelling through a 'pass', as this narrow glen links fertile, diverse 'Speyside' with the elevated and exposed character of Dalwhinnie and the Drumochter Pass to the south

10.8.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

The glen is largely self-contained, with little inter-visibility with other areas, but it forms a distinct 'threshold' to the character areas of Speyside when travelling north, and up to the elevated, sparse landscape of upper Glen Truim and Drumochter to the south.

10.8.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

This landscape is diverse, with a range of different topographical features complemented by varied woodland and a pattern of fields, which pre-dates but is strongly associated with the individual clusters of the three estates. There is extensive regeneration, coupled with new planting, which reinforces the sense of an enclosed 'pass' when travelling through this glen.



The River Truim, with the rocky hill tops of this narrow glen in the background



Large houses sit on terraces, adjacent to grazed pasture. There a number of the small estate houses which cluster around this narrow glen



The narrow pass is framed by steep slopes and woodland



There is extensive planting and woodland regeneration

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT:

UPLAND AREAS

Section version 2: Maps updated 1 July 2010

These upland areas are the least inhabited areas of the Park – although there are occasional remote settlements and farms in addition to some estate houses which may be inhabited for at least part of the year. For the purposes of this landscape character assessment, these areas were assessed at a more strategic scale. This broader scale of assessment reflects the relatively limited number of potential land management and land use issues which are likely to be encountered in these areas.

II UPLAND AREAS

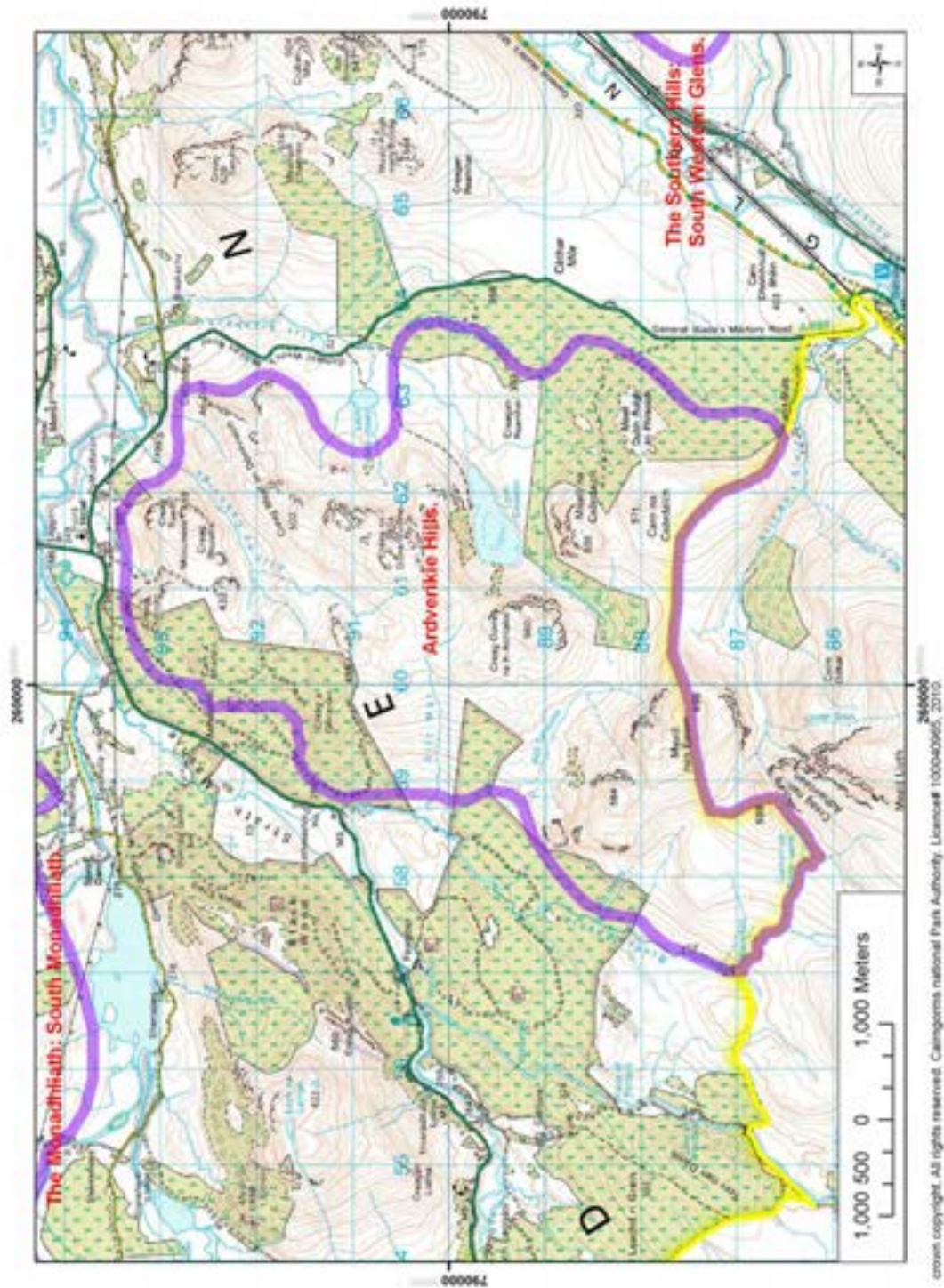
Twelve upland landscape character areas were identified. Many of the character areas have been named to correspond with the upland character area used in the original Cairngorms LCA (1996), which allows for cross-reference to this original document. The character areas are illustrated on the following map, and have been numbered as follows:

- 79. The Ardverikie Hills**
- 80. The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath**
- 81. The Monadhliath: North Monadhliath**
- 82. The Strathdearn Hills**
- 83. The Hills of Cromdale**
- 84. The North Eastern Hills**
- 85. The North Eastern Hills: Deeside Hills**
- 86. The Angus Glens Uplands**
- 87. The White Mounth**
- 88. The Southern Hills: South Eastern Glens**
- 89. The Southern Hills: South Western Glens**
- 90. Cairngorms Central Massif**

The numbers relate to the character areas identified on the following map.



11.1 Ardverikie Hills



11.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- These small, knobbly, erosion-resistant hills are developed on intensely folded and fractured Moine schists, and have been steepened and roughened by glaciation, with crags most evident on the east-facing sides of the hill summits
- The hills contain a series of linked, steep sided and narrow valleys generally orientated south west/north east, creating a relatively complex landscape
- The hills are low – rising up to about 650m – but are elevated above the already raised Càthar Mor corridor to the east
- Lochs – including Loch Caoldair, set within rocky crags at the heart of this area – and relatively level areas of wetland are enclosed by steep hillsides
- The soils are generally immature rankers, which tend to be shallow, poorly developed and acidic, supporting heather and some blaeberry heath
- Conifer woodland extends up onto the lower slopes from the low lying bowl of Càthar Mor to the east and the shallow slopes of Strath Mashie to the north west
- Semi-natural broadleaved woodland extends into the core of this area along the narrow valleys
- There is no historic or pre-historic settlement evident in this area, and apart from a couple of access tracks, one of which is way-marked from the woodland at Càthar Mor, there is no other infrastructure

11.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- Although a small area of relatively low hills, the crags and rock outcrops create a rugged character
- The small scale, almost intimate character of this area reflects its intricate detailed topography
- The rugged, vertical hills contrast with the horizontal expanse of Càthar Mor to the east
- This area is secluded, hidden away behind forest on most sides, and rarely visited
- The hills are often obscured by woodland, which grows along the lower slopes and screens the hills from surrounding roads

11.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This hill group is at the western edge of the Park, and are part of the transition between landscapes of the east and west sides of Scotland. The Hills form the westerly containment to

the expansive bowl of Càthar Mor as well as the south easterly edge to Strath Mashie and Glen Pattack.

11.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

These small but rugged hills of craggy, exposed rock, form an irregular skyline which is easily recognisable when visible, but the area is secluded and rarely visited, largely tucked away behind surrounding woodland.

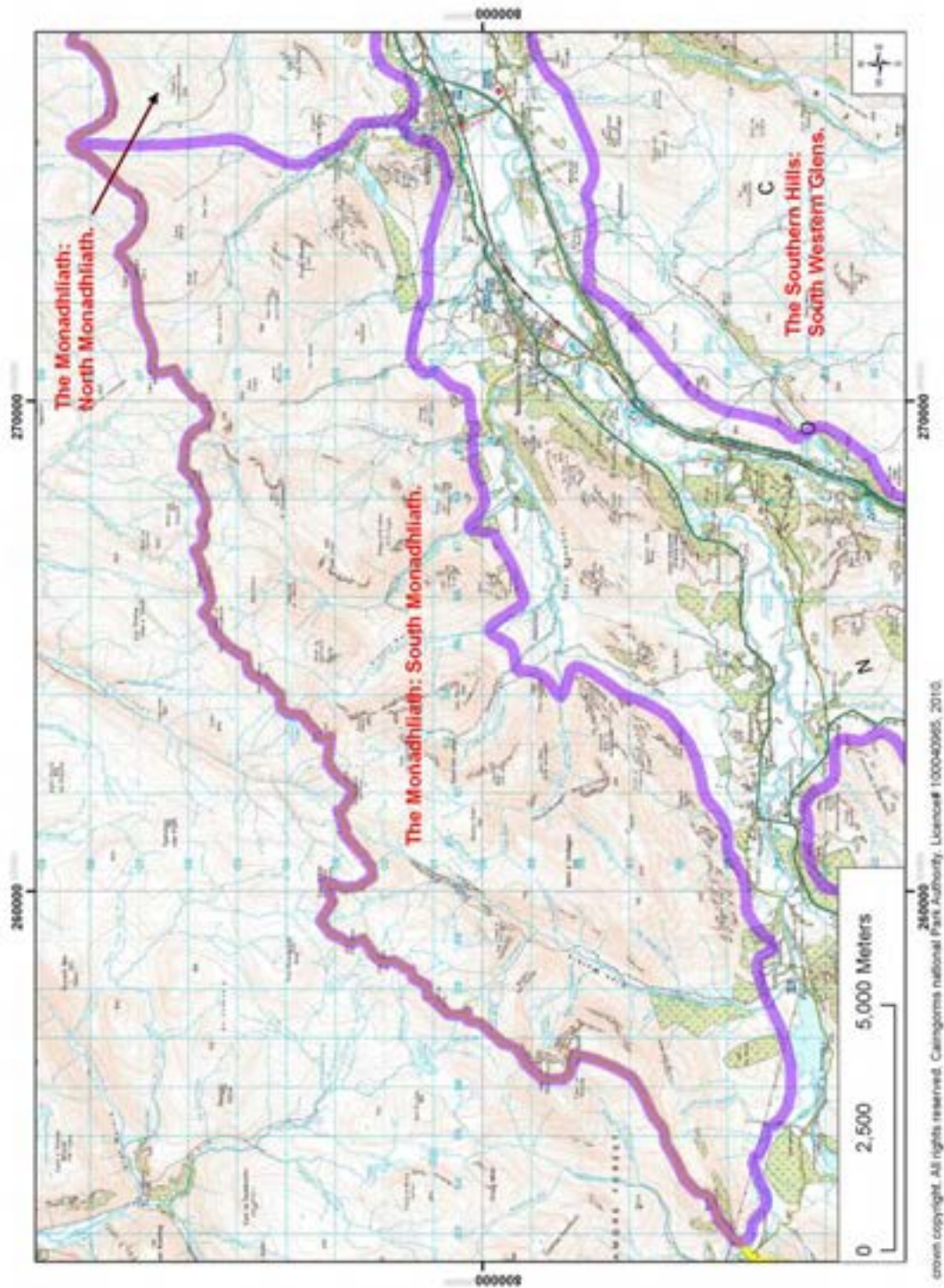


The craggy, exposed rock of these hills, with forestry in the foreground



Woodland along the lower slopes, with the Ardverikie hills in the mist

11.2 The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath



11.2.1 *Landscape Character*

- The southerly and south easterly orientated glens and slopes of the rounded hills and long ridges of the Monadhliath form the north western boundary to the Park
- While within the wider extent of the Monadhliath, long glens and ridges extend north-east/south west, here side valleys and shallow bowls of land drain south-eastwards to the Spey and its tributaries
- Peaks and separate summits in the south Monadhliath can reach 800m, and the high tops have been steepened a by glacial erosion of corries
- On lower hills, other glacial activity has formed crags and rocky outcrops along the upper flanks of the side glens, often on the east/south east facing hills directly overlooking Strathspey
- Glacial erosion has also created rocky outcrops and rockfalls along the south east faces of slopes above Strathspey
- The side glens tend to be elevated, with many tributaries feeding into burns which cut into glacial-fluvial deposits
- There is very occasional riparian woodland along these watercourses
- Heather and upland grassland dominates the upper slopes, and this vegetation can extend down to the glen floors, although areas of grassland and rush, with occasional lochans are located on poorly drained areas dominated by peat
- There is extensive evidence of past land use on the lower, south facing slopes above the rivers Spey and Banchor, with numerous prehistoric sites amongst the pre-improvement townships, a feature of this character area
- Many former shielings, often recognised by their bright green sites, cluster around most of the watercourses flowing south from the high hills
- Tracks for off road vehicles are largely confined to the floors of the glens, with footpaths and smaller tracks then branching off to access ridges and summits

11.2.2 *Landscape experience*

- This area includes some of the most remote hills and glens in the Park, an experience which is reinforced by the height of the hills, the roughness of the terrain and the difficulty of accessing this area from the north
- The mountains are formidable, forming a robust edge to the Park and from the tops they are experienced as the outer edge of the much larger, remote and relatively inaccessible Monadhliath range

11.2.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The southern Monadhliath form the visual backdrop and the more remote hinterland to the landscape character areas within Upper Spey and Badenoch. These mountains are also highly visible from southern hill ranges and the Cairngorm massif.

11.2.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This area of high peaks and craggy upper slopes combines relative remoteness with numerous sites of historic and even prehistoric, settlement and land use, many of which are found across the lower slopes, while summer shielings are found higher up, along the numerous minor glens in this area.



The side glens are elevated above the main trunk glens, with craggy upper slopes formed by glacial erosion – the bright green areas are often likely to be shieling sites



Tracks, often located along the glen floors, leading into the interior hills – here leading through the grass-covered slopes of Glen Markie

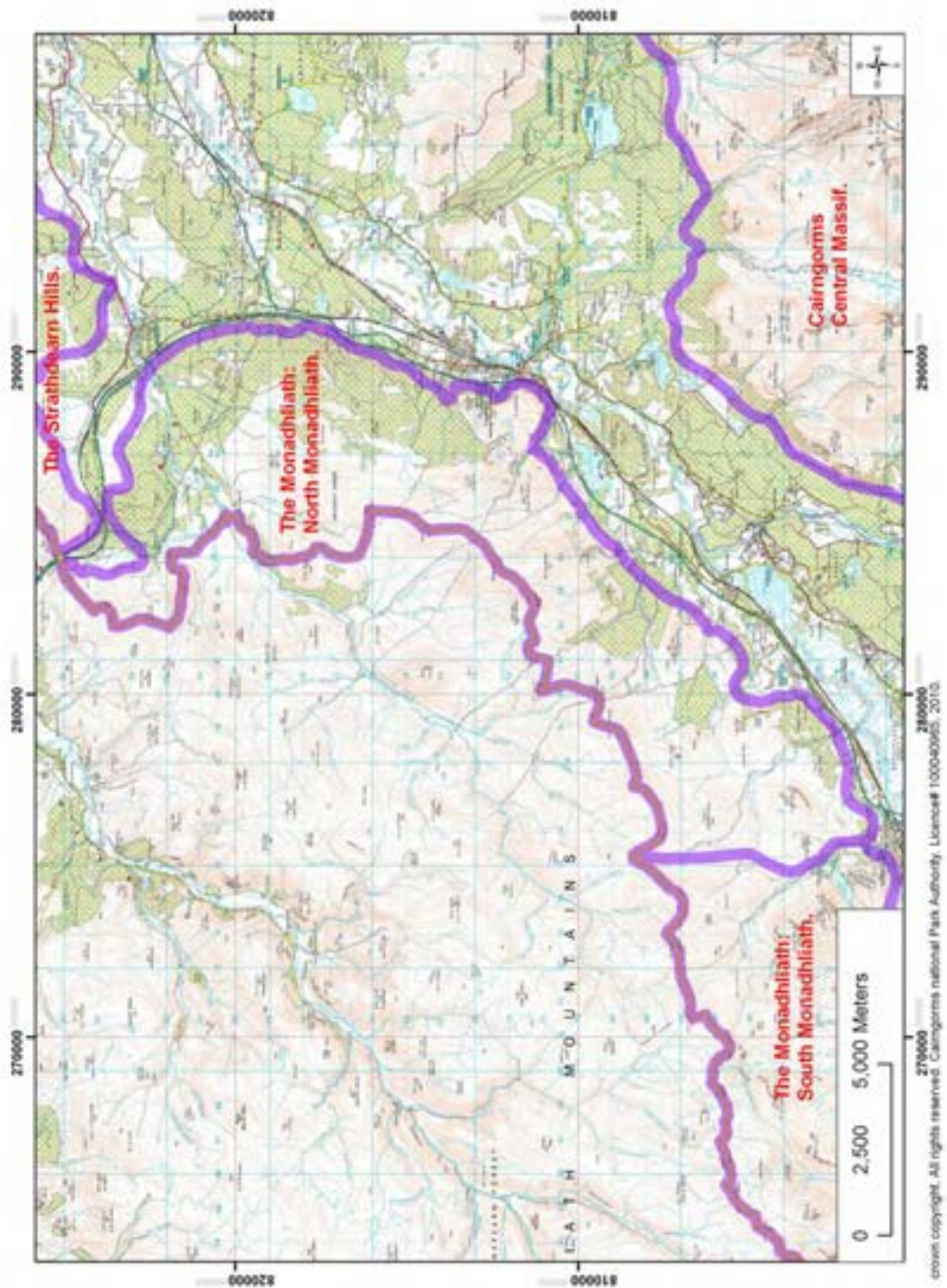


Long ridges, and extensive views to the south west, out with the Park



Hills slopes steepened and roughened by glaciation

11.3 The Monadhliath: North Monadhliath



11.3.1 *Landscape Character*

- These south easterly orientated glens and slopes of the rounded hills and long ridges of the Monadhliath form the north western boundary to the Park
- The high plateau shows few signs of significant glacial erosion in this northern section of the Monadhliath. Its relative monotony is partly a reflection of the uniformity of the underlying Moine schists, but it is also an old erosion surface which has tilted towards the north east
- While within the wider extent of the Monadhliath, long glens and ridges extend north-east/south west, here wide side valleys and generally shallow bowls of land drain south-eastwards to the Spey and its tributaries
- This part of the Monadhliath is generally more subdued than the more rugged southern Monadhliath, and has lower and more rounded terrain especially on the south east flanks overlooking Strathspey, because the lower terrain offered fewer opportunities for mountain glaciers to form during the latest period of repeated glaciation
- The lower hills limit the sense of enclosure and the north/south elongated ridges form large scale, undulating terrain
- Occasional steep sided glens and rocky upper slopes can be found in this area, especially on hillsides facing Strathspey
- Burns traverse the gentle gradients in wide sweeps, often through wetter land, but with few identifiable tributaries
- While there is extensive heather moor and upland grassland across this area, there are also large areas of geometrically shaped conifer woodland, often on gently sloping ground, which extends well into the interior of the glens
- There is little recorded evidence of past land use or settlement beyond the immediate side slopes of Strathspey
- Tracks, suitable for off road vehicles, extend along the lower glen floors, leading to more minor access routes on higher ridges

11.3.2 *Landscape experience*

- The simple topography of low relief and smooth slopes creates a relatively open, expansive landscape on the upper slopes, although forestry can be a contrasting enclosing element
- This area is secluded but not especially remote, with the forest and associated activities limiting the sense of remoteness

11.3.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The part of the Monadhliath forms a visual backdrop and a more secluded hinterland to the landscape character areas within Strathspey. These hills are also visible from the Rothiemurchus, Inshriach and the Cairngorm massif.

11.3.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The smooth, subdued land form strongly reflects glacial erosion, and underpins the low relief which creates a relatively open landscape. It differs from the Southern Monadhliath in terms of the presence of the forestry and lack of recorded historic settlement, as well as being perceived as less remote.

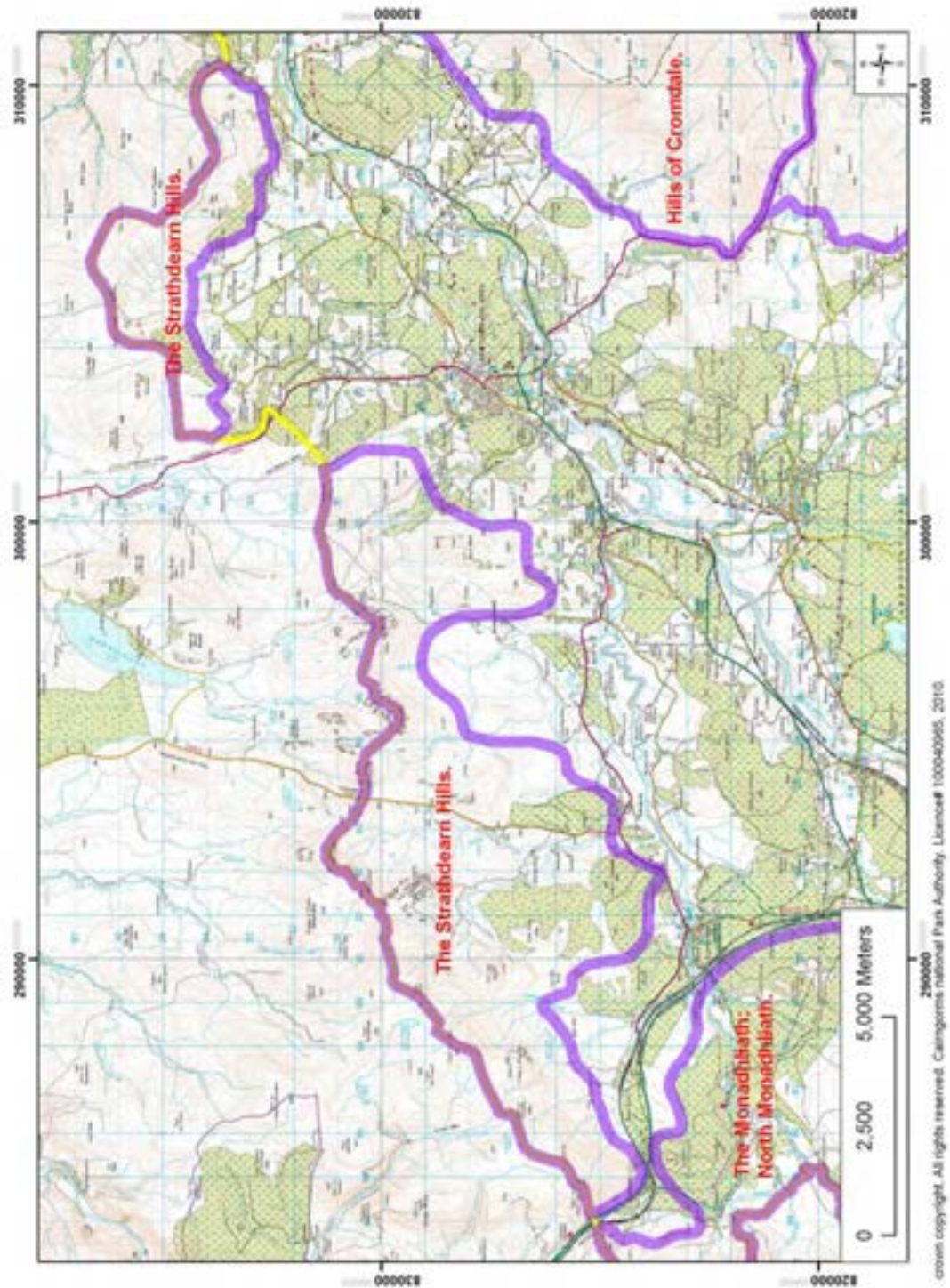


Low relief and shallow glens of the subdued terrain of the North Monadhliath, with woodland in the foreground



Long slopes, with roughened by glacial erosion as they extend down towards the Spey, contain shallow bowls and wide side valleys

11.4 The Strathdearn Hills



11.4.1 *Landscape Character*

- The south facing slopes of the Strathdearn Hills form a pronounced line of hills that rises to an undulating plateau which represents a northern extension of the great Monadhliath 'tableland'
- The hills rise to around 600m and as the last ice sheet streamed northwards the tops were roughened to create knobbly, rocky summits by glacial erosion
- A number of ridges, elongated north/south and heavily eroded by glacier activity, contain a series of wide, elevated, basin-like glens which are orientated southwards
- Many tributaries, and often extensive areas of wetland with small pools, drain into south flowing burns which in turn feed into the Dulnain River and the Spey
- Heather moorland, generally managed as grouse moor, with linear shaped patches of burning, extends over the highest summits
- Settlement is sparse, limited to dispersed elevated late 18th and 19th century farms which occupy the more accessible glens at the very lower margins of these hills, or are tucked against rising ground on the plateau north of the Park
- These farmsteads are on marginal land, which is nevertheless bright green in contrast to the surrounding heather moor
- Occasionally abandoned farmsteads sit within remnants of small pre-improvement field, turf dykes and walled enclosures which have sometimes been subsumed by larger, fenced late 18th/19th century improved fields, but, unlike certain other character areas, are not common-place
- Where fields are still in use, the drained and improved grassland is enclosed by fences which replace walls and there are occasional clumps of scattered birch woodland, sometimes associated with watercourses
- Shielings are regular features of the upper stretches of watercourses across the higher slopes of this area
- North/south aligned public roads (in addition to the A9 at the Slochd) and estate tracks cut between the pronounced knolly summits of the low hills
- There are also several accessible farm roads and tracks which link the remaining working farms, and vehicle tracks which extend onto the grouse moors

11.4.2 Landscape experience

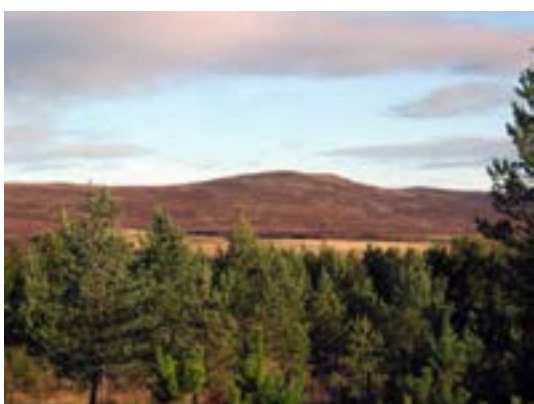
- The wide bowls and shallow ridges create a topography which is relatively open, often barely contained by the low relief
- Views from these elevated glens and ridges, and from the through roads which cross over the hills, are often channelled southwards to the open aspect and panoramic views of the northern face of the Cairngorms Massif
- Conifer woodland along the lower slopes often hides these hills from low lying viewpoints
- View north extend across the undulating plateau and the open expanse of Dava Moor
- Within the Park, the less well known glens are relatively secluded, especially away from the through roads, but the plateau becomes more remote outwith the Park to the north

11.4.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This area is the visual backdrop to Dulnain Strath and the character areas which lie north of Grantown, although its low relief limits the sense of enclosure. The elevated public roads offer the opportunity for extensive panoramic views south across the Park when approaching from the north.

11.4.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The steep, well defined edge of the escarpment which forms the Park boundary is a dramatic, sudden transition between the generally cultivated south facing slopes of shallow glens and the plateau of undulating moorland to the north.

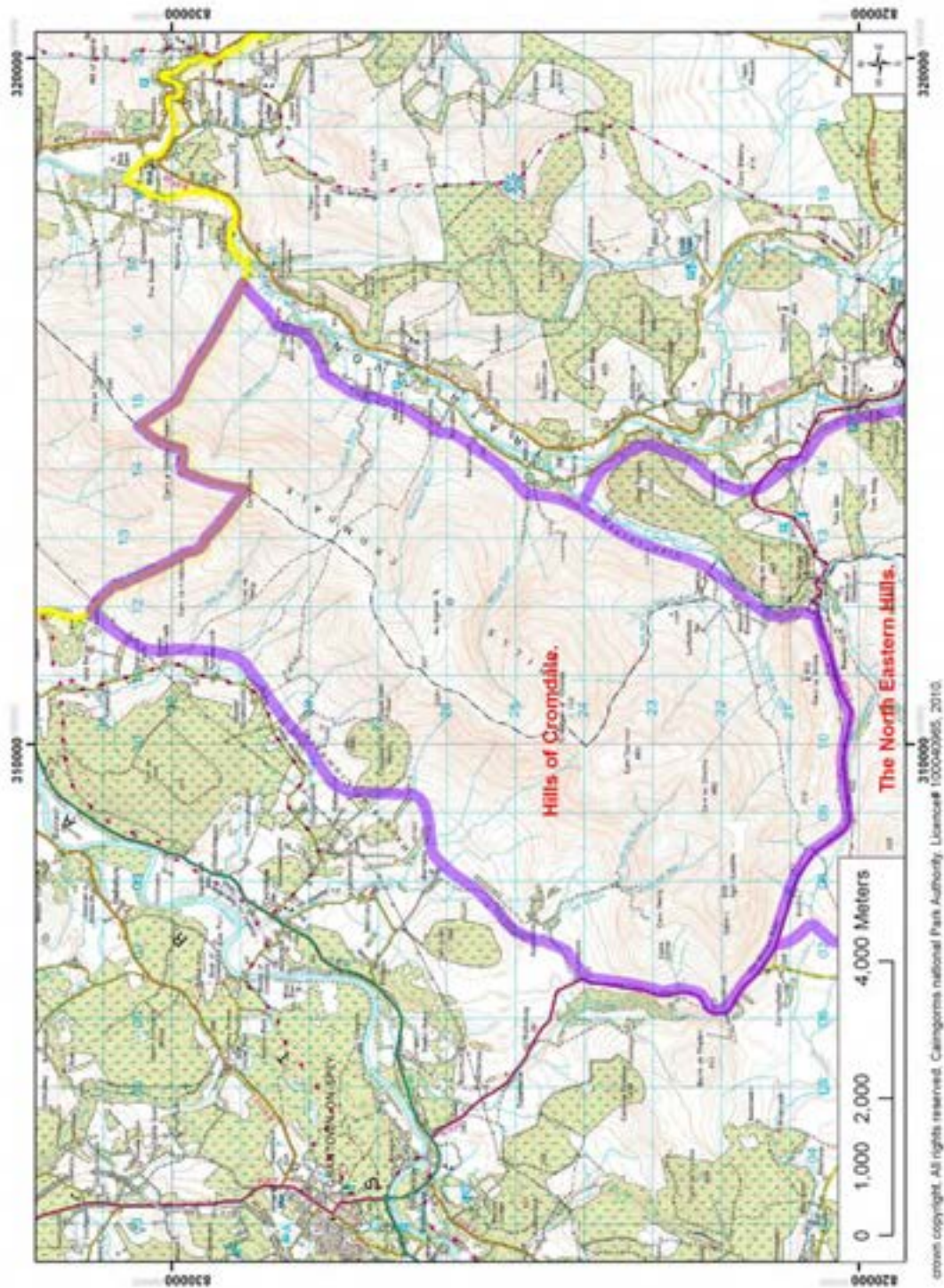


Conifer woodland along the lower slopes, behind which lie the heather-clad hills with their pronounced summits



Occasional patches of bright green, where land has been improved for grazing, can be found in this area

11.5 The Hills of Cromdale



11.5.1 *Landscape Character*

- The high Hills of Cromdale, developed in sandy Moine schists, form a south-west to north-east orientated spine of rounded summits draped in peat.
- The smooth, concave shaped spurs extend down from the central spine south east towards Strath Avon and north west to the Haughs of Cromdale. There is a 'step' on the hillside at around 500m on the north flank of the hills
- The hill sides form formidable flanks which rise abruptly from the edge of the surrounding low lying farmland, forming the enclosure and visual backdrop to adjacent Strath Avon, the Haughs of Cromdale and the Glen of Dalvey
- The relatively bulky flanks of the Hills of Cromdale are divided by a series of deep valleys cut by watercourses to form dry ridges
- The hills are almost entirely heather/blaeberry moorland, with some acidic upland grassland, although there is peat bog along the spine of summits
- The hills appear to be almost entirely managed as grouse moorland, and heather has been burnt in long, broadly rectilinear patches, which have sometimes been marked out by flailed heather boundaries
- Occasional conifer woodland and enclosed, partially drained and improved grassland sits along the lower edges of the north west facing slopes
- Farms, some of which have been abandoned, are all located to take advantage of tributaries and slight shelter from the valleys formed by the watercourses
- These farms consistently sit along the lower fringe of the hill slopes, just at the point where the gradient softens to form the valley floor or lower foothills and are often the focus of small, conifer shelter woods
- The heart of this narrow ridge of hills has no recorded shieling sites although occasional traces of prehistoric and pre-improvement settlements are evident around the lower slopes
- Several vehicle tracks start at the base of the deep valleys but often then veer out of the valleys onto the ridges, sometimes zig-zaging up the hillsides
- Occasional smaller access routes extend into the hills and cross over the hills, linking Strath Avon with Cromdale

11.5.2 Landscape experience

- The relatively narrow spine of hills offer the opportunity for an undulating ridge walk, which allows views down to the lowlying land on either side of these Hills
- Views south to the North Eastern Hills and the Cairngorm massif are panoramic

11.5.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This hill group is well defined and 'isolated', extending outwith the Park and forming the backdrop to several low lying, adjacent character areas while also being highly visible from character areas to the north and west of Grantown on Spey.

11.5.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

This spine of hills is easily recognisable, with uniformly rounded summits and formidable flanks incised by deep river valleys and a consistent coverage of managed heather-dominated grouse moor. The settlement pattern is also well defined, with a relatively consistent relationship with the mouths of the river valleys and change in gradient.



The broad spine of the hills, with the pattern of burning evident on the moorland



Farmland along the lower fringes of the hills

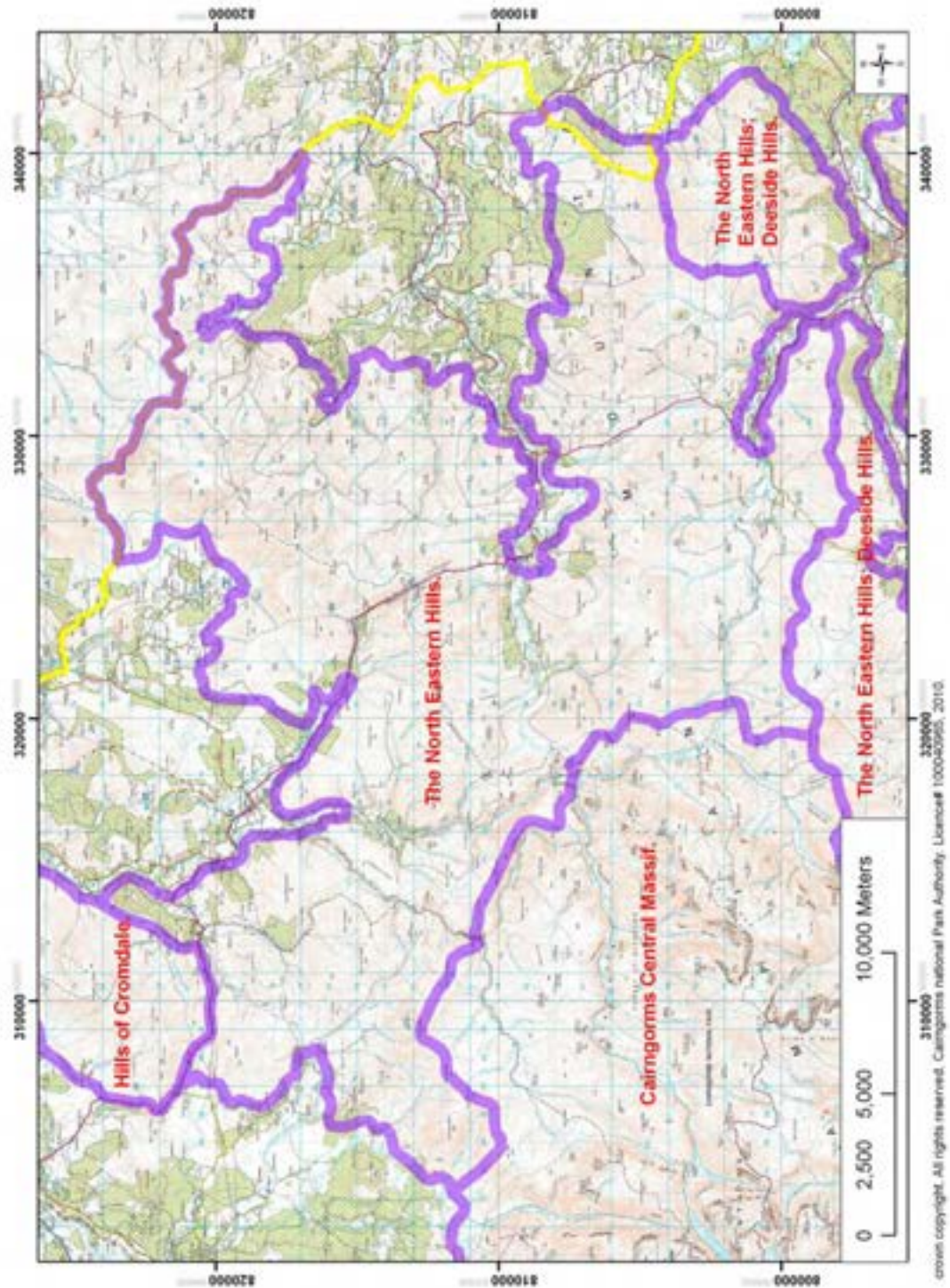


Views towards Grantown and the lower Spey from the summits



The flanks of these hills are divided by deep, narrow valleys cut by watercourses to form drier ridges

11.6 The North Eastern Hills



11.6.1 *Landscape Character*

- This large tract of land, curving round the main Cairngorms massif to the north and east, is characterised by rounded, smooth sided hills are generally around 600m to 700m in height
- This area includes an ancient valley system, probably formed 400 million years ago and the geology is perhaps the most varied in the whole of the National Park, with narrow bands of schists, including quartzites and limestones, intrusions of granite and basic igneous rocks, and old red sandstone in the Tomintoul basin
- Ridges, formed by erosion resistant rocks, alternate with valleys and basins on other, less resistant rock types which have been subject to chemical wearing and erosion over hundreds of millions of years
- The hill sides form formidable flanks which rise abruptly from the edge of the occasional low lying valleys which extend into this upland area
- These steep sided flanks are divided by deep valleys incised by watercourses, often with multiple tributaries, carved between smooth sided, drier ridges
- Occasionally, the river valleys have deepened to create long, narrow steep sided valleys which cut through the upland massif, forming a skeletal network of more accessible passes
- The Ailnack gorge, a spectacular canyon deeply cut into Devonian sediments in its lower part, is a particular geological feature
- The majority of these hills are overlain with blanket peat, which in places has been severely eroded
- The hills are frequently managed as grouse moorland, where heather has been burnt in long, broadly rectilinear patches, which have sometimes been marked out by flailed heather
- Occasional conifer woodland, both planted spruce and Scots Pine, extends up onto the lower flanks of the hills from the surrounding glens. Scattered Scots pine can sometimes be found near former grazing land
- Settlement is limited to a very few farms and estate buildings within the long glens which penetrate into this upland area, possibly where better drained and more fertile soils can be found
- Only in the south east facing glens of the Ladder Hills is there any evidence of historic landuse, in the form of pre-improvement shieling grounds
- In addition, occasional lodges and other estate buildings, can be found well into the interior of the narrow valleys, located adjacent to watercourses where tributaries feed into the main rivers

- Several roads cross over the high passes, often sitting along drier ridges, or tucked against the break in slope as they climb up and over the most accessible through routes
- Vehicle tracks wind along the narrow, steep sided river valleys, allowing access into the interior
- A more extensive network of access routes extends up the ridgelines of the drier spurs onto the upper hill slopes
- The ski centre at the Lecht is also located within this character area, and some of the lifts and other infrastructure are seen on the skylines of the long ridges

11.6.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a tremendous sense of space and openness, linked to great distance, experienced from the upper slopes and ridges which contrasts with the enclosure of the narrow steep sided river valleys
- The upland hill forms are bold, rounded and formidable, creating a sense of solidity and 'bulk' in the landscape which dominates over the human interventions
- This area is diverse and complex, in terms of both geology and topography, but can be easily over shadowed by the dominance of the Cairngorm massif
- The roads which cross over this area offer readily accessible panoramic views and easy, vehicular access to a landscape of mountain and upland character
- Elsewhere, the interior of this character area is secluded and can be remote, particularly as the hill ranges and narrow valleys extend west and south towards the mountainous Cairngorm massif
- The heather turns purple in August, creating an accessible seasonal spectacle

11.6.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

In addition to having a strong identity in its own right, this hill group forms a 'transition area' to the higher and even more remote interior of the Cairngorms central massif, as well as providing some visual containment to the surrounding, lower lying character areas, such as Strathdon, Glen Livet and, to the west, Abernethy

11.6.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The varied relief creates a complex landscape which can be difficult to understand as a whole. The area is often overlooked in favour of higher mountain areas, yet the valleys and basins give a powerful sense of remoteness. The sense of vast expanse and the extent of the heather moor creates an open landscape where the rounded form of the hills is very apparent. The

moor is further emphasised by the pattern of muirburn and the spectacular flowering of the heather in August.



The smooth, rounded hills



Long ridges alternate with valleys and basins

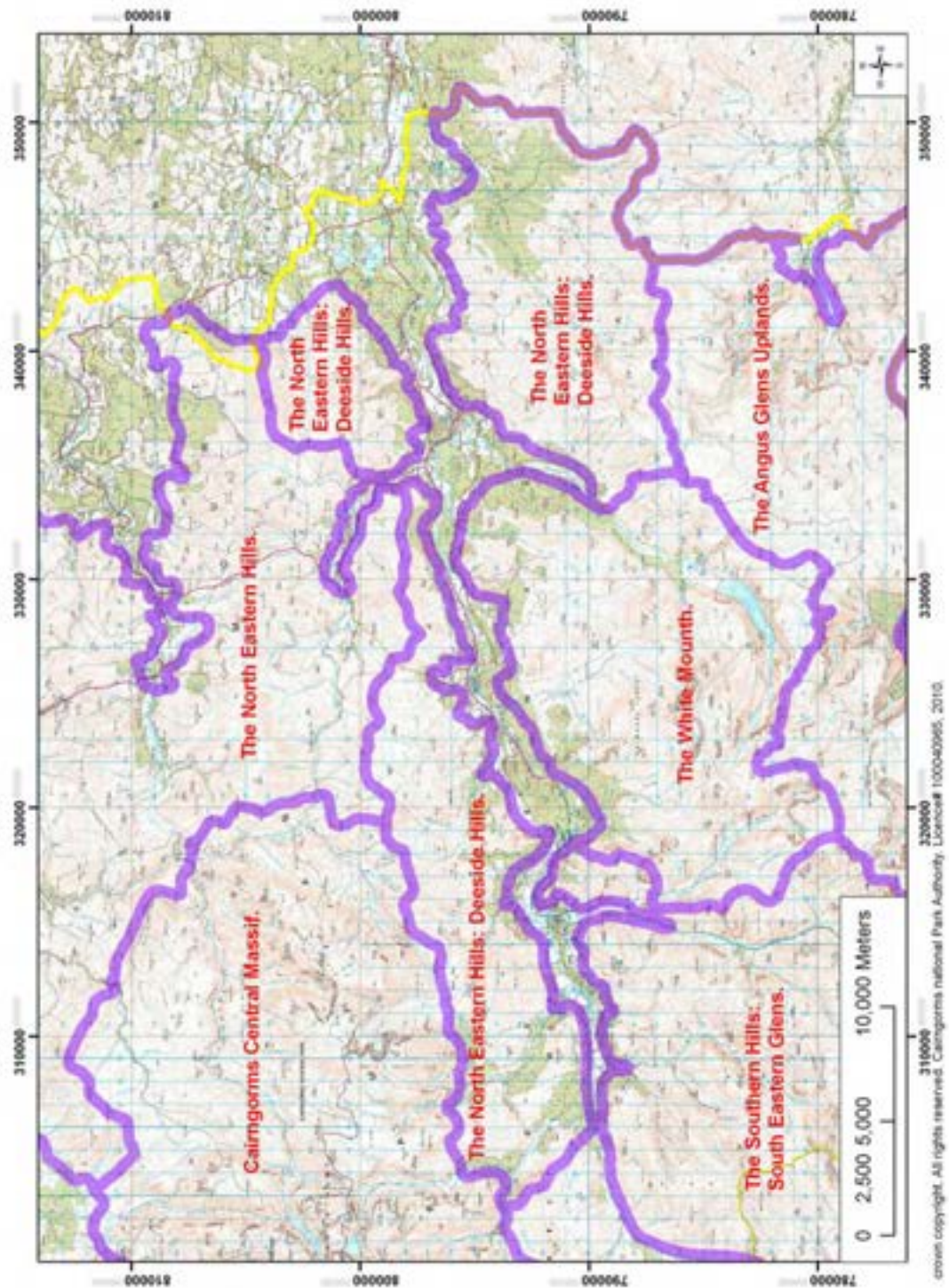


The pattern of muirburn stands out clearly on these hills, with scattered pine on the lower flank of the hill



Patches of brighter green possibly reflect a change in underlying bedrock, here the focus of a small farm, with a deeply cut valley in the background

11.7 The North Eastern Hills: Deeside Hills



11.7.1 *Landscape Character*

- A 'sub set' of the North Eastern Hills, these hills extend along the southern edge of the main Cairngorms massif forming the northern edge to Deeside and its southern edge east of Ballater
- These smooth sided hills are generally around 600m to 700m in height form generally flat-topped ridges which frame a series of valleys which drain into the Dee
- The steep hill sides are divided by deep glens incised by watercourses, often with multiple tributaries, carved between smooth sided, drier ridges.
- Some of the ridges have been truncated by ice moving along the valley in the last glaciation, which has also reshaped some of the hills into large, rounded, roches moutonnées, and in places, the ridge lines are cut through by meltwater channels, visible as notches on the skylines
- The hills are dominated by humus-iron podzols, and support heather and blaeberry dwarf shrub heath on the lower slopes rising to more montane habitat including sedge, rush and moss heath on the upper slopes and summits
- The hills are frequently managed as grouse moorland, where heather has been burnt in long, broadly rectilinear patches
- Conifer woodland, often extensive, extends up onto the lower flanks of the hills and frame the mouths of the glens along Deeside, often hiding evidence of earlier landuse
- Extensive areas of regenerating Scots Pine and semi-natural woodland are found in these glens, often extending well into the interior along the river valleys
- Beyond the wooded areas, settlement is very sparse, limited to occasional estate lodges and small, isolated farms with some traces of pre-improvement settlement towards the west end of the area, around Feardur burn and along the lower, south facing slopes of the Dee
- A few isolated shieling grounds are situated by watercourses that flow down the slopes along the north side of the Dee
- Vehicle tracks wind along the base of the main glens, allowing access into the massif to the north
- A more extensive network of access routes generally – although not always – follow the valleys of tributaries to these main glens

11.7.2 *Landscape experience*

- There is a sense of openness experienced from the upper slopes and ridges which contrasts with the enclosure of the glens and river valleys

- The upland hill forms are bold, rounded and formidable, creating a sense of solidity and 'bulk' in the landscape which dominates over the human interventions
- Views from these hills focus on Deeside or towards Lochnagar and the White Mounth to the south, and north into the interior of the Cairngorm massif
- Extensive planted and regenerating Scots pine reinforces enclosure, and where more semi-natural in habit, naturalness, at the mouths of the glens
- This character area is often secluded and can be relatively remote, particularly as the hill ranges and narrow valleys extend north towards the mountainous Cairngorm massif, or south to meet the head of the Angus Glens
- Remoteness is limited, however, by the popularity of some of the glens, which are very accessible, and the presence of hill tracks and planted woodland

11.7.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This hill group forms a 'transition area' between the higher and more remote interior of the Cairngorms central massif, the Angus Glens and the White Mounth and the managed woodlands, policies and farmland of Deeside. It also forms the visual backdrop and containment to the Deeside character areas.

11.7.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The presence of large areas of regenerating native woodland and Scots Pine, which continues to expand along the rivers and glens is a particular feature which contrasts with the broad, open sweep of the hills. Where the woodland is more open and semi-natural in character, it reinforces a sense of naturalness.



The Smooth sided hills clothed by conifer woodland where they join the main Deeside valley

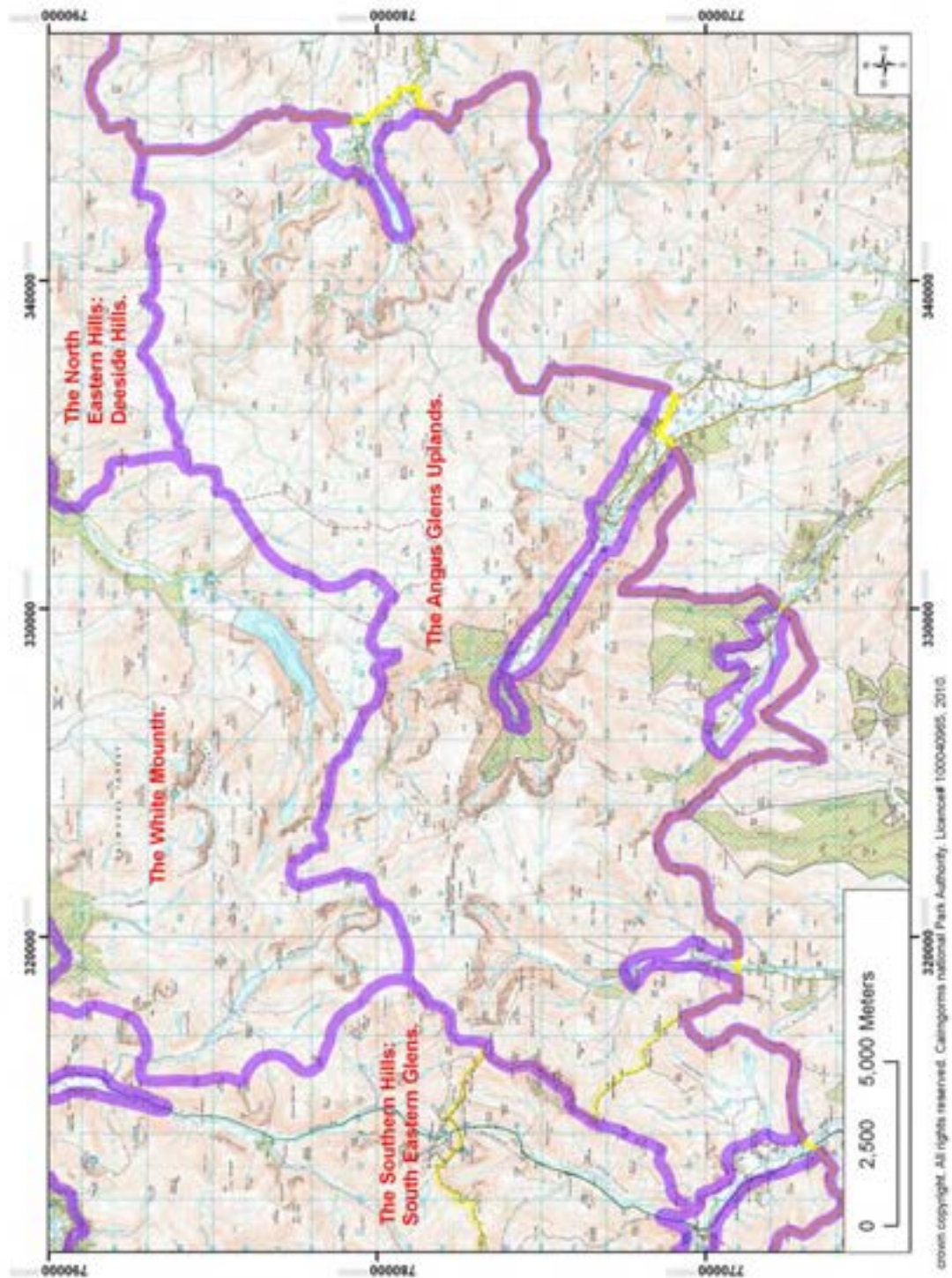


Heather/blaeberry heath in the foreground, with woodland extending along the valley floors, and the higher hills of the Cairngorms massif in the background



Looking south over the Deeside Hills towards Braemar, the pattern of heather burning clearly evident (photograph courtesy of Dr AM Hall)

11.8 The Angus Glens Uplands



11.8.1 *Landscape Character*

- The cliffs and corries of the heads of the Angus Glens bound steep-sided, narrow glacial troughs which penetrate into a rolling plateau with rounded hill summits, rising to over 900m and including a number of 'Munros'
- These glens are contained by slopes which have been steepened and roughened by glacial activity, which has left behind high cliffs, exposed rocky crags and huge corries which often enclose lochans
- The steep slopes below the crags are often mantled by thick scree or rockfall debris
- As the head of the glens extend into the hills they become narrower and more sinuous, and the rocky side slopes become ever more craggy and dramatic, with overhanging cliffs incised by steep-falling burns
- The plateau between these steep-sided glens is broad and sweeping with smooth, undulating summits and shallow river-valleys divided by an extensive network of watercourses
- The extensive upland blanket peat over this plateau has been severely eroded in places and is sometimes interspersed by peat hags and wetland
- This plateau is dominated by montane habitat including sedge, rush and moss heath on the upper slopes and summits
- Remnants of birch woodland extend across the more inaccessible, craggy upper slopes and screes around the heads of the glens
- Heather, often managed as grouse moor, dominates the side slopes, with some swathes of grassland and even occasional bracken associated with the side slopes of the lower glens
- Many tributaries drain into rivers which have worked the fluvial-glacial deposits to create narrow floodplains in each of the four main glens
- Small conifer shelter woods of pine, spruce or larch, are located along the glen floors and side slopes, often extending into the upper reaches of the glens
- The narrow floodplains are the focus of infrequent small, fenced and drained improved grassland fields – most of which have been largely abandoned – associated with very occasional remote farms and estate houses located next to watercourses
- Occasional tiny stone walled fields and rigs, often located on or near alluvial fans, are evidence of pre-improvement farming
- There are occasional ruined buildings well into the interior of glens, sometimes even where the edge of the plateau meets the head of the glen and often associated with high passes

- Private vehicle tracks are located along the base of the glens, leading to access routes into the hills which link one glen to another, as well as crossing to neighbouring mountain areas over a series of high passes, many of which are ancient access routes

11.8.2 *Landscape experience*

- The sense of 'expanse' experienced from the undulating plateau is reinforced by the openness of the rounded summits and the smoothness of the terrain
- This contrasts with the enclosure and narrowness of the heads of the Angus glens, which are contained within steep rocky side slopes
- The heads of the glens are very dramatic and rugged, with towering cliffs and huge corries contained by cliffs, often emphasised by waterfalls which plunge down the hill sides
- Views from these hill tops focus down the individual Angus Glens, or north/west to Lochnagar, as well as north to the distant, higher summits of the Cairngorm massif
- This character area is often secluded and can be relatively remote, particularly when traversing the extensive plateau or crossing over high passes where there are very few vehicular tracks or conifer shelter woods
- Remoteness is limited, however, by the popularity of some of the glens, the presence of planted conifer woodland and vehicle tracks associated with the individual glens

11.8.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This hill group forms a 'transition area' between the lower, farmed and settled Angus Glens and the high summits of the White Mounth. It has a particular role, however, in linking the individual Angus Glens through its series of high mountain passes.

11.8.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The contrast between the elevated undulating plateau and the deep, steep sided and rocky, sinuous glens is a particular feature of this landscape. The glens penetrate deep into the mountains, with ruins of former farmsteads and associated field systems often extending well into the interior, contrasting with their relatively remote location.



The heads of the Angus glens become narrower and more sinuous as the wind into the interior of the plateau



Relatively remote houses, usually former small farms, associated with the estates, are located next to watercourses and green fields on the nea by floodplain



Rock ribs and crags exposed by ice moving from the right to the left in this picture taken above Glen Isla (photograph courtesy of Dr AM Hall)



A steep-sided glacial trough, typical of the heads of the Angus glens, with exposed rocky crags above rockfall debris



Conifer woodland and shelter woods within the glens



Trees – sometimes including larch and spruce – regenerate over less accessible slopes and scree

11.9 The White Mounth



11.9.1 *Landscape Character*

- Centred on an extensive, ring-like granite intrusion, this character area includes the high peaks and cliffs of Lochnagar, which rise to over 1100m, forming a relatively isolated group of high mountains surrounded by an expanse of lower hills
- The domed summits and tors are pre-glacial forms, developed in granite, while subsequent glacial activity has created cliffs, corries and deep troughs and post-glacial weathering and frost action has formed scree and boulder slopes
- Glacial activity was fed by the extensive ice fields of the White Mounth but was highly selective in its impact. Glacial erosion has left behind deep eroded valleys, like Glen Callater, cliffs, exposed rocky crags, scree and huge corries embracing elevated lochans
- Loch Muick fills a deep glacial trough, its curving alignment reflecting the 'ring' structure of the intrusion which surrounds the Lochnagar granite, while the north facing, massive corries below Cac Carn Mòr tower above long, boulder-strewn ridges which slope northwards down to Deeside
- Deep erosion has left tributary valleys hanging along the upper edges of the deeper glens, from where plunging waterfalls are a particular feature after heavy rain or following snow melt
- Alpine soils, which are shallow and fragile, take many years to accumulate on the frost shattered and weathered mountain tops and plateau, and often support distinctive and rare plant communities
- From Deeside, the vegetation grades from Scots pine-based conifer woodland in the lower glens to heather and blaeberry dominated dwarf shrub heath above the tree line, rising to extensive montane habitats of sedge, rush and moss heath across the upper slopes and summits
- The sparse settlement is limited to occasional farms and estate buildings located in sheltered and accessible Glen Muick, and on former shieling sites at the heads of small, shallow glens extending south from Deeside, into the heart of this area
- There are small areas of pre-improvement field systems with remnants of irregularly shaped, walled enclosures at each of these individual settlements, particularly along Glen Muick but also in the lower reaches of Glens Girnock and Gelder
- The narrow public access road to Glen Muick is often busy, and it is therefore a very visible feature in this relatively open landscape
- Private vehicle tracks extend south from Deeside into this area, linking to a path network which allows access to the Munros of Lochnagar and

Broad Cairn, as well as other summits and ridges and to high passes which extend southwards to the Angus Glens

- Glen Muick is a focus for recreation with a large car park and visitor centre located at the Spittal of Glenmuick, allowing ready access to mountain scenery and the Munros

11.9.2 *Landscape experience*

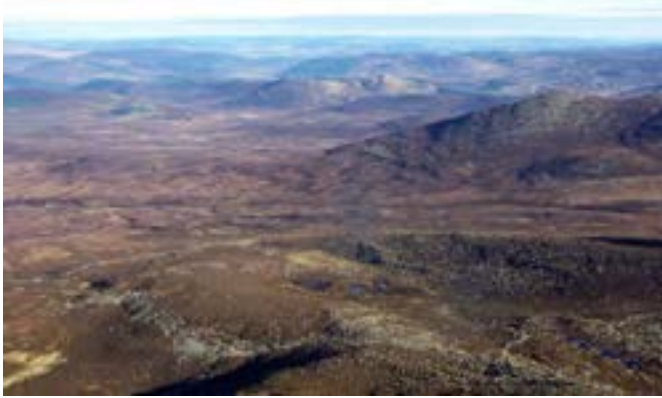
- Within the mountain interior, the height of the summits combined with the dramatic, towering cliffs, huge corries and deeply cut valleys create a spectacular landscape of complex topography
- Views from the very high peaks of Lochnagar and Broad Cairn range widely over the Park. There are also dramatic views along the lengths of the deep valleys from elevated passes
- The mountain interior of this character area is often secluded and can be relatively remote, particularly in the more inaccessible mountain in the western reaches of Lochnagar
- Remoteness is limited, however, by the popularity and accessibility of Glen Muick, which is accessed by a narrow public road and is a focus for recreation
- The transition from the more managed, sheltered and wooded landscapes of Deeside to the high, rugged mountainous interior can be relatively easily experienced travelling along the accessible Glen Muick

11.9.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

Lochnagar and other nearby summits are a recognisable, isolated group of high mountains which are highly visible from other mountain areas across the Park. This area also forms the wider setting to parts of Deeside.

11.9.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The dramatic topography of the White Mounth is relative accessible, although the more remote interior is rugged and challenging terrain. The extensive woodland around the outer fringes of this area forms a buffer along the southern edge of Deeside and reinforces the seclusion of the mountain areas.



Looking north from Lochnagar, the lower hills rising from an expanse of wet heather/blaeberry heath (photograph courtesy of Dr AM Hall)



A huge corrie below Cac Carn Mòr embraces an elevated corrie (Photograph courtesy of SNH)



The granite domes and paps of Lochnagar seen from the plateau edge south of Loch Muick. The steep sides of the glacial trough are locally scree covered with cliffs along the upper slopes. The stream is deeply incised into glacial deposits before it drops into the trough floor (photograph courtesy of Dr AM Hall)

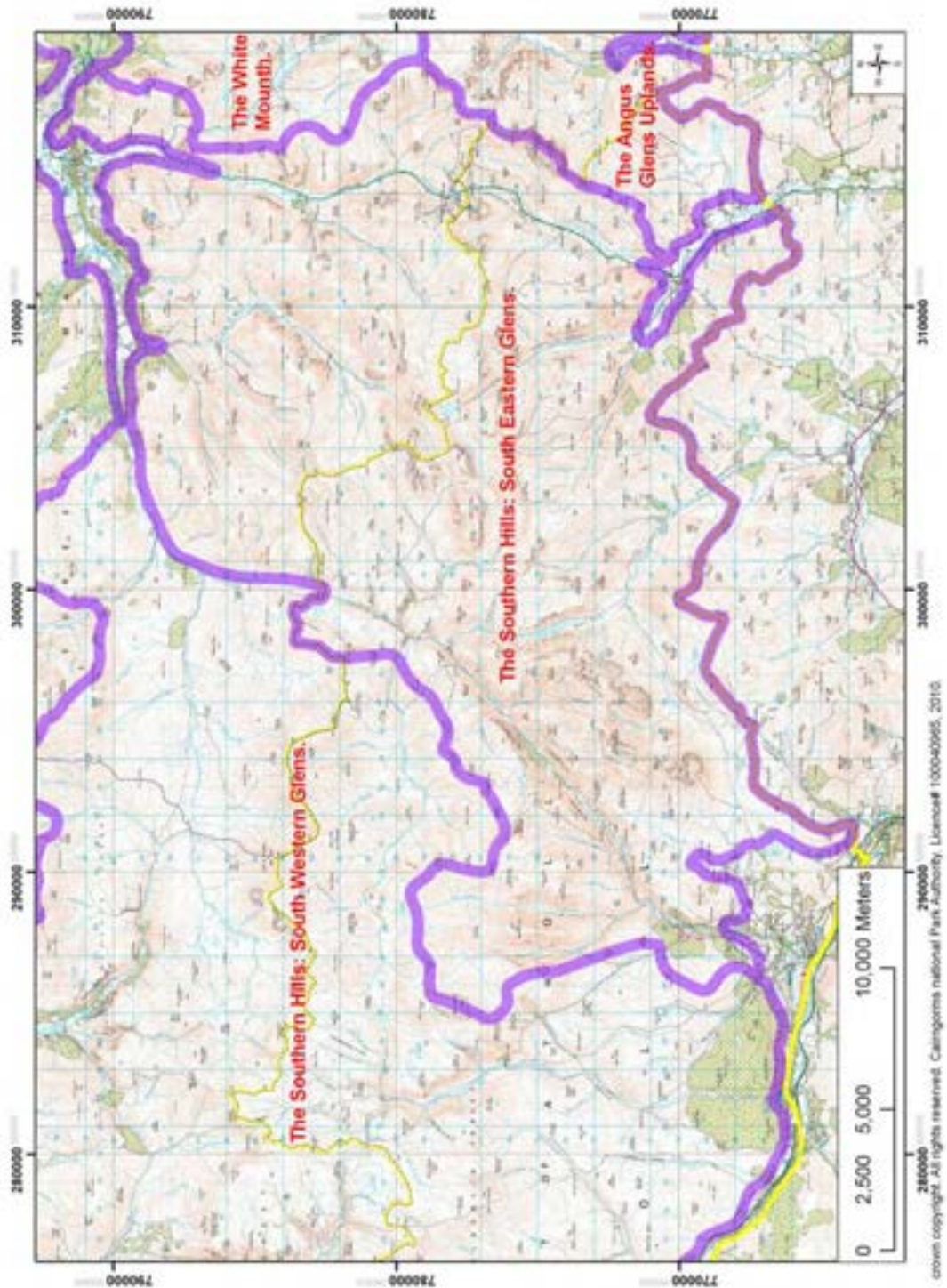


Viewed from Deeside, the shapely peaks of Lochnagar range rise above the woodland



Upper Glen Callater, a deep ice eroded valley, a lochan contained by the rocky cliffs of an impressive corrie

11.10 The Southern Hills: **South Eastern Glens**



11.10.1 *Landscape Character*

- The irregular topography of interlocking ridges, long glens and the complex terraced terrain reflects the effects of erosion acting on Dalradian schist bedrock of diverse lithology
- The long, often narrow, glens are contained by a complex topography of shallow side glens, intervening rocky ridges and truncated spurs created by a glacial activity deepening much older, broader valleys
- These long, enclosed glens, such as Glen Tilt, Glen Taitneach, Glen Ey and Glen Clunie, penetrate deep into the interior of the mountains, forming passes which link Deeside with the Perthshire lowlands. Glen Tilt sits on a faultline, and is very straight.
- The hill tops are sinuous ridges or individual summits, rising to over 1000m, and many of the highest peaks are very steep-sided with summits rising above extensive scree slopes, created by post-glacial weathering of frost-susceptible quartzite
- Subalpine soils on the upper slopes and summits, are shallow, with only a very thin layer of organic matter over the quartzite bedrock supporting sub alpine plant communities and montane habitats of sedge, rush and moss heath
- Heather and blaeberry over the upper glen slopes is often, although not always, managed as grouse moor, while extensive acid grassland with occasional bracken extends along lower slopes
- The narrow floodplains on the glen floors carry more fertile grasslands on calc and mica shists, often maintained by continued grazing
- Occasional conifer woodland extends into the most accessible glens, often established as shelter woods close to former farms or estate buildings
- Elsewhere, broadleaved woodland is located on more inaccessible slopes, with riparian woodland along many of the watercourses, particularly to the west of this character area
- Settlement is sparse, located along the glen floors, but estate buildings and the ruins of former farms can be found well into the interior of the mountain core along the accessible passes
- Traces of pre-improvement townships, including the ruins of buildings and the outlines of small field extend far up the glens, including the Tilt, Ey and Clunie, between and beyond occasional estate buildings
- Even further up these glens and into the heart of the hills, close to watercourses such as those around Ben Vurich or Carn Bhac, are numerous shieling grounds – bright green oases amongst the lesser greens of heather and acidic grasslands

- Private vehicle tracks extend far along the relatively flat glen floors, often linking to paths which continue through the narrow passes or branch out to track up through the side slopes of the side glens
- The A93 also passes through this area, and allows access to the ski centre at Glen Shee

11.10.2 *Landscape experience*

- The steep sided hills and the sense of the surrounding 'mass' create a very pronounced sense of enclosure when travelling through the narrow glens
- The steepness of the upper hill sides and the scree slopes create dramatic ridges, which can be experienced as relatively narrow, sinuous walking routes
- Views northwards to the Cairngorm massif and east to Lochnagar from the highest summits extend widely over the Park
- There are also dramatic, framed views along the lengths of the deep, steep sided glens, which are revealed in stages when travelling through the passes or long narrow glens
- The mountain interior of this character area is often secluded and can be remote, particularly in the more inaccessible mountain areas between Glen Tilt and Glen Shee
- Remoteness is limited, however, by the accessibility of Glen Tilt to the west and Glen Shee, the A93 and the ski centre to the east
- The presence of numerous shieling sites, abandoned pre-improvement townships and the ruins of later farmsteads are reminders of the relative accessibility of the glens, which were once much more widely inhabited and more readily used as access routes than they are today

11.10.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The area is strongly characterised by the passes and long pathways and tracks which extend through the glens between Deeside and the southern boundary of the Park. It forms the backdrop to parts of Upper Deeside and the Glen Clunie and Glen Shee character areas, as well as Atholl to the west.

11.10.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The silvery quartzite scree on the upper mountain slopes often catches the light and is a striking feature both from a distance and when traversing the mountain ridges. The narrow, relatively grassy glens and passes allow access deep into the interior, reflected in the plentiful evidence of their long use and formerly extensive settlement, as well as continued grazing today.



Exposed rocky crags and weathered debris at Glen Shee



Grassy side slopes and more fertile floodplains in Glen Tilt

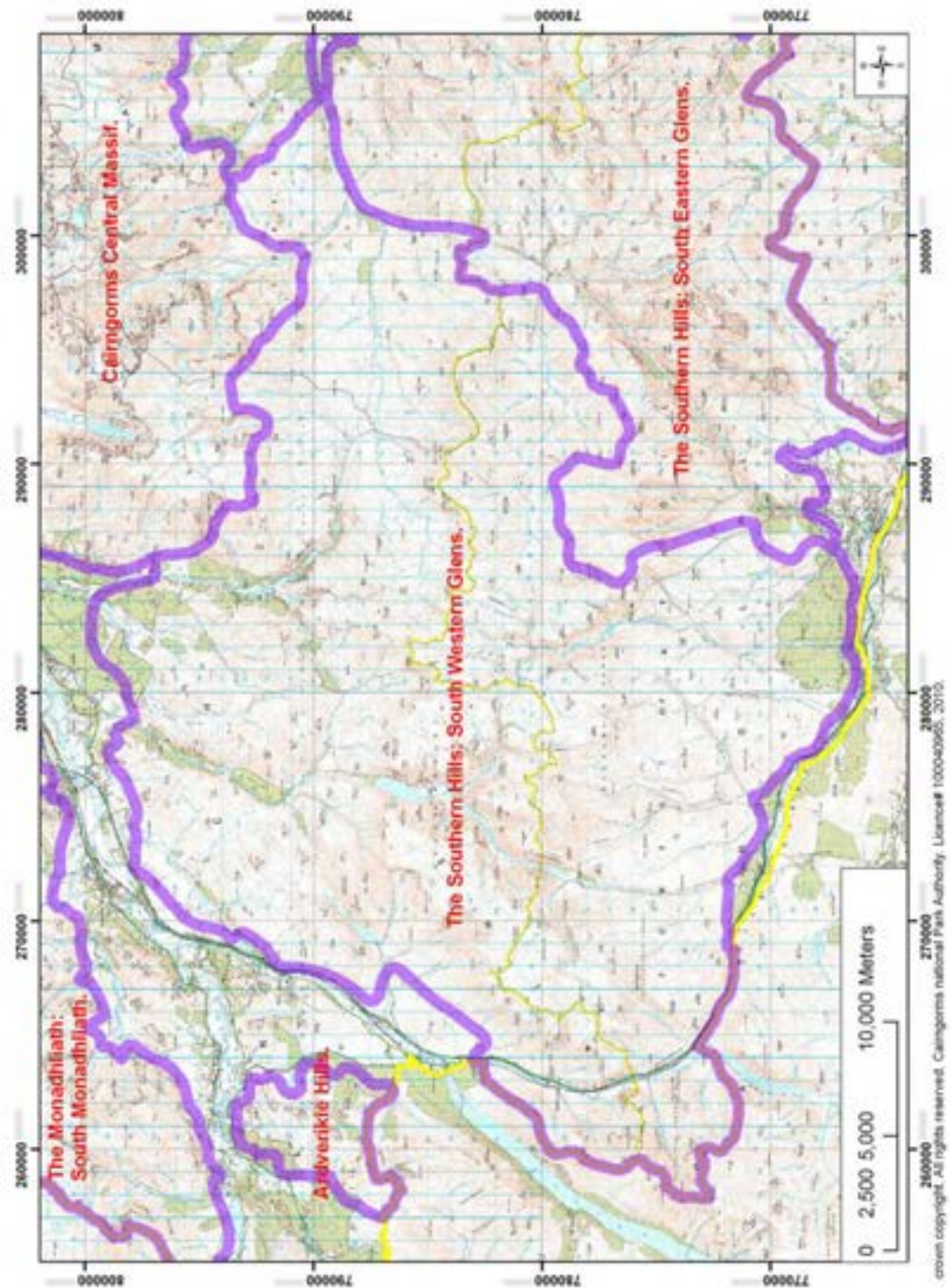


The ruins of former farms, here located close to the site of a former township, can be found well into the interior of these passes



Rigs, on an alluvial fan, sit above the river, where some riparian woodland still clings to less accessible river banks

11.11 The Southern Hills: **South Western Glens**



11.11.1 *Landscape Character*

- This extensive, very gently undulating plateau of the Gaick and the Forest of Dalnamein and Atholl is generally about 800m in elevation, with occasional isolated, steep sided mountain summits rising to over 1000m, often with scree slopes
- The plateau edge rises in an escarpment above the surrounding lower ground of the Atholl depression, Strathspey and the upper Geldie-Feshie strath
- The lack of significant lithological variability in the Moine psammite is reflected in the often subdued, at times almost level, terrain across the plateau
- Ancient west-east drainage systems, which have been little modified by glacial activity, form the main valleys, illustrated by the broad, shallow valley forms associated with the Upper Feshie and Geldie and Tarf
- Glacial activity has breached some watersheds to create several narrow, very steep-sided, through glens – lower Feshie, the Tromie/Gaick Pass and upper Glen Bruar for example – which penetrate through the interior of the plateau
- The tributary valleys that drop steeply to the floors of these glens are often deeply incised
- Hummocky glacial moraine subdivided by small melt water channels can be found along the lower slopes and valley floors, and solifluction, where previously frozen waterlogged sediment has slumped slowly down slope also creates small scale, rounded land forms along the lower slopes of the glens
- There are extensive debris slopes pockmarked with active run-off chutes and landslips along the steep escarpment edges of the plateau
- Long rivers, often with braided reaches or fragmenting into a network of smaller drainage channels and wetland as well as narrow lochs occupy the glen floors
- While there are areas of shallow, subalpine soils on the upper slopes and summits, there is also extensive blanket peat, including areas which have been significantly eroded, exposing the peat on the surface
- Montane habitats, of sedge, rush and moss heath can be found on the higher plateau and summits, but there is extensive open shrub heath of heather and blaeberry across the upper hill slopes while acid grassland occupies the lower slopes along the major glens
- Large areas of conifer woodland, often Scots pine, extend into the most accessible valleys from the mouths of the glens, located on the steep side slopes reinforcing the shelter and containment

- Broadleaved woodland is relatively sparse, limited to riparian woodland and occasional scattered birch across the valley floors
- Settlement is located along the more accessible glen floors and is nearly always associated with estates, with seasonally occupied lodges as well as the ruins of late 18th/19th century farmsteads west of Mar Lodge, as well as south of Glentromie Lodge and north of Glenfeshie Lodge
- The ruins of pre-improvement townships can be found along the mid-stretches of the Feshie, Chomraig, Tromie, Lui and Dee, located between the occasional estate buildings
- Further up these glens and others, into the heart of the hills, are occasional shieling grounds, but shielings are much more numerous and striking, bright green features beside the southerly flowing watercourses of Dalnamein Forest, the Bruar and the Edendon
- Private vehicle tracks extend far along the relatively flat glen floors, often linking to paths which continue through the narrow passes or branch out into the side glens
- The A9 also passes through this area, following the glacial breach at the elevated Pass of Drumochter

11.11.2 *Landscape experience*

- The steep sided glens and the escarpment at the edge of the plateau creates a very pronounced sense of enclosure when travelling through the narrow valleys
- This contrasts with the sense of expanse and openness experienced on the more level plateau
- The dynamic nature of the flood-prone rivers and the frequent landslips of loose material on the steep side slopes combine to create a sense that human intervention is easily overcome by natural forces at this elevation
- This sense of naturalness and unpredictability is reinforced where semi-native woodland, including Scots pine, has regenerated along the glens
- There are dramatic, framed views along the lengths of the deep, steep sided glens, which are revealed in stages when travelling through the passes or long narrow glens
- From the summits, there are extensive, often panoramic, views north and east to the Cairngorms massif and Lochnagar
- The mountain interior of this character area is relatively remote, particularly in the more inaccessible Gaick plateau between Drumochter and Glen Tilt

- Remoteness is limited, however, around the A9, and is in part reduced by the presence of vehicle tracks and the estate lodges, although these are largely located along the glen floors
- The presence of numerous shieling sites, abandoned pre-improvement townships and the ruins of later farmsteads are reminders of the relative accessibility of the glens, which were once much more widely inhabited

11.11.3 Relationship to adjacent character areas

This escarpment around the outer edge of this plateau creates the backdrop to character areas within the Spey valley, Drumochter and Glen Truim.

11.11.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The enclosed passes, with their long history of use and settlement, cut through the expanse of the open, exposed and often hostile plateau. Natural processes such as flooding, braided reaches of the rivers, active run off chutes and landslips creates a landscape where dynamic, natural processes are still very much in evidence.



Glacial moraine subdivided by small melt water channels along the valley floor at Drumochter



The glacial breach occupied by Loch an Dun in the eastern Drumochter Hills
(photograph courtesy of Dr AM Hall)

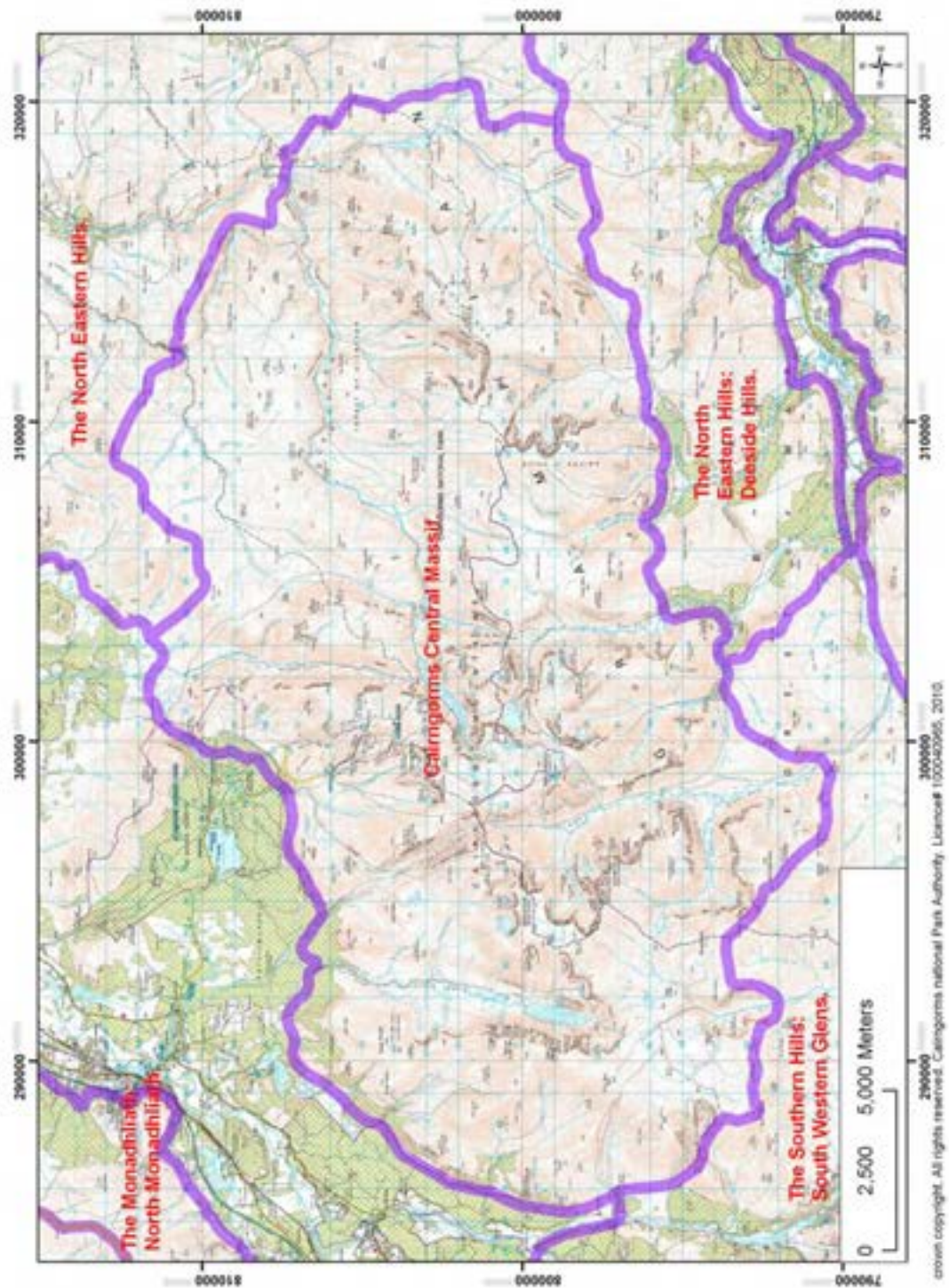


Extensive open shrubby heath of heather and blaeberry, with Scots pine on upper slopes and riparian woodland along Glen Tromie



The braided reaches of the Upper Feshie

11.12 The Cairngorms Massif



11.12.1 *Landscape Character*

- Centred on a massive granite intrusion, this area combines relict landforms which pre-date the last glaciation, such as the domed summits, vast, sweeping plateaux and dramatic tors, with enormous corries, cliffs and deepened troughs formed by glacial activity and smaller features including scree slopes and boulder-covered slopes created by post-glacial weathering
- The massive, bulky mountains rise to over 1300m, their open and exposed, often boulder strewn summits, rising above towering cliffs and corries which embrace elevated lochans
- Structures in the granite bedrock are expressed as straight and curved lineaments and slopes at scales ranging from huge domes to the rectangular building blocks of tors
- The arctic-alpine mountain environment often holds snow throughout the winter, with long-lasting snow patches a feature of shaded hollows
- The long, narrow, deepened glens are framed by the exposed granite of truncated spurs and weathered scree slopes. Some contain elongated lochs – the classic ribbon lakes of glacial scenery
- There are extensive debris slopes along these steep-sided glens, scored by active run-off chutes. Large landslips are found along the steep escarpment edges of the plateau
- Headwaters of the Spey, the Dee and the Don all rise in this massif
- Rivers are fed by burns issuing from elevated, shallow valleys on the plateau that plunge into the deeper glens from. Waterfalls are a particular feature after heavy rain or following snow melt
- At their lower reaches, the rivers meander, with frequent braided reaches and ‘wandering’ gravel banks
- Alpine soils and rankers, which are shallow, poorly developed and fragile, take many centuries to accumulate on the frost shattered and weathered mountain tops and plateau
- These shallow soils support fragmented montane habitats, of sedge, rush and moss heath as well as distinctive and rare plant communities
- Woodland is sparse, limited to riparian woodland and scattered Scots pine and birch along the sides of glens, particularly towards Deeside. Around Rothiemurchus, the natural treeline is being re-established, with stunted pines up to 800m.
- There is no permanent settlement in this area, although until recently, there were mountain bothies used by mountaineers
- Nor is there any upstanding evidence for historic or pre-historic settlement, other than at the extremities of this area, in the uppermost

reaches of the Derry and Gairn rivers, where there are ruins of shielings below Derry Cairngorm and Ben Avon

- The infrastructure of car parks, buildings, the funicular railway and the snow fences, metal gantries and ski lifts associated with the Cairngorm ski centre extend over the north facing slopes of Cairngorm and Cairn Lochan
- Access is largely limited to a path network which extends through the narrow glens and passes and links to footpaths heading into the mountains and up to the summits
- There are also occasional private vehicle routes which sometimes extend up the hillsides to allow access for stalking and a short section of public road access to the ski centre car parks

11.12.2 *Landscape experience*

- The combination of pre-glacial landforms and weathered surfaces, with impressive glacial forms such as the corries and troughs, with post-glacial weathering which has created scree and boulder slopes, creates a diverse and spectacular landscape that is recognised as being of international importance for its landforms
- The vast expanse of the plateau, the massive corries, deep troughs creates a landscape of great scale which is only truly experienced when within the mountain area
- The constant revelation of individual features – such as the tors, corries, lochans and boulder fields – creates a landscape of considerable natural diversity
- The exposed, unpredictable and often hostile environment, the long-lying snow, the dynamic nature of the flood-prone rivers and the frequent falls of loose material on the steep side slopes combine to create a sense that human intervention is easily overcome by natural forces
- From the summits and plateau, there are extensive, often panoramic, views across the massif, south east to Lochnagar and south west to the Gaick plateau. From the north western edges of the massif there are fine, elevated views of Glenmore, Strathspey and the Monadhliath
- There are dramatic, framed views along the lengths of the deep, steep sided glens, which are revealed in stages when travelling through the passes or long narrow glens
- The mountain interior of this character area is remote and relatively inaccessible, with rugged terrain and long travelling distances on foot, as well as the sheer 'mass' of the mountains further reinforcing a sense of isolation

- Remoteness is limited in the immediate surroundings of the Cairngorm ski centre, where the car parks allow easier access to the uplands and the ski uplifts and railway reduce the sense of isolation experienced in the heart of the mountain area

11.12.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This escarpment around the north western edge of this plateau creates the backdrop to character areas within Speyside. This is the most remote part of the Park and it is 'buffered' to the north, east and south, by other mountain areas which reinforce this sense of remoteness.

11.12.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The drama and immense scale of the landforms, as well as the variety of individual features from pre- to post- glacial eras creates a landscape of considerable topographical diversity. The strong sense of remoteness is reinforced by the exposure and unpredictability of the climate, the relative inaccessibility and the dominance of natural processes. These combine to create a landscape where human intervention is minimal and readily overcome by natural forces.



Domed summits and vast plateaux which pre-date glacier activity, the dramatic rock face exposed by glaciation and post-glacial weathered rocks



The Lairig Ghru, a glacial trough



Looking north east across the Avon basin to the high Cairngorms (Photograph courtesy of Dr AM Hall)



Snow lasts well into the summer at this high altitude



Loch Avon – an elongated classic ‘ribbon’ lake

