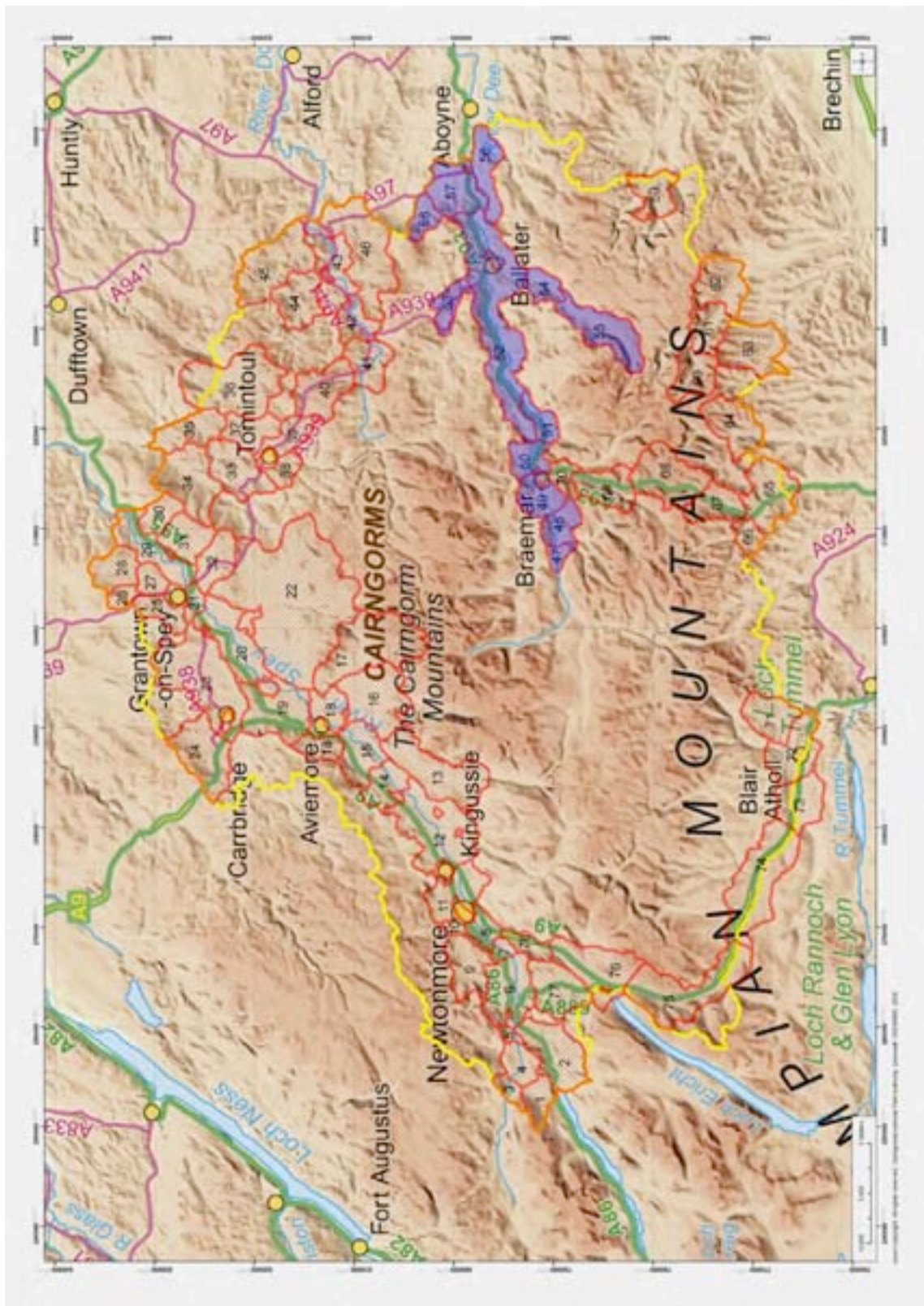


## **7 DEESIDE, MUIR OF DINNET AND CROMAR**

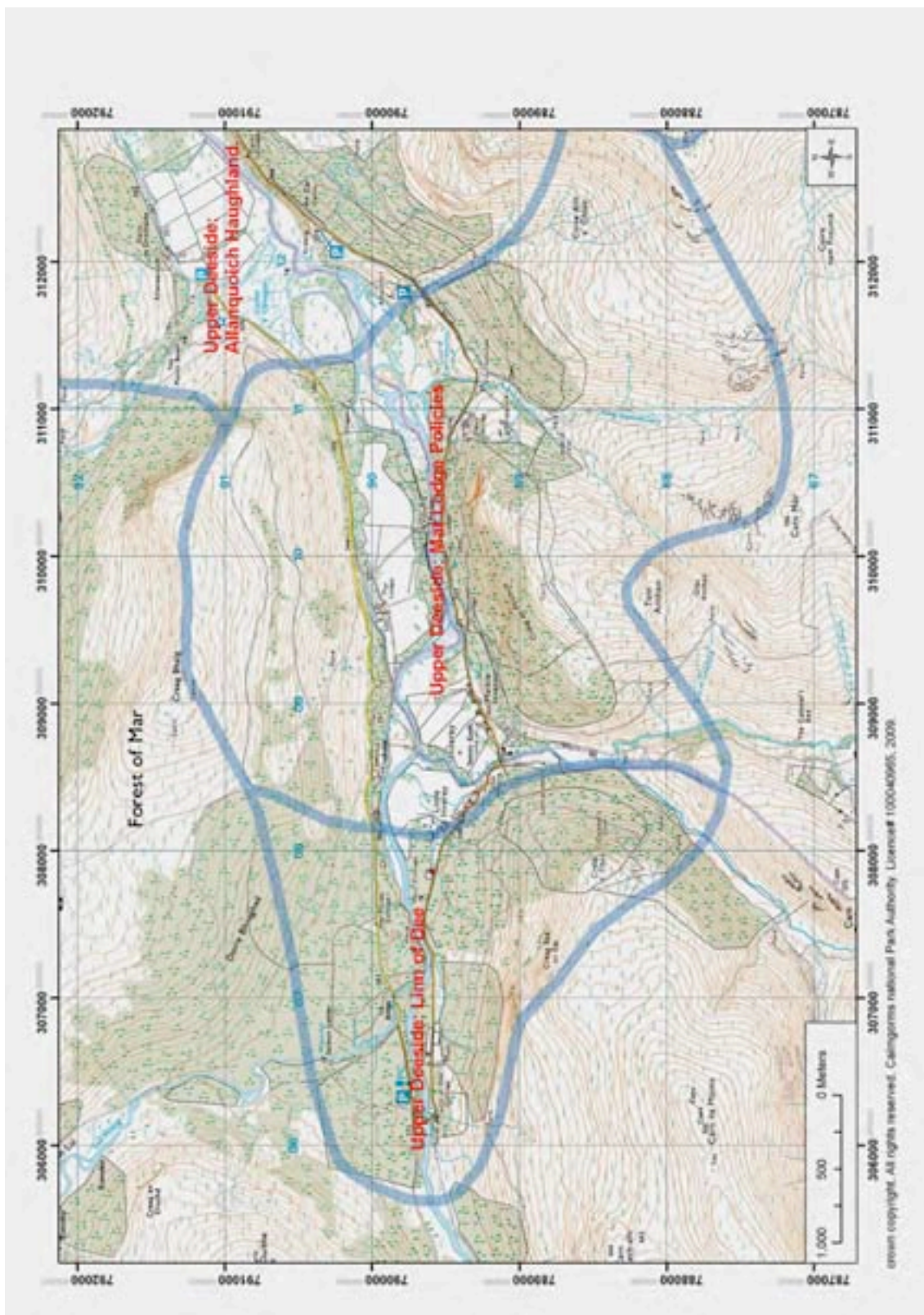
This section of the LCA includes the whole length of Deeside to Muir of Dinnet, then north to Cromar. This character assessment is presented as follows:

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*



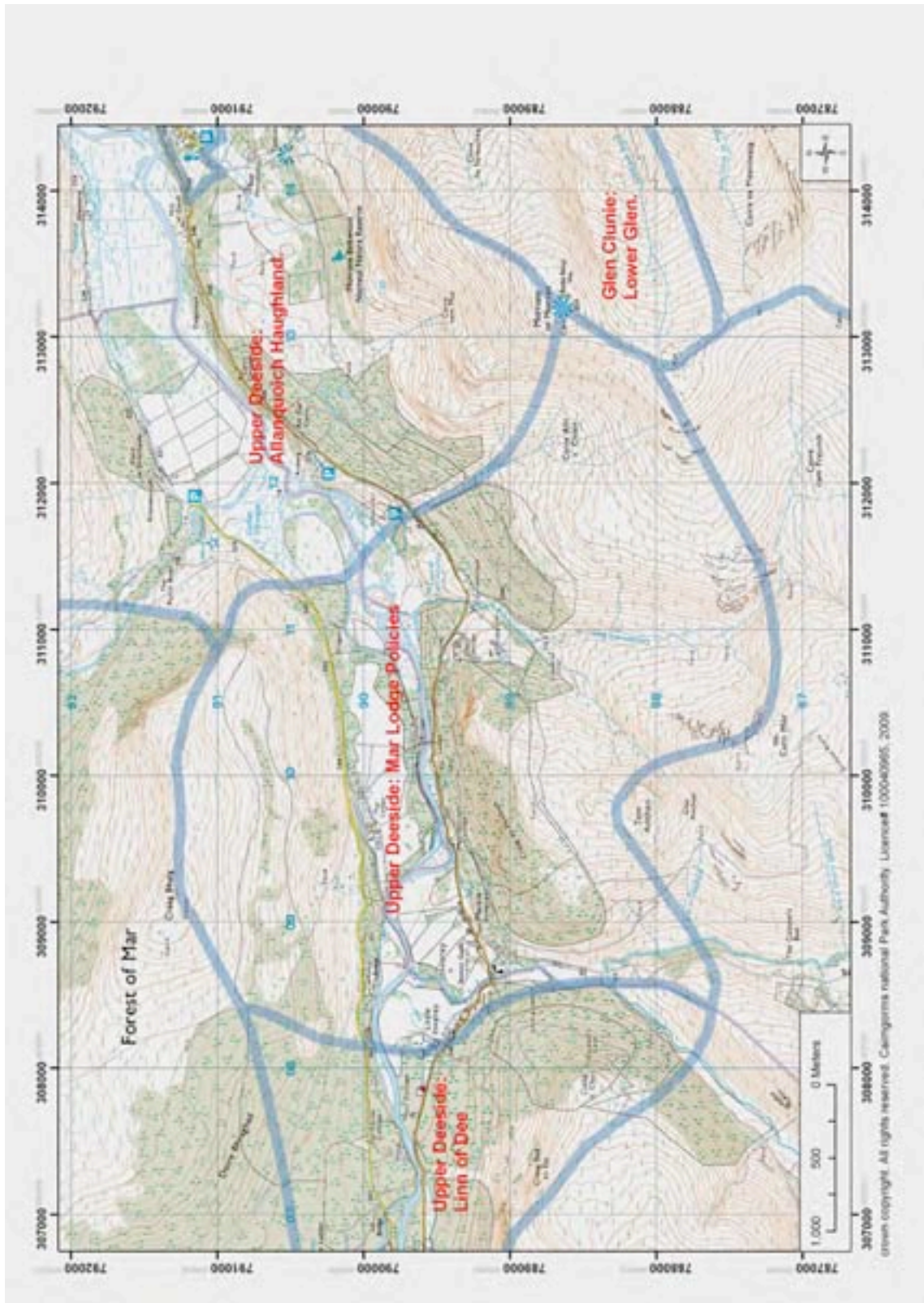
*The dramatic deep chasm of the Linn of Dee*



*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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> 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*



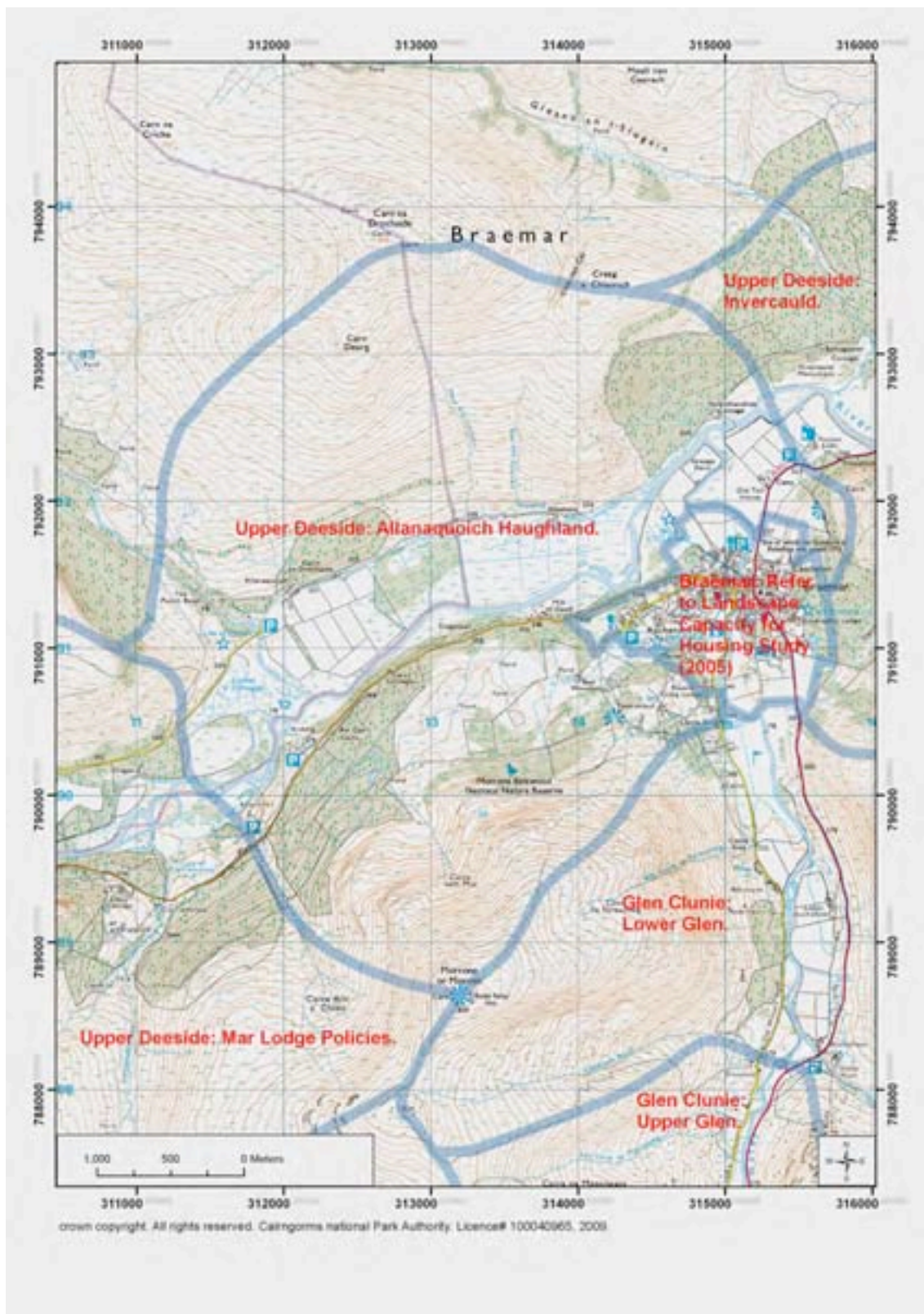
*The ornate Victoria Bridge over the Dee at the entrance to Mar Lodge*



*The late 19<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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



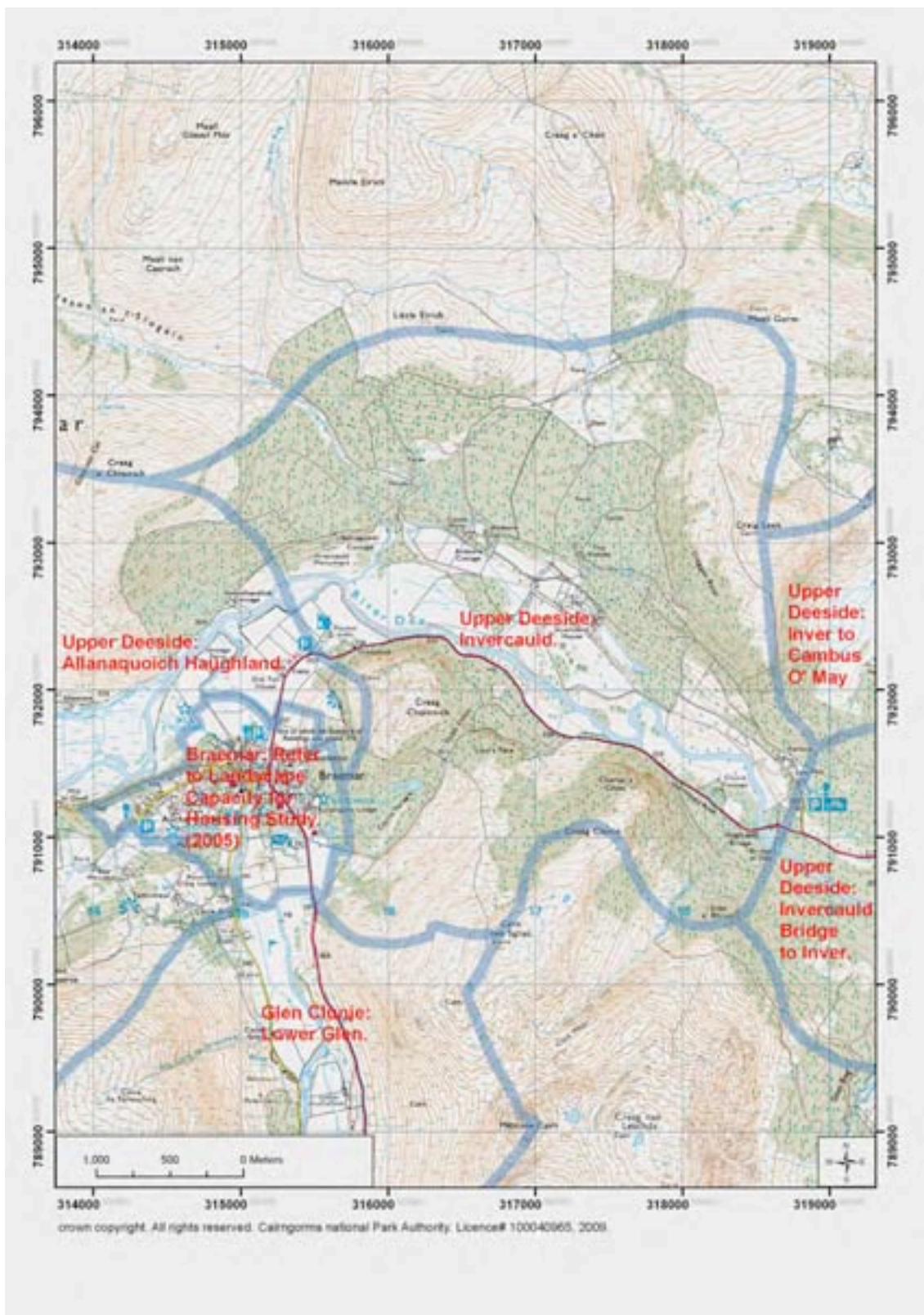
Braided reaches of the River Quoich in the middle of the haugh as it joins the Dee in the foreground



Glimpsed views to Beinn a Bhuid 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
- 18<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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*

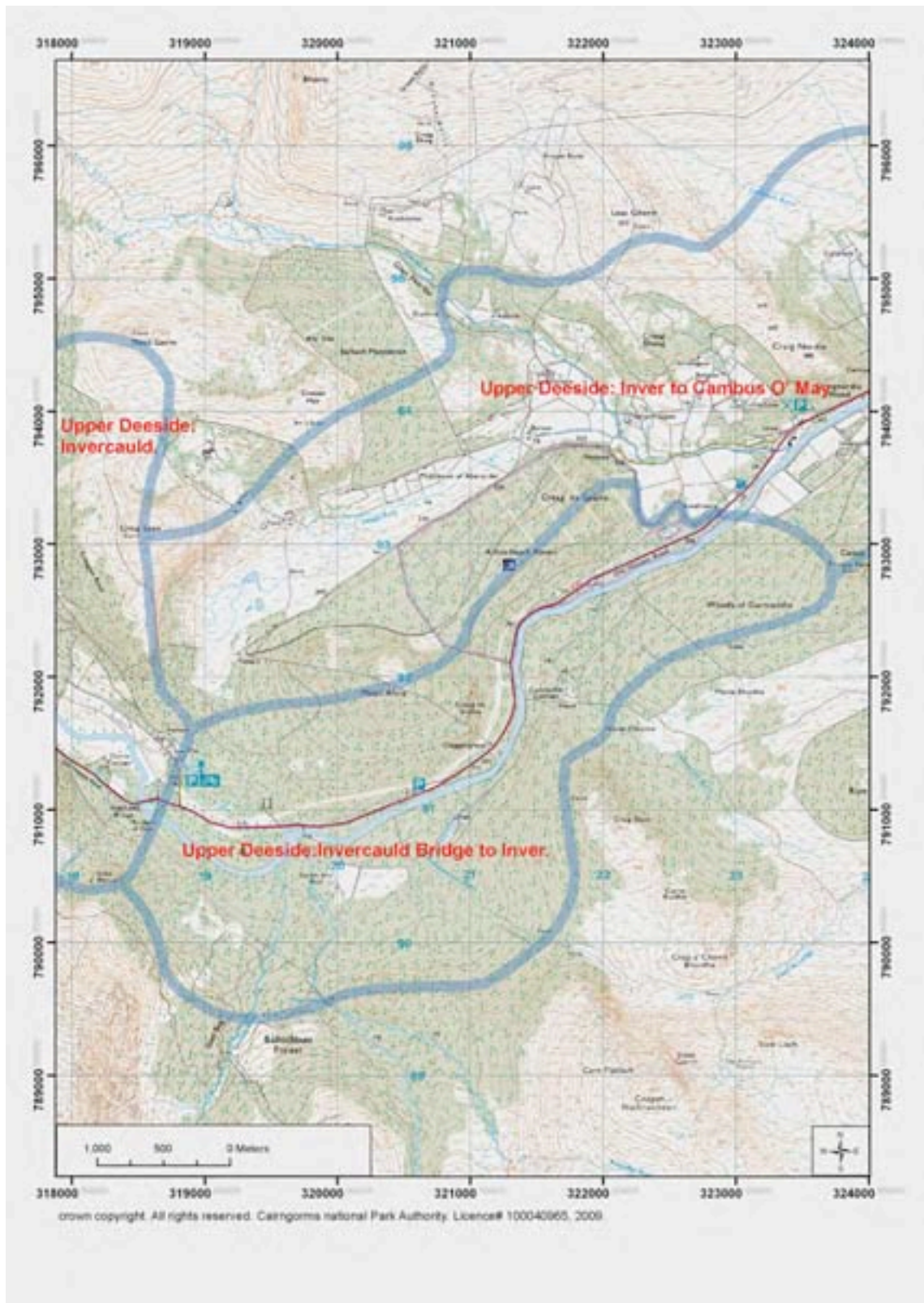


*The floodplain with planting on glacial-fluvial hummocks in the middle ground of this photograph*



*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.



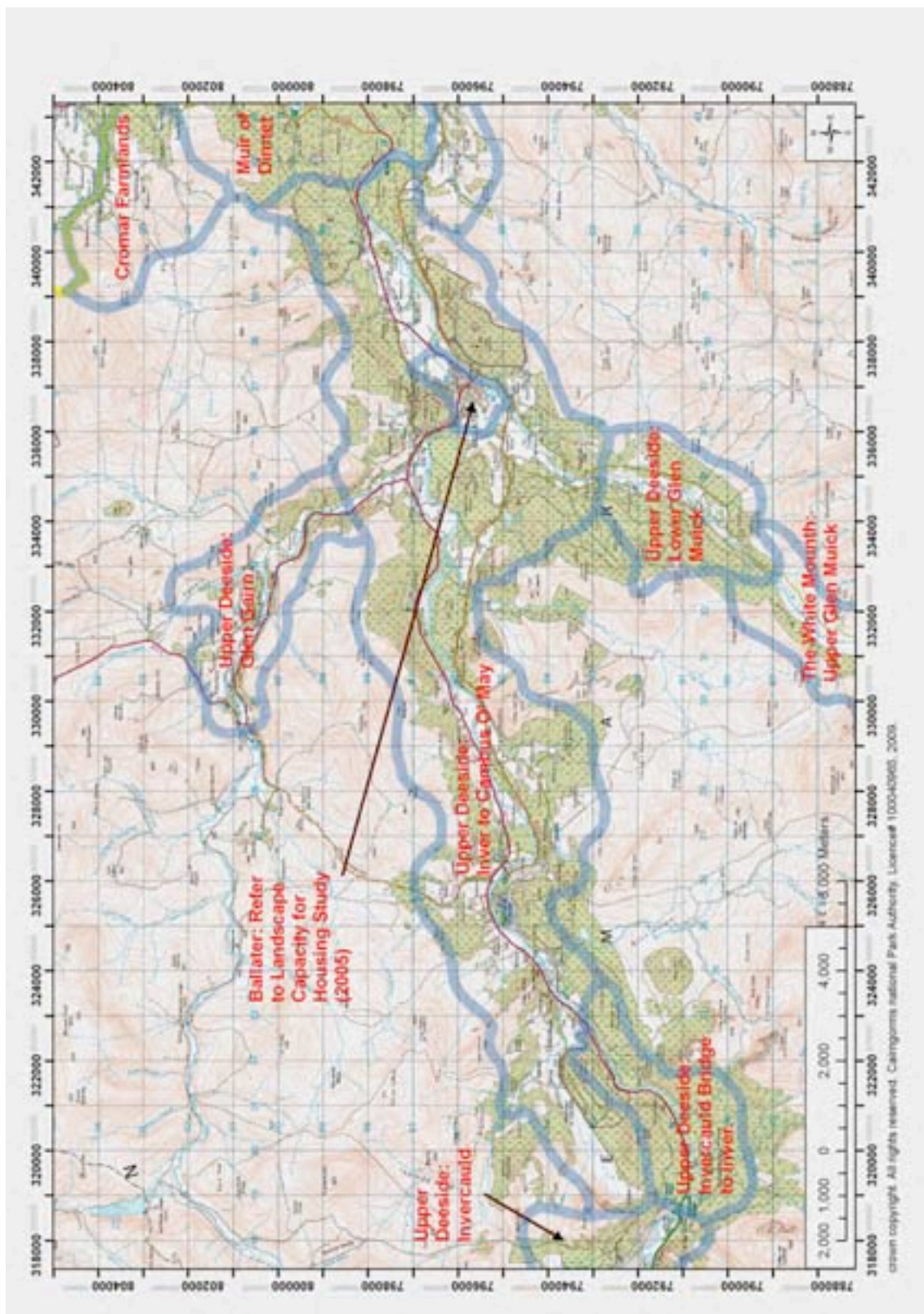
*The River Dee runs a straight and even course and is fringed by more naturalistic woodland of mature pine and birch*



*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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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*

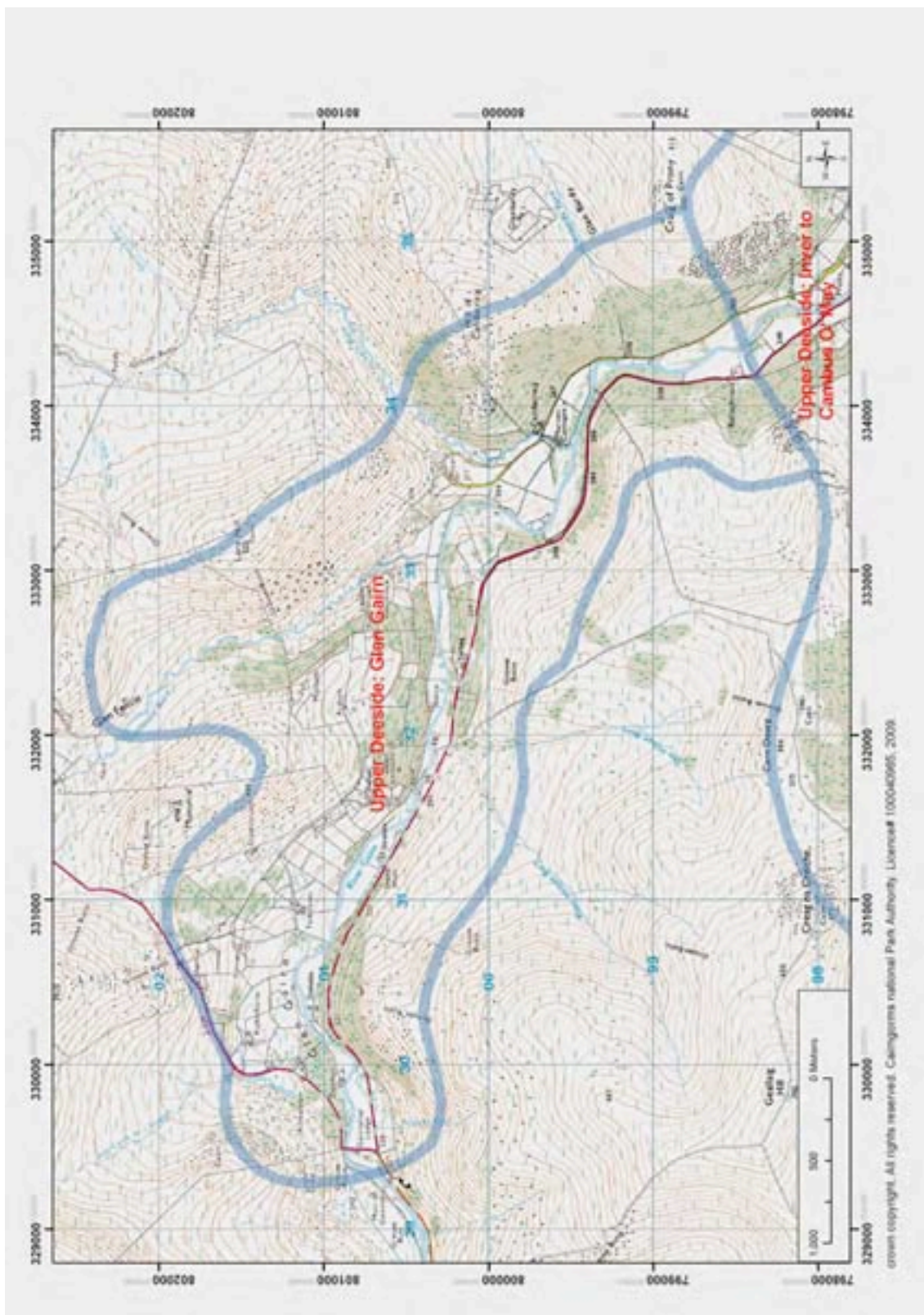


*Flat pastures along the Dee, backed by bands of birch on hummocky lower slopes*



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

7.7 Upper Deeside: **Glen Gairn**



### 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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



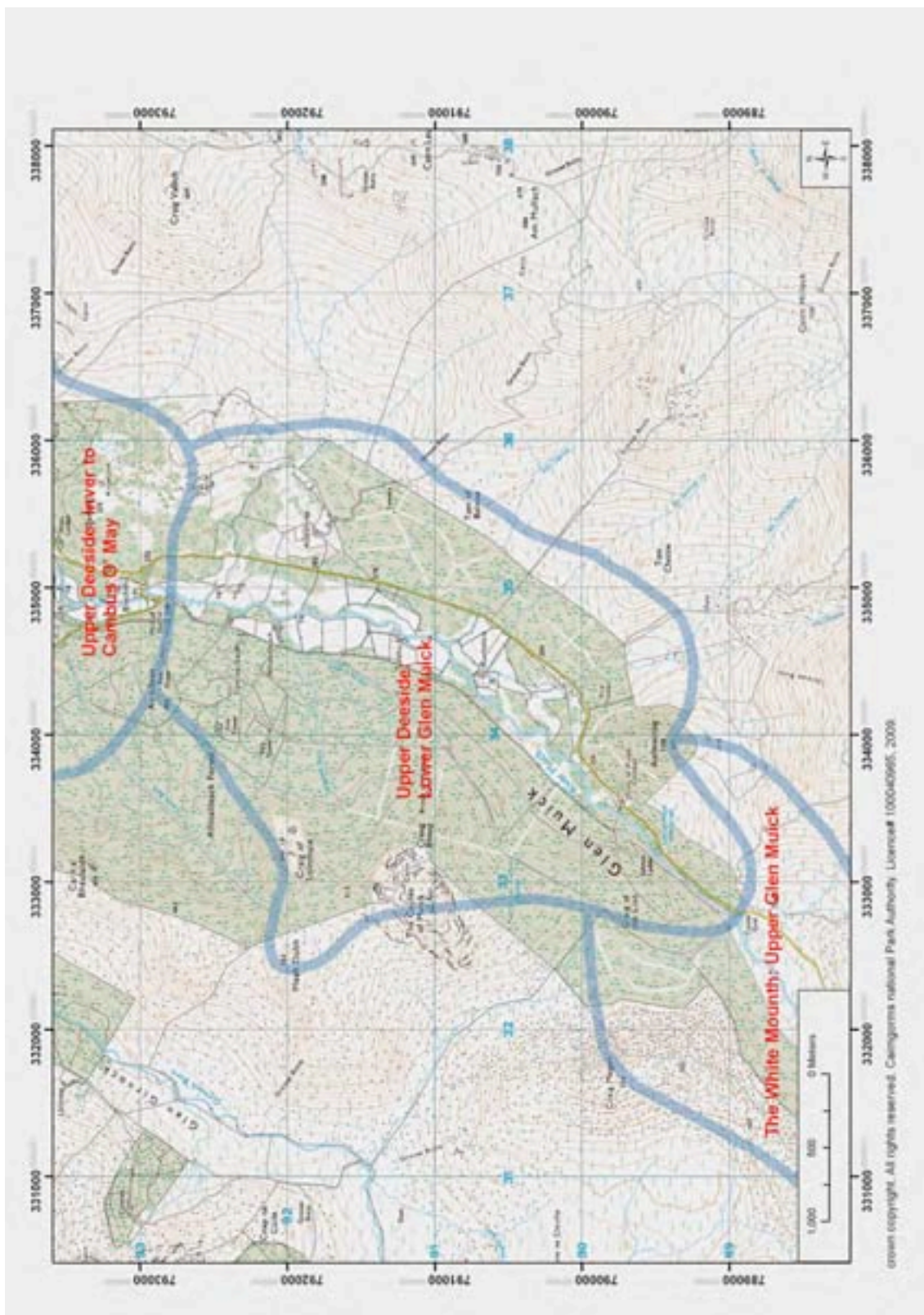
The broader upper valley, with improved fields and sometimes abandoned farm steadings on south facing slopes



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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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.



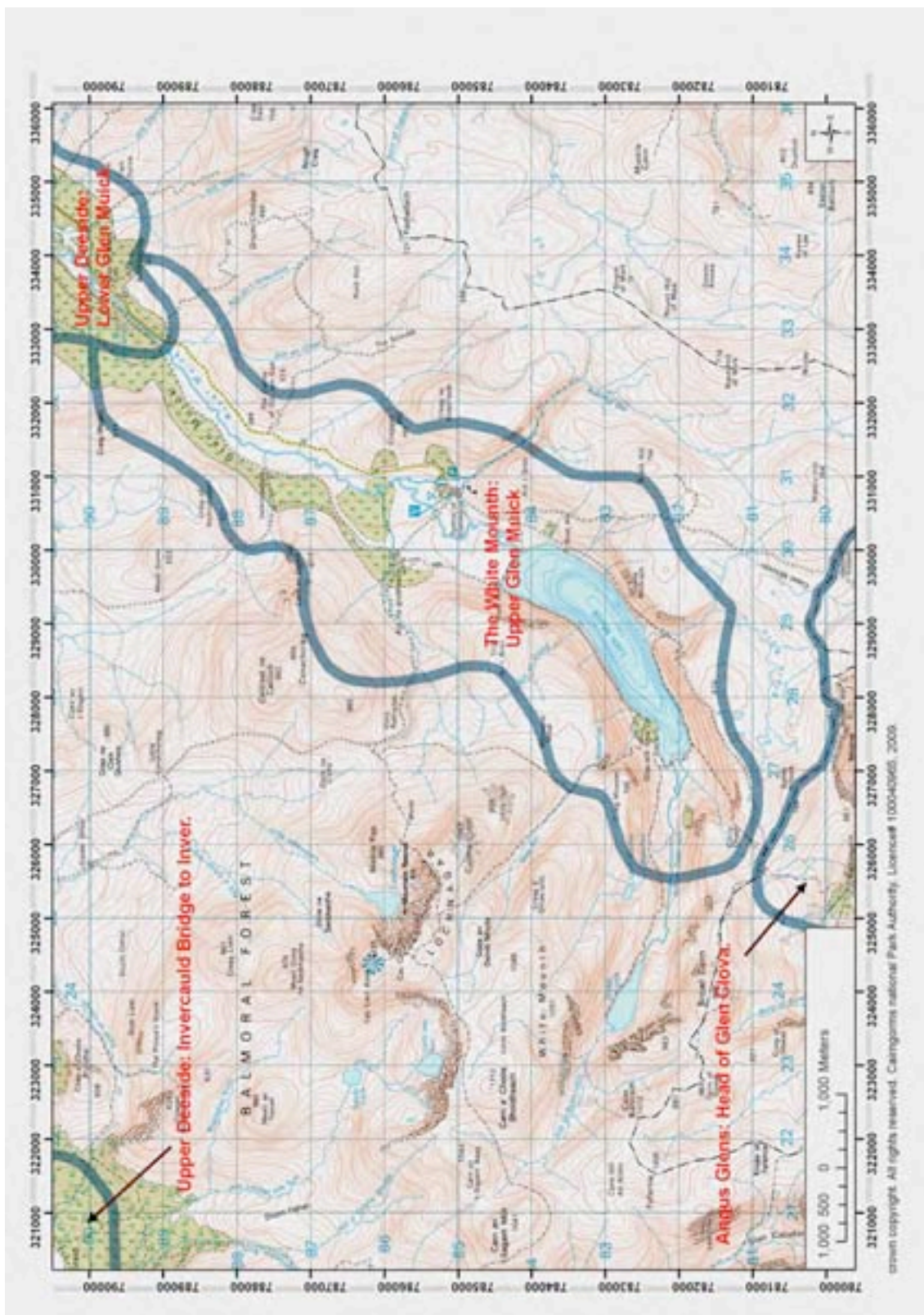
*The Linn of Muick set within a deeply incised wooded gorge*



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



### 7.9 The White Mounth: **Upper Glen Muick**



### 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*

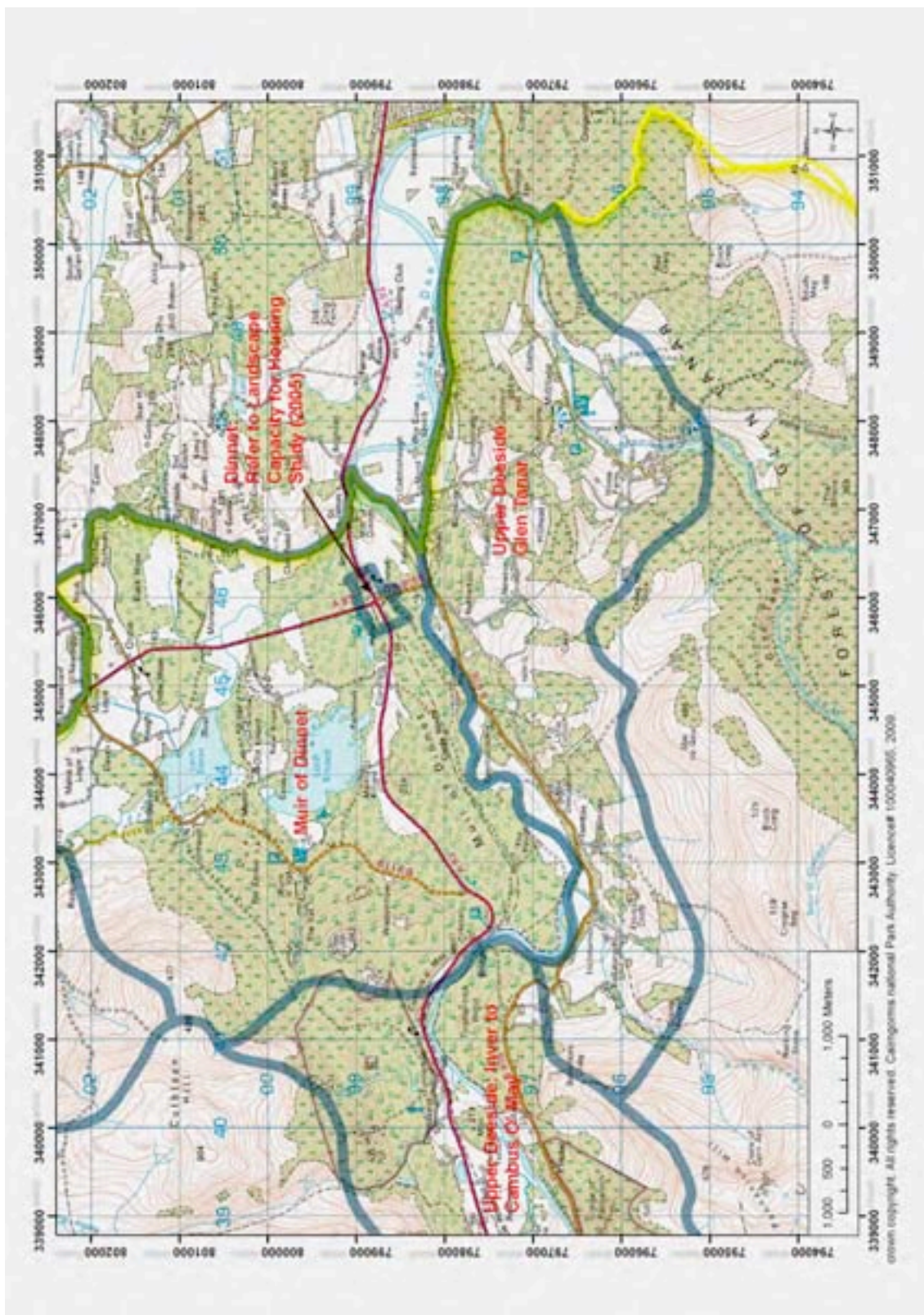


*Loch Muick occupies a deep glacial trough*



*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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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*

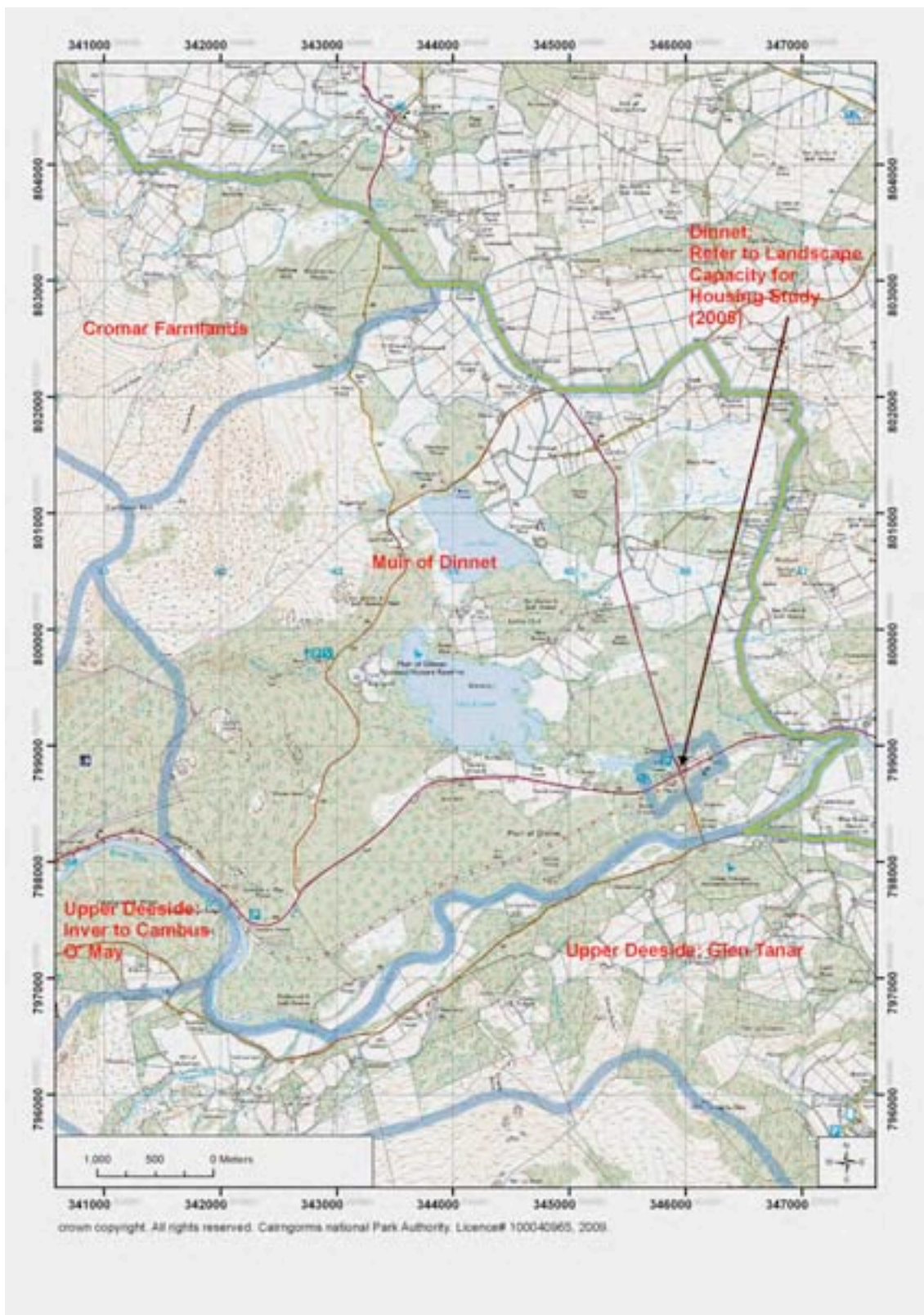


*The hill slopes of the lower glen are covered with managed woodlands*



*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 Cromar. It 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, 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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*



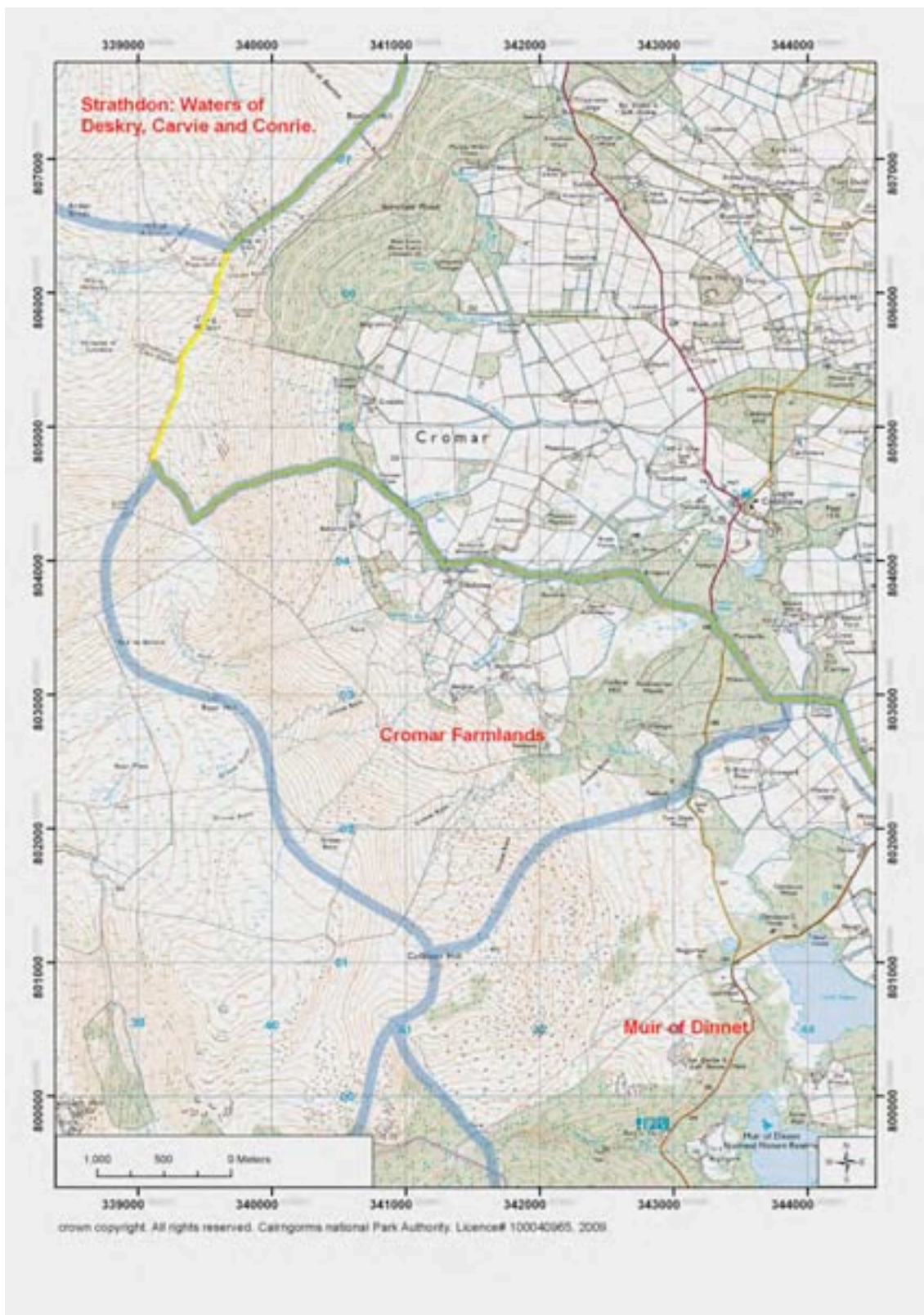
*Pockets of farmland with pastures contained by stone walls occur around the lochs*



*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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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*

