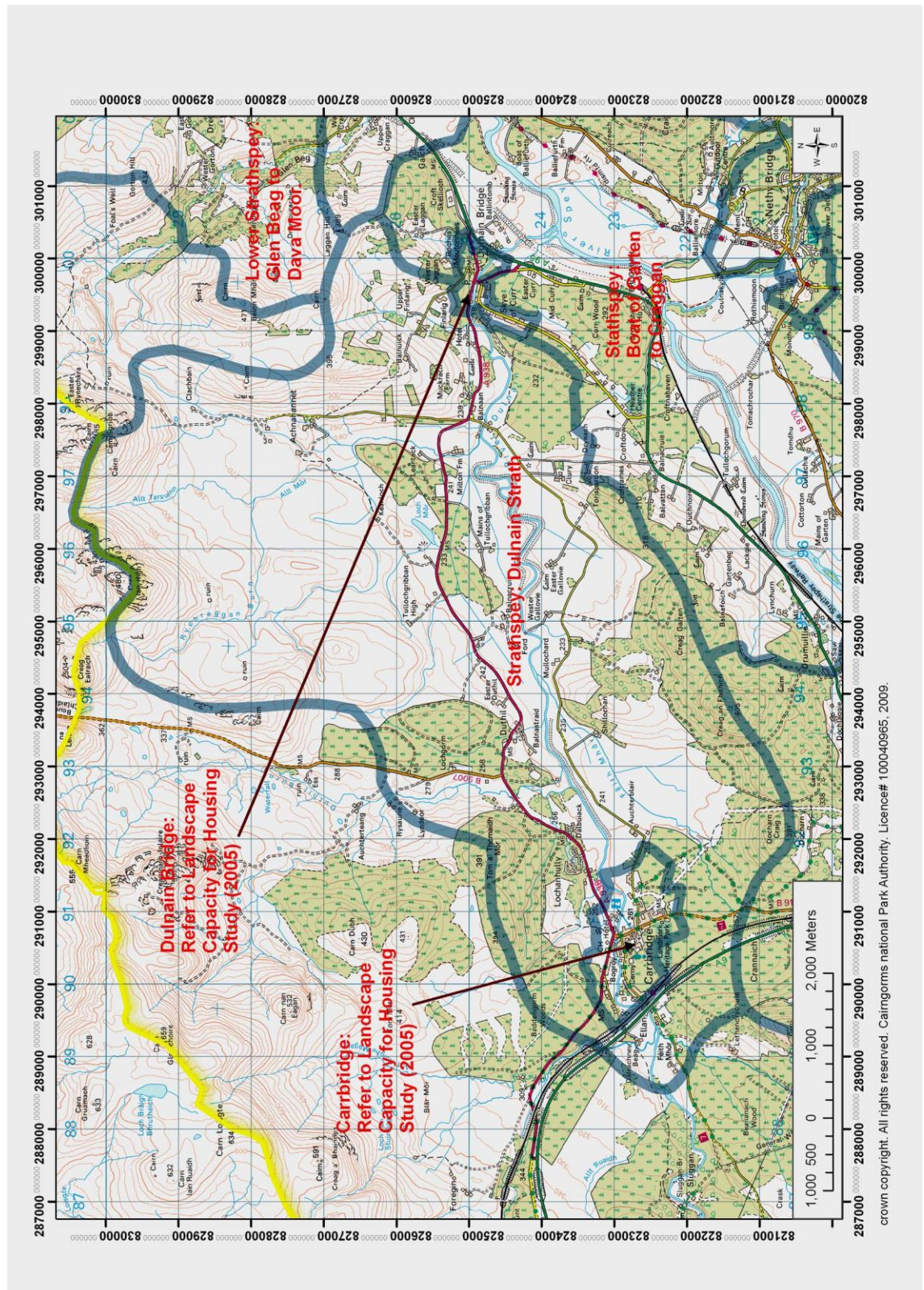


I.1 Strathspey: **Dulnain Strath**



1.1.1 *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

1.1.2 *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

1.1.3 *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.

1.1.4 *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



A wide strath – from elevated roads, the cultivated farmland and the Dulnain River are easily visible



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'