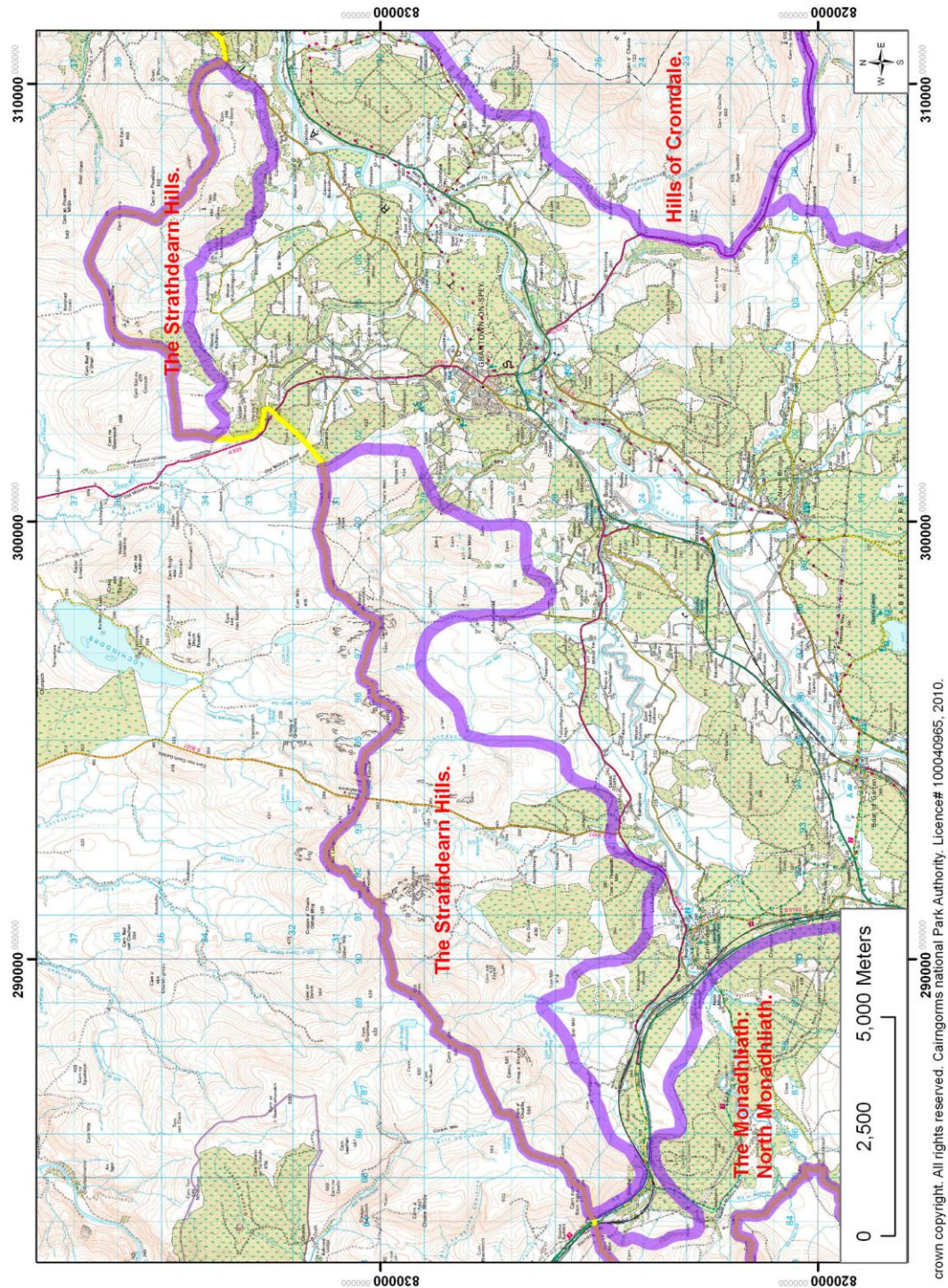


## I.1 The Strathearn Hills



### 1.1.1 *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 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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

### 1.1.2 *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

#### 1.1.3 *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.

#### 1.1.4 *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*