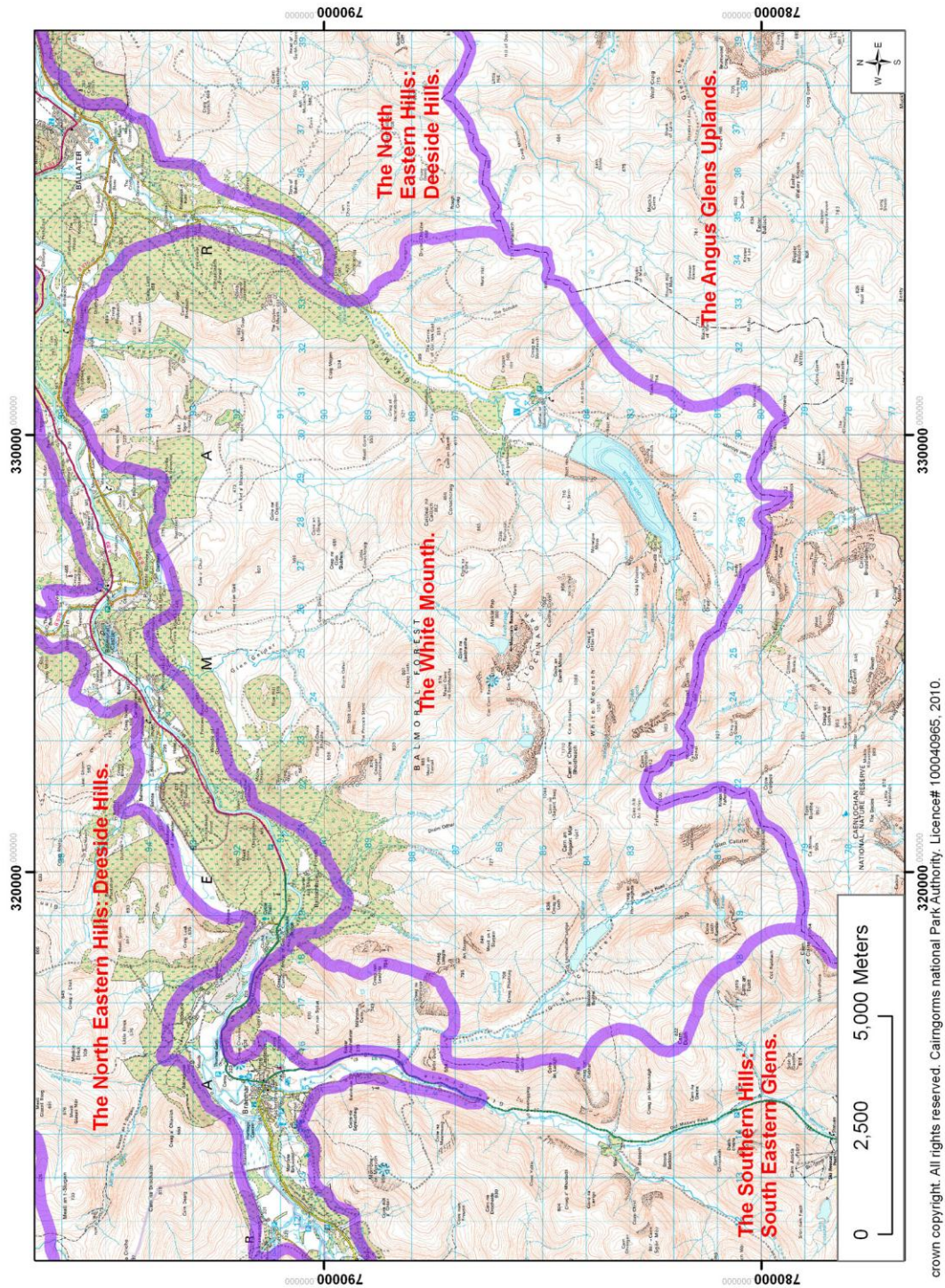


## 1.1 The White Mounth



### 1.1.1 *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

#### 1.1.2 *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

#### 1.1.3 *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.

#### 1.1.4 *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)*



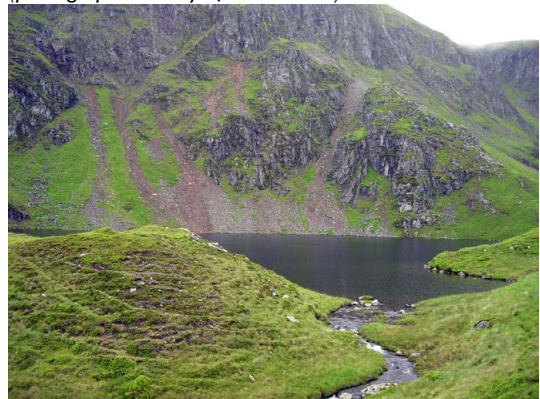
*A huge corrie below Cac Carn Mòr embraces an elevated corrie  
(Photograph courtesy of SNH)*



*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*