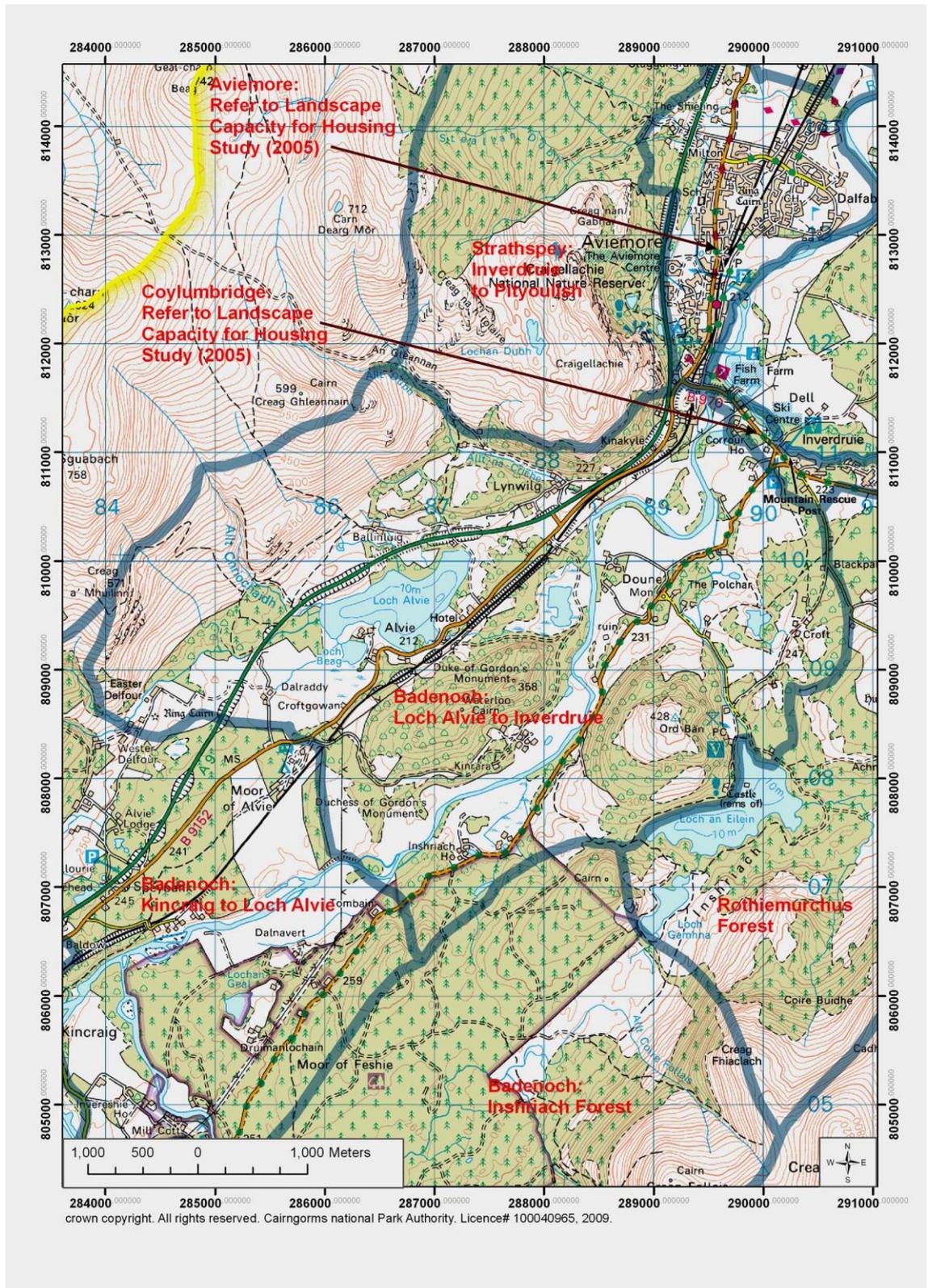


# Badenoch: Loch Alvie to Inverdrue



### 1.1.1 *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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### 1.1.2 *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

#### 1.1.3 *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.

#### 1.1.4 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*