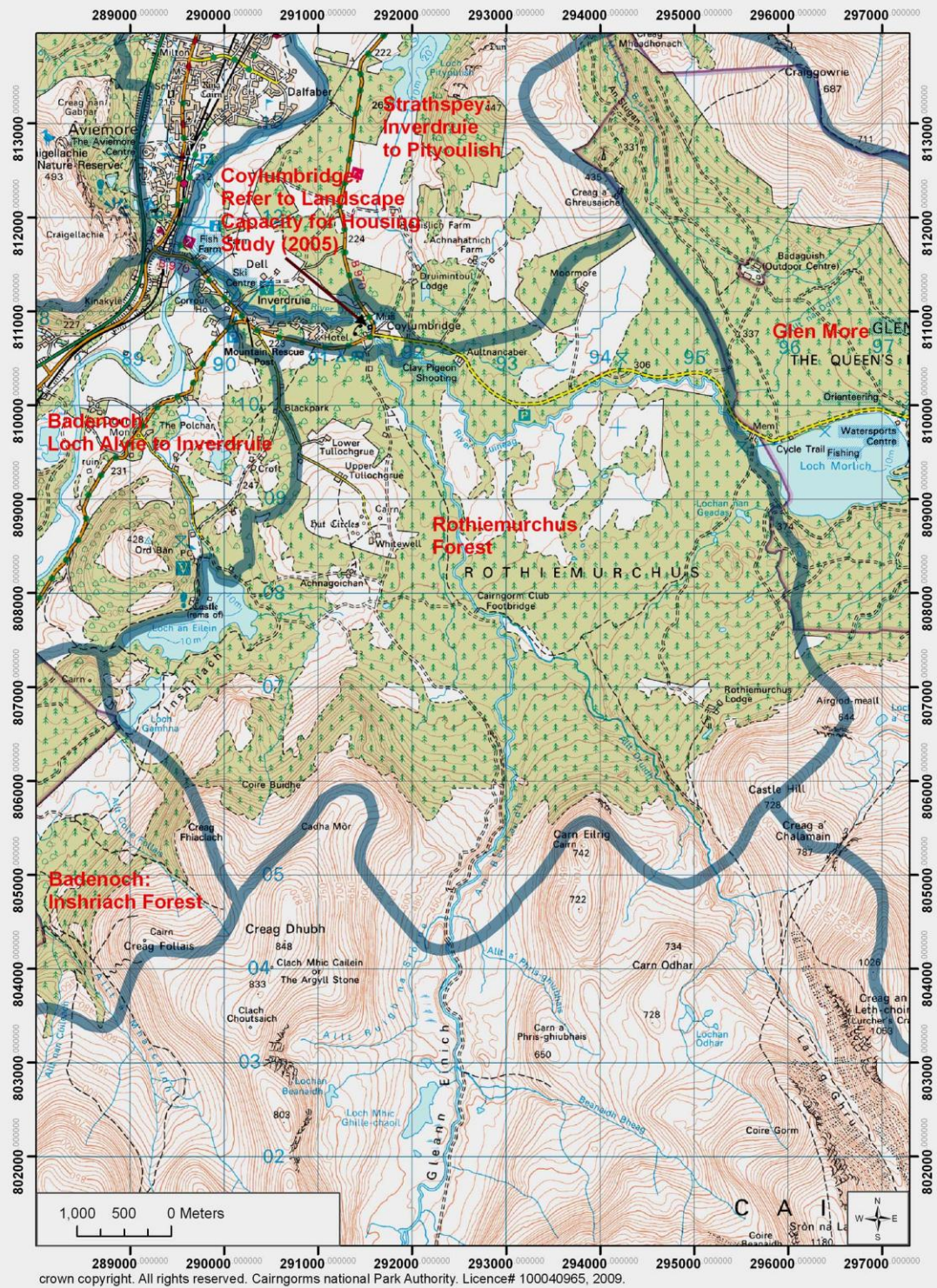


1.1 Rothiemurchus Forest



1.1.1 *Landscape character*

This landscape is raised above Strathspey, lying in the lower part of a bowl-shaped landform which continues east with the Glen More character area, at the foot of the Cairngorm massif, contained by granite-rich hills to the south

The floor of the basin shows a lot of landform detail. The last ice movement was from South West and North East, leaving behind a series of long, sinuous esker ridges of deposit, interspersed with winding melt water channels

Large areas of planted and regenerating native Scots pine, of varied age and density, extend over this area, colonising up the steep slopes of the surrounding hills, and into adjacent glens along the southern edge

Heather moorland, often speckled with young regenerating birch and pine, occupies the numerous more open spaces within the woodland

Loch an Eilean, with its 15th to 17th century island castle, forms a picturesque focus on the western edge of this character area, its deeply indented shoreline fringed by diverse native pine woodland with an under-storey of birch, rowan, heather and juniper

There are occasional stands or individual 'specimen' trees of mature pine

An open area of pasture is located on the low, rounded hill of Tullochgrue within the heart of the Forest. Straight edged, late 18th/19th century improved fields, and dispersed clusters of farm buildings occupy this land which also has evidence of prehistoric farming, suggesting continuity of land-use across at least three millenia.

Hidden in the forest by the Allt Druidh is a pre-improvement summer shieling area, indicative perhaps, of more unrecorded shielings along watercourses elsewhere in the forest

The area is well used by walkers and cyclists. A network of tracks and paths through Rothiemurchus Forest link to the dramatic passes of Gleann Einich and the Lairig Ghru which penetrate deep into the Cairngorm massif

The 'ski road' undulates across the ridges of glacial-fluvial deposit

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The western expanse of the Rothiemurchus Forest has a pronounced natural character emanating from its extensive and diverse native woodland of varying ages and density as well as the moorland

The eastern part of the forest has a more commercial forest character, in part due to stands of more even-aged woodland

The Cairngorms massif, and its associated deeply cut passes and glens, is striking in its huge scale and bold form and can be appreciated from the many open areas within the Forest, for example on the road to Whitewell

The area is very popular for recreation and while this reduces the sense of seclusion experienced, the forest and the varied terrain has the ability to absorb the many people who visit

A feeling of timelessness can be experienced within the long-settled parts of the forest, for example in the Tullochgrue area. This is complemented by the long history of forest management.

The mature native pinewood-fringed Loch an Eilean is highly picturesque and displays a typical 'Highland' scene to the many visitors who walk in this easily accessible area. It has a 'romantic' character enhanced by the ruined castle set on an island and the mountainous backdrop to views.

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The enclosure of woodland cover generally limits visibility to adjacent character areas, but when views of Strathspey, the Glen More area and the mountains are revealed from the open elevated areas, these can be dramatic as well as defining wider containment.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The diverse mosaic of naturalistic native pine woodland interspersed with open heather moorland, juniper scrub and pockets of long-established farmland are the key distinctive features of this landscape, especially to the west. Where the forest is open, there are striking views of the dramatic northern face of the Cairngorms and the Lairig Ghru.



The long, sinuous esker ridges can be seen under the woodland across the floor of the bowl



From clearings within the forest, there are views of the Cairngorms massif and the major glens



Small fields of pasture at Tullochgrue, and views across Strathspey



Pine woodland and heather understorey



View to the deeply cut valley form of Lairig Ghru



Buildings at Tullochgrue