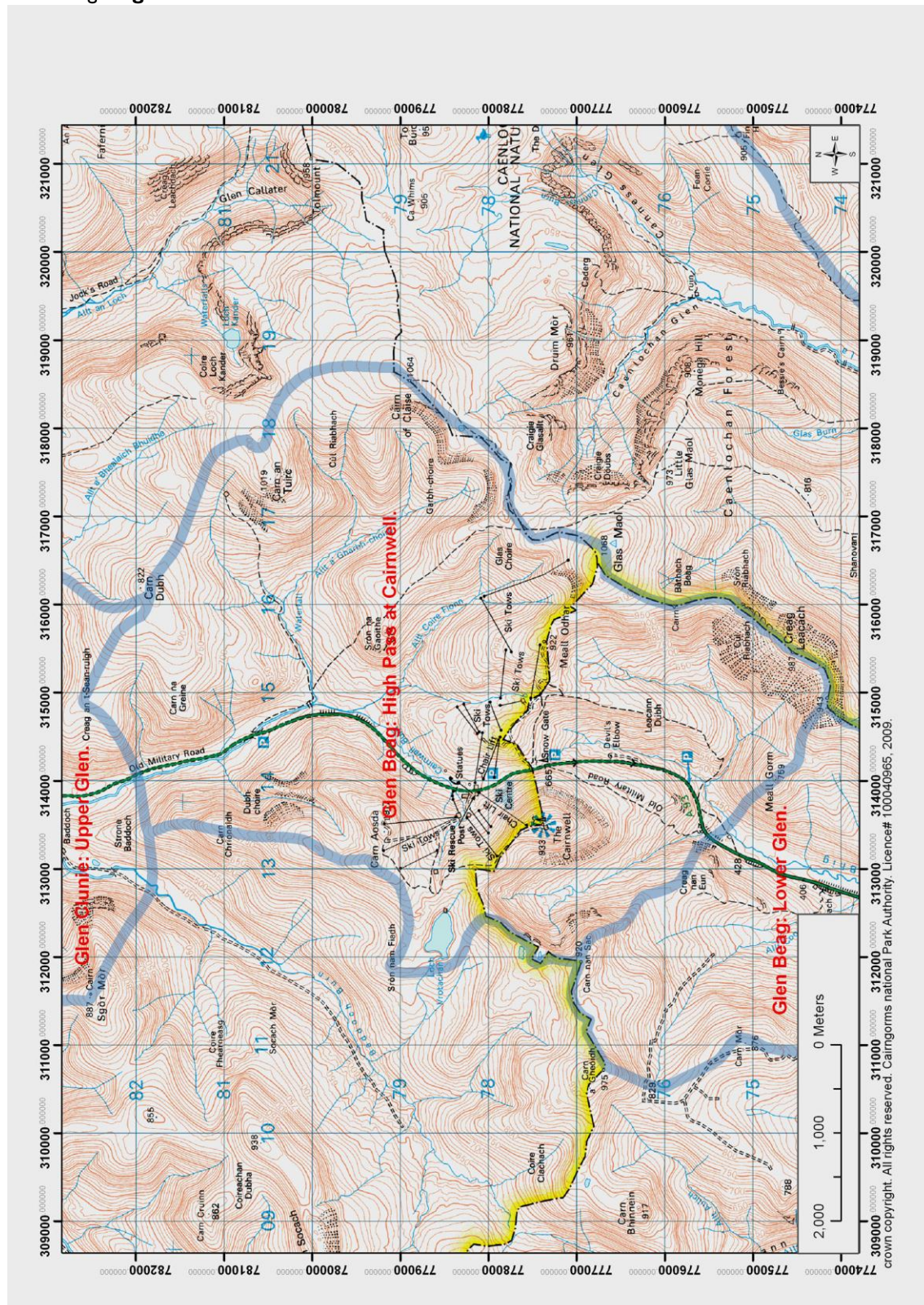


## 1.1

## Glen Beag: High Pass at Cairnwell



### 1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

This high pass curves around the massive bulk of the Cairnwell and is contained by broad flanks of rugged ridges and individually defined 'munro' summits

Corries and cliffs sit along the south eastern edge of this character area, and Glas Choire is a fine 'snowbowl'

The irregular topography of ridges and shallow glens reflects complex bedrock lithology and the extensive scree slopes have been created by post-glacial weathering of frost-susceptible quartz

The crest of the pass is the focus of development associated with the seasonal ski resort of Glenshee, which includes several buildings and car parks, as well as an extensive tow system which reaches up onto the high tops and ridges

The vegetation is heather moorland, possibly on glacial till overlying an acidic bedrock, fragmented by scree, some of which is managed by burning to create grouse moor

Distinct and sometimes large, green patches around many burn sides, generally on the east side of the glen, indicate the location of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century shielings/shelters associated with summer grazings across the heather moorland

There is some peat erosion associated with the ski runs

There are occasional access tracks, some of which have been created informally through the use of ATVs

Very occasional small fenced enclosures appear to be part of a research experiment in grazing impacts

The road is relatively wide and very steep, marked out by numerous snow poles and signs, while its edges are reinforced on the southern side of the pass by concrete kerbing.

### 1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The steep sided hills and the sense of the surrounding 'mass' create a very pronounced sense of enclosure

There is a very strong sense of 'upland pass' – it is clear that the road and the pass are higher than many other roads in Scotland, partly because of the long steep climb, and partly due to the sparse vegetation and lack of permanent settlement

There is a sense of anticipation which builds up as a traveller approaches the crest of the pass

The ski resort is a seasonal destination point in its own right, so there is also a sense of arrival experienced when reaching the 'high point'.



#### 1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is experienced very much as part of the transition of landscape character travelling between Glen Shee and Braemar, and therefore has strong sequential links with Glen Beag and Glen Clunie.

#### 1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The sense of elevation, and of crossing a pass, is very pronounced, a perception reinforced by the transition in vegetation and settlement pattern when travelling up from the glen floors at Deeside and Glen Shee, which then culminates in the crest of the pass. The ski resort, although tidy and well maintained, is a prominent and memorable feature. The green of the shieling sites, which can be found along the burnsidies, can be a surprising encounter.



*The road going up over the pass, with vegetation of moor and rough grazing emphasising the elevation*



*Approaching the Cairnwell from the north, the pass cuts behind a steep spur*



*The ski resort and snow fences extend up the hillsides to screes across the silvery quartzite summits and ridges*



*Road side signs, concrete edges and barriers reflecting the high winter use of the road, combine to create visual clutter*