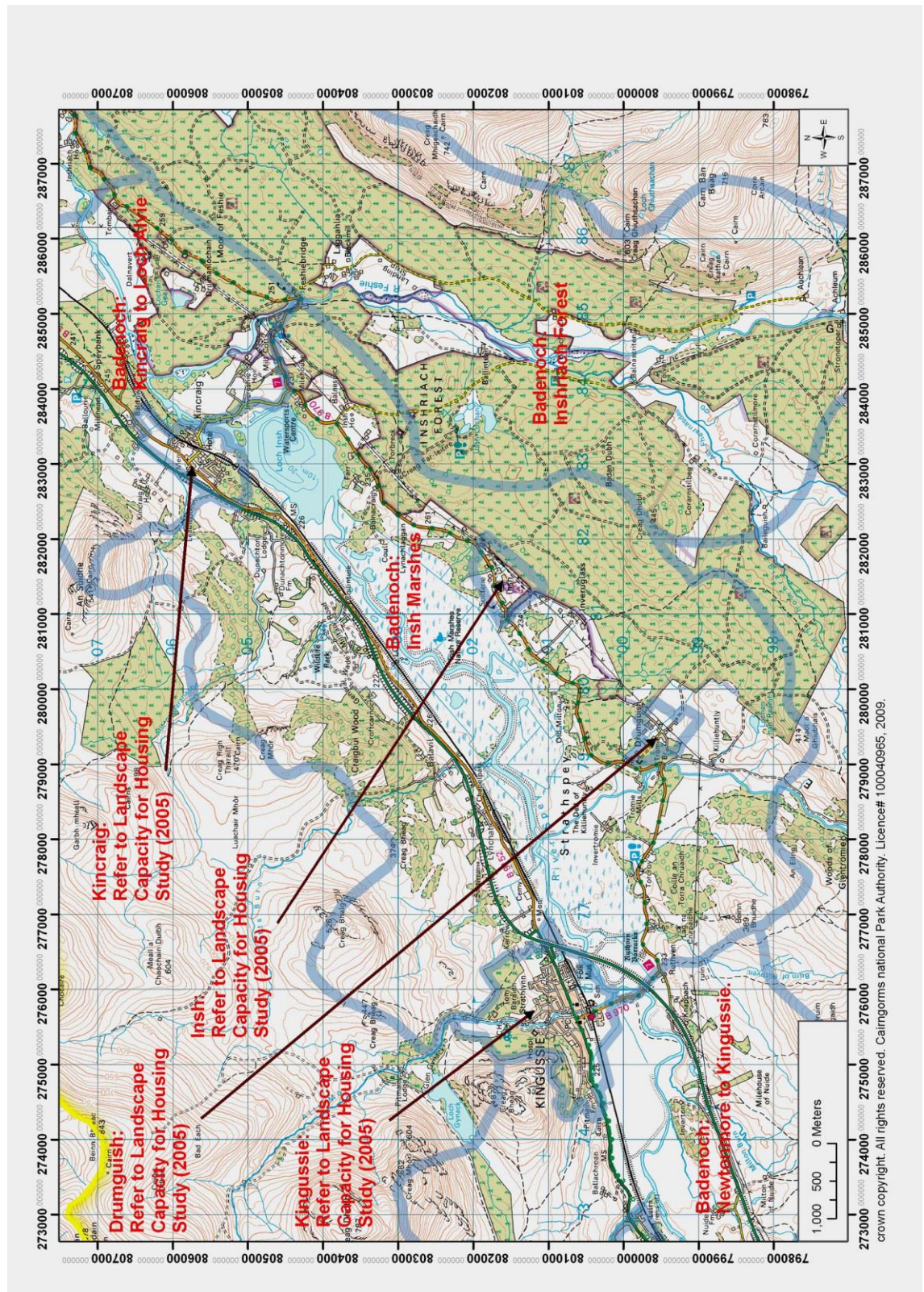


# I.1

## Badenoch: Insh Marshes



### 1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

- Extensive wetland, marsh and occasional pools reach across most of the floor of this wide stretch of strath, interrupted by occasional hummocks of gravelly deposit
- The floodplain is framed on both sides by wide terraces and elevated, sometimes complex and undulating slopes of well-drained glacial-fluvial deposits
- The north western side of the strath is then contained by low, rocky hills along the edge of the Monadhliath, while along the south eastern edge, the vast conifer woodland of Inshriach forest extends across low, undulating terrain
- More extensive, well drained deposits are supplemented by an extensive fan of gravelly outwash from the River Tromie at the mouth of Glen Tromie
- The River Spey meanders in generous loops across the strath floor, pools indicating the line of past meanders, to join with the calm expanse of Loch Insh to the north. The river seasonally floods to transform the strath into a vast shallow, temporary loch
- The floodplain is largely rough textured reeds and wetland vegetation, with occasional scrub
- There are large, better drained meadows on the gravelly outwash from the river Tromie at the Dell of Killiehuntly and Invertromie, within broadly straight edged, late 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century improved fields
- Extensive woodland, much of it semi-natural, occupies the immediate edges of the wetland, rising up onto the low terraces which enclose the strath floor and over the low rocky hills to the north and at the mouth of Glen Tromie
- Geometrically shaped, improved fields sit on top of the well drained terraces and frequently appear surrounded by broadleaved woodland
- Smaller fields, indicating a period of pre-improvement enclosure, cluster around the settlements of Balnespick, Inveruglass and Drumguish to the south of the strath
- There are small holdings at Insh, although the former linear field pattern has largely disappeared
- Large lodges, at Balavil and Dunachton, and more prominent farms occupy the south facing slopes above the A9, where conifer shelter woods, occasional policies, roundels and specimen trees add to the diversity of the vegetation pattern
- Ruthven Barracks is a prominent landmark feature sitting on the remnants of a kame terrace at the south-western end of the marshes, while Insh church, a small white kirk, possibly on the site of an earlier Christian chapel, is a focus on the shores of Loch Insh

The roads clearly occupy land which is elevated above the flood-prone strath, and are often enclosed in woodland, while the railway sits, at least in large part, on top of an embankment across the floodplain. The Insh marshes are a visitor attraction, as is the Highland Wildlife Park, which is largely hidden in woodland, and Ruthven Barracks

#### 1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The extensive wetland, rushes, willow scrub and numerous pools create a large area of semi-natural appearance, emphasised during periods of flooding

The dominance of natural forces is further reinforced by the flood-prone river which introduces an unpredictable and dynamic element

The experience of travelling along the roads, through a sequence of enclosed woodland and open farmland is particularly striking on the south side of the Spey

Views of the marshes are surprisingly infrequent as they are surrounded by trees, through which there are only glimpse views. However, they are very visible from the train, which is elevated on embankments.

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

The marshes are an extensive semi-natural contrast to the managed strath floor elsewhere along the Spey.



#### 1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The naturalistic and dynamic, unpredictable character of the flood-prone marshes is a striking feature, which is reinforced by the extensive areas of semi-natural woodland.



*Level, marshy land, subject to dramatic flooding but punctuated with occasional hummocks of well drained gravelly deposit*



*Extensive woodland, much of it semi-natural, along the hummocky terrain which frames the marshes*



*The meandering River Spey leads into Loch Insh, largely contained by trees*



*The Insh marshes in flood*



*Specimen trees and roundels on designed landscape at Balavil*



*Farmland on well drained, elevated land at the mouth of Glen Tromie*