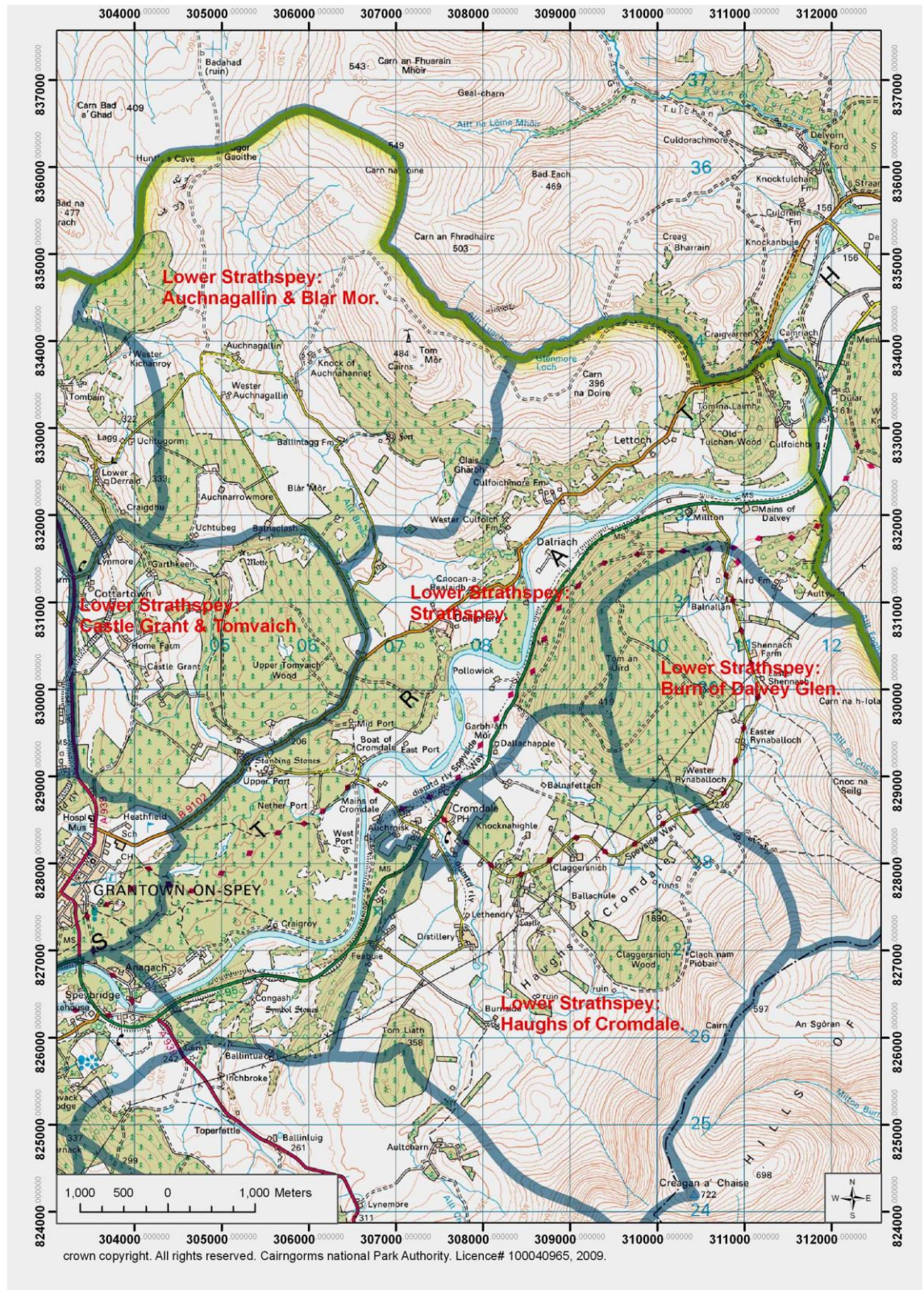


I.1

Lower Strathspey: Strathspey



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

The River Spey forms a rhythmical series of wide meanders along this part of Strathspey, having worked glacial-fluvial deposits to create a sequence of bow-shaped flats within the bends of the river, each contained by elevated terraces or sloping hillsides

The strath is at this point much narrower than Strathspey south of Grantown, and is framed by steep hillsides, with several prominent summits, between which side valleys extend into the Hills of Cromdale to the south east and the Strathdearn Hills to the north west

North west of the River Spey, extensive, hummocky fluvial deposits and river terraces are largely hidden from view under conifer woodland

The sides of the strath, and even some of the river flats, are also densely wooded, with extensive areas of commercial conifer forest, including pine, and occasional large broadleaved woodlands

In addition, a network of linear woodland features, such as riparian woodland, shelter woods and woods associated with the steep banks of terraces, criss-crosses the farmed land

Relatively regularly shaped, late 18th/19th century improved fields are confined to the most level areas of land, including the river flats, some well-drained glacial-fluvial terraces and gentle slopes associated with mouths of the side valleys

The farmed land is largely grassland, but includes arable crops and some areas of wetland and rough grazing, with scattered birch woodland occasionally encroaching onto the less grazed land

Large 'forest' trees, such as oak and ash, and occasional policy woodland associated with lodges and larger farms add to visual diversity

Settlement, with the exception of the village of Cromdale, is dispersed, with large farms even on the lower river flats as well as the upper terraces, and lodges with associated estate buildings and infrastructure placed on elevated sites, overlooking the river

Cromdale is located on a well-drained terrace beside the mouth of a side glen, at the confluence between the Burn of Cromdale and the Spey and close to a crossing point of the Spey

The A95 tends to occupy the elevated terraces on top of steep banks above the river flats east of the River, but travels close to the Spey, constrained by the hills on the eastern side of the valley

The B9102 follows a course generally much more distant from the Spey to the west, loosely following a break in slope at the edge of the strath

The pine woodland, especially Anagach wood, is well used for informal recreation, and the Speyside Way follows the line of the strath, although it is almost entirely set within woodland

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

A pronounced sequence of enclosed forest followed by open, relatively level farmed terraces is experienced when travelling on the elevated roads, although views are in part screened by regenerating woodland

The elevated A95 also offers occasional glimpse views of the river and lower terraces, but frequently views are obscured by roadside woodland

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained, although there are occasional glimpses into side valleys from elevated viewpoints. It provides a narrower, more densely wooded contrast to the more open Strathspey south of Grantown.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The rhythmic spacing and distinct shape of the bow-shaped river flats is a particular feature of this part of the Spey, the rhythm of which is partly complemented by the alternating sequence of farmed open space and enclosed woodland experienced when travelling along the roads.



The network of linear woodland features criss-crosses the farmed land along the strath floor



The low lying river flats are sometimes farmed, or, as in this case, are reverting to wetland and woods



Settlement is located on the farmed land, here on a pronounced river terrace



Riparian woodland along the river, and conifer woodland across the steeper hill slopes