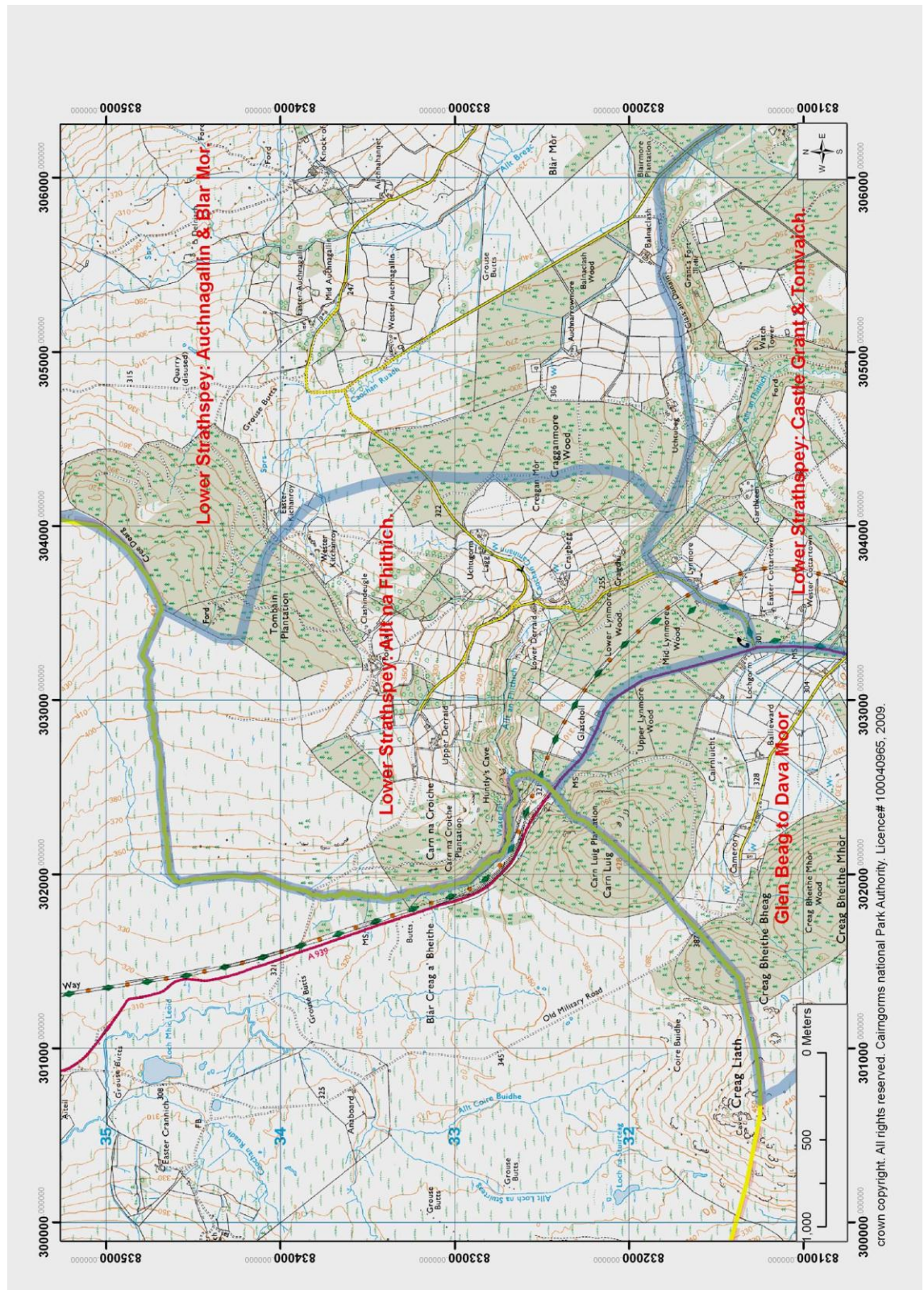


I.1 Lower Strathspey: **Glen of Allt an Fhithich**



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

Convex shaped slopes, locally overlain with glacial till rise above a complex land form of knolls, ridges and uneven terraces which leads down to the deep, narrow, sometimes rocky gorge of the fast flowing Allt an Fhithich – a former channel for glacial meltwater

Open to the south, this landscape is backed by steeper, forest-covered slopes to the north, and is a complex mixture of interlocking farmland and woodland

Diverse woodland, including dense broadleaves along the steep sided gorge, modest scattered birch woods between the fields and more extensive conifer woodlands across the upper slopes and ridgelines, adds to the overall visual complexity of the landscape

The improved, rectilinear-shaped, late 18th/19th century fields are relatively small

These grassland fields are enclosed by ruined dykes which are now being replaced by fences

Elevated farmsteads are clearly placed at the brow of the convex upper slopes, evenly spaced at a similar height above long sweeps of pasture, or sited directly above the river gorge on hummocks or raised terraces at the very base of the hill slopes

Several abandoned farms have been renovated for residential use

The narrow public road winds sinuously through this complex terrain, up and down the steep slopes and around the ridges, linking a network of farm access tracks

The cliffs at Huntly's Cave are regularly used by practising climbers

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The tight interlock of topography, fields and woodlands reinforce the intimate scale and the complex topography along the lower slopes

The small scale of the landscape is readily experienced from the narrow winding roads, which weave around the topography

The views from the upper slopes are orientated southwards, where there is no topography to obstruct fine views to the Cairngorms

Despite its relative proximity to Grantown, this area is relatively secluded, an impression which is reinforced by the narrow, often steep roads with light traffic

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The lower slopes of this character area are confined and self contained, while the upper slopes offer views of 'borrowed landscapes' well to the south of this character area.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This is a diverse landscape of complex topography where there is a strong contrast between the elevated upper slopes with their panoramic views and the intimately scaled landform and pattern of fields and woodland reaching down to the steep sided gorge of the Allt an Fhithich. The complexity of this landscape is experienced on the narrow roads which wind between the hummocks and ridges.



The more complex land form around the narrow gully of the Allt an Fhithich



High up farms are located at the brow of the convex slope, above pastures



From the upper slopes there are fine views to the south. A fence replaces a dyke in the foreground



Upper pastures on convex shaped slopes above the wooded river valley



Narrow roads wind through the complex landform