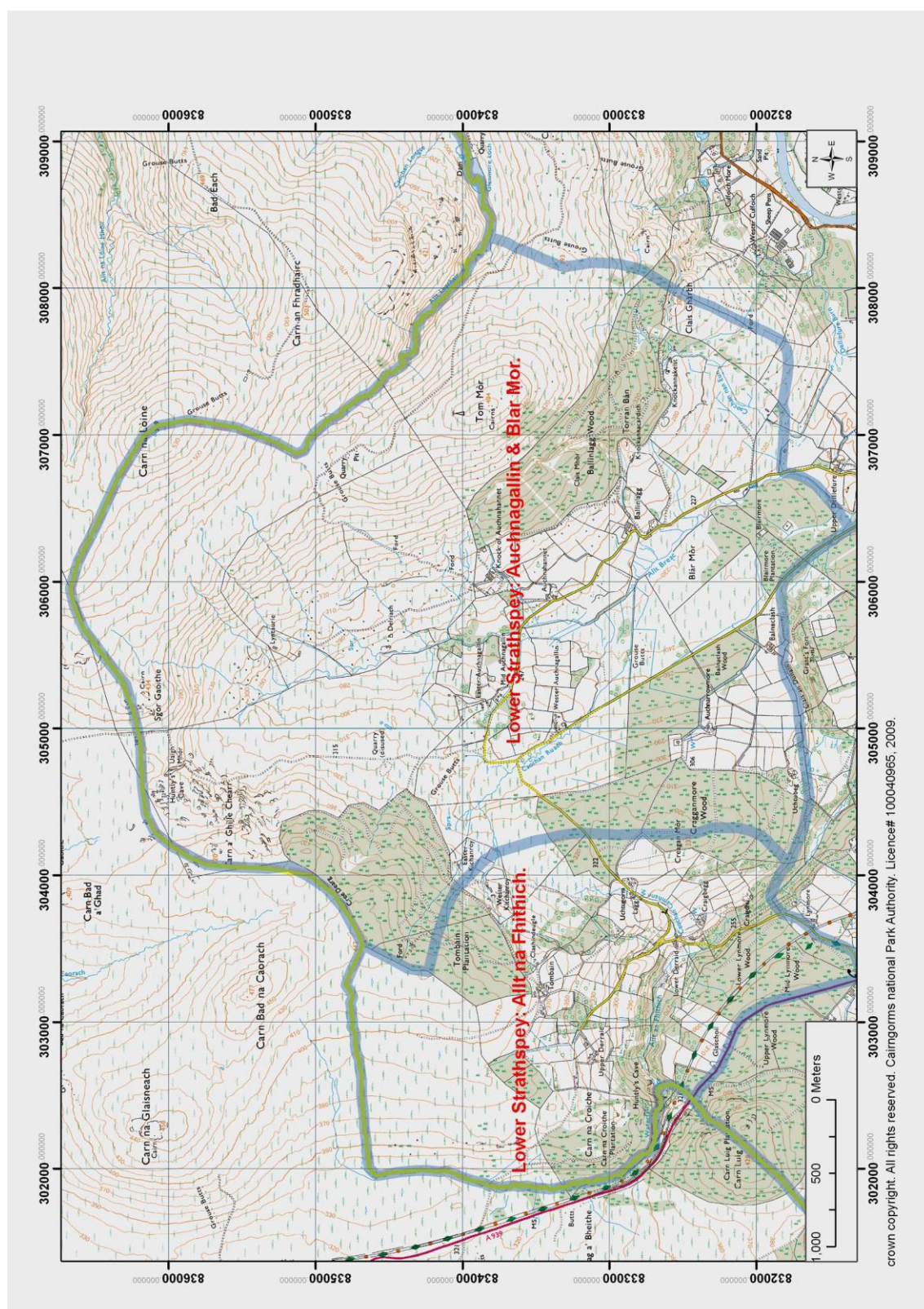


I.1 Lower Strathspey: **Auchnagallin and Blar Mòr**



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

This wide shallow bowl, which spills open into Strathspey to the south, is contained by low ridges with occasional, subtle summits

A band of slightly hummocky, better drained glacial-fluvial deposit straddles the wide basin, below which lies an expanse of lowlying wetland, and above which rise steeper, heathery slopes

Late 18th/19th century improved fields, subdivided by walls, extend over these drier and less steeply graded gravelly deposits. Many of the walls are now neglected, and the field pattern is disappearing

Occasional patches of bright green improved grazing sit across the elevated moorland to the north

Conifer woodland extends along the length of the ridges to the east and west of this basin, while open moorland extends north, merging with Dava Moor beyond the Park

Pockets of birch woodland, many of which are mature, large, well formed trees, are associated with watercourses or scattered in loose clumps across the farmland

Some young conifer trees as well as birch and willow are seeding onto the lowlying Blar Mòr, an expanse of wet heath and rush which sits on peat

There are also extensive areas of wet unimproved grazing on lower lying land at the mouth of the basin, where it meets with Strathspey Settlement, largely of late 18th/19th century farmsteads is dispersed across the accessible pasture on the band of well drained gravelly deposit and avoids the wetter land to the south and north of this band

Hedges, dominated by hawthorn, have been recently planted around many of the fields and along the roadsides, replacing field dykes or enclosing more expansive areas of unimproved grassland

The narrow public road skirts around the wetter lowlying moor linking the farms

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The wide shallow basin and low relief of surrounding ridges creates a sense of openness which is reinforced by the expansive views south to the Cairngorms from elevated roads and settlement

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

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is inter-visible with the Hills of Cromar. The openness and relative simplicity of the land form of this glen provides a marked contrast to the containment and complexity of the land form in the adjacent Glen of the Allt an Fhithich.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The large stature of the birch trees is a striking feature of this glen, as is the relative naturalness of the Blar Mòr. There is a strong and clearly visible relationship between the band of well-drained, gravelly glacial deposit and the location of the settlement and fields.



The field pattern, marked out by dykes, with conifer woodland above



Wetland of Blar Mòr, with woodland beginning to encroach



Rough grazing with birch woodland in the foreground, and fields and farms on the band of better drained land



Woodland scattered across the improved grassland with a new hedge in the foreground