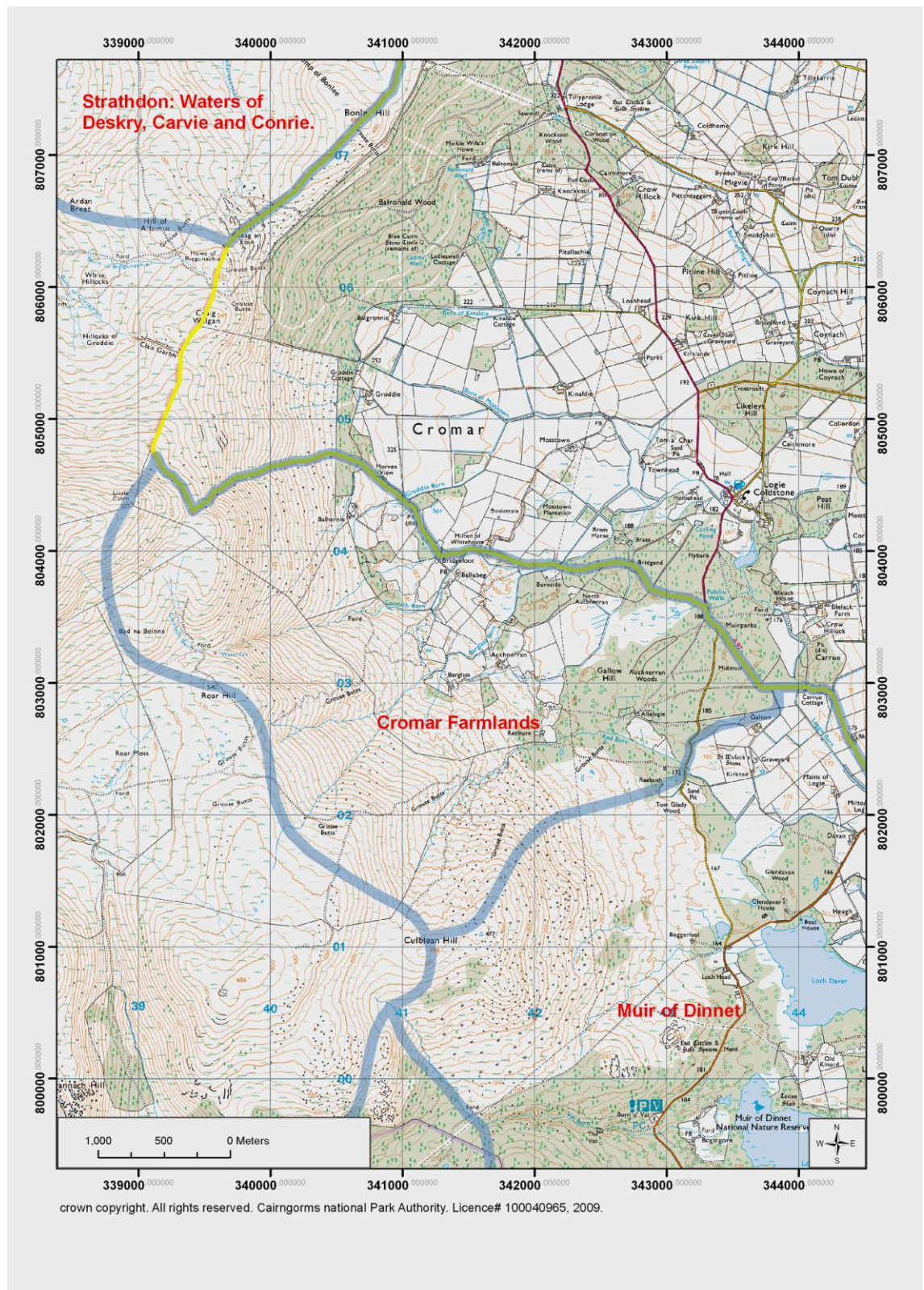


## I.1 Cromar Farmlands



#### 1.1.1 *Landscape character*

Only a very small part of this character area lies within the Park and it extends to the east into the lowlands of Aberdeenshire

There is a gradual transition to the south where this character area merges with the more low-lying area of the 'Muir of Dinnet'. Both lie within the ancient topographic basin known as the Howe of Cromar

These extensively drained farmlands lie at the foot of a steep, east facing escarpment, cut by almost linear narrow river valleys which drain into the mire and former wetland along the lower slopes

The gentle undulation of the landform is occasionally interrupted by small knolls of sandy, glacial-fluvial deposits and these form focal points, often accentuated by clumps of Scots Pine and birch

The hill slopes are covered with heather, burnt in strips to manage as grouse moor and grass moorland

Managed conifer woodland around Muirparks is located on a slight rise above the 'Muir of Dinnet' basin. Policy woodland influences are evident in the large larch and Douglas Fir retained along roadsides in this area

Small shelterbelts mark the edge of improved pasture and hill land in the Ballabeg area

The bright green, straight-edged, late 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century improved fields, strongly associated with drained or drier land, wrap around the rougher grassland on the knolls and pockets of low-lying wet ground which are often colonised by birch

Small farms are located on the lower hill slopes next to the burns which or are sited on knolls within the lower-lying area

There are a number of prominent abandoned buildings in the area at the foot of the hill slopes, often surrounded by woodland

#### 1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The part of this character area located within the Park gives a strong impression of being a marginal upland landscape; this reinforced by the presence of abandoned buildings and wetland interspersed with conifer woodland and pasture

A feeling of seclusion can be experienced in this less-visited area of the Park

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

This character area has a strong visual relationship to the extensive lowland farmlands to the east being contained to the west by the upland edge. There is a gradual transition to the south where this character area merges with the more low-lying area of the 'Muir of Dinnet' north of Loch Davan.



#### 1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This more marginal farmland forms the fringes of the extensive lowland farmland to the east, outwith the Park. Some of its features are similar to those found within the Muir of Dinnet character area, reflecting its underlying tendency to wetland and mire, which is only kept at bay by extensive drainage.



*The heather covered slopes provide the backdrop to these farmlands*



*Pine planted on one of the sandy knolls of glacial deposit on the flatter pastures*



*Small farms are generally located on knolls above the more level pastures*



*Conifer woodland located adjacent to wetter pasture*