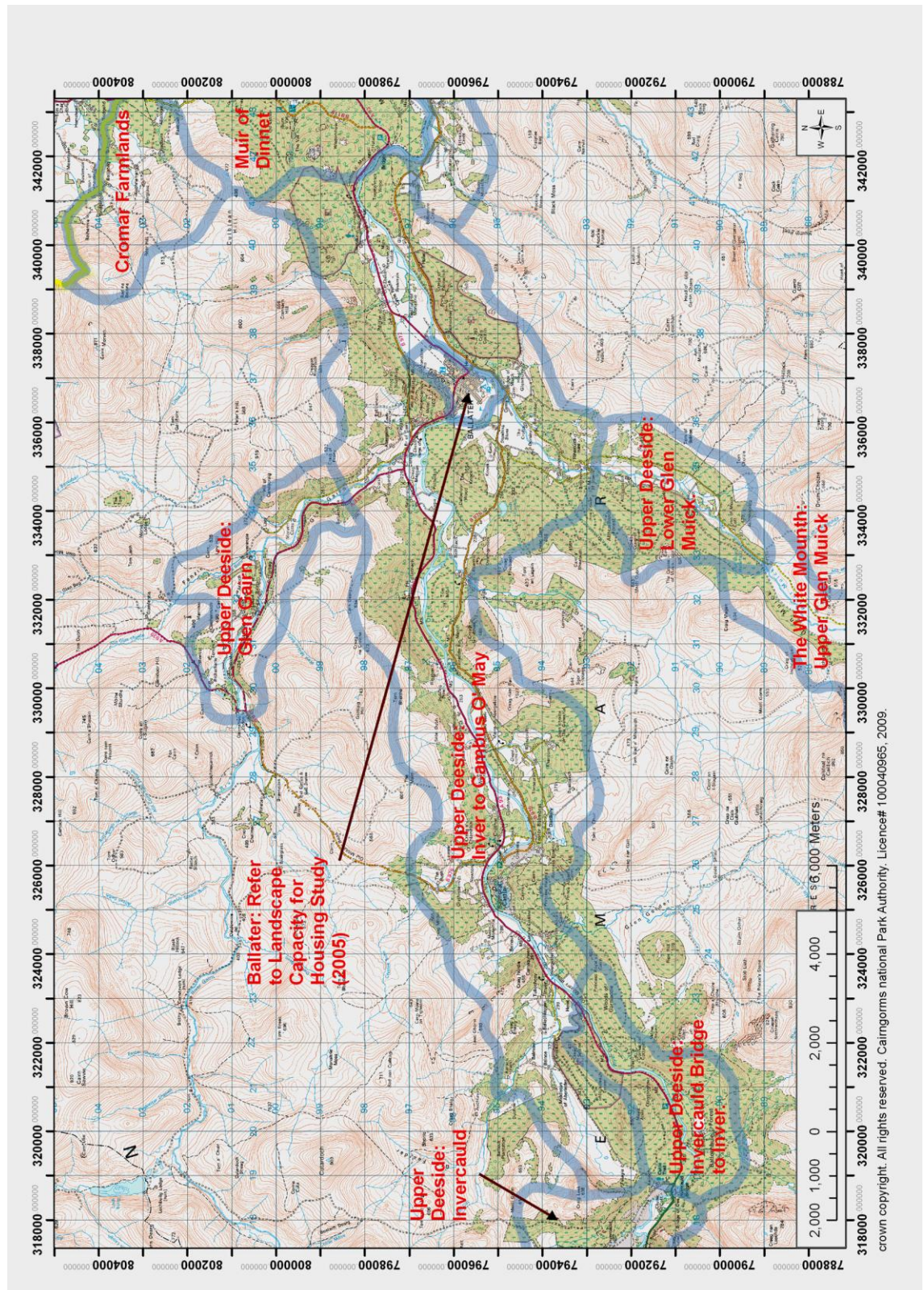


I.1 Upper Deeside: Inver to Cambus O' May



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

The complex terrain of isolated hills, irregular ridges and numerous long side glens, reflects the more diverse composition of the metamorphic and basic igneous bedrock which has been subject to varied degrees of erosion

The hills, like Meall Alvie, Craig Gowan, Creag Ghiubhais and the Knock represent large roches moutonees and typically have crags on their eastern side. These tend to create occasional narrower 'pinch points' along the relatively wide valley

The River Dee meanders in broad loops through a floodplain which varies in width, contained by side slopes of hummocky, glacial-fluvial deposit

Managed pine woodlands cover the side slopes and isolated hills. The woodland occasionally merges together to cover the valley floor, often coinciding with areas of hummocky fluvial deposits. Oak woodlands occur close to Ballater

Wood pasture and extensive birch covers hummocky lower side slopes and the upper slopes of the side valleys of Glen Gairn and Glen Feardar.

Late 18th/19th century improved fields, often straight edged and fenced, woodlands and the Dee are inter-woven within this character area. Improved pasture and arable fields fill the flood plain where it is broad.

Improved pastures on side slopes are often enclosed by stone dykes, while small pockets of slightly irregular, pre-improvement field boundaries are visible within Glen Feardar and Glen Felagie

This is a relatively well-settled landscape with small settlements such as Inver, Crathie and the larger planned settlement of Ballater. Farms and estate cottages are dispersed throughout the area, although generally avoiding the floodplain

Balmoral Castle, the site of a medieval stronghold is just visible above dense woodland. Policy woodland of exotic conifers and purple beech contribute to the setting of Balmoral

Monuments mark the top of focal rounded hills around this very extensive designed landscape

There is a strong estate influence in the style of buildings resulting in a distinctive architectural integrity with little new building evident

Other, smaller designed landscapes surround the original sites of 17th century, or earlier, lairds' strongholds at Glenmuick, Monaltrie, Birkhall and Abergeldie

Public roads avoid the floodplain, often sitting tucked against the break in slope. East of the Crathie, where the valley broadens, there are

roads either side of the Dee. South of the Dee the road is quiet and narrow, contrasting with the busy A93

Public car parks and tourist signage is prominent around Balmoral. The Deeside Way and designated cycle ways are aligned within this character area

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

There is a rhythmic pattern in this landscape, of defined hills rising out of the floodplain and farmland alternating with woodland along the floor of the valley

The River Dee is enhanced by long views to the mountainous landscape of the White Mounth from more open areas to the north

Historic estates, such as Balmoral, Monaltrie, Glenmuick, Birkhall and Abergeldie are largely hidden from view although wooded policies, boundary walls and occasional visible turrets offer tantalising glimpses of what lies within, but the influence of estate architecture and land management is extensive

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is largely self-contained although views of the White Mounth are possible through southwards the side valley of Glen Muick.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

This mix of broadleaved, native and managed pine woodlands, open farmland and settlement is diverse and complex, reflecting the opportunities provided by the varied terrain. The overwhelming estate influence, evident in buildings and also in the composition and management of policy woodlands and farms gives a strong visual integrity to the character area.



Visitor facilities at Crathie



Woodlands occasionally extend across the valley floor although are more dominant on the containing hills



Flat pastures along the Dee, backed by bands of birch on hummocky lower slopes



Defined rounded hills protrude onto the flat valley floor and are mainly wooded