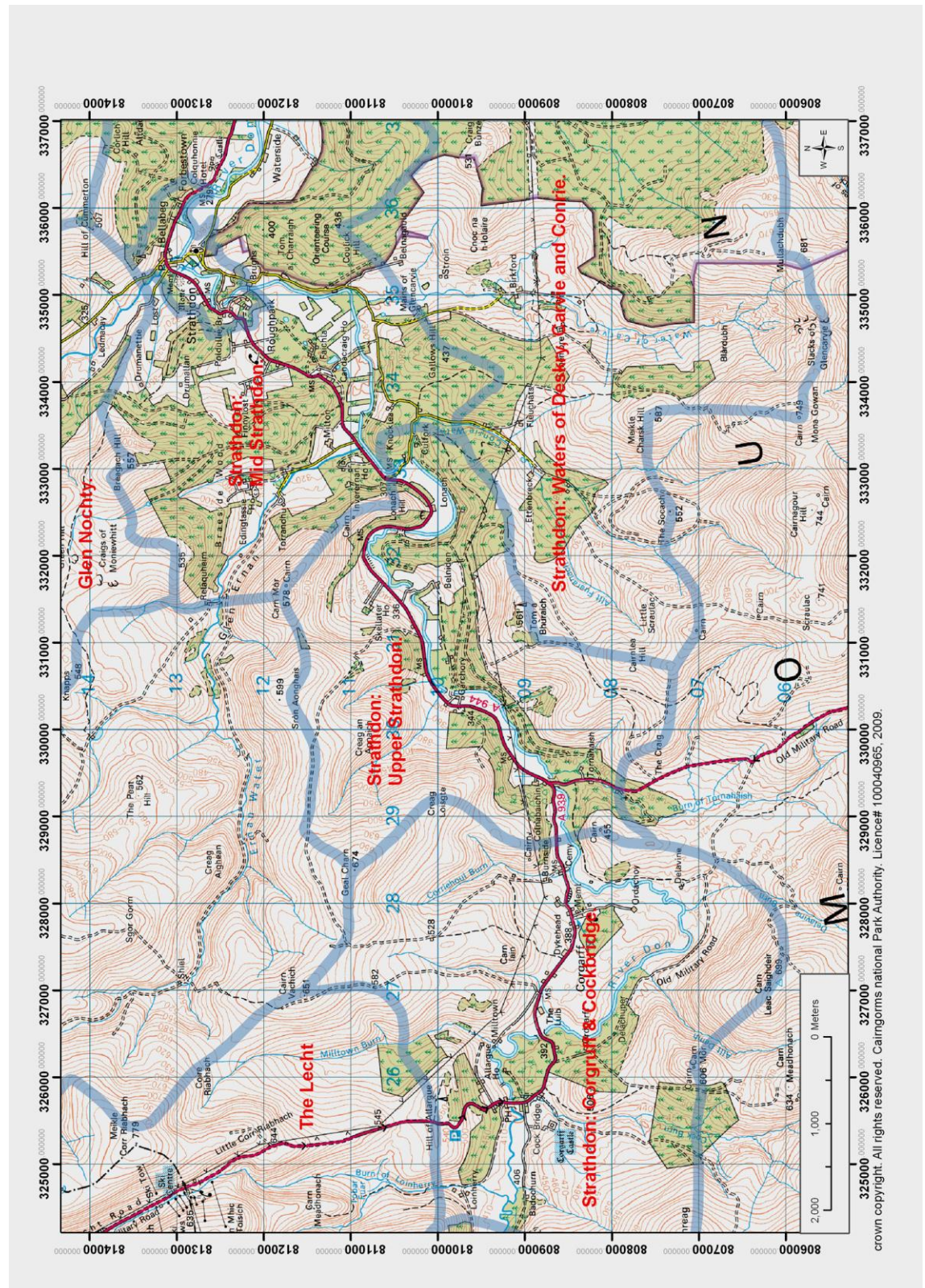


I.I

Strathdon: Upper Strathdon



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

This narrow section of valley, a 'pass' carved by the River Don, winds broadly west/east between steep sided hills with rounded, often domed summits

Bands of scree on some of the slopes have been created by glacial erosion exposing bands of bedrock which have subsequently been subject to frost weathering, resulting in rockfalls

The steep valley sides stop abruptly at the edge of a narrow, very flat flood plain, although they also alternate with arcs of more gentle gradients along the length of the valley, creating a complex topography which reflects the underlying diverse lithology

At Lonach Hill the River Don carves a fine, incised meander where the floodplain is contained within the higher amplitude bends of the valley

The north facing slopes of this valley are covered with conifer forest, which often reaches down to the edge of the floodplain

On the south facing slopes, the conifer woodland focuses around the narrowest sections of the 'pass', where the side slopes are steepest, and where again woodland comes down to the edge of the floodplain

Occasional policy woodland features – such as the avenue at Skellater House – add some diversity to this landscape

Late 18th/19th century improved fields, often enclosed by walls, occupy the more gentle gradients of the side slopes, regardless of aspect

These small fields of grassland and some arable alternate with the woodland on the steeper slopes

Most of the very level floodplain is also subdivided into small, fenced 18th/19th century improved fields, but these alternate with areas of wetland which are subject to frequent flooding

Remarkably, there are a couple of farms located on the edge of the narrow floodplain, but otherwise, farms are sited on the gentle, farmed upper slopes, overlooking the strath. This part of the valley of the River Don is not heavily settled.

At the narrowest sections of valley floor, the A944 hugs the very edge of the steeper slopes, right on the edge of the floodplain, where it has a stone retaining wall along the upside of the roadway

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The sense of winding through a narrow pass is reinforced by the dense conifer woodland

There is a sequence of open farmed land associated with more gentle gradients alternating with woodland on steeper side slopes which is experienced when travelling through the valley

The flat floodplain, and its abrupt juxtaposition with steep side slopes
'channels' views along the valley, although they are never far-reaching

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

This area is very self contained, although it provides a sense of a 'pass' between the settled, diverse lower strath and the upper reaches of the River Don west of Corgarff.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The drama of the flat floodplain framed by the steep valley sides is reinforced by the alternating sequence of woodland and farmland, a pattern which is closely allied to slope gradient. A similar alternating sequence of farmed land and wetland along the floodplain creates a further rhythmic pattern to this landscape.



Conifer woodland on the steeper slopes enclose the narrow, level floodplain



There are fields, framed by woodland, across the more gentle slopes, alternating with woodland on the steeper slopes



Scree created by frost weathering on bands of bedrock which have been exposed by glacial erosion



An avenue of mature broadleaves at Skellater