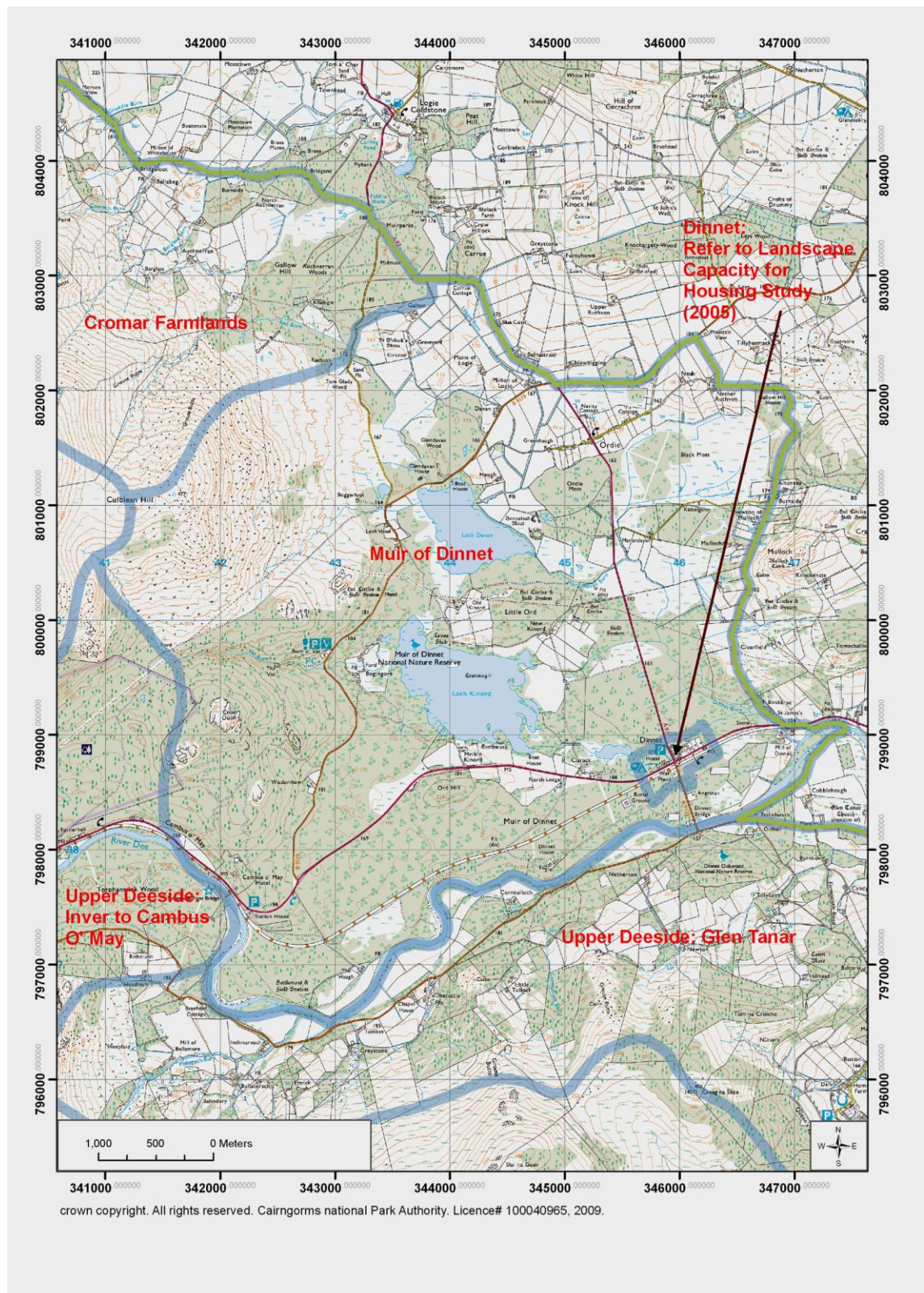


I.1 Muir of Dinnet



1.1.1 *Landscape character*

- The low-lying basin of the Muir of Dinnet lies in the western most howe of Deeside, the Howe of Cromartie is contained by the long gentle slopes of Culblean Hill to the west and by the small outcrops hills and more undulating ground outside the boundaries of the Park to the east
- Ice moved eastwards from Deeside across the basin floor and during the last ice age, still ice created Loch Kinnaird and Loch Davan, large kettle holes which lie at the core of this landscape, and the Burn o' Vat plunge pool within a former glacier melt water channel.
- The lochs are fringed by wetlands, merging into the surrounding low-lying farmland. Boggy woodlands of birch and oak enclose Loch Davan and much of Loch Kinnaird and are interspersed with wetlands and heath vegetation
- Extensive regenerating birch woodland extends across the Muir of Dinnet north of the River Dee
- Oak and birch woodland also covers the lower hill slopes which contain this area to the west. These are speckled with occasional Scots pine, which increase to merge with the more extensive coniferous plantings on the higher slopes of Creag Dubh
- Pockets of small, straight-edged, 18th/19th century improved fields enclosed by stone dykes occur on the fringes of the lochs and along drier ridges, particularly around the straightened Loggie Burn
- The narrow strips associated with the linear settlement of Ordie reflect its origins as a planned village
- This area is rich in archaeological features including a crannog, prehistoric earthworks and pre-medieval field systems. Traces of prehistoric round houses and fields systems and areas of remnant pre-improvement farmland with clearance cairns occur on higher ground between the lochs
- The granite walled chamber of the Burn o' Vat is a popular visitor attraction and an informal network of tracks provide access to Loch Kinord through the surrounding birch woodland and wetlands
- The A93 cuts through moorland to the south of Loch Kinord, contrasting with the network of narrow public roads around the lochs

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

- The presence of abundant wildfowl on the lochs and wetlands of this area is a dramatic sight, producing an impression of a landscape dominated by nature

- More than 4000 years of past land use and settlement can be appreciated by the presence of many features which have survived in this wet area where improvements to farmland have been limited

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The extensive woodlands of this character area and the steep hill slopes to the west result in it being fairly contained although it has a visual relationship with the rolling farmland to the east which lies beyond the Park boundary.

1.1.4 *Assessment of distinctiveness*

The sense of hill ground naturalness along with the extensive 'wetland' habitat influences much of this character area. The rich diversity of extensive native birch and oak woodlands, lochs and wetlands is enhanced by the presence of numerous relict archaeological features reflecting settlement over several millennia.



Extensive birch woodland and heather moorland are key features of this area



Loch Kinord set amongst woodlands and farmland



Pockets of farmland with pastures contained by stone walls occur around the lochs



Wetlands and willow scrub fringing Loch Davan