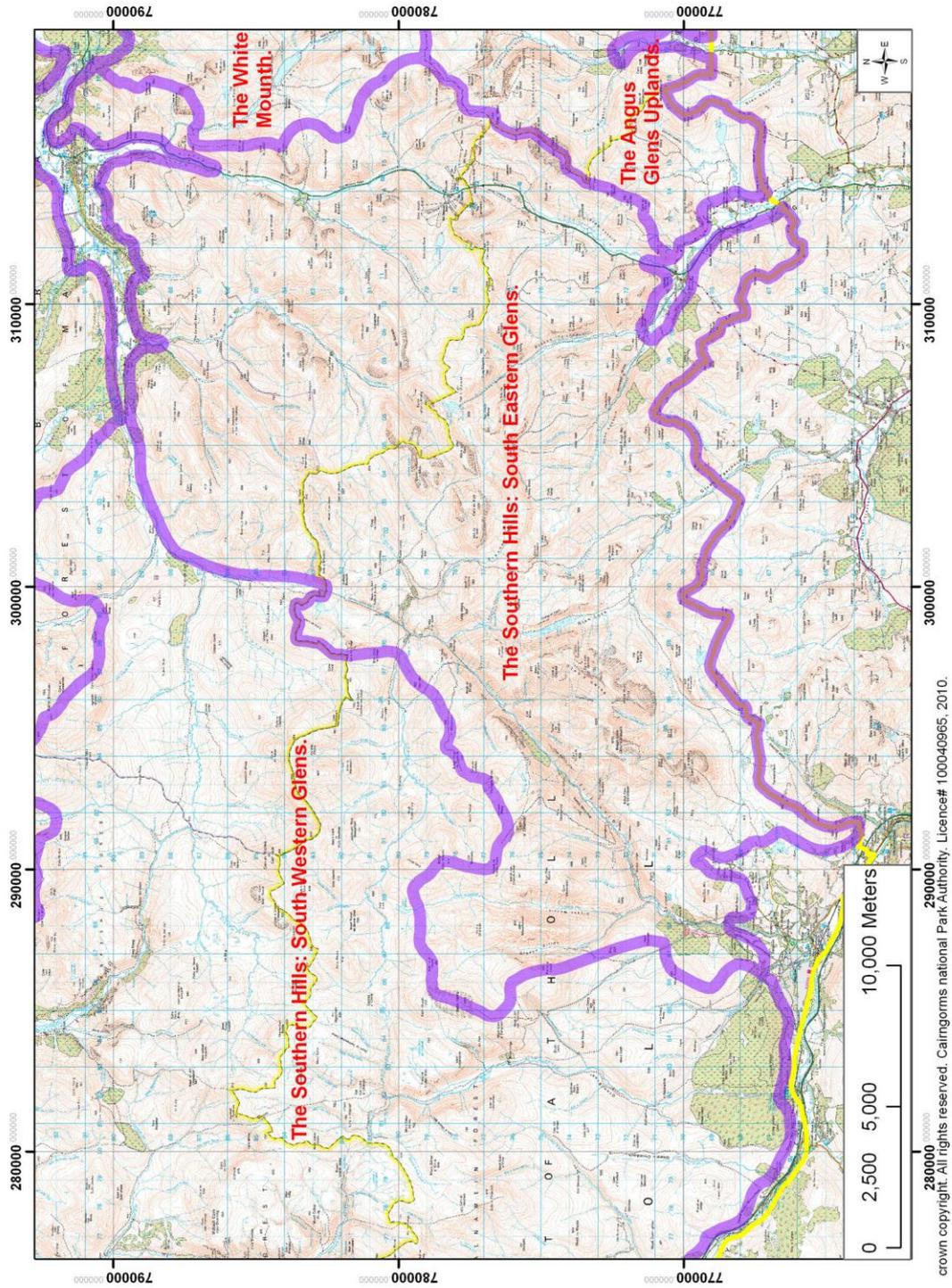


I.1 The Southern Hills: South Eastern Glens



1.1.1 *Landscape Character*

The irregular topography of interlocking ridges, long glens and the complex terraced terrain reflects the effects of erosion acting on Dalradian schist bedrock of diverse lithology

The long, often narrow, glens are contained by a complex topography of shallow side glens, intervening rocky ridges and truncated spurs created by a glacial activity deepening much older, broader valleys

These long, enclosed glens, such as Glen Tilt, Glen Taitneach, Glen Ey and Glen Clunie, penetrate deep into the interior of the mountains, forming passes which link Deeside with the Perthshire lowlands. Glen Tilt sits on a faultline, and is very straight.

The hill tops are sinuous ridges or individual summits, rising to over 1000m, and many of the highest peaks are very steep-sided with summits rising above extensive scree slopes, created by post-glacial weathering of frost-susceptible quartzite

Subalpine soils on the upper slopes and summits, are shallow, with only a very thin layer of organic matter over the quartzite bedrock supporting sub alpine plant communities and montane habitats of sedge, rush and moss heath

Heather and blaeberry over the upper glen slopes is often, although not always, managed as grouse moor, while extensive acid grassland with occasional bracken extends along lower slopes

The narrow floodplains on the glen floors carry more fertile grasslands on calc and mica shists, often maintained by continued grazing

Occasional conifer woodland extends into the most accessible glens, often established as shelter woods close to former farms or estate buildings

Elsewhere, broadleaved woodland is located on more inaccessible slopes, with riparian woodland along many of the watercourses, particularly to the west of this character area

Settlement is sparse, located along the glen floors, but estate buildings and the ruins of former farms can be found well into the interior of the mountain core along the accessible passes

Traces of pre-improvement townships, including the ruins of buildings and the outlines of small field extend far up the glens, including the Tilt, Ey and Clunie, between and beyond occasional estate buildings

Even further up these glens and into the heart of the hills, close to watercourses such as those around Ben Vurich or Carn Bhac, are numerous shieling grounds – bright green oases amongst the lesser greens of heather and acidic grasslands

Private vehicle tracks extend far along the relatively flat glen floors, often linking to paths which continue through the narrow passes or branch out to track up through the side slopes of the side glens

The A93 also passes through this area, and allows access to the ski centre at Glen Shee

1.1.2 *Landscape experience*

The steep sided hills and the sense of the surrounding 'mass' create a very pronounced sense of enclosure when travelling through the narrow glens

The steepness of the upper hill sides and the scree slopes create dramatic ridges, which can be experienced as relatively narrow, sinuous walking routes

Views northwards to the Cairngorm massif and east to Lochnagar from the highest summits extend widely over the Park

There are also dramatic, framed views along the lengths of the deep, steep sided glens, which are revealed in stages when travelling through the passes or long narrow glens

The mountain interior of this character area is often secluded and can be remote, particularly in the more inaccessible mountain areas between Glen Tilt and Glen Shee

Remoteness is limited, however, by the accessibility of Glen Tilt to the west and Glen Shee, the A93 and the ski centre to the east

The presence of numerous shieling sites, abandoned pre-improvement townships and the ruins of later farmsteads are reminders of the relative accessibility of the glens, which were once much more widely inhabited and more readily used as access routes than they are today

1.1.3 *Relationship to adjacent character areas*

The area is strongly characterised by the passes and long pathways and tracks which extend through the glens between Deeside and the southern boundary of the Park. It forms the backdrop to parts of Upper Deeside and the Glen Clunie and Glen Shee character areas, as well as Atholl to the west.

1.1.4 Assessment of distinctiveness

The silvery quartzite scree on the upper mountain slopes often catches the light and is a striking feature both from a distance and when traversing the mountain ridges. The narrow, relatively grassy glens and passes allow access deep into the interior, reflected in the plentiful evidence of their long use and formerly extensive settlement, as well as continued grazing today.



Exposed rocky crags and weathered debris at Glen Shee



Grassy side slopes and more fertile floodplains in Glen Tilt



The ruins of former farms, here located close to the site of a former township, can be found well into the interior of these passes



Rigs, on an alluvial fan, sit above the river, where some riparian woodland still clings to less accessible river banks