

Statement of Importance: Deveron Valley Special Landscape Area

Location and Boundaries

This SLA covers the valley of the River Deveron as it flows through Aberdeenshire, from Haugh of Glass in the west to the north coast at Banff and Macduff. The boundaries of the SLA follow, as far as possible, the ridge lines that define the valley. Roads and other physical boundaries have been selected as close as possible to these ridge lines, though in places the boundary follows topography where no alternative was located. From west to east the northern boundary of the SLA follows the ridge of high ground to the north of the River Deveron, crossing the Daugh of Cairnborrow and The Bin. North east of Ruthven the boundary follows the Moray council boundary until the Moss of Crombie. Here it travels east along minor roads (and briefly the A97 south of Aberchirder) before heading north at South Briggs. From here it continues to follow minor roads before following the A97 from the Mill of Brydock to Banff, where it shares a boundary with the North Aberdeenshire Coast SLA. From west to east the southern boundary of the SLA follows minor roads from Haugh of Glass, then crosses Clashmach Hill to Huntly. The A96 and A97 then form the boundary until Cobairdy. It then follows watercourses and minor roads east past Glen Dronach Distillery south of Fergie, and on to Milnbank and Turriff. The boundary passes through Turriff on the A947, then heads north along a minor road returning to the A947 as far as Macduff.

Designation of the Deveron Valley acknowledges the high scenic quality resulting from its meandering river bounded by rolling wooded hills, which forms an important setting to settlements along the valley floor and sides, and backdrop to castles and estates. The interplay and harmonious balance between the features of this SLA means that no one feature particularly dominates the landscape over another but that they are all of equal significance in terms of their contribution to the special qualities of the area. The importance of the area for connectivity, in terms of transport corridors, water catchments and woodland networks is also recognised.



The Deveron Valley north of Turriff (Source: LUC)

Designation Statement

The Deveron Valley is a farmed landscape, framed by wooded hills and ridges. The valley is unified by the meandering River Deveron, which flows from the hills of Moray into the Moray Firth at Banff Bay. The landscape is a harmonious composition of river, farmland, wooded estates and heather-clad / forested hills, forming the setting to numerous villages and historic buildings.

The Deveron Valley has a strong woodland structure comprising deciduous woodland associated with traditional estates, as well as forested hills, riverside trees and beech hedging. Woodland on the steep sided valleys are important for nature conservation and also contributes to the quality, richness and diversity of the SLA, as well as providing a mature and managed character.

There are numerous small settlements and estates with distinctive local architecture.

The River Deveron is popular for fishing of salmon, sea trout and brown trout. Other opportunities for recreation include canoeing, walking, cycling and golf. Some of the hills enclosing the valley provide opportunities for panoramic views across the Deveron and beyond, including Fourman Hill, a Marilyn on the boundary with Moray, south east of Milltown of Rothiemay. Views across the valley from the A97 are also available, e.g. south of Aberchirder.

The following aspects and features of this landscape are considered worthy of recognition through SLA designation:

- Meandering river framed by rolling wooded hills and ridges, providing views into the valley. These views are typically directed and focussed along the river and to the side slopes and immediate skylines.
- Ancient and historic structures, such as the Neolithic Stirling Cairn, and the Bridge of Alvah, are found along the length of the river valley.
- Strong network of woodland throughout the valley provides landscape structure and wildlife habitat. A variety of woodland types include coniferous plantations, deciduous hilltop copses, shelter belts and a wealth of roadside trees including beech and ash.
- The presence of historic estates has a strong influence along the river, including parkland around Duff House, Forglen and others, but more generally in the wooded landscape.
- The valley landscape forms an important part of the setting of various settlements, including the planned town of Huntly and the market town of Turriff.
- Distinctive local architecture displayed in towns, villages and farms such as the Duke of Gordon's grid-pattern layout of Huntly, the Gothic Forglen House, and William Adam's magnificent Duff House.
- Fortified castles spread along the valley, including Huntly Castle.
- The attractive landscape makes the Deveron a popular setting for a range of outdoor recreation including fishing, canoeing, walking and cycling, with the National Cycle Network Route 1 between Banff and Turriff.
- A continuous valley landscape, from the hills to the sea which forms a contained setting for the settlements, estates and houses found along its length.

Forces for Change

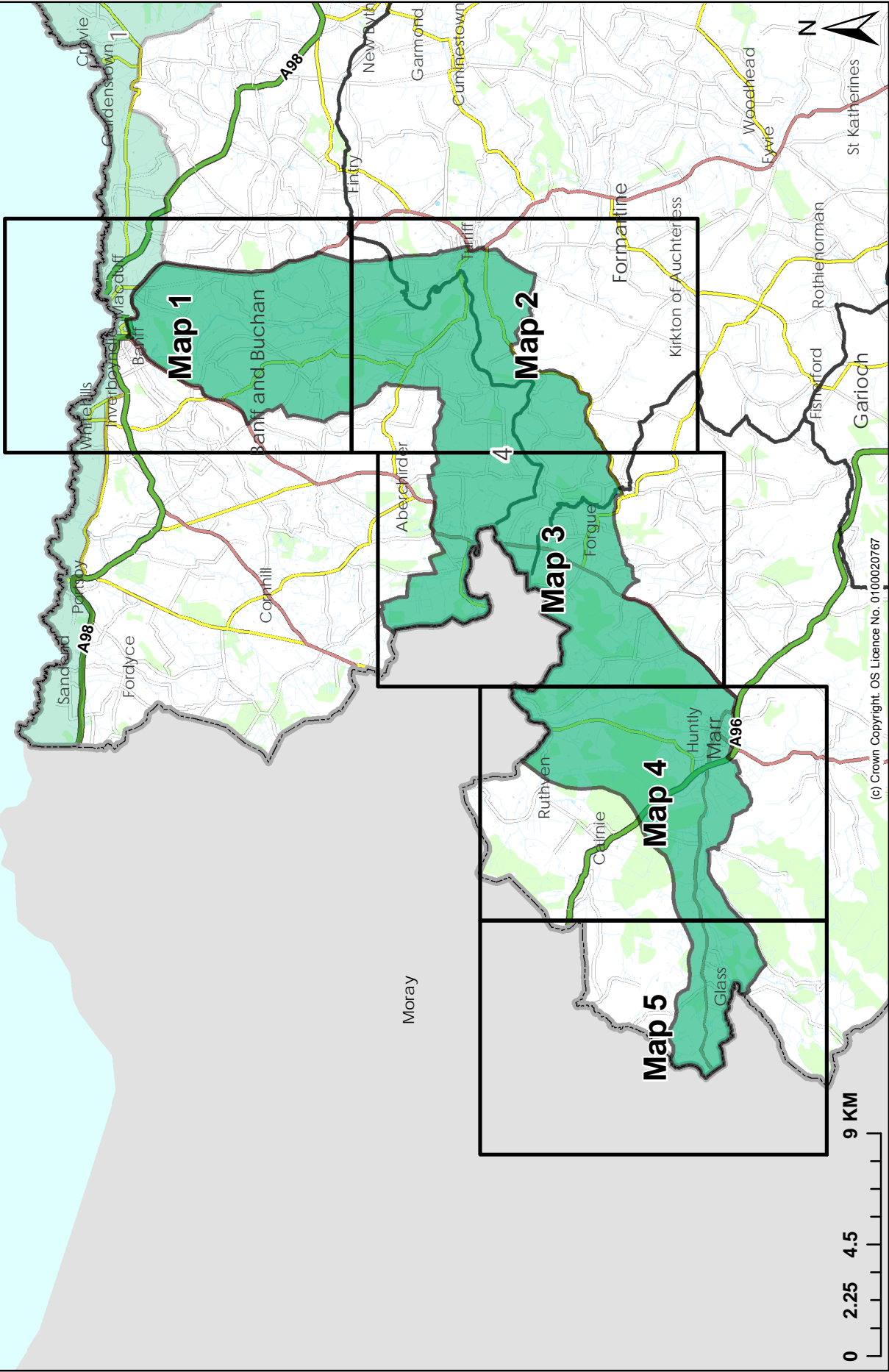
- Development of renewable energy technologies (e.g. on-shore wind turbines and associated infrastructure) affect views to and from the SLA.
- Changes to landscape as a result of forest management and changes to agricultural practices in this area.

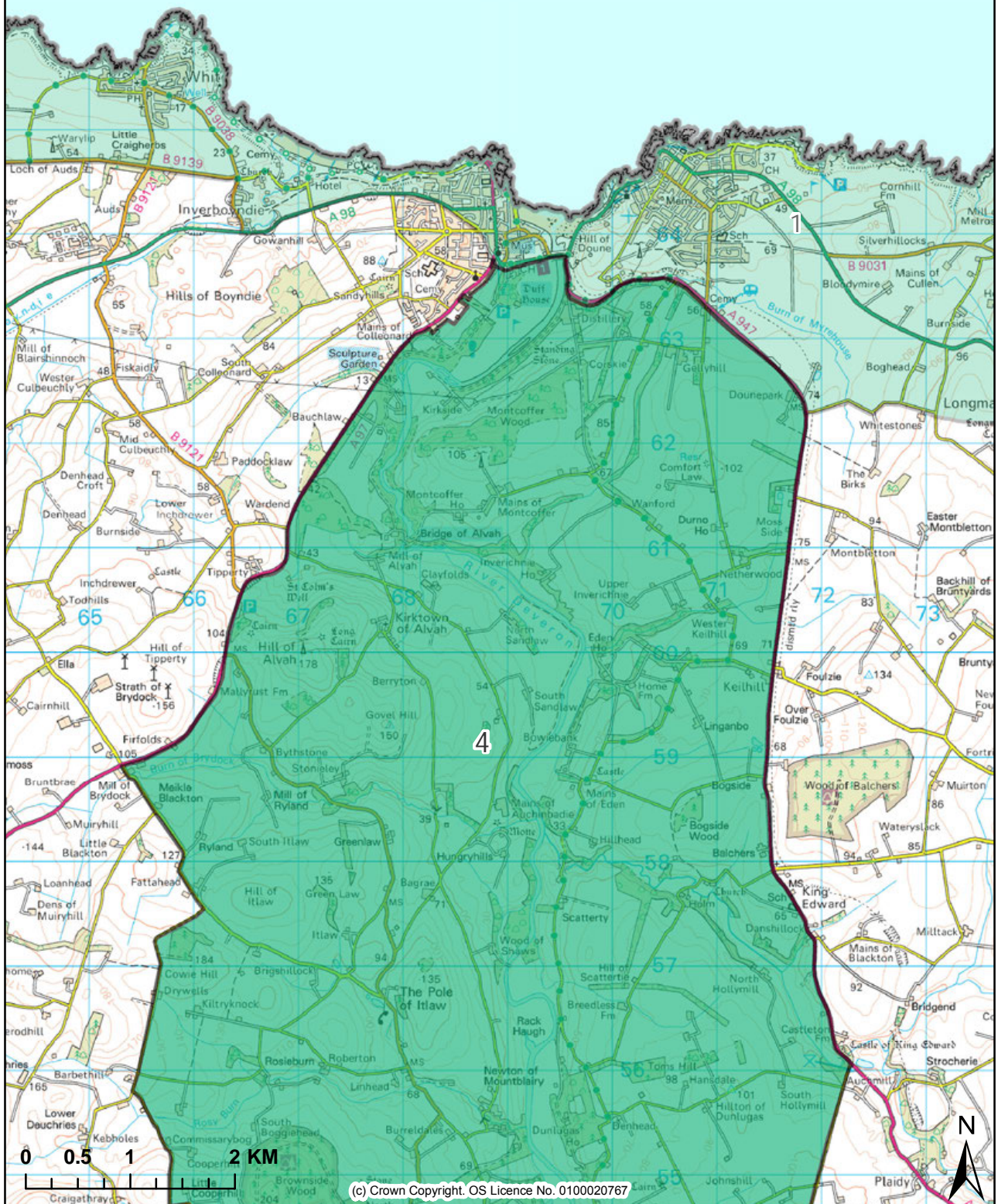
- Pressure for major residential developments in and around towns and villages including Huntly and Turriff.
- Impact of proposals which effect the integrity of natural and historic features within the SLA.
- Scattered and incremental development e.g. single houses cause negative impact on sense of place.
- Development that is likely to individually or cumulatively erode the harmonious balance of features within the SLA.
- The presence of invasive species e.g. giant hogweed and tree viruses/diseases which may lead to large scale tree loss.

Management Recommendations

- The Deveron Valley SLA is classed as a valley landscape type. As such emphasis should be on maintaining the current patterns of land use and settlement, with development focused within existing towns and villages. Elsewhere, development should be located on lower slopes or floor of the valley and carefully sited, designed and landscaped to integrate within the wider valley landscape. Development proposed in surrounding upland areas should be assessed to minimise the visual impact on the SLA, including views and vistas along the valley.
- Proposals within the river valley or on the rolling wooded hills and ridges should be carefully assessed to ensure development will not negatively impact on the landscape or sense of place felt within this area.
- There is strong network of woodland throughout the valley which provides landscape structure. Woodland management and further creation of coniferous plantations, deciduous hilltop copses and shelter belts is encouraged in this area.
- The sense of place associated with historic estates including parkland around Duff House, Forglen and others, but more generally in the wooded landscape should be maintained and where possible enhanced through well considered layout, siting and design.
- The valley landscape forms an important part of the setting of various settlements, including the planned town of Huntly and the market town of Turriff. Developers should seek early engagement with Council to determine what characteristics associated with towns in this area development must protect.
- Design of new development should be sensitive to the distinctive local granite architecture displayed in villages and towns, wider countryside.
- Proposals which seek to take advantage of the Deveron landscape as a popular setting for a range of outdoor recreation including fishing, canoeing, walking and cycling, with the National Cycle Network Route 1 between Banff and Turriff should be carefully assessed to balance the economic, social and environmental benefits.
- This SLA should remain as a continuous valley landscape, from the hills to the sea. Development which is likely to break up or negatively impact on the continuity associated with this landscape should not be supported.

4 Deveron Valley

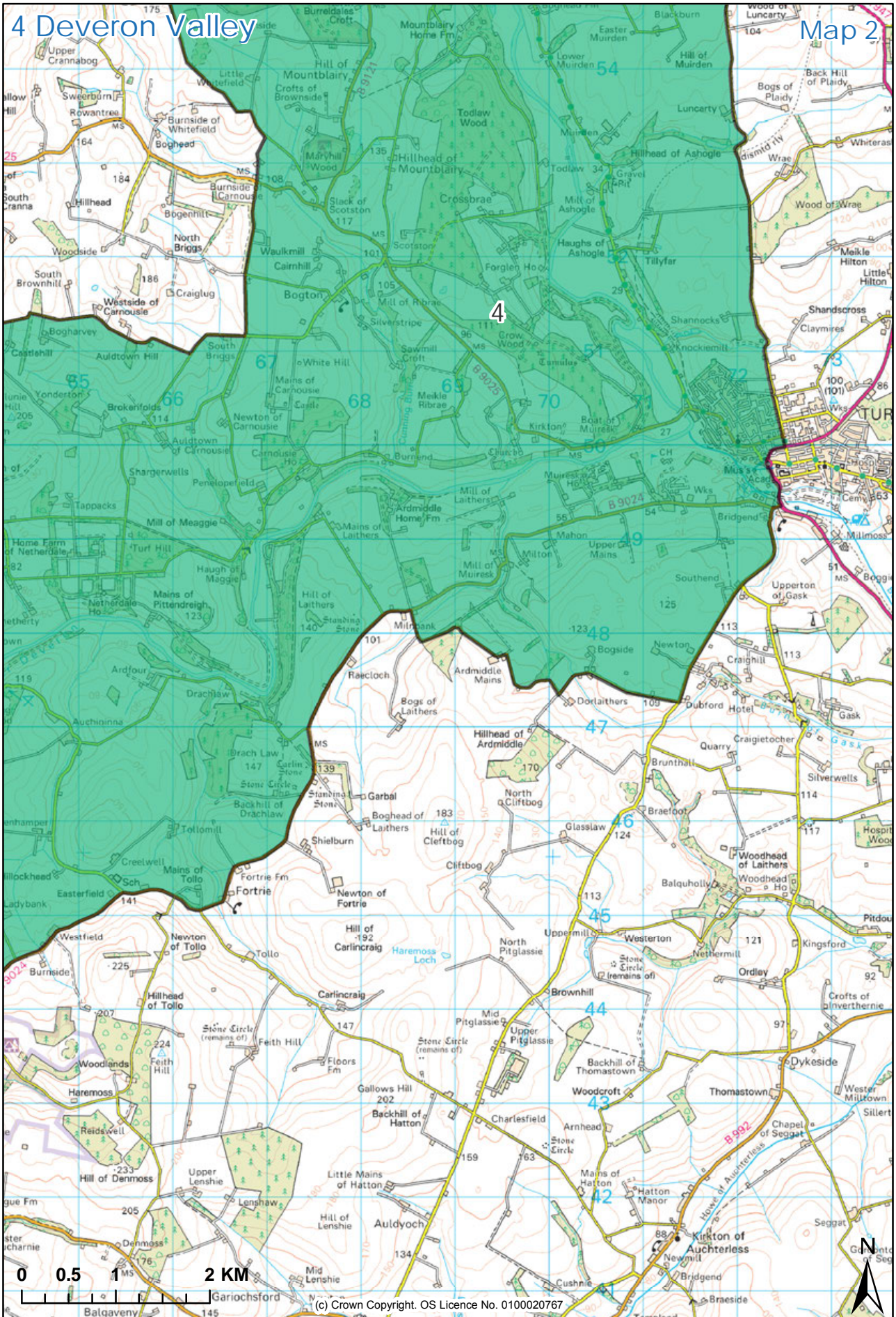




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4 Deveron Valley

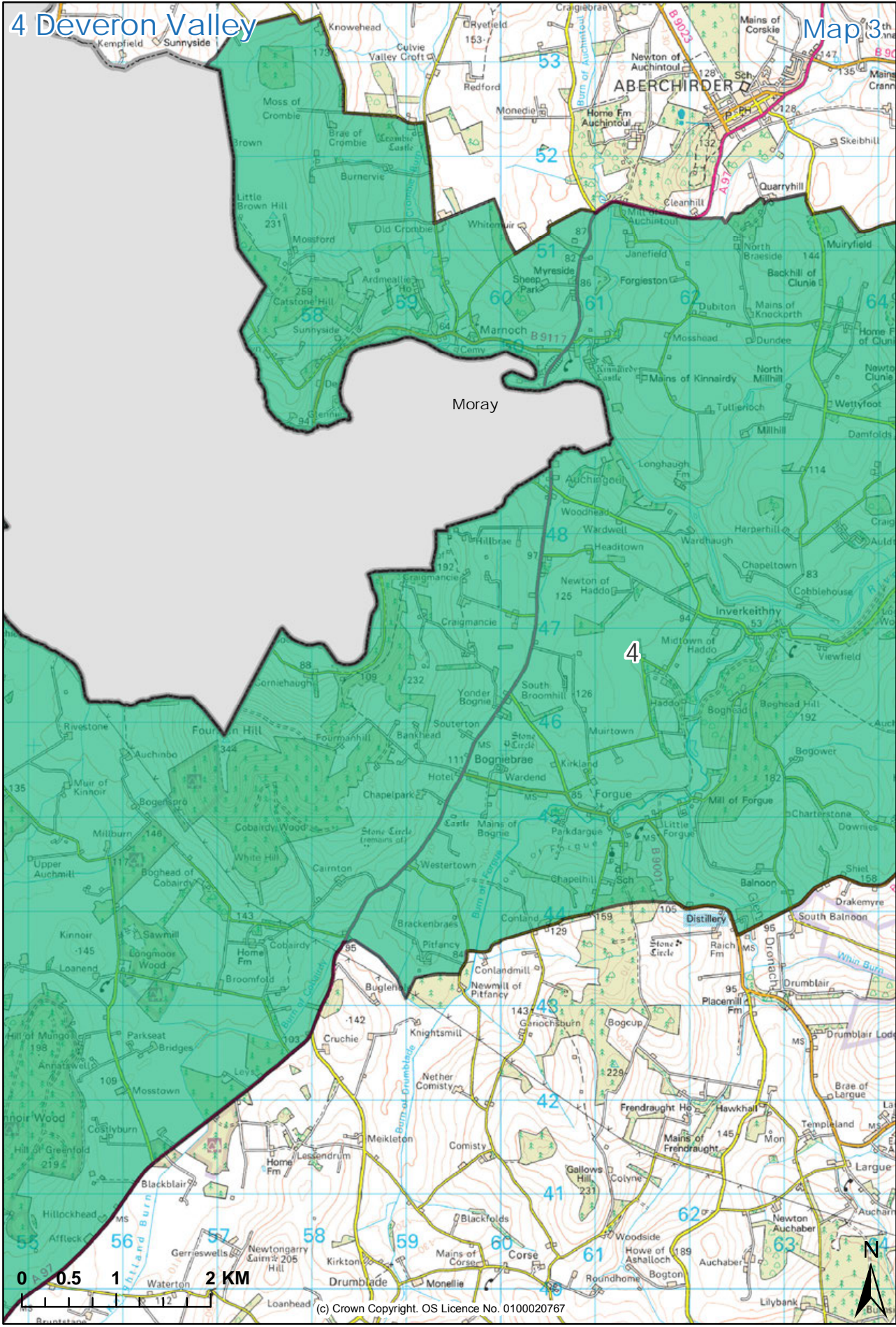
Map 2



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4 Deveron Valley

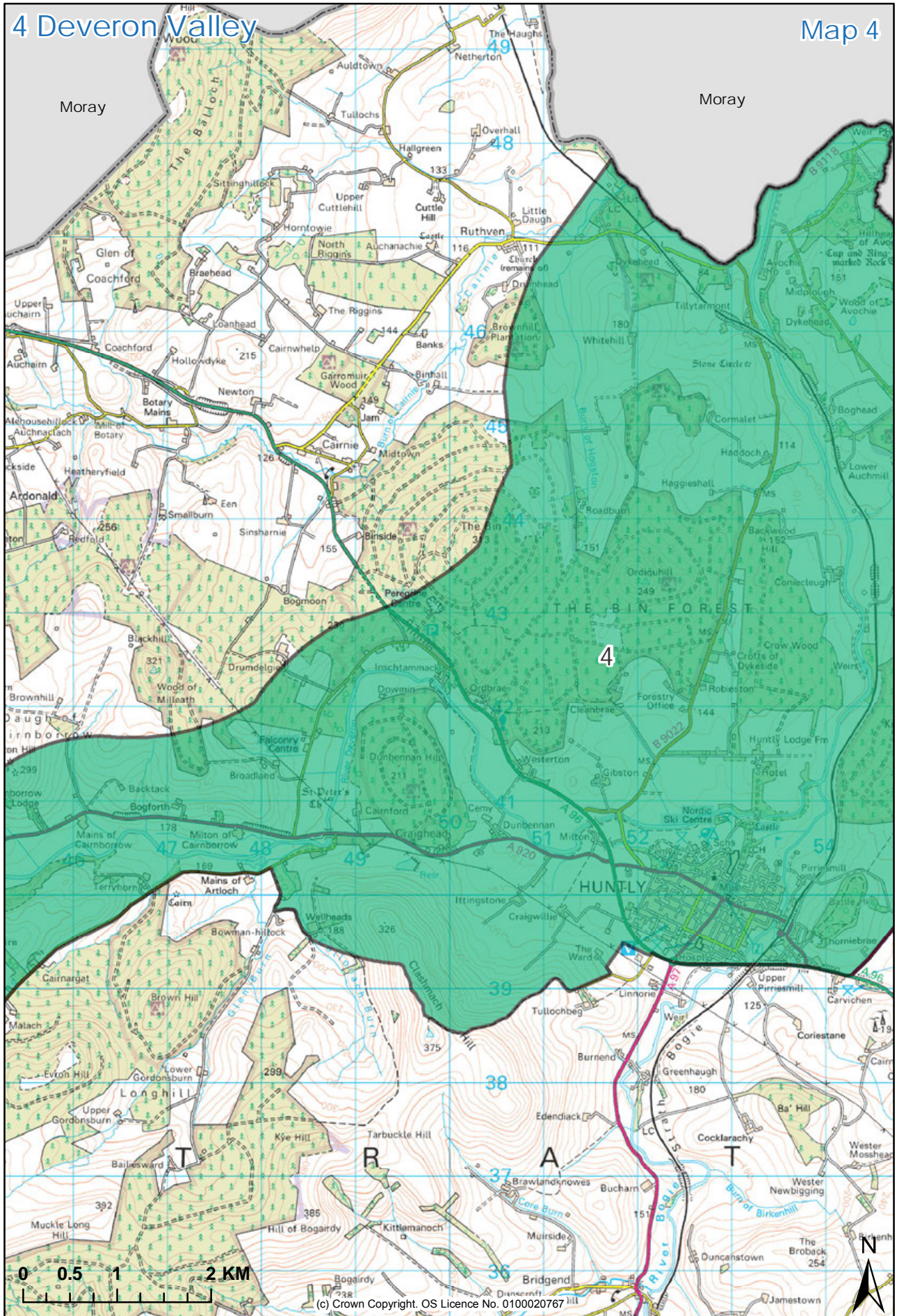
Map 3



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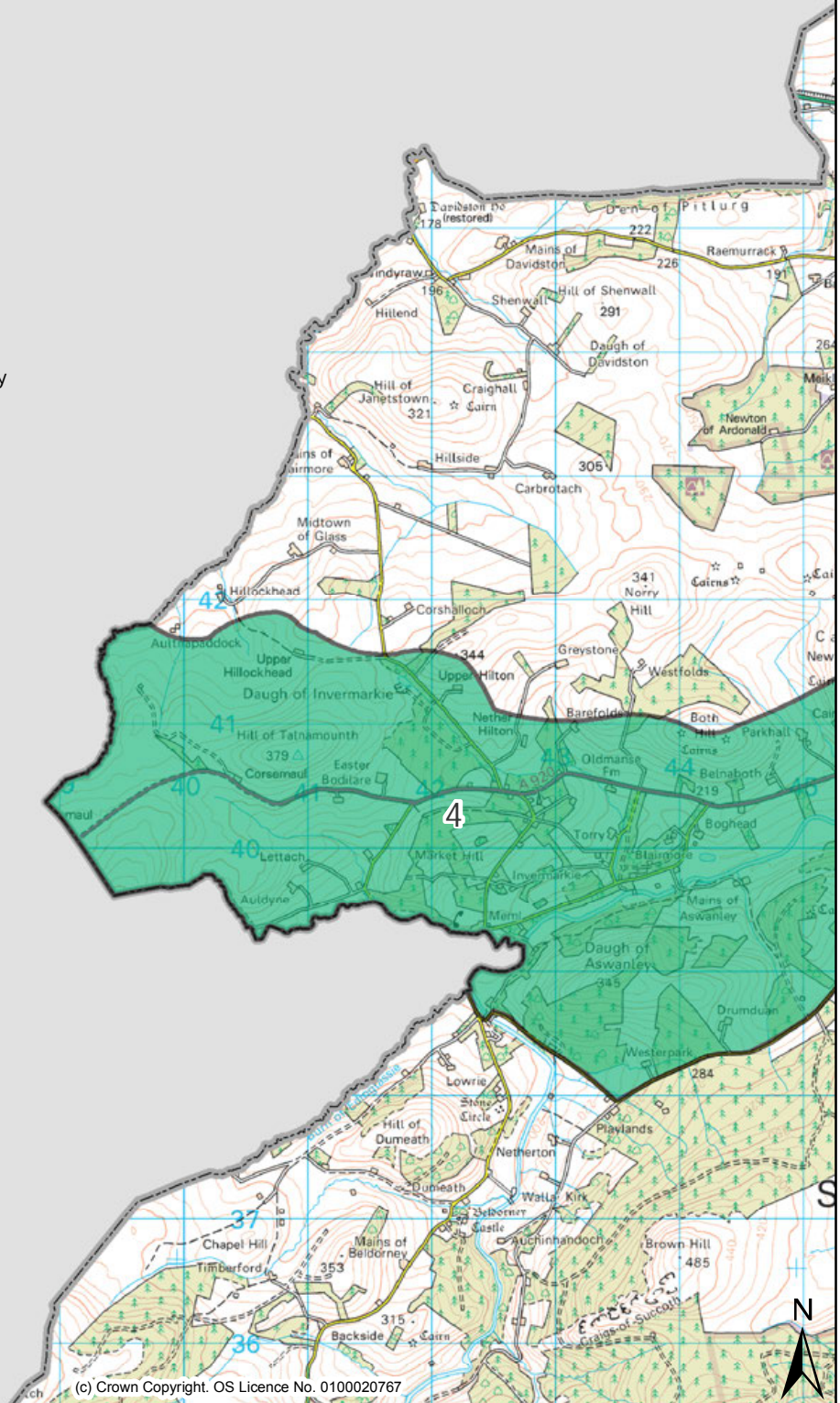
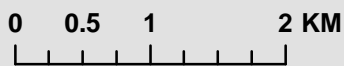
4 Deveron Valley

Map 4



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Moray



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Statement of Importance: Bennachie Special Landscape Area

Location and Boundaries

This SLA is centred on the landmark range of Bennachie at the centre of Aberdeenshire, and extends west along the distinctive ridge as far as Suie Hill. It includes Pitfichie to the south and the wooded farmland which forms the foreground to Bennachie to the east and the distinctive Mither Tap of Bennachie to the north.

The western boundary follows minor roads along the Suie Burn between Bridge of Alford in the south and Ford in the north. The northern boundary follows minor roads and the B9002 between Ford and the A96 at Mill of Carden. The eastern boundary heads south east through Garioch, following minor roads, and briefly the route of an overhead line, between Mill of Carden and west of Inverurie. The boundary crosses the River Don west of Port Elphinstone, then joins the B993 south west until Kemnay. The southern boundary skirts the edge of Kemnay before re-joining the B993 until Tillyfourie where it follows the A944 as far as Bridge of Alford.

These boundaries have been chosen as physical features that enclose the key upland areas, and their lowland settings, which have been identified as meriting designation within this SLA. The Pittodrie House Historic Gardens and Designed Landscape and other mature policy woodlands and tree belts provides richness and diversity to lower lying landscape which contrasts with the simplicity of upland moorland landscapes associated with the main Bennachie ridge. There are qualities associated with wildness, remoteness and drama from the craggy summits which provide a distinct sense of place from the surrounding settled landscape.

Designation of Bennachie and its setting recognises its importance to Aberdeenshire's landscape identity, its popularity with visitors and its indivisibility with the surrounding landscape. Designation also recognises the contribution of the moorland spurs to scenic qualities of the area, by forming dark ridges across the skyline which contrasts with the green lowlands.



Bennachie from the north-east (Source: LUC)

Designation Statement

The Bennachie ridge is part of the Grampian Outliers, and comprises a series of rounded hills – Suie Hill in the west and Mither Tap in the east. Oxen Craig is the highest point on the ridge, although Mither Tap has the most distinctive profile. Bennachie is an iconic landform, visible from much of the wider Aberdeenshire area.

The hills are blanketed with a patchwork moorland and forestry, with rocky outcrops at the higher summits. This moorland and forestry forms a dark ridge seen across the skyline from the farmed and wooded lowlands.

Bennachie ridge has numerous historic features, including an Iron Age hill fort at the summit of Mither Tap, Barmykyn Hill fort on Airlie Hill, and cairns on other summits including the largest recumbent stone at Old Keig. The Maiden Stone is a Pictish symbol-bearing slab of pink granite, located near Garioch. The Place of Origin is a modern sculpture, located overlooking the quarry at Kemnay.

There are spectacular views over the surrounding lowlands from the hill summits, and conversely the series of hills is widely visible from the surrounding lowlands, forming a distinctive focal point in views. Bennachie is visible from the A944 to the south and A96 to the north and east.

The upland areas have an intact land cover of heather moorland and forestry, supporting wildlife such as cuckoos, red squirrels and roe deer. The hills provide opportunities to experience tranquillity and solitude, whilst being in proximity to farmed and settled lowland areas.

The following aspects and features of this landscape are considered worthy of recognition through SLA designation:

- Bennachie and in particular the summit of Mither Tap with its fortifications, is the iconic hill range of central Aberdeenshire, instantly recognisable from across the wider landscape, in both long and short range views.
- Intact land cover of heather moorland on the main Bennachie ridge.
- Extensive woodland across lowland and upland, including native woods, estate policies and forestry plantations, with a substantial amount recognised as ancient woodland.
- Hillforts are found on summits such as Mither Tap and Tillymuick, along with earlier prehistoric cairns and later post-medieval granite quarries, which emphasise the long history of settlement in the region. On the lower slopes lies the remains of the Early Medieval centre of Maiden Castle, and the later 19th century Colony site which forms an important part of the oral history in the area.
- The River Don is a key feature of Aberdeenshire, meandering through the upland glen south of Bennachie, and across the farmland around Kemnay.
- The farmland to the east provides the setting to Bennachie, but also typifies lowland Aberdeenshire with its mosaic of wooded estates and open farmland.
- Bennachie is valued for its range of formal and informal recreational opportunities and is a hugely popular area, with walkers enjoying the spectacular views from the Bennachie summits, and Pitfichie being a centre for mountain biking.
- Panoramic views from the upland areas, particularly from the Bennachie summits, over the Don Valley and beyond to the patchwork of Aberdeenshire farmland.

Forces for Change

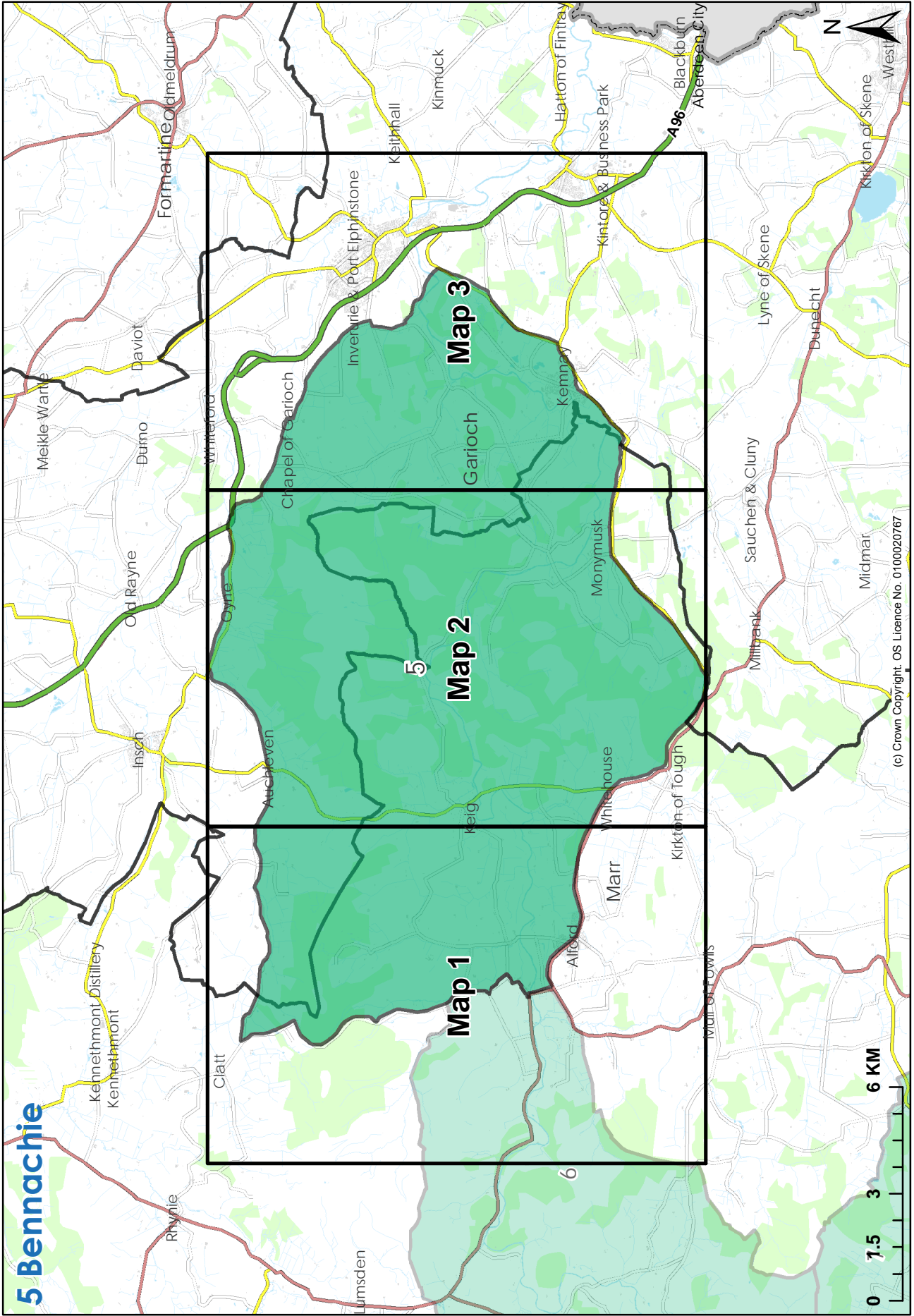
- Changes to landscape as a result of forest management and changes to agricultural practices in this area.
- Creation and maintenance of hill tracks associated with land management.
- Increased levels and types of recreation along access tracks may lead to erosion.
- Impact of proposals which effect the integrity of natural and historic features within the SLA.
- Development pressure for major residential and employment expansion in and around towns and villages including Kemnay and Inverurie.
- Development of renewable energy technologies (e.g. on and off-shore wind turbines, grid connection and associated infrastructure) affect views to and from the SLA

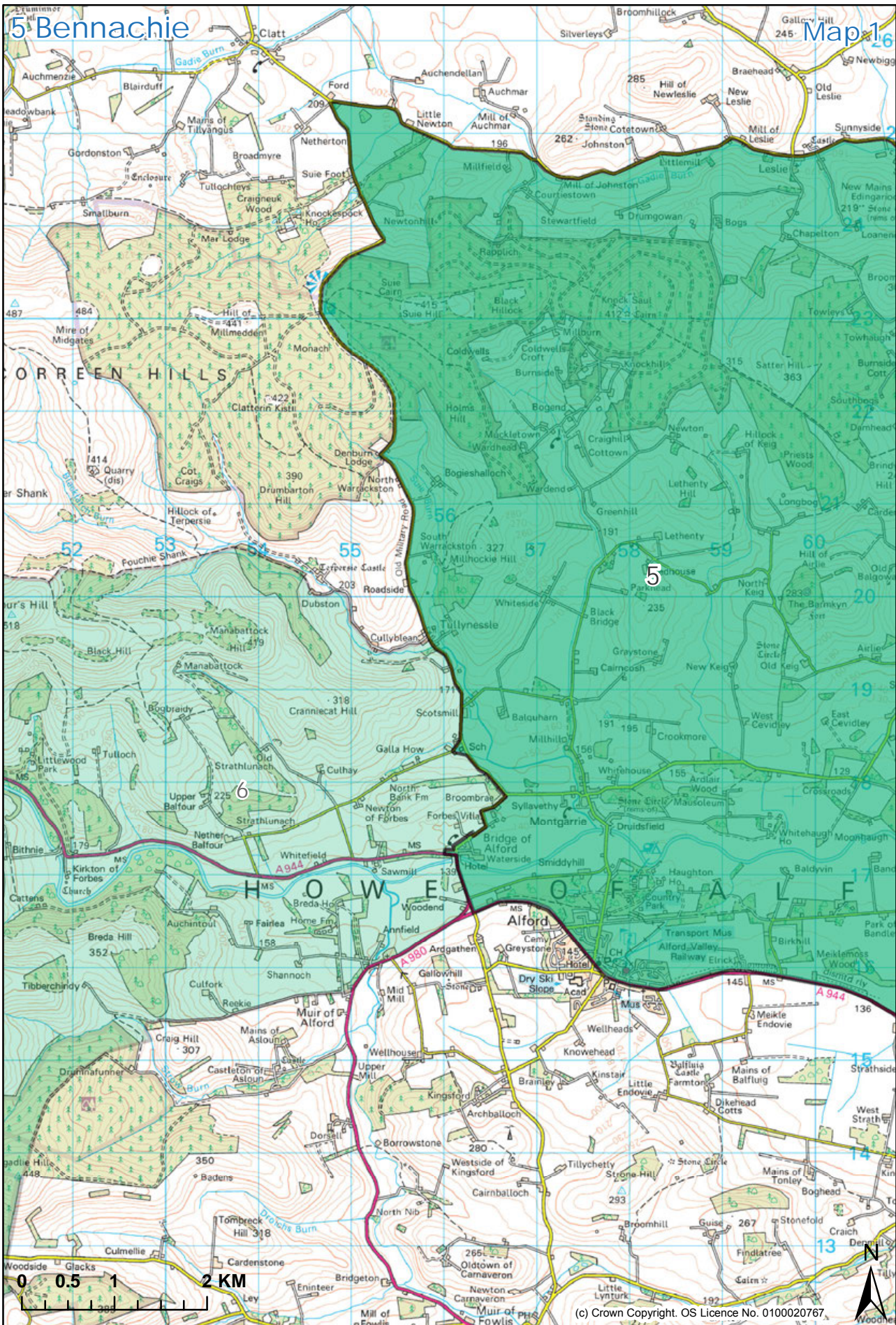
Management Recommendations

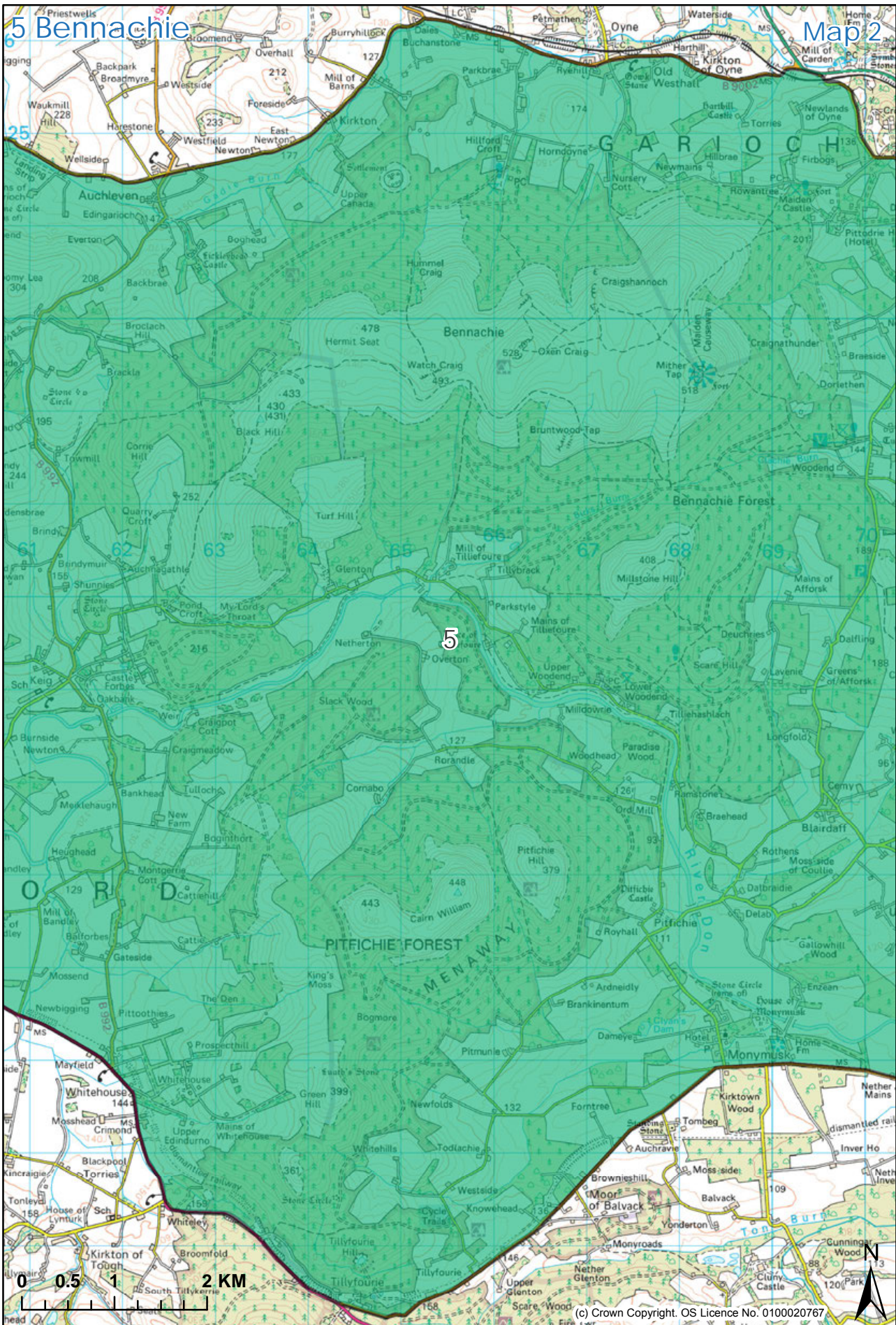
- The Bennachie SLA is classed as an upland landscape type. As such emphasis should be on retaining their largely undeveloped and remote character. This means ensuring that any developments are located and designed to limit their wider visibility and, protect open skylines and rugged summits.
- Impact of development at both long and short ranges to and from Bennachie ridge should avoid negative impacts to the view and ensure that they are not disproportionate. Mitigation measures can be put in place, including landscaping in and around new developments.
- The intact land cover of heather moorland on the main Bennachie ridge should be maintained.
- Development involving hill tracks should be undertaken in line with best practice guidance and should take account of landscape character and qualifying features of the SLA.
- Woodland management and further woodland creation in the form of native woods, estate policies and forestry plantations is encouraged in this area to maintain the mosaic of wooded estates and open farmland.

- Cognisance must be had to the River Don as a key feature of this landscape.
- Hill forts and cairns and other features that emphasise the long history of settlement in the area should not be negatively affected by any form of development, nor have the views from them negatively affected by any form of development.
- Development which seeks to take advantage of popularity and accessibility of Bennachie should only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the sense of place associated with Bennachie will be unaffected and conflicts with other land uses can be managed.

5 Bennachie

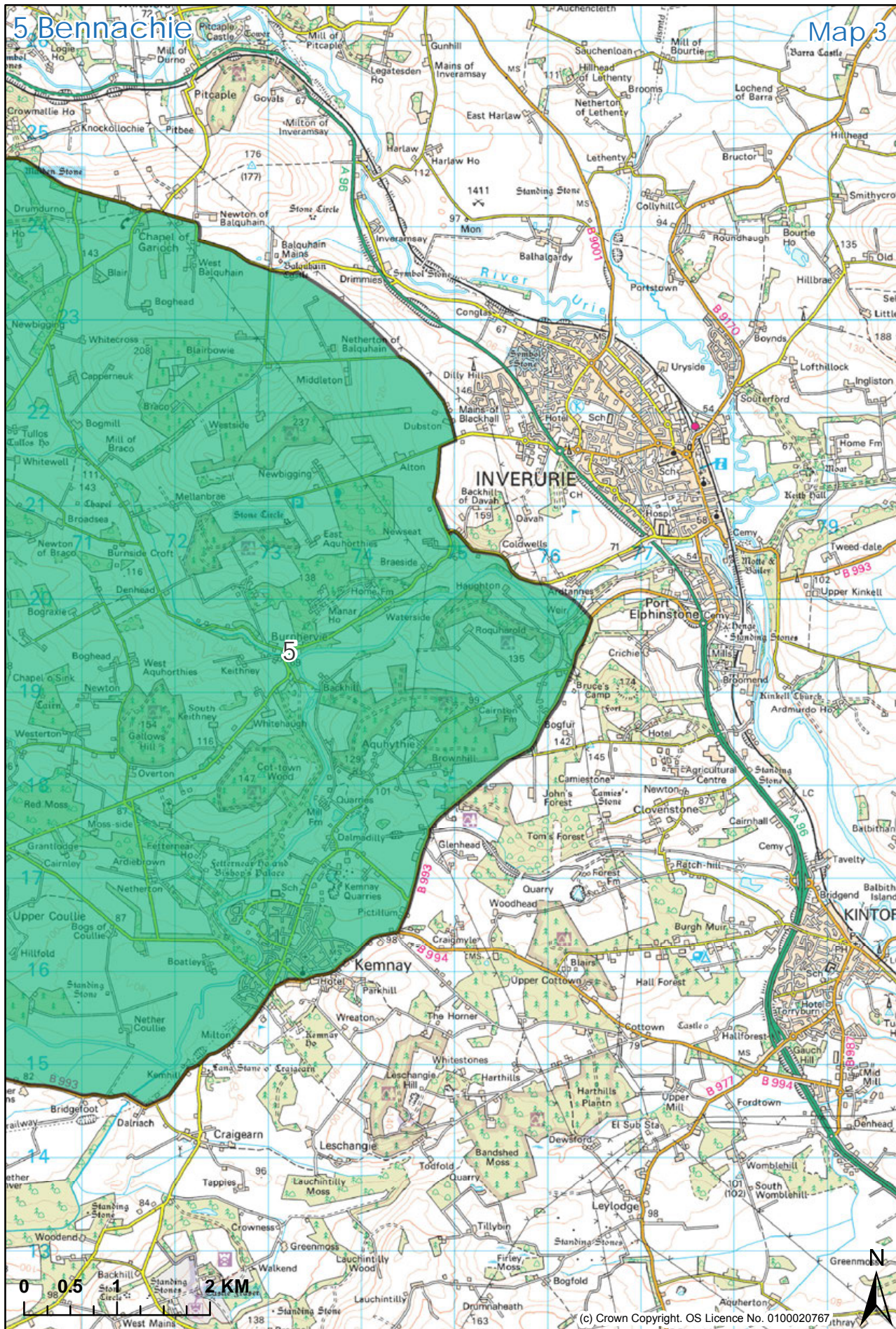






5 Bennachie

Map 3



Statement of Importance: Upper Don Valley Special Landscape Area

Location and Boundaries

This SLA lies in the west of Aberdeenshire, and covers the upper part of the River Don valley from Glenkindie in the west to the Howe of Alford in the east. The western boundary is contiguous with the Cairngorms National Park. To the north the boundary follows ridgelines, minor roads and tracks across to the A97. It continues east along minor roads and paths to cross the ridge of Lord Arthur's Hill. The boundary follows the Blacklatch Burn down to the Old Military Road at Tullynessle. From here the boundary marches with that of Bennachie SLA as far as Alford, where it turns westward to follow the A980. From Muir of Alford it returns to forest tracks and field boundaries up to The Socach, from where it follows the ridgeline westward across Broom Hill and Balderonoch Hill to the National Park boundary.

Boundaries have been drawn as closely as possible along the ridge lines that frame the upper Don valley, with the intention of including the immediate visual envelope of the river itself, and of the experience of the valley from the A97 and A944 roads that pass through.

Designation of the upper Don Valley and enclosing ridges recognises the high scenic qualities of its rolling wooded hills enclosing steep sided gorges and wider straths. The naturalness and connectivity created by the river corridor, woodland network and relationship with the adjacent Cairngorms National Park are also seen in this area.



Heather-clad moors contrast with farmland in Strathdon (Source: LUC)

Designation Statement

The Upper Don Valley comprises rolling arable and pastoral farmland, bisected by the meandering River Don and contained by hills blanketed in open moorland and woodland. The A97 (Highland Tourist Route) passes through this area and is seen as a gateway into the Cairngorms National Park to the west. People travelling on the A97 get an increasing experience of remoteness, wildness and seclusion, with increased enclosure and views to

higher hills as they travel westwards. The A944 runs along the valley floor parallel to the River Don, and passes through an attractive wooded gorge west of Alford.

The Don is one of Aberdeenshire's major rivers, with a strong local identity. The Upper Don Valley is well wooded, with both broadleaved woodland and coniferous forestry.

There are numerous features of built heritage interest, including a cairn on Lord Arthur's Hill and the medieval Kildrummy Castle. There are small settlements and scattered farmsteads along roads, built with traditional materials.

The Don Valley is a gateway into the National Park, and attractive drives are available along both the A944 and A97. Higher hills within the Cairngorms National Park are visible beyond those enclosing the valley.

The Upper Don valley is farmed and settled, with accessible hills, the network of meandering rivers, burns and woodland contributes to naturalness within the landscape. There is a great sense of remoteness and increased wildness felt within this SLA with no large settlements situated within the boundary and relatively low demand for large expansions to existing villages.

The following aspects and features of this landscape are considered worthy of recognition through SLA designation:

- The River Don, a meandering and occasionally braided river with channels that split off and re-join, is a key river that contributes to the identity of Aberdeenshire, forming a link between the mountains and the sea.
- Distinctive valley landforms, including the steep sided gorge west of Alford and the wider strath around Kildrummy.
- The Don is contained by rolling wooded hills with attractive broadleaved woodland and a patchwork of arable farmland and pasture.
- Broad open moorland forms the backdrop to views along and across the strath, including views to the higher hills within the Cairngorms National Park.
- Moorland ridges extend almost to the river in places, creating an interlocking visual pattern of upland and lowland.
- Substantial and well visited built heritage features include the medieval Kildrummy Castle and its more recent hotel namesake and associated gardens. The designed landscape of Glenkindie House has an influence on the approach to the National Park.
- An agricultural but sparsely settled landscape, the settlement pattern is one of dispersed farms, often featuring traditional buildings featuring materials of granite rubble and sandstone set in small woodlands, rather than nucleated villages.
- The Don valley is the route of the A97 Highland Tourist Route, a major gateway into the National Park, with glimpses into the higher hills west of Glenkindie.
- The southern ridge of Balderonoch Hill, Broom Hill and The Socach offers panoramic views for walkers over Strathdon and south into the Howe of Cromar.

Forces for Change

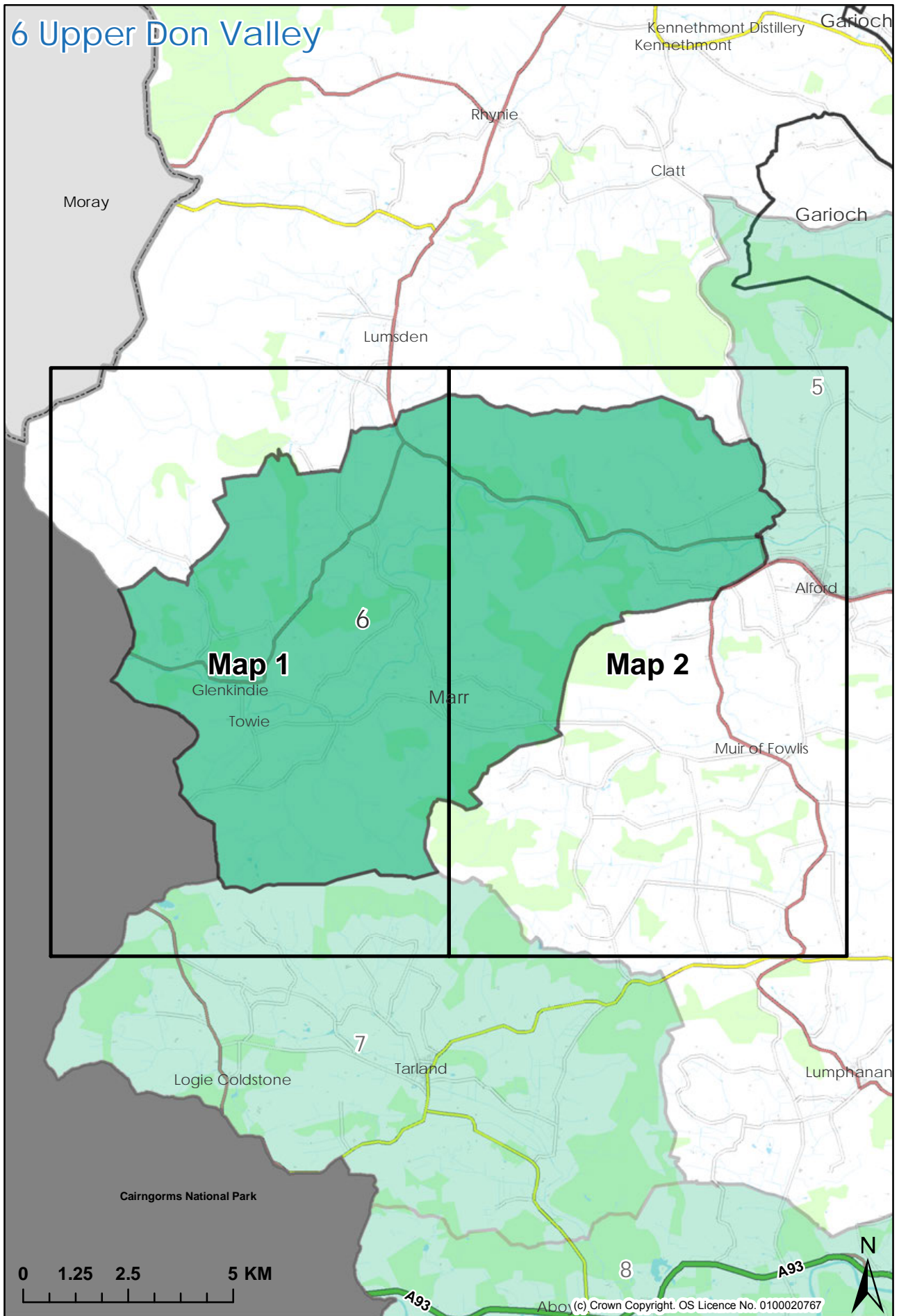
- Changes to landscape as a result of forest management and changes to agricultural practices in this area.
- Scattered and incremental development e.g. single houses cause negative impact on sense of place.
- Creation and maintenance of hill tracks associated with land management.
- Changes in estate and moorland management practices.
- The presence of invasive species e.g. giant hogweed and tree viruses/diseases which may lead to large scale tree loss.

- Development of renewable energy technologies on enclosing slopes to the river (e.g. on and off-shore wind turbines, grid connection and associated infrastructure) and in direct views along the river (e.g. hydro) affect views to and from the SLA.

Management Recommendations

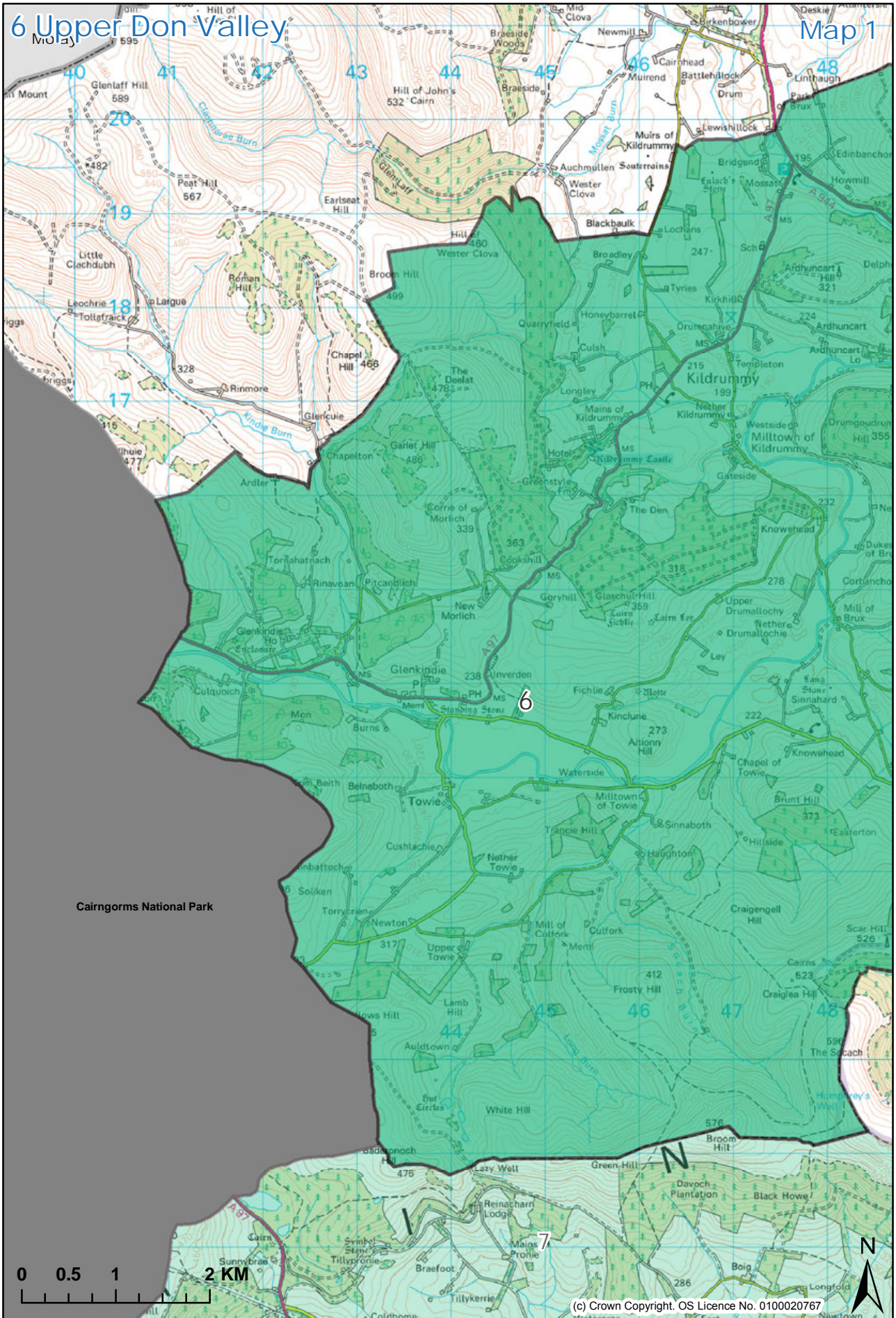
- The Upper Don Valley SLA is classed as an upland landscape type. As such emphasis should be on retaining their largely undeveloped and remote character. This means ensuring that any developments are located and designed to limit their wider visibility and, protect open skylines and rugged summits.
- Development should be sensitive to the distinctive valley landforms, particularly in relation to the scale and sting of development to avoid interrupting the liner flow of the SLA and avoid intruding on valley sides as well as avoiding development which adversely impacts on the rural and traditional character of the area.
- Any development occurring within the broad open moorland which forms the backdrop to views along and across the strath, including views to the higher hills within the Cairngorms National Park, should be justified with layout, siting and design being a vital consideration. Development should not encroach on the panoramic views associated with the southern ridge of Balderonoch Hill, Broom Hill and The Socach.
- The interlocking visual pattern of upland and lowland created by moorland ridges which extend almost to the river in places should be maintained.
- Development involving hill tracks should be undertaken in line with best practice guidance and should take account of landscape character and qualifying features of the SLA.
- The setting of landmarks and built heritage features should be preserved and where possible enhanced due to their influence on the approach to the National Park.
- Development should reflect the existing the settlement pattern of dispersed farms, featuring traditional granite buildings set in small woodlands, rather than nucleated villages. Large-scale development is inappropriate.
- Cognisance must be had to the River Don and the patchwork of broadleaved woodland and the pattern of arable farming land pasture as a key feature of this landscape.
- Proposals which seek to utilise and promote the key attributes associated with the Don valley as part of the A97 Highland Tourist Route, a major gateway into the National Park, particularly associated with diversification and tourism, may be supported where clear merits are seen and no detrimental impact is experienced.

6 Upper Don Valley



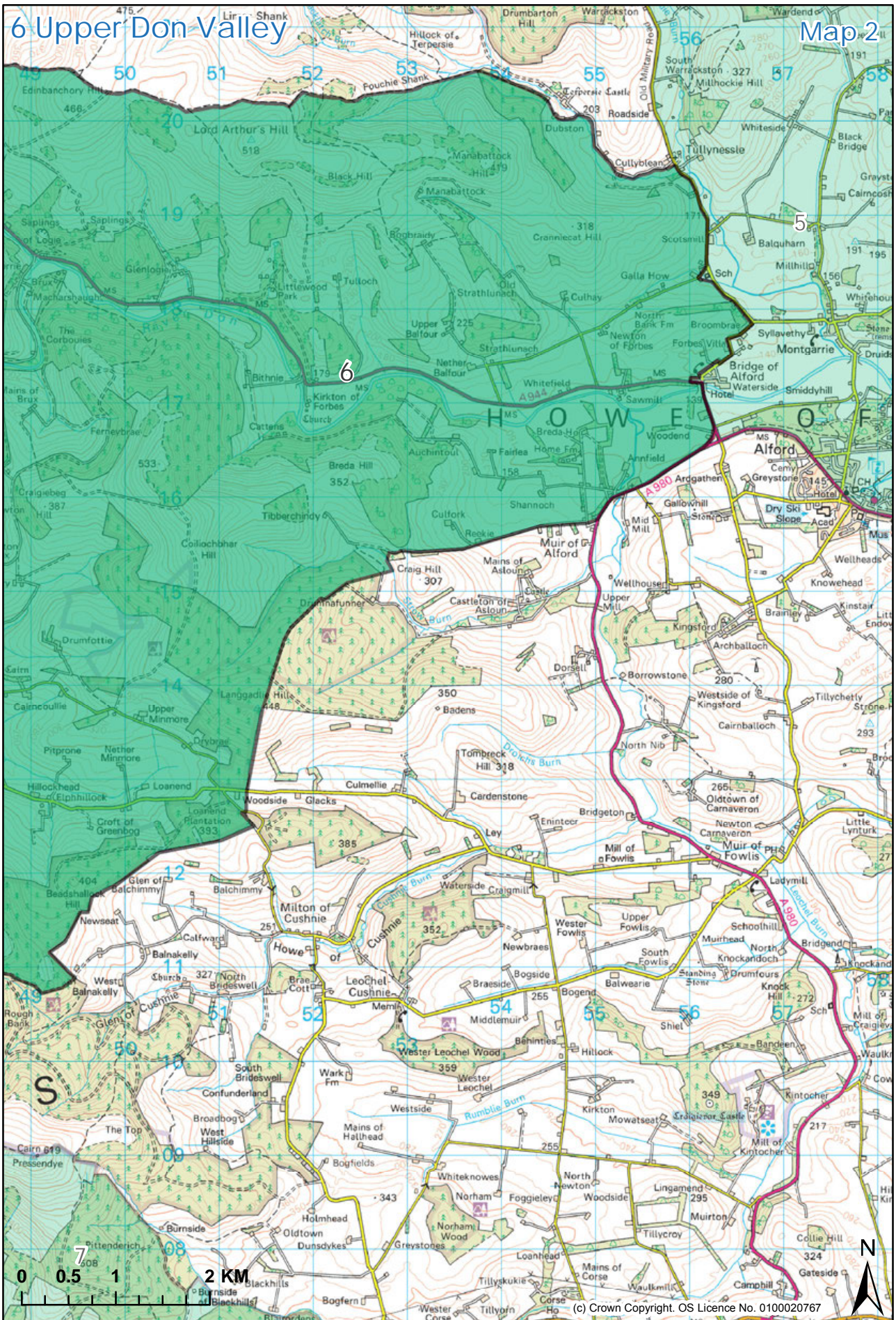
6 Upper Don Valley

Map 1



6 Upper Don Valley

Map 2



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Statement of Importance: Howe of Cromar Special Landscape Area

Location and Boundaries

This SLA is centred on Tarland in the west of Aberdeenshire. The area includes the Howe of Cromar and the surrounding hills that define it on all sides. To the west this area is bounded by the Cairngorms National Park, which wraps around to Balderonoch Hill in the north and Black Moss in the south. From Balderonoch Hill the northern boundary of the SLA continues east across the ridge of Broom Hill and Pressendye, then follows the Corse Burn south-east to the B9119. From this road the boundary runs south largely following the eastern edge of forest plantations that cap the Craiglich-Mortlich ridge. At Mortlich it joins the boundary of the Dee Valley SLA, and turn west to follow the higher ground that separates the Howe of Cromar from the river valley. This boundary mainly follows minor roads, paths and field boundaries as far as the National Park boundary at Black Moss.

The boundaries have been established along the ridge lines that enclose the low-lying basin of the Howe. The most appropriate boundary feature has been chosen along each ridge, which in some cases is a track or path following the high ground. In other cases, as at Craiglich, the boundary is on the hillside beyond the ridge, rather than in front of it, in order to ensure that the visual envelope of the Howe is included.

Designation recognises the intact nature of the Howe, and its strong relationship with the Grampian Outliers and Cairngorm fringes landscape character area. The inter-visibility of the area with the Cairngorms National Park, including views to and from Morven and other peaks also contributes to the remote sense of place. Designation acknowledges the visibility of the area from the A97 and panoramic view from Queen's View. Other features such as archaeological remains, the woodland network and River Dee catchment would also be recognised.



The Howe of Cromar from Queen's View (Source: LUC)

Designation Statement

The Howe of Cromar is a wide, sweeping pre-glacial basin of farmland, contained by low lying hills blanketed by moorland and forestry, and also by the more distant summits within the Cairngorms National Park, including Morven.

Numerous burns cross the Howe, and are tributaries of the River Dee. The ecological value of the river and its surrounds contributes to the landscape character, as well as being recognised as nationally and internationally important for nature conservation. The Howe is well wooded, much of it ancient woodland, and both the woodland and waterways contribute to the ecological connectivity of the area. There is a sense of remoteness and increased wildness felt within this SLA.

The area has numerous features of built heritage interest including stone circles, Pictish stones and hill forts. The small granite villages of Tarland and Logie Coldstone sit at the centre of the Howe, and there are scattered traditional farmsteads throughout.

There are many opportunities for recreation in the Howe including walking, mountain biking and hang-gliding. Queen's View offers panoramic views across the Howe towards the Cairngorms National Park.

The following aspects and features of this landscape are considered worthy of recognition through SLA designation:

- Wide, sweeping basin of farmland, framed by ridges of dark moorland and forestry.
- Dramatic mountain peaks rising from the farmland in the west of the Howe to the summit of Morven within the National Park.
- Panoramic vistas from Queen's View in the east, overlooking the Howe and beyond, to the cliffs of Lochnagar.
- A harmonious balance of open to enclosed land, such that no one feature dominates, creating the managed character of the Howe, with an intact network of coniferous and deciduous plantations, policy woodlands and shelterbelts.
- A long heritage of settlement, with much evidence of early human activity in the form of iconic stone circles such as Tomnaverie, and surviving Bronze Age landscapes such as around Drummy Wood to the south west of Tarlan adds to the strong cultural character of the SLA.
- More recent built heritage includes medieval and later castles and laird's houses, and distinctive granite village architecture as seen in Tarland.
- The area is overlooked from walking routes in the National Park, and also from the adjacent hills including the open ridge of Pressendye and the more intricate, wooded Scar Hill.
- The woodlands and waterways contribute to the richness and diversity of the landscape character.

Forces for Change

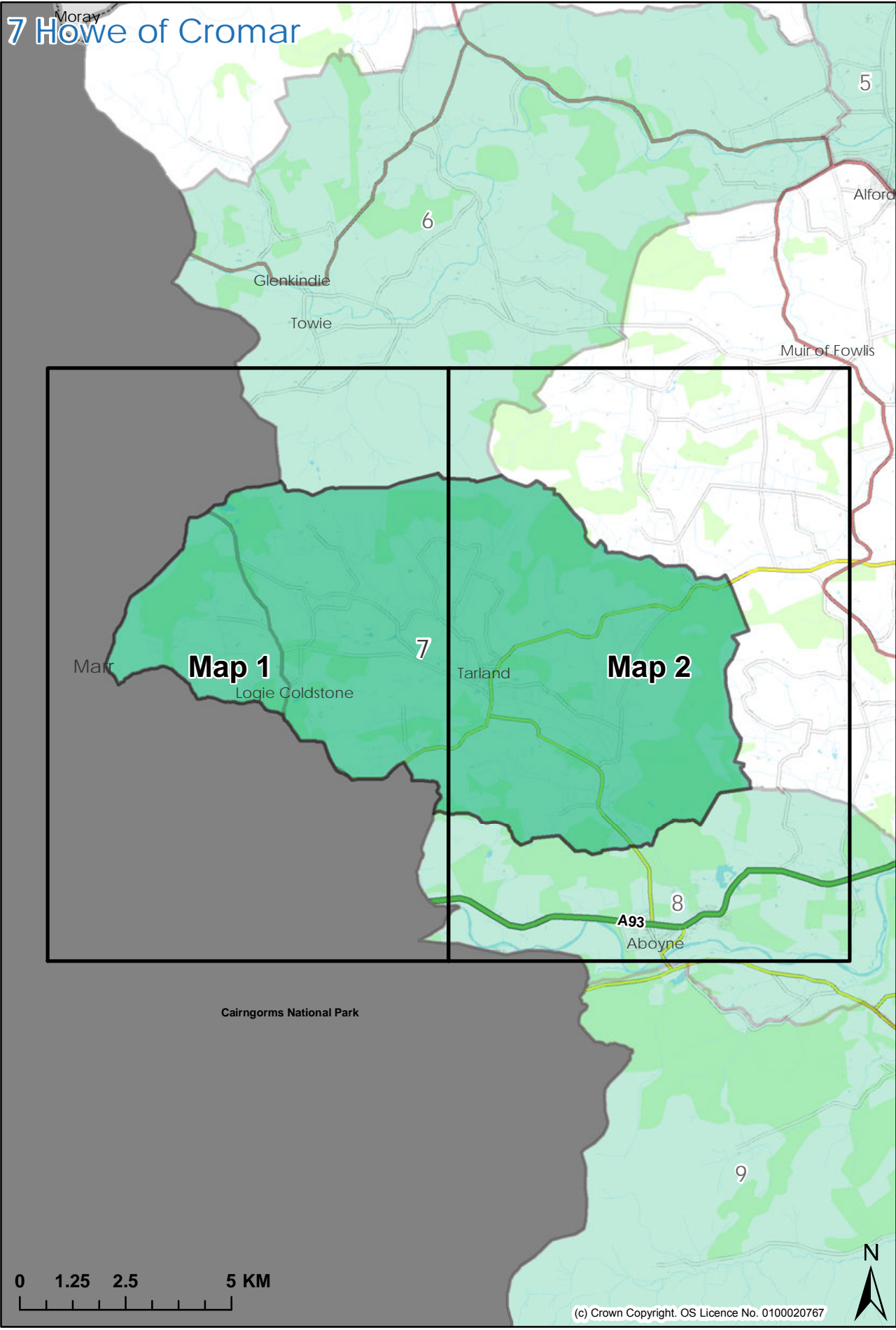
- Changes to landscape as a result of forest management and changes to agricultural practices in this area that could impact upon or erode the balance of open to enclosed space.
- Creation and maintenance of hill tracks associated with land management.
- Changes in estate and moorland management practices.
- Scattered and incremental development e.g. single houses cause negative impact on sense of place.
- Impact of proposals which effect the integrity of natural and historic features within the SLA.

- Development of renewable energy technologies on enclosing slopes to the river (e.g. on-shore wind turbines, grid connection and associated infrastructure affect views to and from the SLA

Management Recommendations

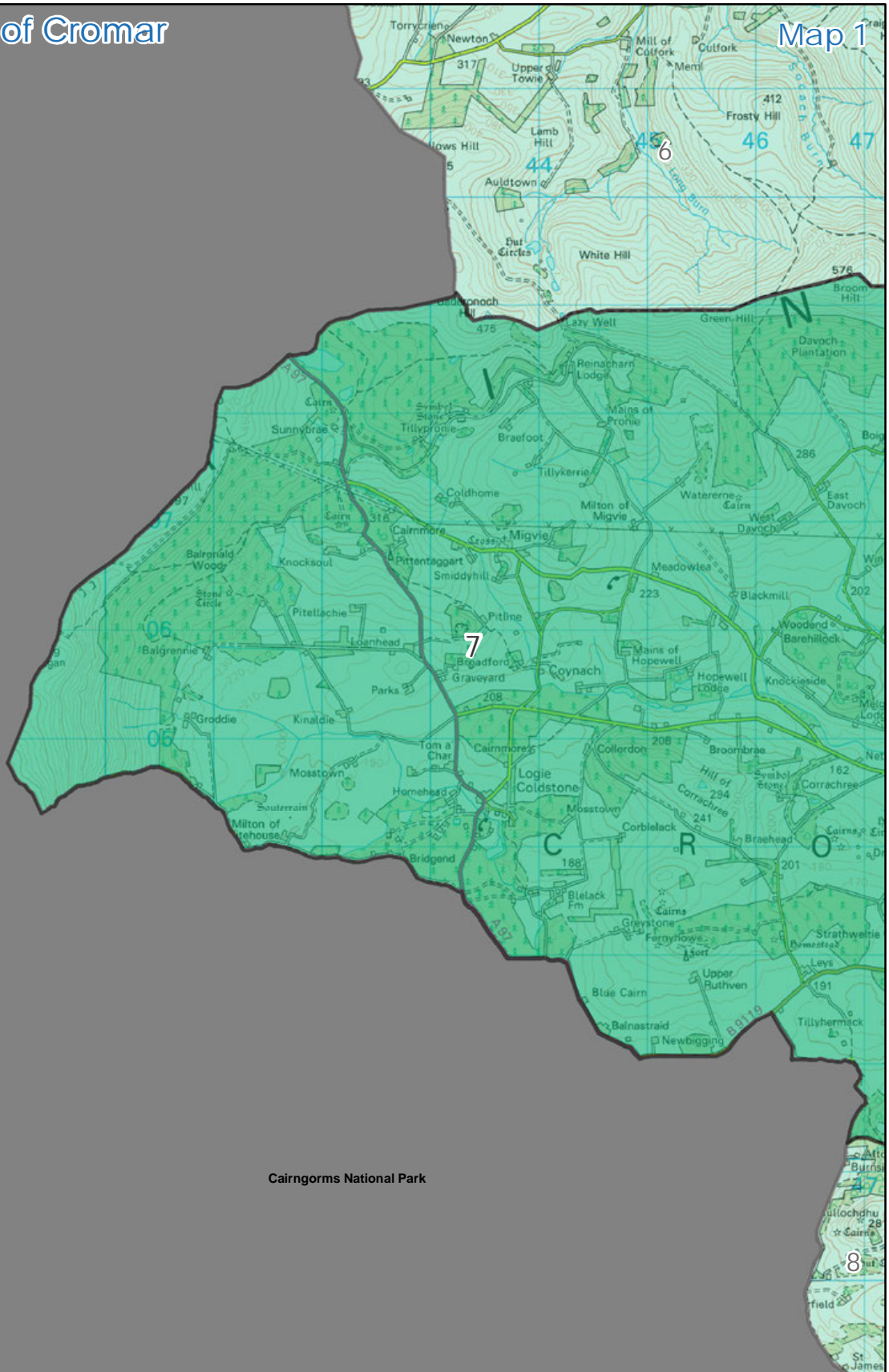
- The Howe of Cromar SLA is classed as an upland landscape type. As such emphasis should be on retaining their largely undeveloped and remote character. This means ensuring that any developments are located and designed to limit their wider visibility and, protect open skylines and rugged summits.
- The wide, sweeping basin of farmland, framed by ridges of dark moorland and forestry should be maintained. Development of a scale that could interrupt the appreciation of or draw attention from the wide basin should be avoided.
- Development and management proposals should not negatively impact on the sense of place or panoramic vistas associated with the Queen's View and views of the dramatic mountain peaks rising from the farmland in the west of the Howe to the summit of Morven within the National Park.
- The patchwork of arable farmland and woodland across the Howe, with coniferous and deciduous plantations, policy woodlands and shelterbelts. This should be maintained and enhanced.
- Development involving hill tracks should be undertaken in line with best practice guidance and should take account of landscape character and qualifying features of the SLA.
- Layout, siting and design of development proposed in and around settlements should reflect the distinctive granite village architecture.
- The area is overlooked from walking routes in the National Park, and also from the adjacent hills including the open ridge of Pressendye and the more intricate, wooded Scar Hill. Development to encourage enjoyment and increased access to countryside, should be informal and rural in character and low key to sit well within the landscape. It is important that development in this area respects the sense of place and experience of wildness felt from these locations.

7 Howe of Cromar

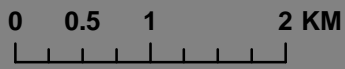


7 Howe of Cromar

Map 1



Cairngorms National Park



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7 Howe of Cromar

Map 2

