

Innovation Award

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Natural Capital Laboratory

Located in the Scottish Highlands near Loch Ness, the Natural Capital Laboratory (NCL) is a live laboratory, which offers a unique environment to enable the understanding and measurement of natural capital. Immersive Sound Demonstrations are one of the new digital tools that has been pioneered on this project to track and communicate complex data at scale and to identify, quantify and feed into value assessments of the impacts of rewilding.

With its positive and substantial impact on the environmental and acoustic landscape, the innovative techniques in the application of acoustics have been used to identify direct links between climate change action and biodiversity increase and represents a fantastic example of how to push the boundaries of acoustic applications for the benefit of all. There is collaboration between acousticians, ecologists, landscape surveyors, environmental economists, and visualisation specialists. The most recent Immersive Sound Demonstration was featured in BBC Countryfile Highlands Rewilding episode.

This is a very clever project in which the acoustic elements are key to the success, with use of virtual reality to explain how it can work. It offers an excellent way of showing the client and the public what they can expect and it offers great potential for the future. It recognises that soundscape has changed the way information is presented and that use of technology can enable good acoustics to be demonstrated to everyone. It has pushed innovation from the very start and goes beyond existing good practice as well as having timescales that were huge and challenging. The use of audio to assess changes in animal and bats behaviour was brilliant and this type of immersive sound demonstration can benefit future programmes. This is the sort of work that shows what acoustic consultancy can cover and displays creativity in design and testing new techniques to quantify, measure and communicate environmental and social change.

