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**Deliverable D2.4 in Project Number JHI-D4-1 ‘People & Nature’**



The James  
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# ‘Workshops/interviews conducted to test platform capacities for enabling more inclusive engagement’

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## Workshops/interviews conducted to test platform capacities for enabling more inclusive engagement

### Introduction

D2.4 is a key deliverable of JHI-D4-1 WP2: Enabling inclusivity in biodiversity narratives which seeks to "identify narratives and narrative approaches which are usually outside of biodiversity research, and develop and evaluate audio-visual and interactive narrative tools and techniques to better enable their productive engagement for transformative change". In our delivery of D2.4 we designed and facilitated a series of stakeholder workshop and community engagement activities, supported by exchange with expert advisors and formal ethics procedures (to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights throughout stakeholder workshops and associated data collection and analysis), to assess the platform's usability, content, and capacity to identify, prompt and connect marginalised ecological and cultural narratives. The feedback is now helping us (and stakeholder co-creators) develop suggestions and priorities on remaining Platform input and refinements required, which will inform D2.5 (*'Final refinement and reporting on digital platform'*, due end-March 2026). The development of the audio-visual and interactive Platform sits within the wider People and Nature project which seeks to identify and evaluate interventions, research approaches, and processes which can facilitate the transformative change of how biodiversity in Scotland is framed, valued, managed, and governed, and how the associated benefits can be harnessed and more equitably distributed by engaging with a plurality of voices and values.

### Background

The pilot platform (D2.3, Donnelly et al., 2025) has been co-developed with stakeholders, particularly Cairngorms Connect, to explore three intersecting dimensions of marginalisation identified in D2.1 (Brown et al., 2023): **people, ecologies, and ways of knowing**. These are being piloted through the themes of **gender, treeline ecologies, and Gaelic** within the Cairngorms National Park. The Platform integrates georeferenced video stories, story prompts (primarily short videos including one or more of place-names, story excerpts, archival maps and materials, and questions emerging regarding them) inviting people to respond, and diverse historic and contemporary map layers. Its design goal is to enable less-heard narratives to be discovered, explored, and responded to, thereby supporting more inclusive, reflective and effective approaches to biodiversity futures.

### Preparation and Materials Development

To support platform testing and co-creation, we developed:

- story prompts derived from place-names, cultural archives, ecological histories, and our scoping review work in year 1-2 (D2.1; Brown et al., 2023) which explored the opportunities and barriers to greater inclusivity of narratives in biodiversity research and management in Scotland;
- exemplar video stories produced with researchers and cultural advisers;
- new techniques for gathering and prompting stories, including the development of a methodology and novel **gender-related map layer** (a database of gender-related place-names for the case-study area);
- themed videos combining material and elements of individual video stories and story prompts to illustrate emerging issues across each case-study theme. These include interlinkages between marginalised social and species identities, and related practices and spatial distribution, and the contingencies of engaging minority languages and related cultural forms in biodiversity understandings and enhancement;

- approaches for co-editing and curating video material with stakeholders;
- an online survey (Qualtrics) for circulation via the Cairngorms Connect newsletter and internal stakeholder and relevant researcher networks, to understand more deeply the social and technological contingencies around the inclusive or continued marginalisation of particular biodiversity narratives.

This work built on analyses in D2.1 (Brown et al., 2023) and method development in M2.5 (Brown et al., 2025b), in which different ways of including marginalised narratives in and through the audio-visual digital platform were explored with stakeholders.

### Engagement Activities Phase 1 (Late 2024–Spring 2025): Co-development of Content and Design

- **Expert exchange:** Ongoing collaboration with advisers specialising in storytelling, place-names, Gaelic and minority languages. These advisers contributed stories, reflected on narrative processes, and reviewed platform handling of Gaelic and gender dimensions.
- **Knowledge Exchange event:** Co-organisation of the *Gaelic in the Landscape* event (Badaguish, April 2024) (Brown et al., 2024b), which identified and expanded stakeholder networks and advanced discussions on the relationship between minority languages and ecological restoration within partner organisations.
- **Cairngorms Connect workshops:** Two online user-feedback sessions (Dec 2024; Jan 2025) (Brown et al., 2024a; 2025a) with the Communications and Outreach team (detailed in M2.5) provided targeted insights on platform structure and design (details will be given in D2.5).
- **Project dissemination:** A presentation (Brown et al., 2025d) at the Ecosystems and Land Use Stakeholder Engagement Group (ELSEG) meeting (Feb 2025) generated interest from agency representatives and invitations for further engagement (e.g. exploring scope to use our approach in NatureScot initiatives in which challenges arise from stakeholder differences).
- **External collaboration:** Integration of the *Coilltean Caillte / Forgotten Woodlands* place-name database into the platform, and contribution of a project video story to their national StoryMap.

### Engagement Activities Phase 2 (Autumn 2025): Broader Stakeholder Workshopping and Testing

This phase explored in more depth how the presence and combinations of particular narratives (e.g. those normalising upland landscapes without trees or (particular) people, those naturalising particular acts of ecological management, such as culling species deemed surplus or vermin, or those making visible forgotten land uses or management norms) and narrative forms (e.g. story, scientific, visual, textual, historical, contemporary) may enable engagement with overlooked ecological and cultural perspectives.

#### **A. Cairngorms Connect Staff & Volunteer Conference Workshop (1 Sept 2025)**

A major interactive workshop session was conducted with 98 participants from Cairngorms Connect, partner agencies (NatureScot, FLS, RSPB, WildLand Ltd, CNPA), Endangered Landscapes Programme researchers, and community and citizen science volunteers. Participants viewed three themed videos (Gaelic, gender, montane woodland) and completed co-designed response cards capturing thoughts and feelings. Responses and associated fieldnotes were transcribed and are undergoing thematic and narrative analysis. (Brown et al., 2025e).

#### **B. Community Screening Event (4 Sept 2025)**

Themed story reels were screened at the Cairngorms Connect Community Conference

(Glenmore Lodge) with ~80 community and partner participants. Informal feedback reinforced the value of stories for allowing diverse lived experiences relevant to restoration to emerge. (Brown et al., 2025f).

### **C. Expert Interviews and Researcher Exchanges**

Continued discussions were undertaken with expert advisors, and were extended to researchers with expertise in biodiversity, inclusive methods, digital tools and narrative approaches. Particular insights were collected through a conference presentation on the Platform at the Royal Geographical Society (Aug 2025) (Brown et al., 2025c).

### **Initial Insights**

The data collected include: videos (including story prompts, story submissions and responses to story prompts); narrative and thematic data from response cards, and; fieldnotes from all stages of the project development, including internal development meetings and workshops, stakeholder workshops and facilitation, and ongoing stakeholder and researcher exchanges.

Preliminary findings include:

- Combining video stories, historical materials and map layers provides a multi-layered, integrative and inclusive foundation for exploring biodiversity futures at landscape scale.
- Stories can act as an engaging and less confrontational means of deliberation, helping participants recognise dominant narratives, recognise and understand marginalised perspectives, depersonalise contentious issues and reflect through humanised, situated accounts.
- Place-based cultural prompts—even partial traces such as place-names or archival fragments—can powerfully stimulate new ecological considerations and novel narrative and practical connections, especially when working at landscape scale biodiversity enhancement.
- Workshops highlighted both opportunities and challenges for inclusive dialogue, including emotional safety, comfort, and the distinctive role of video prompts and story-placeholders in facilitating open conversation.

These insights will be augmented and further examined through a follow-up sense-checking and co-analysis workshop at the Cairngorms Connect Equality, Diversity and Inclusion event (scheduled Jan 2026), and the Qualtrics online survey (Nov/Dec 2025) being circulated via the next Cairngorms Connect newsletter and via internal networks of relevant researchers.

### **Next Steps**

Feedback on content, design and usability is informing ongoing platform refinement for D2.5 ('Final refinement and reporting on digital platform', due end-March 2026). Data from the September 2025 workshops, community sessions, expert interviews and the online survey will be analysed using narrative and thematic methods to inform D2.6 (Report / manuscript on key opportunities and barriers arising in relation to inclusivity of neglected biodiversity narratives using digital, audio-visual tools' Due in January 2027)

## Related and cited outputs

Brown, K.M; Donnelly, D. Juarez-Bourke, A. (2025a). Feedback session with Cairngorms Connect comms & Involvement Working Group on the Restoryation Cairngorms prototype audio-visual digital platform. Online meeting with the Cairngorms Connect Comms & Involvement Working Group, 28th January 2025.

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Brown, K.M; Donnelly, D. Juarez-Bourke, A. (2025b). M2.5: Approaches for inclusion of narratives using the audio-visual digital platform developed with stakeholders, February 2025

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Brown, K.M.; Juarez-Bourke, A.; Gray, R.; Nicholson, H. (2023) Scoping review of marginalised narratives in biodiversity research and management Deliverable D2.1 within project D4.1, Work Package 2 (RESAS 2022 - 2027), March 2023. [D4\\_1 WP2 - Deliverable 2\\_1 - Scoping review of marginalised narratives.pdf](#)

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Brown, K.M.; Juarez-Bourke, A.; Donnelly, D. (2025d) Developing a novel story platform to facilitate effective & inclusive regeneration of biodiversity. Ecosystems and Land Use Stakeholder Engagement Group (ELSEG) meeting, Edinburgh, 19th February 2025.

Brown, KM, Juarez-Bourke, A & Donnelly, D. (2025e) 'Restoration with Roots: Working with place-names and stories for resilient and inclusive ecological futures', Paper presented at Cairngorms Connect Conference, 1 September 2025, MacDonald Highland Resort, Aviemore, UK

Brown, KM & Juarez-Bourke, A (2025f) Screening and panel discussion of our 'Gaelic' and 'Montane Woodland' themed video reels at Cairngorms Connect Community Conference, 4th September 2025, SportScotland Glenmore Lodge, UK

Donnelly, D., Brown, K., Juarez-Bourke, A. (2025) Restoryation website.