

**Wales Squirrel Forum (7)**  
**WAG offices, Newtown**  
**14<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

**Present**

Michelle Bromley	Forestry Commission Wales (FCW)
Sarah Cartmel	Clocaenog red squirrel project
Liz Halliwell	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Hugh Knott	Menter Mon - WRSP contractor
Brenda Mayle	Forest Research (FR)
Kath McNulty	Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor)
Craig Shuttleworth	Menter Mon/ARSP
Delcie Simkin	WAG (Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Branch)
Chris Wynne	North Wales Wildlife Trust

**Chair** Liz Halliwell  
**Minutes** Michelle Bromley

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

Kate Burgess	Denbighshire Countryside Service
Huw Denman	European Squirrel Initiative
Isabel Macho	Carms CC (for Mid-Wales Red Squirrel Project)
Kate Williamson	Snowdonia National Park Authority

LH extended a warm welcome to KM replacing Judith Webb as the ConFor representative. Huw Denman had provided comments on the agenda which LH agreed to contribute on his behalf.

**2. Minutes of last meetings (WSF5, joint ESF/WSF6 & WSP3)**

- WSF5 – accepted
- Joint ESF/WSF6 - accepted
- WSP3 – persons present / apologies, to be amended.
- General point made by BM over consistency in use of SQPV for abbreviating Squirrelpox Virus.

**3. Matters arising and action points (WSF5, joint ESF/WSF6 & WSP3)**

**WSF 5**

Action Point	
<p>1 Clarify WAG roles for testing &amp; SQPV research.</p> <p>Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan with Nick Jackson of Welsh Mountain Zoo</p>	<p><i>See WSP3 action point 1.</i></p>
<p>2 Officially state the group's/organisation's commitment, needs, contribution and objectives for a Wales RS project , summarise previous and current activities and send to LH.</p> <p><a href="mailto:L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk">L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><i>Three responses received</i></p>

Ideas for other partner organisations to LH	
<b>3</b> Develop flow chart of project development stages.	<i>discharged</i>
<b>4</b> Prepare a note for the Partnership on way forward for RS Recovery Plan	<i>discharged</i>
<b>5</b> Contact Richard Pow over costing details of North England SoS plan preparation	<i>See WSP3 action point 2.</i>
<b>6</b> Inform FCGB what action WSF are taking re warfarin review Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990 Investigate records from private sector GS control groups	<i>See WSP3 action points 3, 4 and 10.</i>
<b>7</b> Prepare guidance note for record contributions and blank spreadsheet format.  Contribute records in advised format and send to LH. <a href="mailto:L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk">L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk</a>	<i>See WSP3 action point 4.</i>
<b>8</b> Once action 6 complete - respond to FC GB and UKRSG	<i>See WSP3 action points 3, 4 and 10.</i>
<b>9</b> Supply examples of worked costs to PG  Comments and suggestions to PG	<i>Received from HD. See WSP3 action point 11.</i>
<b>10</b> Contribute other research areas to BM via e-mail <a href="mailto:brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk">brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk</a>	<i>See WSP3 action point 5.</i>
<b>11</b> Write to Director FCW on behalf of WSF	<i>Discharged - see matters arising</i>
<b>12</b> Let LH know DONM availability Liase with Fred Curry	<i>Discharged.</i>

**Joint ESF/WSF6** (different format - extracted from ESF minutes)

NB Items discussed are shown as **bold**

**MB to confirm who will chair the ESF following retirement of Fred Currie  
As at 8<sup>th</sup> Feb '08 Rebecca Isted (acting head of Natural Environment  
Programme Team) of Forestry Commission England**

- *Kania Traps*

AP: BM to liase with JM, JK. Objective to seek sites where no-one is live trapping so that Kania traps could be deployed.

- *Data and NBN*

AP All to upload data onto NBN (MW NE England, FC to contact CP re IOW data).

- *Pine Marten research*

AP CCr to send BM details of Irish research on Pine Martens

AP LH to find out more at Waterford mtg in June and report back to group

**Pine Marten are not an important predator of grey squirrel in Wales. Lack of evidence – LH to send BM details of Scottish PhD & SC that of the Irish research work.**

- *Forest Practice Note 4 Despatch of grey squirrels and Warfarin useage*  
AP BM expressed concern regarding insufficient information on Killgerm products and will follow this up.  
AP BM, CB with others to raise this with EA again  
**BM confirmed that that the CSL review of despatch methods commissioned by SNH has been delayed and is now due to be published April '08.**

- *Woodland Birds & Grey Control Project*  
AP RS to send BM paper

- *Welsh Squirrel Group Update*  
AP LH to follow up issues around funding available from Better Woodlands for Wales. LH agreed to circulate AP from last WSG  
**Detail on the business rules for grey squirrel control elements eligible for funding through BWV scheme available from MB upon request. There are currently two levels of funding available as part of an overall management plan (higher in pole stage woodlands and in red squirrel areas and lower in all other areas). Pending review see WSP3 action point 11.**

### **WSP3**

<b>Action Point</b>	
<p><b>1</b> Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan with Nick Jackson of Welsh Mountain Zoo</p>	<p><i>Carried over – SC for contingency plan and CS for field craft advice. Carried over</i> <b>Action point 1</b></p> <p><i>CS called for further research into role of contamination / hygiene of traps and sacks used in both RS &amp; GS research / control. Is disinfectant effective in limiting contamination and/or could it limit trapping through strong smell etc?</i></p> <p><i>BM advised a precautionary approach as only 6 months into mode of transmission study.</i></p> <p><i>BM to follow-up on use of Interferon for treating RS with SQPV.</i> <b>Action point 2</b></p>
<p><b>2</b> Contact Richard Pow over costing details of North England SoS plan preparation</p>	<p><i>CS and HK have sourced details for the RS project scoping study. CS and HK to share with MB and LH.</i> <b>Action point 3</b></p>
<p><b>3</b> Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990</p> <p>Investigate records from private sector GS control groups</p>	<p><i>Completing collation. Carried over.</i> <b>Action point 4</b></p>

<p><b>4</b> Contribute records in advised format and send to LH. <a href="mailto:L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk">L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><i>CCW collating records to update NBN – All to submit to LH as per pro-forma</i>  <b>Action point 5</b>   <i>Agreed that more rigorous criteria are needed to verify records</i></p>
<p><b>5</b> Contribute other research areas to BM via e-mail <a href="mailto:brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk">brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><i>Actively inform BM of anything which may be of interest including project area updates.</i></p>
<p><b>6</b> Jonathan Rothwell CCW &amp; Keith Jones FCW to prepare data layers for red squirrel distribution &amp; share information.   CCW/FCW to maintain database of GIS layers for decision making.</p>	<p><i>Cannot complete until Action Point 4 is completed. Carried over.</i>  <b>Action point 6</b></p>
<p><b>7</b> Share previous work on site criteria &amp; ranking and MWRSP to prepare draft focal sites guidance.</p>	<p><i>Agenda item</i></p>
<p><b>8</b> FCW to draft standard paragraph for FDPs.</p>	<p><i>Generic guidance and reminder given to all Forest Districts – however FDPs should be site specific</i></p>
<p><b>9</b> Redraft conservation plan based on comments received</p>	<p><i>Agenda item</i></p>
<p><b>10</b> Follow up Warfarin issues by 1st week September and email WSPartnership</p>	<p><i>Lack of quality data on RS distribution prevents an update. Still stands that if Pine marten or RS present then cannot use Warfarin as a GS control mechanism.</i>   <i>KM asked about rat control and BM to raise with Adrian Meyer at the BPC meeting. Risk around agricultural buildings and pheasant pens.</i></p>
<p><b>11</b> Send comments to LH on BWW by end August</p>	<p><i>Comments from HD and others received. LH to forward to Patrick Green. KM reported some members said payment levels ok but that guidance was poor. MB to ensure that BWW management planners etc are aware of Forest Practice Note 4 and reference inserted where GS control is a plan element.</i>   <i>MB explained that the business rules for GS control would not change until the Biodiversity Strategy for Welsh Woodlands, Native Woodland policy and Woodland Strategy Review were completed.</i></p>

### **Matters arising**

LH had received a reply to the letter she wrote on behalf of WSF from the late Ian Forshaw (NB: Trefor Owen is now Director for FCW). He asked the Forum to consider his response with particular reference to providing demonstrable evidence of viable Red Squirrel populations. CS stated that the Pentraeth FDP review process was very positive at this stage. KM raised a query over the implications of the wording relating to native woodland within the WAG

*One Wales* document and the potential conflict with Red Squirrel conservation needs. BM recommended that the WSF red squirrel conservation plan concentrate on site/landscape defendability rather than population numbers as the Gurnell et al report on survey methods has shown that there is no easy method to assess population sizes. MB pointed out that Red Band Needle Blight was likely to become a significant issue affecting the long term management of Red Squirrel sites.

#### **4. Wales Red Squirrel Project**

Menter Mon had been selected to complete the scoping exercise on contract to CCW. HK introduced the discussion document 'preparing the ground' and reported progress to date (distributed with agenda on 6<sup>th</sup> March via e-mail). HK described the planned brainstorming workshop to discuss proposals and generate new ideas drawing on WSP membership. The Forum discussed the scoping study. CW recommended that there should be a focus on genetics and that a single project officer could facilitate this. HK emphasised that care and attention to detail over funding sources was key.

##### **Action point 7**

*LH to circulate dates for workshop (part of scoping exercise)*

##### **Action point 8**

*ALL to recommend independent facilitators for workshop*

##### **Action point 9**

*MB to explore potential European sources of funding eg LIFE+*

#### **5. Focal sites criteria**

LH summarised how the criteria had been developed to date and the Forum discussed the revised proposals drawn up by the mid-Wales project group. The Forum recognised that whilst the criteria used by Scotland and England were not suitable for Wales, it was emphasised that the criteria must be robust, independent and capable of justification. All agreed that not only would focal sites analysis give a 'snapshot' of site 'status' but also give context for decision making for 'peripheral' sites. MB drew attention to the usefulness of the Poulson *et al* landscape defendability analysis (FC report for SNH) as a basis for criteria development. BM said that the Scottish work analysing functional connectivity was adding to this work and that a lack of accurate hedgerow mapping data was becoming a limiting factor. KM suggested that an opportunities and threats analysis be taken. Concern was raised about sites that have 'no status'.

##### **Action point 10**

*LH & MB to assess the opportunities and threats for each known site and circulate to the Forum by 30<sup>th</sup> May*

## **6. Red Squirrel Conservation Plan**

LH emphasised the need to finalise the plan as soon as possible. The Forum discussed the summary of outstanding actions that LH had collated. BM commented that genetics was not adequately considered. HK stated that the business plan / project plan must be aligned with the red squirrel Conservation Plan.

### **Action point 11**

*ALL to provide comments and submit individual outstanding RSCP actions by 25<sup>th</sup> April*

## **7. Grey squirrel releases**

CS raised concerns over releases under licence from Natural England and asked the Forum to consider making an objection to any such releases in Wales. The Forum debated the subject and were in agreement that there needed to be more control / advice over where such releases were permitted re Red Squirrel conservation.

### **Action point 12**

*KM to contact RSPCA re raising awareness of the issues relating to grey squirrel releases*

## **8. Legal protection of Red Squirrel**

CS stated that although Red Squirrel had full legal protection<sup>1</sup> there were numerous examples of inappropriate woodland management being carried out resulting in disturbance and destruction of places of refuge and an absence of case law to test these instances. LH stated that under the W&C Act there is no purpose in law for issuing a licence for economic forestry or development activities and that the activities usually rely on a defence of being 'the incidental result of a lawful operation'. MB stated that FCW undertake work which is thoroughly planned to a best practice framework including the preparation and approval of a method statement through consultation with CCW Regional officers and others where appropriate.

### **Action point 13**

*MB to follow-up site specific examples contributed by CS, SC & HD with the local Forest District Managers.*

## **9. Newborough draft Forest Design Plan**

CS stated that the latest meeting to discuss the plan had been very satisfactory in terms of red squirrel conservation and wider biodiversity gain. A 3D visual display of the future forest was much appreciated.

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<sup>1</sup> under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended

## 10. Research update

BM introduced her research summary (distributed with previous meetings' minutes on 10<sup>th</sup> March via e-mail) and thanked the Forum for contributing items. Discussion focussed on the latest additions (in italics). LH asked CS about a student project using baited transects. CS said that this work had yet to be completed. BM drew attention to Ireland's priority site work analysing habitat using GIS tools. The Forum discussed adenovirus and the work of David Everest. It is likely that adenovirus is currently overlooked by most squirrel workers. BM noted that the science could be better progressed by encouraging more exploratory student studies. HD asked BM about Forest Research spend on immunocontraception. BM replied that FR was looking at species specific delivery mechanisms and that the ESI was pursuing species specific control approaches. BM said that continuity of funding was a concern for these programmes.

### Action point 14

*ALL to continue to bring new items and research to BMs attention via e-mail [brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)*

### Action point 15

CS to send BM details of Pentraeth SQPV results.

## 11. Red squirrel projects in Wales

CS – Anglesey. 16 greys had been trapped so far this year with a rolling trapping project and four active trappers. A recent suspected case of SQPV from Pentraeth has not been confirmed – no evidence of the virus has been found, despite the symptoms strongly suggesting SQPV. Further tests are being carried out. A mainland control programme was also underway and a student project was looking at mechanisms to prevent grey squirrels crossing the Anglesey bridges.

SC – Clocaenog. Around 100 greys were trapped over the winter. The Forum discussed concerns over windfarm proposals for the area. SC was especially concerned about the Alwens and the open moorland restoration proposals under 'most appropriate habitat mitigation analysis'. LH understood that Alwens are owned by Welsh Water and are not being considered for wind farm development. Also, the RSPB's Strategic Environment Management Planning process had identified some funds for community benefit and some would be directed towards red squirrel conservation.

LH for HD – mid-Wales. 30 days of trapping for red squirrel presence over two areas and one grey had been caught. On the last day of trapping a red squirrel was seen. There has been lodgepole pine cone production and so it is likely that RS are using the sitka spruce more making it difficult to identify where to trap as the SS is so widespread. The BBC had contributed £5K to investigate RS habitat suitability – study will be partly desktop and partly field survey (coning and drey presence).

## 12. UK Red Squirrel Group meeting

This item had been mostly covered at item 3. LH said that the website hosted by SNH required the WSF content to be revisited and updated. See <http://www.snh.org.uk/ukredsquirrelgroup/> NB most WSF info is under the Country Groups section, although there is some ARSP info under Research.

### Action point 16

*ALL – Especially Clocaenog, Anglesey and Central Wales project groups - to send updated content to LH. LH to supply to SNH.*

## 13. Any other business

CS reiterated the importance of genetics in Welsh red squirrel populations and cited Pentraeth with over 100 reds in 180ha of woodland – a dense population for Wales. The Forum debated various ideas for diversification of the gene pool.

CS made the Forum aware of a feasibility study being funded by Coed Cymru and the ESI on Gower to remove all grey squirrel and reintroduce red squirrel to the area.

KM raised awareness of the non-native Provosts squirrel found near Leeds recently. BM said that it was thought to an individual pet release.

## 14. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June

LH thanked DS for the use of the WAG meeting room.

**Michelle Bromley**

Wednesday, 09 April 2008

## SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS WSF7

Action Point	By whom?	By when?
1. Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- contingency plan</li><li>- field craft advice</li></ul>	SC CS	By next meeting
2. BM to follow-up on use of Interferon for treating RS with SQPV.	BM	By next meeting
3. Share SOS project details with MB and LH	HK	ASAP

4. Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990 Investigate records from private sector GS control groups	MB	By next meeting
5. Contribute squirrel records in advised format and send to LH.	ALL	ASAP
6. CCW/FCW to maintain database of GIS layers for decision making. Jonathan Rothwell CCW & Keith Jones FCW to prepare data layers for red squirrel distribution & share information.	LH & MB	By next meeting
7. Circulate dates for workshop (part of WRSP 'preparing the ground' scoping exercise)	LH	4th April
8. Recommend independent facilitators for workshop	ALL	4th April
9. Explore potential European sources of funding eg LIFE+	MB	By next meeting
10. Assess the opportunities and threats for each known red squirrel site and circulate to the Forum	LH & MB	30 <sup>th</sup> May
11. Provide comments on RSCP draft 5 and submit individual outstanding actions	ALL	25 <sup>th</sup> April
12. <i>KM to contact RSPCA re raising awareness of the issues relating to grey squirrel releases</i>	KM	ASAP
13. Follow-up site specific examples of inappropriate woodland management contributed by CS, SC & HD with the local Forest District Managers.	MB	ASAP
14. Continue to bring new items and research to BMs attention via e-mail <a href="mailto:brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk">brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk</a>	ALL	By next meeting
15. Send BM details of Pentraeth SQPV results.	CS	ASAP
16. Send updated website content to LH especially Clocaenog, Anglesey and Mid Wales project groups. LH to supply to SNH. <a href="http://www.snh.org.uk/ukredsquirrelgroup/">http://www.snh.org.uk/ukredsquirrelgroup/</a>	ALL	By next meeting

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