

Wales Squirrel Forum (8)
FCW Offices, Aberystwyth
3rd July 2008

Present

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| Liz Halliwell | Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) |
| Huw Denman | European Squirrel Initiative |
| Isabel Macho | Carms CC (for Mid Wales Squirrel Project) |
| Lizzie Wilbeforce | South and West Wales Wildlife Trust |
| Sarah Cartmel | Clocaenog red squirrel project |
| Delcie Simkin | WAG (Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Branch) |
| Chris Tucker | Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) |

Chair Liz Halliwell

Minutes Chris Tucker

1. Welcome & Apologies

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| Chris Wynne | North Wales Wildlife Trust |
| Hugh Knott | Menter Mon |
| Craig Shuttleworth | Menter Mon |
| Kate Williamson | Snowdonia National Park Authority |
| Brenda Mayle | FC |
| Michelle Bromley | FCW |

2. Minutes of last meetings (WSF7)

WSF7 – accepted

3. Matters arising and action points (WSF7)

| Action Point | |
|---|---|
| 1. Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contingency plan - field craft advice | No progress. Action point 1 Brenda Mayle has circulated updates on SQPV outbreaks. LH reported that the Pentraeth case had not been confirmed by testing and could not be conclusive. |
| 2. BM to follow-up on use of Interferon for treating RS with SQPV. | See BM's circulated report. Discharged |
| 3. Share SOS project details with MB and LH | Not progressed |
| 4. Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990 Investigate records from private sector GS control groups | Carried over Action point 2 |

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| 5. Contribute squirrel records in advised format and send to LH. | LH sent reporting form to all groups. IM to follow up records from Neil Matthew Action point 3 |
| 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. | Awaiting completion of action 4 above. Action point 4 |
| 7. Circulate dates for workshop (part of WRSP 'preparing the ground' scoping exercise) | Discharged |
| 8. Recommend independent facilitators for workshop | Discharged |
| 9. Explore potential European sources of funding eg LIFE+ | CT to get update from FC funding team Action point 5 |
| 10. Assess the opportunities and threats for each known red squirrel site and circulate to the Forum | On agenda |
| 11. Provide comments on RSCP draft 5 and submit individual outstanding actions | No comments received |
| 12. <i>KM to contact RSPCA re raising awareness of the issues relating to grey squirrel releases</i> | Carried Over Action point 6 |
| 13. Follow-up site specific examples of inappropriate woodland management contributed by CS, SC & HD with the local Forest District Managers. | Carried over Action point 7 |
| 14. Continue to bring new items and research to BMs attention via e-mail brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk | BM update received |
| 15. Send BM details of Pentraeth SQPV results. | LH has reported on this above. |
| 16. Send updated website content to LH especially Clocaenog, Anglesey and Mid Wales project groups. LH to supply to SNH. http://www.snh.org.uk/ukredsquirrelgroup/ | LH to circulate general information before it is put on website Action point 8 |

Matters arising

IM reported on RSPCA comments in the press which challenged the link between grey squirrels and red squirrel decline and warning that the Mid Wales project should be wary of culling greys.

Action Point 9

IM to circulate RSPCA article

4. Wales Red Squirrel Project

The brainstorming session took place in May and provided lots of information for Hugh Knott to take forward development of the project proposal; his report of the session has been circulated by email.

Hugh's proposal is developing individual project plans and then combining them into an all Wales plan proposal. A key issue is how to achieve support from FCW for the plan as the major landowner.

CT expressed that the Focal Site Assessment would appear to be the way forward in demonstrating potential sustainability of sites.

A discussion on the next steps after the brainstorming followed and it was felt that letters of support from local landowners and communities should be sought. The completion of the project proposal is expected in September/October 2008.

HD stated that private forestry companies are supportive.

Seeking Wales Biodiversity Partnership support: DS offered to raise the project as AOB at the next meeting, 15th July. It was felt that this should be followed by a paper to the 12th November meeting of WBP.

Action Point 10

DS to add Wales Squirrel Project as AOB at July meeting of WBP

Action Point 11

LH to complete the Conservation Plan and HK the Project Proposal in time that a paper can be presented to the 12th November meeting of WBP.

Action Point 12

All project groups to seek local landowner and community support for the project.

Action Point 13

All to let LH have comments on the report from the brainstorming meeting.

5. Focal Sites Assessment

LH explained the sources for the Focal sites assessment. A discussion followed which concluded with the decision to develop the scoring system from the Mid-Wales project and the Focal Sites assessment into a decision tree with supporting narrative.

Action Point 14

All to send LH comments on the focal sites assessment on what should/shouldn't be included

Action Point 15

LH/CT to combine scoring and focal sites assessment into decision tree.

Action Point 16

MB to talk to BM re funding to do GIS analysis of buffers.

Action Point 17

LH to contact Kate Burgess re report for Cynwyd hair tube survey

6. Grey Squirrel Control

HD raised the issue of grants for control. As previously reported by MB the grant allocation for grey squirrel control in Wales is not fully taken up and he suggests that an increased rate in high risk areas only would focus the money where it will be most effective.

Currently under BWW the rates are:

High risk areas £120/ha at 50% funding

Low risk areas £67/ha at 50% funding

In England the rate is 80% in red squirrel priority sites.

HD felt that large woodland areas benefit from the hectare funding as economics of size make control affordable with grant whilst smaller woodland owners (eg 10ha) don't take up the grant as it isn't viable on that scale.

He suggested that the grant be stopped and the control is externalised and someone is contracted to carry out control for all landowners in the critical areas.

His recommendations are:

1. Strategic landscape level management outwith BWW

Or

2. Impose a ceiling in hectares for large forest blocks and a grant threshold for smaller woods, eg the grant for smaller woods in the buffer zone would be at least £1500, and apply only in high risk areas.

LH asked how far the Grey Squirrel Policy for Wales had developed.

Action Point 18

CT to find out the current situation of BWW spend on grey squirrel control, how much and what breakdown on woodland size is.

Action Point 19

CT to find out what stage the Wales Grey Squirrel Policy is at.

Action Point 20

CT to look into the possibility/likelihood of a strategic approach for GS control.

7. Tir Gofal

LH introduced the TG Species packages which identifies key areas for a suite of species to target action.

TG officers can advise on key species work on a farm. CCW and various NGOs have produced guidance on what management is appropriate. The

guidance includes red squirrel. Control of grey squirrels in native woodlands is an option. There is a need to have consistency in control, methods used and licensing requirements in areas where red squirrels are present. SC pointed out that it would be a massive undertaking to have one single person carrying out control in an area but on the other hand it would give consistency. A project officer would be able to monitor and co-ordinate control.

Action Point 21

All to send LH comments on the Red Squirrel Tir Gofal Guidance note, previously circulated by email.

8. Research Update

See the update emailed by Brenda Mayle.

Action Point 22

HD to find out about the Red Squirrel Alliance and report to the group.

Action Point 23

CT to look into item 13 the Beetle monitoring involvement of FR

Action Point 24

All to continue to bring new items and research to BMs attention via e-mail brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

9. Red Squirrel Group/Project Updates

Mid Wales Group

The group has received £5K from the BBC which has been used to produce a leaflet(?) and to pay for a survey for RS field signs in areas of Tywi(?) which have been identified as potential habitat from FC map data. HD will be doing the groundtruthing with volunteers.

Action Point 25

SC to send methodology used in Clocaenog to Mid Wales group.

Clocaenog

GIS modelling is being used to identify where links between habitats should be retained during thinning operations. There is potential to use 'Future Forest' to help the modelling but this is not fully functional at present.

Action Point 26

CT to find out expected date for Future Forest to be working.

Newborough

LH gave an update on behalf of CS. During recent survey 73 red squirrels were trapped in 5 days and there is also possible breeding near Beaumaris. FC have contracted Bangor University to write a rationale for the FDP for Newborough but it appears that the author has not considered red squirrels as a factor. CS feels that this is an opportunity missed. CS has received a letter of support from the FWAG Chairman for Grey Squirrel control.

10. UK Red Squirrel Group Meeting

Deferred until next meeting.

11. Any Other Business

a) DS asked about the Wales Woodland Strategy consultation which is to happen soon.

CT reported that the draft consultation paper has been completed and sent to the minister. Head of Policy, FCW, is meeting with the minister on 9th July after which, all being well, the consultation will go out.

There are 5 chapters to the strategy, the 5th one being Climate Change.

The paper is issues based and the consultation questions are issue based.

The consultation period will be 12 weeks.

It was agreed that all members be consulted individually rather than the forum as a group.

b) SC reported that she had been doing some consultation work for a windfarm company on Rheola but to date no red squirrel survey had been commissioned. Is this an opportunity to get more information?

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| Action Point 27 |
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| LH to speak to colleagues in Swansea office. |
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12. Date of Next Meeting

2nd October, 2008

Aberystwyth exact location tbc

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS WSF8

| Action Point | By whom? | By when? |
|---|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contingency plan - field craft advice | SC CS | By next meeting |
| 2. Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990 Investigate records from private sector GS control groups | MB/CT | By next meeting |
| 3. Follow up MWRSP records from Neil Matthew | IM | ASAP |
| 4. 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/CT | By next meeting |
| 5. Explore potential European sources of funding eg LIFE+ | MB/CT | By next meeting |
| 6. Contact RSPCA re raising awareness of the issues relating to grey squirrel releases | KM | By next meeting |
| 7. Follow-up site specific examples of inappropriate woodland management contributed by CS, SC & HD with the local Forest District Managers | CT/MB | By next meeting |
| 8. Circulate UKRSG website info for comment by squirrel groups | LH, CS, SC & IM | By next meeting |
| 9. IM to circulate RSPCA article | IM | By next meeting |
| 10. DS to add Wales Squirrel Project as AOB at July meeting of WBP | DS | ASAP |
| 11. LH to complete the Conservation Plan and HK the Project Proposal in time that a paper can be presented to the 12 th November meeting of WBP. | LH/HK | ASAP |
| 12. All project groups to seek local landowner and community support for the project. | ALL | Ongoing |
| 13. All to let LH have comments on the report from the brainstorming meeting. | ALL | ASAP |
| 14. All to send LH comments on the focal sites assessment on what should/shouldn't be | ALL | 4 th August |

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| included | | |
| 15. LH/CT to combine scoring and focal sites assessment into decision tree. | LH/CT | ASAP |
| 16. MB to talk to BM re funding to do GIS analysis of buffers. | MB | By next meeting |
| 17. LH to contact Kate Burgess re report for Cynwyd hair tube survey | LH | By next meeting |
| 18. CT to find out the current situation of BWW spend on grey squirrel control, how much and what breakdown on woodland size is. | CT | By next meeting |
| 19. CT to find out what stage the Wales Grey Squirrel plan is at. | CT | By next meeting |
| 20. CT to look into the possibility/likelihood of a strategic approach | CT | By next meeting |
| 21. All to send LH comments on the Red Squirrel Tir Gofal Guidance note, previously circulated by email. | ALL | By next meeting |
| 22. HD to find out about the Red Squirrel Alliance and report to the group. | HD | By next meeting |
| 23. CT to look into item 13 the Beetle monitoring involvement of FR | CT | By next meeting |
| 24. All to continue to bring new items and research to BMs attention via e-mail brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk | ALL | Ongoing |
| 25. SC to send survey methodology used in Clocaenog to Mid Wales group. | SC | ASAP |
| 26. CT to find out expected date for Future Forest to be working | CT | ASAP |
| 27. LH to speak to colleagues in Swansea office regarding Rheola survey. | LH | ASAP |