

Wales Squirrel Forum (9)
FCW Offices, Aberystwyth
2nd September 2008

Present

Liz Halliwell	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Huw Denman	European Squirrel Initiative
Isabel Macho	Carms CC (for Mid Wales Squirrel Project)
Lizzie Wilbeforce	The Wildlife Trusts
Patrick Green	Forestry Commission Wales (Grants and Licences)
Iolo Lloyd	Forestry Commission Wales (for Clocaenog project)
Delcie Simkin	WAG (Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Branch)
Chris Tucker	Forestry Commission Wales (FCW)
Chris Jones	Forest Research
Hugh Knott	Menter Mon
Craig Shuttleworth	Menter Mon (for Anglesey Red Squirrel Project)

Chair Liz Halliwell
Minutes Chris Tucker

1. Welcome & Apologies

Sarah Cartmel	Clocaenog red squirrel project
Kath McNulty	ConFor
Chris Wynne	North Wales Wildlife Trust
Brenda Mayle	Forest Research

2. Minutes of last meeting (WSF8)

WSF8 – accepted

3. Matters arising and action points (WSF8)

Action Point	
1. Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contingency plan - field craft advice 	Carried over. Action point 1
2. Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990 Investigate records from private sector GS control groups	Carried over. Action point 2
3. Follow up MWRSP records from Neil Matthew	Discharged
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.	Ongoing
5. Explore potential European sources of funding eg LIFE+	Discharged

6. Contact RSPCA re raising awareness of the issues relating to grey squirrel releases	Ongoing
7. Follow-up site specific examples of inappropriate woodland management contributed by CS, SC & HD with the local Forest District Managers	Ongoing
8. Circulate UKRSG website info for comment by squirrel groups	Some comments received. LH to follow up remainder
9. DS to add Wales Squirrel Project as AOB at July meeting of WBP	Discharged
10. 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.	Ongoing
11. All project groups to seek local landowner and community support for the project.	Ongoing
12. All to let LH have comments on the report from the brainstorming meeting.	Discharged. Report now finalised.
13. All to send LH comments on the focal sites assessment on what should/shouldn't be included	Discharged. Comments received
14. LH/CT to combine scoring and focal sites assessment into decision tree.	Discharged
15. MB to talk to BM re funding to do GIS analysis of buffers.	The analysis can be carried out but BM needs Richard Pow report on refined buffer zones.
16. LH to contact Kate Burgess re report for Cynwyd hair tube survey	Discharged. KB agreed to prepare report.
17. CT to find out the current situation of BWW spend on grey squirrel control, how much and what breakdown on woodland size is.	There is no set budget for GS control. PG to get the figures on spend. There are 130 plans in BWW at the moment but in 6 months there may be 700+.
18. CT to find out what stage the Wales Grey Squirrel plan is at.	CT stated that the Grey Squirrel policy is awaiting focal sites to be agreed between FCW and WSF. IM argued that the principal of Focal sites could be incorporated into a policy. CS stated that Wales is behind other countries. PG asked for examples of buffer zones from CS.
19. CT to look into the possibility/likelihood of a strategic approach for GS control	The possibility of a strategic approach to grant funding will be discussed with FCW Grants and Licences
20. All to send LH comments on the Red Squirrel Tir Gofal Guidance note, previously circulated by email.	No comments received. IL was surprised to hear about the Tir Gofal guidance note. LH to recirculate. Action point 3
21. HD to find out about the Red Squirrel Alliance and report to the group.	The Red Squirrel Alliance does not exist as an organisation. The Red Squirrel Survival Trust is to be launched to collect and allocate funding.
22. CT to look into item 13 the Beetle monitoring involvement of FR	Carried over. Action point 4
23. All to continue to bring new items and research to	Ongoing. Action point 5

BMs attention via e-mail brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk	
24. SC to send survey methodology used in Clocaenog to Mid Wales group.	Carried over. Action point 6
25. CT to find out expected date for Future Forest to be working	Future Forest works at a small scale but there are difficulties at larger scales. No fixed date for remedy but it's being worked on.
26. LH to speak to colleagues in Swansea office regarding Rheola survey.	Discharged. Some RS survey work may be undertaken.

Matters arising

IM and HD on behalf of MWRSP raised an issue regarding felling of a pine stand in Tywi on FCW managed land.

Whilst the project recognises that Tywi is a productive forest and they do not challenge the clearfell system they felt concerned that this operation to remove pine was going ahead.

During the Forest Design Plan consultation MWRSP recommended to FCW that pine areas in Tywi should be managed primarily for Red Squirrel conservation and reported that where confirmed records have been found FCW have been responsive, particularly in the Y Fannog area alongside the reservoir.

MWRSP are expecting a formal response to their complaint about the felling on Monday 8th September but they feel that FCW are not being proactive at all and there are 'potential breaches of the W&C Act and NERC Act'.

IL advised that the whole landscape context needs to be considered. RS management has to be integrated into the planning process.

HD has spoken to the Euroforest manager concerned with the site and reported that he 'would be happy to leave the pine'. He also considers that it is not cost-effective to fell pine.

Red Band needle blight is an issue with the long term viability of Corsican pine and in the Forest of Dean there have been problems with it in Scots and Lodgepole pine, reported CJ. This has an impact on the silvicultural options to manage stands. In Tywi there are also several other fungal pathogens which affect pine.

Action point 7

CT to speak to Neil Stoddart, FDM Llanymddyfri, regarding the pine in Tywi.

Action point 8

HD to send CT a copy of MWRSP recommendations for Tywi.

4. Focal Sites Assessment

LH gave a summary of the WSF8 discussion.

IM supported a narrative approach.

PG asked if this was a site or landscape scale assessment. It has to be a landscape scale due to the buffer zone and defendability issues.

CS said that the assessment is too rigid as some questions may not be applicable and there needed to be a way of showing a site in a better light. It also needs to be able to include the socio-economic angle, eg community support and activity.

A narrative and table based assessment is seen as correct in principal with some tweaking.

Action point 9

LH and IM to adjust the assessment and re-circulate to the group for completion.

Better Woodlands for Wales

LH distributed a map showing red squirrel sites in Wales with a buffer zone that could be used for targeting GS control grants.

PG estimated the cost of managing GS via grants.

HD proposed a landscape scale approach. Currently the grant is potentially too generous for those with large woodlands, and not incentive enough for small woodland owners. Within the grant scheme there could be a ceiling for larger forests and a threshold for smaller woods relating to project size. He suggests giving the grant to an external group which landowners commit to. CS agreed - deer management is an example. FCW staff sit on Deer Management Groups which encourage landowners to work at a landscape scale. FCW funds survey work and deer management plans.

HD suggested that there is a mis-match between BWW and TG. TG approach needs to be clarified.

FCW needs to consider its view on having such a scheme with a strategic plan, although EU funding rules may not permit this.

LW mentioned having a strategic plan in the management scheme. The level of grant is not high enough.

In FCE the grant is based upon a fixed cost per trap per hectare.

CS asked about control on FCW land adjacent to private land where GS control is being funded by grant. There is none but this should be considered under a landscape scheme.

Action point 10

CT to discuss the possibility of a strategic approach to grant funding grey squirrel control with G&L.

Action point 11

PG to consider the BWW GS control maps supplied by LH

Action point 12

All to supply priority area maps to CT for buffer analysis, including Anglesey mainland buffer zone.

5. Wales Red Squirrel Project Plan

HK explained that the document helps focus the group's ideas and can also be adapted for funding bids. It needs to clearly show FCW's role and FCW needs to be happy with it.

Funding:

HLF is limited to £8M and needs match funding. In North England *HLF* have not been keen on grey squirrel control.

For *HLF* the process is to do a pre-application enquiry to *HLF* and they will give a response within a couple of weeks then there is a 1st stage application which would involve 2-3 days work, to which *HLF* should respond in 2-3 months. If *HLF* invite a full application on the basis of this then you can be quite confident that they are supportive of it. Full application involves a lot of work, although *HLF* development grants are available.

LIFE+ Nature – European Species and N2K sites

LIFE+ Biodiversity – have to be innovative and demonstration projects, that can be applied elsewhere. Or, alien species control.

Annual application window in November.

EA are likely to submit mink control application in 2009

FC use *HLF* funding to develop management systems to design habitat

FCW and CCW would need some level of approval/agreement to go forward with these types of funding bids.

Action point 13

Further comment on the draft to Hugh Knott by end of next week.

Action point 14

LH to circulate revised draft to WSP for comment.

It was suggested that FCW give a simple statement of support on the principal of projects, grants and further application.

Project management for the WRSP was discussed – could be through the forum or a project board. It was agreed to set up a task and finish group - members to be determined.

6. WRS Conservation Plan

Translation of the whole document into Welsh is required.

WSF/WSP and organisational agreement is needed.

Action point 15

HD and CS to draft forest management principles and HD will collate it.

Action point 16

LH to send out questions on the draft and proposed actions.

7. WBP Paper

It was agreed that a main paper should be presented at the 10th February meeting of WBP. LH requested other members of the WSF to support the presentation.

8. Research update

See Brenda Mayle's update paper for details.

9. Red squirrel projects in Wales

Mid Wales Group - the group has secured survey funding from CCW S&E Region and the BBC. Application may be made to the BBC for further funding for up to £50K next year.

Anglesey - there is to be a new RS reintroduction in the south of the Island soon. This year's GS cull has caught 90 adults but none since August.

Clocaenog – 2nd draft of habitat management plan in preparation to go to FD staff. Trapping of GS will commence as soon as the contract is formalised.

10. UK Red Squirrel Group Meeting

England – the SOS and RSPP projects are being reviewed. A new priority site announced in Yorkshire Dales. Buffer zones around priority sites are being reshaped.

Scotland – carrying out stronghold analysis. SNH licence has been issued to translocate RS to a site west coast. SWT - pan Scotland project with 5 officers and 6 trappers. Borders – 4 FC rangers working on GS control.

Action point 17

LH to circulate the minutes of the last UKRSG meeting

11. Date of next meeting

WSF December 18th by Video conference

WSP meeting – meeting to be organised for the New Year.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS WSF9

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. LH to re-circulate information on the Red Squirrel Tir Gofal Guidance note	LH	ASAP
4. CT to look into item 13 the Beetle monitoring involvement of FR	CT	By next meeting
5. All to continue to bring new items and research to BMs attention via e-mail brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk	All	Ongoing
6. SC to send methodology used in Clocaenog to Mid Wales group.	SC	ASAP
7. CT to speak to Neil Stoddart, FDM Llanymddyfri, regarding the pine in Tywi.	CT	ASAP
8. HD to send CT a copy of MWRSP recommendations for Tywi.	HD	ASAP
9. LH and IM to adjust the Focal sites assessment and circulate to the group for completion.	LH/IM	By next meeting
10. CT to discuss the possibility of a strategic approach to grant funding grey squirrel control with G&L.	CT	By next meeting
11. PG to consider the BWW GS control maps supplied by LH	PG	By next meeting
12. All to supply priority area maps to CT for buffer analysis, including Anglesey mainland buffer zone.	ALL	ASAP
13. Further comment on the WRSP draft plan to Hugh Knott by end of next week, 12 th September 08.	ALL	12/9/08
14. LH to circulate revised draft to WSP for comment	LH	By end Oct
15. HD and CS will draft forest management principles for WRSCP and HD will collate it.	HD/CS	ASAP
16. LH to send out questions on the WRSCP draft and proposed actions	LH	ASAP
17. LH to circulate the minutes of the last UKRSG meeting	LH	By next meeting