

**Minutes of Wales Squirrel Forum meeting #2
12 Sept-2005**

Present: Dave Cowley, Anglesey CC (DC), Huw Denman, ESI & MWRSP (HD), Liz Halliwell, CCW (LH), Chris Jones, Forest Research (CJ, standing in for Brenda Mayle), James Laing, FCW (JL, standing in for Ruth Jenkins), Hugh Knott, Menter Môn (HK), Dorian Moro, CEH (DM), Judith Webb, FTA/CLA (JW)

Apologies: Trish Fretten, WAG; Anna Hobbs., MWRSP; Ruth Jenkins, FCW; Brenda Mayle, Forest Research; Chris Wynne, NWWT

Chair: Liz Halliwell
Minutes: Dorian Moro

Start time: 11:10am

Minutes

1. Welcome and introductions

Those present briefly introduced themselves and apologies accepted from those unable to attend.

2. Minutes of last meeting (meeting #1, 27th June 2005)

Minor edits by Brenda Mayle accepted. Minutes accepted by group.

3. Matters arising and action points

LH contacted Colin Booty (RSPCA) to consider RSPCA representation on Wales Squirrel Forum. He requested more information about Forum role and aims before commitment from RSPCA.

ACTION: LH to provide information to Colin
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No Chair names provided.

ACTION: ALL, to suggest names for Chair of wider Forum to be sent to LH

Establishment of community group needed for mid-Wales project. LH contacted Neil Mathew but no feedback yet.

ACTION: LH to seek feedback from Neil

4. Revised terms of reference

Changes made to previous version of Forum to strike a better balance between red squirrel conservation and grey squirrel management and incorporating feedback from members. Current version is vs2.1. Clearer links between the Forum and the Partnership have been made by changing the titles to reflect group structures and participants. Some discussion of content of the 'terms of reference' made and additional edits will be incorporated into a final version by LH following circulation to members absent from meeting. It was agreed the 'Terms of Reference' is an evolving document. The Forum members accepted the adoption of the current Terms of Reference following input from absent members.

ACTION: LH to update and circulate final Terms of Reference for Wales Squirrel Forum to absent members for production of a final version

5. BAP targets review

Some discussion about the credibility of setting targets was made and 20 1 km squares provided a realistic reference of current distribution of red squirrels in Wales. Current version (vs2.3) will be redrafted to change 'known populations' to a clearer definition to differentiate between sightings and additional information.

ACTION: LH to redraft vs2.3 of BAP targets and circulate to Forum members.

6. Red Squirrel Strategy

This forms the management direction for red squirrels in Wales.

ACTION: LH to speak to Kate Williamson (SNPA) and Sarah Cartmel about this. DM will send LH a template of a species recovery plan produced in Australia.

7. Updates of red squirrel projects in Wales

HK: update on grey squirrel control on Anglesey. Trapping has now taken place over last 7 years. Permission now agreed to trap in all major woodland estates on island. It would be good to model effort required to remove remaining greys from island woodlands. Current grey population estimated at less than 500 (possibly as low as 300) individuals. In 2004, reds estimated to total 100 individuals in Pentraeth based on use of nest boxes. In 2005, reds in captivity in Newborough suffered a mortality from a pathogen (coccidial infection but mortalities could also have been associated with viral infection). Outside enclosures, evidence of breeding found from a first generation red born last year. Anglesey Aluminium has said they will support the establishment of red squirrels on one of their sites on Holy Island (NW Anglesey) and will arrange for 2 pairs to be purchased from licensed breeders in England. Friends of the Anglesey Red Squirrel have produced an information package for primary schools about red squirrels.

HD: report currently being written about red squirrels in mid Wales. Genetic evidence (from mitochondrial DNA) shows that diversity (number of haplotypes) is good within these populations. Grey squirrel control is on-going.

ACTION: HD to enquire to Forestry Commission about their responsibility for red squirrel management in mid Wales.

JL: The Forest Design Plan for Tywi is due to be reviewed in 2006. There is an opportunity for the Wales Squirrel Forum to have input and to incorporate habitat management for greys and red squirrels in the review and design process.

8. Wales red squirrel project & 9. Funding opportunities

LH discussed a proposal to develop one large Wales-wide project to conserve and manage red squirrels, rather than develop several minor projects for separate parts of Wales which could compete for the same funds. A recent application by the North of England Red Squirrel Conservation group to Heritage Lottery Funding has been submitted. One large project can consist of modular projects for different areas of Wales. Discussion was raised about the logistics of organising this, eg. who should lead it? Who could fund it? LH suggested there was Heritage Lottery Funding available specifically for Wales and this was one likely avenue to seek funds. Other possible funders included Tubney Trust, People's Trust for Endangered Species (though small funds likely from PTES), other charitable trusts. DM proposed a free-thinking 15min session to identify what key works need to be focused upon for possible inclusion in a funding bid, and these are listed below (but not in any order of priority):

- 1) grey squirrel trapping (in buffer zones in mid Wales and Anglesey)
- 2) public education initiatives (eg. 'squirrel cameras to nesting boxes)
- 3) landowner initiatives to maintain habitat in buffer zones of key red squirrel areas (and to link in with agri-environment schemes)
- 4) Research into monitoring and surveillance of
 - a) genetics of reds
 - b) disease in greys
 - c) population monitoring of reds in key and additional areas
- 5) Translocation of reds to additional sites

<p>ACTION: HK, LH and JL to identify potential funders and to identify what they fund and whether current Wales-wide proposal idea would be eligible for each funding body.</p>
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10. UK red squirrel group.

Last meeting attended by Jean Matthews in Northern Ireland in July 2005. Minutes of meeting will be available for viewing on the UK red squirrel website.

DC passed on concerns from Craig Shuttleworth that past minutes reported incorrect facts and that vigilance is required about facts reported in future minutes prior to these being accepted.

11. Wind farms and red squirrels

No current actions

12. Meeting of Wales Squirrel Partnership

This is proposed for later in 2005. Discussion about the merits of 1-2 speakers made and the group felt these would be useful to update members of the Partnership of current works. A Chair of the Partnership has yet to be identified.

ACTION: ALL to provide HK with ideas of Chair and possible members. HK to collate membership list commencing with those on the Anglesey Squirrel Conference. HD to contact European Squirrel Initiative to discuss possible links to their functions later this year.

13. Any other business

Inclusion of Wales Squirrel Forum in UK Red Squirrel site

ACTION: LH to include details on link

14. Date of next meeting

Either 6th 12th 13th December 2005

ACTION: ALL to email LH for preferred date

Meeting closed: 1500hr