

## Minutes of Wales Squirrel Forum Working Group (WSFWG) meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> June 2005

CCW Offices, Newtown

Present: Dave Cowley (DC), Huw Denman (HD), Trish Fretten (TF), Liz Halliwell (LH), Anna Hobbs (AH), Ruth Jenkins (RJ), Hugh Knott (HK), Brenda Mayle (BM).

Apologies: Dorian Moro, Judith Webb, Chris Wynne.

Chair – Liz Halliwell, Minutes – Huw Denman

Start time:- 11.20am

Minutes	Action
<p><b>1. Welcome &amp; introductions</b> – Liz Halliwell (LH) of Countryside Council for Wales welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief background to the Wales Squirrel Forum; initially squirrel forum meetings were primarily about grey squirrels and damage to trees. Red squirrels didn't become a major subject of discussion until the advent of Species Action Plans (SAPs). The current squirrel forum came about in response to the need to discuss the red squirrel situation in Wales after a number of years without meetings. After a successful stakeholder consultation meeting it was agreed that the Forum and Working Group should be formed with the remit of dealing with both red and grey squirrel issues. Those present introduced themselves and apologies were accepted from those unable to attend.</p>	
<p><b>2. Appointment of chair for meeting</b> – It was agreed that a representative of Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) would chair the WSFWG for the first year. Ruth Jenkins (RJ) of Forestry Commission (FC) agreed to arrange the secretariat for future meetings. It was agreed by all present that the chair of the Forum should be independent of the Forum and Working Group and that members of the Working Group could suggest names for independent chair.</p>	<p><u><b>LH</b></u> <u><b>RJ</b></u> <u><b>All</b></u> to suggest names for chair of 1<sup>st</sup> Forum</p>
<p><b>3. Structure of WSF and terms of reference</b> LH introduced the papers on WSF structure and terms of reference and invited those present to contribute. There was lively discussion concerning the terms of reference of the WSFWG; in particular the prioritising of the functions of the Forum and the working relationship between the Working Group and the Forum and external organisations. It was agreed that both red and grey squirrels should be the remit of the Forum but that the critical state of the red squirrel population in Wales makes it high priority. The impact of grey squirrels on bird populations and biodiversity was discussed. Hugh Knott (HK) of Anglesey Red Squirrel Project suggested that Anglesey could be used for comparative research into impact of grey squirrels on biodiversity. The need to have representation by an animal welfare organisation was discussed and it was agreed that RSPCA should be invited to attend the Forum. LH to contact RSPCA. There was discussion on how much authority WSFWG has and whether the Forum needs to be consulted before any action is taken by WSFWG. RJ stated that WSFWG needs legitimacy and authority as advice and guidance may need to be sent to other organisations in addition to the Forum. Brenda Mayle (BM) of Forest Research said that the members of initial stakeholders group had appointed WSFWG and were confident in their ability. Trish Fretten (TF) of Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Environment, Conservation and Management Division reiterated the need for WSFWG to be effective and that WAG membership gives some official endorsement to it. It was agreed that WSFWG has authority to carry out its work and that the Forum will be consulted and informed during Forum meetings. Should there be a need to consult in the interim this would be done by email. RJ &amp; LH agreed to re-draft the terms of reference and working processes of the groups by July 19<sup>th</sup>. Members of WSFWG to respond to redrafted version to LH by 3<sup>rd</sup> August.</p>	<p><u><b>LH</b></u> to contact RSPCA  <u><b>RJ &amp; LH</b></u> to redraft terms of reference by July 19<sup>th</sup>. <u><b>All</b></u></p>
<p><b>5. Work Plan</b> Discussed with Red Squirrel Strategy</p>	
<p><b>6. Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) review</b> The BAP for England was discussed and whether population contraction would be acceptable in Wales. BM explained that it is realised in England that contraction will occur</p>	

<p>and that it will only be possible to defend certain priority areas. However, concern was expressed that a case of squirrel poxvirus had been found at Newcastleton near Kielder Forest which is regarded as a strategic stronghold for red squirrels in England. Huw Denman (HD) of European Squirrel Initiative (ESI) thought that in Wales because of vulnerability of the known population that contraction of occupied 10Km squares could mean eventual extinction and would be unacceptable.</p> <p>The question of targets was discussed and it was agreed that number of occupied 10Km squares would be the parameter used. Records for the past 5 years would be used and records divided into 'known populations' and 'sightings'. Criteria for what constitutes a known population were not discussed. LH to confirm records to quantify location and numbers of occupied squares.</p> <p>Anna Hobbs (AH) of Mid Wales Red Squirrel Project (MWRSP) to collect mid Wales data and send to LH.</p> <p>HK brought up the issue of expansion and re-introduction, as this was a likely scenario on Ynys Môn if grey squirrels could be eliminated from other parts of the island. It was agreed that Newborough as a reintroduction site would be counted as a 'known population' and that expansion of the range on Ynys Môn could be counted as achievement of the target.</p> <p>LH mentioned that red squirrels had been seen in Cynwyd and Nantyr in recent weeks.</p>	<p><u>LH</u></p> <p><u>AH</u></p>
<p><b>7. Red Squirrel Strategy</b></p> <p>Dave Cowley (DC) representing LBAP Partnerships asked how rigid are the SAPs and strategies as flexibility is needed to react to new situations. TF suggested that the Strategy needs to be high level and also needs to be as succinct as possible; avoiding background information but providing outcomes and actions.</p> <p>HK &amp; HD offered to help with the development of the strategy. LH will contact Sarah Cartmel regarding her possible involvement in development of the strategy.</p>	<p><u>LH</u> to contact Sarah Cartmel.</p>
<p><b>8. Research Programme</b></p> <p>BM gave a comprehensive summary (+written report) of research &amp; monitoring activities. A very brief précis is given here. Mel Tompkin under contract to Scottish Wildlife Trust has produced a database of squirrel literature which is available via LH. Contract for testing squirrel monitoring option and efficacy will finish February 2007 with Sarah Cartmel leading Wales fieldwork part. Grey squirrel research into impact of damage on oak, beech, influence of thinning on risk, influence of food availability on damage risk, biodiversity impacts and visual assessment of reproductive development. Red squirrel research with regard to different research projects on epidemiology, spatial dynamic, transmission and presence of poxvirus in grey squirrels and their role in its transmission. BM also mentioned the report of red squirrel workshop in Newcastle in January 2005 which has been used to draft a paper for submission through the UK red squirrel group to government departments and ministers.</p>	
<p><b>9. Funding opportunities</b></p> <p>To be discussed in next meeting</p>	
<p><b>10. UK Red Squirrel Group</b></p> <p>The UK BAP red squirrel group is meeting 1<sup>st</sup> week in July in Northern Ireland</p>	
<p><b>11. Any other business</b></p> <p>BM said that there has been no change yet with regard to the use of Warfarin.</p> <p>LH brought up the issue of community involvement in mid Wales and that she would contact Raj Jones and Neil Mathew. BM mentioned the usefulness of a website, especially as a means of reporting red squirrel sightings.</p> <p>The date and location of the Forum meeting will be discussed in the next WSWFG meeting.</p>	<p><u>LH</u></p>
<p><b>12. Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> September 2005.</p>	
<p>Meeting closed at 3.30pm</p>	