

Terms of Reference

Aims and Objectives of the group

The main aims of the UKRSG are to co-ordinate, support and provide advice on the implementation of the UK Red Squirrel Species Action Plan. The implementation of the red squirrel SAP at the UK level will be achieved through the development of a Red Squirrel Conservation Implementation Plan, based on the SAP.

The main objectives and targets of the SAP are:

- 1 To maintain viable self-sustaining populations of red squirrels in areas where red squirrel populations are healthy and where grey squirrels are currently rare or absent. Such areas might be either unsuitable for grey squirrels or vulnerable to grey squirrel invasion.
- 2 Wherever practicable, to maintain or expand red squirrel populations that are currently threatened because of isolation, small size or proximity to grey squirrel populations.
- 3 To reintroduce red squirrels to selected areas in their former natural range where the ecosystem can be effectively managed to support viable populations. (see the red squirrel release advice note[link])

The main actions for the SAP are:

- 1 To survey and monitor red squirrel populations so as to determine
 - a) their conservation status
 - b) threats to their viability
 - c) the effects upon them of different objectives of forestry management
- 2 To maintain and enhance current red squirrel populations where effective, practicable and sustainable, through good management.
- 3 To ensure the effective implementation of relevant legislation and policy.
- 4 To improve knowledge of the ecology and conservation of red (and grey) squirrels through appropriate and effective research.
- 5 To promote education and awareness of the status and needs of red squirrels.

Functions of the UKRSG

The UKRSG will implement the objectives and targets of the UK SAP by:

Setting priorities for UK conservation

- Overseeing the development of common standards for surveillance, monitoring, recording and training
- Advising and commenting on specific programmes of work with ‘champions’ and sponsors
- Providing consistent guidance on all aspects of red squirrel management throughout the UK
- Guiding and supporting country and regional groups in implementing the Species Action Plan at the UK level

Facilitating communication

- Co-ordinating and provision of information dissemination between country and regional groups
- Acting as a focal point for the co-ordination of public awareness programmes and information on red squirrel conservation

Reporting at a UK level

- Collating reports on the progress of red squirrel conservation throughout the UK to present to the UK Biodiversity Group, and EU forum.

International liaison

- International communication/collaboration. Raising the profile and awareness of grey squirrel impacts and the need for control in Europe.

Roles within the group

In the Terms of Reference it is recognised that there is a need for a variety of contributions to cover the following areas:

- Policy and legislation
- Site safeguard and management
- Species management and protection
- Providing advice and guidance
- Monitoring
- Research
- Communications/Education and publicity

Therefore the membership of the group is made up of the following:

- Countryside agencies
- Country fora representatives
- Other government agencies/departments
- Experts in red and grey squirrel conservation management and research
- Non government organisations representatives

In addition, as the group meetings are held alternately in each country local representatives, experts and non-government organisations are invited to participate to highlight local issues to the group.