

UK Red Squirrel Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

The red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* has a widespread distribution and is common throughout most of its range. However, populations have been declining in the UK and northern Italy where it is being replaced by the introduced grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*. It is now considered Endangered in Britain and Vulnerable in Europe. The species is listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention, is Lower Risk –near threatened on the IUCN Red List and is protected under Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Wildlife Northern Ireland Order 1985 (Article 10) (as amended).

Aims and Objectives of the group

The main aims of the UKRSG are to co-ordinate, support and provide advice on the implementation of conservation measures for the red squirrel in the UK. The main conservation objectives are:

- I) 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.
- II) Wherever practicable, to maintain or expand red squirrel populations that are currently threatened because of isolation, small size or proximity to grey squirrel populations.

Functions of the UKRSG

Setting priorities for UK conservation

- Overseeing the development of common standards for surveillance, monitoring, recording and training
- Agreeing 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 conservation measures

Facilitating communication

- Co-ordinating and provision of information dissemination between country and regional groups
- Act as a focal point for sharing of information between Government bodies in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland & Wales.
- Acting as a focal point for the co-ordination of public awareness programmes and information on red squirrel conservation

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
- Research & monitoring
- Communications/Education and publicity

Therefore the membership of the group will need to consist of the following:

- Relevant Government agencies and departments, 1 representative from each Country Forum
- Representative from key NGO delivering Red squirrel conservation in the UK.
- Experts in red and grey squirrel conservation management and research

1 from each Country group, each government agency/department and from key NGO (eg. Wildlife Trusts), plus experts in red/grey conservation management and research.

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