

UK Red Squirrel Group Telecon

10 September 2015

Present

Julia Garritt (FC GB); Liz Halliwell (NRW); Katherine Walsh (NE); Robin Gill (FR); Jenny Bryce (SNH); Colin Edwards (FCS); Jon Lees (NI); Richard Pow (FCE) Chair.

Apologies

Adrian Vass (UKSA); Simon Liebert (Defra); Mark Ferryman (FR); Nick Mason (RSNE).

Confirming Group membership and distribution list (and chair)

It was agreed that the membership of UKRSG is composed of those listed above under present and apologies. The email distribution list used in circulating the final papers for this meeting and these minutes is the correct one. (In answering a question from Colin Edwards Richard Pow explained the history to the UKRSG and the UKSA and the different memberships and functions of the two groups).

Richard Pow agreed at the end of the meeting, in the absence of another volunteer and as a result of organisational change associated with devolution, to chair the next meeting.

Update from UK Squirrel Accord (paper from Adrain Vass attached)

Key comments for Adrian as follows:

- 1. There should be a mention of the UKRSG with the link between the two groups explained. (Adrian to act as a link between the two groups).**
- 2. The Autumn 2015 Accord meeting is mentioned. Can Adrian please share details of this with UKRSG members.**
- 3. There was a feeling that the document has a strong English focus with greater emphasis on grey control than red conservation.**

Country Updates (attached)

Scotland – Updated Scottish Strategy has been produced. No big changes but some management of expectations. RDPS – focus on grey control where there are greys. Paid at the rate of £200/trap/annum for 5 years. Minimum trapping period of 50 days/yr per trap.

England – Action arose from Nick Mason’s written report – can UKRSG be represented on the HLF project group? Kat had circulated red squirrel conservation guidance associated with CS in England. Richard described how CS in England is supporting red squirrel conservation.

Wales – RDP support for grey control in Wales required 3 month period of trapping and trapping at a density of 1/ha. Craig Shuttleworth, Peter Lurz and John Gurnell have recently produced a book on squirrels – link to this subsequently circulated.

Northern Ireland – Jon Lees explained how there had been significant staff cuts in his department, lost a third of staff. Red squirrels are now found in all 32 counties of Ireland. There is also increased distribution of greys. The density of pine martens has increased in central Ireland – more on pine martens later in the meeting.

Pine Marten as a grey squirrel control agent – discussion

The Vincent Wildlife Trust are heavily involved with the current re-introduction project in mid-Wales. The objective is very much focussed on re-introducing the species (bolstering the current small population in this area) as opposed to a biological control agent for grey squirrels. The pine martens will be introduced in pairs, probably 10 pairs being released each year for two years. There is a PhD project looking at the impact of the increased pine marten population on grey squirrels. There is a related PhD looking at other aspects. The pine martens are being introduced in an area where there are currently no red squirrels, partly because of concerns re predation by martens on red squirrels.

There is no concern re pine martens being taken from their stronghold areas in Scotland as populations are increasing here. Experience from the central belt of Scotland is that martens are being seen in areas where they have not been seen for many years. In two of the areas where pine Martens are now being seen there are no greys.

In England there is a need to link up more closely with the Vincent Wildlife Trust. There are aspirations in England for pine martens to be re-introduced on areas on the PFE. Robin Gill (FR) working with FE (e) on this. The view is that the potential benefits will outweigh potential disbenefits. **It is important that FE and FR discuss their proposals with NE and the Vincent Wildlife Trust. Robin Gill agreed to action this.**

AOB and DONM

There was no other business.

Next meeting will be Thursday 10 March, 10.30.