



UK Red Squirrel Group Minutes

Tuesday 15th January 2013

1 Welcome and apologies

S Bailey

Attendee's in person: Sallie Bailey FC GB (Chair), Sophie Eastwood SSG (Minutes), Jenny Bryce SNH, Richard Pow FCE, Julia Garritt FCS

Attendees by phone: Jon Lees DOENI, Kat Walsh NE, Liz Halliwell CCW, Crispin Thorn FCE, Mark Ferryman FR, Simon Liebert DEFRA, Nick Mason RSNE

Apologies: Chris Tucker FCW, Robin Gill FR

2 Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising (Nov 2011)

S Bailey

AP1 ALL to send comments on need for protocol on red squirrel translocations to SM – **see renewed AP1**

AP2 ALL to visit new RSNE website – complete

AP3 BM & DE to add adenovirus information page on UKRSG website – **see renewed AP3**

AP4 SM to write short funding proposal paper – dismissed

AP5 SM to enquire who reports on RS at UK level – **SL to carry forward**

AP6 BM & KW to discuss England forum – complete

AP7 ALL to send filming locations suggestions to BM - complete

General consensus that veterinary checks were required for red squirrel translocations and UKRSG should produce a protocol. Legalities depend on whether or not the red squirrel is added to schedule 9. In England a licence is required for red squirrel capture from wild but does not cover release therefore there is no power at present to enforce vet checks. KW informed group that NE have longstanding agreement with Zoological Society London and Tony Sainsbury would be a useful contact..

AP1 SB to approach David Everest AHVLA and Tony Sainsbury ZSL. LH, JB and KW offered to assist produce protocol.

AP2 SL to confirm DEFRA has no objections to production of protocol.

AP3 SL to confirm latest position re adding red squirrel to schedule 9.

Since BM has now left MF and RG have taken over some of her roles. MF apologised for delay in uploading content to website and noted he is having a meeting with BM next week.

AP4 MF to add adenovirus information page on UKRSG website.

SM emailed group last year to inform that he would not have time to complete action and has since been replaced by SL. SL offered to carry on action, however, the group has dismissed the action until there is a specific proposal or project.

BM and KW sent out invites to kick start the England forum but due to lack of support it never got off the ground. It was pointed out that RSNE now play a major role and perhaps there is no need at present. CT added that wider England interests are still important and perhaps UKRSG is suitable venue until need arises for separate England forum.

3 Confirm membership of UKRSG

S Bailey

SB apologised for using dated UKRSG contact list which highlighted the need for an updated list. SB circulated spreadsheet to discuss but expressed concerns about membership growing >16 in terms of productivity.

FC representatives discussed the role of the lapsed red squirrel bird table meetings, which are internal to FC. It was suggested these could be held before UKRSG meetings as needed.

LH informed group that FCW, CCW and EA are due to merge on April 1 to create Natural Resources Wales NRW. It was decided that LH could remain as country forum rep and CT as NRW rep.

It was suggested that Janet Wickens RSST should be asked to join the group.

AP5 SB to invite JW to the next meeting – discharged.

4 Country updates

Reps

Please see country summaries.

KW had circulated a red squirrel re-introduction proposal prior to the meeting for Denny Island. The group shared her concerns and discussed the relevance of schedule 9. KW had not had recent updates on the Cornwall project. This links into section 8 on national priorities.

5 Research update

MF

RG was unable to join meeting and MF had no updates. New phd started last October supervised by RG. It aims to research bark stripping by grey squirrels. Bark stripping is prevalent in spring/summer which coincides with a calcium deficiency in squirrels. Therefore calcium supplements may be a suitable deterrent. Designed to complement contraceptive research by increasing knowledge in grey squirrel physiology.

MF and RG have discussed updating research lists previously compiled by BM. Unfortunately they have been busy so far but hope to find a way to progress this.

6 Update on regulatory reform position

SL

Update on the Deregulation Bill

- . The MoJ Repeals Bill is now the Cabinet Office Deregulation Bill and a new Cabinet Office Bill team has been set up
- . The scope of the Bill will be limited to measures that are deregulatory (relieving burdens on businesses or the taxpayer) and repeals of redundant legislation
- . A draft Bill will be published in May 2013 for pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Parliamentary Committee
- . Our expectation is that the Bill will be introduced in October 2013

7 Overview of RSNE and current activities

NM

RSNE started just over a year ago, however, development of the project began several years prior.

Surveying: one of the main successes so far is the completion of two red and grey squirrel range monitoring schemes. Results published later this month.

Grey squirrel control: some slow progress with access and co-operation but getting there. All staff complete trapping returns monthly and everyone else quarterly. An estimated 29% of trapping done by project staff with help from volunteers and landowners.

Research: NM establish in-house research in April concentrating on ambassador sites. This will involve extensive monitoring almost to an individual level. Also progressing a phd project which will be similar but to a finer scale at edges of strongholds.

AP6 NM to discuss Phd with MF to minimise duplication of efforts.

AP7 NM to include SB in Phd plans as funding may be available - discharged

Partnership working: has been particularly challenging. RSNE are newcomers and there is already an established conservation network but great progress has been made. Interest for a private landownership levy to secure some future funding. Successful NI delegation visit last Nov.

General discussions surrounding future funding and the need for red squirrel funding proposals to 'branch out' from biodiversity to include other socio-economic elements e.g. eco-tourism and ecosystem services.

AP8 NM to discuss red squirrels and ecosystems services and funding with KW

JB queried cross-border data links with RSNE and SSRS. NM informed group that he is keen to share data and discussions are ongoing.

8 National priorities for red squirrel conservation

JB

JB discussed the need for national priorities although accepted an overview can be difficult due to devolved issues. It is unlikely the UKRSG will be able to produce a strategy but some sort of steer would be useful for funding and cross-border working. NM queried statement about re-

introductions and noted differences in objectives between RSNE and SSRS South. At present there is not a unified UK approach to introductions.

General consensus that the UKRSG term's of reference should be updated to formalise position.

AP9 ALL to think of 1 or 2 high-level aims with a short list of objectives. An email will be passed around. List will be reviewed and finalised at next meeting.

KW briefed the group on NE's role in Biodiversity 2020. NE are going back to taxon groups and mammals is one. Includes section 41 species and looks at old BAPs/SAPs. Reinventing ranked targeted action plans. KW keen for member of group to represent red squirrels.

The upcoming British Red Squirrel Conference was discussed. It was noted that Scotland and other areas were not represented. The Cornwall project was also discussed.

AP10 SL to discuss conference with the environment minister Richard Benyon.

9 AoB

All

JL updated group on the commissioned research by Queen's University, Belfast investigating prevalence of SQPV and rates of transmission. Research highlighted the role of ectoparasites e.g. fleas and suggested urine is involved in shedding parasites. There are weaknesses with the report for example the parasites were not formally identified and the sample size was only one.

AP11 SB to find out if FC note 33 is going to be reviewed.

JG informed group that 3 out of 19 stronghold sites now have a drafted advice statement. She asked the group whether she could circulate the drafts for comment on how they read.

SB updated group on a FC sponsored phd on grey squirrel dispersal and modelling. Related FC note due to be published this summer and will be distributed.

SB offered to chair the next meeting but suggested a rotating chair after that. RP offered to host the next meeting in Newcastle with a possible RSNE related site visit.

AP12 SB to send doodlepoll to confirm date of next meeting – discharged.