

English Woodland Grant Scheme

Operations Note 10a

1st June 2008

Management guidelines for Red squirrel reserves in northern England

Purpose This document has been written for managers of the 16 forests in northern England that have been identified as red squirrel reserves.

By adopting these management guidelines these managers will be playing a crucial part in the strategy to prevent the extinction of red squirrels in mainland England. The guidance does not cover every aspect in detail and landowners are encouraged to seek advice specific to individual circumstances from their local. This advice will seek to maximise the effectiveness of management actions whilst respecting other landscape and conservation interests. Implementation of these guidelines is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding with landowners within the reserves. These memoranda will be reviewed after five years, or earlier, if appropriate.

Grant aid under the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) may be available to help with the costs of management and conservation work. Please contact the local Save Our Squirrels Officer for details.

Use These guidelines will form the basis for “good management practice” for the purposes of the relevant grants administered under the EWGS in the north of England. The Isle of Wight and The Poole Harbour Islands off the south coast are to be managed in accordance with the Local Biodiversity Action plan for this species.

Operations Note 010b covers good management within the buffer zones of the Red squirrel reserves.

Support This Note is supported by National Office England.

The primary FC contact on Red squirrel conservation in northern England is Richard Pow. Save Our Squirrels and FC contact details along with a location map of the reserves is at the end of this Note.

Further Advice The EWGS website www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs contains all the information needed to apply for grant support. If you do not have access to the internet, you can request any of the information from your local Forestry Commission office.

We recommend getting professional advice on woodland management and grants. A list of national and regional professional organisations is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-advice or from your local FC office.

Versions Version 1.0 issued June 2007

Version 1.1 issued 1st June 2008 – minor change to header

Management Guidelines for Red Squirrel Reserves in Northern England

Introduction

The red squirrel is declining in England and is a priority species for conservation identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. In an attempt to prevent the extinction of the species in England, 16 forests in Northern England will be managed as red squirrel reserves. Each of these reserves is ringed by a buffer zone that is approximately 5km wide.

Woodland Management

In the absence of grey squirrels and associated squirrel pox virus, food supply is the most important factor influencing red squirrel population density. Reserves should therefore be managed to sustain a continuous red squirrel food supply. Conifer seed is the most important food source for reds in the reserves. Conifer species are of variable quality as a food source and the amount of seed produced depends on the age of the trees and a number of other factors. So forests should be managed to:

- maintain a continuous proportion of the forest composed of stands of seed bearing age;
- ensure that a proportion of species other than sitka spruce are present in the forest. But note that elevating the proportion of non-sitka to a high level can make the forest a more suitable habitat for greys, so seek advice if such a change in species composition is being considered;
- ensure that no large seeded broadleaved trees are planted in forests where there are very few already – particularly in those reserves where red squirrel persistence is largely dependent upon habitat management rather than grey control. Small seeded native broadleaves are a welcome addition to forest diversity;
- ensure spatial continuity of forest habitat in designing the shape and location of any large felling coupes;
- seek to avoid felling trees where reds are present and whilst dreys are occupied by young (potentially March – October) where this is likely to significantly impact on the local red squirrel population.

The above means that forest managers should endeavour to plan felling and restocking over future decades. A Woodland Management Plan is the suggested approach – advice on this, and possibly funding, is available from the Forestry Commission.

Grey Squirrel Control

The relative importance of habitat management and grey squirrel control varies between the reserves and is likely to change over time. Research is underway on other mammals to investigate alternative methods of population control, such as contraception. This work is in its early stages and such methods of controlling grey squirrel populations will not be available for many years. Culling grey squirrels remains an essential aspect of red squirrel conservation.

Grey squirrels are already present in some of the reserves and colonisation by grey squirrels is likely to be a problem in all of them. An on-going programme of grey squirrel control may be necessary if red squirrels are to survive. It is important for reserve managers to work with their neighbouring land managers in the buffer zones to co-ordinate grey squirrel control work. Help with this and advice on grey squirrel control best practice and information on training, if this is required, is available from your Save Our Squirrels Officer. There is a trap loan scheme that you may like to take advantage of.

- Undertake an appropriate level of well-targeted grey control (using best practice methods) focussing on the dispersal corridors such as river valleys where grey squirrel incursion is likely to start and where trapping is likely to be most productive.

Sightings and Monitoring

Monitoring of red and grey squirrel populations is essential if the effectiveness of conservation work is to be understood.

- Allow and where possible and appropriate, assist in red and grey squirrel monitoring work.
- Report all new sightings of red and grey squirrels to Save Our squirrels tel 0845 3479375 .
- It is particularly important that you report sightings of dead red squirrels or those with disease symptoms resembling myxomatosis as this could be squirrel pox virus disease. If you come across a red squirrel carcass, please contact your Save Our Squirrels officer as they may wish for it to be sent away for blood tests and post mortem.

Supplementary Feeding

Supplementary feeding is a useful means of drawing squirrels to a known location to increase the likelihood of sightings. Generally, it is not thought to be a necessary or useful means of sustaining red squirrel populations. If considering supplementary feeding please follow these rules and obtain advice from your Save Our Squirrels Officer.

- Stop feeding immediately if grey squirrels appear locally.
- Stop feeding immediately if squirrel pox virus is identified in the local squirrel population.
- Ensure proper, regular cleaning of feeders using disinfectant to reduce risk of disease transmission.
- Only use a recommended seed mix and locate feeders appropriately.

Public Access, Enjoyment and Involvement

There is considerable public interest in red squirrels and their conservation.

- Where public access has been agreed, encourage an appropriate level of access for squirrel viewing and provide the agreed facilities and interpretative materials. Your Save Our Squirrels Officer can provide information on grants available to support this work and provide information on volunteer red squirrel conservation groups in your area.

Useful contacts for information on grants and further advice

The Northumberland Wildlife Trust offers advice on Red squirrel management for all of the reserves in Northern England. Contact the Save Our Squirrels Officer at Northumberland Wildlife Trust on 0191 2846884 or contact at www.saveoursquirrels.org.uk

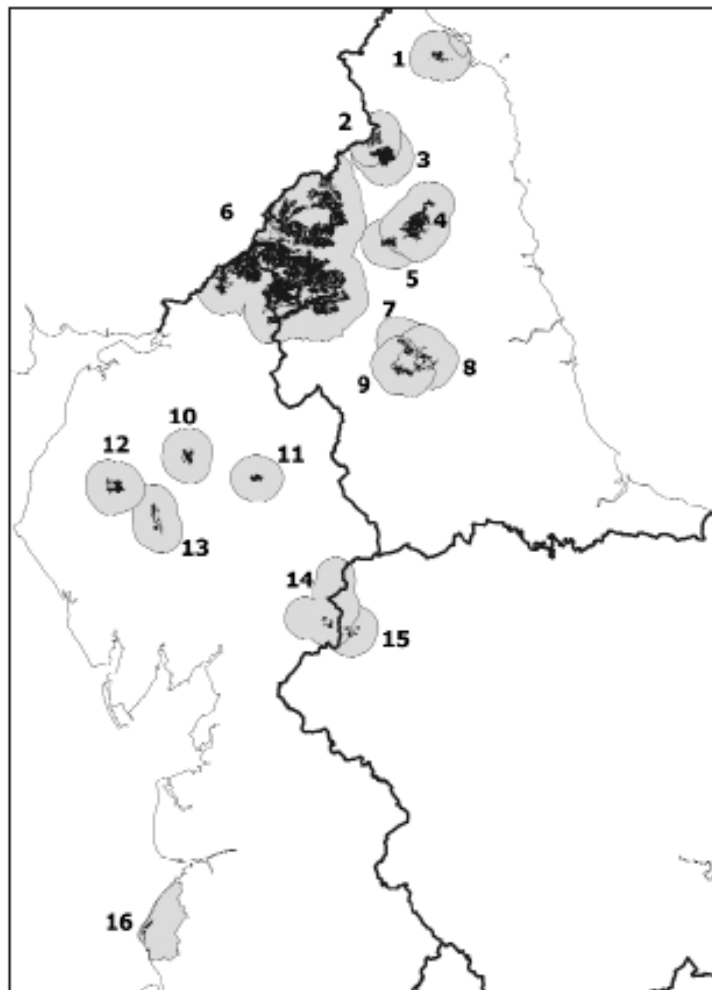
For information about the English Woodland Grant Scheme see www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs

Or contact the Forestry Commission

North East England	01669 621591
North West England	017687 76616
Yorkshire & The Humber	01904 448778

Red Squirrel Reserves (and buffer zones) in the North of England

1. Kylee
2. Uswayford
3. Kidland
4. Harwood
5. Raylees
6. Kielder
7. Dipton/Dukeshouse Wood
8. Healy/Kellas
9. Slaley/Dukesfield
10. Greystoke
11. Whinfall
12. Whinlatter
13. Thirlmere
14. Garsdale/Mallerstang
15. Whiddale
16. Sefton



For the Isle of Wight contact [South East England Conservancy](#)

For the Poole Harbour islands contact [South West England Conservancy](#)