

Ayrshire Red Squirrel Group
SSG Report
1st March 2012

Squirrelpox

- ◆ Sero-positive grey squirrels have been found at sites across Ayrshire, including Kilwinning, Culzean, Coylton, Galston, Auchinleck and Mauchline. These records are of great concern, particularly given their proximity to Glasgow and the Central Belt (~30 miles to Glasgow). RSSS has been coordinating the response and the priority is currently on taking a large number of samples to try and establish the northern-most extent of seropositive greys.
- ◆ Concerns are also rising that there may be outbreaks of pox in red squirrel populations which have gone unreported due to the remote nature of woodlands/ forests in Ayrshire.
- ◆ ARSG have already issued several press releases and are continuing to focus efforts on awareness raising and supporting the grey control/ pox testing efforts.

Grey Squirrel Control

- ◆ Several local communities have successfully accessed windfarm money and are now implementing grey control.
- ◆ Grey control continues through our trap loan scheme and volunteer GSCOs. Several large donations have helped us to match fund small grants.
- ◆ Ongoing liaison with RSSS GSCOs working in Ayrshire via RSSS Project Coordinator.
- ◆ Fundraising for a Western GSCO ongoing. Very early stage discussions have been held with the Ayrshire Rivers Trust, looking at opportunities to include grey squirrels in the remit of their invasive species control officers.

Windfarms

- ◆ Windfarm developments continue to be both an issue and an opportunity. There are currently discussions underway to secure investment on Arran, by way of off-site mitigation for impacts elsewhere.

Other

- ◆ 2012 is ARSG's 10th anniversary. We hope to offer a programme of events to celebrate and intend to engage more actively with the schools and communities in South Ayrshire this year.
- ◆ The group's next AGM will be held on March 22nd in Girvan.