

Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 18th January 2005 at Forest Service Office, Belvoir Park, Belfast

Present:

John Milburne (EHS) Chair	Robbie McDonald (Quercus)
Christine Butler (Countryside Mgt Branch)	Mike Dobson (National Trust)
Dermot Hughes (UlsterWildlifeTrust)	Stephen McCartney (Forest Service)
Michael Griffith (Belfast Zoo)	Ian Wright Turner (Forest Service)
Richard Schaible (Forest Service)	Stewart Morewood (DARD)
Anne McCombe	Basil Lenaghan (DARD)
Sandra Marsden	Mark Parker (DARD)
Colin Somerville (EHS) Minute Taker	

Apologies

Declan Looney, Michael McGoldrick, Laura Finnegan, Geoff Hamilton, Brian Poots, David Tosh, Maurice Turley, David Galloway, Doreen Swann, John Fisher, Colm McDaid.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Mike Dobson pointed out that his update should be amended to state that there are greys in Rowallane.

Matters Arising

Mike was not in a position to provide numbers of greys controlled.

Laura was not present, but is still to circulate details of her study and the samples she requires.

Presentation

Fiona McKay delivered a presentation on Squirrel Pox Virus in Northern Ireland.

Review of Northern Ireland Red Squirrel Action Plan

John stated that he and Richard would work with the various organizations to draw up a revised Action Plan.

John emphasized that there was a particular need to raise the profile with Government, and that more resources were needed for control of greys in the new plan.

Robbie agreed that it should be made clear that extensive culling was required.

Christine confirmed that the 2007 Rural Development Plan was being drafted, and that the revised Squirrel Action Plan could be considered in this process.

Richard pointed out that there was a need for voluntary action and fundraising outside of government. He also asked if Ulster Wildlife Trust could provide funds, and if they would be willing to become the lead partner.

Dermot stated that UWT would not commit to anything until they had seen the revised Action Plan.

It was agreed that it would be preferable to have a NGO as lead partner.

Ian stated that Forest Service would still have resource problems for control.

It was suggested that a bounty be put on greys, and that shooting clubs should be used to control them.

John and Dick stressed that a bounty was not an option, but that BASC should be consulted on the topic of grey control.

Richard confirmed that the revised plan was likely to be similar to the one being employed in Northern England.

Draft Letter to CXs

It was agreed that the order of paragraphs 2 and 3 should be changed, the actions to be taken should be expanded on, and the final paragraph dropped.

It was noted that the letter should also be sent to Ian McKee, BASC and QUB Vice Chancellor.

John suggested that any other contacts could be gathered by phone at a later stage.

ACTION JOHN

Dermot proposed that the group should meet once more, before a new Steering Group was formed.

John suggested a meeting when a draft of the revised Action Plan was available.

AOB

None

Date of Next Meeting

TBA