

Wales Squirrel Forum (5) 1st November 2006

Present

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Michelle Bromley | Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) |
| Sarah Cartmel | Mid-Wales Red Squirrel Project (MWRSP) |
| Huw Denman | European Squirrel Initiative |
| Patrick Green | FCW – woodland officer |
| Liz Halliwell | Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) |
| Ben Isaac | WAG (Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Branch) |
| Hugh Knott | Menter Mon |
| Brenda Mayle | Forest Research (FR) |
| Judith Webb | Forest and Timber Association (FTA) |
| Lizzie Wilberforce | Wildlife Trust South and West Wales (for CW) |

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Chair | Liz Halliwell |
| Minutes | Michelle Bromley |

1. Apologies

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Chris Wynne | North Wales Wildlife Trust |
| Kate Burgess | Denbighshire Countryside Service |

LH pointed out that the Terms of Reference stated CCW would chair the Forum's first year and invited members to nominate a new chair. LH accepted the invitation for CCW to chair for a second year. FCW will continue to provide secretariat. LH welcomed PG, invited to speak on agenda item 7.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Last sentence to be deleted from item 9.

3. Matters arising and action points

| Action point | |
|--|---|
| 1 Forum to prepare a map showing existing and potential areas for red squirrel, including private land. | Carried over – integrated into RS Conservation Plan |
| 2 Forum to produce guidance for local authorities, land managers and developers to raise awareness of likely squirrel habitat, the potential impact of development and mitigation required. | Carried over – integrated into RS Conservation Plan |
| 3 Review membership with Wildlife Trust member and contact Wales Environment Link for nominated representative. <i>Send membership update to UK Squirrel Group.</i> | WT remain nominated WEL member. Note: unable to update membership lists on web pages at present (SNH about to replace JNCC as host for UKRSG website) |
| 4 Send comments to LH preferably as document tracked changes via e-mail | Some comments received – thank you. Task and finish group will meet end Nov - TBC |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Re-draft Red Squirrel Recovery Plan in light of Forum advice</i></p> <p><i>Develop rationale and define criteria for selection of 'focal areas'</i></p> | |
| <p>5 <i>Liase and clarify status of Defra Animal & Wildlife Disease Strategy and feed back to Forum</i></p> | <p>BM had attended Defra workshop & has meeting in Nov with Vet. Div. to progress. Wildlife Health Strategy has become a devolved issue. The Wildlife Health Strategy consultation has just been sent out to England only, for reply by 1st October.</p> <p>BI & LH to clarify WAG roles for testing & SPV research.</p> <p>SC to progress SQPV outbreak contingency plan with Peter Dickinson of Welsh Mountain Zoo (drug called Interferon has been successful at treating infected RS).</p> |
| <p>6 <i>Send comments to LH/SC preferably as document tracked changes via e-mail</i></p> | <p>Carried over – integrated into RS Recovery Strategy</p> |
| <p>7 <i>Organise meeting with Richard Pow</i></p> | <p>Discharged</p> |
| <p>8 <i>E-mail funding sources document to Forum members</i></p> | <p>Discharged. Any updates send to BI who will maintain list which is available on WPB website</p> |
| <p>9 <i>Feed Forum comments to FC GB</i></p> <p><i>Revisit CCW project for squirrel database</i></p> <p><i>Contact Emily Dicks re: increasing awareness & sightings reports</i></p> <p><i>Invitation to consider further and feed comments back to Forum</i></p> | <p>Agenda item</p> |
| <p>10 <i>Keep Forum updated on progress of FCW grey squirrel policy development</i></p> | <p>Work in progress. Capacity of team reduced at present.</p> |
| <p>11 <i>Contribute other research areas to BM via e-mail</i></p> | <p>Recurring action</p> |
| <p>12 <i>Respond to Fred Curry re: joint England / Wales SF</i></p> | <p>Deferred. Joint Forum meeting in Spring a possibility – Forest of Dean location.</p> |

Action point 1

*BI & LH to clarify WAG roles for testing & SQPV research.
SC to prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan with Nick Jackson of Welsh Mountain Zoo*

4. Wales Red Squirrel Project

LH distributed a rough draft project outline for the development of a Wales red squirrel project and recommended that a project proposal be submitted to the next CCW external funding board for a contractor to progress the project plan and funding bid. The Forum discussed grey squirrel control element which would require alternative support mechanisms in the form of existing grant sources. The Forum asked for the inclusion of an additional section summarising past and current RS conservation action. JW advised that the group needed to form a relationship with potential funders quickly. There was discussion over capacity to provide a project preparation leadership role and the need for more community involvement in the squirrel project groups. It was noted that LBAPs (Local Authorities) were important partners.

Action point 2

Each RS project group and WSF member

– to officially state the group's/organisation's commitment, needs, potential contribution (eg time, expertise, funding) and objectives for a Wales RS project .

- summarise previous efforts, successes and failures and what each group are currently engaged in.

ALL identify other potential partner organisations for Wales RS project

Send to LH. L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk By 17th Nov '06.

Action point 3

SC, LH & JW to develop flow chart of project development stages.

Action point 4

MB to prepare a note for the Wales Squirrel Partnership on way forward for RS Recovery Plan by 17th Nov

Action point 5

MB to contact Richard Pow over costing details of North England SoS plan preparation.

5. Warfarin update, FC guidance and map review

LH re-capped on the review and the requirement for the Forum to respond to FC GB Steve Gregory. England Squirrel Forum had already responded requesting the use of selective access hoppers and the removal of the buffer zones. The Forum agreed with this proposal. It was noted that this had to be agreed at UK level (via a response from the UKRSG).

The group discussed what records and dates would be used to determine the map revision. It was important to clarify peripheral areas if the removal of buffer zones was to allow more effective GS control. UKRSG have yet to finalise criteria for revision of the map, but to help that process have asked the Country Fora to collate all records of 10 km squares with RS since 1994, together with information on detailed surveys since that time. The Forum agreed that this information would be recorded using CCW's species recording spreadsheet format. This was linked to agenda item 6.

The group requested that the response to Steve Gregory must include a request to investigate use of a tray to deal with bait spillage.

Action point 6

MB to inform FCGB what action WSF are taking

MB to co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990

MB to investigate records from private sector GS control groups

Action point 7

LH to prepare guidance note for record contributions and blank spreadsheet format.

ALL then to contribute records in CCW spreadsheet format and send to LH for collation. L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk

Action point 8

Once action 6 complete - LH & MB to respond to FC GB and UKRSG

6. Red Squirrel database

Linked to agenda item 5. LH explained that CCW has a project to mobilise all species records onto the NBN. Records from CCW squirrel surveys are currently being entered onto Recorder 2000 and this dataset could be used to develop a Wales squirrel database. It will require long term management to keep it up to date and a mechanism for this has yet to be identified. There was discussion over the type of records to be contributed including *Tracking Mammals* datasets and surveys that did not yield positives. Public sightings with limited verification were considered useful if the number of orphan sightings concentrated in a particular area and time.

Refer to action point 7

7. Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW) grants for grey squirrel control

PG summarised the business rules being developed for the GS control element of a BWW management plan and grant. This would dovetail with the FCW grey squirrel policy (in development) where detail could be provided by adopting a similar approach to the critical threat criteria that England had developed. PG introduced the concept of holding areas – those identified with high GS populations threatening to disperse to high quality, seed or pole stage stands. These may be funded at a higher rate.

The group discussed the cost of GS control and owner uptake of previous WGS supplements. Aims were different for broadleaf protection (reduce numbers) and RS conservation (eradicate). Costs were therefore higher and more labour intensive for zero tolerance trapping for RS conservation. It was pointed out that the new grant scheme BWW would not fund one-off action outside of the management plan framework (an approved management plan is a pre-requisite for scheme entry).

Action point 9

HD and HK to supply examples of worked costs to PG

ALL comments and suggestions to PG by Nov 17th '06.

8. Research / monitoring update

BM updated the group on current research (research summary - refer to paper e-mailed with agenda). Latest updates are in italics. Points of clarification:

Grey squirrels:

- Item 2, b – includes gamekeepers
- Item 7 – ESI not funding
- Item 9, b – more boxes had been monitored. Of 20 predation events only 1 was predated by GS.
- Item 9, d – Repeat woodland Bird Survey found reduced breeding success due to GS predation only correlated with lesser spotted woodpecker and hawfinch.

Red Squirrels:

- SQPV antibodies found in GS only 2km south of Scottish border – much concern.

Action point 10

ALL to contribute other research areas to BM via e-mail

brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

9. Updates on red squirrel projects in Wales

SC – Clocaenog GS control focussing on RS hot spots because good coniferous cone year.

HD – Nothing new and no funds. Concern that last 5 years trapping efforts will not be kept up and benefit foregone. WGS coming to an end and risk that owner of Bryn Arau Duon may not continue to manage for RS due to lack of strategic approach in mid-Wales area. Called for adjacent owners/managers (including FCW) to control GS.

HK – 450 GS trapped in 2005. 162 GS trapped in 2006 with increased effort. Estimate that 100 GS remain. Modelling work suggested that eradication would be achieved in 2007 with present effort levels. 100 GS traps HK writes "The website of the inventor is <http://www.elgeeco.com/> However, the website is out of date and only shows the prototype, which doesn't have the holding/refuge cage which attaches to the bottom. The new version is made by Bethel Rhodes <http://www.bethelrhodes.co.uk/> but



"elgeeco 007.jpg"

they do not have it yet on their website. Here is a picture had been distributed to private landowners, mainly in gardens.

Action point 11

LH on behalf of WSF to write to Director FCW re GS control in Assembly Woodlands especially regarding the MWRSP.

10. Feedback on UK Red Squirrel Group meeting

LH gave feedback to the group from the last UKRSG meeting. There was much discussion on warfarin, the role of the group, its Terms of reference and group membership.

There will be a workshop in April/May in Scotland on RS surveillance and recording. Further details to follow.

JNCC no longer maintain the UKRSG website – this will be moved to SNH. Next UKRSG meeting will be on 9th January 2007.

11. Any other business

JW drew the Forum's attention to a legally available spring trap, the Kania trap, which is being actively promoted and advocated for pest control (including GS) in many publications.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Possible joint England / Wales Squirrel Forum on April 18th / 19th in Forest of Dean.

Action point 12

*ALL to let LH know availability by Nov 17th
LH to liase with Fred Curry re: joint England / Wales SF*

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

| Action Point | Who? | By when? |
|---|---|---|
| <p>1 Clarify WAG roles for testing & SPV research.</p> <p>Prepare SQPV outbreak contingency plan with Nick Jackson of Welsh Mountain Zoo</p> | <p>BI & LH</p> <p>SC</p> | <p>Before WSF6</p> |
| <p>2 Officially state the group's/organisation's commitment, needs, contribution and objectives for a Wales RS project , summarise previous and current activities and send to LH. L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk</p> <p>Ideas for other partner organisations to LH</p> | <p>Each RS project group or WSF member</p> <p>All</p> | <p>17th Nov</p> |
| <p>3 Develop flow chart of project development stages.</p> | <p>SC, LH & JW</p> | <p>17th Nov</p> |
| <p>4 Prepare a note for the Partnership on way forward for RS Recovery Plan</p> | <p>MB</p> | <p>17th Nov</p> |
| <p>5 Contact Richard Pow over costing details of North England SoS plan preparation</p> | <p>MB</p> | <p>17th Nov</p> |
| <p>6 Inform FCGB what action WSF are taking re warfarin review</p> <p>Co-ordinate compilation of FC woodland records since 1990</p> <p>Investigate records from private sector GS control groups</p> | <p>MB</p> <p>MB</p> <p>MB</p> | <p>17th Nov</p> <p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p> |
| <p>7 Prepare guidance note for record contributions and blank spreadsheet format.</p> <p>Contribute records in advised format and send to LH. L.Halliwell@ccw.gov.uk</p> | <p>LH</p> <p>ALL</p> | <p>17th Nov</p> <p>ASAP</p> |
| <p>8 Once action 6 complete - respond to FC GB and UKRSG</p> | <p>LH & MB</p> | <p>ASAP</p> |
| <p>9 Supply examples of worked costs to PG</p> <p>Comments and suggestions to PG</p> | <p>HD & HK</p> <p>ALL</p> | <p>Nov 17th</p> <p>Nov 17th</p> |
| <p>10 Contribute other research areas to BM via e-mail brenda.mayle@forestry.gsi.gov.uk</p> | <p>ALL</p> | |
| <p>11 Write to Director FCW on behalf of WSF</p> | <p>LH</p> | <p>ASAP</p> |

| | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------|
| | | |
| 12 Let LH know DONM availability | ALL | Nov 17th |
| Liase with Fred Curry | LH | ASAP |

Michelle Bromley
7th November 2006