



Wales Squirrel Forum

Stakeholder discussion

29th November 2004, Broneirion, Llandinam

TRANSCRIBED REPORT



About the facilitators

This seminar was designed and facilitated by Lindsey Colbourne Associates, an independent business with more than 12 years experience in facilitation, training, consultation, partnership working and consensus building in the UK and internationally.

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About this report

This report has been produced by Lindsey Colbourne Associates, based on notes made on flip charts, postits and worksheets during the meeting.

The report is being circulated to all participants, together with those who have expressed an interest to date.



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1. Meeting aims, programme and working method

1.1 Aims


The meeting aimed to bring together the range of interests across Wales in order to:

- Share information
- Discuss possible role and activities of Squirrel Forum
- Discuss possible operation and membership
- Decide next steps

1.2 Programme

Time	Session
1030	Welcome & introduction
	Round of introductions and updates
	Possible role and activities of Forum: ideas
1245	Lunch
1330	Remit for Forum (building on morning's discussion)
	Operation and next steps
1500	Close

1.3 Working Method

- Small  Large group
- Turn mobile phones off
- Building on but not constrained by Forum's work in past
- Spirit of inquiry and collaboration
- Write it down (or make sure someone else does)



2. Update and current situation in Wales

2.1 Current red squirrel populations

Note: No exact figures are available

Participants were asked what they knew of current red squirrel populations. The resulting discussion highlighted there may be red squirrels in:

- Dolgellau
- Bala- Aberhirnant
- Corwen
- Mid Wales - 3 forests
 - Tywi
 - Irfon
 - Crychan
- Brechfa & West Carmathenshire
- Môn-Anglesey
- Clocaenog
- Rheola (7 years ago)

2.2 Perceptions of the current situation

After sharing views on the current populations, participants were asked to comment on what the current situation for red squirrels in Wales meant to them:

- Critical – emergency action required
- Very patchy, unhealthy (under threat surrounded by greys)
- Population dynamics 1.1 reds & greys – research required
- Need to understand coning cycles
- Greys present since 1960's yet reds still survive in Wales - something special here?
- Timescales? Data collected for 12 years @ Clocaenog
- Thinking in terms of next 100 years
- Population variations
- Research and action contemporaneously
- Sustainable action
- Although current list looks long, it could be diminished very soon
- Important because of genetic diversity
- Natural red squirrel fluctuations
- Impact of grey squirrels on other fauna – unknown?
- Lot of work going on elsewhere (or at least planned) need a to link to this
- No research on death rates from parapox virus and transmission

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- Fragmentation of approach towards squirrels – no cohesive approach, lack of funding
- State of the woods - need to know more and management of woods
- No funding for sterilization programmes and research (initial results were promising but not for species – specific)
- Parapox is found in Northern UK (absent in Italy)
- Grey squirrels have impact on broadleaf trees
 - complex relationships
 - regeneration not just timber value



3. Possible roles and activities for the Forum

In this session, participants worked in small groups to put forward what they think would be useful roles and activities of the Forum.

3.1 Summary of roles and activities suggested

- i) Overview and central contact point
- ii) Conservation strategy
- iii) Establishing priorities
- iv) Influencing policy
- v) Research promotion/ prioritization
- vi) Information & communication focus and exchange
- vii) Public education and awareness
- viii) Monitoring of effectiveness
 - Forum
 - Wales scene
- ix) Organization/ structure

For details see overleaf

3.2 Detail of suggested roles and activities



Possible role/activity	Detailed suggestions	How might this role be fulfilled by the Forum?
i) Providing the overview and central contact point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Becoming the recognised body for ALL squirrel issues (- all squirrel issues to ensure broad base of evidence and argument) - Ensuring Wales-wide focus (as opposed to very local level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have clear mission statement - Be inclusive - Central contact point for organisations - Public directed to local contacts
ii) Conservation strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Input into the UK BAP review 2005 – the Welsh perspective - Develop a Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy for Wales - Identify focal sites for action - Proposing strategies for lesser known populations - Feed back to UK Squirrel Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forum would set remit - Individual and/or sub group to do detailed work - Forum comments on their proposals - Forum endorses
iii) Establishing priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discuss, decide upon, prioritise emergency action in relation to critical red squirrel population - identify priorities for action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - based on conservation strategy
iv) Influencing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lobbying politicians to draw down funding, raise profile and influence policy - inform policy makers (as well as politicians) - lobby key organizations to influence their policy (eg CCW, Forestry Commission) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members bring issues in - Discuss what to be done - Lobby appropriately
v) Research promotion/prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promotion of research into reds and greys - research appropriate to Wales situation - need to prioritise research and funding opportunities UK and Wales wide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get information on what's going on - Identify gaps - Influence

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Possible role/activity	Detailed suggestions	How might this role be fulfilled by the Forum?
vi) Information & communication focus and exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a focus for communication and information collation especially people working on the ground - provide regular updates on what is happening in Wales - a role to facilitate information distribution and exchange and acting as a focal point - closer links between different research groups (through medium of the Forum) - hold regular meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Page on UK RSG - Web & links - Searchable database - Online discussion forum - Wide mailing list for information/minutes - Face to face
vii) Public education and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raising PUBLIC profile of the status of the Red Squirrel - to educate the public about the negative aspects of grey squirrels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through links to LBAP - Through community groups - Co-ordinate what is going on with National Red Squirrel Week - Agree core messages
viii) Monitoring of effectiveness - Forum - Wales scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitoring to check where we are and are we being effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annually review - Each meeting check action points - Individual organizations to report on targets and indicators
ix) Organization/ structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - define different roles within the Forum (eg. one aspect dealing with reds, another with greys) - bringing together a wide partnership, and reaching consensus 	See notes in following sections



3.3 Comments on how the forum might work

- Possible process for the forum (suggested by one participant):
 - Mission statement
 - Establish overview of population research and conservation needs, and outward look at other policy influences and drivers
 - Identify priorities for action on each of the areas identified
 - Prepare and update a conservation action plan
 - Ensure everyone in Wales is aware what is going on, where and how (based on possible role/activities listed under iii)
 - Lobby politicians (again based on iii) to draw down money, according to priorities
 - Work on public support by raising profile – critical issues
 - successes
 - Monitoring itself to ensure it is effective and that things in Wales are happening and something is done if not
- Not sure about step by step approach – should be the structure/function not step by step. It is about connections – interconnected web.
- Form a Welsh red squirrel BAP group
- Focus on all squirrel issues will make Forum a more influential and motivational body and more able to link into a range of different groups, interests
- This makes sense ecologically and politically
- Greys need to be discussed because they have an impact on conservation broader than just red squirrels, economics (sustainability issues)
- Red squirrels are central



4. How could the Forum be structured and organised?

4.1 Mission statement

It was suggested that a mission statement was required to ensure a unified national approach. The following suggested mission statements were put forward by participants:

- Saving the red squirrel in Wales
- Managing squirrels in Wales
- Ensuring the health of woodlands and red squirrels in Wales
- To make Wales a red squirrel country once again
- Red squirrel conservation and grey squirrel management in Wales
- To bring back red squirrels to Welsh woodlands... and gardens
- To address red and grey squirrel issues in Wales

Following discussion, all present said they could 'live with' the following statement of purpose for the Forum:

The Forum exists to enable effective red squirrel conservation and grey squirrel management in Wales

4.2 Suggestions on structure and organisation

Options for 'structure'

- Having a wider forum will give us more 'clout'
- Wide forum, with AGM and smaller 'task groups' undertaking work through the year and reporting back at AGM.
- Really wide forum with 18-21 (max) in a 'core' or coordination group and sub-groups (specialist groups to feed into sub groups)
- All inclusive forum with regular (annual) meeting for information exchange (ie information exchange as opposed to decision-making)
- One model could be a co-ordination group focused on process (as opposed to policy) – ie helping the forum to operate effectively rather than being the people to decide policy for the forum
- core/steering group perhaps made up of people from the working groups, reports to the wider forum (process or policy focused?)

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Options for getting the work done

- Decentralised exchanging of information and views: Possibly a page on UK RSG discussion forum, on line discussion, open to all.
- Forum might ask individuals or organisations or sub-groups to do specific tasks agreed by the Forum. Forum first establishes remit and then comments on and endorses the work
- These sub-groups or task and finish groups membership should be representative of wider interests in the forum (ie each sub-group is 'balanced')
- If get sub-groups to work within confines of agreed mission statement, principles of operation towards clear aims and objectives, then much work can be delegated – ie less needs to be done by a 'core' group
- When lobbying a particular organization, the Forum's views are represented (not interested member's views). This will help get round problems of individuals finding themselves lobbying their own organisations.

Running meetings

- Worried that very big open group might not reach consensus (or quickly enough)
- Facilitation might enable consensus to be reached in a larger group anyway
- At each meeting to review actions and effectiveness this together provides an overview which allows a reassessment regularly.

Note: Please also see feedback given in 6.3 and 6.4



5. Next steps

Decision	Action	Who	When
Transcribed report from today to be circulated to all	Write up flip charts from today Check e-mail contact details Circulate report	Lindsey Liz Liz	mid Dec
It is useful to have a forum focused on statement and covering the types of activities listed in this report	Convene next meeting of 'core group'	Carl/Liz	End March/early April
	Send in ideas of others who may be interested in being included in the forum (see* below) → Liz	All	Christmas
Develop proposals further taking results from today	Draft proposal Ask Michelle/Ruth if they would like to be involved	Liz/Raj/Judith/ Sarah	Mid February
	e-mail proposals to all invited today. Ask others as suggested above (see * above) & ask them where they want to 'fit' and flag meeting date	Liz	Mid Feb - in by
	Redraft		Mid March
Set up T & F group to focus an influencing UK BAP	Decide how to work together Do the work within timescale to influence the BAP process Inform the rest of the 'forum' as to progress	Liz/Hugh/Kate W/David/Sarah	
Start collating research – list of projects	Check with UK squirrel forum to see if they'll pass their literature database	Brenda	
	Pass on Welsh link to above → all	Brenda	

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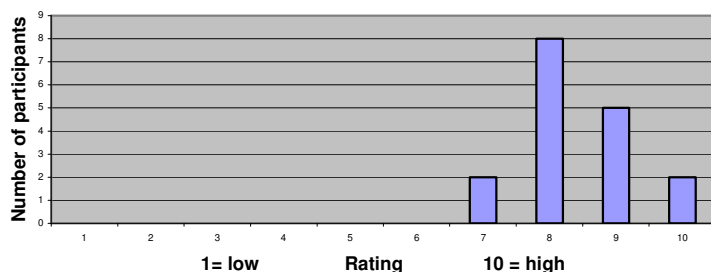
Decision (contd)	Action	Who	When
T&F to pull together the overview information (ie about current populations)	Put together population information	Brenda/Geoff/ Liz/Kate W	
	Get together contact list		
T & F on community involvement	Work together to support the to establishment of local friends groups	Raj/Neil/ Kate B	
Clarify who will cover costs of venues etc	Talk to FCW Inform rest of forum	Liz	



6. Summary of feedback

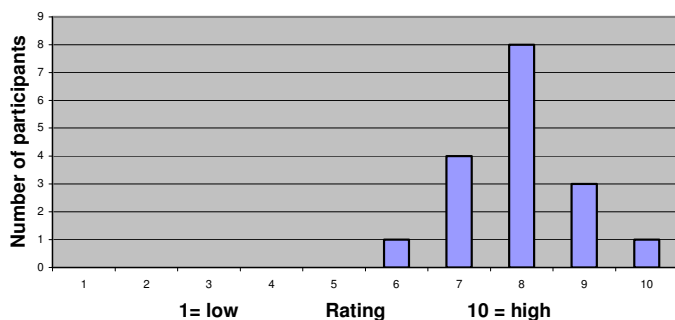
At the end of the meeting, participants were asked to give their feedback and final thoughts about day. This section is a complete transcription of all feedback forms received.

6.1 How would you rate the meeting overall?




- Very interactive – I think everybody contributed at least something
- Friendly
- A little more pre-meeting information could have been useful including how/what the 'old group' did so could ensure good bits taken forward and poorer bits left
- Excellent – just not enough time
- It helped greatly to have an independent meeting organizer
- 1st 'facilitated' meeting I have attended
- A task that has to be undertaken to move forum forward but somewhat onerous in the afternoon
- lots of progress made in short space of time

6.2 How satisfied were you with the outcome/decisions of the meeting?



- Very well run
- Are most appropriate people on task groups
- More time needed to finally resolve how to go forward

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- Achieved a good level of commitment from a wide range of participants
 - Facilitation enabled group to find ways of taking the establishment of a forum further – very difficult otherwise probably
 - We'll wait and see what happens!
 - Last 15 mins very useful. Things should happen!
 - Possibly could have come to further conclusions but also good to keep to time constraints

6.3 How did you feel about of the meeting? In particular, was it useful to have it facilitated rather than chaired?

- I think facilitation moved the meeting on much faster and encouraged people to drip in much more effectively
- Facilitated rather than chaired please
- Probably – though if chaired would more 'final' decisions have been made
- Vg – facilitation worked well
- Yes
- Yes, facilitation worked well. Good mix of group discussion and general presentation
- Excellent
- Yes, a chair doesn't usually have the authority (in broadest sense) that someone outside the group can have
- Yes - Chair usually unable to keep focus as well as this was. But didn't give impression of cutting discussion short. Enabled 'chair' to be fully involved
- Excellent facilitation
- Agree
- Yes good facilitated draw out leveled views
- Yes it was
- The facilitation was excellent – a good way to get focused and move things on
- Very useful to have it facilitated
- Very useful to have the facilitation at this stage esp because it was 'impartial' re agencies
- Definitely better to have someone not so involved facilitating to keep discussions on track and bring everyone back to the point



6.4 Do you have any remaining concerns about the forum?

- No as long as no important groups are left out in the future (eg colleges?)
- Perhaps the urgency of the plight of the red squirrel could have been grasped better – slight complacency
- That it can be both functional and influential
- How quickly will it work? Will the urgent action be identified?
- Management of the groups and commitment of FCW at senior level
- No, but it will be important for all of us to participate fully. Most of us are v busy so we much ensure that individuals do not promise too much!
- Location of meetings important to allow ease of travel – also time of year – avoid poor traveling conditions/snow or locations which more at risk
- Let's see how it pays out
- Red action stifled by policy interests and WAG
- No
- Feel the structure of the forum needs establishing further
- Wait and see whether folk do what they've said and how it goes

6.5 Any suggestions for future meetings?

- Include a field visit to see eg red squirrel conservation work
- Should be based around identified priorities
- Presentations of case studies eg sites, control, other regions
- Actions need to be decided
- A similar format please!
- Possibly field visit included re information exchange
- Distance traveled to meetings
- No
- Can Lindsey come to all our meetings?



7. Participants

David Cowley	Anglesey County Council	davidcowley@anglesey.gov.uk
Isabel Macho	Carms County Council	imacho@camarthenshire.gov.uk
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