

FIRST WELSH RED SQUIRREL CONFERENCE

14th September 2004

Experts from throughout Wales will meet on Saturday 18th September to discuss how to safeguard the last remaining populations of native red squirrels.

The Friends of the Anglesey Red Squirrels, a local conservation group, supported by our patron Lady Anglesey, have organised a one-day conference to be held in the spectacular coastal town of Beaumaris, Anglesey, at the Canolfan on Saturday the 18th September, from 9.30am -5.00pm. The talks are aimed at a wide audience. Families and children are most welcome to attend. Tickets cost £10 and an optional buffet lunch at a small extra cost will be provided. Prior booking is essential.

The event will be opened by Howie Watkins of BBC/N&PCC and include a series of illustrated presentations on squirrel biology and conservation. A wide range of topics will be covered, such as; genetics, grey squirrel management, practical red squirrel conservation programmes, captive breeding and habitat management. This event will be a vital opportunity for conservationists, landowners, politicians, educationalists and members of the public to come together to discuss strategies for the maintenance of red squirrels in Wales.

Sadly, it is likely that only 500 adult red squirrels can be found in the wild throughout Wales. Populations have declined dramatically as a result of the spread of the North American grey squirrel, a species introduced to the UK. Unless decisive action is taken, the native red squirrels in Wales may be extinct within ten years.

Dr Craig Shuttleworth, the woodland ecologist at Menter Môn, said 'The red squirrel is one of the most endangered woodland mammals in Wales. It is reassuring that so much work is currently being carried out to try and save the species but we must continue to be vigilant especially in areas such as Anglesey where island habitat lends itself to greater protection.'

Dr Raj Jones, co-founder of the Friends said 'We are delighted to host the first conference of this type in Wales' she added 'It will be an opportunity for professionals to share information and to work creatively with local groups towards the conservation of Red Squirrels in Wales and in other parts of Britain and Europe.

Anyone interested in attending the event should contact Rebecca Gwynne at Menter Mon by e-mail Rebecca@mentermon.com or telephone 01248 752700.

Ends

Issued by The Friends of the Anglesey Red Squirrels on 14th August 2004. For more information, please contact Rebecca Gwynne on 01248 725700.