

# Red Squirrel

## Wild Challenge Action Plan



### Wild Challenge Long Term Vision 2040

**Sightings of red squirrels will have increased and people visiting the National Park will be able to readily see them. Landowners and local communities will take pride in the return of red squirrels to their area and be encouraged to maintain this.**

Red squirrels within the National Park will be protected from further re-colonisation of grey squirrels through a network of community led groups and landowners continuing responsible grey squirrel trapping effort in areas that are sensitive to grey squirrel distribution from the central belt. Pine marten populations will have continued to develop throughout Scotland and the effect of natural predation will retain low levels of grey squirrels within the Park. Healthy woodland habitat networks will provide natural distribution pathways and encourage red squirrels to develop populations throughout the Park.

## Wild Challenge delivery

Objectives	Actions	Target date	Measures of Success
Sustain and defend the thriving red squirrel populations in current “red-only” range north of Central Lowlands (Argyll and northern areas of the National Park) through effective grey squirrel control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain effective squirrel control in areas where grey populations have declined to ensure densities do not regain. This will be achieved through collaboration between Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels staff, land managers and local trap loan volunteers.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grey squirrel control maintains low densities in sensitive distribution areas and “pushes back” grey squirrel populations into central belt area. This can be monitored during trapping season with low numbers being caught in sensitive areas.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage land managers currently involved in grey squirrel control to re-apply for SRDP support for new 5 year scheme.</li> </ul>	By 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local voluntary control networks are established and demonstrate efficient communication between communities. The success of this will be demonstrated by an annual increase in volunteer control.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage land managers to apply for SRDP support for grey squirrel control in red squirrel conservation priority areas and grey squirrel distribution pathways.</li> </ul>	By 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land managers involved with current 5 year SRDP schemes will continue to support this and be willing to reapply for future funding. Land managers not currently signed up to the scheme will apply and annually landowners in the area involved in SRDP grey control will increase.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase interest in volunteer trap loan scheme by targeted public engagement in sensitive grey squirrel distribution areas.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active trap loan volunteer list increases and provides control across the national park.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create local community grey squirrel control networks by linking trapping volunteers with interested homeowners. This will provide long term sustainable control.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	
Continued monitoring of red and grey squirrel distribution to increase understanding of population changes and assess the effectiveness of grey squirrel control effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collate and verify national public sightings records.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red squirrel distribution increases throughout the national park recorded through increased sightings and presence/absence surveys.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue spring presence/absence tetrad monitoring annually of red and grey squirrels with help from volunteers and local organisations.</li> <li>Increase monitoring area by collaborating with local wildlife recording groups and community groups.</li> </ul>	<p>Yearly to 2020</p> <p>By 2020</p>	

Objective	Action	Target date	Indicators of success
Provide support for land managers and communities to deal with potential squirrel pox outbreaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain low numbers of grey squirrels in areas of red squirrels to prevent major outbreaks of disease (Squirrel Pox Virus) through landowner, volunteer and project staff trapping effort.</li> <li>• Maintain intensive surveillance of the squirrel pox along the Highland Red Squirrel Protection Line.</li> <li>• Provide local councils, wildlife groups, NGOs etc. with information on squirrel pox virus and how to report potential outbreaks,</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactive control in areas of disease spread to reduce grey numbers.</li> <li>• Red squirrel populations safeguarded from disease outbreaks or able to re-establish population after disease subsides.</li> </ul>
Continue public support for red squirrel conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with partners to deliver red squirrel conservation education throughout the park through public events, interpretation, social media etc.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased interest in local voluntary action through local community networks being set up.</li> </ul>
Encourage landowners to have good forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When in discussions with landowners, ensure they are aware of FCS advice on woodland networks and the importance of creating these with desirable tree species</li> <li>• Provide information on responsible felling management where red squirrels are present.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for woodland management increase and more landowners are keen to manage not only commercially but also with species conservation in mind.</li> </ul>

## Key challenges for delivery

1. Changes to SRDP funding have resulted in landowners requiring a forest management plan (over 100ha of woodland) or a forest plan (under 100ha of woodland) before being eligible to apply for grey squirrel control. This may mean that small landowners who have no commercial plans for their land may not be interested in applying for the scheme. There is also a cost required for larger management plans to be drawn up which outweigh the amount of potential income from the grant.
2. Public perception of grey squirrel control is varied throughout the park and beyond. Often this can restrict the number of people willing to become involved in the trap loan scheme or allow trapping to be undertaken on their land.
3. Squirrel pox is a threat to red squirrel populations across Scotland but has recently been found in Plein Country Park. This will mean that through grey squirrel distribution along the River Teith populations of red squirrels from Stirling to Callander could be at threat in the future.
4. Possible funding constraints in the Forestry Grant Scheme that may result in landowners being refused grey squirrel control funding.

## Opportunities for delivery

1. There are several landowners within the National Park that have not been previously approached to apply for SRDP funding. These landowners are in key areas on the south west of Loch Lomond where grey squirrel populations remain a significant threat particularly to the red squirrel populations of Argyll.
2. The National Park benefits from the wide range of volunteers who live in the park. Engaging with these individuals on a frequent basis may encourage uptake of the trap loan scheme and other possible surveying opportunities.
3. The National Park is within an hour's drive of 50% of the Scottish population. This means the opportunities for squirrels to be reported to the sightings page are very high. Increased promotion and working with the Communications team will ensure the message is kept at the fore front of red squirrel engagement within the park.
4. Working with the woodlands advisory team will ensure that any woodland creation does not hamper the success of red squirrels and provide habitat more suited to grey squirrels.

Red Squirrel Wild Challenge Group	Other key partners
Chair: Mary-Anne Collis Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels <a href="mailto:mcollis@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk">mcollis@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk</a>  Mel Tonkin Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels Project Manager  Linda Winskill Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority  Simon Franks Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority  Catherine Kennedy Forestry Commission Scotland	Forestry Commission Scotland  RSPB Scotland  Scottish Natural Heritage  Private land managers  Scotland's Land and Estates  Local volunteers