

**Minutes of Tayside Squirrel Forum
3rd June 2009**

Present: Mike Strachan, Simon Poots, Ken Neil, Mel Tonkin

Apologies - Graham Christer, Brian Tasker, Fred Conacher, Katherine Lloyd, Colin Castle, Polly Freeman, Alison Anderson, Fred Conacher, Johanna Willi.

Minutes of Last Meeting: Agreed.

Mel reported that on the 2nd June SNH launched a public consultation on a national strategy for grey squirrel control. This will be available on the SNH website. The closing date will be 1st September 2009.

The Forestry Commission is running its consultation on red squirrel strongholds. The closing date will be 26th June 2009.

Mel reported that the Project Officer for Aberdeenshire & Moray has now been appointed. Hollie Walker starts on the 8th June 2009 and will be based at SNH in Aberdeen. She has worked for the JNCC in the past. It would be useful to invite her to the next TSF if she is available. The funding has come from Aberdeen LEADER, Aberdeen Greenspace, Red Squirrel Survival Trust and BIFFA. With this funding now secure, we should be able to look towards funding a grey control officer for Tayside next. This could be on at least a part-time basis.

Mike suggested that LEADER might be able to help fund the GCO post and that he would investigate this.

Mel has devised a map that indicates the principal zones for grey control at this point in the SSRS Project. This will be where priority support will be given to grey control efforts in the first year of operations. It takes into account potential pinch points and trapping/monitoring potential and is based on the current grey distribution records.

Simon explained that he had spoken to the Red Squirrel Survival Trust with a view to gaining financial support for a wider trapping regime. This plan would cover areas in Tayside that will not fall into the immediate SSRS priority zones. He has hopes that he may find funding of as much as £50,000 per annum for 3 years. He has charted a series of zones that would be trapped across on a year by year basis. They would take into account places to the south of the SSRS priority area and include Perth and environs, the north coast of Fife on the Tay and the coast from Perth to Monifieth among others. He suggested that this project be administered by the P&K group on behalf of the others.

One or two points were raised about potential overlap with the SSRS Project and the need to avoid any confusion that might arise. Simon offered to reassess the mapping of his proposal. The need to ensure that the issues of public perception and public relations are taken into consideration was emphasised and agreed as being crucial. A further point that grey control on a large scale outwith the SSRS / SNH priority zones might have an effect on determining the effectiveness of the national strategy was raised. Simon stated the broadly held concern that the city of Perth is an area that merits a determined grey control effort being undertaken and also that the success of some previous grey control work along the north shore of Fife has shown that reds will return to areas that they have yielded to greys if extensive grey control is carried out.

DONM Sept 9th.