



## **STAKEHOLDER TOOLKIT**

**Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is working to ensure red squirrels continue to be a part of Scotland's special native wildlife.**

With the help of partners, landowners and local volunteers, the project is monitoring squirrel numbers across Scotland, managing the impact of squirrelpox and helping to combat the spread of grey squirrels in key areas.

Our efforts are making a difference — in many of our project areas, red squirrels are already making a comeback.

### **Developing community action**

In 2017, the project began a new phase called 'Developing Community Action'. Alongside vital conservation work, the project is focussing on engaging with local communities, inspiring them to take action to protect red squirrels where they live.

Community action is the key to long-term, sustainable red squirrel conservation in Scotland, with the added benefit of connecting more people with the nature on their doorstep. From participating in spring surveys to helping out at events, volunteers of all backgrounds can help ensure red squirrels continue to have a home in Scotland.

### **Our partners and funders**

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Land & Estates, Red Squirrel Survival Trust and RSPB Scotland.

The project is funded by National Lottery Players through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, project partners, the Dumfries & Galloway LEADER fund, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (Balmedie-Tipperty), Margaret Davies Charitable Trust, Mrs Lascelles Charitable Trust, Dulverton Trust and the Robert O'Curle fund.



We want to work with stakeholders to inform the public about the challenges facing red squirrels in Scotland, raise awareness of our campaign and inspire community action across the country.

### Our key messages are:

- Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is a partnership project, led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, working to save Scotland's native red squirrel. There are still many places in Scotland with healthy red squirrel populations, but their numbers have seriously declined in recent decades.
- The main threat to the red squirrel's future in Scotland is the spread of grey squirrels, which were introduced to Britain from North America. Larger and more robust, grey squirrels out-compete red squirrels for food and living space. Some grey squirrels also carry squirrelpox, a virus which doesn't affect greys but is lethal to reds.
- The project is monitoring squirrel populations, managing the spread of squirrelpox and controlling grey squirrel numbers in strategic areas where this effort will have a positive impact on Scotland's core red squirrel populations.
- Our work is already making a difference. In many of our project areas, red squirrels are well on the road to recovery.
- Community action is the key to long-term protection of red squirrels in Scotland. The project needs more volunteers to get involved.
- A simple way people can help the project is by reporting their sightings of both red and grey squirrels at [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](http://scottishsquirrels.org.uk)



There are a number of ways your organisation or community group could help us inspire more people to take action for red squirrels.

**For example:**

- Stay in touch with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels by signing up for our newsletter and following us on social media
- Help us promote the project and its aims through communications with your networks e.g. newsletters, social media, posters and leaflets
- Get involved in our community engagement work, for example by co-hosting a red squirrel event or hosting a guest talk from one of our red squirrel Conservation Officers
- Share our volunteering opportunities and events with your networks
- Collaborate on opportunities to expand the range of training available to individuals and groups from both our project and your organisation
- Encourage the people in your networks to join our online Community Hub

**The Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels Community Hub**

Our Community Hub is an online space where active supporters and volunteers can fully engage with the project. Registered users can:

- Keep a record of their squirrel sightings and trapping data
- Access volunteer resources and training materials
- Find out about events and training opportunities
- Keep up to date with the latest results
- Connect with other volunteers in their local area



[scottishsquirrels.org.uk  
/community-hub](https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/community-hub)



We have various tools and resources available to help stakeholders communicate our project's key messages.

### Printed materials

The following printed materials are available to order, for display in visitor centres and other community meeting places.

- Project leaflets
- Regional volunteering leaflets
- A4 and A3 squirrel sightings posters
- A6 squirrel sightings postcards
- Events poster templates

### Template article

We have put together a short article that could be included in a newsletter, blog or web page.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is a partnership project, led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, working to ensure red squirrels continue to be a part of Scotland's special native wildlife.

Red squirrels were once widespread throughout the country, and there are still many places you could encounter one today. However, their populations have seriously declined in recent decades.

The main threat to the red squirrel's future in Scotland is the spread of grey squirrels, which were introduced to Britain from North America in the late 1800s. Grey squirrels out-compete red squirrels for food and living space. They can also carry squirrelpox, a disease that doesn't harm greys, but is deadly to reds.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels has been monitoring squirrel populations across Scotland since 2009. The project is also managing the impact of squirrelpox, and helping to combat the spread of grey squirrels in areas where this action will have a positive impact on core red squirrel populations. In many of its target areas red squirrels are already beginning to make a comeback.

However there is still a lot of work to do, and community action will be the key to long-term, sustainable red squirrel conservation in Scotland. There are lots of ways to get involved in the project, from participating in survey work to joining the project's trap-loan scheme. One of the simplest things people can do to help is report sightings of both squirrel species on the project's website.

To find out more, visit [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](http://scottishsquirrels.org.uk)



## Social media posts

The project Facebook page is [facebook.com/SavingScotlandsRedSquirrels](https://www.facebook.com/SavingScotlandsRedSquirrels)

The project Twitter handle is [@ScotSquirrels](https://twitter.com/ScotSquirrels)

## Suggested tweets

Seen a squirrel? Help [@ScotSquirrels](https://twitter.com/ScotSquirrels) by reporting your sightings (red and grey) at [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](https://www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk)

Join [@ScotSquirrels](https://twitter.com/ScotSquirrels) in taking action to protect red squirrels where you live. Find out more at [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](https://www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk)



## Suggested Facebook posts

By reporting your squirrel sightings (red or grey) to Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels, you'll be helping to protect one of Scotland's most loved native species. Add your squirrel to the map at [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](https://www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk)

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is working to ensure red squirrels will always be a part of Scotland's special native wildlife. Find out how you can get involved at [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](https://www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk)



The project is working in the parts of the country where red squirrels are most under threat from the spread of grey squirrels.

-  North East Scotland
-  Central Lowlands
-  South Scotland priority areas



### Where does the project operate?

In the Central Lowlands, we are preventing grey squirrels from spreading further north from the Central Belt, protecting Scotland's core red squirrel populations north of the Highland Boundary Line. We are also testing for squirrelpox across this region.

In North East Scotland, we are working to remove an isolated population of grey squirrels that was first introduced to Aberdeen in the 1970s and proceeded to spread further into rural areas.

In South Scotland, we are carrying out targeted grey squirrel control in priority areas, to protect local red squirrel populations and manage the risk of squirrelpox, which is prevalent throughout the region.

### How does the project control grey squirrel numbers?

We use live-trapping in accordance with best practice guidelines, then dispatch the animal in the most humane way possible. All staff and volunteers participating in grey squirrel control are fully trained and must follow a strict protocol.

Our methods are designed to ensure public safety, and minimising any animal distress is uppermost in our consideration. The methods we have adopted have been deemed the most humane by the European Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (2005).

## Are there any alternatives to grey squirrel trapping?

At this time, halting further spread of grey squirrels in strategically targeted areas is the only viable option to fully protect the strong red squirrel populations we still have across Scotland.

Grey squirrel contraception is the subject of research, as is the development of a squirrelpox vaccine. However, these are a long way from being ready for use and may be insufficient on their own.

There are also suggestions that in the future, Scotland's recovering pine martens could play a role in controlling grey squirrel numbers in some areas.

These potential solutions are promising for the future of red squirrel conservation in Scotland, and the project is following their developments closely.

However, we simply can't afford to wait in the hope that they will work. The story south of the border has shown us that red squirrels can be completely replaced within the space of a few years, especially when squirrelpox is present.

## How can people get involved?

There are all sorts of ways to get involved. You don't have to be an expert to join in and there are roles to suit different interests, abilities and time commitments. For example, people can:

- Help us monitor the situation by submitting a squirrel sighting on our website
- Get involved in citizen science by taking part in our spring surveys
- Share their enthusiasm with others by volunteering at our events
- Support the project through fundraising
- Take action by joining our trap-loan scheme

For more information, please visit [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](http://scottishsquirrels.org.uk)





## How to contact the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels team

### In Your Area

The project employs red squirrel Conservation Officers in the following regions:

- North East Scotland
- Tayside
- Argyll, the Trossachs and Stirling
- Scottish Borders
- Dumfries & Galloway

To contact a specific staff member, please visit [scottishsquirrels.org.uk/about](http://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/about) for details

### General enquiries

[squirrels@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:squirrels@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk)

Scottish Wildlife Trust reception:  
**0131 312 7765**



PROJECT  
PARTNERSHIP



FUNDERS



[scottishsquirrels.org.uk](http://scottishsquirrels.org.uk)

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, a Scottish registered charity (charity no.SC005792) and a company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland (registered no. SC040247).