



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2019-0174 , 2 July 2019

# Red Squirrels: Debate on potential red squirrel extinction

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## Summary

This briefing has been prepared ahead of the debate on potential red squirrel extinction scheduled for Wednesday 3 July from 9.30 to 11.00am in Westminster Hall. The debate will be led by Trudy Harrison MP.

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

# 1. Background

There are two species of squirrel in the UK: the Red Squirrel and the Grey Squirrel. The red squirrel is native to Britain, but its population has declined since the middle of the last century as the American grey squirrel expanded its range across the mainland. The grey squirrel is widely accepted as the main reason for the decline of the red squirrel over the past century. This is because:

- Grey squirrels compete with red squirrels for food and shelter and push them out to other areas
- Grey squirrels carry the squirrelpox virus and transmit this to red squirrels. The virus does not appear to impact grey squirrels but is fatal for red squirrels.

Grey squirrels are also responsible for damage to broadleaf woodlands by stripping bark in the areas they inhabit.

Policy on wildlife is devolved, and this briefing concentrates on policy relating to squirrels in England.

## 1.1 Squirrel Population

There are estimated to be around 140,000 red squirrels in the wild in the UK, with the majority living in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The population is estimated to have peaked at around 3.5 million, prior to the introduction of grey squirrels in the Nineteenth Century.<sup>2</sup> The current grey squirrel population is estimated at around 2.5 million.<sup>3</sup>

The Forestry Commission estimates that in 2014 there were 15,000 red squirrels in England. They occur in isolated populations on the islands in Poole Harbour, on the Isle of Wight and across the north of England, including the Lake District, with Kielder Forest, in Northumberland, supporting around 60% of the total population.<sup>4</sup> A map of current red squirrel activity is available on the [British Red Squirrel website](#).

Squirrel charities have suggested that without conservation management, red squirrels could become extinct in England in approximately 10 years.

The monitoring of the red squirrel population is undertaken by different entities across the UK. Ultimately, all red squirrel population data comes from detections, some of which are anecdotal, such as visual sightings. The same squirrel may be detected more than once, while some will go undetected entirely, meaning that the overall population estimate is highly uncertain.

The most comprehensive estimate of the distribution of the red squirrel population in the UK was by the Red Squirrel Survival Trust in 2011. This

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<sup>1</sup> Red Squirrels United, [Background](#), accessed 1 July 2019

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The Wildlife Trust, [Saving species: red squirrels](#), accessed 1 July 2019

<sup>4</sup> [PO 112856 20 November 2018](#)

brought together estimates made by conservationists for local areas. Note that different monitoring methods will have been used in different parts of the country. The maps below were an output of this exercise.

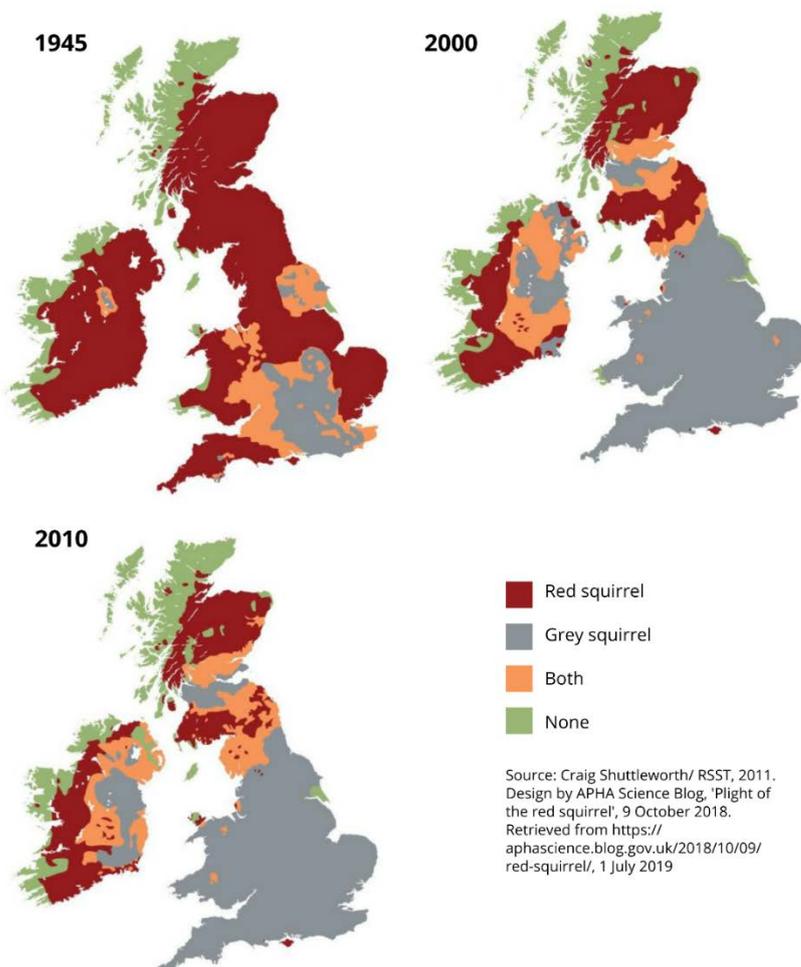
The maps suggest that the change between 2000 and 2010 has been mainly been from areas of reds only to a mix of greys and reds, most notably in Cumbria, Northumberland and parts of Northern Ireland. In some areas, such as the southern part of Northumbria, reds disappeared entirely in this ten-year period.

[Red Squirrels United](#), an umbrella organisation, is now coordinating monitoring and conservation efforts by local organisations and compiling this data for the UK. Monitoring methods include:

- Visual sightings by organised groups of volunteers and members of the general public,
- Passive infra-red wildlife cameras,
- Hair sample analysis, and
- Ecological sampling to estimate the likely population based on the habitat.

RSU has not published granular data but publishes an [annual report](#) (latest 2018) which includes a section on monitoring.

#### Red and grey squirrel distribution in the British Isles in 1945, 2000, and 2010



## 1.2 Government Policy

A PQ from Trudy Harrison MP in April 2019 asked the Government what action it was taking to "...prevent the potential extinction of red squirrels in the UK". Dr Therese Coffey, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment, answered:<sup>5</sup>

This is devolved matter and the below information relates to England only.

The Government is committed to protecting and expanding red squirrel populations and tackling the threats that grey squirrels pose to them. The Forestry Commission works with Natural England and other conservation organisations and projects to help protect red squirrel enclaves and to allow the populations to expand.

The Forestry Commission also undertakes a number of actions to protect red squirrels from the impact of grey squirrels as outlined in the grey squirrel action plan for England. These actions include Countryside Stewardship funding for landowners who choose to help protect red squirrels within designated reserves.

Defra, in partnership with the United Kingdom Squirrel Accord, has also provided funding for work by the Animal and Plant Health Agency for the development of a fertility control method for grey squirrels. This research continues to show promise as one potentially effective and humane method to control grey squirrel numbers in the longer term.

Further detail on the grey squirrel action plan was given in a PQ answer in March 2018:<sup>6</sup>

We are working together with a range of stakeholders under the UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA), which aims to promote partnership working to both increase public awareness and support for action to protect our red squirrels and woodlands from the damage caused by grey squirrels. Defra and the Forestry Commission are signatories to the UK Squirrel Accord and are represented on the Accord Executive Committee. Under the joint grey squirrel action plan for England, Defra and the Forestry Commission (FC) are committed to working with land owners and other organisations to implement a package of measures to support targeted grey squirrel control. The action plan includes:

1. Additional measures in forestry options of Countryside Stewardship for land managers to control grey squirrels (not just in red squirrel areas but in woodlands where squirrels are a threat to management plan objectives).
2. Support for research and evidence.
3. Taking action on the FC's own land holding (the public forest estate).

A team at the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) National Wildlife Management Centre is leading development of a contraceptive for grey squirrels. Defra provided initial funding of £39k in 2016/17 and a further £55k for 2017/18. Our contribution helped secure a further £125,000 for the APHA project from charitable trusts and the private sector coordinated

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<sup>5</sup> [PQ 240064 2 April 2019](#)

<sup>6</sup> [PQ 129686 6 March 2018](#)

through the UK Squirrel Accord and, although complementary, the Defra and UKSA funded work are separate projects.

The UK Squirrel Accord was an agreement signed by a large number of woodland and conservation bodies, animal and squirrel charities and Government bodies (including DEFRA) in 2014 to support the future of the red squirrel, and commits to controlling grey squirrels where needed.<sup>7</sup>

A blog from the Animal and Plant Health Agency on [the \*Plight of the Red Squirrel\*](#) gave further details of the five year project, which runs to 2022, to develop an effective contraceptive for Grey Squirrels:

Fertility control has been proposed as a humane, publicly acceptable and cost-effective method for reducing populations of grey squirrel (Dunn, Marzano et al. 2018, Massei 2018). The APHA's National Wildlife Management Centre (NWMC) is now in the process of delivering the second year of a five year project, funded by Defra and the UK Squirrel Accord, aimed at developing and delivering oral contraceptives to control British grey squirrels. This includes developing an existing contraceptive, already successfully tested by the NWMC in laboratory trials, and developing methods to deliver this contraceptive safely and effectively in the field.

The blog goes on to note that an important part of the project is developing a way of delivering the bait containing the contraceptive, via a feeder or hopper, so that it is only eaten by grey squirrels and not other wildlife.<sup>8</sup>

An update on the [UK Squirrel Accord in May 2019](#) also provided further details of the project.

In June 2019 *The Times* reported that the project was having to further develop the hopper as problems had emerged with isolating the bait for grey squirrels alone.<sup>9</sup>

Multiple organisations work to support the red squirrel, for example:

- [Red Squirrels United](#)
- [The Wildlife Trusts](#)
- [The Red Squirrel Survival Trust](#)

### 1.3 Pine Marten reintroductions

There has been ongoing debate on the impact on squirrel populations of the [reintroduction of the pine marten](#) in areas where it had previously become extinct.

This has been [in response to research](#) from Ireland and Scotland which found that in areas where pine martens were once again present there were significantly reduced grey squirrel numbers and red squirrel

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<sup>7</sup> [UK Squirrel Accord](#) [accessed 1 July 2019]

<sup>8</sup> APHA Science Blog, [Plight of the Red Squirrel](#), 9 October 2018

<sup>9</sup> ["Grey squirrel sterilisation plan hits snag"](#), *The Times*, 2 June 2019

populations returned.<sup>10</sup> This has resulted in some advocating the introduction of pine martens to [support](#) red squirrel populations.<sup>11</sup> Others have cautioned that the research is still in its early stages and that [further information is needed](#), as pine martens predate on a range of small mammals and other vertebrates, and therefore could also have some negative impacts on red squirrel populations.<sup>12</sup>

The Defra's position on the reintroduction of pine martens was set out in a [written answer](#) in May 2016:

The Forestry Commission is involved in the Vincent Wildlife Trust's pine marten recovery project in mid and north Wales. The Forestry Commission in England is supporting a project in the Forest of Dean with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Forest Research and others to pursue a pine marten restoration project. This project includes studies into impacts of pine martens including on trees and other wildlife. Natural England is also working with the Trust to restore viable populations of pine martens to northern England.

The Forestry Commission is also working closely with one of the authors of the paper that identified the decline in grey squirrel populations in the Irish midlands, which may be associated with the abundance of pine martens. The work with the author and others will further explore the relationship between red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens in the UK.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.4 Invasive Species Regulations: Grey Squirrels

Changes to how the Government implements EU regulations on invasive species mean that from October 2019 it will no longer be legal to re-release injured grey squirrels. This was previously permitted by Natural England under licence.

The change raised concerns from animal rescue centres and resulted in a parliamentary petition. The Government response to the petition set out that it is illegal to release into the wild any invasive species, and this includes injured and treated grey squirrels. The new position on keeping and release is as follows:

### **Keeping and Release:**

We need to ensure that the way in which we manage non-native species such as the grey squirrel is consistent with the Regulation and supports our own government strategy. As a consequence, release of species listed under the Regulation will not be permitted, except in the context of control action.

However, non-commercial owners may continue to keep grey squirrels in captivity as companion animals, as long as they were

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<sup>10</sup> The Conversation, [Resurgent pine martens could be good news for red squirrels](#), 27 August 2019

<sup>11</sup> The Guardian, [Can the pine marten help forest animals flourish once more?](#), 25 Nov 2018

<sup>12</sup> The Conversation, [Why the pine marten is not every red squirrel's best friend](#), 12 February 2019

<sup>13</sup> [Squirrels: Written question - HL822](#), 11 May 2016

kept as a companion animal prior to the species' inclusion on list of species of Union concern (3 August 2016 for grey squirrel).

In addition, there is a requirement, under Article 19 of the EU Regulation, to establish management measures for widespread species, aimed at their "eradication, population control or containment". It is possible for some, otherwise prohibited, activities to be allowed as part of a species' management measures, provided there is strict justification and provided that all appropriate controls are in place. The planned Order puts in place a licensing regime to support the implementation of Article 19.

Grey squirrels, such as those taken to rescue centres may, potentially, be kept under an Article 19 management measure licence until the end of their natural lives. These licences will be issued under strict justification. In situations where animals are being kept, either as a companion animal or under licence, they must be kept in secure containment, and prevented from breeding or escaping. It will not be possible to keep any grey squirrels which are not covered by the companion animal defence or a management measure licence (or any other defence, licence or permit under the Regulation).

## 2. Press articles

Guardian, 25 Nov 2018

[Can the pine marten help forest animals flourish once more?](#)

Rewilding plan could help other species such as the red squirrel back into the Forest of Dean

BBC News, 13 June 2018

[One in five British mammals at risk of extinction](#)

The red squirrel, the wildcat, and the grey long-eared bat are all facing severe threats to their survival, according to new research.

The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2018

[Predatory pine martens could save the red squirrel](#)

The Daily Telegraph, 20 February 2018

[Grey squirrels may have outlasted red squirrels in Britain due to their superior problem solving powers](#)

The Conversation, 12 February 2019

[Why the pine marten is not every red squirrel's best friend](#)

The Daily Telegraph, 30 November 2017

[Threatened red squirrels get boost from biggest new forest in 30 years](#)

The Guardian, November 6 2017

[Red squirrels successfully reintroduced to north-west Scottish Highlands](#)

New population naturally expanded since reintroduction to north-west Scotland in 2016

The Conversation, 6 April 2017

[Grey squirrels are bad for the British countryside – full stop](#)

The Conversation, 8 March 2017

[In defence of the grey squirrel, Britain's most unpopular invader](#)

### 3. Government press releases

#### [March 2019 update: Invasive non-native species and grey squirrels](#)

The Government has confirmed the implementation date of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019.

Published 1 March 2019

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Natural England, and Lord Gardiner of Kimble

A plan to tighten rules around releasing invasive non-native animals which threaten our native wildlife will come into effect in October 2019, the Government today (1 March) confirmed.

Invasive species cost the economy an estimated £1.7 billion per year. One of the best-known is the grey squirrel, which threatens our native red squirrel and causes significant damage to forestry in the UK.

The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 that the Government will lay before Parliament at the beginning of March represents no change to the keeping of grey squirrels in UK law.

There is no requirement on vets to euthanise any injured or healthy squirrels that are brought into rescue centres.

It has been illegal to import and keep these animals under existing British legislation dating from 1937. These actions will remain illegal under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order in line with the [EU Regulation \(1143/2014\) on invasive alien \(non-native\) species](#) and domestic policy.

Under the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#) it is also currently an offence to release grey squirrels without a licence. The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order will mean that [Natural England](#) will no longer issue release licences for grey squirrels.

Biosecurity Minister Lord Gardiner said:

*Invasive non-native species, including the grey squirrel, not only challenge the survival of our rarest species but damage some of our most sensitive ecosystems, costing the economy more than £1.7 billion per year.*

*This order prevents the release of these animals back into the wild to help protect the endangered red squirrel, with only 15,000 left in England. There is no requirement for vets to euthanise injured or healthy squirrels as a result of this order.*

This move will bring England into line with established policies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where release licences are not issued.

The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order will come into effect during October 2019.

Under the EU Regulation, it is a requirement for management measures to be put in place for widespread invasive species. There will be an upcoming period of consultation on the Government's proposed management measures for these species.

To allow for this period of consultation, keeping and release licences issued by Natural England will be extended until the Order comes into force in October 2019.

The UK will continue to uphold international obligations as an EU member state and also as a responsible partner nation working closely with other countries to protect our native wildlife and forestry landscapes for future generations to enjoy.

The Government has a long-term strategy to help control grey squirrel populations where they are identified as a specific threat to forestry or to existing populations of red squirrels. The Grey Squirrel action plan is published [online](#).

Any companion animal of a listed species - that was kept before it was included on the EU list - may continue to be kept in secure accommodation, as long as it is not able to breed until the end of its natural life.

## **Government forestry policy statement**

The statement sets out clear priorities for future policy-making, focused on protecting, improving and expanding our public and private woodlands.

Published 31 January 2013

From: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)

This was published under the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government

### **Documents**

#### **[Government Forestry Policy Statement](#)**

Ref: PB13871PDF, 1.23MB, 49 pages

### **Details**

The Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement incorporates the Government's Response to the Independent Panel on Forestry's Final Report. It acknowledges the importance of the Panel's report and confirms that the Government shares its vision for the future of our forests.

It sets out clear priorities for future Government policy-making, focused on protecting, improving and expanding our public and private woodlands. It covers, among other things, the future of the Public Forest Estate, woodland creation and management, the economic development of the forestry sector, community involvement in local woodlands and tree health.

The statement confirms that the Public Forest Estate will remain in public ownership, and announces that a new body will be established to hold the Estate in trust of the nation and manage it for the long-term benefit of people, the economy and the environment.

**Further information**

- [Forestry](#)
- [Independent Panel on Forestry - Final Report](#)

## 4. Parliamentary

### 4.1 PQ

#### [Squirrels: Conservation](#)

**Asked by:** Harrison, Trudy

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent the potential extinction of red squirrels in the UK.

**Answering member:** Dr Thérèse Coffey | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

This is devolved matter and the below information relates to England only.

The Government is committed to protecting and expanding red squirrel populations and tackling the threats that grey squirrels pose to them. The Forestry Commission works with Natural England and other conservation organisations and projects to help protect red squirrel enclaves and to allow the populations to expand.

The Forestry Commission also undertakes a number of actions to protect red squirrels from the impact of grey squirrels as outlined in the grey squirrel action plan for England. These actions include Countryside Stewardship funding for landowners who choose to help protect red squirrels within designated reserves.

Defra, in partnership with the United Kingdom Squirrel Accord, has also provided funding for work by the Animal and Plant Health Agency for the development of a fertility control method for grey squirrels. This research continues to show promise as one potentially effective and humane method to control grey squirrel numbers in the longer term.

10 Apr 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 240064

#### [Non-native species](#)

**Asked by:** Smith, Henry

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether Natural England plans to consult on the implementation of the Invasive Alien Species Order 2019 to create species action plans that allow a flexible and risk-based management approach to licensing the release of (a) grey squirrels, (b) muntjac deer and (c) other widespread species where their release poses no threat to native wildlife.

**Answering member:** Dr Thérèse Coffey | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

While the rescue of wildlife will not be illegal under the Order, the re-release of listed invasive species that have been taken from the wild will not be permitted.

Neither grey squirrel nor muntjac deer are protected in the UK and both are highly invasive species which cause significant impacts on domestic ecosystems and protected species. Grey squirrels also have a negative impact on our forestry.

There are no plans to allow the release of widespread invasive species listed under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 2014, except as part of a specific licenced activity aimed at supporting the control of the species.

The UK is committed to reducing the impacts of invasive non-native species within our borders. The Invasive Aliens Species (enforcement and permitting) Order 2019 is part of fulfilling these commitments, as laid out by the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The Order also fulfils our obligations under the EU regulation to manage our widespread invasive non-native species.

19 Feb 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 219390

### [Non-native Species](#)

**Asked by:** Rosindell, Andrew

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the implementation of the Invasive Alien Species Order 2019 on the numbers of (a) grey squirrels and (b) muntjac deer.

**Answering member:** Dr Thérèse Coffey | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

No direct assessment has been carried out. The Government takes biosecurity extremely seriously and aims to reduce the impacts of invasive non-native species on our natural environment, the economy and human health. As part of this, the Government works closely with the UK Squirrel Accord and forestry interests to implement the grey squirrel action plan for England and provides funding to the Animal and Plant Health Agency to explore the potential for developing a fertility control method for grey squirrels. We have made a commitment that our exit from the EU will not to erode protections for the environment.

We therefore intend to uphold our commitment to the implementation of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 2014 which requires us to manage the populations of widespread species such as grey squirrel and muntjac deer.

31 Jan 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 211687

[Squirrels: Conservation](#)

**Asked by:** Campbell, Mr Gregory | **Party:** Democratic Unionist Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to increase the red squirrel population over the next five years.

**Answering member:** Dr Thérèse Coffey | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Government is committed to protecting and expanding red squirrel populations and tackling the threats that grey squirrels pose to them. This is a devolved matter. In England, the Forestry Commission works with Natural England and other conservation organisations and projects to help protect red squirrel enclaves and to allow the populations to expand.

The Forestry Commission also undertakes a number of actions to protect red squirrels from the impact of grey squirrels as outlined in the grey squirrel action plan for England. These actions include Countryside Stewardship funding for landowners who choose to help protect red squirrels within designated reserves.

Defra, in partnership with the United Kingdom Squirrel Alliance (UKSA), also provided funding for work by the Animal and Plant Health Agency for the development of a fertility control method for grey squirrels. This research, now in its third year, continues to show promise as one potentially effective method to control grey squirrel numbers in the longer term.

14 Nov 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 189605

- [Squirrels: Pest Control](#)

**Asked by:** Shannon, Jim

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of grey squirrels.

**Answering member:** Dr Thérèse Coffey | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We are working together with a range of stakeholders under the UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA), which aims to promote partnership working to both increase public awareness and support for action to protect our red squirrels and woodlands from the damage caused by grey squirrels. Defra and the Forestry Commission are signatories to the UK Squirrel Accord and are represented on the Accord Executive Committee. Under the joint grey squirrel action plan for England, Defra and the Forestry Commission (FC) are committed to working with land owners and other organisations to implement a package of measures to support targeted grey squirrel control. The action plan includes:

- Additional measures in forestry options of Countryside Stewardship for land managers to control grey squirrels (not just in red squirrel areas but in woodlands where squirrels are a threat to management plan objectives).
- Support for research and evidence.
- Taking action on the FC's own land holding (the public forest estate).

A team at the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) National Wildlife Management Centre is leading development of a contraceptive for grey squirrels. Defra provided initial funding of £39k in 2016/17 and a further £55k for 2017/18. Our contribution helped secure a further £125,000 for the APHA project from charitable trusts and the private sector coordinated through the UK Squirrel Accord and, although complementary, the Defra and UKSA funded work are separate projects.

06 Mar 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 129686

### [Squirrels: Conservation](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court

To ask Her Majesty's Government what contribution they made to the 2014 UK Squirrel Accord; and whether the red squirrel population is expanding relative to that of grey squirrels across the UK.

**Answering member:** Lord Gardiner of Kimble | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Government is committed to protecting and expanding red squirrel populations and tackling the threats that grey squirrels pose to them.

Defra and the devolved administrations are signatories to the UK Squirrel Accord, which aims to promote a coordinated approach to controlling grey squirrels and securing the future of our red squirrels. The UK Squirrel Accord supports the Government's long term strategy for controlling grey squirrel populations. Defra has provided funding to the Animal and Plant Health Agency to explore the potential for developing a fertility control method for grey squirrels.

In addition the Forestry Commission works with Natural England and other bodies as part of the Red Squirrel Northern England Project, a conservation project to help protect red squirrels and expand the biggest population of red squirrels left in England. Recent evidence shows the range for red squirrel presence in northern England is stable.

08 Jan 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL4362

**Date tabled:** 20 Dec 2017 | **Date for answer:** 08 Jan 2018 | **Date answered:** 08 Jan 2018

### [Squirrels](#)

**Asked by:** Campbell, Mr Gregory

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many (a) red and (b) grey squirrels there are in the UK (i) now and were (ii) in 2007.

**Answering member:** Dr Thérèse Coffey | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Forestry Commission estimates that there are 15,000 red squirrels in England and over two million grey squirrels. The red squirrel population is fragmented, occurring only in isolated populations on the islands in Poole Harbour, on the Isle of Wight and across the north of England with Kielder Forest, in Northumberland, supporting around 60% of the total population.

This estimate dates from 2014 and no more recent data is available. There is no data available for red and grey squirrel numbers in England for 2007. Wildlife is a devolved policy matter.

20 Nov 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 112856

### [Squirrels](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they have gathered on the reported decline of grey squirrels in areas with pine marten populations.

**Answering member:** Lord Gardiner of Kimble | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Forestry Commission is involved in the Vincent Wildlife Trust's pine marten recovery project in mid and north Wales. The Forestry Commission in England is supporting a project in the Forest of Dean with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Forest Research and others to pursue a pine marten restoration project. This project includes studies into impacts of pine martens including on trees and other wildlife. Natural England is also working with the Trust to restore viable populations of pine martens to northern England.

The Forestry Commission is also working closely with one of the authors of the paper that identified the decline in grey squirrel populations in the Irish midlands, which may be associated with the abundance of pine martens. The work with the author and others will further explore the relationship between red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens in the UK.

11 May 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL8221

## 4.2 Statement

### [Grey Squirrels](#)

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Jim Knight):** I am pleased to advise that we will, on Sunday 22 January, publish a Policy and Action Statement for the management of the Grey Squirrel in England's Woodlands. This has been prepared jointly by the Forestry Commission England and Defra.

The grey squirrel was introduced into this country in the 19th century and has spread widely. Grey squirrels are enjoyed by many as part of our wildlife but also represent a serious and growing threat to our native woodland and priority species.

This policy will set out the rationale and actions for the control of grey squirrels.

The Forestry Commission will continue to provide best practice guidance on the control of grey squirrel populations and will be targeting support where it will be most beneficial.

Copies of the Policy and Action Statement will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses on Monday and will also be available on Sunday from 7.30 am on the Forestry Commission website at:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/greysquirrel>.

20 Jan 2006 | Written statements | House of Commons | 441 c37WS

## 4.3 Debates

### [Red Squirrel Population](#)

28 Jun 2006 | Adjournment debates | House of Commons | Westminster Hall | 448 c103-18WH

Lead member: Cook, Frank | Answering member: Gardiner, Barry

### [Red Squirrels \(North-East England\)](#)

08 Sep 2004 | Adjournment debates | House of Commons | Westminster Hall | 424 c316-24WH

## 5. Further information

### **Forest Research**

[Management of grey squirrels](#)

### **Woodland Trust**

[Red squirrels](#)

### **Forestry England**

[Red Squirrel](#)

### **Red Squirrel Survival Trust**

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### **UK Squirrel Accord**

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