

Consultation Response Form

You are welcome to answer all or some of the questions.

Please submit your comments by 21 February 2018, by sending it by email to

ForestryPolicy@gov.wales

Or by post to

Forestry Resources Policy Branch,
Rhodfa Padarn,
Llanbadarn Fawr,
Aberystwyth,
SY23 3UR

Your Name: *Ceri Davies, Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting*

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Responses to engagement event or consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

Consultation Questions

1. Owing to limited resources, action for managing grey squirrel populations needs to be targeted. The categories stated at p.17 of the consultation document are not in order of priority as this will depend on the objectives of landowners and local groups. However, flagging these for targeting helps recognize the importance of these categories and could form the basis of further targeting in future.

Do you agree with these categories? Please give a reason for your response.

Yes	✓
No	

NRW agrees that these three categories should be priorities for targeting given the evidence of impact on red squirrel populations, woodland ecosystems and timber production.

Collectively these areas would represent a significant proportion of the woodland resource in Wales. A review every 5 years, identifying actions taken, funding requirements, roles and responsibilities going forward, and an assessment of affordability against benefits would help in assessing the success of these priorities.

2. A “vulnerability map” of wooded areas in Wales could be developed to help indicate where a collaborative approach to grey squirrel management could be focused.

Do you feel that this tool would assist in a collaborative and targeted approach to grey squirrel management? Please provide details of any other targeted approaches.

Yes	✓
No	

NRW gives cautious support for the development of a woodland vulnerability map, recognising the need for a tool to focus effort. However, additional priorities may also emerge at a local level based on landowner experience, willingness of a group of landowners to work co-operatively, and other SMNR priorities such as the need to establish woodland corridors to support ecosystem connectivity. The development of a vulnerability map should not preclude or dissuade groups from working elsewhere where collaboration is possible.

3. Draft actions 3) and 4) relate to support and incentives in future grant schemes with a focus on collaborative working. Do you agree that support, if available, should focus on a strategic and collaborative approach to grey squirrel population management? Please explain your answer.

Yes	✓
No	

Given the widespread distribution of grey squirrels and their ability to rapidly recolonise habitat, the greatest chance of maintaining an area free of grey squirrels or keeping numbers at a reduced level, will be through management at a landscape scale. Management undertaken in a piecemeal or uncoordinated manner is unlikely to yield benefits to either woodland quality or red squirrel conservation.

NRW suggests that any future grant schemes to support GS management for timber production should also ensure commitment to manage the woodland to the final crop. Grey squirrel control in isolation of good silvicultural management will not achieve quality high value timber.

4. Owing to limited resources, it is not possible or feasible to manage grey squirrel on every part of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. Draft action 5) relates to work that NRW could undertake when resources allow. Do you agree that this should be focused where it is feasible to do so and there is a partnership approach with other woodland owners? Please detail below any other considerations or limitations for identifying areas for action.

Yes	✓
No	

NRW recognises the importance of managing grey squirrels to protect biodiversity and woodlands. The WGWE does not sit in isolation of other woodlands and so it is appropriate that when implemented GS management should be taken in partnership with other woodland owners.

Currently GS management by NRW on the WGWE is prioritised to protect red squirrel populations identified as 'focal sites' in the Red Squirrel Conservation Plan for Wales. NRW works closely with the local red squirrel projects. Any extension to the areas where GS management is undertaken would need to be subject to a cost-benefit appraisal and would not be possible without additional resource.

5. Draft action 8) relates to working collaboratively to improve action on the ground. Do you agree? How could this be achieved?

Yes	✓
No	

Experience has shown that local, isolated management has limited effectiveness except in the very short term and collaborative action at a landscape scale would be a more effective use of scarce resources. However, with the exception of groups/individuals that are already involved in GS management, wider collaboration is unlikely to be achieved without an effective engagement process. An awareness raising programme is needed to highlight opportunities and benefits of working collaboratively with landowners and land managers.

There also needs to be engagement at a policy level so that future grant schemes and other funding opportunities are designed to encourage collaborative working. GS management in previous agri-environment schemes was targeted at priority red squirrel conservation areas, but there was no co-ordination between recipients which resulted in a piecemeal approach.

6. Draft action 10) relates to promoting best practice and training, and highlighting the need for risk assessment of damage. Do you agree that these actions are necessary to encourage grey squirrel management? How could this be done effectively?

Yes	✓
No	

As highlighted above, effective GS management will rely on awareness raising with a wider range of stakeholders. Investment of a small amount of resource to co-ordinate and support best practice training should be considered to initiate improved GS management across a wider range of sectors/stakeholders.

7. It is proposed that the Wales Squirrel Forum could be adapted to provide a steering group for the delivery of the plan and avoid duplication of effort. Do you agree that an adapted Wales Squirrel Forum would be the most appropriate

steering group to assist in the delivery of this plan? Please give reasons for your response.

Yes	✓
No	

The WSF's remit does currently include management of GS populations for both red squirrel conservation and tree protection. However, the membership will need to be reviewed to properly reflect a wider range of stakeholders for it to effectively cover the objectives of the GSMAP.

The WSF does not have any resource or constituted remit and so it will need to be acknowledged that the Forum has a co-ordinating role to support delivery rather than responsibility for ensuring delivery of the plan's objectives.

8. As accurate baseline monitoring data for grey squirrel populations and associated damage is not available, the plan proposes 3 monitoring methods. We are interested in hearing about other existing or potential monitoring methods that have not been referenced in the consultation document. What are these and what is involved?

NRW is not aware of other potential monitoring methods that would be suitable at present. Some research may be necessary to further develop monitoring options.

9. We would like to know your views on the effects that the draft grey squirrel management action plan would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

Please also explain how you believe the draft grey squirrel management action plan could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Implementation of the GSMAP should provide opportunities for all stakeholders to work bilingually. As such as guidance/training materials should be provided in English and Welsh.

10. The draft plan sets out the context for a grey squirrel management action plan for Wales, and actions that we feel are necessary and realistic in delivering action on the ground.

Are there any actions that you feel are unnecessary or have been missed?

Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

NRW was a member of the steering group that developed the draft GSMAP and we support the establishment of a more strategic approach. Whilst there are many challenges in the management of grey squirrels across Wales, the agreement of the action plan will help to focus discussions on approaches and raise awareness across a wider range of stakeholders.

How to respond

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