

The United Kingdom Squirrel Accord



[The UK Squirrel Accord](#) consists of 32 leading woodland, timber industry and conservation organisations in the UK. The Accord was created at the invitation of HRH Prince Charles who had the aim of bringing a concerted and coordinated approach to securing the future of our red squirrels and woodlands, and to controlling the introduced grey squirrel.

Long term vision for the future:

- Our native red squirrel populations are secure and have expanded beyond their current strongholds.
- Our woodlands are flourishing and can continue to deliver multiple benefits for future generations.

Aim

The Accord records a common purpose and resolve concerning squirrels in the United Kingdom. Grey squirrels need controlling because of the economic, social and environmental damage that they cause and their adverse impact on red squirrel populations which are part of the natural heritage of the United Kingdom and need protection. Many different parties are involved in work to protect reds or control greys. The signatories to this Accord recognize the vital importance of both these work areas and agree the following long term aim:

Red squirrel populations protected and thriving and greys controlled, through targeted and sustained action.

Why control grey squirrels?

Grey squirrels need controlling because they are causing major economic, social and environmental damage to the broadleaved woodlands of the United Kingdom.

The grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) was introduced to the UK from North America in 1876 and its population has grown rapidly since then.

The problem of grey squirrels was first recognised in 1930 when a law was passed making it illegal to release a grey squirrel into the wild. Today it is estimated that could be as many as 3 million grey squirrels in the UK and this number continues to grow.

Forest damage and the impact on the UK's woodland industry

Grey squirrels damage our forests by stripping bark from trees' main trunks (at the base and up in the canopy) and branches. When they strip a complete ring of bark around the tree, it will kill the tree.

The impact of grey squirrels on red squirrels

This colonisation has had devastating consequences for our native red squirrels as the grey squirrels were first introduced to England from North America in 1876 as an ornamental species to populate the grounds of stately homes. Around 30 separate introductions occurred until 1930 when the damage caused by the grey squirrel was recognised and it was made illegal to release a grey squirrel to the wild. Grey squirrels have rapidly spread and colonised much of mainland England with detriment to our native red squirrel.

Squirrelpox virus

The most significant threat associated with grey squirrels is the spread and transmission of a disease called squirrelpox virus (SQPV). It can take only one grey squirrel to introduce this virus to a local population of red squirrels and then the virus can spread throughout the reds with devastating effect. Where a grey squirrel introduces SQPV, red squirrel population decline has been observed at between 17-25 times quicker than through competition alone.

The Squirrel Accord commitment to the future

Our commitment to the effective and targeted control of grey squirrels and the protection of red squirrels will be achieved through the following key areas:

- Ensuring the public understand the importance of our work.
- Communicating to the public through platforms such as engaging with Landowners and local groups.
- Working with and building on existing partnerships to ensure that all relevant landowners are aware of the impact of grey squirrels.
- Offering practical support and advice on grey squirrel management.
- A long term commitment to practical action and scientific research, ensuring our work is in line with available national research and guidance, developing and trialling innovative control methods, research and monitoring, developing a series of case studies highlighting exemplary management, coordination and communication and so bringing groups together to ensure they work effectively and to a common purpose