

SRDP Funding for Squirrel Management

Bell Ingram provide a comprehensive package of skills required to undertake a grant application to the Scottish Rural Development Programme for grey squirrel control. The prime objective of this control is to reduce the threat to our native red squirrel population.



Bell Ingram is leading the way in applying for SRDP funding for the control of grey squirrels. We have an excellent relationship with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS) and to-date have had a 100% success rate with applications. A number of large and high profile estates have been awarded funding due to Bell Ingram's efforts generating nearly £250,000 of grant income over the next five years.

The idea behind the funding is to try and conserve our native red squirrel population in Scotland by controlling the number of grey squirrels and preventing their northward migration. (More information about the plight of the red squirrel and the threats it faces can be found over the page.)

Our designated member of staff will take care of every aspect of the application process, offering additional guidance and support where necessary. Often with these applications there are a number of estates / landowners involved and a collaborative project is required. This can be fully co-ordinated by Bell Ingram and often recommendations can be made as to potential collaborators.

The grant itself is a five year contract with the Scottish Government to plan and implement a formal trapping regime for grey squirrels using humane live capture traps. This regime must meet the minimum requirements of five sessions of eight days from January to December. The traps must be checked at least once every 24 hours and all red squirrels must be released without harm.

Grey squirrels need to be dispatched using the methods outlined in the Best Practice Guidelines.

In return for implementing this regime, an estate can be expected to receive £185 per trap, per annum. The number of traps that an estate will be allocated is dependant on the number of grey squirrels in the area and the resources available. The Scottish Government indicate that one trap per hectare should be used as an approximation, but every estate will differ.

All of our applicants have found this process to be financially and personally rewarding.

Bell Ingram represents a broad range of clients including private estate owners, farmers, public agencies and individual property owners and we have developed excellent working relationships with external organisations and charities. Our colleagues in other divisions/offices of Bell Ingram can provide additional expertise to assist projects where required.

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Red Squirrels in Scotland

This guide provides a brief overview of the plight of red squirrels in Scotland. The Scottish Rural Development Programme provides an excellent opportunity for estates and landowners to become more pro-active in trying to conserve our native red squirrel.



There are now an estimated 120,000 red squirrels in Scotland which represent approximately 75% of the UK population. They prefer to inhabit coniferous woodlands and their main food sources are the seeds from the cones of trees such as Scots Pine, Larch and Spruce. Although still relatively widespread across many parts of Scotland, their range is decreasing. Their main strongholds have been identified as the Highlands, Dumfries and Galloway and remaining Caledonian Pine Forest remnants.

The decreasing 'red' population has resulted in them being protected by the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981. This makes it an offence to trap, kill or keep a red squirrel except under license as well as to release a trapped grey squirrel. Red squirrels have been recognised as a priority species so are subject to a UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Organisations like Saving Scottish Red Squirrels (SSRS) are helping to meet the objectives of the UK BAP, but still need further co-operation from landowners.

Grey squirrels were introduced from North America at the beginning of the 20th Century and are larger and heavier than their British relative. Although they prefer broadleaved woodland, they are less choosy about what they eat so if there is a shortage of food then they can normally cope better than reds. For the past fifty years the spread of grey squirrels has moved progressively north.

Greys tend to use riverside woodlands as their main migration routes and displace reds as they go by competitive exclusion. Saving Scottish Red Squirrels has estimated that once greys get into an area, it only takes between 12-14 years to fully displace all the reds. This increased competition for food will result in increased mortality of red squirrels, especially in the more vulnerable juveniles.

One of the major causes for concern is Squirrel Pox; a viral disease affecting red squirrels, killing them within 15 days of infection. Ironically it is carried by grey squirrels, but they show no symptoms of the disease. As a result they continue to thrive and breed whilst transmitting the virus to the reds.

Undoubtedly, grey squirrels are by far the biggest threat to our red squirrel population and is estimated that grey squirrels outnumber reds by 2:1 in Scotland. Unless more is done this situation is only going to get worse.

The Scottish Rural Development Programme provides an excellent opportunity for estates and landowners to become more pro-active in trying to conserve our native red squirrel. The financial rewards certainly make it a worthwhile venture and the results that Bell Ingram has witnessed from estates, that have already implemented their formal trapping regime, far exceeded our expectations.