

# **Grey Squirrel Policy**

**Version 1**

**Date issued: 25/02/2025**

## Rationale for the policy

Grey squirrels, introduced to the UK from North America, are an invasive species in Westmorland and Furness, and are spreading throughout Cumbria, threatening biodiversity, and impacting on economic activity. In particular they have led to the extirpation of the native red squirrel from most of the UK and causes significant economic damage to forestry.

### Links to Council Plans, Policies and Strategies

The apex goal in the Council's Nature and Biodiversity Action Plan (Part One) is to have thriving plants and wildlife. We seek to take action on climate change and biodiversity loss and redress damage and protect our environment for the long-term. We aim to recover species abundance and range, including iconic species such as the red squirrel and support our partners to protect native species and manage invasive non-native species.

This policy represents part of the solution towards meeting these aims through the justified control of the invasive non-native grey squirrel. This is a necessary action to prevent the extirpation of red squirrels, reduce economic losses in the forestry industry and meet our statutory obligations.

### Links to Central Government Policy

Several pieces of legislation pertain to the management of grey squirrel populations. These include the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019, and the Forestry Act 1967.

In addition, there is relevant legislation pertaining to the conservation of red squirrels, a UK priority species, that require grey squirrel management. These include the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Although currently in draft form, the red squirrel will be a priority species in the upcoming Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and is an important target species for meeting the Council's obligations under the Biodiversity Duty and the Environment Act 2021.

## Actions for the Council

The Council will work in partnership to facilitate appropriate control of grey squirrels in Westmorland and Furness. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Exploring how the Council can best contribute to controlling grey squirrels where they threaten to cause economic, environmental or social harm, especially when associated with Council owned and managed sites. This includes areas that act as reservoirs for squirrels that may disperse into red squirrel areas or susceptible woodlands.
- Granting licences for relevant incorporated groups to undertake appropriate management of grey squirrels on Council owned or managed sites through the use of trained operatives. Actions will be informed using the flowchart that can be accessed using the link below and will take into consideration the type of Council land that they are on.
- Supporting relevant agencies exploring medium and long-term strategies for (a) removal of grey squirrels and (b) expansion of red squirrels as outlined in the 'England Red Squirrel Action Plan 2023-2028'.
- Encouraging and supporting public education on grey squirrel matters through making appropriate information available on our website.
- Ensuring that actions taken against grey squirrels are in line with current law and carefully consider health and safety, public exposure, and the humane management of animals.
- Considering the impact of changes to green, blue and grey infrastructure on the future distribution and abundance of priority species as defined by UK Government policy and the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

A flowchart diagram to assist with choosing grey squirrel control strategies and methods can be found on page 3 of the [UK Forestry Standard Technical Note: Controlling grey squirrels in forests and woodlands in the UK \(2019\)](#).

## Monitoring and Review

Given the potential for rapid changes in grey squirrel distribution and abundance, this document should be reviewed on an annual basis. The review should include a review of good practice and a meeting with appropriate stakeholders to receive updates on grey squirrel issues and revisit how the Council could further support appropriate actions.