



FORESTRY FUNDING WASTED WITHOUT GREY SQUIRREL CONTROL

Grey squirrel control must be one of the conditions fulfilled by applicants wishing to apply for support under a new forestry funding programme announced by the government last week, according to charity, the European Squirrel Initiative (ESI).

“While we welcome the government’s support for farmers and landowners in helping to create new woodlands, this must go hand in hand with proper management and this means effective grey squirrel control. If this does not happen then this project will fail and more taxpayers’ money will be wasted,” said Andy Wiseman, chairman of ESI.

“Already we have seen government funding into new woodland creation wasted due to lack of support for consistent and coordinated grey squirrel control. It has been estimated that grey squirrel damage and the consequential economic impact costs the UK forestry industry in excess of £150m per annum and more woodland creation will add to this bill unless woodland protection conditions are attached to payments to ensure that the new woodland is established for the long term” he added.

The announcement, by forestry Minister, Therese Coffey, stated that farmers, foresters and land managers will be able to apply for up to £6800 per hectare to plant, weed and protect new woodland as part of the next round of the governments Woodland Creation grant. The fund, which is part of the Countryside Stewardship scheme amounts to £13m and aims to plant more than 3 million trees.

Grey squirrels are invasive aliens and recognised by government as a pest species. They are now classified by a recent EU Regulation as a species which governments have an obligation to control. Recent figures released by the EU show that non-native species cost the members states in excess of £12bn a year.

“There is no doubt that the government must honour its obligations and insist on grey squirrel control. Unless this happens, the trees planted today will not grow to maturity tomorrow. In addition, timber quality will suffer together with detrimental impacts on our native flora and fauna. We cannot afford to throw money away and government has an opportunity to put measures in place to ensure that we have a healthy and vibrant forestry and woodland sector throughout the UK which will benefits the environment and wider biodiversity in the future,” said Mr Wiseman

“2017 is the 30th anniversary of the Great Storm of 1987. We must take note of the fact that trees planted following that event are now at their most vulnerable to damage by grey squirrels. Huge government support was given to encourage new planting but with no requirement to control grey squirrels. Unfortunately, the results of this can now be seen, with no hope that this large-scale new planting will ever be able to match that it was designed to replace. We must learn from our mistakes”.



ENDS

Notes to Editors:

The European Squirrel Initiative:

The grey squirrel, *Sciurus Carolinensis*, a native species of North America, was introduced to England from the late 19th century, until 1938 when it became illegal to import or keep the species in captivity.

The European Squirrel Initiative was founded in June 2002 by a group of concerned conservationists and foresters. The organisation seeks the restoration of the native red squirrel and the protection of the natural environment by removing the impact of the alien grey squirrel in Europe.

Its role is to:

- Persuade conservation bodies and governments of the absolute necessity of ridding Europe of the grey squirrel.
- Continue to commission research into the Impact of the grey squirrel on local ecosystems.

For more information visit the ESI website: www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org

Issued on behalf of the European Squirrel Initiative by Kendalls.

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