



# Red Squirrels United: a nationwide approach to red squirrel conservation

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Ulster Wildlife



LIFE14 NAT/UK/000467

# Red Squirrels United



- The first UK-wide network working together to secure the future of our red squirrels, uniting 40 organisations across the UK and 5,000 volunteers.
- The largest invasive species management programme in Europe, representing a significant investment by EU LIFE and HLF of ~£3 million.
- A scientifically robust programme of conservation, protecting nine main stronghold red squirrel populations.



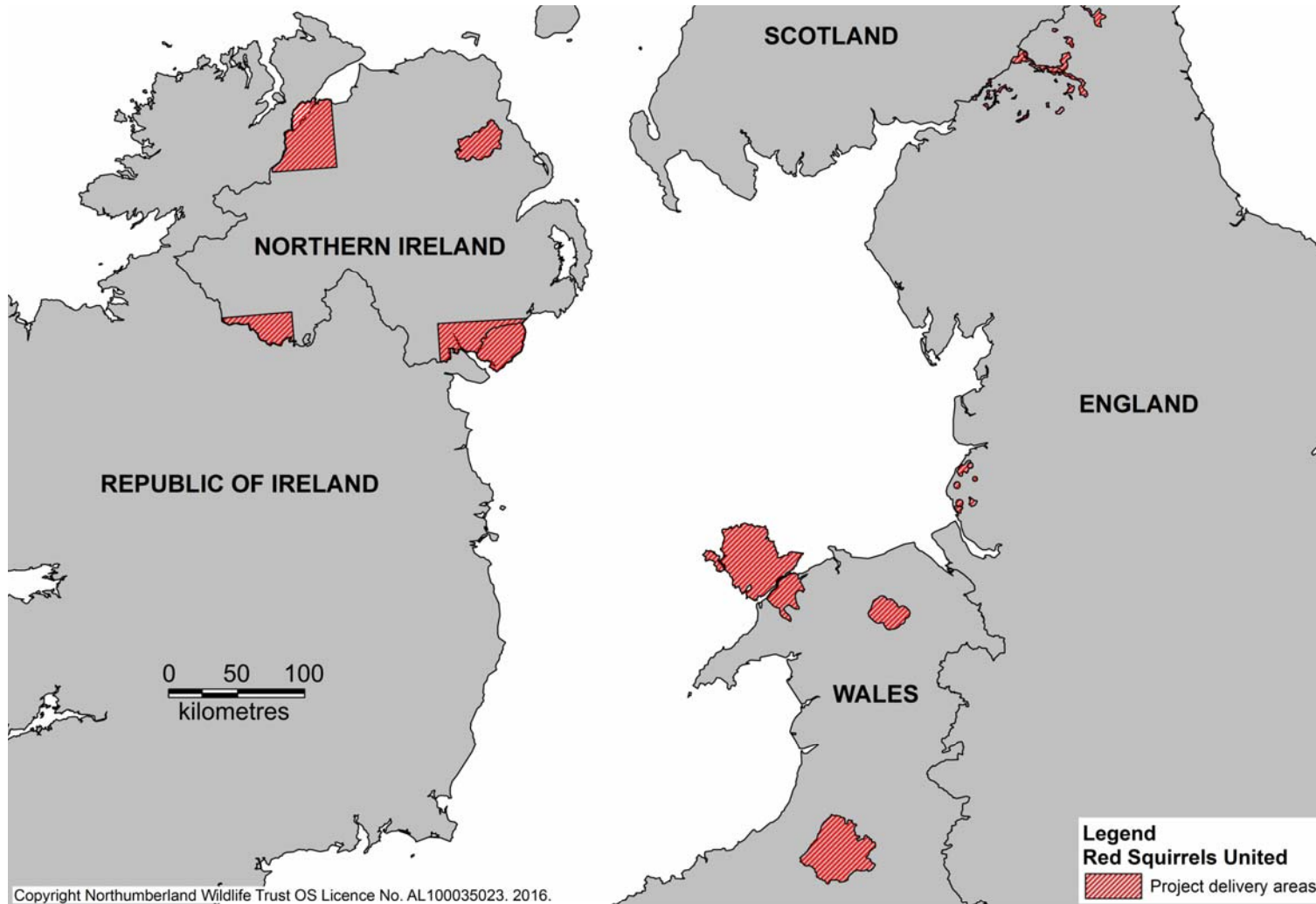
# Red Squirrels United Mission



- Support local communities carrying out red squirrel conservation.
- Monitor squirrel populations and prevent the further spread of invasive non-native grey squirrels.
- Underpin our conservation work with the latest scientific research.
- Share knowledge and best practice on invasive species management.



# Red Squirrels United Conservation Areas



# Engaging the community

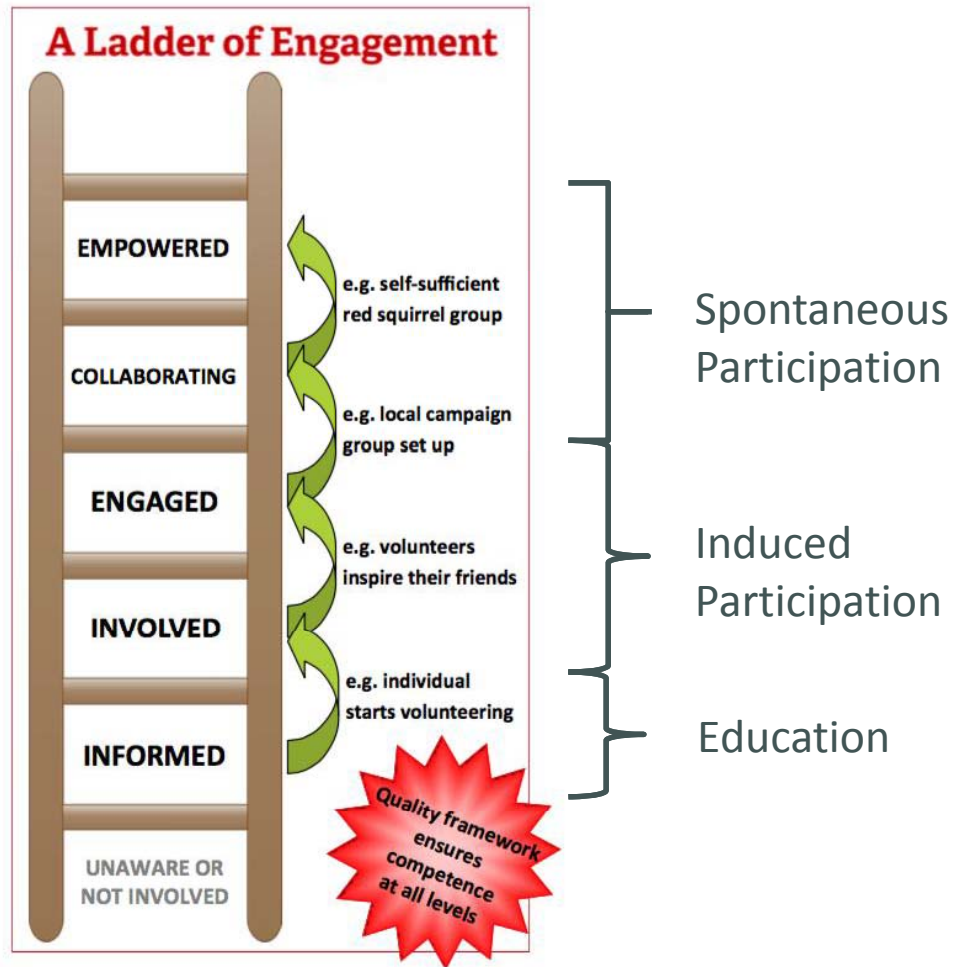


## Results from Forest Service Public Attitudes Survey

Segment	Current	Objective	How do we find them?
Squirrel rejecters (9%)	Aren't interested in seeing any squirrels	Ignore	N/A
Wildlife ambivalents (8%)	They wouldn't mind seeing squirrels but this is low in their list of priorities and they are not willing to take any action for wildlife	Ignore	N/A
Generalist squirrel appreciators (55%)	They like wildlife but are unaware of the threats. Likelihood to act is low. May be gardening positively for wildlife and enjoy spending time outdoors	Raise awareness of the need to conserve red squirrels Inspire them to visit locations where they can see red squirrels.	National media, Social media linking to titles that connect with their interest in wildlife, gardening and sending time outdoors.
Active Wildlife enthusiasts (26%)	Already take action such as wildlife gardening and green consumerism and some are more actively volunteering and/or signing petitions for wildlife issues	As above plus: If they live in an area with red squirrels then encourage them to take positive action e.g. feeding, nest boxes, recording sightings. If they don't then potentially encourage supporting red squirrel conservation financially e.g. red squirrel adoption	Existing members of conservation organisations, volunteers in their local community, campaign petition signers. Visit natural places, garden centres etc. Typically have more time and/or money e.g. retired, higher wealth, suburban/rural rather than urban
Animal welfare/rights advocates (2%)	Don't want any animal to be killed – a small proportion of these will be activists and vocal	They don't focus on grey squirrel management	Reactive response to them making contact Proactive mapping of key influencers in this sector through past contacts, social media, blogs etc.

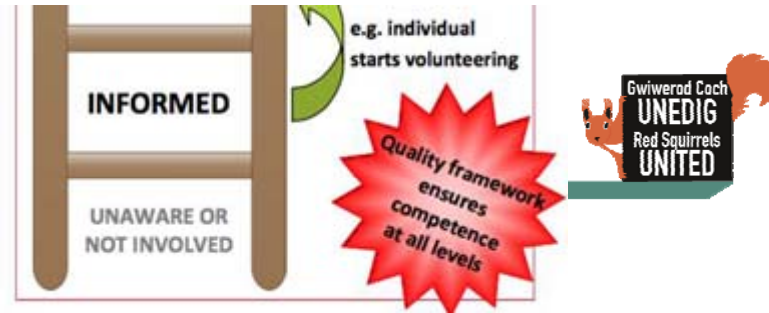


# Empowering the community





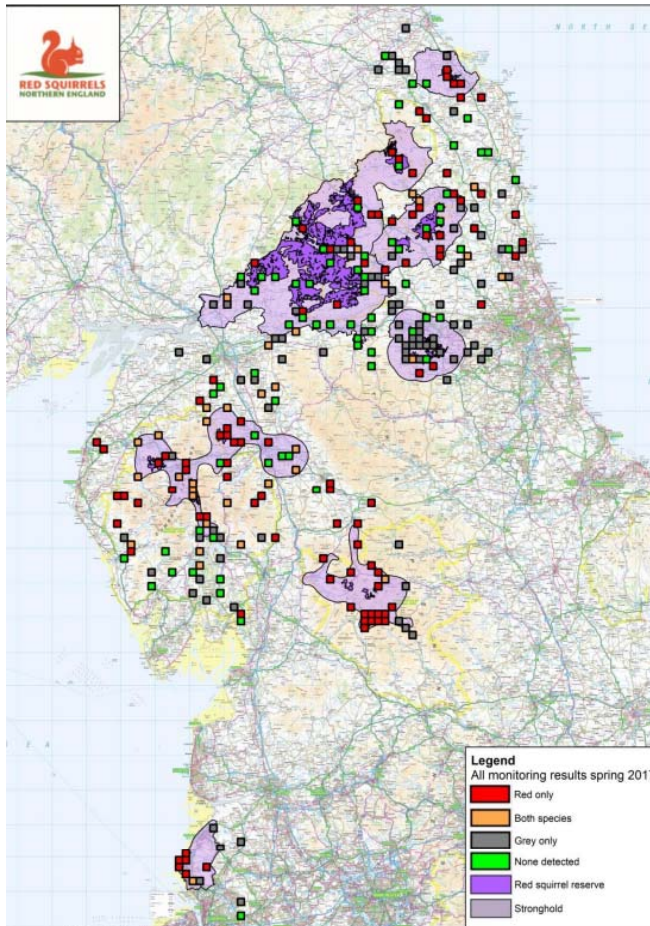
# Red Squirrels United - Informing



- 🦉 National press campaign
- 🦉 Call for volunteers on 24/02/2017 gained national coverage:
  - 🦉 BBC Breakfast, BBC News, ITV Good Morning Britain, ITV News, Sky News Sunrise, Channel Five News
  - 🦉 BBC Radio 1, 2, 4, 5 live, World Service, Planet Rock
  - 🦉 The Guardian, Daily Mail, Daily Express, Sunday Post, The Sun, The Times, Daily Telegraph, Metro, Washington Post
  - 🦉 Inundated with requests for help and running out of woodlands!

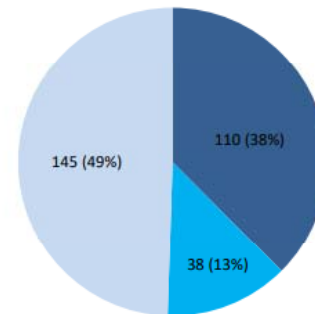


# Northern England – Involving and Engaging



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Survey data from Northern England (Spring 2017)



Portion of surveys carried out by volunteers / local groups / eNGO (Spring 2017)



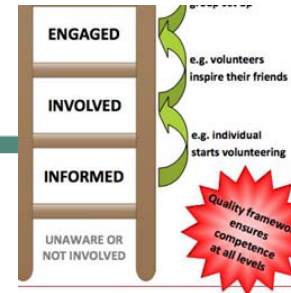
- Local RSGs
- RSNE staff
- Other volunteers

- 150 volunteers involved (not including volunteers from local groups)
- In total volunteers responsible for **87%** of survey effort
- Survey has been ongoing since 2012





# Northern Ireland – Involving and Engaging



Training



Thank You Events



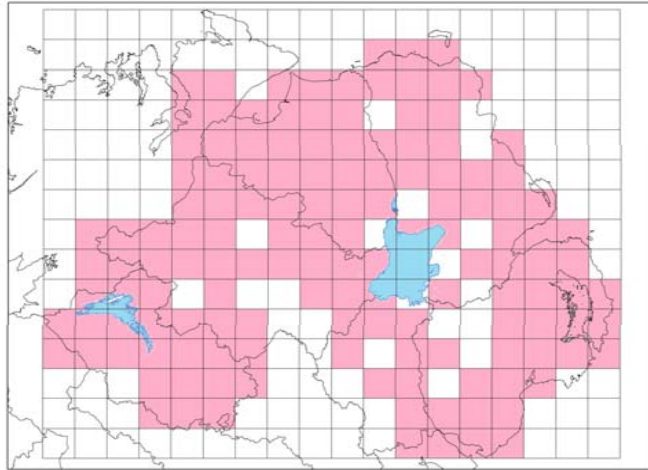
Experiencing



Gifts / Bribes

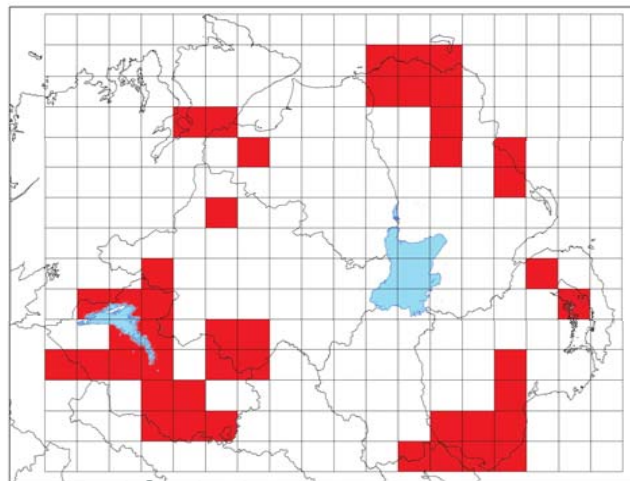


# Northern Ireland – Involving and Engaging

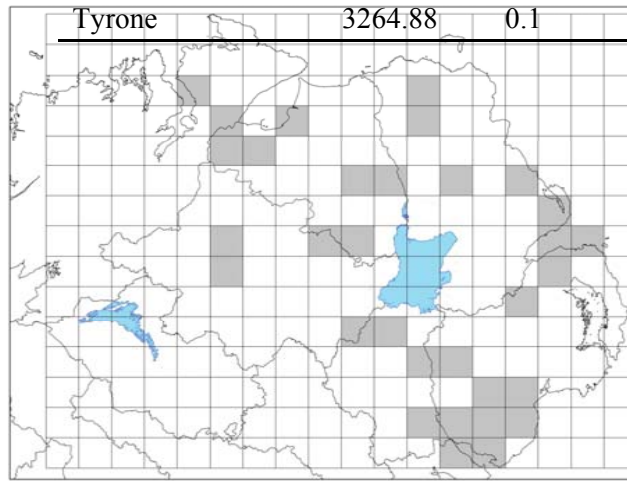


NI Presence / Absence Survey

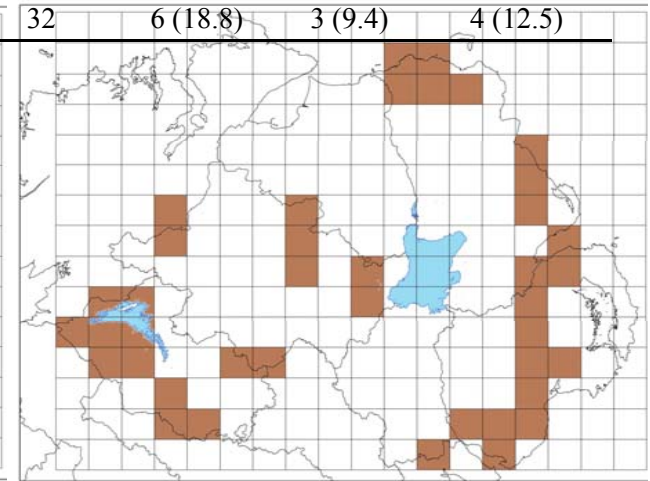
County	County area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Survey sites per 10km <sup>2</sup> (effort)	Number of woodlands surveyed	No. of sites with red squirrel (%)	No. of sites with grey squirrel (%)	No. of sites with pine marten (%)
Antrim	3095.63	0.14	41	16 (39.0)	5 (12.2)	7 (17.1)
Armagh	1325.86	0.08	11	2 (18.2)	4 (36.4)	2 (18.2)
Donegal	4857.44	0.02	11	3 (27.3)	2 (18.2)	0 (0)
Down	2498.76	0.22	54	9 (16.7)	23 (42.6)	11 (20.4)
Fermanagh	1850.59	0.25	46	20 (43.5)	0 (0)	19 (41.3)
L/Derry	2121.13	0.2	42	4 (9.5)	13 (36.0)	0 (0)
Tyrone	3264.88	0.1	32	6 (18.8)	3 (9.4)	4 (12.5)



Red Squirrels



Grey Squirrels



Pine Marten





# Northern Ireland - Collaborating



## Red Squirrel and Pine Marten Community Meeting

We're seeking volunteers to help us protect red squirrels and pine martens in woodlands across North Down. Get involved and help give our last remaining reds a fighting chance of survival.

A survey carried out last year has revealed populations of pine marten and red squirrels across some fragmented woodlands across North Down.

If you'd like to find out more please join us at Hollywood Library on **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 6:30pm.**

**All welcome!**

**Presentation starts at 6:30pm.**

**Want to know more?**  
E-mail: [conor.mckinney@ulsterwildlife.org](mailto:conor.mckinney@ulsterwildlife.org)  
Telephone: 028 90463 111  
<http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/redsquirrels>



# The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum - Collaborating



**Statutory Body Signatories:**  
**(Also provide Chair and Secretariat)**

**Private Sector**



**Third sector organisations**

**Grassroots community groups**



*Protecting,  
Maintaining*





# The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum - Collaborating



The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) was established to bring together statutory and non-statutory organization as well as representatives of country parks, private landowners and local volunteer organizations dedicated to protecting the red squirrel in Northern Ireland.

## Squirrel Hygiene Protocol

### Squirrel feeding station / trap hygiene

The squirrelpox virus is responsible for the disease known as squirrel pox which presents in red squirrels with a mange, scab or myxomatosis-like symptoms, leading to rapid loss of body condition and then death. There is no practical treatment for sick squirrels; the reds tend to die within 10-14 days. The virus appears to be endemic amongst the UK grey squirrel population and its effects on this species appear unclear. Nearly all grey squirrels with pox antibodies do not display any outward symptoms.

The virus appears to be spread via a number of routes, with ectoparasites being a primary pathway, however, live virus is found in faeces, urine and saliva. Pox viruses are fairly robust and will survive outside the host for a considerable time if the conditions are favourable. Dry weather may mean the virus remains viable for over a month. Wet conditions will reduce its viable period considerably. Outside the host the virus can be killed by good hygiene procedures using disinfectants and bleaches which may help reduce its spread within the local population.

There are a wide range of other pathogens that affect red squirrels, and the other wildlife that they may come into contact with. Feeders will attract other mammals and birds to feed on spill food, and traps will regularly capture non-target species, therefore, the risk of disease transmission is high. By following these guidelines, you should help reduce these infections. (During confirmed squirrelpox outbreaks, feeding stations should be closed down, squirrels can be scatter fed).

### Feeders and feeding stations.

Good feeding station hygiene should be observed at all times. The regularity of the cleaning regime will be determined by, feeder construction, usage, soiling, weather and threat of pox. Where there are both red and grey squirrels in close contact, this schedule should be at least fortnightly. Not only does this reduce the risk of squirrelpox transmission but it reduces the risk of other diseases and vectors coming into contact with red squirrels.

Although there is no evidence that squirrelpox can be transmitted to humans, a number of other pathogens carried by squirrels may do so, always wear good quality waterproof nitrile gloves to protect your hands when working on or around squirrel feeders. Wash your hands well on completion of the task or before eating, drinking or smoking.



## Grey Squirrel Control Protocol



### Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum Standard Operating Procedure:

#### Control of Grey Squirrels for Red Squirrel Conservation - A Code of Good Practice.

Our native red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) is at significant risk of being displaced by the introduced eastern American grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*). The larger grey squirrel can easily outcompete the red squirrel for resources, including food and habitat. Across the UK grey squirrels are known carriers of diseases such as the squirrel pox virus and the adenovirus. Both viruses are fatal to the red squirrel population, whilst causing no known harm to the grey squirrel. Grey squirrels are rapidly increasing in number and are expanding their range across Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) takes the view that red squirrel conservation is only possible where grey squirrel control is carried out as part of the management prescription for red squirrels.

This Code of Practice has been created to act as a guide to any NI Government Agency, non-governmental organisation, or volunteer controlling the grey squirrel population on behalf of their local Red Squirrel Group or for private land owners who wish to undertake grey squirrel control for conservation or tree protection reasons.

This document describes suitable control measures and their use. The timing of these measures should be determined by the landowner, and where appropriate, the squirrel group (with the landowner's permission). Where it is deemed that grey squirrel control is necessary, the operator must do so in a professional and humane manner.

There are several methods by which grey squirrels can be controlled recommended by the NISF. The NISF would strongly advise that all persons intent on undertaking grey squirrel control undergo some practical training with an experienced person before embarking on a programme of grey squirrel control. Those persons operating on land with public access or land belonging to a third party and those working with groups of volunteers must ensure that have appropriate levels of insurance.

#### **1. Permission of landowner to control target species.**

It is of the utmost importance before any control of grey squirrels is undertaken that the permission of the landowner (preferably written) is obtained. Where the landowner does not control the sporting rights, it will also be necessary to seek the permission of the owner(s) of the sporting rights.



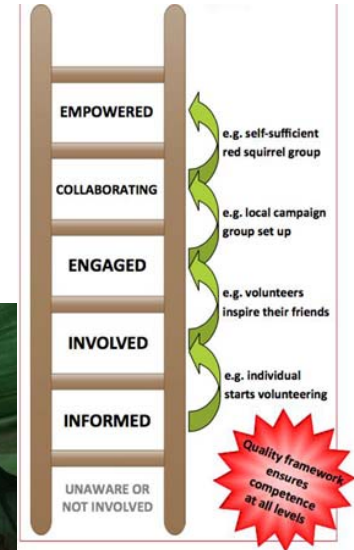
# Northern Ireland - Empowering



30 members

- 7 - Retired / Not working
- 1 - Farmer
- 2 - MSc student
- 1 - High School Student
- 1 - Secondary School teacher
- 1 - Conservationist
- 2 - Engineer
- 1 - Tradesman

Etc etc.....





# Northern Ireland - Empowering



Muff Glen 2017:

Total Control Count = 45





# Northern Ireland - Empowering



🔴 Illegal



🔴 Legal





# Northern Ireland - Empowering



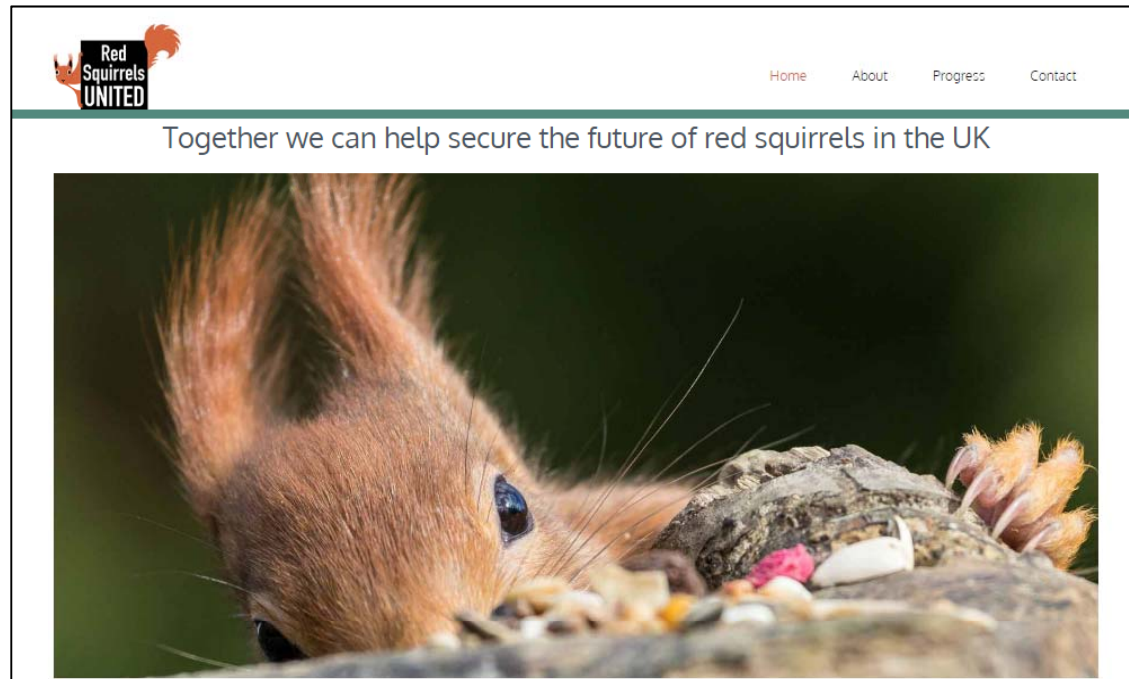
Muff Glen, Enagh Lough,  
Prehen, St Colombs Park 2018:  
Total Control Count so far = 105



# Red Squirrels United Communication



- Visit us: [www.redsquirrelsunited.org.uk](http://www.redsquirrelsunited.org.uk)
- Follow us: [www.facebook.com/RedSquirrelsUnited/](https://www.facebook.com/RedSquirrelsUnited/)
- Tweet us: <https://twitter.com/RedSquirrelsRSU>
- Meet us: Annual knowledge fairs



Thank you for listening



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