

Strategy

2026-2031



UK
SQUIRREL
ACCORD

Introduction



Our vision: A future where red squirrels are recovering, woodlands are thriving and collaborative action is delivering positive outcomes for nature and people.

In 2015, the UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA) was established to help protect the UK's native red squirrels and young trees, and reduce the negative impacts of invasive grey squirrels. The partnership continues to grow in impact and membership, and welcomes new signatories that complement and strengthen our work.

The following five-year strategy was developed with UKSA partners. Research was conducted with representatives from UKSA signatories on the drivers and challenges to partnership success. Results fed into a series of partner workshops held across the UK. Outcomes were prioritised and then further developed by a partner steering group.

This collaboratively developed strategy identifies activities to be coordinated through core UKSA resources, alongside wider partnership actions as we move into our second decade. Working together we can create a brighter future for the UK's red squirrels, trees and woodland ecosystems.

UKSA would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this strategy. There are many opportunities to contribute to delivering our shared objectives. Please get involved and help us achieve more together.

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Partnership & Governance

Objective

A strong, coordinated & committed UKSA partnership delivering collective impact.

Need

UKSA is a multi-sector partnership that needs effective coordination, trust and structures to deliver collective impact.

Resources

- Existing UKSA signatory base
- Executive Committee, subcommittees and UKSA staff
- Communication tools and platforms

Goals

- Strengthened governance framework with clear roles and accountability
- High signatory engagement and active collaboration

Core UKSA activities

- Update governance documents and role descriptions
- Develop a partnership engagement plan and maintain communications channels
- Deliver annual partnership meetings and opportunities to bring signatories together
- Produce an annual partnership summary for public dissemination

Partnership activities

- Outline clear actions signatories can take to support UKSA and deliver its aims

Intended impact

UKSA is a trusted and coordinated partnership effectively working together to deliver greater collective impact.



Funding & Resources

Objective

UKSA secures the resources needed to deliver its strategy and aims.

Need

Delivering UKSA's aims requires sustained and diverse funding and operational capacity. Current funding is limited and uncertain. The current fundraising target is £750,000 for grey squirrel fertility control research and partnership management. This does not include the in-kind support from partners which is needed and greatly appreciated.

Resources

- Fundraising skills and networks across partners
- UKSA staff time and expertise
- Funder relationships and track record
- In-kind support from partners

Goals

- Secure diverse funding streams
- Strengthen UKSA capacity to deliver strategy

Core UKSA activities

- Develop and implement a fundraising strategy
- Establish a signatory fundraising network

Partnership activities

- Explore innovative funding mechanisms
- Maintain and expand in-kind support from partners

Intended impact

UKSA has the resources needed to lead, coordinate and support delivery of its strategy.

Red Squirrel Recovery

Objective

Red squirrels are recovering across more of the UK.

Need

Red squirrels have declined dramatically across the UK due to habitat loss, competition from grey squirrels and squirrelpox virus. Conservation efforts are fragmented and under-resourced. There is a need for coordinated action to support species recovery.

Resources

- UKSA signatories
- Volunteer networks
- NGOs, landowners and government support
- Initiatives and projects
- Existing national and local squirrel strategies
- Grey squirrel fertility control development

Goals

- Reduce grey squirrel threats in red squirrel areas
- Increase the delivery of evidence-based management activities

Core UKSA activities

- Identify how UKSA can support relevant country strategies and action plans
- Facilitate partnership working to benefit red squirrel recovery
- Facilitate expansion of landscape-scale activity within the UKSA project area

Partnership activities

- Support delivery of initiatives and projects that align with UKSA aims
- Share guidance and training on best practice management methods
- Advocate for the inclusion of red squirrel recovery in relevant strategies
- Establish a UK-wide volunteer network for support and knowledge sharing
- Coordinate periodical updates of the squirrel distribution map and disseminate

Intended impact

Red squirrels are recovering across more of the UK, supported by collaborative actions.



Healthy Trees & Woods

Objective

Trees are better protected from negative grey squirrel impacts.

Need

Widespread bark stripping by grey squirrels leads to significant damage to trees, impacting woodland health, carbon storage and biodiversity. This damage also incurs economic costs for woodland owners and managers.

Resources

- Research on bark stripping impacts
- Signatory and partner knowledge and engagement
- Landowner and land manager networks
- Policy frameworks related to woodland health
- Grey squirrel fertility control development

Goals

- Increase adoption of effective grey squirrel management
- Improve landowner engagement and integration in woodland plans

Core UKSA activities

- Identify how UKSA can support relevant country strategies and action plans
- Facilitate partnership working to benefit healthy trees and woods
- Facilitate expansion of landscape-scale activity within the UKSA project area

Partnership activities

- Promote and scale-up management actions – including new methods as they become available
- Share data on tree damage and effective responses
- Engage landowners in proactive protection
- Advocate for woodland resilience in policy and practice

Intended impact

A reduction in the level of bark stripping damage on UK trees and improved woodland health.

Research, Evidence & Monitoring

Objective

Robust evidence helps inform conservation, land management and policy decisions.

Need

Conservation, land management and policy decisions must be evidence based, but current data on squirrel populations, impacts and interventions is patchy, inconsistent or inaccessible.

Resources

- Fertility control research programme
- Monitoring networks and citizen science projects
- Partnerships with academic institutions
- UKSA subcommittees and working groups

Goals

- Improve accessibility and use of evidence
- Increase engagement in monitoring systems across the UK

Core UKSA activities

- Agree and promote national research priorities with signatories and academic institutions
- Oversee grey squirrel fertility control programme development and delivery

Partnership activities

- Seek to ensure research is delivering for identified priorities
- Improve engagement with monitoring and increase data access
- Address the issue of data standardisation
- Enhance and promote the UKSA resources library

Intended impact

Squirrel and woodland management decisions are guided by robust and collaborative evidence.



Policy & Advocacy

Objective

Policies & policymakers support the delivery of UKSA aims.

Need

Policy frameworks and political support are critical to address the threats posed by grey squirrels and enable conservation of native species and healthy woodlands.

Resources

- Government and political relationships
- Evidence from research and monitoring
- UKSA signatories and committee expertise
- Existing UK and devolved policy levers

Goals

- Policies are effectively implemented
- Policymakers are supportive of UKSA aims

Core UKSA activities

- Maintain constructive engagement with policymakers
- Identify key champions within the policy sector
- Support delivery of relevant country policies
- Provide evidence to policymakers

Partnership activities

- Contribute evidence for policymakers
- Encourage more delivery of key policies

Intended impact

UK and devolved governments are taking coordinated policy action to support red squirrel recovery and healthy woodland ecosystems.

Awareness, Engagement & Communications

Objective

Increased public & partner support for achieving UKSA aims.

Need

Public and partner support is essential to enable effective grey squirrel management and red squirrel recovery, but awareness is variable and opposition to management exists.

Resources

- UKSA brand, communications tools and messaging guidance
- Partner networks and platforms
- Campaigns such as Red Squirrel Awareness Week
- Stories, case studies and ambassadors

Goals

- Strengthen public understanding and visibility
- Expand community and youth engagement

Core UKSA activities

- Coordinate messaging and storytelling across partners
- Deliver public-facing campaigns and events
- Refresh and promote communications tools and content
- Publish a 'State of UK Squirrels' report based on available evidence

Partnership activities

- Support delivery of communications activities, campaigns and events
- Expand outreach activities

Intended impact

More people across the UK are informed and motivated to support UKSA and its aims.



Key Performance Indicators

UKSA core

1. Percentage of signatories actively engaged annually
2. Core operational funding secured and maintained
3. Number of coordinated partnership, policy and communications activities delivered
4. Communications reach and engagement across UKSA channels and campaigns

UKSA partnership

1. Collaborative projects and funding aligned with UKSA aims
2. Participation in management, monitoring and knowledge-sharing activity
3. Policy and sector engagement supporting UKSA objectives
4. Evidence of positive trends for red squirrels and woodland resilience

Strategy Delivery

Over the past decade, UKSA has demonstrated the value of partnership working in tackling complex challenges facing the UK's red squirrels, trees and woodland ecosystems.

The next five years provide an opportunity to build on that foundation. By working together, sharing knowledge and embracing innovation, we can accelerate progress towards red squirrel recovery, healthier woodlands and sustainable solutions to the impacts of grey squirrels.

UKSA will continue to provide leadership, coordination and opportunities for collaboration, helping partners align their efforts, share expertise and maximise their collective impact.

We invite signatories and stakeholders across the UK to play their part in delivering this strategy. Whether through practical action, research, advocacy, funding, communications or partnership working, everyone has a role to play.

Together, we can achieve more than any one organisation alone.



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