



Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels in Dumfries and Galloway

Final Report to Dumfries and Galloway LEADER, August 2020

Background to the project

1. How was the idea for the project developed?

The national Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS) project was first established in 2009 to reverse the decline of red squirrel populations in Scotland. From 2009 to 2016 our pilot programme of landscape-scale grey squirrel control across targeted areas in Dumfries and Galloway brought red squirrel populations in areas affected by grey squirrel colonisation back from the brink, e.g. Annan Valley, Nithsdale, moving them from dwindling to thriving. The work in this period established that red squirrels can recover and thrive in suitable areas where grey squirrel densities are kept very low, even with the presence of squirrelpox. It also demonstrated that there is widespread community and land manager support for this initiative.

This project was therefore developed in 2016 with the aim of building on this support and enthusiasm to put in place an innovative and sustainable way to deliver red squirrel conservation over the long-term via public participation. The development of the project took into account lessons learned in this initial phase as well as the results of consultation with the community and other stakeholders. Substantial research was also carried out in the development phase into optimal methods of delivering and supporting community action.

2. Who was involved in the project? Individuals and Organisations.

The project recruited the following members of staff: Conservation Officer (1FTE) and Community Engagement Officer (0.45FTE), both based in Dumfries and Galloway. The local Grey Squirrel Officer (GSO) was also key in delivering project activities and the project-specific costs of this role were included in this proposal. All staff were employed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, where the national SSRS Project Manager, Data Officer, Communications and Engagement Officer and Administrator provided central support to the Dumfries and Galloway project..

At a national level, the central partnership for SSRS consists of the Scottish Wildlife Trust as voluntary conservation body, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) as statutory agency, Scottish Forestry as major land and forest owner and forestry regulatory body, Scottish Land & Estates (SL&E) as influential landowner organisation, RSPB Scotland as a leading nature conservation body, and Red Squirrel Survival Trust (RSST), the UK's only dedicated red squirrel conservation charity. Each of the partners is represented on the Project Steering Group which holds quarterly meetings.

On a local level, the Trust had already established the following partnerships in Dumfries and Galloway.

Previously existing Local Squirrel Groups: Annandale Squirrel Group; Glenkens Squirrel Group, Gatehouse Squirrel Group.

These groups have a wealth of experience of coordinating red squirrel conservation activities at a local level and of galvanising and supporting volunteers.

The project also collaborated with the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership in the area, which involves a wide number of statutory, voluntary and private sector partners.

3. What were the aims and objectives of the project?

The aim of this project was to establish an innovative model for sustainable red squirrel conservation, with local people taking on responsibility for the practical conservation work involved in looking after their local red squirrel populations.

Project Outcomes:

- Local communities in Dumfries and Galloway empowered to be responsible for conservation action to protect local priority populations of red squirrels
- Local red squirrel networks able to contribute to grey squirrel control and maintain public awareness of the ongoing red squirrel conservation issue
- Networks of landowners in key areas implementing trapping on their land under ongoing funding contracts
- Resident communities, local tourism providers and visitors to the area benefit from the conservation of a popular and charismatic local species

Objectives:

- ***Establish community-supported Priority Areas for Red squirrel Conservation (PARCs) in Dumfries and Galloway***

This activity aimed to build up knowledge and skills in the local community to enable the delivery of required grey squirrel control in these key areas via trap-loan volunteers and local landowners, reaching a point where red squirrel conservation activities can be carried out sustainably into the future, with minimal external support.

- ***Roll-out targeted community engagement and training to increase public support for red squirrel conservation across Dumfries and Galloway, promote opportunities for participation to community volunteers and landowners and provide required training and support***

These activities were overseen and coordinated by staff recruited through the national project (particularly the Communications and Engagement Officer), with local content, information and elements of training provided by the staff working in Dumfries and Galloway.

- ***Implement ecological Progress Monitoring and Evaluation programme***

The project aimed to engage local individuals in squirrel sightings reporting and formal monitoring schemes, as well as provision of information gathered from their own grey squirrel control activity, in order to provide data for assessing red and grey squirrel distributions and population trends.

4. How was the funding package assembled?

The total eligible costs at award stage were £210,711:

£73,719 was provided by HLF

£5,793 from the Scottish Wildlife Trust's own funds

5. How much money did LEADER provide?

LEADER awarded £105,355.

The project experience

6. When did the project take place?

The project took place between 1st April 2017 and 31st July 2020

7. What actually happened?

7.1. Recruit Red Squirrel Conservation Officer and Community Engagement Officer

- We recruited a Conservation Officer (FT) and Community Engagement Officer (with 45% of duties covering Dumfries & Galloway) following 4 weeks advertising, shortlisting of candidates and two sets of interviews.
- Both posts started work on 12 June 2017
- Office space was procured and set up in Dalbeattie, Dumfriesshire.
- Vehicles were procured for the SSRS-DCA Conservation Officer South West and the Community Engagement Officer for South Scotland.
- Following notice given by the Community Engagement Officer in January 2018, we submitted a change request to change from one full-time Community Engagement Officer covering all of South Scotland with a 45% of their time covering Dumfries & Galloway to a part-time post just covering South West Scotland (90% of their time covering Dumfries & Galloway and 10% covering Ayrshire).
- We recruited a part-time Community Engagement Officer starting work 19/04/2018, following 4 weeks advertising, shortlisting of candidates and interviews
- Following notice given by the Community Engagement Officer August 2019, we recruited a full-time Community Engagement Officer (for which we are claiming only 45% as per the original application) starting work 28/10/2019, following 4 weeks advertising, shortlisting of candidates and interviews.

7.2. Implement grey squirrel control in Glenkens, Nithsdale, Annandale and Esk Valley PARCS (Priority Areas for Red Squirrel Conservation) through GSO, landowners, & trap-loan volunteers and assess trapping requirements to maintain healthy red squirrel populations in PARCs going forward.

- Grey squirrel control was carried out continuously from 1st April 2017:
 - by landowners operating under Forestry Grant Scheme contracts in the Glenkens, Nithsdale, Annandale and Esk Valley PARCS

- by project Grey Squirrel Officers in the Annandale PARC (ongoing)
- by the Glenkens Squirrel Group volunteers in the Glenkens PARC.
- From May to August 2018 and 2019 a seasonal Grey Squirrel Officer was employed *under separate funding* to cover the Solway Forests. Under an extension to this separate funding, this post was made full-time from 3rd February 2020
- From December 2018 a further new full-time Grey Squirrel Officer was employed *under separate funding* to cover the Nithsdale PARC (ongoing).
- The Conservation Officer South West has provided detailed assistance in the submission of 15 new Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) contracts for landholdings in the PARCs by end March 2020. (5 to March 2019; and 10 contracts to Mar 2020).
- Staff trapping results have been submitted and collated monthly on the main database.
- Trapping results from the 2017 and 2018 FGS-funded contracts have been collected and collated; collection of 2019 results started in March 2020.

7.3. Launch Community Hub network to facilitate and support community engagement activities.

- The Project was tendered for, a specialist spatial data and website builder selected and the Community Hub built over the course of 12 months. It was launched in September 2018 during Red Squirrel Week. <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>.
- The login requires users to sign up to the Hub, whereupon several new facilities become available to users of different levels of access, including:
 - Resources (information, how-to videos and downloads);
 - a facility to sign up to join local red squirrel volunteer networks; a diary of events; a people manager where people can create a profile and create training, volunteer records.
 - Signed-up users can enter their own survey and trapping data.
 - Red squirrel network members can see mapping and tables of survey and trapping records and summary statistics for their own group area;
 - staff can see key performance indicators and can manage volunteers who have signed up.
- Introductory sessions and training workshops for Dumfries & Galloway volunteers on how to use the Hub have been held, and support continues to be given.
- About 1,216 Dumfries & Galloway SSRS website users with a DG postcode have an account on the Hub; 306 of these are active volunteers; 159 of these have registered on the Hub and created a profile.

7.4. Provide training and equipment to support local red squirrel groups and work with them to facilitate and support volunteer learning and networking.

- There were 4 volunteer Red Squirrel Networks (or groups) in Dumfries & Galloway at the project start in April 2017: Annan, Glenkens, Five-Glens and Gatehouse.
- Through SSRS efforts there were 8 new volunteer Red Squirrel Networks in Dumfries & Galloway set up by end March 2020: Solway Forests, Kirkudbright, Mid-Nithsdale, Lower Nithsdale, East Wigtonshire, Castle Douglas and District, Esk Valley, Moffat and District. The Five Glens group dissolved, but was replaced in part by the Mid-Nithsdale group.
- Training includes detailed informal training on how to set up a volunteer red squirrel network, the essential structures to successfully run the network and manage network.
- Formal training for volunteers includes:
 - How to set up an account, use the support content, and use the People Manager facilities on the SSRS Hub
 - How to run stalls at events
 - How to trap grey squirrels to the best humane standards – via workshops, individual training, coaching/shadowing and formal outsourced training.
 - How to keep trapping records and submit them direct to the SSRS Hub.

- Safe use of air weapons (via British Association of Shooting and Conservation (BASC) initially; our Grey Squirrel Officer staff now have received BASC training on how to train others in the safe use of air weapons, since which time training has been done by the SSRS team.
- How to carry out squirrel surveys – via events, by individual training and by short training videos accessible on the SSRS Hub by signed up survey volunteers.
- Externally provided training available, e.g First Aid.
- Equipment is provided to affiliated local red squirrel networks via:
 - a start-up fund which is administered by SSRS to provide essential equipment for the network's activities, mainly trapping equipment and bait and survey equipment required for the network's own squirrel trapping and surveying
 - An annual maintenance fund for consumables, events and venue hire
 - Provision of SSRS project posters, leaflets and other printed materials, advertising for events
 - Events equipment including marquee, events furniture, leaflet holders, banners, standard display boards
 - Individual travel expenses to cover project work and the network's own work

7.5. Carry out a publicity campaign to raise local community awareness of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project and the role for volunteers in securing the future of the region's red squirrels.

- Between 01 April 2017 and 31 March 2020:
 - the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project stall attended 4 Scotland-wide countryside events and 26 country shows in Dumfries and Galloway
- SSRS staff and volunteers also delivered
 - 16 talks
 - 8 guided walks
 - 58 local volunteer red squirrel network meetings
 - 6 stakeholder meetings
 - 26 training workshops
 - 30 individual training sessions in trapping or survey
 - 9 news releases nationally
 - 5 news releases in Dumfries & Galloway
 - 38 pieces of media coverage specific to Dumfries & Galloway
 - 104 pieces of national media coverage including Dumfries & Galloway
 - 1 television interview
 - 10 other volunteer and public engagement events

All are intended to raise local community awareness of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project and the role for volunteers

- SSRS website: <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>
- SSRS Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SavingScotlandsRedSquirrels/>
- SSRS Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/ScotSquirrels>
- Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmTJ7qrHgfgPFKsx6x3LCEA>

7.6. Complete the spring surveys and analyse and report the results and promote the public recording of squirrel sightings across Dumfries and Galloway.

- Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels systematic spring surveys of red and grey squirrel presence or absence across Dumfries and Galloway were completed by staff and volunteers in Spring 2017 (194 boxes across 49 sites), 2018 (204 feederboxes at 51 sites) and 2019 (216 feederboxes at 54 sites) as part of the wider project annual surveys; reports of each of the surveys were produced and circulated: e.g. <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SSRS-SPRING-2019-SURVEYS.pdf>

- Surveys for Spring 2020 were prepared: repair/replace feeder-boxes, procure materials and consumable, contact volunteers, recruit and train new volunteers, create and assemble volunteers packs and deliver to volunteers. Surveys started early March and were due to finish end April; however, the 2020 surveys were suspended on 23rd March due to the Coronavirus Covid-19 lockdown.
- 1,398 squirrel sightings (854 red squirrels; 544 grey squirrels) in Dumfries and Galloway have been submitted via the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels website reporting page in 2017-2018;
- 1,295 squirrel sightings (877 red squirrels; 418 grey squirrels) in Dumfries and Galloway have been submitted via the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels website reporting page in 2018-19.
- 1,540 squirrel sightings (749 red squirrels; 791 grey squirrels) in Dumfries and Galloway have been submitted via the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels website reporting page in 2019-20.

8. Detail how the project fits with the Local Development Strategy.

- **Sustainable Settlements**

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) highlights the importance of community capacity building in the context of Sustainable Settlements. This project has strengthened communities by providing awareness-raising and training to deliver a community-led, place-based initiative which will help to secure the future of a key local natural asset.

- **Land, Coast and Marine Environments**

The LDS also refers to the fact that Dumfries and Galloway's natural environment assets are one of its key strengths and that it is home to a number of UK-BAP species - including red squirrels. The aim of this project was to protect this key natural environmental asset, a UK-BAP species also listed in for action in the Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Action Plan. By raising awareness and community involvement in conservation action in priority protection areas, the project has helped to secure the future of red squirrels in the region.

- **Economy**

The LDS highlights the fact that wildlife observation is important to tourism in the area and lists the potential of environmental thematic tourism as an opportunity. This project has protected and enhanced the role that this native species plays in the tourism sector in the area.

The project has also provided young people with volunteering opportunities and the chance to boost employability skills.

9. How was the project delivered?

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels – Developing Community Action (SSRS-DCA) is a five-year partnership project, led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Land & estates, RSPB Scotland and Red Squirrel Survival Trust. The staffing and day-to-day running of the project were the responsibility of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, under the guidance of a SSRS-DCA Partnership Advisory Group.

The SSRS-DCA Dumfries and Galloway project was a 3-year element of this wider national Scottish project, delivered by a team consisting of:

- 1 FT Conservation Officer (CO, 100% in Dumfries & Galloway) – new post - LEADER funding contribution
- 0.45FTE Community Engagement Officer (CEO) – new post - LEADER funding contribution
- Varying number of Grey Squirrel Officers (GSOs) funded 100% by non-LEADER funding but line-managed by the CO for Dumfries & Galloway and therefore contributing greatly to the delivery of the LEADER-funded element of the project.

The CO was responsible for the regional strategy and overall management of the SSRS project in Dumfries & Galloway, under line management from the SSRS-DCA Project Manager, with particular responsibility for developing the grey squirrel control networks.

The CEO was responsible for engagement of the wider public across Dumfries & Galloway and for the recruitment and support of local volunteers and the establishment of local community red squirrel protection networks (RSNs).

The GSOs carried out grey squirrel control in areas where there was no alternative cover, recruited and trained grey squirrel trapping volunteers, especially those from the local RSNs, assisted in the recruitment of landowners to co-operate with the project. They had a vital role in ensuring local RSNs had the correct training and know-how to safely undertake humane grey squirrel control in their own patches through their role in training trapping volunteers.

Landowners delivered essential widespread trapping on their own land, either voluntarily or under 5-year Forestry Grant Scheme contracts, and – crucially - permitted access for SSRS and trained volunteers to undertake trapping where they could not do the work themselves.

Volunteers carried out a variety of roles: trapping, delivering the Spring Surveys, forming local Red Squirrel Networks (11 in total), public outreach and education, data management, running their own events and assisting at SSRS staff events.

10. What marketing was undertaken?

The SSRS-DCA project was marketed across Scotland and regionally in Dumfries and Galloway by a variety of methods:

- Online channels:
 - SSRS website: <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>
 - SSRS Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SavingScotlandsRedSquirrels/>
 - SSRS Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/ScotSquirrels>
 - Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmTJ7qrHfgPFKsx6x3LCEA>
- News releases Scotland-wide and specific to Dumfries & Galloway
- Quarterly newsletters widely circulated
- Production of national and regional stakeholder packs in pdf format
- Shows and events, walks and talks (182 in Dumfries & Galloway over the 3 years), for which collateral such as leaflets, and branded events materials such as marquees, banners and display boards were produced
- Advertising for events on the social media and local press
- Stakeholder events and local partnership meetings
- Initiatives such as the Great Scottish Squirrel Survey in which people were encouraged to report all their squirrel sightings for a week in September 2019
- The sightings reporting facility on the SSRS website provided a medium for interaction with a wide range of the Scottish public

11. Who benefitted from the project?

- Local volunteers gaining new skills and knowledge relating to preserving and enhancing the landscape, wildlife, local heritage and wider environment, meeting new people and undertaking outdoor activities for fitness and wildlife appreciation for mental health
- Dumfries & Galloway residents who signed up for the quarterly newsletter kept informed of project developments and matters concerning red squirrels
- Residents, landowners, visitors who are able to see a valued native species – the red squirrel - in their gardens and local environment due to SSRS-DCS work in enabling their reinstatement to areas from which they had been lost.
- The general Scottish public with an interest in wildlife knowing that the nation's red squirrels are being kept from further decline.
- Red squirrels are part of the natural fauna of woodland and forest in Dumfries & Galloway. The environment has been enhanced as a result of our work to protect red squirrels, which are:
 - thriving in Annandale
 - thriving in Glenkens and Fleet Basin
 - thriving in Galloway Forest Park
 - stable in the Solway Coasts forests
 - recovering in Nithsdale.
 - recovering in Eskdale
 - widespread across the rest of Dumfries & Galloway
- The enthusiasm of local people to join the SSRS project and help in its work demonstrates the value of this species and the wider environment to the lives of the people of Dumfries & Galloway.

12. How did the final budget turn out?

The final total eligible expenditure costs were: £109,471.08

HLF provided £73,719; £5,793 came from the Scottish Wildlife Trust's own funds; with LEADER providing £29,959.08.

13. What lessons have been learnt?

13.1 Requirement for full-time coverage of Dumfries & Galloway by the Community Engagement Officer (CEO) for this project duration:

Initially we had a single CEO covering the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway. We learned that this area of land was too great for one person to adequately cover, particularly with the lack of straightforward travel routes from west to east across South Scotland, making time invested in travel excessive.

Initially we sought to remedy this by restructuring the post to 2 P/T CEOs, with one covering Dumfries & Galloway and other parts of South West Scotland, and one covering the Borders – thus eliminating the travel element.

However, we found that we had underestimated the amount of time need to support the new volunteer networks, and increased the CEO to a FT post.

13.2 Response of local people exceeded expectations

We underestimated the response by local communities to engage actively with the project and the level of enthusiasm that people would bring to the project from the very start. People were demanding support from SSRS-DCA before we had proper support systems established, which put local staff under pressure and led to staff absences and losses.

The keenness of local communities to actively participate is clearly a huge benefit to the project, but brings with it a need to manage expectations, which we had to establish retrospectively.

14. Will the project be mainstreamed or transferred?

The Dumfries & Galloway LEADER-funded project remits will now be transferred to the national SSRS-DCA project which still has two more years to run. The same staff team will continue to operate in Dumfries & Galloway under other funding, including the additional staff that SSRS-DCA has already employed in the region through separate funding to carry out work additional to the LEADER-funded element.

15. Detail the sustainability of the project and/or the exit strategy.

The thrust of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels-Developing Community Action (SSRS-DCA) project was to inspire and train local communities to take ownership of the wellbeing of their own local red squirrel populations and provide them with the skills to protect red squirrels from their main threat – replacement by the introduced American Eastern Grey squirrel through competition for space and resources and by spreading the fatal squirrelpox disease – thus creating a more sustainable delivery system for this vital work.

The intention is to have transferred a great deal of the work on the ground to local communities by the end of the SSRS-DCA project (31 March 2022).

Local Red Squirrel Networks will have been trained with the necessary skills and equipped with fieldwork equipment and events and public engagement collateral to enable them to continue to protect red squirrels with only a small expenditure for travel and consumables required for ongoing support. SSRS-DCA will investigate sources of funding for travel and consumables, which are hard to fund via local grants, and intend to have these in place by March 2022.

SSRS-DCA has developed an innovative Community Hub accessible by local community networks on the SSRS website, which will continue to provide:

- Resources (information, how-to videos and downloads) e.g. SSRS Hub User Guide for Volunteers; SSRS Volunteer Handbook; 4 Survey: How To videos; downloadable Survey Protocols and Data Sheets; Building a Volunteer Network Guide; SSRS Slides for Volunteer Presentations, SSRS Poster Templates; Guidance and Risk Assessments for Grey Squirrel Control Volunteers, video guidance for Grey Squirrel Control Volunteers showing how to enter and manage their control data; downloadable Activities for Children.
- Facility to sign up to join local red squirrel volunteer networks; a diary of events; a People Manager where people can create a profile and create training, volunteer records and where volunteer Red Squirrel Network administrators can manage their network volunteers. We are working on a BuddyPress system to allow easy messaging between the project and different groups of volunteers, and for volunteer groups to communicate withing the group and with other groups.
- Signed-up users can enter and review their own survey and trapping data.
- Red squirrel network members can see mapping and tables of survey and trapping records and summary statistics for their own group area, enabling them to manage their red squirrel protection efforts in local landscapes;
- Staff can see key performance indicators.

About 1,320 Dumfries & Galloway SSRS website users already have an account on the Hub, and there will be more by the end of the next two years of SSRS-DCA; the SSRS Partnership's follow-up project will retain staffing to provide Community Hub management and support for users.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is beginning work to develop a follow-up project for SSRS-DCA, to continue essential long-term elements of the work. It is envisaged that funding will be in place for the follow-up project to start in April 2022.

Included in this will be staffing to provide ongoing support, albeit at a less intensive level, for local red squirrel networks to continue to manage local grey squirrel populations.

This is anticipated to include a South Scotland Community Engagement Officer, as well as support from the SSRS and the SWT core team for data management, the SSRS website, communications and staff management, to co-ordinate and support the efforts of the volunteer work-force.

As well as supporting the 3 existing and 8 new local community squirrel networks with training and equipment, we have also supported the development of an umbrella body, the Red Squirrels Forum for South Scotland, for communication between groups and sharing best practice and with a view to supporting the groups after the end of this project.

State how targets were met and provide evidence within this report.

Target: 170 people participating in environment-focused or heritage-focused projects, events and initiatives.

The following people participated in the following ways:

- 952 separate people with a DG postcode participated by submitting sightings in D&G by logging on the SSRS online Community Hub <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/squirrel-sightings/>. during the 3 years of the project, each contributing valuable scientific information
- 60 *are feeder-box survey participants in D&G logged on the SSRS online Community Hub
- 251 are logged on the SSRS online Community Hub grey squirrel control participants in D&G; (Hub category with DG postcode filter)
- 143 *people in D&G subscribe to the SSRS newsletter, e.g. [https://mailchi.mp/1fc24895c9a6/ssrs-news-summer2019-1233494?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/1fc24895c9a6/ssrs-news-summer2019-1233494?e=[UNIQID])

*Figures obtained using a spatial query on the underlying relations geodatabase to limit the output to those residing within the D&G boundary.

Evidence is provided as a database extract in Excel uploaded to LARCs.

07P00020_SSRS Hub People Manager_Dumfries and Galloway Extract

The names and personal details have been removed from the database, but the Hub unique "Person ID" number is provided.

See the screenshot of the People Manager in the SSRS Community Hub (**Figure 1** below). The "ID" column shown is the Unique Person ID.

For the "Participants" section in LARCs, we have entered people's first and last name initials, following advice from Dumfries and Galloway LEADER liaison that our Person ID would not suffice for this purpose.

Target: 250 people who have gained skills and knowledge relating to preserving and enhancing the landscape, wildlife, local heritage and wider environment.

The following people participated in the following ways:

- 3,125 attendances were counted visiting an SSRS knowledge-sharing events such as at stalls at countryside events, guided walks, illustrated talks, training sessions, stakeholder meetings or volunteer network support meetings in D&G, thus gaining knowledge of a threatened Scottish and UK species and gaining understanding of the work being done to protect it in the region and nationally.

Evidence was produced in the form of events listings and attendance numbers provided to LEADER with Milestones Claims.

- >250 people were given D&G at training workshops or individual training. Included in the events listings and attendance numbers provided to LEADER with Milestones Claims.

Of these:

- >250 people in Dumfries & Galloway received training in safe and humane grey squirrel trapping techniques by SSRS-DCA.
- 74 people were given training in squirrel survey techniques.
- 42 people attended training sessions on the use of the SSRS online Community Hub.
- 22 people were given training in variety of other skills.

The following figures relate to the number of people across Scotland engaging with knowledge relating to preserving and enhancing wildlife and local heritage:

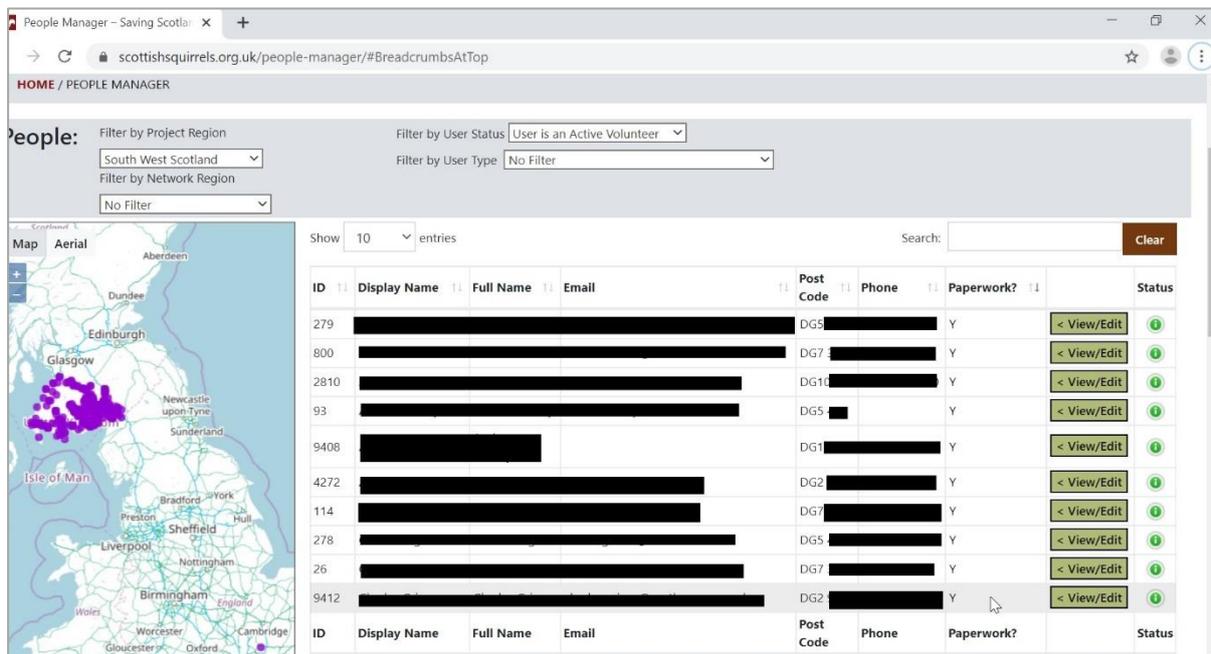
8,642 SSRS Facebook followers by end March 2020
 1,908 SSRS Twitter followers by end March 2020
 64,145 on average SSRS website page views per quarter-year in 2019-20.

Explanation of Evidence

- It is not possible to provide original evidence of individuals attending training or knowledge sharing events in the form of signed attendance lists.
- From the time that the General Data Protection Regulations came into effect on 25 May 2018, the project ceased to keep attendance lists of names at events and destroyed earlier lists.
- Instead participants were registered on the purpose-built SSRS online Community Hub (see screenshot, Fig.1) (accessed via the SSRS website <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>) on which access to participants’ names is restricted to a few named staff assigned with special access levels to view the Hub data (login and password protected) by the Hub Administrator in accordance with GDPR.
- Each person registered on the SSRS Community Hub was allocated a unique Person ID number so that names (and other GDPR restricted personal detail) need not be used.
- However, for the “Participants” section in LARCs, we have used people’s first and last name initials, following advice from Dumfries and Galloway LEADER liaison that our Person ID would not suffice for this purpose.

Figure 1. Screenshot from Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels Community Hub People Manager Active volunteers in South West Scotland are shown.

Personal details are redacted. The underlying databased can be queried to determine how many of these people reside in Dumfries and Galloway.



However, the large number of people engaging with the project and gaining skills and knowledge relating to how the SSRS project is carrying out its work of preserving and enhancing local wildlife is substantially more than the target of 250 people: See **07P00020_SSRS Hub People Manager_Dumfries and Galloway Extract.pdf (uploaded to LARCs)** which details 1,188 people in Dumfries & Galloway who have either

- signed up to the quarterly SSRS newsletter (knowledge-sharing)
- been confirmed as an “active volunteer” (someone who is actively involved in running events or managing volunteer groups or carries out red squirrel conservation work),
- submitted red or grey squirrel sightings to the website reporting page (citizen science)
- carried out SSRS squirrel survey work, or
- carried out SSRS grey squirrel control work

Totals in each category are seen at the bottom of the list in the uploaded pdf of the spreadsheet.