

A red squirrel in Scotland Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

The plight of the red squirrel is perhaps one of the most well-known conservation issues that the UK has faced.

Since the 1870s the number of the once common species has drastically declined due to loss of habitat and disease spread by the non-native grey squirrel.

Now only an estimated 140,000 remain and there is a real risk that this much-loved creature will one day disappear from the country for good.

However in parts of the UK conservation work has begun to have a real impact on improving the number of red squirrels. Anglesey now supports the largest red squirrel population in Wales, thanks to an HLF-supported project.

Now we are supporting a new partnership project, led by the wildlife trusts, which seeks to develop a UK-wide response to the crisis for the first time.

The four year Red Squirrels United programme will build a network of red squirrel champions - trained volunteers who will protect red populations and maintain and extend grey squirrel-free habitats - in Wales, North Merseyside, Cumbria, Northumberland and Northern Ireland. Workshops, events and skills-sharing will take place across the rest of the country to help raise public awareness and share what’s been learnt.

Our Trustee Tom Tew, the author of a book on red squirrels, welcomed the new project. He said: “It's great to see such strong co-operation between conservation organisations which now, thanks to National Lottery players, have a great

opportunity to capitalise on all the local work and build a co-ordinated, national response to the threats faced by this endangered species.”