

P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus

This petition was submitted by Craig Shuttleworth, having collected a total of 11,306 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Squirrelpox virus is carried and spread by grey squirrels. It doesn't harm them. When red squirrels are infected they develop open extensive skin lesions and die a painful death within 2 weeks

In North Wales, 70-80% of the Gwynedd red population was lost in a 2020/21 outbreak <https://theconversation.com/squirrelpox-outbreak-detected-in-north-wales-without-a-vaccine-the-disease-will-keep-decimating-red-squirrels-196811>

Promising research by Moredun Institute into a vaccine ran out of funds.

Additional Information:

The Wales Red Squirrel Conservation Plan (Page 9) highlights that most Welsh red squirrels are in forests inhabited by grey squirrels. Pox virus is thus a major threat in Wales.

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/691092/eng-red-squirrel-conservation-plan-for-wales.pdf>

In Bangor, there have been repeated Squirrelpox virus outbreaks in the period 2017-2022. Dead red squirrels have been found in woodland close to the Britannia Bridge and Telford's Suspension Bridge. It is only a matter of time before the infection is spread across the Menai Strait and onto Anglesey. The island contains the largest red squirrel population in Wales.

The infection causes graphic symptoms:

<http://www.britishredsquirrel.org/red-squirrels/disease/>

We need Welsh Government to commit to funding research such as the stalled vaccine research of Moredun/Wildlife Ark Trust:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/red-squirrel-vaccine-under-threat-2540293>.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Arfon
- North Wales