

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