



Northumberland
Wildlife Trust

Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN)

Fertility Control:
Community Engagement,
Training and Education Lead

Invitation to Tender



PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the UK the non-native grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) has a significant economic and environmental impact as this species competes for resources with the native red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and transmits diseases such as the parapox virus to the more susceptible red squirrel. In addition, grey squirrels cause substantial damage to forestry through bark stripping that affects tree growth and timber value and may cause broadleaved trees to die, with consequent costs of restocking. Reducing the number of grey squirrels is the only method to decrease the impact of this species. Traditional methods of controlling grey squirrels, such as trapping and shooting are often inefficient. Fertility control is widely advocated as an alternative or additional method to lethal control for grey squirrels. Bait-delivered oral contraceptives are currently being developed and tested by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) as an alternative and more publicly acceptable method for reducing the numbers of grey squirrels in the UK. Oral contraceptives delivered in baits could reduce population size as well as the rate of population recovery after culling. Delivering oral contraceptives at a regional scale will rely on coordinated control carried out by local practitioners and volunteer groups, with public and landowner support, gained from raising awareness through community engagement and education programmes.

As part of the Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN) project, APHA will work with local community and volunteer groups based in four UK regions where red squirrel conservation is a priority. These groups, in organised field trials, will test methods and equipment that will eventually be used to deliver contraceptives to grey squirrels.

The contractor will:

- Provide expert advice informing the delivery of the fertility control trials and the interpretation of results derived from these trials.
- Work with APHA and the UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA) to produce training materials describing the methods used. This will ensure that local community groups will be equipped with new skills to administering the contraceptive to grey squirrels, while non-target species are excluded.
- Work with APHA and UKSA to disseminate the findings of the trials and promote fertility control as a wildlife management method. This will be achieved through publication of scientific and popular science papers and through presentations to lay audiences in the form of blogs, webinars and talks.
- In partnership with UKSA and assisted by APHA, design a range of educational activities aimed at raising awareness about red squirrel conservation and fertility control for grey squirrels for a wide spectrum of stakeholders, with particular focus on key groups such as schools.

RSRN Background

Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT), in partnership with Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT), the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and Merseyside (LWT), Knowsley Safari , Bright Green Nature, Restoring Upland Nature and Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere have been granted funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for an ambitious project which aims to safeguard the red squirrels in northern England and southern Scotland. This is part of a wider vision for a wilder Britain and an ecologically resilient landscape. The Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN) builds on decades of work by partners and volunteers to manage grey squirrels and monitor red squirrel populations. Funding from NLHF will allow us to implement field trials for grey squirrel fertility control, explore the potential impact of the pine marten as a natural grey squirrel predator and establish new activities to engage wider audiences. The project will work at a landscape scale to bring about lasting change for red squirrels that would be lost in a decade without continuous and extensive conservation effort.

Key Outputs of Fertility Control Project in collaboration with APHA, UKSA, awarded tender organisation/individual and other project partners:

1. In key areas, community groups are equipped for grey squirrel control, particularly with reference to the use of oral contraceptives.
2. Bait uptake by grey squirrels measured in 4 key areas and an assessment of the effort required for effective grey squirrel control. Volunteers are trained in delivery methods and success is measured as the proportion of a grey squirrel population that will consume baits from hoppers.
3. An assessment on whether grey squirrel-specific feeders can deliver bait to grey squirrels only, in at least 6 key areas with and without red squirrels.
4. An estimate of cost to deliver contraceptives to grey squirrels in areas with and without red squirrels.
5. Establish best practice and training guidelines to allow the future roll out of a contraceptive to control grey squirrels.
6. A dissemination plan to highlight the results from the fertility control trials, based on a combination of articles in popular science magazines, public and school talks, presentations to at least 2 national and international conferences, updates on websites relating to Wildlife Fertility Control.

7. A toolkit of education resources, which will support the Scottish and English national curriculums for KS4/S4-5 that use red squirrel conservation as a case study to deliver school learning. This will raise awareness about the species, improve connection to nature and engage/inspire young people to learn about squirrel-related issues in the UK. Schools will either actively take part to some of the trials within the project or incorporate some modules of the trials in their science curriculum.
8. Press briefings via UKSA and by job holder's organisation contact with the Science Media Centre, generating articles in the main broadsheets.

Key Outcomes

1. Raised awareness at a national level about red squirrel conservation and alternative methods to controlling grey squirrels.
2. Increased engagement in key communities identified as pivotal for red squirrel conservation, understand the skills and tools required to: (a) deliver grey squirrel control based on contraceptives, and (b) monitor the effects of squirrel population control.
3. Increased appreciation among stakeholders (students, teachers, and other community members normally not engaged in research), at local and national level, about the importance of evidence-based research to deliver effective and publicly supported methods to mitigate the impacts on wildlife, using grey squirrels as a model species.
4. Inspire younger generations to become actively involved in conservation and science.
5. Results presented in the wider context of the conservation of native species and management of non-native species and the project used as blueprint for similar initiatives in the UK and overseas.

The milestones have been identified in Appendix 1.

THE CONTRACT

The Delivery Phase contract will start in January 2026 (*estimated time*) and completed by June 2030. The contract is between NWT and contractor and will be managed on behalf of NWT by the RSRN Programme Manager.

CONTRACT SPECIFICATION

The contractor will have a proven track record demonstrating the following expertise:

1. Co-authored scientific and lay-person publications, ideally relating to wildlife fertility control.
2. Lead/leading field research.
3. Produced science-based technical documents.
4. Raising public awareness about the management of non-native invasive species.

In particular, the contractor will carry out the following activities:

- Fill an 'independent subject matter expert' role to provide expert advice concerning fertility control trials delivery and interpretation of results.
- Co-author publications derived from the project.
- Work with APHA and UKSA to develop fertility control training materials for community groups.
- Ensure the project and its conservation practice/learning is represented in any relevant external agencies/organisations' meetings focussed on wildlife management.
- Raise public awareness about the use of fertility control to manage non-native invasive species.
- Collaborate with UKSA and other partners to develop educational resources for secondary school which will raise awareness about red squirrel conservation generally and wildlife fertility control specifically and allow students to engage with a 'live' scientific case study.
- Collaborate with the UKSA and other partners to produce a toolkit, hosted on the UKSA website, free to access for secondary schools.
- Engage with secondary schools across the RSRN project area and beyond to access the red squirrel case study resources and to support their curriculum.
- Produce end of year interim reports to be submitted to the NWT on activities carried out each year.

This will include attending partnership meetings which are anticipated to be once per quarter throughout the Delivery Phase.

Budget Summary

Contract	Staff time	£77,990
	Travel & Subsistence, up to	£ 10,000
	Total (excluding VAT)	£87,990

Contractor selection

Qualified contractors are asked to provide the following as part of their tender submission:

- Tender proposal – to include an outline of approach and a detailed plan to deliver the milestones
- Associated risks to meeting the milestones
- Number of days estimated to be needed for this project and how they will be allocated
- Number of staff allocated to the work, cost per day and availability
- Proposed payment terms
- Contact details of two clients willing to provide references regarding the provision of similar services. References will only be taken up for shortlisted bidders
- Normal working location(s)

The Northumberland Wildlife Trust working in partnership with RSRN partners will select a contractor based on:

- Relevant experience (45%)
- Proposed approach to the work (35%)
- Value for money (20%)

Tender deadline

Tenders should be submitted in pdf or MS Word compatible format to rsrn@northwt.org.uk with the subject heading TENDER: RSRN Fertility Control: Community Engagement, Training and Education Lead by 09:00am on **Wednesday 3rd December 2025**

The Northumberland Wildlife Trust may wish to interview shortlisted contractors during the week commencing 15th December 2025. Unsuccessful tenders will be notified by Wednesday, 10th December 2025.

For more information, please contact Mike Denbury, RSRN Programme Manager at

rsrn@northwt.org.uk or visit [Red Squirrel Recovery Network \(RSRN\) | Northumberland Wildlife Trust](#)

The following documents will be provided on request:

- APHA Delivery trial plan
- RSRN Engagement Plan
- RSRN Conservation Plan
- RSRN Theory of Change
- RSRN Legacy Plan

Appendix 1

Project Year	Category	Milestones
Yr 1	Staff time (estimated 35 days)	• Carry out meetings APHA to review the planning of field trial • Organise meetings with the UKSA representatives to discuss school engagement plans • Contact schools across the RSRN project area for initial meetings to discuss schools' requirements • Attend quarterly online meetings with project partners, plus additional meetings as required to deliver outcomes • Submit interim report to NWT
Yr 2	Staff time (estimated 35 days)	• Give talks on wildlife fertility control to community groups • Provide expert advice on the planning of fertility control trials • Assist with the development of training materials regarding fertility control trials • Engage with schools across the RSRN project area to develop educational resources • Attend quarterly online meetings with project partners, plus additional meetings as required to deliver outcomes • Submit interim report to NWT
Yr 3	Staff time (estimated 35 days)	• Finalise secondary school resources • Work with project partners to showcase initial results of the project on various media outlets • Attend quarterly online meetings with project partners, plus additional meetings as required to deliver outcomes • Provide APHA with expert advice regarding the initial interpretation of the results of large-scale trials • Submit interim report to NWT

Yr 4	Staff time (estimated 35 days)	• Provide APHA with expert advice regarding the interpretation of the results of large-scale trials • Attend quarterly online meetings with project partners, plus additional meetings as required to deliver outcomes • Submit interim report to NWT
Yr 5	Staff time (estimated 35 days)	• Attend quarterly online meetings with project partners, plus additional meetings as required to deliver outcomes • Provide expert advice regarding the overall results of large-scale trials • Finalise training materials with APHA based on study findings • Plan dissemination of results with APHA and project partners, to guide future applications and raise awareness about fertility control • Draft scientific papers with APHA • Co-author final report with UKSA