Written evidence submitted by Joan Hilford

There is no firm evidence to show that red squirrels are any more native to this country than greys. A few bones of reds in coastal areas after the last ice age and none after that for thousands of years proves nothing. The best one can say is that the reds were here before the greys and neither is a native species. Sure, reds can catch SQPV from greys but are much more likely to become infected from fellow reds and the lack of suitable habitat is also contributing to the demise of the red squirrel.

You appear to want to eliminate grey squirrels. Are you also going to eliminate Chinese water deer and the like, German shepherd dogs and racehorses of various foreign strains?

Grey squirrels entertain vast numbers of humans every day. They have become our equivalent of monkeys due to their antics; i.e., leaping through trees, picking up food with their little hands and then rushing to hide it. I’ve watched grey squirrels having fun chasing each other through the trees, then coming to sit on the garden shed where they watch me while I’m watching them and they don’t damage trees any more than red squirrels do. Indeed, at the turn of the last century, around 100,000 red squirrels were slaughtered in Scotland because of perceived tree damage; now it’s the turn of the grey squirrel to be persecuted. Grey squirrels are wonderful company and great entertainers. Life would be very dull without them. I have no hesitation therefore in requesting you conduct a referendum on whether to kill, or not kill, grey squirrels.

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