Written evidence submitted by Tracy Battensby

I would like to express my deep concern about the invasive species act, with particular reference to the grey squirrel. The response to the petition does not address the fundamental issue that vets and wildlife rescue have with it, namely that rescue numbers are so insignificant as to not affect the overall populations. Eradication is NOT in the EU directive so I am puzzled as to what the benefit would be to deny these unfortunate creatures help and rehabilitation when they need it. There are already measures in place to control populations (which I don’t agree with as they are open to abuse, but unfortunately we have to tolerate).

I have absolutely nothing against red squirrels, and I wish them every success, but please bear in mind that the ones we have now are introduced ones from Scandinavia (as the originals were effectively culled to the brink by farmers in the 20th century). Reds are building immunity to squirrel pox, and the biggest killers of reds (and greys) are still road traffic accidents (not pox) and loss of habitat. Reds prefer coniferous woods whilst greys prefer deciduous. May I suggest you take a look at the decimation of the woodland in this country - THAT is what needs to be addressed, not persecution of innocents.

I fail to see why these animals are considered alien anymore anyway - there is nobody alive today in the UK who can remember a time without grey squirrels so they are as much a part of the ecosystem as any other creature.

I’m afraid this bill is based on flawed science and prejudice. There is compelling public interest in continuing to rescue grey squirrels (and indeed muntjac deer and Canada geese). A rescue organisation or a vet worth its salt won’t turn away any injured animal anyway as it goes against everything they work towards.

Please reconsider this draconian thinking.

*May 2019*