ecology**report**

Red Squirrel Dreys and Site Presence

for

Land Adjacent to Summergrove
Whitehaven
CA28 8YN
Grid Ref NX9981542

March 2026

bringing **e**cological **e**xcellence **t**o **l**ocal **e**nvironments

Prepared by:

Whistling Beetle Ecological Consultants Limited
Mowpin Lodge
New Road
Haigh
WN2 1PF

Tel: 07880 733977
e-mail: info@whistlingbeetle.co.uk
website: www.whistlingbeetle.co.uk

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Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Whistling Beetle Ecological Consultants were commissioned in March 2026 to undertake a Red Squirrel Drey and Presence Survey on trees within the immediate boundary of the site identified as Land adjacent to Summergrove, Whitehaven, CA28 8YN, Grid Ref NX9981542

1.2 The surveys had been requested by the ecologist at Cumberland Council
The Market Hall, Market Place, Whitehaven, CA28 7JG
This was to provide confirmation of red squirrel status in the trees on the borders of the site. Specifically, if any dreys were present that would/could be disturbed during the proposed development works on the site. update previous surveys carried out on site.
The specific surveys were

- A check for the presence of red squirrel on site and dreys in the trees on the site boundary.

1.2 The objectives of the survey were to provide an assessment of the current status of red squirrel on site and if confirmed present to assess any impact from the proposed development on site. If evidence of red squirrels were recorded in any of the tree's, mitigation proposals would need to be developed for the protection of the species.

1.3 All assessments and surveys were supervised by Principal Ecologist Graham Workman who has over forty-five years professional experience in the ecology field. He has the specialist knowledge and ecological skills to undertake and complete all the surveys contained within this report. He was accompanied by an assistant ecologist with several years' experience in undertaking ecological assessment surveys.

1.4 The proposed development is for the construction of residential properties on the site.

2.0 Red Squirrel

2.1 The site is located in an area where red squirrels have been recorded in the past and in the wider area red squirrel populations are present. There are no significant features currently on site that benefit Red Squirrels.

2.2 **Red Squirrel Action Plan**
In 2023 the England red squirrel action plan was published. The aims of the plan is to:

- Protect, identify and strengthen red squirrel populations across the current range.
- Expand the current range of red squirrels
- Support and improve collaboration actions at all levels
- Promote better understanding and support for red squirrel conservation across England.

2.3.1 **The Cumbria Red Squirrel Strategy** focuses on protecting red squirrel strongholds through targeted grey squirrel control, habitat management, and community-led conservation. Key initiatives include the Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN), landscape-scale monitoring, and testing fertility control for

greys, aiming to stop disease transmission (squirrel pox) and reverse population decline.

2.4 Key Components of the Strategy

- Red Squirrel Strongholds: Conservation efforts are prioritized in specific "stronghold" woodlands deemed best for long-term survival, often isolated to limit grey squirrel access.
- Grey Squirrel Control: Crucial, ongoing control of grey squirrels is carried out by local volunteer groups and landowners to prevent them from replacing red squirrels.
- Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN): A major five-year project (launched 2023) operating across Northern England and Southern Scotland, focusing on large-scale conservation and potential fertility control trials for grey squirrels.
- Monitoring and Reporting: Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre and Cumbria Wildlife Trust emphasize the importance of reporting sightings of both red and grey squirrels to monitor spread.
- Disease Prevention: Reducing contact between grey and red squirrels is paramount to stopping the spread of squirrel pox, which is often fatal to red squirrels.
- Volunteer Engagement: Westmorland Red Squirrels acts as a key local group, organizing volunteers for, surveys and grey squirrel control.

3.0 Legislation

3.1 As red squirrels are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, a licence is required from the appropriate country agency (Natural England), for any study that would interfere in any way with the animals or their nests. The introduced grey squirrel is also subject to legislation that prevents any trapped or captive-held animal being released back into the wild.
Red squirrels and their dreys are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended) and by the Nature Conservation Act 2004. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
- kill, injure or capture a red squirrel;
- disturb a red squirrel in a drey;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to a red squirrel drey.

Where impacts that would result in an offence cannot be avoided, a species licence can be issued in some cases to allow the works to proceed. Licences will only be issued if certain tests are met. It is important that any licensing issues are considered as part of a planning application. This is to avoid a situation where planning permission is secured but the lack of a species licence prevents the development from proceeding.

4.0 Red Squirrel Status in Cumbria

4.1 Cumbria is a major UK stronghold for native red squirrels with 16 active volunteer groups protecting them against the invasive, disease-carrying grey squirrel.

4.2 Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre's species database has almost 3 million individual records. Thousands of species are included in this database but two of the most commonly recorded species are Red and Grey Squirrels. This reflects the level of interest in these two species, conserving the iconic native Red Squirrel while trying to control the invasive, but often personable, Grey.

4.3 The many volunteer groups that operate across Northern England are represented by another organisation, Northern Red Squirrels. It provides a collective voice for local groups and support to these very hands-on groups that carry out effective control and implement conservation measures in their communities. In Cumbria alone, there are 16 local Red Squirrel groups and 15 are represented by Northern Red Squirrels. Almost the whole geographical area of Cumbria is covered by one of the local groups. As well as providing the bulk of Grey Squirrel control in their particular area, each local group also compiles sightings of both squirrel species.

4.4 **Key Information & Conservation**

- **Status:** Endangered but stable in Cumbria due to conservation, with populations present throughout the county.
- **Threats:** Non-native grey squirrels, which out-compete them for food and transmit the fatal squirrel pox virus.
- **Protection:** Red Squirrels Northern England (RSNE) and local groups (e.g., Penrith & District) perform critical, ongoing grey squirrel management.

4.5 Past Presence of Red Squirrels

4.6 The National Biodiversity Network Atlas was accessed for past records of Red Squirrel presence within a 1 kilometer buffer of the site.
(see Appendix 3 Information from the National Biodiversity Network Atlas for details)

5.0 Field Survey

5.1 An initial visual survey visit was conducted on the 9th March 2026. This date was chosen as trees would not yet be in leaf allowing for all trees to be searched for signs of squirrel dreys or other signs which may indicate red squirrel presence such as feeding remains.

5.2 There are subtle differences between red squirrel and grey squirrel dreys.

Key Differences

- Size and Structure: Grey squirrel dreys are typically bigger, messier, and more robustly built. Red squirrel dreys are often about the size of a football (roughly 30cm in diameter) and more tightly constructed.
- Location/Habitat: While both species build nests in trees, red squirrels are more likely to build in conifers, often placing them in the fork of a branch close to the trunk, about three-quarters of the way up. Grey squirrels often prefer deciduous trees but are adaptable and will build in either, or even inside roof cavities.

- Construction Materials: Both weave together twigs, leaves, and moss. However, because red squirrels are often found in coniferous areas, their nests may contain more pine-related materials.

- Usage: Grey squirrels will sometimes take over and expand upon the existing, smaller drey of a red squirrel

Similarities

- Appearance: Both build spherical nests of interwoven twigs, branches, and leaves.

- Placement: Both species prefer to build their nests in the fork of a tree, usually around 6 meters or more off the ground.

- Multiple Nests: Both red and grey squirrels will construct and maintain several different dreys within their territory, using some for breeding (natal) and others for daily rest.

  Important Note: Because the dreys look very similar, it is generally not possible to definitively identify which species a drey belongs to just by looking at it. In the UK, all dreys should be treated as potentially belonging to the protected red squirrel, unless it is certain that only grey squirrels are present in the area.

5.3 Only two methods – visual surveys and hair tube surveys – can distinguish red from grey squirrels and so provide separate population assessments. Drey counts can be useful in some circumstances but are not always reliable. Feeding transects can only be carried out in conifer woodland, although where hazel is present, the characteristic split shells can also be observed.

5.4 If Red squirrel are suspected in the area the use of whole maize bait and fixed camera traps are a quick and easy method to confirm whether squirrels of either species are present in a woodland.

5.5 **Weather Conditions**
Weather conditions on the 9th March 2026 were overcast skies with no wind. Showers had occurred in the morning prior to the survey but no further rain was encountered during the survey. The temperature was 10° centigrade. Conditions were considered suitable for squirrel activity to occur if present on site.
The survey began at 1100hrs and concluded at 1600hrs.

5.6 The surveyors were both equipped with Swarovski binoculars and a Kowa spotting telescope was also available if closer views in canopies or crowns were necessary to confirm drey presence.

5.7 All trees on the site boundary were surveyed for any evidence of dreys, either as completed dreys or in construction or dreys in a derelict state.

5.8 All lines of trees were surveyed from within the site and then on the external boundaries to ensure that all trees were carefully inspected for any signs of drey presence or squirrel activity such as bark stripping.
(see Appendix 1 SF/RSS/WB/01 for details of boundaries surveyed)

(see Appendix 2 LSF/RS/WB/PS01, LSF/RS/WB/PS02, and LSF/RS/WB/PS03, for photo sheets of tree ages and suitability for Red Squirrels)

5.9 The only trees on the site boundary that were of an age and structure were a line of native hardwoods that were currently being assessed for risk located on the northern boundary of the site.

5.10 The ground area of any conifer trees on the site boundary was carefully inspected for the presence of fallen cones. The few conifer trees adjacent to the site were not of an age which would produce seed bearing cones. No cones resulted in no evidence of squirrel presence through confirmation of feeding.

6.0 Limitations.

6.1 There were no limitations in carrying out the Red Squirrel Survey. All trees adjacent to the site boundary were inspected for any evidence of Red Squirrel presence or activity.

6.2 Full access to the trees on the boundary, first from within the site and then externally to the site provided full confidence of the survey results

7.0 Red Squirrel Survey Results

7.1 Every tree on the boundary of the site (and immediately adjacent to the boundary) was searched for any presence of squirrel dreys. This included any drey in construction or evidence of a derelict unused drey.
No Dreys were recorded on site, on the boundary or in trees adjacent to the site

7.2 Ground areas on the site were surveyed for any evidence of feeding or foraging squirrel activity.
No feeding or foraging evidence was recorded in any area of the site. No pine cones were recorded on the ground areas around the few immature pine trees

7.3 The surveyors were on site for a total of five hours and any squirrel activity on the boundary would be recorded and type of activity noted (feeding, foraging, commuting, calling)
No presence of Red Squirrel (or Grey Squirrel) was recorded during the survey period (1100 hrs to 1600hrs).

8.0 Conclusions

Red Squirrels could potentially commute through the trees on the site boundaries but no opportunities for Red Squirrels are present within the site. The complete lack of drey presence or current recorded activity indicate that the proposed development will have no negative impact on any Red Squirrel population.

9.0 Closure

This report has been prepared by Whistling Beetle Ecological Consultants Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

The findings of this report represent the professional opinion of qualified ecologists and do not constitute professional legal advice. The client may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the relevant wildlife legislation cited in this document.

11.0 References

Web addresses for access to full UK legislation and policy text:

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010:
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100490_en_1

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:
www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1981/cukpga_19810069_en_1

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:
www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000037.htm

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006:
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060016_en_1

Planning Policy Statement 9:
www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408

UK Squirrel Accord:
https://squirrelaccord.uk/

Red Squirrel Survival Trust:
https://www.rsst.org.uk/

Red Squirrels Northern England:
https://rsne.org/

Red Squirrels Recovery Network:
https://www.nwt.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/rsrn

Northern Red Squirrels:
https://www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk/

Appendix 1

Western site boundary and 30m buffer zone.

No suitable trees for drey construction and
no evidence of deserted dreys.

Northern site boundary along footpath

Mature native hardwoods with low potential for
drey construction due to lack of any conifer species
No suitable conifer species in or adjacent to the site

Central area of shrubs

No potential for drey presence

See Photo sheets LSF/RS/WB/PS01, LSF/RS/WB/PS02 and LSF/RS/WB/PS03 for images of trees and hedges which form the site boundaries.

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Project

Red Squirrel Drey Survey and Presence Survey

Site Location

Land adjacent to
Summergrove
Dalzell Street
Whitehaven

Transect walked on field boundary

Transect walked within buffer zone

Photo Sheet	SF/RSS/WB/01
Date	March 2026
Scale	N/A

Appendix 2

1. Existing hedgerow on site boundary with Dalzell Street

2. Internal tree line on western boundary of site

3. No trees were of an age or structure to provide suitable opportunities for drey construction

4. Poor condition hedge row separates field

5. No trees were of an age or structure to provide suitable opportunities for drey construction

6. Looking north where field boundaries with footpath

7. Trees along this boundary are primarily managed as an hedge

8. Wiew of ‘hedge’ south to Dalzell Street

9. Northern end of site with access gate and track to Science Park and Summerfold.

No trees were recorded with any suitable opportunities along this boundary. Within the line of trees only two spindly Corsican Pine were recorded. These were too immature to produce cones for potential food source. No other trees apart from the hawthorn were berry or nut producing offering little incentive for Red Squirrels to visit or construct dreys in the area,

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Project

Red Squirrel Drey and Presence Survey

Title.

Land adjacent to Summergrove
Dalzell Street
Whitehaven

Photo Sheet	LSF/RS/WB/PS01
Date	March 2026
Scale	N/A

1. Track to Westlakes Science Park

2. Boardwalk into Science Park with trees on either side for a short distance

3. Modified grassland with copses of trees make up the Science Park site

4. Science Park

5. No trees were of an age or structure to provide suitable opportunities for drey construction

6. Looking through tree boundary onto site

7. Several conifer are present on the Science Park site but not enough to sustain a RS population

8. Looking through the tree line onto the site.

9. Boardwalk back to access gate and track to Summerfold.

No trees were recorded with any suitable opportunities along this boundary. On the Science Park site there were some conifer species but not of an age which would provide a regular food source. . No other trees apart from the hawthorn were berry or nut producing offering little incentive for Red Squirrels to visit or construct dreys in the area,

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Project

Red Squirrel Drey and Presence Survey

Title.

Land adjacent to Summergrove
Dalzell Street
Whitehaven

Photo Sheet	LSF/RS/WB/PS02
Date	March 2026
Scale	N/A

1. Track to Summerfold

2. Boardwalk with trees on either side.

3. Tree works ongoing seemingly removing at risk trees

4. Several mature native species trees along this boundary. Some trees marked for felling

5. Looking south back into the site

6. Boardwalk through to Summerfold Estate

7. Some trees of an age and structure that have some negligible potential but no dreys present

8. Full tree line on Northern boundary

9. Dividing remnant hedge present but no opportunities present for Red Squirrels

All boundaries of the site with trees present were surveyed for any evidence of Red Squirrel presence through active of derelict dreys present or positive evidence of Red Squirrel activity. No evidence of Red Squirrel was recorded.
It is highly unlikely of Red Squirrel presence on site currently of in the future. No resources are present that could sustain Red Squirrels on site so no further survey effort is necessary in regard to this site.

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Project

Red Squirrel Drey and Presence Survey

Title.

Land adjacent to Summergrove
Dalzell Street
Whitehaven

Photo Sheet LSF/RS/WB/PS03

Date March 2026

Scale N/A

Appendix 3

Red Squirrel Records within 1 kilometer of the site

Record data.

The closest record to the site was north and in April 2018

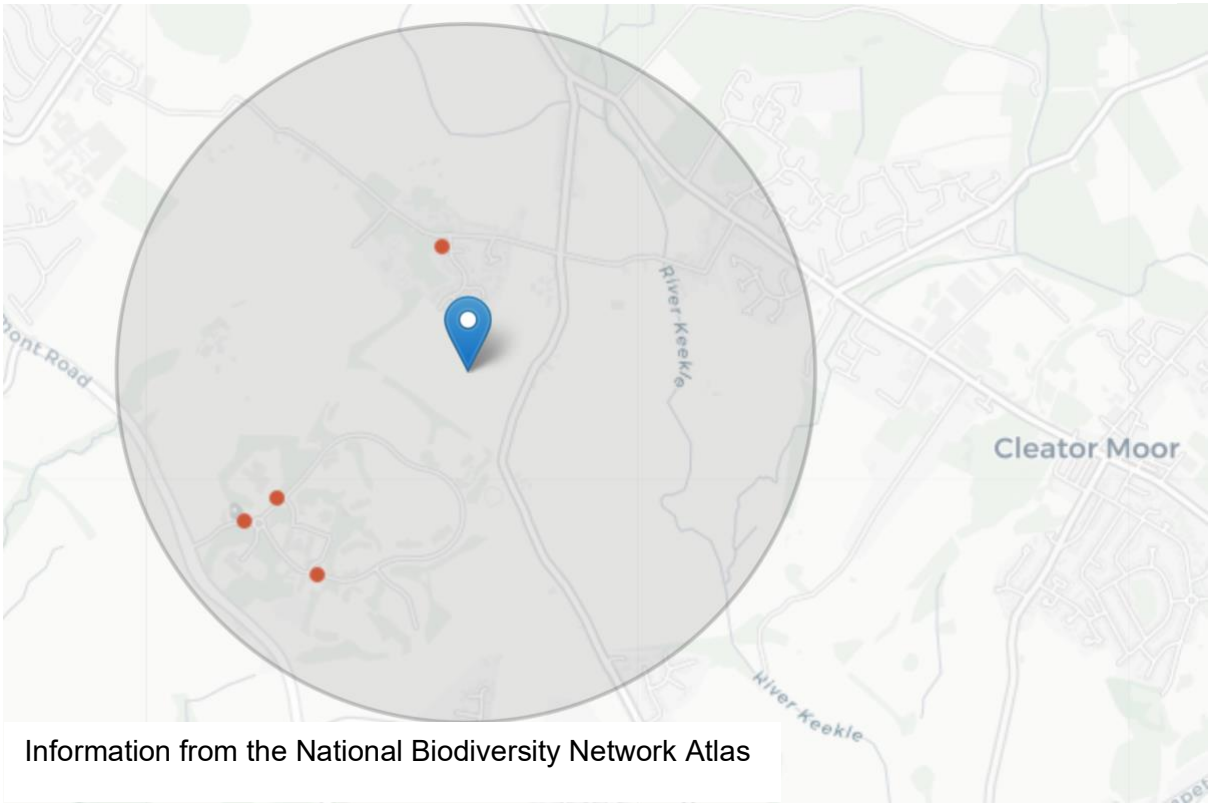
The most recent record was southwest of the site in June 2021

Species: ***Sciurus vulgaris*** | **Red Squirrel** Date: 2021-06-28 England OSGR: NX99531502
Data Resource: National Mammal Atlas Project, Online Recording Basis Of Record: Human Observation View record

Species: ***Sciurus vulgaris*** | **Red Squirrel** Date: 2021-04-02 England OSGR: NX996148
Data Resource: Mammal Mapper App Sighting Records Basis Of Record: Human Observation View record

Species: ***Sciurus vulgaris*** | **Red Squirrel** Date: 2020-10-12 England OSGR: NX994149
Data Resource: Mammal Mapper App Sighting Records Basis Of Record: Human Observation View record

Species: ***Sciurus vulgaris*** | **Red Squirrel** Date: 2018-04-22 England OSGR: NY000157
Data Resource: National Mammal Atlas Project, Online Recording Basis Of Record: Human Observation View record



Information from the National Biodiversity Network Atlas