Press Release
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£40 MILLION PER ANNUM TIMBER LOSS FROM GREY SQUIRRELS

New figures released today by the European Squirrel Initiative show that grey squirrels are costing the English forestry industry in excess of £40 million per annum, and this does not take into account costs associated with environmental or habitat loss. Over a 60-year period, or a rotation, this amounts to a loss of £2.4 billion.

The research, carried out by leading forestry management company, Pryor and Rickett Silviculture, show that earlier estimates of annual losses of £10-£14 million were significantly under estimated. With the value of timber going up and the impact of grey squirrel damage increasing, the economic effects are even greater than previously thought.

“These figures are alarming and in economic terms a disaster for those woodland owners who are not taking effective steps to control grey squirrels,” said Graham Taylor, chairman of ESI and managing director of Pryor and Rickett, “this must be a wake-up call to all those involved in owning, growing and managing our woodland, including the Forestry Commission and government, to ensure that proper steps are taken to insure this damage is prevented.”

The research shows that the difference in income for a hectare of grey squirrel damaged oak, for example, compared to undamaged can be in excess of £45,000. With 150-year-old oak selling for around £54,000 per hectare compared to £7,000 for damaged oak. (see Figs. 1 & 2 below)

“On the basis that it costs around £7,000 to establish a hectare of oak, in undamaged trees that would be recovered in 30 years. While in grey squirrel damaged oak it could take at least 70 years to recover planting costs and in reality, will never exceed the total establishment costs. No squirrel control should not be an option,” added Mr Taylor.

The research shows that while the cost of failure is high, the cost of protection, estimated at £20 per hectare for 40 years - £800 per hectare – is low compared to the final value of undamaged crop.

The research examined the impact of grey squirrel damage in oak, beech, sweet chestnut and birch as well in conifers, scotch pine, larch and Norway spruce. A conservative estimate of woodland in England of 128000ha has suffered large amounts of damage equating to an average of 2,000 hectares / annum since World War 2. The research considered the level of damage; quality; class; growth rates and percentage of hectares in the damage phase.

“These figures are alarming, and they do not take into account the additional cost of timber imports which are around £12-£14 billion per annum, some of which we could be growing here, but are failing to do so because of grey squirrel damage,” commented Graham Taylor.

As well as the economic impact, grey squirrels have a significant effect on biodiversity with woodland habitats and some species specifically affected by grey squirrels including our native red squirrel, woodland birds and other mammals. In addition, woodlands play a valuable role in carbon sequestration.

The research concludes that when taking into account total losses caused by grey squirrels, including timber loss, additional imports, carbon and habitat loss and property damage of around £20m a year, the cost to the economy could amount to £64 million per annum, for England alone.

"These figures highlight the scale of the cost of the damage both economic and environmental caused by the alien invasive grey squirrel. It is time we all took the threat more seriously and worked together to ensure more effective methods of control are developed and put in place with a more coordinated and united front in dealing with the problem," concluded Mr Taylor. (see Fig. 3 below)

- ENDS -

The European Squirrel Initiative:

The grey squirrel, Sciurus carolinensis, a native species of North America, was introduced to England from the late 19th century, until 1938 when it became illegal to import or keep the species in captivity.

The European Squirrel Initiative was founded in June 2002 by a group of concerned conservationists and foresters. The organisation seeks the restoration of the native red squirrel and the protection of the natural environment by removing the impact of the alien grey squirrel in Europe.

Its role is to:

- Persuade conservation bodies and governments of the absolute necessity of ridding Europe of the grey squirrel.
- Continue to commission research into the impact of the grey squirrel on local ecosystems and the development of new methods of control.

For more information visit the ESI website:
www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org

Issued by Kendalls on behalf of the European Squirrel Initiative.

For more information, please contact:

Andrew Kendall
info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org
01502 475110

Graham Taylor
www.silviculture.co.uk
graham@silviculture.co.uk

European Squirrel Initiative

Notes to Editors:

Figure 1

GS Damage – Income from failure

	£/m3	Volume / ha	£/ha
30 year old MB / Oak	£10	95	£950
60 year old MB / Oak	£22	153	£3366
90 year old MB / Oak	£30	202	£6060
120 year old MB / Oak	£30	220	£6600
150 year old MB / Oak	£30	238	£7140

NB Assume YC 6 Birch / Oak / MB

Figure 2

GS Damage – The Income from Success

	£/m3	Volume / ha	£/ha
30 year old Oak / MB	£20	106	£2120
60 year old Oak / MB	£45	170	£7650
90 year old Oak	£83	250	£20750
120 year old Oak	£166	265	£43990
150 year old Oak	£194	280	£54370

NB Assume YC6 Oak / MB

Figure 3

Table 1 - Impact of GS damage on stand valuations at maturity in England

Broadleaves	Quality Class	YC	Undamaged Mature Value £ / Ha	Maturity Stand Value (100% damage) £/ha	Opportunity Loss with 100% damage	Average Rotation Length	Net Loss / annum £/ ha	Total Hectarage damaged by spp (ha)	Total Opportunity Loss / Quality Class
Oak	H	6	54370	7140	47230	120	394	26287	1241549179
	M	4	38000	7140	30860	150	206	20221	624020060
	L	4	15000	7140	7860	180	44	14155	111255942
Beech	H	6	12500	7140	5360	150	36	22995	123253200
	L	4	12500	7140	5360	180	30	10220	54779200
Sweet Chestnut	H	8	40000	7140	32860	100	329	2738	89954250
	L	4	15000	7140	7860	140	56	1278	10041150
	Coppice	10	3000	2500	500	16	31	3650	1825000
Sycamore	H	8	15000	7140	7860	100	79	10950	86067000
	L	4	12000	7140	4860	120	41	9125	44347500
Birch	M	6	9000	7140	1860	60	31	6935	12899100
					Total Hectarage in Damaged =			128553	
					Hectarage in each annual age class =			2143	
						Accumulated Opportunity Loss =			2399991581
						Annual Loss over 60 years =			39999860
Conifers									
Scots Pine	Medium	12	26600	20350	6250	60	104	1476	9225000
Larches	Medium	12	18000	12600	5400	45	120	2894	15629760
N Spruce	Medium	16	29250	24650	4600	50	92	643	2958720
									27813480
						Annual Loss over 50 years =			556270
					Total Cumulative Cost Of GS Damage =				2427805061