

# [Press release: Campaign branches out to protect UK's mighty oaks](#)

A major new campaign to protect the UK's mighty oak trees from threats including pests and diseases has been officially launched at [the 2018 Chelsea Flower Show](#) by Lord Gardiner, Defra's Biosecurity Minister.

[The Action Oak Partnership](#) – made up of charities, environmental organisations and landowners – is seeking to raise £15 million for research and monitoring to help safeguard the 121 million oaks in UK woodlands.

Work will include capturing the first detailed picture of the current health of oak trees, helping to gain a greater understanding of how to preserve their iconic position in our landscape for generations to come.

The campaign contributes to [the Government's 25-year Environment Plan](#), which was launched by the Prime Minister in January, by helping to strengthen biosecurity and build resilience to protect oaks for future generations. It also builds on the £37 million the Government is already investing in tree and plant health research.

Action Oak is supported by The Prince of Wales, who convened a cross-sector meeting on the issue of plant health and biosecurity at Highgrove, his residence in Gloucestershire, in February. HRH is also the Patron of [Woodland Heritage](#), the charity that will be administering funds raised by the campaign.

Defra Biosecurity Minister Lord Gardiner said:

Protecting our country from pests and diseases, so our trees and plants can thrive in the future, is a priority for this Government and we are proud to be backing this campaign.

The Action Oak Partnership provides a one-off opportunity to shape the future of our oak trees and make sure they continue to have a place in our landscape.

The combined knowledge of all the organisations involved will be vital in protecting these majestic trees, contributing to help us be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

The Action Oak Partnership includes [The Woodland Trust](#), [Woodland Heritage](#), [National Trust](#), [The Duchy of Cornwall](#), [Forest Research](#), [Royal Botanical Gardens Kew](#), [the Forestry Commission](#) and [the Northern Ireland Forest Service](#), and is supported by [Defra](#), [Scottish](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland governments](#).

[The Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (APHA), supported by the organisations

involved in the Partnership, will have a stand at RHS Chelsea dedicated to Action Oak. At the stand visitors will be able to learn about how oak trees have shaped our history, the threats they face and how they can be protected.

Action Oak has already attracted support from foundations, businesses, artists and celebrities including:

- Dame Judi Dench, a well-known tree lover – a 3D scan of her favourite oak tree will be displayed on the Action Oak stand at Chelsea
- British ceramicist Emma Bridgewater – has created a bespoke Action Oak mug which will go on sale later in the year in support of Partnership, with a portion of the proceeds going towards Action Oak research
- The Monument Trust, one of [the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts](#) – has donated a further £500,000 towards research into Acute Oak Decline (AOD)
- The JABBS Foundation, a private family charitable foundation based in Birmingham – has pledged over £565,000 towards research examining oak tree defences at [the University of Birmingham for Forest Research](#)

Geraint Richards, Duchy of Cornwall head forester, said:

The oak is our country's most important tree, an iconic species and the provider of numerous benefits to us and our environment.

We must do all that we can to preserve the health of our oak trees for future generations.

Beccy Speight, chief executive for the Woodland Trust, said:

We need to take a serious look at the threats our trees and woods are facing. As we approach a post-Brexit world, we need to take opportunities to make the UK's landscape more resilient, and combat invasive pests and diseases head-on. Our shared responsibilities span from ensuring the supply of new, UK-sourced saplings to better care for our ancient trees.

We are proud to be a part of Action Oak. The oak supports an astonishing amount of wildlife, but is also an iconic part of our culture and heritage. By working together we plan to make the necessary changes to safeguard our most treasured native tree, for decades to come.

Lewis Scott, co-founder and trustee of Woodland Heritage said:

My co-Founder, Peter Goodwin, single-handedly raised £2million towards research into Acute Oak Decline (AOD) before his untimely death last year.

This money has enabled so much research to have been undertaken over the last decade, but the threats to the oak go far beyond AOD, itself not yet fully understood.

It is wonderful, therefore, for Woodland Heritage to now be part of a unique initiative that is tackling the wide range of risks the oak faces head-on, helping to ensure that the mighty oak can be enjoyed by generations to come.

For more information about the campaign and how to support it, visit [the Action Oak website](#)

---

## [News story: UK to ratify international protocol to reduce air pollution](#)

The government has taken an important step towards ratifying the 2012 amendments to the Gothenburg Protocol, an international agreement to reduce air pollution.

An Explanatory Memorandum signed by the Environment Secretary and the text of the amendment to the Gothenburg Protocol were yesterday laid before parliament. This follows on from progressing with ratification of two other amended air pollution Protocols earlier this year.

The amended Protocol sets ambitious international targets for the reduction of damaging air pollutants including new national emission reduction commitments to be met by 2020 and beyond for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, non-methane volatile organic compounds and fine particulate matter.

The amended Protocol also introduces stricter limit values for emissions from new and existing major stationary sources, such as combustion plants, and iron and steel manufacturing plants.

The UK has been a Party to the Convention since 1982 and ratified the original Protocol in 2005. Over this period major investment by successive governments and industry and a shift in the UK fuel mix away from coal towards cleaner forms of energy have helped to significantly improve air quality levels. However work is still needed to combat harmful pollutant emissions.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

“Air pollution remains a significant threat to public health and we are committed to tackling its causes and improving air quality.

“This is why we are signing up to the amended Gothenburg Protocol and will shortly build on our £3.5bn plan to tackle roadside emissions by publishing a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy.”

---

## [Press release: A crushing end for seized waste crime vehicle](#)

The vehicle was detained by officers last year after months of surveillance and intelligence gathering as part of Operation Poppy, a joint operation between the Environment Agency and local police into 28 incidents of large scale illegal dumping of commercial waste in North Staffordshire, Shropshire, South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire. The DVLA also issued a prohibition notice and immediately removed the vehicle off the road after the vehicle was found to be using trade plates illegally and deemed unsafe to drive.

The driver and passenger were questioned by the police and remain a line of enquiry.

The vehicle was used to transport and dump large quantities of shredded household commercial waste, varying between 30 and 500 tonnes, on farmland, private wooded estates, secluded public footpath areas and business compounds. Secured areas were broken into and locks replaced by the offenders.

Environment Agency officers working on the case have since reported a reduction in illegal waste activity in the area since the lorry was seized.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

We are determined to make life hard for waste criminals by preventing and disrupting illegal activity. Today's vehicle crushing highlights the lengths we will go to make criminals pay for their unlawful deeds.

Thanks to the recent £30 million funding from the government and new powers to tackle problematic sites including authority to lock up sites and force rogue operators out of business, we are in a better position to safeguard the environment, local communities and the economy from the effects of waste crime.

In the financial year 16/17, the Environment Agency brought 138 prosecutions against businesses or individuals for waste crime offences, yielding more than £2m in fines.

As the fight against waste crime ramps up, the Environment Agency has recently introduced body worn cameras for waste enforcement officers. The move follows a growing number of abusive incidents during site inspections.

Environment Agency, West Midlands Area Director, Mike Grimes said:

This is the second vehicle destroyed this week, that has been taken as part of Environment Agency enforcement action. The seizure of these vehicles give a clear message that the Environment Agency takes waste crime seriously and will persistently pursue those suspected of illegally dumping waste.

We're making good progress to tackle waste crime. Our enforcement action is resulting in higher fines and custodial sentences. In the past 2 weeks, prosecutions in West Midlands have resulted in a 26-month jail term for one waste criminal and a 200 hour community service order for another.

Last year, the Environment Agency closed down 2 illegal waste sites every day and we have already seized another vehicle connected with waste crime across the Midlands. With our new waste powers, we can take tougher action to reduce illegal waste activity, which will make a real difference to the local communities.

Gill Heath, Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet member for Communities, said:

It took us 3 days to remove approximately 175 tonnes of rubbish from the car park and footpath at Madeley Heath, so I'm delighted that a vehicle involved in that crime is being taken off the road permanently.

Dumping commercial waste has the potential to harm people and the environment, causes a great deal of trouble for the victims and it's extremely frustrating that public bodies have to spend taxpayers' money cleaning up a crime.

Members of the public can report illegal waste activity anomalously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via the [online form](#)

---

## **Research and analysis: ACRE advice: application for a trial of GM camelina (18/R08/01)**

These documents are the advice of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) to government on an application from Rothamsted Research to carry out a trial of *Camelina sativa*, which has been genetically modified to produce omega-3 fatty acids, wax esters, and a pigment in its seed.

The committee advised that the risks to human health and the environment from this trial are extremely low.

---

## **Notice: The East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board: application made to abstract water**

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for the abstraction and impoundment of water.

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- which Environment Agency offices you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
- when you need to comment by