

[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](#)