

If you have trouble viewing this email, please let us know: pressoffice@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales

Datganiad i'r wasg/Press release

'Citizen scientists' sought for tree health survey

People across Wales are being urged to become "citizen scientists" by taking part in a UK-wide project to survey the health of our broadleaved trees.

Natural Resources Wales issued a rallying cry to help build a comprehensive picture of tree health issues as part of the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) project.

In partnership with the Welsh Government, it has funded the translation of the OPAL Tree Health Survey Pack into Welsh and the production of 5,000 packs for distribution around the country.

It's hoped the packs will prompt a wave of action for people to explore their local area to find and survey trees. The data gathered will help scientists and researchers to manage tree health more effectively.

A team from Natural Resources Wales has been trained by experts from Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) and Forest Research (FR) to run events for groups and schools throughout the summer and into the autumn term.

One such event took place yesterday (Wednesday, 31 July) in Maesgwm Forest at Coed-y-Brenin Forest Park, where children from high schools in Dolgellau and Tywyn joined Swyn Spencer of Natural Resources Wales and local Active Young People's Officer Catrin Davies.

Using the Tree Health Survey Pack, they surveyed ash, horse chestnut and oak trees and learned about the vital role trees play in helping to regulate our climate and support the animals and plants around them.

OPAL was conceived in 2007 as an education and research programme led by Imperial College London. Up until this year, its focus was solely on England, but the tree health survey has been extended to Wales and Scotland.

Millions of larch trees in Wales have been infected with *Phytophthora ramorum* and Chalara dieback of ash has also been identified here.

Tim Jones of Natural Resources Wales said, "Trees provide habitats for plants, animals and fungi, resources such as fruit and timber, help clean water and the air we breathe and reduce the risk of flooding.

"They are a much loved and vital resource, but over the past decade there has been a significant increase in the number of pests and diseases threatening our trees.

"We want to encourage greater community engagement and awareness of these threats to our environment. The OPAL survey is a good way to create a new generation of nature lovers and engage people in tree health issues in a positive way.

"Our scientists, foresters and woodland managers can't check every single tree or woodland quickly enough to give us a comprehensive picture of the state of health



of our trees, so I'd urge anyone with an interest in our environment to get a pack and get surveying."

All people have to do to take part in the survey is find a site with safe access to one or more broadleaved trees. Results can be submitted online.

A survey pack and information – including reusable guides and tree ID poster - can be ordered or downloaded from the OPAL website at www.opalexplornature.org/TreeSurvey

Anyone with a professional interest in trees and forestry is also being asked to volunteer their expertise by becoming "Tree Buddies" to help members of the public and schools carry out the survey, improve their learning experience and provide more accurate and reliable results.

Caption: Children show off their tree health packs as they check on a tree with Swyn Spencer of Natural Resources Wales.

Ends

Email: pressoffice@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Phone: 029 2046 4227

During office hours and evenings or weekends

Notes to Editors:

- Natural Resources Wales brings together the work of the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales, as well as some functions of the Welsh Government. Its purpose is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future.
- Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is a research and education programme, funded by the Wellcome Trust, delivered through a partnership of 15 organisations from across England and led by Imperial College London. As part of the OPAL Programme, six national survey topics (including tree health) give the general public the tools and support they need to explore and record nature in their local area. Details of the surveys can be found at <http://www.opalexplornature.org/surveys>
- For more information about how OPAL can support 'Tree Buddies', visit <http://www.opalexplornature.org/tree-buddy>

- Natural Resources Wales supports the delivery and development of education, learning in the natural environment through a variety of ways including: curriculum linked visits and activities, advice and guidance, funding, training for education professionals, networking, experience placements and resources. For more information contact sue.williams@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk
- Important numbers:
 - **0300 065 3000** to talk to us
 - **0800 80 70 60** to report an incident
 - **0845 988 1188** for information on flooding