

## Major scientific study on climate change comes to Nottingham

If you're anywhere around Asda, Hyson Green on the 13th June you may see some rather strange goings on... including people digging small holes in the Peppers Garden at the front of the supermarket. But don't worry it's just the Spring Clean Group from the Partnership Council charity in Hyson Green - looking for earthworms!

The Spring Clean Group, a group made up of local people, businesses and organisations who volunteer and campaign to keep the local area clean and tidy, is taking part in a ground-breaking national survey, the OPAL Soil and Earthworm Survey, launched by scientists at Imperial College London, the Environment Agency, the Natural History Museum and the British Geological Survey. The survey was launched on 23rd March 2009 and will run until May 2010.

The Spring Clean Group isn't the only one helping out with the survey either. OPAL are hoping that as many as 2,000 people will take part in the survey, in the East Midlands alone, and as many as 40,000 nationwide.

The survey has been launched to encourage members of the public to record information about the soil and earthworms in their local community, to reveal changes caused by pollution and climate change.

The survey is being run by the OPAL Soil Centre, which is based at Imperial College London and is part of the national Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) project - an Imperial-led initiative to inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environment.

### **Matthew Danquah who leads the Spring Clean Group at the Partnership Council explains:**

*"Helping people to discover, enjoy and protect their local environment is exactly what we aim to do - by organising activities such as voluntary neighbourhood clean-ups and campaigning for improved rubbish collecting services for example. So we're delighted to be taking part in a national survey that underlines the importance of caring for our local environment."*

*"Studying soil is essential because it's critical to many areas of our lives - from growing food to producing biofuels. It's very exciting that local people are going to be involved in providing scientists with information about the health of Nottingham's soil and how it's being affected by pollution and climate change."*

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## **Dr Nick Voulvoulis, Director of the OPAL Soil Centre, agrees:**

*"This is a really exciting project that gives people of all ages the chance to get their hands dirty and find out more about the world beneath their feet. At the same time, they will be contributing to an important survey of our soils and the organisms that live in them, which will allow scientists to monitor any future changes that may occur as a result of climate change or pollution."*

Very little is currently known about earthworm diversity and distribution. For example, there are a number of rare species.

## **Matthew continues:**

*"The survey will involve the Spring Clean Group digging a small pit (25x25cm) which we'll refill at the end of the day. We will then gather data about the soil using a special survey pack provided by the OPAL Soil Centre. In addition, we'll count and identify any earthworms we find - using a very dilute solution of mustard to bring burrowing earthworms to the surface. Naturally no worms will be harmed during the process and the mustard solution is entirely safe for them. Plus of course we'll return them to where we found them. The results will then be entered onto a national database for scientists to analyse the data."*

The Spring Clean Group will be carrying out the survey from -

**10.00am to 12.00pm on the 13th June, at the Peppers Garden, Asda, Hyson Green.**

Anyone interested in joining the survey is welcome to contact

**Matthew on 0115 970 8200 or email [matthew@partnershipcouncil.co.uk](mailto:matthew@partnershipcouncil.co.uk)**

## **Earthworm facts:**

- Earthworms are present in almost every kind of soil but they prefer healthy soil.
- Healthy soil contains plenty of air and moisture.
- Earthworms have no lungs but breath through their skin. They absorb oxygen and release carbon dioxide.
- Earthworms are great for gardens because they help to increase the amount of air and moisture in the soil - needed for plants to grow.
- Earthworm excrement is a great soil conditioning material - helping soil to retain moisture and fight against pests and diseases.

**[www.partnershipcouncil.co.uk](http://www.partnershipcouncil.co.uk)**

**<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/environmentalpolicy/research/environmentalquality/opalsoil>**

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