

# GROWING CONNECTIONS

A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES





## GROWING CONNECTIONS: A BETTER FUTURE FOR COMMUNITIES

**Our vision is of a world full of happier and healthier communities where people know one another and neighbourhoods thrive.**

Through the work of Eden Project Communities we connect individuals and communities, encouraging people to make positive changes where they live. By bringing people together, we help grow connections and strengthen communities so they are more resilient and better able to face the challenges we see in the world today.

This report explores our work and the impact that it has on individuals and communities. We're passionate about community and proud of what we have achieved so far with the help of many friends and partners, yet there is still so much to do to secure a better future for all our communities.

**WE'RE BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL  
FOR OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE - JOIN  
US AND WE CAN MAKE A BETTER  
FUTURE, TOGETHER.**

# INTRODUCTION

The Eden Project in Cornwall is testament to the power of ordinary people working together. We have a global mission: to create a movement that builds relationships between people and the natural world, to demonstrate the power of working together for the benefit of all living things.



Through Eden Project Communities we build relationships between people and support them to develop the skills and confidence to create positive change together. It all started back in 2009 when we had an idea – what if we invited the whole nation to come together to share food in their communities on one weekend of the year?

The Big Lunch was born – now **the UK's annual celebration for neighbours and communities**, with millions sharing friendship, food and fun on the first weekend in June. The Big Lunch provides people with an excuse to come together, that connection creates fertile ground from which a community's own ideas can then start to grow and flourish.

Alongside The Big Lunch we work with people to build their **skills, confidence and connections**, enabling communities to take the lead and make things happen for themselves. We host Community Camps, online workshops and in-person events and have a Network of community-minded people from

across the UK. Together this creates a space for people to share their ideas, skills, experience and stories – making anything possible and helping our communities to thrive.

Our work has significant impact – building community spirit and a sense of belonging, making people feel better about where they live and reducing loneliness. Over 1,000 new community projects have started and thousands of community activists have made positive changes where they live.

We could not do this alone – we'd like to thank our funders, friends and partners for their incredible support, along with all the people and communities who have stepped up to make a difference. Your support is invaluable, your hope and optimism inspirational and your energy is infectious!

But there is still so much more to do – the urgent need for community connection and resilience is increasing as the challenges of the 21st Century unfold.



Eden's work with communities is based on the belief that we're better equipped to tackle challenges when we face them together. That means it's more important than ever to bring people together, and we invite you to join us as we **build connections, support people to lead the changes they want to see and together create a better future for us all.**

## OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

On average,

**7M PEOPLE**

take part in The Big Lunch across the UK every year

**82%**

of participants say The Big Lunch helped them to feel more connected to others

AN AVERAGE OF

**£8M**

IS RAISED EVERY YEAR

That's a total of over **£70m** raised for local causes or charities through The Big Lunch since 2016!

There have been over **12,000** participants in over **300** online workshops or talks, and face to face events delivered through our **Network** since 2020!

**82%**

say it has made a lasting positive difference on their community years after holding a Big Lunch

**77%**

of participants feel a stronger sense of belonging in their community following The Big Lunch

A WHOPPING

**20 MILLION**

PEOPLE TOOK PART IN THE MONTH OF COMMUNITY 2022!

On average, each person makes

**9 NEW CONNECTIONS**

through participation in **the Network**

**17.2M**

took part in **The Big Lunch** and **The Big Jubilee Lunch**

That's **1 in 4** people across the UK!



**11.7M PEOPLE SAY IT HELPED THEM FEEL LESS LONELY**

**15.3M PEOPLE SAY IT GOT PEOPLE TALKING TO EACH OTHER**

**12.8M PEOPLE FEEL CLOSER TO THEIR NEIGHBOURS**

**77%**

of **Month of Community** events included a fundraising element

**1,000**

new community initiatives started as a result of **Community Camp**

**OVER 389,000**

people in communities across the UK have indirectly benefited from the skills and confidence gained by participants at a **Community Camp!**

# MONTH OF COMMUNITY: PARTNERING TO MAKE A BIGGER DIFFERENCE

The Month of Community is a celebration of everything that makes our communities great!

By joining good causes together every June, we all put a spotlight on community-based activity, invite participation and encourage action.

This helps increase our collective impact and reach, with almost a third of the UK population taking part in the Month of Community in 2022. By working together as equal partners we're able to invite people to engage with their community through a broad

variety of events, awareness weeks, campaigns and activities - there's something for everyone.

Events during the Month of Community encourage people from different backgrounds to meet and connect, leading them to become more involved in their community.

**Taking part helps create stronger support networks, has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing and increases support for local organisations and charities.**



**A WHOPPING 20 MILLION PEOPLE TOOK PART IN THE MONTH OF COMMUNITY 2022!**



**76%** of participants felt Month of Community events had a positive impact on their community.



**73%** said Month of Community events helped people feel less lonely.



**70%** said Month of Community events encouraged people to engage in voluntary work.



**78%** said Month of Community events created a stronger sense of community spirit.

# THE BIG LUNCH: BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

The Big Lunch encourages people to come together in their neighbourhoods and communities to share friendship, food and fun. What makes The Big Lunch 'Big' is everyone joining in on the same weekend, and being part of a national moment.

The Big Lunch has gone from strength to strength, bringing an average of 7 million people together every year, and is credited with building social capital on a mass scale.

In 2022 our involvement in the official Platinum Jubilee celebrations saw participation in The Big Jubilee Lunch soar to **17.2 million people – that's 1 in 4 of the UK population!**

Taking time to eat together isn't just a lovely thing to do, it has a deep and lasting impact. From the moment the first invitation gets posted through the door, a street starts to change.



The Big Lunch breaks down barriers, **reduces loneliness and isolation**, builds a stronger sense of community and belonging and leads to more local volunteering.

## the big lunch

AROUND  
HALF

of Big Lunch organisers told us they have a new commitment to environmental concerns since attending a Big Lunch

92%

of organisers have seen a positive impact on their communities

NEARLY  
30M

new friendships made through The Big Lunch!

42%

of organisers say new community groups or initiatives have been set up after a Big Lunch

“ For us The Big Lunch is a day for connection...when I look back I can't believe there were a few years I wanted to do it but had to work up the courage. All you have to do is voice your interest and get a few neighbours to help you get started. I suppose that's the same for any idea you want to get going, start talking about it and see what happens!

- JOANNA, EAST BELFAST ”

Since starting her Big Lunch, Joanne and her neighbours have gone on to develop a beautiful shared space behind their houses – they've named it Rainbow alley to reflect the diverse nature of their community.

“ I love The Big Lunch because there’s a lovely sense of celebration and welcoming new neighbours in. On our street we now help each other out, exchange skills and have meaningful conversations and relationships.

– ANDREW, LIVERPOOL ”

Longer term, The Big Lunch creates fertile ground from which positive change can happen, from informal activities such as the sharing of tools, skills and time, to new community groups and initiatives set up as a result of connections made.

Each year, The Big Lunch raises over £8m for good causes, with **75% of the money staying within the local community**, and in 2022 that rose to a **whopping £22m** thanks to the Jubilee booster effect on participation.

We support people to make The Big Lunch an annual part of their community calendar, and to take the next steps to make the **positive changes they want to see where they live, a reality.**

On a mission to create more outdoor growing activities for local children, Eugenie from Rutherglen in Scotland started Grow 73, a community gardening initiative re-connecting people with their community, history and nature. When Eugenie discovered The Big Lunch she decided to invite everyone to bring a picnic and held one at the community garden in the park – connecting even more people to green spaces.

“ People played music and chatted and it felt like the beginning of a community. ”

The Big Lunch has become Grow 73’s signature event, with people getting together each year to enjoy music, food and a few hours outdoors.

## EMMA’S STORY, NEATH



Emma and her neighbours have held a Big Lunch since 2009, and as their Big Lunch grew, more connections encouraged them to make improvements to their community. Their biggest step was taking on a lease for a dilapidated community centre, it’s now a hub of activity in the area, offering something for everyone!

“ Everything we’ve done has started from one little street party – our street is now unrecognisable from what it was 14 years ago. People know there’s always someone they can call if they have a problem...Community is everything to me – I can’t imagine my days without it now. ”

## COMMUNITY CAMP: INSPIRATION AND SKILLS BUILDING

Our Community Camps, running since 2013, offer support, learning and connection to those who want to do more in their communities. They are immersive events, building the confidence and boosting the skills of community-minded people UK wide, helping them to take their own projects and ideas forward.

Connections made through Community Camps are deep and long lasting, and the practical support, inspiration and learning leads to concrete action. **Over 90% of people who have been through a Community Camp have gone on to deliver more within their community,** and over 1,000 new initiatives or projects have started as a direct result of Community Camps so far.

Attending a Community Camp can be a life-changing experience. 93% of participants told us that Camp had made a lasting impression on them

and their motivation to do something for their community – setting people up for a lifetime of positive community action.



51,271  
HOURS

of training and support delivered through Community Camps!

OVER  
1,800  
PEOPLE

have taken part in a Community Camp so far

AROUND  
3/4

of participants report improved confidence across a range of skills after attending a Community Camp

OVER  
389,000

people in communities across the UK have indirectly benefited from the skills and confidence gained by participants at a Community Camp

93%

of participants said that Community Camp had made a lasting impression on them and their motivation to do something for their community

By the end of the Community Camp I was full of great ideas and determined that we could take on the building at Gatis as a community asset. I was on what we have since dubbed 'the Eden effect'. I have never felt so enthused in all my life! I'm suddenly finding people want my advice or opinion; it's most certainly down to the information and ideas triggered during my Eden weekend and the network events.

- MARIA, WOLVERHAMPTON



## LUCINDA'S STORY, SOMERSET

Lucinda lives in a newly-built development in Somerset, where she runs Wilstock Hub, a community charity raising funds to build and run a communal building for the 4,000 residents. She attended Community Camp in 2015 in search of inspiration.

“Camp was the beginning of my journey. When I arrived, I didn't know how I was going to go forward with my project, but it left me with the confidence to go forward knowing I could reach my goal. I've continued with that positivity and it's got me through hurdles faced along the way, I've never looked back!”

Lucinda and her neighbours have since raised nearly £1.3m, and are now close to achieving their dream of a communal space fit for their active and vibrant community.



## EDEN PROJECT COMMUNITIES NETWORK: PEER TO PEER SUPPORT

The Network is a place where people, organisations and projects can connect with others to **build their skills, confidence and connections** so they can take forward their community ideas and make a difference. **It is a space to share advice, learn new things and support one another as they bring ideas to life.**

Engagement in the Network can be through attending a workshop or seminar, through our Facebook group for peer to peer learning and support, or more sustained involvement over time to build up a variety of skills.

Network activities are made as accessible as possible, running either online or face to face in community spaces around the UK. Real life meet-ups facilitate the strengthening of local connections, partnership working and understanding of specific local issues, whereas online sessions can provide learning on a particular topic or enable those who may not be able to attend a physical event, to come together and share ideas.

**OVER 12,000 PEOPLE HAVE JOINED NETWORK EVENTS, WORKSHOPS OR TALKS SINCE 2020**

There are nearly **3,000 members** in the Network Facebook group from all over the UK

**91% OF NETWORK MEMBERS SAY THEY HAVE AN INCREASED NETWORK OF PEOPLE TO TURN TO FOR INSPIRATION, MOTIVATION, AND ADVICE ON COMMUNITY INITIATIVES.**

**92%** of network members applied the skills they gained to benefit their wider community, and **90%** have taken new ideas back to try in their own communities

## BUILDING A MOVEMENT

We live in extraordinary times and face unprecedented levels of change and uncertainty, both locally and globally. The urgent need for community connection and resilience is increasing as the challenges of the 21st Century unfold – the climate emergency, biodiversity loss, equality, food security and the loneliness epidemic, to name just a few.

The next few years will demand the best of us all. When the rules of a successful future are not yet known, we need to use our collective imagination and enterprise to find new solutions.

Eden Project Communities delivers a unique programme, with reach and depth, and we are proud of the impact we have had so far, but we know there is so much more that needs to be done.

**Join us in a growing movement of people and organisations** who care about our communities, provide hope, and engender the citizenship values we need to cope with the immense social, economic and environmental challenges around us. **Help us to bring people together, grow connections, support and empower people to create the changes they want to see in the world.**



**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE!**

**WANT TO EXPLORE WAYS WE COULD WORK TOGETHER?  
LET'S MEET FOR A CUPPA, WE'LL BRING THE CAKE.**

### Get in touch

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