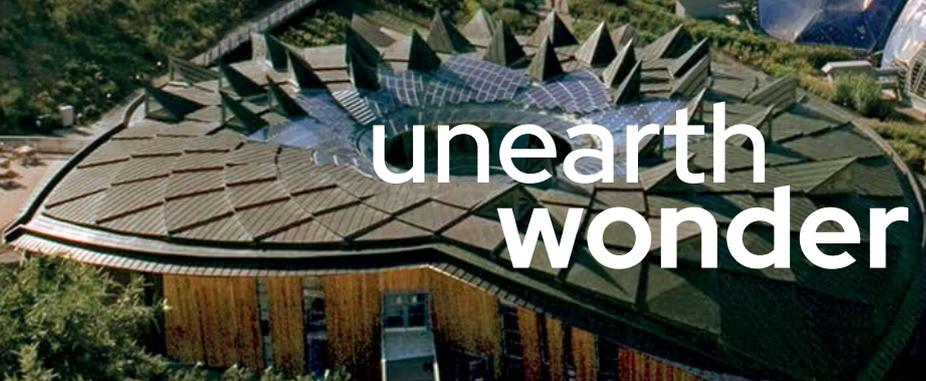




2001 2026

eden project



unearth
wonder



unearth wonder

25 years of the Eden Project

Dave Meneer

If you believe there should be a place...
That celebrates life and puts champagne in the veins.
Is all about education but doesn't feel like school. To hold conversations that might just go somewhere.
Where research isn't white coats in secret but shared exploration to help us all.
That's a sanctuary for all those who think the future too precious to leave to the few because it belongs to us all...
then welcome.



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Foreword

I was going through a spaghetti western phase. A raffish beard and pulling at a cheroot. Above me, two buzzards wheeled upwards in a thermal. Below, seen from my cliff-edge vantage point, was a savage wound of white framed by a green skin of stubby trees and gorse. From where I stood, I could see no obvious road into the crater even though common sense told me there would be an entrance and an exit, for this mine was deep. Elation took hold of me. After 18 months of searching, we had found the perfect site. It's the weirdest thing hunting for something, you know not what, and knowing only that when you found it, you would recognise it instantly.

Our memories live life backwards, editing our pasts to make sense of the journey taken and excising the preposterous coincidences and strokes of fortune that actually lit our path, replacing them with stories which speak of organisational skill and prudence.

Eden, as it would become, was born around a kitchen table where companions were theatre folk, horticulturists, an environmental activist and musicians. As time passed and the conversations became ever more passionate, we would be joined by engineers and architects, finance people and a bunch of other people in search of an adventure. In the smoke above the table a dream was fermenting... taking shape. The genie let loose recognised something about dreams and magic and realised that the secret was to be able to organise to deliver.

An Irish friend remarked later that 'random meetings are dancing lessons from God'. Almost everything that led from a kitchen table conversation in 1995 to a 25th anniversary of opening on 17 March 2001 (St Patrick's Day) was not random but championed by having an open door. The dice would roll with us, and yes, we raised an improbable sum of money for a project in a place many considered a backwater. Yes it would, as the Eden

Project, win many awards, break records and become a shiny symbol of an emerging environmental awareness. So many remarkable people were drawn into Eden's orbit as the singular canvas was being worked on. We mourn those we have lost and remember fondly those who are no longer on the adventure.

Pause for a moment. Was it worth it? Eden's economic impact is beyond anything a regeneration project of this size could ever have imagined. It broke some rules, which led to it being seen as pioneering, and reached an entirely new audience in a way that many would then use as an inspiration. We had created possibly the best outdoor arena in the world which year after year attracted some of the greatest musicians and bands to play. We collaborated with Peter Gabriel's WOMAD and created Africa Calling as one leg of Live 8 on 2 July 2005. More than 2 billion people saw bits of this, and those of us who were there were misty-eyed seeing Nelson Mandela address the musicians and audience by satellite. Away from the limelight we worked on projects in Kosovo, Thailand, India and Kenya exploring the nature of community; and with each project we learned. In 2009 we started The Big Lunch, encouraging people around the country to break bread with their neighbours. We have opened Oriental Eden in Qingdao in China and are currently developing newly imagined Edens in Morecambe and Dundee. Quietly, under the radar, the National Wildflower Centre has made itself an Eden home and our team is working all over the place to establish, with others, what we call Nature Connection – asserting the instinctively felt fact that being in nature and engaging in its nurture is profoundly healing. One of our favourite projects is at an unlikely location, Canary Wharf, where we have created an Eden Dock, which will soon be followed by the creation of a safe wild swimming space. Unbelievably,

this place of hard edges and unyielding reflections is seeing the emergence of a community using the social spaces and everywhere creating life – human and other!

What have we learned? After all, compared with the great institutions, 25 years doesn't even get you to infancy. The first thing is that most institutions lose their energy and lose sight of their real reason for being and we must guard against this. We know we must keep the fire of our passions and dismay ablaze in the service of what we stand for. We know too that, whatever the temptation, we must avoid politics (with a capital P), as the politicisation of our age is not encouraging kindness or generosity of spirit. We must champion the belief that the future remains ours to make and that it will be a bright one.

Lastly, we have learned an astonishing thing. Eden began by being the Living Theatre of Plants and People, but with each succeeding year, we have come to realise

its narrative recognises that we are part of nature as much as any living thing, and that to damage nature is to hurt ourselves.

Eden was built and evolved with many hands on its tiller. My hope is that after the present crew has moved on, it can continue to capture hopeful and inspiring ideas, keeping a culture alive in which square pegs continue to be welcome in our round hole.



Sir Tim Smit
Co-founder – Eden Project





Introduction

Welcome. This is your Eden, whether you've visited or have yet to come. More than 25 million people have walked through the gates of the Eden Project so far.

That number alone tells you something. Independent research shows that Eden, through those visitors, has generated over £6.8 billion for Cornwall and the South West and sustained thousands of jobs over the past 25 years. That's important to me. It really matters. But if this book were only about economics, it would be a very one-sided story.

Because what has been happening here is something else entirely. Eden is a charity that has been changing things. Changing lives – quietly, persistently, sometimes unexpectedly.

This book explores what we have come to call the Eden Effect. The impact of the place, the impact of the charity. Not just the money spent or the nights stayed, but ideas sparked, the confidence grown, the careers nudged into being, the sense of connection rediscovered. It asks a simple question: what happens when you put plants, people, theatre and possibility at the centre of a place?

At its heart, Eden is a garden, quite possibly the most significant garden to be created this century. The plants are not there for decoration; they are here to plant stories in our minds. Horticulture is the starting point of these stories about who we are, where we belong, where we are going and how we might live better as part of the natural world, not apart from it. The design, the interpretation, the theatre; all were groundbreaking then and remain so now. Few places have reimagined so boldly what a garden can be, and what it can do.

The Eden Project took an exhausted clay pit, once described as a great scar on the landscape, and reimagined it as a global garden. Eden's story started with physical transformation, one that became symbolic

– a living demonstration of what humans can do when they choose to heal rather than abandon. That act alone has echoed far beyond Cornwall.

None of this happened by chance. Eden exists because of Sir Tim Smit, its co-founder, and the extraordinary team he gathered around him – people with imagination, grit and an unshakable belief that something improbable could be made real. It exists because of trustees who have stewarded the vision, staff who bring it to life every day, and volunteers who have given their time, energy and belief so generously. Thousands have helped and ushered this place into being. I am immensely proud to lead the Eden Project today as CEO, and proud of what this organisation has done to transform this part of Cornwall and influence tourism, education and environmental thinking far beyond it.

This is my second stint at Eden. I first arrived in the early 2000s, when the place itself was still young. You could say we grew up together. I have spent much of my working life here, and want to spend more yet, because there is still so much to do. This book looks back, of course, and much of that brings a smile. But it also helps us look forward to 2050 and beyond. Looking back helps us look forward better.

In those early days, everything was new. In many ways, we were learning as we went along, writing the script while rehearsing the lines. Watched closely by some who expected us to fail, cheered on by many who hoped we would not.

My early work (as Head of Research) focused on two deceptively simple questions. Was Eden working educationally? Does it deliver economically?

On education, the evidence soon became clear. More than a million people have come through our schools programme alone, with millions more learning

informally through wandering, wondering and talking. We developed unique and innovative ways to measure these impacts and set new standards for doing so – now replicated by museums and gardens around the world. And the effects of Eden have lasted. People come back to us years later as adults to tell us that a visit to Eden helped shape who they became. Environmentalists, horticulturists, designers, exhibit makers, performers, educators... We have been overwhelmed by those stories. Still are!

On economics, we measured who came. Why they came. What they spent. Where they spent it. How long they stayed. Whether they returned. With a colossal £6.8 billion that has been pulled into the region, along with new areas of business: hundreds of the best bands in the world attracted to play in Cornwall; a winter business model to tackle seasonality; jobs sustained; local suppliers, artists and artisans supporting us all the way – the evidence speaks for itself. Those results still matter today, and they run through this book.

But there is a third question that matters just as much. Does Eden help people feel more connected to the natural world and each other?

For 25 years, Eden has been quietly, persistently helping people realise that humans are part of nature, not apart from it. That idea sits beneath everything we do – in the gardens, the exhibits, in our learning programmes, even in the rock concerts. In large-scale landscape restoration that puts biodiversity back where it belongs. In international work in Costa Rica, China, and elsewhere. In new Edens taking shape in places that have asked us to help, in Morecambe, Dundee, and beyond.

Unearthing wonder has always been central to this. Unearthing wonder in plants. In people. In places others may have overlooked. It also runs through our work with communities. The Big Lunch is a good example. For 18 years, it has helped neighbours across the country connect through the simple act of sharing

food together. It's a modest idea, but a powerful one. Unearthing wonder in the place where you live.

Eden has always been an optimistic place – optimism with an attitude and spring in its step. We are not here to scare people or catalogue problems. We are here to help people think, feel hopeful and leave feeling that solutions are always possible.

And we keep moving. Keeping the place strong and curious. Doing things we never imagined at the start, like music, ice skating, new gardens, new energy systems. New Edens. Our programmes reflect our origins in nature recovery and connecting people to nature, but look to the future, bringing best practice, policy and the latest research to bear. Always growing.

This book helps us see the scale of what the charity Eden Project has achieved. Its effect on people, communities, the economy, the environment. It inspires me every day to think that we are enriching lives, strengthening neighbourhoods and supporting nature to restore itself, alongside sustaining economies.

I hope it will also reveal to you how much more there is to discover. This is your Eden. Please continue to join us, become a Member, help tell this story and support this charity on its incredible journey. The Eden Effect is still unfolding. The future is ours to make.

Turn the page, and you will begin to see how and why it matters.



Andrew Jasper
CEO – Eden Project



From pit...

to paradise

Tim Smit – now Sir Tim – arrived in Cornwall in 1990 with his young family looking for something to find. And so he did – well, he discovered one thing and he built another, but importantly, essentially, he invented both: The Lost Gardens of Heligan, and a few years later the Eden Project.

Heligan was like Sleeping Beauty in her overgrown castle in the woods – the rambling but once beautifully maintained grounds of a country estate that had become a jungle after most of the gardeners went off to fight in the First World War and never came back.

Through Heligan, Tim became fascinated by botany, horticulture, ecology and all things green. An idea took root and began to flourish: what if a place could be built that wasn't a stamp collection of rarities but which could showcase the plants that had changed the world, the big ones, the ones that touch our lives every day – wheat, rice, tea, coffee, cacao, cotton, hemp and cola?

Heligan had shown that even people who don't know much about plants are interested when those plants are wrapped in a story that connects them to people. Eden would be a living theatre of plants and people. And Tim never deviated far from that original idea.

Back-of-a-fag-packet calculations showed that it would have to be big – very big – able to house greenhouses the scale of which had never been seen. Making a feature of these was an important part of the strategy to attract an audience rarely seen in educational projects – a cross-section of the public in all its diversity and in large numbers. Through its sheer physical presence, Eden would become something of a beacon for others trying to effect change; a place that showed what can be done by working with the grain of nature rather than stubbornly and carelessly against it.

All Tim had to do was find the money and assemble a team to build it.

Eden would look fabulous anywhere, but Tim had decided with his usual audacity to transform the scar of a worked-out china clay pit into the paradise.

The idea struck him on the A30. Back then, Tim says, you could see across the clay country where there are 'these enormous ziggurat-shaped waste tips, they're absolutely enormous ... and I suddenly started thinking about Arthur Conan Doyle's Lost Worlds, and craters and civilisation and great plants and culture and everything else, and then craters turned to pits and all the rest of it, bang, Eden Project!'

After endless driving around the barren clay country, he found Bodelva on the outskirts of St Blazey (a stone's throw from St Austell if you're particularly good at throwing stones). There are hundreds of old clay pits around here, but this one delivered Tim's Conan Doyle 'Lost World' dream perfectly: eleven hectares (27 acres), 70 metres deep, with a nice south-facing cliff against which to lean the world's largest greenhouses.

'It was the strangest thing. The instant my eyes fell on Bodelva Pit, I knew it was the one. Here in the company of buzzards, on my rock in the middle of nowhere... I knew we'd found our Eden.'

Tim Smit, *Eden*

Finding Eden

Designing Eden

This sprawling idea demanded some architectural nous. Step forward Jonathan Ball from across the county in Bude – not only an architect but very well connected in that world and well-connected in the county, Cornish through and through. Tim and Jonathan met in September 1994, and together they became co-founders of the Eden Project. 'Jonathan was really excited about the idea and wanted to take it forward,' Tim recalls. 'I was really grateful for the support because he knew a world I didn't.'

Jonathan's practice had the skills and the hi-tech kit to develop a computer-generated model of what Eden might become. This led to a quest for a world-class architect with a way with glass, and there was one standout candidate – Nicholas Grimshaw, the man who'd designed the splendid Waterloo International Rail Terminal – an architectural triumph of snaking glass and steel roofing. Tim's pitch went something like this: 'We're giving you the opportunity to build the Eighth Wonder of the World...the bad news is we can't pay you.' And the answer was 'Yes.'

In 1996, Tim and Jonathan went up to London to pitch the idea to the Millennium Commission. And the answer was 'No.'

But that wasn't the end of it. Tim couldn't face the loss of the dream at this point, so on the train back to Cornwall he said to Jonathan, 'We'll tell everybody that they loved the idea but asked us to resubmit it in a different form.'

And that's what they did. The original design was for a glasshouse almost a kilometre long along the south-facing wall of the pit, containing four distinct climates: subtropical, tropical rainforest, desert and Mediterranean. The subtropical and tropical zones were combined, and the desert was dropped.

And the Waterloo Station-style design met its Waterloo. Why? Because the pit was still being scraped clean of the last of its china clay. Until the Millennium Commission OK'd the project, the team couldn't buy the pit, so the owner carried on mining. But that was a bit of a problem. You see, you can't design a building if you don't know where the foundations are supposed to go, and the foundation line was moving at a steady old rate of 10 metres a week. Or can you? Turns out you can. Nature had the answer all along: bubbles.

Bubbles can sit on any surface; it doesn't matter how uneven it is. And nature offered a few ideas when it came to structuring those bubbles, too. Bees got there first – just look at a honeycomb – maximum space linked by minimum effort and material used in the 'walls'. Yes, squares also fit together nicely when they're packed together, but not as economically as hexagons. Awfully clever, hexagons. Of course, it was Buckminster Fuller who came up with the idea originally. Geodesic domes made from hexagons are all about strength and weight and letting light in, and yes, beauty. And perhaps we'd better stop calling them glasshouses.

Glass was never a frontrunner really. Plants are fussy. And the ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE) covering that you see today weighs far less than the equivalent amount of glass. And that means it needs much less steelwork to hold it up there. Better, cheaper, safer. There are fewer shadows on the plants too. And it's not degraded by sunlight, which is also rather helpful in a greenhouse covering. Double 'glaze' it and pump air in between, and you get better insulation than normal double-glazing. Tim called it 'cling film with attitude', and he wasn't wrong. Easier to say than ethylene tetrafluoroethylene too.





The big build

Dig it all out and then put it all back a century later. Oh, how those old miners would have rolled their eyes as the finest earth-moving technology of the day went into action, making some level bits that could be built on using the old spoil heaps sitting right there. A million and a half tonnes of the stuff.

Then it rained for a hundred days in a row.

Over 195 million litres of water poured in. Good job there were still pumps in the pit, and they were the only things working in those conditions. Everyone else was inside waiting for the weather to break, which eventually it did. They got back to work, and the floor of the pit was raised by 20 metres in some places, and the lip lowered to improve access for the construction monsters needed for the build itself.

Up went the scaffolding. So much scaffolding it's in *The Guinness Book of Records* as the largest freestanding scaffolding ever erected in the world. There are no figures for the number of building projects stalled because Eden had used all the scaffolding, but it was quite a sight to behold.

People love looking at construction going on. The Eden team had noticed cars pulled up all along the site perimeter on Sunday afternoons and families ogling what was going on down there in the pit.

Necessity is the mother of invention, they say, and earning some money was a necessity in those early days – so why not open the building site and charge for it?

And so in May 2000, the 'Big Build' was born. How many projects have the confidence to share a work in progress?

The first visitors were taken down into the pit in land trains. Everyone wore hi-vis jackets and hard hats – all part of the drama. Many still talk about it to this day.

Astonishingly, over 300,000 people turned up in those few months, bringing in over a million quid, and that excited gang of ambassadors went away ready to spread the word.

Then Eden shut the doors again to ramp up the excitement (and get the place planted up).

Growing Eden



That's the pit dealt with, for now at least, but what about the paradise?

Eden grew out of Heligan, where Tim had already surrounded himself with botanical experts like Philip McMillan Browse, Heligan's Horticultural Director, and Peter Thoday, a Heligan Trustee. Heligan was not a place for the faint-hearted and both men were hugely respected, hugely experienced and fearless. Both would become directors of the Eden Project.

Plants would be at the heart of Eden. Not the rarest, or the strangest, but the everyday ones that we all love but don't really know. They're the workhorses of the plant world that we couldn't do without, feeding, clothing, healing, and intoxicating us. Some of them have changed the world.

Very quickly, they got to over 4,000 different plants from all over the world. Now all they had to do was start growing them.

Just five miles down the road south of Eden, there were some more huge glasshouses at Watering Lane. These were actually made of glass; they'd been on the go since late 1997 with a tiny team led by an experienced cultivator of plants called Ian Martin, who had begged, borrowed and bought what were to become the stars of the show.

With all the excitement going on up at Bodelva with famous architects it was all too easy to forget that all those hectares inside and out had to be filled with living things.

Those soap bubbles hadn't been blown yet, so the nursery had to house them all, and it was growing and being added to by the day. Cannington College in Somerset came knocking as they were clearing out their old tropical house, so a team jumped in a van and went and nabbed them. Then Cambridge University Botanic Garden donated some more, followed by Wageningen University in the Netherlands. A tropical research centre in Montpellier bounced up with rubber trees, and so it went on as the jungle drums put the word out and endless letters and phone calls were made. Cacao from the University of Reading and oil palms from Bath University; the bananas were from the Plantain Institute in Belgium – of course they were, where else would you go? Coconut palms from Wye College, London University. The proteas from a friendly nursery in Helston, though many more migrated from South

Africa later. Gnarled old olives imported from nurseries in Italy, Spain and Holland and looked just brilliant as only they can. Yes, money was spent on plants, lots of it, but much more greenery came in essentially for free. Plant enthusiasts are a generous bunch.

By spring 2000 there were nearly 100,000 plants there of 4,000 different types and a crew of 18 (mainly) volunteers keeping them alive before they made the big trip up the road. Some of the bigger ones were already outgrowing Watering Lane and holes had to be dug to stop them going through the roof.

And don't forget the pests – can you imagine! Managing the creepy crawlies became a daily concern. Not to overdo it, but think of managing your own patch and then multiply it by a thousand or more, and with an overriding desire to avoid blasting everything with pesticides. It was mainly done by bugs that eat bugs and simply staying super-watchful. That and building a quarantine house to put newcomers in for up to three months; can't be too careful. Once the five-mile trip had been made to Eden there was no turning back and the stakes were high.

The stage was being built at Bodelva, and the sky monkeys (see p.62) were cling-filming the Biomes. The cast at Watering Lane were learning their lines. Meanwhile, off stage in another former quarry, the Dance of the Diggers had also begun, creating the 83,000 tonnes of topsoil that those plants would need to survive.

Seven different recipes were needed for the different planting zones. Tony Kendle (later Eden's Foundation Director) and his team at the University of Reading had been working with Eden's scientists since 1998 to devise the soil types using china clay waste and test them – did they drain well or hold water, could they supply the nutrients the plants required? That sort of thing. Then McAlpine's diggers went to work at Penhedra quarry mixing the china clay waste with composted green waste or bark chippings, depending on which zone the mixture was destined for. Like making a giant bowl of cake mixture for plants.

In spring 2001, the mixture was loaded on to trucks and delivered to Bodelva to be spread over the site. They were still spreading it out the night before they opened.





Ready or not?

The rush in 2000 was astonishing – a dash to get the plants in the ground and have something other than the Biomes to look at. Everybody was out there planting, even the finance team before they had admission money to count.

The Rainforest Biome still had a long way to go. In those early days even the huge kapok trees that were nudging the roof of Watering Lane looked tiny once they arrived in the Biome. And the Med was still warming up too, though it would soon come into its own. In other words, the architecture was gleaming bright and new, but the stars of the show had a little more rehearsing to do. Within weeks, they were strutting their stuff, but Eden's first visitors would need to be informed and amused from day one, so Eden's Arts Team put together a loose alliance of designers, artists, sculptors and automata makers from Cornwall to create loads of 'exhibits' to tell the stories – and the storytelling at Eden would be like nowhere else.

The first exhibit the public would see when Eden opened was *The Plant Takeaway* (aka 'Dead Cat'). It had been installed in the Visitor Centre during the Big Build. Its message is simple – think of all the plants you've used one way or another by the time you've finished breakfast and imagine what life would be like without all that variety. Food, drink, clothes, toothpaste, drugs. Without oxygen. The answer is: there wouldn't be any.

At the entrance to the Rainforest Biome, the Tropic Trader by David Kemp towered over everyone, framing what came next. In the Mediterranean Biome, Dionysus cavorted in a vineyard adored by his followers, the Maenads and the Satyrs. The revelries began before a single vine was planted, and now there are over fifty. In the Rainforest Biome a Malaysian-style house stood in the grounds of a 'home garden'. It looked more like an allotment back then. It's now shrouded in vegetation. The development of the Gardens carried on: in September, the first *Eve*, a cousin of Heligan's *Mud Maid*, appeared in the orchard.

That's just a few of the bigger exhibits. There were loads of them, and over the years, more were developed. A canopy walkway all about climate change; an area devoted to the wonderful plants of South-western Australia was added to the Med; and *Invisible You*, a permanent exhibition, was created about the friendly and not-so-friendly microbes that live inside and on us, to name a few. Learning by stealth, they called it back then.

Somehow, they did it, planting and preparing right up to the last minute, when the first visitors emerged from the mist, peering into the pit.

Eden was built, planted and ready to open to the public on budget and a month sooner than expected. And that was just the beginning.



25 years

'out of this world' The Daily Telegraph

'a miracle' The New York Times

'stunning' The Sun

'Paradise found' Daily Mirror

'education by visionaries' The Times

of Eden

2001

The curtain went up on the Living Theatre of Plants and People on 17 March 2001 – St Patrick's Day, as it turned out, though that was a coincidence. All the miracles had already happened, though another might be needed. Since February, Britain had been in the grip of a foot-and-mouth epidemic; the countryside was a pyre of burning cattle, and the public were being warned not to travel.

Luckily for Eden, they chose to risk it.

Good press certainly helped. 'Paradise found' said the *Daily Mirror*, *The Sun* simply said 'stunning', *The Guardian* said, 'Nothing quite like the Eden Project has been seen this side of Quatermass and *It Came From Outer Space*', while *The Daily Telegraph* chimed in with 'Out of this World.' When you have no money to spend on advertising, the power of free press, third-party endorsements and the relentless pursuit of PR pays unbelievable dividends.

The public began queuing at 4.30 am. By 9.30 am, the queue was so long that

Eden decided to open early. Three and a half thousand people crossed the threshold in the first hour. Some were local (including at least one who had worked there when it was still just a clay pit); others came from across the country and overseas – one man flew in from Seattle, determined to revisit after seeing it under construction during the Big Build.

They were greeted by the sight of the Biomes – as magnificent as ever, of course. Few of them would have noticed the 'Outdoor Biome' as it was known back then. That would change.

The brief was to create a series of curved, flat terraces that could be planted up, while ensuring good access for visitors across the site. Eighty per cent of Eden is under the Cornish sky, and most would agree that these cracking gardens have become a joy over the past 25 years – no small achievement given the architectural drama of the two Biomes.

The Eden Team rose to the occasion as 'their' Eden became everyone's. Some

of those who started as guides or kitchen staff went on to take on new roles and responsibilities. Some are still there, still committed to the vision.

A remarkable 1.2 million visitors turned up in the first year (twice as many as expected). But Eden wasn't about to rest on its laurels. Plans were already in motion for a new building for its staff, who were working out of Portakabins, and another for its education programmes, which were being taught wherever space could be found. The first notes of what would become the Eden Sessions were performed that summer, and the first theatre performance would follow in the autumn. Other ideas were forming. Some would take shape and thrive, others would fade. Triumphs would follow, as would disasters (two floods?!), but the ideas kept coming, as you'll see.



2002

The **Eden Sessions** hit the ground running in 2001–2002, and have been running ever since. That's a roll call of 300 bands and artists, including support acts, and an audience of well over three-quarters of a million in a quarter of a century.

By happy accident, Tim had been a music producer and was keen to make the most of the place's magnificent acoustics, while music industry insider John Empson has booked the gigs from day one.

We often said that we booked a headliner and then simply booked another – when you've got Mumford and Sons 'supporting' Doves and a very young Mark Ronson 'supporting' Lily Allen (the night after Amy Winehouse), you can say that kind of thing.

Pulp played the first official Eden Session, and over the years the Sessions have featured music from Elton John to

Motörhead (sadly one of Lemmy's last-ever gigs and Eden's loudest). They've hosted some of the best British bands in their prime: Oasis, Muse and Massive Attack; Mercury Prize winners like PJ Harvey; dance music from Massive Attack and Fatboy Slim; world-famous artists including Diana Ross, Brian Wilson, Van Morrison, Björk and Queens of the Stone Age. And it's not just music – Bill Bailey and Eddie Izzard both headlined their own Sessions, too.

The Sessions are eclectic, premier division and sell out fast. And Eden still handles all the bookings themselves.

Over the years, it's become a well-oiled machine – the right people, the right kit in the right place year after year, able to handle any challenge that comes down the hill. And, of course, to do so when the place has other things on its plate – like thousands coming

through the gate who may not want to be shooed out at the end of that day so that 6,000 others can get in and get settled.

Importantly, they've brought in a crowd who otherwise might not have stumbled upon the place or known what it was really all about. Eden lets them in free on the day of the gig and the day after.

Of course, the music industry has changed a fair bit since 2002 thanks to streaming. It costs a lot more to book bands now, but our sponsor (or Presenting Partner) Volvo is a great help. The Sessions are also now a joint venture with the global live entertainment champion AEG.

Wondering what Eden's 25th year will bring to the stage? Stop by the Eden Sessions website: edensessions.com

2003

After some years in 'Portakabin City' the administrative arm of the Eden Project, including the Foundation Team, which leads on Eden's charitable objectives, moved into the new Foundation Building (pictured). Today, that space is shared with the Eden Project's Higher Education programmes.

Work began on Myth & Folklore in the Outdoor Gardens.

The ambience of the Mediterranean Biome was enhanced with a bell tower and a lookout.

2004

The Gardens for Life three-year pilot programme was launched to link 7,000 children in the UK, India and Kenya (pictured) through school gardening. The programme continued to support school gardens in the Rift Valley, Kenya, and the Gambia after the pilot, with further funding from charitable trusts and a successful BBC Radio 4 Appeal fronted by Monty Don.

A new winter programme of festivities and ice skating, A Time of Gifts, was created to reconnect with our local community and to bring new people to the region at a traditionally quiet time of year. It earned Eden a gold award for marketing at the Cornwall Tourism Awards.

Celebrating the arrival of spring, 'Bulb Mania' painted the site in bright colours.

2005

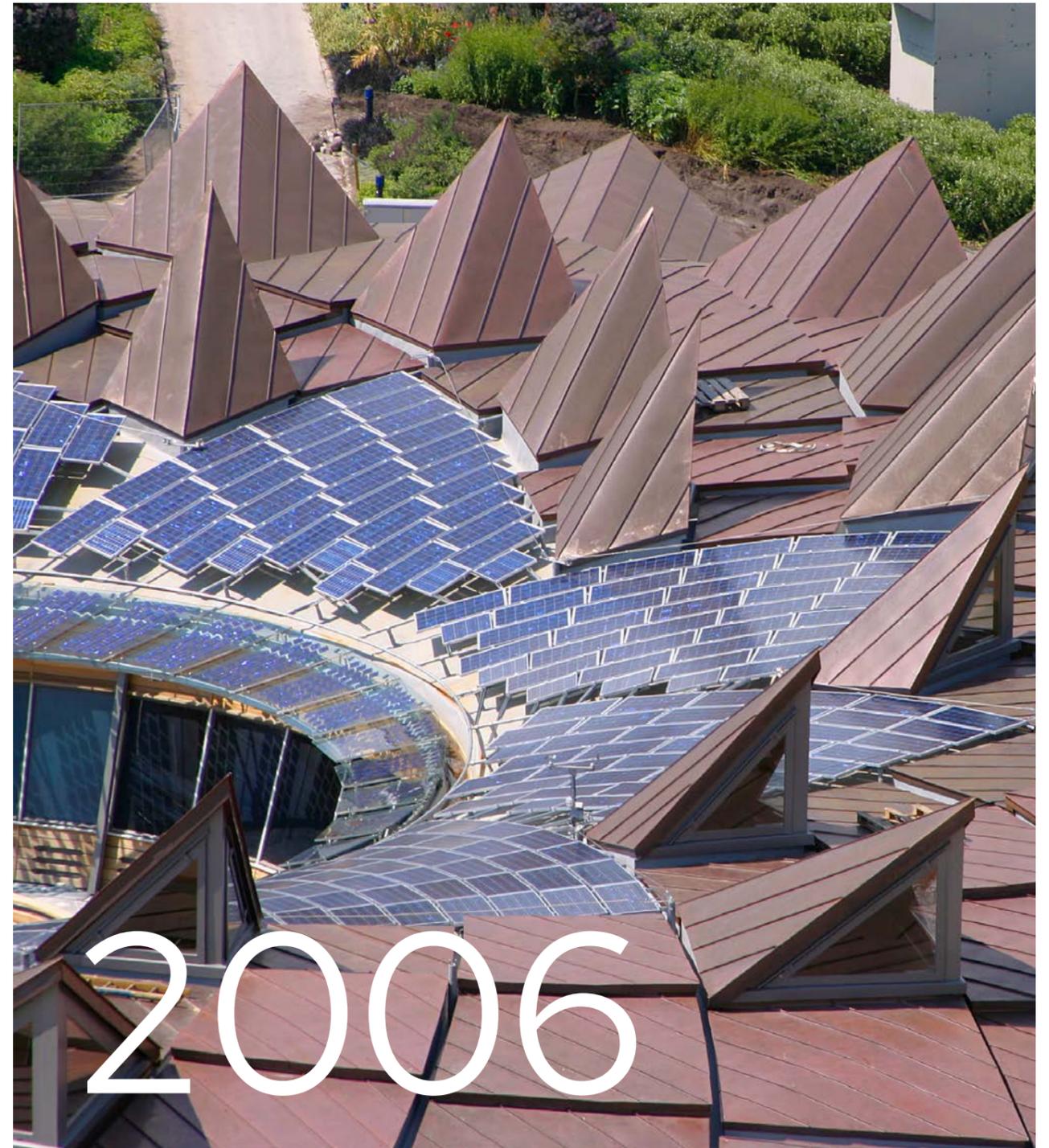
Live 8. Eden was late to the party and that was the point – it seemed odd, indeed unacceptable, that hundreds of artists were being gathered together globally to put pressure on wealthier countries to increase aid to Africa, yet so few of those artists were actually from Africa.

Peter Gabriel – long associated with promoting music from African countries and further afield through his WOMAD organisation – agreed with Eden's point of view. Together, they secured an audience with Sir Bob Geldof with just three weeks to go, and the Eden Project was added to the roll call of locations that included London, Philadelphia, Rome and Paris.

All Eden had to do was put on the gig, sell the tickets and get 22 artists and their musicians all the way to Cornwall to play on two stages all day on 2 July. Bring it on.

So, that's what happened – transport, including planes and helicopters, not to mention buses and taxis, was begged, borrowed and purloined, in just 20 days, to get over 300 performers to the stage on time. Hotels and food and drink too of course. All the staff were involved one way or another, the current CEO Andy Jasper was main driver to and from Newquay airport – he had that Dido and that Youssou in the back of his cab once, y'know.

And the sun shone, and the music was great. Angelina Jolie flew in to make a speech in her role as a UN Goodwill Ambassador with UNHCR. Nelson Mandela appeared on the big screen from South Africa. One of the great days.



'I am confident that the Eden Project will continue to encourage a better understanding of the planet on which we live, to offer a vision of hope for the future, and to inspire us all to work to make this world a better place for everyone.'

Message placed under Seed by HM Queen Elizabeth II.

Eden's education building, The Core (above), was opened by Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh during their first visit on 1 June 2006. Intrinsic to its design is a tree-like form, with a roof that spirals out from a central wooden core in Fibonacci spirals, covered in copper sourced from a single mine in Utah (and largely paid for by the mining company, Rio Tinto). At the centre was a space for Seed, a 76-tonne granite sculpture by Peter Randell-Page, which would be lowered into place the following year. It's now also home to Eden's permanent exhibition, Invisible Worlds.

The Great Day Out programme (2006–12) began offering new experiences for homeless people, offenders and excluded young people to inspire and motivate them to realise their own potential.

In June 2006, with the generous support of the Drapers' Company, Eden held a successful fundraising dinner in the City of London to launch our first nature connection programme, Mud Between Your Toes (2006–2013), to help children experience, understand and celebrate their sense of place in the natural world.

2007

In 2007, Eden put on the world's first Sexy Green Car Show. At a time when the only EVs most people saw were milk floats and golf carts, the Sexy Green Car Show gave us a glimpse of what was to come. Now, EVs are everywhere – and you'll find them at every turn at Eden. Eden's fleet has been largely electric since 2016, and today its partnership with Volvo provides nine XC40 Recharges. Eden also runs three electric 'bumble' buses in the summer to help ferry visitors in and out of the pit.

Peter Randall-Page's *Seed* sculpture (left), arrived at Eden and was lowered into the Core.

Den Building proved a hit with families during the summer holidays, with many not making it to the Biomes until after lunch!



2008

The second incarnation of *Eve* by Sue and Pete Hill was created in Myth & Folklore.

Eden's ten millionth visitor crossed the threshold and was presented with Lifetime Membership by Tim Smit.

Angela Easterling's 'Shape Shifters', an exhibition of photograms of plants, was held in the Core (left).



2009

The first year of the Big Lunch brought 700,000 people together in June. It has run annually ever since, with the patronage of HRH Duchess of Cornwall, now HRH Queen Camilla, and has led the celebrations for successive jubilees and a coronation.

October that year saw a more competitive gathering. The Eden Marathon and Half-Marathon (pictured), took its first strides through Cornwall's spectacular countryside. Where else would every runner get a pasty and a beer for taking part?

The Key Garden won silver-gilt at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May. Led by Eden, in partnership with Shekinah Mission in Plymouth, the project was co-designed by people experiencing homelessness. It was Eden's third win, following medals for its exhibits on endemic island plants.



2010



Suspended high above the canopy in the Biome, the new Rainforest Lookout was opened by adventurer Bear Grylls. Visitors could now enjoy a unique bird's-eye view of the variety of plants on display.

Following the success of the Key Garden, Eden returned to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show to take up the offer of the largest-ever plot for a show garden. The Places of Change Garden was created by 500 volunteers from over 40 homeless agencies, and ex-offenders from eight prisons. The initiative was a collaboration between Eden, homeless charities and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

The Freaky Nature season sparked kids' interest in the weird and wonderful characteristics of plants and the science behind them.

Summer Splash was the theme of Eden's summer programme, and a bigger splash came in the autumn. On 17 November, 40 mm of rain fell across mid-Cornwall in just two hours, flooding Eden and the surrounding area. The torrent swept away Eden's Link restaurants and its ice rink.

Eden's Big Lottery-funded family learning project, Seeds, Soup and Sarnies, brought participants together for a seed swap. The project involved 200 families from economically challenging parts of Cornwall and Middlesbrough to 'plant, grow, cook, share and eat'.



2011

Luke Jerram's giant acoustic wind pavilion, *Aeolus*, was exhibited in the Outer Estate.

Eden was one of the partners in Cornwall Together, a collective energy-buying initiative for Cornish households.

Eden ran a series of Planning Camps for communities undertaking neighbourhood plans for Locality, the national network supporting community organisations, and funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

2012



A Big Jubilee Lunch was held across the UK to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Another would follow to mark her Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

The Cornish Pasty Association's first-ever World Pasty Championships were judged at Eden in February 2012 and were held here for another 10 years.

The Olympic flame visited Eden as part of its 70-day journey across the UK. Strapped to a helium balloon, Ben Fogle took the flame high up into the canopy inside the Rainforest Biome.



Phase 1 of the Rainforest Canopy Walkway opened in summer 2013, and during the school holidays the Biome was awash with 22 different species of butterflies.

Eden hosted an electric bike show in April 2013 to give visitors the chance to test out what was then a relatively new concept. The cycling theme continued with the first Tour d'Eden (later Sportif), in May.

The Macmillan Christmas Fair moved to Eden in 2013, beginning its 13-year run (and counting).

2013

Singer Jesse J meets a fan before her 2013 Eden Session.

Eden's seasonal programme Freaky Nature (2010–2014) returned for the fourth time, taking over the Core (home of Seed) to explore seeds and seed dispersal. In previous years, the programme had delved into soil and manure, examined survival strategies, and investigated the world of bugs.

Heather Jansch's popular sculpture, *Horse*, was cast in bronze and displayed outside the Visitor Centre alongside its driftwood original.

A new exhibit made of and about rubber was installed in the Rainforest Biome.

'Dinosaurs Unleashed' was unleashed on summer visitors, the first of three big-budget summer programmes on this theme.



2014

2016

Little Eden nature connection sessions for parents, grandparents and carers, began at Little Carne Farm.

A brand-new Festival of Light and Sound, featuring renowned light artist Chris Levine from Edenlab, lit up the winter nights in December.

Eden came top of the Soil Association's new league table ranking the health of food served to children and families at UK visitor attractions.

Inspired by Moorish gardens of old, a new Perfume Garden (pictured) was laid out in a geometric courtyard within the Mediterranean Biome.

The launch of Eden on Prescription, a social prescribing programme featuring five weekly activities to support individuals in managing their health and well-being through connections with nature.



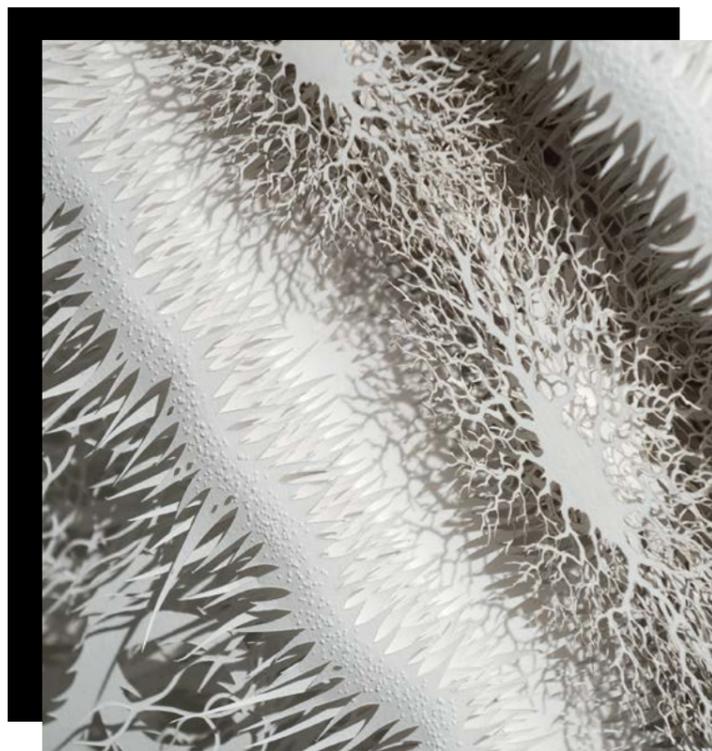
2015

'Invisible You', a new permanent exhibition supported by the Wellcome Trust, opened in the Core in May. Eden commissioned 11 artists to create exhibits exploring the human microbiome. It was the first phase of the Invisible Worlds project.

The Eden Project's first degree programmes started in September with 70 undergraduates studying horticulture, plant science and landscape design. The partnership with Cornwall College awards degrees from the University of Plymouth.

The Festival of Hope, a one-day inspirational event, featured Tesla, Finisterre, Pukka Tea, Surfers Against Sewage and many more.

Eden created the Pukka Tea Box under the Link Bridge to tell the stories of medicinal herbs and learn about the sustainable harvesting of wild herbs.



Rogan Brown Cut Microbe (2015), hand-cut paper (detail), from Invisible You.

2017

Developed with academic support from the Met Office and the University of Exeter, the latest phase of the Rainforest Canopy Walkway, the Weather Maker, opened in March. The walkway shows how rainforests affect weather and regulate the climate to encourage visitors to support their conservation.

The Great Big Walk set off across the UK to see the outstanding community work taking place across the country, supported by The National Lottery, the Pears Foundation and the Prince's Foundation.

Four years in the making, a new Western Australia garden was created with the help of Kings Park Botanic Garden in Perth. The garden recreates the jarrah and banksia woodlands of the kwongan, an area rich in spectacular flora, such as grass trees and kangaroo paws (pictured), which thrive on the Earth's oldest and most infertile soils.



2018

Invisible Worlds opened to become a permanent feature of the Core. It reveals the world beyond our senses; at its centre is ∞ *Blue* (Infinity Blue), by Studio Swine, an incredible homage to cyanobacteria (pictured).

The National Wildflower Centre relocated to the Eden Project, beginning a new era of nature recovery and landscape restoration.

Eden starts its forest restoration work in the Nicoya Peninsula of Costa Rica.

A live half-term show, *Operation Earth*, explores the health of the planet in collaboration with the Natural History Museum and other members of the Association of Science and Discovery Centre.

Eden welcomes its 20 millionth visitor.

2019



Minibeast Mansion (pictured), a new play area for under-10s, was opened.

Eden's social prescribing programme won *Horticulture Week's* Best Community Health/Wellbeing project.

Eden responded to the national School Strike campaign by sending its Education Team into schools to deliver specially themed lessons and inviting schoolchildren to Eden for its Make the Change event.

Educator Status was awarded to Eden Project Learning by the Society of Garden Designers.

Nesta funding allowed our early years team to run outreach events for families in deprived Cornish areas over six weeks.

Eden teamed up with United Way Colombia to support Outdoor Classroom Day Colombia, which saw participation from over 19,000 young people from 57 municipalities and 14 cities.

Julian Opie's *Crowd 4* was exhibited in the Outdoor Gardens.

Luke Jerram returned with *Gaia* in the Med Biome.

The Radical Botany exhibition brought together works by contemporary artists alongside the paintings of the Eden Project Florilegium Society.



2020

Eden was closed for much of 2020, but the plants didn't care about the pandemic, so the Horticulture Team continued to maintain the site in strict isolation along with the maintenance and security teams among others.

The Veld exhibit opened in the Outdoor Gardens (pictured).

One of the many hidden streams at Bodelva caused a landslide in the Outdoor Gardens.

2021

On 11 June, the Eden Project hosted a special reception for the G7 leaders and the EU to discuss how the private sector can work with governments to tackle the climate emergency.

The Renaissance concept of a cabinet of curiosities was updated by Eden for COP26 as a call to arms to regenerate our fractured planet.

A new Korean Garden was opened in partnership with the Korea National Arboretum, telling stories of nature recovery with and without human intervention.

Drilling began for Eden's geothermal well.

The Eden-curated Sustainability Pavilion was finally opened at the delayed Dubai Expo 2020.



2022

Sky Primary School and Eden Project Nursery (above) opened in temporary buildings in the Outer Estate, with 15 Reception and 7 Nursery pupils.

Eden's nutmeg tree (right) fruited for the first time.

The NWC partnered with Foresight and Canary Wharf to explore new ways to encourage nature recovery and nature connection.

Pollinator Pathmaker by Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg was installed in the Outdoor Gardens.

Ai Weiwei's *Fly* sculpture was exhibited in the Core as part of the Super Natural exhibition.



2023

£50m of government Levelling Up funding was awarded for the Eden Project Morecambe.

The UK's first operational deep geothermal power plant since 1986 came online in June at the Eden Project (pictured).

Growing Point, a new geothermally heated plant nursery, began operation.

Nature's Playground, a natural adventure playground, was opened by the Core as part of the Summer of Play.

In October, the Eden Project Wildflower Bank was created to help reverse the biodiversity crisis.



2024

Eden Dock (left), a new green oasis, was created in Canary Wharf, London, with the help of the Eden Project.

Eden is invited by the British Embassies of Colombia and Mexico to chair a panel at COP 16 on recognising the rights of nature in the boardroom and attracting investment in biodiversity funding.

Eden Project Dundee receives planning permission.

Five new kangaroo paws were introduced to the Med Biome, cultivated from plant tissue supplied by the Western Australian Botanic Garden.

National Wildflower Centre supplies the seed and volunteers to plant the verges of the new link road between the A30 and St Austell with wildflowers (below).

Cornelia Parker's *THE FUTURE (Sixes and Sevens)* is shown at Eden.



2025



The National Wildflower Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary with the launch of the Wildflower Photographer of the Year Competition, sponsored by the Canary Wharf Group.

In the Rainforest Biome, a baobab flowered for the first time: a UK first. The coco de mer palm produced its first mature leaf, and Victoria lilies returned to the Amazon pond.

A 140kW solar PV system was installed on the roof of Growing Point.

Oriental Eden opened in Qingdao, China.

'A moment of pause' by Jess Shaw featuring marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), one of over 500 entries to the Wildflower Photographer of the Year competition in 2025.



Eden's

impact

Impact. Economic

Eden has been a powerhouse of economic impact and supply chain delivery – especially locally.

That was always part of the plan, of course, for the Millennium Commission and the government, both national and local. How much could be injected into those disparate communities up and down the land – from London’s docklands to a worked-out claypit in the far Southwest? Could the landmark projects make an impressive and long-lasting impact across the country – culturally, educationally, socially, and environmentally – and, while doing all that, could they generate income, create jobs, and drive wider economic opportunity for local businesses and employers?

In Eden’s case, it was yes, yes, yes, yes, yes and yes. And they collected all the data on that from Day 1 – talking to people, seeing what they spent when they were at Eden, measuring the ‘Eden Effect’ – to fully understand their economic impact on Cornwall. After just four years, it was a billion pounds; it was soon £1.5bn and then £2bn, and they stopped counting. They had a very happy county council, a better-off county, some very happy suppliers, and a workforce that has averaged over 430 a year over the past 25 years. Through thick and thin.

So 25 years on, Eden commissioned Counterculture – a leading consultancy in economic impact assessment – to pick up where we left off and bring the figures bang up to date. Was Eden a good investment? Has it delivered financially?

Their answer is yes – Eden’s economic impact on the South West over the past 25 years, and counting, is £6.8 billion. How did they arrive at that figure? Essentially, it is very simple. Add up how many people have come over the past 25 years, factor in who they are, how they travelled here, where they stayed and for how long and work out the kind of money they spent. Importantly, too, find out why they came – what ‘pull’ did Eden exert when it came to planning their trip? If they’d have come to Cornwall or the South West anyway, Eden could hardly claim to be a big influence could it? So, be fair.

Did these visitors stay in a hotel or a tent? Did they come by train or car? Alone or with the family? Counterculture then considered these factors alongside what they spent at Eden, how many employees Eden needed to look after them, the resulting wage bill, running costs, suppliers and so on.

And there are other groups that visit Eden – like schoolchildren – nearly a million since opening and gig-goers coming to the Sessions – up to 6,000 a Session, 143 times! And yes, Eden knows how many pints they bought (no, not the kids) and how many pasties. There are nearly two million young people in those two groups. And they’re all included in the 25 million who have been to Eden over the last 25 years.

Eden has attracted over 20 million people (and their money!) to Cornwall. The total spend on these trips – both at Eden itself and elsewhere – is estimated to be £8.4 billion. Day trippers spent 4% of that, and 96% was spent by holidaymakers who stayed in the area for around four nights on average. Of course, that’s not all down to Eden, but independent estimates again (based on findings from Eden’s visitor surveys) suggest that around 60% of that spend would not have occurred if Eden did not exist.

And Eden has employed 430 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff a year on average over that quarter of a century, jobs that simply weren’t there before 2001 – 91% of Eden’s employees live in Cornwall (and a few they let in from Devon), so most of the £340m wage-bill this

century has stayed in the county. Those jobs themselves help to support another 260 FTE jobs in the wider economy through the multiplier effect of jobs in one place helping create and sustain jobs across the region.

And £632m has gone on other operating expenditure, not counting tax. A third of that has gone to companies based in Cornwall and just over half to businesses based in the wider southwest. Less than 2% went outside the UK.

After all that talk about construction earlier, Eden has also spent around £210 million to date on developing and maintaining all its capital assets.

Any businessman or woman reading all this will smile a knowing smile; anyone in the same business can make that a sympathetic smile too.



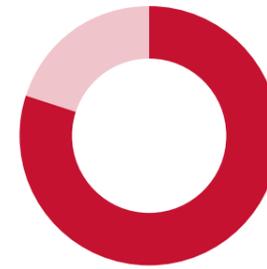
£210 m
Spent on its capital assets

25 m
Visitors to Eden

690 Jobs
Created and sustained for 25 years

£632 m
Spent with suppliers

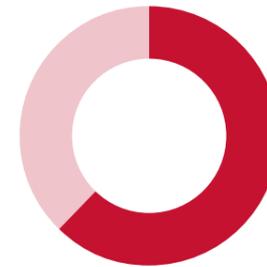
£6.8 bn
Eden's economic impact to SW



Visitors

Over 25m people have visited Eden in the period. Of these, around 80% travelled from outside Cornwall. This means that **Eden has helped to attract around 20m people (and their money!) into Cornwall.** The total spend incurred on these trips – both at Eden itself and elsewhere – is estimated to be **£8.4 billion**. Around 4% of this spend was from day trippers and 96% from holidaymakers, who stayed in the area for around 5 nights on average. Based on visitor surveys it is estimated that around three-fifths of this spend would not have occurred, if it were not for the existence of Eden.

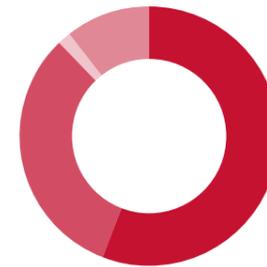
● Outside Cornwall ● Cornwall



Employment

Eden has directly employed over 430 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff on average through the period, spending over £340m on salaries and wages and supporting around 260 FTE jobs in the wider economy through multiplier effects – nearly 700 FTE jobs in total. 91% of Eden's staff live in Cornwall.

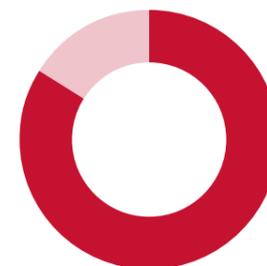
● Direct Employment ● Indirect & Induced Employment



Suppliers

Eden has spent over £632m in other operating expenditure (excluding tax payments). Around £200m (32%) of this has gone to businesses based in Cornwall, and £350m (56%) to businesses based in the SW. **Eden has also spent around £210m to date in real terms on developing and maintaining its capital assets.**

● South West ● Cornwall ● UK ● Overseas



Economic Impact

We estimate that Eden has so far contributed **£6.8 billion** to the SW region, including **£5.7 billion** for Cornwall in net additional economic impact*. This relates to the combined economic value of spend that Eden has directly incurred on its own staff and suppliers or indirectly stimulated in the wider economy through secondary spend by staff and supply chain businesses, and by visitors attracted by Eden.

This does not include the value of the wider social and economic benefits of improved health and well-being, local pride, national reputation and so on, to which Eden is also likely to have contributed significantly.

● Cornwall ● South West

*Counterculture have sought to follow best practice guidance and make reasonable assumptions based on the best available data, nevertheless findings should be regarded as being illustrative of Eden's economic contribution, rather than definitive. In line with Treasury guidance, consideration has been given to potential adjustments required to the gross estimates to assess net additional impact.

Environmental Impact

The Eden Project aims to be an exemplar and explainer of sustainability; its site must breathe it at every turn; make it work financially and make all that relatable to the public.

Eden practices what's called 'regenerative sustainability' – in other words, putting more back in than you get out. In Eden's case, this often means coming up with new and better ways of doing things – like generating green energy, actively reducing the amount of waste it generates, reusing water, stocking sustainable products, and improving biodiversity both at Eden and beyond.

Let's start with energy. Like many organisations, Eden is on a journey to net zero – in other words, reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to the minimum with any residual emissions balanced by carbon removals.

How is it going to do that in practice? Well, there are three agreed categories of greenhouse gas emissions, called 'scopes'. Scope 1 covers direct emissions from heating, cooling and transportation. Scope 2 are emissions from energy that's bought in, like electricity. Eden plans to reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions to zero by 2030 and be a leader in clean energy through initiatives like on-site geothermal. To put that in perspective, the UK's national target is a 68% reduction from 1990 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

Scope 3 is a bit trickier – and lots of businesses struggle here – because many of these are caused by factors beyond their control, like the companies that supply your goods and services, how your staff get to work and, importantly for Eden, how its visitors get here.

So it's tricky, but Eden still plans to reduce its scope 3 emissions by 55%.

And how is it going to do all this? Well, Eden has a head start on the scope 1 thanks to its on-site geothermal energy plant, and the EV fleet (12 Volvos, 3 buses and 25 or so vans). Long before geothermal, they installed a building management system that gives them control over the whole site and saved 140 tonnes of CO₂. And they also did things that any of us can do, like upgrade to the latest boilers, insulate buildings, and install LED lighting. Yes, they still have to use a bit of gas on colder days, can't have the stars of the show dropping dead. The electricity they buy in is 100% renewable – and when the other geothermal well is drilled, Eden will generate its own.

Scope 3 is the tricky one, but it's not impossible. You have to pick your suppliers carefully, the ones who get it, or want to try and do their bit – Eden's procurement policies help here.

You have to make sure you can be reached by green public transport, provide EV charging points, or put in cycleways and footpaths, and Eden's done all that, but you can't make people or companies do the right thing.

Mind you, a lot of them do. And don't forget that people coming to Cornwall on holiday would otherwise be going somewhere else, so there would be emissions of some sort.

Low-carbon energy has been at the top of Eden's wishlist for a long time. First, there were plans for a turbine. It was going to be big – very big. Turbines' energy-making efficiency rises exponentially as the height and length of the blades increase. Eden's was going to be 127m high – more than twice the height of Nelson's column, in media speak – and generate 2MW of free energy, enough electricity to power the whole Eden Project plus 1,100 homes. Three-quarters of Eden's visitors were in favour. But it wasn't popular with Eden's neighbours. Eden's approach has always been to persuade – the whole place is built on that premise – it's estimated that it consulted with 250,000 local people in meetings over three or four years before construction began. As Tim put it at the time, 'Getting the green light for the turbine would have been a hollow victory if it destroyed the good relations we have always enjoyed with our neighbours.'

So, rather than push through for planning permission anyway, they stopped and thought: if we can't go up, could we go down instead? Eden Geothermal Limited was established, and they drilled down almost 5km.

It's hot down there, and if there's water down there, then you've got nature's kettle warming it up; if there isn't water down there, then why not put it down there and pump it back up? When the water comes back up, it's about 70–80°C.

There's a large black 25 cm diameter pipe running around the site, delivering hot water where it's needed, including at Growing Point, Eden's state-of-the-art nursery, which replaced the old Watering Lane nursery down the road.

All that is now done on the main site, but a stone's throw from where all that lovely hot water bursts to the surface. Another win for heating bills and transport costs. And food and packaging costs too – much of what the kitchens at Eden need is grown right here, picked when required, and dropped off to the chefs. The nursery has also been designed to harvest water from the roof, which is then poured into a giant pond larger than an



Olympic-sized swimming pool. Handy when you have young plants to water. There's also solar PV on the roof, which can supply up to 4% of Eden's electricity demand.

That's heating taken care of, but what about electricity? That means another well and steam to drive a turbine that generates electricity. And there is hardly anything to see – the site is very discreet. And no noise now the drilling is done. Perfect.

Geothermal hasn't been done on this scale in the UK for nearly 40 years. Right now, it is the largest geothermal power plant operating in the UK; with another round of investment, it will be much bigger and much more effective, producing much hotter water and, with it, the capability to generate enough electricity to meet the Project's own needs. All by drilling down, not building up.

It's not only about energy. Eden prides itself on collecting two-thirds of the water it needs to irrigate its plants and flush its water-efficient loos.

It sorts and measures over 20 different waste streams on-site and encourages its visitors to help.

In 2018, Eden phased out plastic bottles and offered reusable alternatives, and in 2024, Eden incentivised visitors to return takeaway coffee cups or to buy their own.

Food waste is composted on- and off-site; on-site food waste is turned into compost (energy for plants), and off-site energy is turned into energy (for people). Nothing goes to landfill.

And the products in its shops must meet at least one of five criteria – be produced locally, made from plants, fairly traded, made from recycled material or promote sustainable living.

As it enters its 25th year of operation, Eden is well on the way to meeting its targets. If the last 25 years are anything to go by, it will carry on learning and innovating in the next 25, in Cornwall and elsewhere.

1,764 tCO₂e

Carbon savings so far

2242.17 t

Waste recycled

653 t

Food waste turned into compost on-site or energy off-site

454 ML

Rainwater and groundwater harvested for irrigation and toilet flushing

3.5 GWh

Total energy savings since 2012/13



Eden's

purpose



Nature education

As Eden looks to the future, its education programmes are more relevant than ever. In a world facing an intimidating global sandstorm of problems, Eden knows that building a bright, biodiverse and just future for all life on Earth isn't about simply rolling out advice like 'recycle more' or 'fly less'. As Tim Smit once said: we shouldn't just consider what kind of planet we're leaving our children, but also what kind of children we're leaving for our planet.

As an educational charity, the Eden Project recognises that it must champion curiosity and creativity and foster a regenerative mindset. Eden does this with (and for) its visitors (25 million and counting), but there is a whole programme of formal (and informal) education from preschool to postgraduate and beyond, and it started when Eden first opened.

In the early days, education at Eden focused mainly on schools, and the whole site served as the classroom. Schools used temporary spaces in the Visitor Centre, while fleet-of-foot teaching and learning by the Education Team relied on rucksacks full of props and resources and on participatory small-group work in the Biomes and the Gardens. They launched with just three workshop programmes – 'Don't Forget your Leech Socks', 'The Great Plant Explorers', and 'A Feast for the Senses' – delivered by a team of four. These workshops aim to connect children and young people with the living world and inspire them to care for it. From the outset, Eden's Education Team recognised the power of stories to hook learners through creative thinking and problem-solving. Stories gave the workshops purpose and structure, sparking curiosity through challenges, quests, and adventure, and helped transform Eden into a living classroom, a place where the curriculum could come alive through global stories of plants, people and places that connect with pupils' everyday lives. Some of the first teachers who brought their classes to Eden are retired now, and many of the children who came with them in 2001 are well into their thirties. At least 750,000 school children so far, probably more, have poured in since opening day. Over 30,000 children and young people a year arrive for school and college visits as well as workshops designed for all key stages across the curriculum and areas within tertiary education.

Although its principles remain largely unchanged, the education programme looks very different from those early days when the team lacked an on-site base. Today, Eden offers almost 40 workshops to meet the needs

of different ages and curriculum subjects, and provide opportunities for learning in, about, and for nature. The team now includes six qualified teachers and two Higher Level Teaching Assistants.

Since 2005 the Education Programme and its team have made the copper-roofed, nature-inspired Core their home. Five fantastic, flexible, fully equipped classrooms act as welcoming bases and learning spaces for education audiences.

And it's not just for younger learners anymore. Teachers are empowered to take 'Eden' back to their school or college through training courses that enable them to move their curricula outdoors and become advocates for sustainability.

The team have had the chance to help develop nature-based learning at a deeper level through a partnership with Kernow Learning. Sky Primary and Eden Project Nursery teach a unique, innovative curriculum that incorporates national programmes of study. They aim to offer exceptional nature-based education through enquiry-based learning, enriched with sustainability and global citizenship. They've just been awarded a 'Good' rating by Ofsted, with special mention made of the school's focus on nature and sustainability.

Eden's Schools programme isn't just for those who can make it to Cornwall. Following the pandemic, Eden has developed an online learning programme featuring livestreams and resources that reaches tens of thousands of learners.

Degree courses are delivered in partnership with higher education providers, including Cornwall College, Plymouth, Falmouth and Anglia Ruskin Universities. The courses offer students transformative learning experiences. Whether growing plants, designing stunning gardens, creating jaw-dropping events, or healing damaged ecosystems, all courses are rooted in sustainability and focused on positive futures. Around 200 students are studying for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in these areas. It's not just horticulture and ecosystems; there are also degree courses that explore other areas where Eden has first-hand experience, such as festival management and tourism, all through the lens of sustainability. A thriving apprenticeship programme has been running for over ten years, covering horticulture, hospitality, fundraising and technical services amongst other things.

Eden is also an approved centre for Royal Horticultural Society qualifications, and there is a range of courses that provide up-to-date horticultural information and practical skills either in person or online for budding professionals or those wishing to hone their skills.



Nature recovery

It might surprise you to learn that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. This is a dry way of saying that many of our wild places have been developed for housing, factories and farming, leaving few places for wildlife to thrive. And aside from a few success stories in the media, British wildlife is definitely not thriving.

Since the 1970s, UK species have declined by 19%. Farmland bird populations have halved. Flying insects – the ones that used to splat your windscreen in the summer – have fallen by two-thirds over the past 20 years alone.

And the wild places? Less than 15% of them are in a fit state, and only 7% of woodlands can make that claim. Wildflower meadows have been decimated: 97% of them have been destroyed since the 1930s. One in five flowering plant species is threatened with extinction. Over half of all flowering plants have vanished from their natural habitats.

That's where nature recovery comes in.

By demonstrating, communicating and collaborating to achieve the best result, Eden's been doing nature recovery around the world for 25 years – in places like the Seychelles, Colombia, Kenya, Costa Rica, Mexico and of course Cornwall.

Then in 2018, another like-minded organisation, the National Wildflower Centre (NWC), filed for bankruptcy. Like Eden, it was a Millennium Project, and for 17 years the NWC had transformed some of the UK's neglected landscapes, working with partners like the Woodland Trust, and the Forestry Commission. They sowed wildflower seeds with community gardeners, schoolchildren and activists in Liverpool and beyond, and their biodiversity projects were widely regarded as among the best in the UK. Tower blocks surrounded by hectares of sterile lawns in Kirkby yielded to cornfield annuals; drab wasteland by Great George Street was swamped with scarlet poppies. In Everton Park, wildflower corridors traced the streets of what had once been one of the most densely populated districts in the United Kingdom.

Eden had had a long relationship with the NWC. As Tim Smit put it at the time, 'It's an organisation of national importance that has brought wildflowers back into the national consciousness.' When disaster struck, the NWC made a phone call, and with the help of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Eden stepped in, secured the National Wildflower Centre name and its intellectual property (the other assets had already been sold), and enlisted the NWC's last remaining member of staff. It moved the National Wildflower Centre to Cornwall while retaining a base in Liverpool. Eden isn't short of plant experts, so it was soon up and running in Cornwall. Kit was bought, fields sown, and within a year or so, it was harvesting its own wildflower seeds.

Today, the National Wildflower Centre is still living up to its name. It's haring about the country creating wildflower meadows, setting up seedbanks and working with communities, corporate partners and other charities to restore the nation's wildflower meadows. It's working with other organisations to save some of the country's unique flora, by collecting seed, growing new plants and reintroducing them at key sites. The Eden Wildflower Bank has been created to help landowners increase biodiversity at scale across England through Biodiversity Net Gain Units.

It's also raising awareness of just how stunning wildflowers can be. It celebrated its 25th anniversary last year by creating the Wildflower Photographer of the Year competition, sponsored by Canary Wharf.

Meanwhile, in Costa Rica, Eden has been building on the successful rewilding of a once-barren landscape by tropical dry forests. (Dry tropical rainforests are even more endangered than wet rainforests.) They're home to jaguars, pumas, tapirs and macaws – and people. The aim is to create a 'biological corridor' that links areas of dry tropical forest to create a larger habitat for plants and wildlife, and to give local people a stake in its recovery.

Working with local partners, Eden has created an agroforestry project to help preserve the forests – poor farmers can't afford to leave the trees on their land alone if they can make a living from cattle farming. But by providing cacao plants and training to farmers as well as guaranteeing to buy the crops, this project shows they can make a living from the living forest.



Nature connection

Nature-based activities can do more than help people find comfort and pleasure in nature; they can also help improve their mental and physical health.

A generation of children is in danger of growing up without experiencing or understanding the natural world. If they don't care for nature, then why would they want to save it? That was the premise behind Eden's first nature connection project for young children, Mud Between Your Toes, back in 2003. That idea is still at the core of Eden's much larger early years programme, which offers a range of preschool activities to help support inquiring minds and develop a love of nature in young children and their carers.

The early years team draw on the latest research to inform their work, which uses nature to support early development and learning and encompasses nature-based play at Little Eden, baby yoga, Explore and Play, and Music in the Med. As the experts in this field like to say, 'it's not rocket science – it's neuroscience.'

And it's important. The amount of time that children spend outside has declined by 50% in a single generation. Playgrounds have closed, and the average child now 'roams' just 300 metres. Yet research shows that being out in nature makes children happy, and children who spend time outside care more about nature.

The young aren't the only ones to benefit from a closer relationship with nature. Hippocrates, said that 'Nature itself is the best medicine', and it turns out he was on to something. There's growing evidence that it makes us healthier, happier and more creative. Studies have shown that just looking at a 'green view' from a hospital bed can reduce the need for painkillers, and being out in nature can reduce inflammation for people suffering from certain chronic illnesses.

Eden's Weekly Walking Group has been running for almost 20 years. Initially for people with COPD, it has since expanded to include other conditions such as diabetes, and is part of Eden's pioneering social prescribing programme. It started with walks in the Outdoor Gardens and the Med Biome; today, they also take place in our wilder Outer Estate.

Walking has been described as 'a wonder drug' that can improve heart health, blood pressure, cholesterol and bone density, and lower the risk of diseases like diabetes and arthritis. Walking in nature can provide additional health benefits by exposing you to natural chemicals that support your body's health, improve your mood (even if it's raining), and reduce inflammation.

Eden has improved signs and trails to its site to encourage people to walk or cycle, and is working with Natural England to promote responsible recreation and ensure that nature doesn't pay the price for our improved health and wellbeing.

There is also a series of Wonder Workshops for adults, because you are never too old to experience something new. These 90-minute sessions bring to life Eden's living collection of plants and reveal the connections between them and our lives. Each session focuses on a different plant. Wonder why? Awe and wonder have been shown to help improve social connections, too.

A horticultural therapy garden has been established at Vounder for those experiencing health-related issues. Participants who would benefit from improving mental and physical well-being are referred to the team by a local GP practice.

The idea of the garden as a place to restore your mental equilibrium has been around for as long as gardens have existed. Every gardener knows that life feels better with muddy fingernails, and recent research has shown that a common soil bacterium boosts serotonin levels in the brain. Higher serotonin levels are associated with improved mood, and the same 'mud bugs' reduce inflammation and may also help conditions such as diabetes and asthma. The team offers short courses for beginners, as well as longer accredited courses, and runs sessions for veterans through the Defence Gardens Scheme.

The aim now is to scale this up. Thanks to The National Lottery, and the Ashken Family Foundation, the Eden Project and its partners will be able to train more health and well-being practitioners across the UK to reconnect people with nature, alongside a national campaign to raise awareness of the importance of nature in the climate crisis.



Communities

Eden's community work takes different forms. From the mass participation and icebreaking of a Big Lunch to targeted community engagement projects and training programmes, the aim remains the same: to bring people together and help them make a difference.

Eden created The Big Lunch to start conversations and encourage people to take those first steps towards making a difference together. Every year, usually on the first weekend in June, millions – yes, millions – sit down to have lunch together. Many of them don't know each other – at least not at first – and go on to discover that there's more that brings them together than pulls them apart.

Eden decided that the world could do with a little more of that common ground in 2009 when it embarked on this big, fun, friendly thing, and the world doesn't seem to have had enough of it yet. In fact, they can't wait for that weekend to come round again – 700,000 sat down together that first year and 10.3m sat down last year to enjoy friendship, food and fun. Since 2009, over 1.5 million Big Lunches have been held, attended by over 120 million people. Many go from being strangers to pals in an hour or so. And there have been even bigger years, of course, when The Big Lunch was an official part of the Jubilee and Coronation celebrations. (Queen Camilla is the Patron and has been since 2013, when she was delighted to take it on as HRH Duchess of Cornwall.) Its funders over the years include The National Lottery and the Pears Foundation, as well as numerous sponsors.

Many newcomers feel they've stumbled upon something really rather special right on their doorstep.

A Big Lunch offers a chance to make new friends, find support, or lend a hand. And it can be the start of something much bigger.

Eden has data coming out of their ears on all this. It's all too easy to get quantitative and mathematical about something so qualitative and emotional, so here are just a few of the findings from research with adults who attended a Big Lunch. Most people feel more connected to nature and the environment, have a better understanding of people from different backgrounds, and have a stronger sense of belonging. For many, the impact was even greater: people spoke of feeling less lonely, of making new friends, and of rediscovering the simple pleasure of sharing company and food.

It's a light-touch idea with deliberately light-touch ownership and little obvious intrusive management, enabling ordinary people to feel part of something much bigger. The experts call it 'social capital'. A lunch that leaves whole communities feeling that bit more connected and that bit more resilient in the face of everything that seems to be thrown at us these days. At around the same time as The Big Lunch began, Eden pioneered a creative approach to community engagement. These techniques were shared through training sessions for neighbourhood planning groups across England and at a series of Community Camps run at Eden to help those whose appetite for change had been whetted by a Big Lunch take the next steps towards improving their neighbourhoods. And to keep the momentum going, the Communities team also created a 'Month of Community' campaign. They will also bring their expertise to the new lottery-funded Nature Connections programme over the next few years. It all links up.



New Edens

Eden is a growing family of destinations starting with Morecambe and Dundee in the UK, while partnerships in China and Dubai are already up and running.

From the moment Eden opened, the team were asked to develop new Eden Projects. Many conversations are underway in the UK and around the world to explore possibilities. One thing Eden has always been clear about is that it's not interested in creating carbon copies. Each must be framed by its location and respond to the area's environmental, social, and economic context. But any visitor to another Eden Project should immediately recognise a family resemblance, an attitude and a way of doing things. Each must aim to be a symbol of regeneration, working with the grain of nature.

Morecambe was once a popular seaside resort that fell out of favour with the arrival of package holidays. Like the original, Eden Project Morecambe is a regeneration project. It reimagines the town as a seaside resort for the 21st century, inspiring wonder and connecting its visitors with the natural world. This 'Eden by the bay' is inspired by the geometry, beauty and efficiency of seashells, set in gardens overlooking Morecambe Bay. It will house living landscapes where visitors will encounter world-class art, performances, and storytelling that explore the rhythms of nature. The government has awarded the project £50 million to move to its next phase, and an HQ has been established in the town where the team works with its local partners, Lancaster University, Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council.

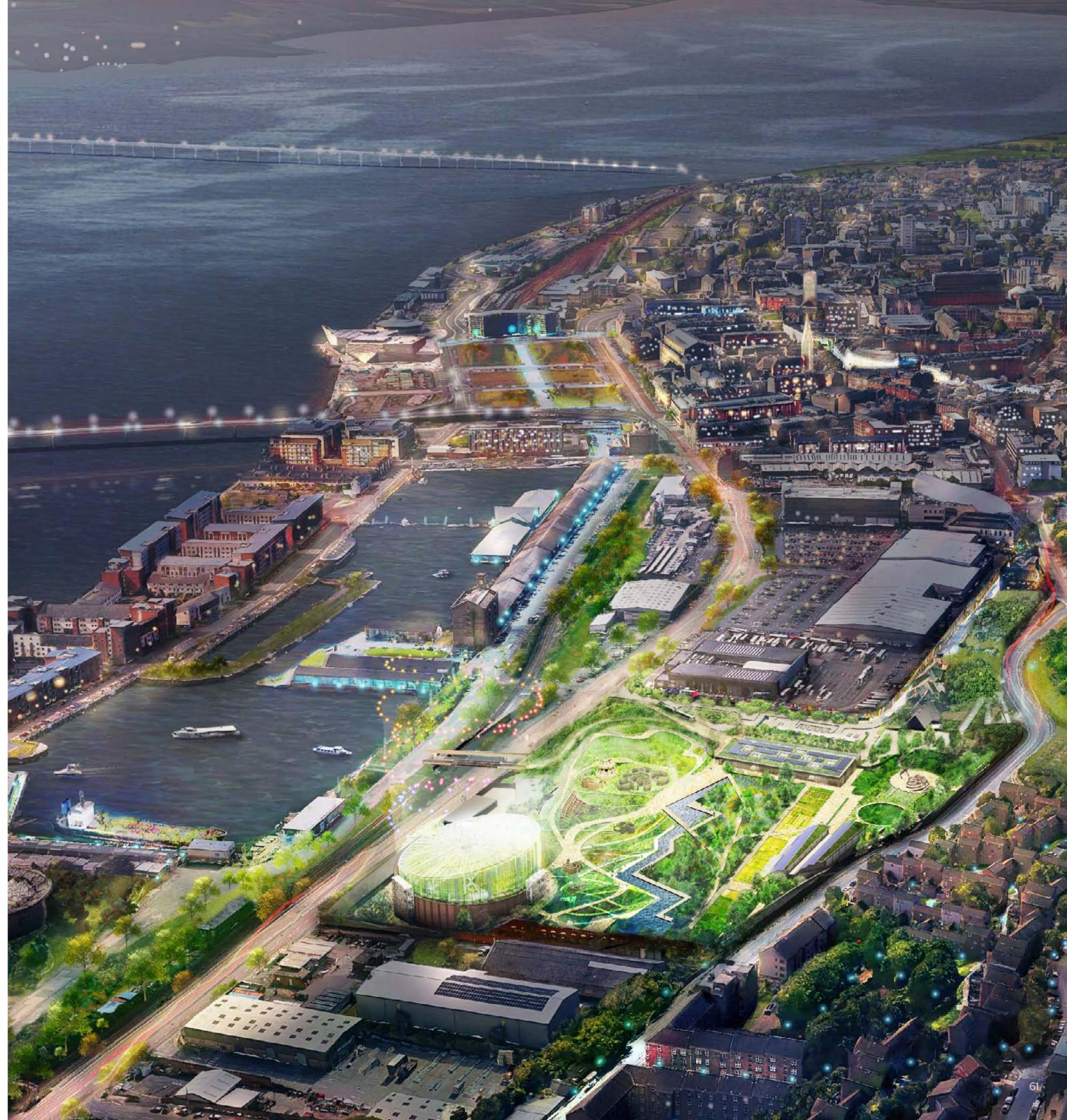




Across the border, two hundred miles northeast of Morecambe, another Eden is taking shape in Dundee on the east coast of Scotland. Taking another unloved urban site, Eden Project Scotland will redevelop a disused gasworks on East Dock Street into a beacon of regeneration and tourism. The project will take its inspiration from Dundee's Nine Incorporated Trades, introducing the concept of a new set of guilds that address the skills required for a regenerative, sustainable future. Co-creation events have been run as part of an extensive consultation process to give the public a say in how the development evolves.

Discussions are also underway for new projects overseas that must be kept under wraps for now, but Eden is making progress toward its ambition to have a presence on every continent except Antarctica.

Overleaf: internal and exterior concept imagery of Eden Project Morecambe. **Above:** The Eden-curated Sustainability Pavilion at the Dubai Expo 2020. **Right:** Eden Project Scotland concept art.





Join Us

Our charity inspires hope, wonder and positive action for the planet by reconnecting people with the natural world. Your support enables us to deliver transformational nature recovery, education and community programmes at our home in Cornwall and through new projects across the UK and beyond.

Be part of something special.
edenproject.com/support

Our supporters

Over the past 25 years, a large number of organisations from the public, corporate, and charitable sectors have placed their trust in our work, and our trustees and volunteers have worked tirelessly on our behalf. Without their support, we could not have had the impact we've achieved. We thank them all.

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vInspired
Volvo Car UK
Waitrose
Wedgetail Foundation
Wellcome Trust
Westminster Foundation
Wolfson Foundation
Woodford Fund
World Wide Fund for Nature
YouTube Earth Day (via GOOD)

* Fundraising event for the Canopy Walkway Project
** Now The National Lottery Community Fund
† Halifax Building Society, now part of Lloyds Banking Group
†† Now National Lottery Heritage Fund

Disclaimer
This list reflects support received over a 25-year period. Some organisations, public bodies, and funding programmes are listed under the names and structures in place at the time support was given. Where organisations have since merged, rebranded, or closed, historic names have been retained for accuracy. If your organisation is missing please contact us and we will amend in any future edition.

Twenty-five years ago, a barren clay pit became a global garden.

Since opening in 2001, the Eden Project has welcomed more than 25 million visitors and helped generate £6.8 billion for the region. Yet the real story lies beyond the numbers.

Through groundbreaking education programmes, world-class cultural events, nature recovery at scale and pioneering sustainability, Eden has demonstrated that regeneration is not an abstract ideal.

This book tells the story of the Eden Effect: how an ambitious idea grew into a movement that connects people with nature, restores damaged landscapes and inspires hope in uncertain times. It is both a celebration of what has been achieved and an invitation to imagine what comes next.



Dave Meneer is a Cornishman born in Redruth a long time ago who was the Eden Project's marketing director for its first decade, having spent 25 years of his own in advertising agencies in London, Frankfurt and Paris. Eden enabled him to return to Cornwall in 1999 with his children, Hannah and Billy, and he still lives close to the project now with his wife Anna, a filmmaker who has been documenting the project since before it opened.

