

# Lizard Larks



The Eden Project is an environmental education charity and a regeneration project. They have developed a range of approaches for engaging the public with the issues and opportunities that a sustainable future presents.

## Location

Lizard Peninsula



## Aim



Determine children's access to play opportunities on the Lizard Peninsula



Chatting about dens at Goonhilly

The Lizard Peninsula is a large area of outstanding natural beauty with sandy and pebbly beaches, woodlands, open moor and breathtaking views along the SW coastal path. Yet many children fail to make the most of the opportunities the Lizard presents because they live in relative isolation to one another.

The Eden Project education team was funded by Cornwall Council through a pathfinder grant to engage with children about their experiences of play and discover how they play, the kind of spaces they play in, and their general mobility across the peninsula.

## Engagement Events



During the second week of August, 2010, the Eden team toured the Lizard peninsula setting up four adventurous play days in various spaces. The play days were free but delivered on the understanding that we would use the opportunity to talk to local families about their play experiences. We delivered a day of activities at Penrose estate near Helford, setting up camp in a wooded area and offering den-building, nets and swings in trees, treasure hunts and cooking. This was followed by a day at Predannack airfield where families built go-karts and climbed on the old jet fighter planes, which in turn, was very different from day three, a fun-filled day at Poltesco beach that included raft building, river walks, nets over rivers, and cooking. The fourth and busiest day was at Goonhilly nature reserve, where families built dens, climbed in unusual nets, played games, went on quests and cooked over a fire.



Conversations while cooking in Penrose

During each of the events playworkers were asked to keep consultations with children informal and chatty as they went about the activities. The intention being that we would share our findings during group discussions at the end of each event. This information would form the basis of a report, but also steer us in a direction for a follow-up event in October. As it's not easy to retain specific nuggets of information gained in random conversations, playworkers were provided with notebooks so they could jot down brief words that would later prove useful when recounting conversations.



Chatting about play while building rafts at Poltesco

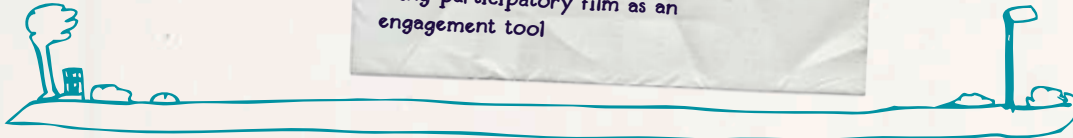


Setting up camp and making the woodland playful





Using participatory film as an engagement tool



During the first night we were able to use the same approach as we did in the previous play days and chat informally with children about their play experiences around the Lizard. By mid-evening, after having engaged the girls in a night story walk and scramble through the woodland, we sat around a fire chatting further about their play memories. The first day was a warm-up to give playworkers an opportunity to build trust with the participants so that by the second day the children would be more comfortable answering formal questions while being filmed.



Fires set the perfect atmosphere for conversations



Many consultation activities for children don't allow enough time for relationships to be established between the consultants and the children and between the children themselves. As a result, the data collected can be superficial and misleading. In contrast, by the second day of raft-building the girls were very happy to chat openly to the camera, and in some cases, they wanted to interview each other.



## Techniques



Attractive, adventurous activities  
Hand-picked location that encouraged group participation

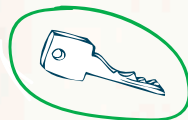
Fire

Food

Participatory filming

Establishing relationships

## Key concepts



- ▶ Target your events to attract your audience and their interests.
- Use spaces that lend themselves to communal activities such as circles, natural amphitheatres and fire pits. Use seating 'in the round' if the space isn't naturally circular.
- ▶ Create an ambience that is conducive to the audience and the subject.
- Tailor your staff to your audience so they can relate to each other and strike up a rapport easily.
- ▶ Let participants design and operate parts of the participatory process, e.g. setting up play materials and using film equipment.
- Food and cooking naturally lend themselves to collaborative experiences.