



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY GROWING

# The Power of Food Festival



THE FESTIVAL IN NUMBERS

## Festival Report 2017

The Power of Food Festival showcases community food growing around Edinburgh & celebrates the amazing people who breathe life into neighbourhoods through their work in and around the gardens. Its purpose is to encourage greater societal wellbeing, environmental sustainability and social inclusion through the promotion of community food growing.

Since its foundation in 2015, The Power of Food Festival has been an act of optimism and celebration. Since its tentative steps, three years ago, the Festival has grown; 2017 saw the third edition. Twenty-nine community food gardens opened their gates to the public during a packed weekend of events and family activities celebrating community food growing across the city. Bold new branding and website captured the positive mood of the Festival. Our programme saw an eclectic mix of events and gardens with over 50 events including poetry writing, music from local bands and choirs, talks on urban trees and many more. There was plenty of opportunity to share food with community picnics and tasters.

Despite being in its third year, we could also say the 2017 Festival was a 'festival of firsts'. For the first time, we moved outward from the city going beyond the city limits, extending to the Pentland Hills (Youth Vision) and Midlothian (The Lost Gardens of Penicuik). There were several other firsts including release of a mini-documentary, an exhibit at Stockbridge Library and launch night.

### Objectives

This report has been prepared by the Festival coordinating team to reflect on the Festival 2017, highlight the successes and identify ideas for improvement.

29 GARDENS  
50+ EVENTS  
~1,700 GARDEN VISITS  
8,175 WEBSITE VIEWS  
936 TWITTER FOLLOWERS  
672 FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS  
21 ONLINE ARTICLES  
1 MINI DOCUMENTARY  
1 TV REPORT 1 PODCAST

# Events

Visitors were given the chance to try everything from insect -hunting to seed planting. There was poetry writing, music from local bands and choirs, talks on urban trees and much more. There was plenty of opportunity to share food with community picnics and tasters from Slow Food and the Food Assembly. Over 50 specific events were advertised in the Festival programme & many more took place across the gardens.



## Launch Night

In the week leading up to the Festival a kick off dinner was held at [Ostara Cafe](#). The wonderful [Real Junk Food Project Edinburgh](#) cooked up a storm – feeding 30 people from food which would have been on its way to landfill had it not been diverted by the Real Junk Food Project.

The event highlighted small community gardens as part of a bigger movement. For the first time, a festival launch event was held to kick off the celebrations and focus the minds and highlight the wider food context of the Festival. This was in direct response to feedback from previous festivals.

*"I so enjoyed being part of the Festival launch and meeting so many inspirational people that offer great things."*

During the course of the evening we heard from several speakers. Donna from TRJFP not only gave us the run down on an amazing menu (to delighted ooh's & aaaahs!) but also shared a little about the work their amazing volunteers do to raise awareness of the issue of food waste, help people to eat and cook better and instigate change towards a more sustainable, efficient and just food system.

David, Chef-proprietor of Ostara reflected on his research into community food growing research. He shared three moving stories of people he had met in community gardens to illustrate the key importance of the gardens

to community, in knowledge exchange and the importance of using land for the common good.

Ewan Aitken of the Cyrenians, shared some inspiring stories about the work Cyrenians does to reconnect people through food and how 'good food' has less to do with nutrition and everything to do with connection.

The dinner was well received and it was great to have the opportunity to explore some of the wider food issues behind community gardening & the Festival.

## Library Exhibit

Throughout May & June The Stockbridge library hosted a Festival exhibit. Photos from the previous years were displayed and books about gardening and community projects were available in the communal reading area. The library staff commented that many people enjoyed the photos and loved the idea of the Festival. We also had some lovely comments left by visitors who were enthusiastic about the idea.

*"I have gleaned many ideas to take back home (North Queensland, Australia). Great to see food gardening scene so popular here"*



## External Contributors

Of 12 gardens who asked to be connected with external contributors, the Festival coordinating team was able to facilitate introductions between 9 gardens and pro-bono external contributors.

*"Thank you SO very much for inviting us to be part of the Festival at the Leith Community Croft. We had a wonderful day and met new and inspiring people. The Croft really is a very special space and Evie is hugely inspiring."*

Given the increasing size of the Festival in terms of participating gardens it was very challenging for the coordinating team to find a good match. This created a heavy workload for the coordinating volunteers & sometimes resulted in gardens being disappointed. However, where connections were made the events were fantastic and it was rewarding to be able to help make new connections between the community and gardens. Introductions included dance performance, kids concert, poetry writing, food sharing, food waste workshops, yoga classes, choirs and music bands.

## Guided bike rides

We were delighted to continue our partnership with Sustrans who offered two guided bike rides as part of the Festival.

Feedback on the rides was very positive and everyone was enthusiastic about doing bike rides to show people to the gardens. It was a shame that take-up wasn't as good as in the past. Highlights included Bill, the gardener & long time local resident sharing the history of NEA. The second ride enjoyed a great picnic at Milton Road Community and it was mentioned how friendly and helpful the garden hosts were. Due to the success of the rides Sustrans is also looking to do another guided ride in the autumn to visit the Donkeyfield Orchard during Apple Day.

Confusion around opening times and route planning and challenges due to limited signage meant a couple of the gardens didn't get visited as planned, which was a disappointment for all involved. In future, it'll be key to increase communication and have more signage. There have also been suggestions to improve take-up:

- ⇒ Engage with more walking and cycling groups to lead/participate in tours.
- ⇒ Emphasise that the routes are, as far as possible, on the Edinburgh Cycle path network and on Edinburgh's Quiet Routes.
- ⇒ Include details in the Edinburgh Festival of Cycling programme.





# Feedback

## In the media

Building on relationships & networks from last year the Festival saw great engagement with the press ahead of the Festival with over 20 articles shared online. We were particularly delighted to feature in The List festival guide, have a podcast made about us, be featured on STV & launch a mini-documentary about the Festival.

## Gardens

We were grateful for an excellent response from gardens to our feedback survey. It indicated that, on the whole, the event was a great success. The nature of the Festival is such that visitor numbers do vary a lot between gardens. Even where there had been disappointing attendance, gardens highlighted it was just nice to be part of a city-wide event.

*"People came to the garden who had never been before and people were inspired for new projects."*

The primary reasons for participating were to raise the profile of their garden, engage with new people and celebrate their achievements. Most gardens said they would like to participate again in future events which is great!

*"We open our garden regularly to the public and have lots of visitors however this was the first time we had a clear response from families with children and we LOVED it!"*

Where they were less sure about participation it was primarily linked to the effort of organising separate events & limited resources. For example, some said they would only participate again if it coincided with another social they had planned anyway and flagged that being volunteer-run, they were already very stretched.

*"Although more visitors would have been good, those who came had a really good time."*

Based on gardens' feedback, it's estimated around 1700 people came along. There was a large variation in visitor numbers to the gardens. Some were very well attended and some had very few visitors. There were several reasons identified for this:

- ⇒ Confusion over opening times
- ⇒ Garden location – difficult to find/not well sign-posted or location "off the beaten track"
- ⇒ Limited local promotion of events

Where gardens had greater numbers of visitors this was often linked to:

- ⇒ Good active local promotion by garden and partners
- ⇒ Appealing events (in particular family/food focused)
- ⇒ Central location – visitors walking past who hadn't previously known about Festival

## Visitors

Feedback from visitors was very positive and key themes were the amazing welcomes in gardens & how relaxing and unique the spaces were.

*"What great work you are doing and a great contribution to the community."*

There were many "thank you's" and one garden with a visitors' book for comments had over 50 people write in it!

*"I didn't really know what to expect but was very impressed with the organisation, the food on offer, the music and hearing about the project."*

It was also positive to hear that several gardens had new members join them as a direct result of engagement during the Festival.

*"An amazing welcome from the friendly people of the garden. This place is unique and they manage to make you feel at home."*



# How to make it a great success, a community gardener's perspective:

by Heather Yang, Newhaven Heritage Community Garden

As the "Strawberry Power of Food Festival" of 2016 was not a great success (apart from children enjoying a supply of strawberries and cream) I dithered about organising a Power of Food Festival in 2017.

I was encouraged by the Newhaven Heritage Centre who recommended that the choir would sing again, along with someone to tell tales of the burial ground and the gardening volunteer Susan who offered to do printing - so planning started! Gordon created a poster and I sent it everywhere on Facebook and people hung them on railings. The school pupils from Trinity Academy also delivered invites to local homes and the After School Club gave information out to parents as well as creating and hanging bunting.

The Power of Food Festival organisers offered support from Leith Food Assembly and what a difference that made, I did not need to think of catering! I met with Steph and we talked through it all and on the day Steph and Mike really came up trumps and delivered an amazing spread along with a gazebo and some of their friends joined us too. The pies and salad were just amazing and are still being spoken about! Bert's Pies all the way from Eyemouth are the best. Steph also helped with promotion on Facebook and to her contacts.

Prior to the event, the gate was unlocked, weeds tidied, a bench was carried into the garden and a seat along with a few blankets and cushions to sit on.

On the day, we kicked off with a local volunteer offering a Pilates session which all ages participated in especially people trying it for the first time. The local choir warmed up and offered us some beautiful songs then



we had tales of the graveyard that people listened to while eating their picnic.

'Sunny' is the word to describe the afternoon - with stories, songs, cheer and company, we packed up and left people chatting into the evening and new friendships were formed.

A seed of an idea brought an afternoon of delight to over 80 participants and local people found us and enjoyed being in the Old Burial Ground and being arty, eating, looking at herbs, as well as exercising and facepainting with volunteers that are gardeners or from the Newhaven Heritage Centre Committee or the local After School Club.

Telling people about the event and gaining support in advance was key. On the day, all I had to do was put up the tables that I had borrowed from the local primary school, boiled water and greet each person that popped along. Really it was no great effort as everyone did a little bit and we created a party, we had a very happy afternoon!



## NEWHAVEN HERITAGE COMMUNITY GARDEN

A community garden in the heart of Newhaven that encourages the local community to meet and enjoy growing fruit and herbs as well as a chat. The garden is tended by a group of volunteers on Sunday mornings and they are joined by the local school children on Friday afternoons.

Newhaven Main Street, Newhaven Village, EH6 4LW

## LEITH FOOD ASSEMBLY

The Food Assembly is an online market place bringing together shoppers with nearby food producers allowing people to buy local and pay online and then collect supplies in person on a Monday evening at Jeremiah's Taproom.

[www.thefoodassembly.com](http://www.thefoodassembly.com)



# Final words

## Partnerships

As in previous years we were lucky to enjoy support from a variety of wonderful people and organisations who through their enthusiasm, kindness and generosity helped make the 2017 such a success.

In the run-up to the Festival, The Serenity Café & Edinburgh Food Sharers supported our AGM. The Forest Café hosted a gardens meeting. The Stockbridge library showed a Festival exhibit, Ostara Café & The Real Junk Food project hosted a kick off dinner with individual thanks to Ewan Aitkens, Donna McArdle & David McVey for speaking at the event. Sarah Fairbrother produced an amazing documentary about the Festival and Mel Hindle a TV report which aired on STV.

Many thanks also to Dan Plunkett who designed the Festival branding, maps & programme and to Andrew McAllister who created the interactive Festival map and Andy Gallacher for taking pictures during the Festival. Many thanks to the fantastic team from Sustrans who organised & led the guided rides - Lisa Morton, David Liddell, Ross Hendry, Eric Ingram & Fiona Goodbody for their enthusiasm and support.



OSTARA CAFE



## Food for thought

After three years of running The Power of Food Festival, we are starting to get a good feel for what matters and what the likely ingredients of success are.

Those less familiar with the Festival may be surprised to know that it is entirely volunteer-run and coordinated by a very small core team without any grant funding. Though still in its infancy, the Festival has been very fortunate to benefit from the fabulous skills, energy and time of very many people, many of whom have donated their professional expertise pro bono. Indeed, an important premise of the Festival is to show how much we can do **without recourse to money, instead focusing on harnessing the goodwill and talents of all involved**. We truly believe that positive collective action based on meaningful and trusting relationships can take us much further than what money can buy (and it always runs out!). The active involvement of so many people is literally priceless and hugely inspiring; it is one of the things we love about what we do.

This way of working does, however, suppose that **everyone takes ownership and responsibility for their own contribution**; be that as core team, associate, garden staff and volunteers, partners and external contributors, Festival member, or simply garden and Festival friend. Without each taking ownership for their own bit, cracks quickly start to appear and the castle of cards gets a bit shaky.

The gardens that decide to take part in the Festival are very much at the centre of the festivities. **A key ingredient for success is that gardens really own their participation**: from registration, liaising with people who might help in their own community and wider networks, sending the coordinating team accurate programme details, putting out posters, and sign-posting visitors to their venue. The Festival is also the chance for gardens to incorporate their own pre-existing events into a city-wide celebration, thus attracting more visitors.

The Festival core team acts as the catalyst. It offers the overall coordination, develops partnerships, produces and promotes the Festival programme, as well as providing guidance and practical resources to the gardens. **Keeping in touch is key** for this support to be fully harnessed; this mainly happens by email, but the core team also tries hard to bring people together for a couple of meetings. We have found that such face-to-face contact makes a big difference and we encourage you to come along.

The Power of Food Festival is a community festival; its **scale and pace will develop organically over time**, as its roots grow and positive ripples form around each and everyone involved. The Festival thrives on the connections it brings about between a diverse range of people across the city. It invites all those involved in it to embrace and nurture the rich gift culture it promotes. Through all we do together, we make the whole greater than the sum of the parts and our **collective action is more sustainable** over the long run.

Making the Festival happen is a big job, something we do on top of other work and family commitments. While more gardens have been taking part in the Festival, which is absolutely fantastic, the size of the core team remains the same and so we will all need to remember the key ingredients to continue making a success of it.

## Thank you all!

The 2017 Festival Team

Jossie, Elina, Elsa & Marie-Amélie

