

The logo features a blue sky with white clouds as a background. At the top, the text 'Celebrating Community Change Makers' is written in a cursive, orange font, arching across the top. Below this, the word 'EDINBURGH' is written in a bold, green, sans-serif font. Underneath that, the words 'POWER OF FOOD' are written in a very large, bold, green, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the logo, the word 'Festival' is written in a large, cursive, orange font, overlapping the bottom of 'POWER OF FOOD'.

Celebrating Community Change Makers

EDINBURGH

POWER OF FOOD

Festival

**Edinburgh's first
Power of Food Festival
20th and 21st June 2015**

How was it?

This summer, Edinburgh hosted the inaugural Power of Food Festival - a packed weekend of events and family activities celebrating community food growing across the city. Fifteen community food gardens opened their gates to the public with an estimated 500 visitors enjoying the event.

Visitors were given the chance to try everything from insect-hunting to tattie-lifting. There was poetry writing and music from local bands and choirs. There was plenty of opportunity to taste local produce and sample lots of yummy food, including a free communal meal served to 60 people. Over the weekend, visitors learnt about herbalism and how to grow tomatoes, heard food-inspired storytellers and picked up some new recipes to try out. Find out more about the [community food gardens that took part](#).

A festival of community spirit



The Festival was entirely volunteer-run and free. Around 60 people were matched with the gardens and gave their time to run workshops, and provide entertainment and food. The event was also a celebration of diversity with a great range of garden spaces on show - from transformed wasteland and an office plot to a farmhouse and a public library. It connected different initiatives and brought people together. With plenty of laughter and a great sense of community spirit, the weekend was even topped off with a splash of sunshine!

"We all seem to be linked by a joy in being outdoors together and working with the environment. Food at the end of it is just one of the rewards."

The energy, enthusiasm and sense of pride shone through it all.

The Power of Food – outside and online

The Festival was created to celebrate, promote and raise awareness of inclusive community food growing. It took place on the summer solstice, a traditional time of enlightenment and renewal. The event inspired many, with feedback from the participating gardens overwhelmingly positive and describing the event as a great success. There is clearly a real appetite for the Festival to take place again. Although turnout varied between the gardens, overall nearly 500 visitors enjoyed the Festival.



The event also generated a lot of social media activity. With only a few months to gather momentum, it reached 300 followers on Twitter and its presence peaked at 46.4k Tweet impressions in June. Facebook also created a good following that extended as far as the Philippines and Colombia! The strong, positive online presence will hopefully inspire similar events elsewhere. Read more on the [Festival website](#).

Festival benefits

By bringing community gardens together under one umbrella and thus giving them greater recognition, the Festival was seen as a valuable way of making the whole greater than the sum of the individual parts.

"[We received] lots of very positive feedback from a range of visitors. People said they were keen to come back and some were inspired and impressed by all that was happening. All food, drinks and cake went, usually a good sign."

Some of the benefits identified included:

- a great way of advertising existing gardens, meeting new faces and generating interest to become involved
- the opportunity to create new neighbourhood links and talk with local residents who didn't necessarily know about the gardens
- making new connections with external organisations and individuals who contributed their skills on the day, enjoyed themselves and offered to do it again in future
- giving the volunteers who form the bedrock of community gardens the chance to celebrate and showcase their work to the public
- raising awareness of the links between food, the environment and wellbeing



A small part of a big movement

The event highlighted that small community gardens are part of a bigger movement in the city. Feedback stressed the value of being given the support and encouragement to have a celebratory event and to link up with like-minded people. People from near and far mingled, shared food and stories, had a laugh and felt a sense of closeness and coherence between local collective actions. We received reports of visitors' surprise and delight at discovering new spaces and realising how much can be done, even on a small bit of land in the city centre.

"In a lot of cases [visitors] got to discover a part of their local community they didn't know existed, yet pass on a daily basis."



Adults and children alike enjoyed the chance to take part in gardening activity. The friendly and welcoming nature of the gardens attracted individuals who might not usually engage in public events. Some lucky ones even got to leave with a bag of super fresh and delicious local vegetable for their dinner!

In some cases, it was an opportunity for community growers from different gardens to meet one another for the first time, to network, to give and receive praise on their achievements.

"There was a real community atmosphere on the day. The warm response and encouragement received from all those who attended was fantastic and it showed us just how many people in the surrounding areas are passionate about the same values as we are."

Making connections and building bridges

The Festival organising committee leveraged external resources and actively facilitated partnerships between gardens and pro-bono external contributors. Around 60 people with a range of specialist skills, including nature conservation, cooking, music, and storytelling, were put in touch with the gardens and offered diverse and fun activities,



food and entertainment for all ages and abilities. Time and again, the feedback highlighted that this innovative approach to building bridges and making connections was one of the strong points of the Festival. The external contributors' input was very highly rated by visitors and gardens alike. For some gardens, these connections snowballed into further links being made and potential longer-term partnerships being created.



We teamed up with [Sustrans](#), the national cycling charity, to offer a guided cycle tour of the Festival. This provided a great way of tying in with the Festival's wider sustainability and wellbeing strategy and fitted in well with Sustrans' National Cycle Network 20th anniversary celebrations. Twenty-eight people from a range of backgrounds took part in the ride led by Sustrans volunteers. One cycle tour couldn't possibly get around all 15 gardens, but for those gardens visited on two wheels, it proved to be a powerful way of bringing the public to gardens located further away.



"The day was really lovely! The cyclists came and they were amazed at the garden and I had made a huge salad which they tucked into."

"The buzz around the festival really helped to create some publicity and the help that the team offered in connecting with producers etc. really helped us make something happen. The cycle tour was also a great idea to link the gardens on the day."

We were also delighted to join forces with [Edible Edinburgh](#). Councillor Lesley Hinds, Chair of Edible Edinburgh, launched Edinburgh's Sustainable Food City Charter at the Milton Road Community Garden (Edinburgh College). The Festival provided a great platform to demonstrate how community growing directly contributes to the Charter's objectives around social inclusion and environmental



sustainability. The Sustrans cyclists arrived just in time to witness the event and everyone enjoyed tucking into a delicious buffet sourced from the best of local ingredients.

Food for thought

With no ready-made template to follow, the Festival was an experiment. It worked well and thoughts are already turning to how a similar event could be run in the future. Points for further consideration include:

- city-wide advertising with more emphasis on local promotion, in the gardens' own neighbourhoods
- starting local engagement well in advance e.g. linking in with schools
- holding an opening event to focus the minds and highlight the wider food context
- exploring creative ways to attract visitors and increase turnout
- improving signposting to venues and making gardens more visible for visitors
- maximising the input of external contributors
- staggering opening times where gardens' opening hours are short
- boosting the gardens' volunteer capacity
- facilitating relationship building between gardens
- making a short film of the Festival



The Festival in numbers

- 15 gardens
- 60 volunteer event contributors
- 500 volunteer hours given by the organising committee alone
- 500 visitors over the weekend
- 300+ Twitter followers
- 275 Facebook likes
- One local radio appearance, [coverage in the media](#) and in the e-bulletins of several other organisations



Final words

"Everyone in the group enjoyed the opportunity to break out of the central Edinburgh bubble that we usually operate in and meet communities in other parts of the city. We had lots of people take flyers and sign up their email addresses so it was definitely a success."

"The day was a great success and the band was the icing on the cake. Thank you for all the hard work you put in over the last few months and we would be honoured to take part again next year."

"The gardens were amazing and inspirational – I only wish I'd been able to get round more."

"Huge congratulations on an excellent event - well done to everyone involved."

"An enormous thanks for everything last weekend. What a day! Your (and others there) enthusiasm and spirit for the farmhouse project helps to keep it all alive for us too. We appreciate all the help and time and effort you put into making the day happen. Community is built, and grown, and nurtured... just like our food, you helped us grow new fruit. Thanks!"



"Well done! Hope you do this again next year and continue to build the Festival."

"You all did a superb job and your passion for the cause resonated throughout the Festival."

"The team were hugely supportive, offering ideas and helping us to make connections."

"The gardens were a revelation."

Personal thanks

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow. I am deeply touched by the encouragement and support I have received from many different quarters since this Festival idea first lodged itself into my mind in the Autumn 2014. As testified in this report, turning this modest little seed into a reality for all to enjoy has been a superb team effort and a fabulous display of community spirit. The Festival was inspired by Edinburgh's amazing community gardeners; it couldn't have happened without their energy, ingenuity and their desire to share their passion. The event also benefited hugely from the generosity and skills of a wide range of [individual and organisation partners](#) who provided us with precious help along the way and contributed their very special input on the day. Last but not least, my thanks to Christine Giraud and Rebecca Crowther who took a leap of faith and agreed to embark with me on this journey to create Edinburgh's first Power of Food Festival. Thank you all!

Marie-Amélie Viatte, Festival founder



Festival contacts

To enquire about the Festival or community food growing, contact the Festival team:

- Web: poweroffoodfestival.wordpress.com/
- Email: poweroffoodfestival@outlook.com
- Follow us on Twitter: [@PoFFest](https://twitter.com/PoFFest)
- Like us on Facebook: [Edinburgh Power of Food Festival](https://www.facebook.com/EdinburghPowerofFoodFestival)