

The Eden Project

The Eden Project is the largest plant enclosure in the world, built in the lightest and most ecological way possible. The project is situated in a 15-hectare landscaped site, formerly a worked-out Cornish clay pit. Four phases have been completed to date.

The focus of the Eden Project is a sinuous sequence of 8 inter-linked geodesic domes threading around the site, encapsulating Humid Tropic and Warm Temperate regions. The biomes are an exercise in efficiency, both of space and material. The cladding panels – triple-layered pillows of high performance ETFE foil – allow maximum light transmission and minimum structure due to their exceptionally low weight.

The biomes were completed in 2001 - a year after the Visitors' Centre was finished. This building is a working showcase for methods of building with low impact on the environment: green roofing; gabion walling; rammed earth construction and timber cladding. During its first six months of opening, it attracted over half a million visitors to its showcase 'Big Build', which offered views of the construction of the biomes from its panoramic galleries.

In 2002 Grimshaw completed phase three, the Foundation building. It was built to accommodate the increase in staffing levels, a direct consequence of Eden visitor numbers exceeding projections by 200%. The design meets extremely high sustainability targets. Under BREEAM for Offices 2002, it achieved a rating of 'Excellent'.

The fourth phase of the Eden Project, the Core, is an education centre completed in 2005. Designed with the sculptor, Peter Randall-Page, the building is in itself an expression of the geometric principles of plant growth, and represents a true collaboration between all members of the client, design and construction teams.

A fifth phase, The Edge, is currently in design. It will contain plant life from the Dry Tropics alongside a series of permanent and temporary exhibits on climate change and other environmental issues