

# EQUINOX

ORGANIC  
KOMBUCHA

## IMPACT REPORT 2020 -2021



Flower of Life Ltd

**Becoming Thought and Deed Leaders**

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# EQUINOX KOMBUCHA

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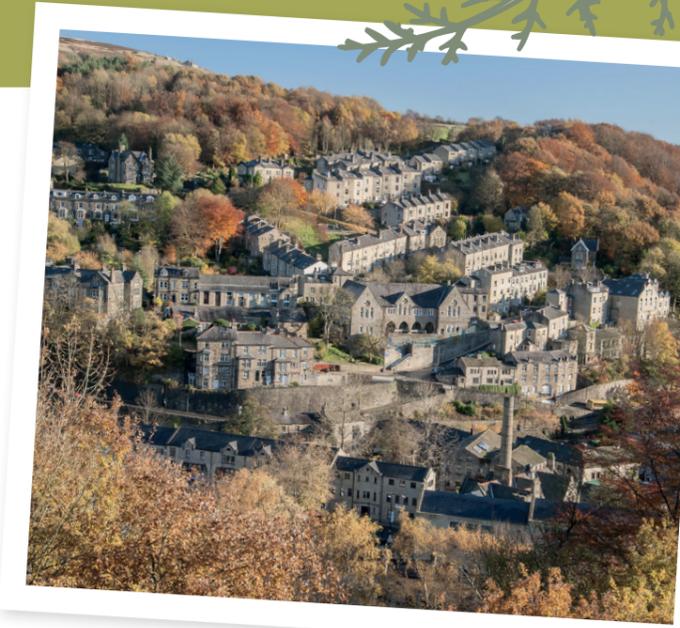
# The miraculous journey of 2020

*2020 will go down in history as a year to remember on multiple levels.*

Despite numerous challenges we are extremely grateful to be able to say that our business has continued to grow in both revenue, capacity and impact – much of which is discussed in detail in this report. We have preserved and expanded job roles, launched a new partnership with River Cottage and achieved our B Corp certification to solidify the foundation of ethics and sustainability that sits at our heart. All of this against the backdrop of floods, the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. No small feat for an organic manufacturing business in West Yorkshire but we have only just begun our learning journey.

In February, we experienced the flooding of our warehouse and production site; a unit that sits uncomfortably close to the Calder River. Despite extensive mitigation works throughout our valley (the river has flooded six times in the last five years), the river surged to 3 meters plus after Storm Ciara took her toll on West Yorkshire. Before we knew it, water levels had risen to waist height in our unit. Our staff were nothing short of heroic in coming together to clean and clear the mess having us back up and running within a week which was a small miracle.

Then less than a month later, COVID-19 catalysed the first major lockdown in the UK and like many small businesses, we found ourselves running to keep up with continually changing government guidelines and workplace secure measures. With the majority of our customers being in retail, we were blessed to continue operating albeit with sporadic order cycles as the number of customers in store decreased rapidly for the first stages of lockdown. Looking for the silver lining, we were able to ramp up our direct to home orders and grow our direct to customer ecommerce massively as 2020 progressed, as well as use this channel as a valuable two way



communication mechanism to discover what our growing customer base really needed as the surreal year progressed.

October saw us launching a new range of organic Kombuchas with Hugh Fernley-Whittingstall and River Cottage. After extensive product development and R&D, these lines were unlike anything we had ever produced (or seen before in the market) and hit the shelves in Waitrose and Abel & Cole with success due to strong sponsorship from Hugh and the health and immunity relevant messaging that continued throughout 2020 in the mainstream media.

Our vision is to continue to disrupt the soft drinks industry; in the right way! We strive to be uncommonly good through walking our talk on ethics, social and environmental responsibility and educating our customers on the benefits of healthy, organic, living products such as Kombucha. We are passionate about being a learning organisation and work really hard to engage our stakeholders into the process of continually becoming more sustainable, impactful and conscious of the things that really matter in our business context. We feel really lucky to be one of the companies with what we consider to be a miraculous story of 2020 and intend to continue putting people and planet at the core of the way we do business into 2021 and beyond. This impact report tells our story so far.



## MISSION

**TO DISRUPT THE SOFT DRINKS MARKET WITH THE VERY BEST ORGANIC, SUSTAINABLE BOOCH.**



## METHOD

**WE ARE UNCOMMONLY GOOD IN EVERY WAY IMAGINABLE.**

# 2020-21 THINGS TO CELEBRATE

Our FYE 20-21 was a rollercoaster ride through a fast changing social, environmental and commercial landscape but throughout it all we continued to focus on the key material impacts that our business could positively affect, much aided by the structure of the

B Corp certification that we had followed throughout FYE 19-20 to guide our sustainability strategy. There were plenty of things that didn't go to plan, but also lots that gave us cause to celebrate. Here are some of them.

**MAR**



Introduced an additional **10 days paid** COVID specific sick leave days for FTE's

Introduced a new staff online **health and wellbeing** Zoom program throughout furlough

We donated **10,086 bottles of booch** to Care Homes, Key Workers and Food Banks in Calderdale

**APR**



Continued our quarterly **employee engagement** survey to seek input from and understand the needs and ideas of our staff

**MAY**



Qualified for the **Sublime Good Brands Award**

Conducted our annual **materiality & Future Trends Survey** with staff, customers and community stakeholders

**JUN**



Launched **Wellbeing Wednesday** on IGTV as a series to educate customers on the key material issues raised related to physical, mental and emotional health

In preparation for the launch of the new **River Cottage Kombucha** we entered into a **trial of paper labels**. We have yet to find a solution that works for our chilled products but continue to experiment until we do!

**OCT**



We **donated 5100 cans** of booch to The Real Junk Food Project

We **won 3 Great Taste Awards** for Original, Raspberry and Elderflower and Wild Berry

We conducted **consumer research** with a sample of **2000 people** to understand how customers perceptions of **health** and health giving products had changed over COVID

**SEP**



We achieved our first ever **B Corp Certification** at a whopping 91.3 points!

We donated another **4000 cans and 10k bottles** to The Real Junk Food Project

**AUG**



In response to BLM campaigns, we set off to **understand what diversity and inclusion** actually means in Calderdale and how the needs of our local community have changed over COVID-19. This research is due to be published in April 2021

We launched our internal Equinox **Leadership Lab Training** on communications, leadership, diversity, continuous improvement and ethics

**JUL**



**Measurement of our annual Scope 1,2 and 3** Carbon and environmental impact metrics (water, materials procured, business mileage, energy) of our manufacturing sites and offices

**NOV**



**DEC**



**JAN**



**FEB**



# The positive impact of being a purpose driven, sustainable business

It goes without saying that 2020 was a challenging year for everyone. Being based in Calderdale brought us not only the Covid challenge to deal with but also the recurring issue of localised flooding. Seeing the power of the water, the damage it can do and how it gets into everything when unleashed underlined not only the power of nature but that we seem to be living in times of uncertainty and the only constant in the world we live in right now seems to be change itself.

One can either let the change get to you or roll with the punches and make changes in our own business and personal world in order to deal with the new situations we constantly find ourselves in. It takes a lot of courage, hard work and a healthy dose of humour to do this. It's for this reason that I am incredibly proud of the team here at Equinox and the individuals at our key partners we work with and everything that we have collectively achieved despite these consistent challenges and difficulties. You are all my inspiration to come to work each day and I thank you whole heartedly for all your efforts and sharing of common goals.



Dan Spayne, Managing Director.

“For me, one of the most pleasing achievements in 2020 was the fact that we obtained B-Corp status. This felt like a lovely recognition for all the hard work that many individuals involved in our business have strived for – for many years and is a great result for the business.”

It is also a recognition of the organisational changes we have been putting in place for a couple of years now in order to qualify for this. That being said, the business was developed with these ethics and principles in mind from its inception and those involved at the beginning of the Equinox journey have found B Corp a solidification of our company purpose and culture. For me, It's key to keep carrying the torch in this way. At the end of the day, we are a manufacturing business that is a small part of a national, local and worldwide supply chain.

We are happy being part of this chain as we are making a tasty, healthy, organic product that swims against the mainstream tide and in my opinion helps many people be healthier (our customers tell us this!). However, as part of the B-Corp process we had to recognise that not every challenge we face in our production will be something we can necessarily change. To some extent we rely on third party suppliers to help us be better.

Dan Spayne, Managing Director.

We therefore decided to focus initially on what we could control and do it well. This is why we made quite a lot of changes to what we do with our people and ensured that where we use energy it is sustainably sourced.

We are a real living wage employer and have put health insurance in place for those on full or part time contracts. These were just some items that in a sense were “easy wins” where we could adapt what we do to make that positive change and be a force for good.

However, making real systemic and fundamental change in the food and drink industry and the world we live in is easier said than done. What this process has taught me is that making real change is often difficult and sometimes downright confronting. It in some ways makes you feel helpless as you are reliant on others coming along on the same journey with you and creating impact together. Often difficult change doesn't make classic “financial sense” but are the “right things to do”. This all boils down to partnership and picking the right collaborators. I'm very excited and happy that we have begun this process and continued to develop some inspirational partnerships in 2020 and early 2021.

Front and centre in my mind is the work we have done with River Cottage in creating kombucha that has been crafted in new ways (ways we hadn't worked with before and were exciting yet daunting). River Cottage also helped us see the importance of standing up for what you believe but also recognising where we have further to go and not being afraid to admit that. In addition, we have

continued to work closely with Waitrose & Partners and they have been a great supporter of what we do and how we do it as they are also aligned to doing the right thing within their business.

“This work never ends, the journey is forever but day by day, bottle by bottle I'm proud to come to work in the knowledge that we and our key partners are moving fast in the right direction to make a difference in the industry.”

We might not have all the answers (yet!) but I know that working together makes us stronger and gives us a better chance of being the change we wish to see in the world at large. I look forward to the future with excitement and hope that we can continue to show key progress year on year in each impact report we publish.



## WHERE WE HAVE STRUGGLED

1. Working as we do with landlords, in our production site in Sowerby Bridge we struggled to convert to 100% low impact renewables due to the nature of our lease contract. **We are moving towards this aim step by step.**
2. **Eradicating plastic** from our packaging has been a continual struggle given we have yet to find a paper based label that will apply and stay affixed to a chilled, condensed kombucha bottle!
3. **We would love to have more of a circular economy** approach to the reuse of our glass bottles however to set up a reverse logistics chain that our customers could use to return their bottles, have them cleaned to food safety standard and reused is currently out of our cost range right now. It's definitely something we want to explore in the future however!
4. As more brands move away from plastic packaging, the glass and aluminum industry is struggling to keep up. **We have found it challenging to procure glass bottles with a high recycled content** of suitable quality ... the quest continues.
5. At the start of lockdown we had lots of plans to integrate our staff development with **community investment and match people with social projects** to develop their leadership capabilities in a real social or environmental context. Unfortunately this has simply not been possible in the context of social distancing so we are planning to pick all of this up once again when we are able to.
6. Our staff **volunteering has suffered over the pandemic** as we have had to furlough people at different times to ensure the future security of their jobs. 2021 should see us being able to work in an integrated way once again and sending more Equinox people out into the Calderdale ecosystem to get stuck into projects that matter.

## WHERE WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS

1. We spent a lot of time talking to **our staff** about the sort of **benefits that they would most value** if we were to put them in place. Longer maternity / paternity leave, health insurance for all full and part time roles, extra paid sick leave over COVID and onsite coaching all featured in the list of things we now offer to our staff.
2. Because putting the real needs of our stakeholders first really matters to us, **we now do an annual materiality analysis** that includes our employees (via weekly Kitchen Sessions), our customers (via a social media poll), our community (via interviews) and our shareholders (via meetings and board updates) that tells us the key future trends and sustainability issues that are most important.
3. We run a **quarterly employee pulse check** to measure engagement and get regular input into key health and wellbeing issues as well as marketing and communications!
4. Instead of just posting a black square on our instagram feed during the Black Lives Matter protests, **we have invested in 8 months of community research** in our local region of Calderdale to fully understand what diversity and inclusion really means in our local area and how we as a business can make the most positive impact here into the next year. Read more on this on page XX.
5. Working with our landlord in Mythmolroyd where our brewing factory is, **we put solar panels on all our units** which has reduced our energy consumption from the grid (albeit from fully local impact renewables through fellow *B Corp Bulb*).
6. During lockdown we **donated over 29,000 cans and bottles** of booch to Care Homes, key workers and families through *The Real Junk Food Project*.
7. Of course the '*piece de la resistance*' in September 2020 was the achievement of our **B Corp certification at a whopping 91.3 points** (only 80 needed to certify) to recognize all our work towards being an organisation that uses business as a force for good!

## THE EQUINOX LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

# OUR IMPACT TARGETS 2021-22

The impact targets below have been aligned to the feedback and changing needs of our core stakeholder network (employees, community, customers and shareholders) and given the current volatility as we emerge from the global pandemic, we are focussing on one key impact area per B Corp assessment section for for the next 6-12

months. These are pragmatic targets, linked to core business activities that we feel we can achieve as we move out of lockdown and into recovery. They are informed by the materiality analysis we did in June 2020 and have been further tested and verified through our 2020 Staff and Customer Future Trends survey.

## B Corp Impact Areas 2020 - 21

	<b>Governance</b>	The implementation of an internal performance based share scheme that creates a wider sense of ownership and accountability amongst our employees
	<b>Workers</b>	The design and implementation of an integrated training and development strategy that weaves on-the-job skills-based training, with social & environmental development, diversity awareness, management training and continuous improvement and lean ways of working
	<b>Environment</b>	Development of Supply Chain sustainability data, tracking and partnership approaches to positive environmental impact such as collaborative working to encourage UK organic herb growing
	<b>Community</b>	Partnering with Rooting & Fruiting and The Real Junk Food Project to understand the evolving needs of our community and how we can play our role as a key business stakeholder in the creation of a Community Learning Hub into 2021
	<b>Customers</b>	Development of customer education & engagement strategy, and true customer dialogue linked to our Equinox Community programme to build awareness of the health benefits of Kombucha as well as inform our ongoing new product design strategy

## Key material issues and future trends

The cornerstone of our sustainability strategy for the last few years has been an annual materiality analysis and future trends survey that we conduct with stakeholder groups including employees, customers, community changemakers and investors. We began this process in June 2019 and ran the survey again in June 2020. The core themes are connected to the Sustainable Development principles of Environment, Society, Health and

Economics and form the basis of our decision making around customer education, marketing and community investment. The 2020 analysis was conducted through our quarterly staff engagement pulse survey, employee workshops, community stakeholder interviews and customers polls on social media.

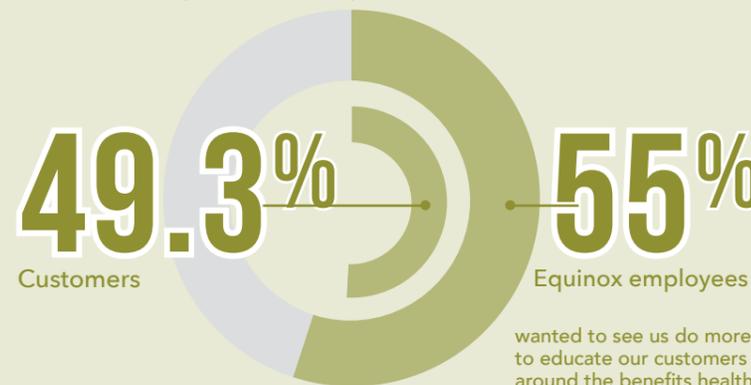
## 2020 RESULTS

**Environmental Regeneration and Reforestation**  
Highlighted as a key issue



## Environment

**Education** Importance as a social issue and key area of impact on our company



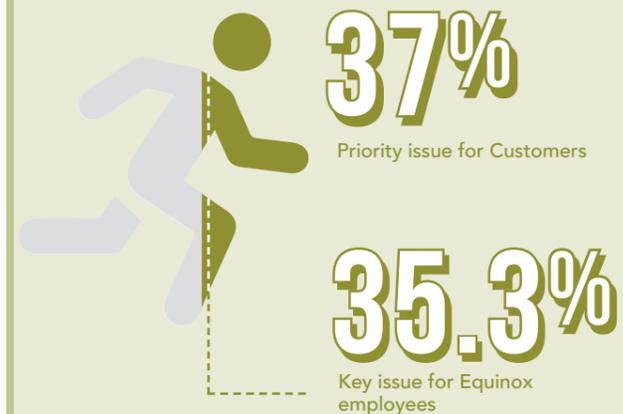
## Education

**Mental health** topped Health & Wellbeing category



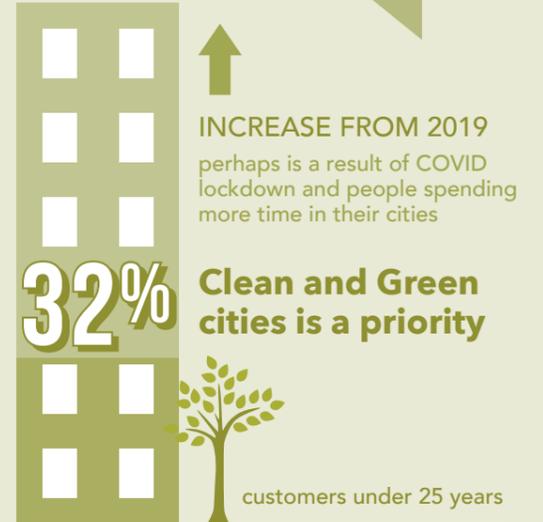
## Mental Health

Importance of **Exercise & Nutrition**



## Exercise & Nutrition

**65%** said **flood mitigation** is a specific priority in environmental regeneration for our business



## Diversity & Inclusion



**Social Mobility** is important

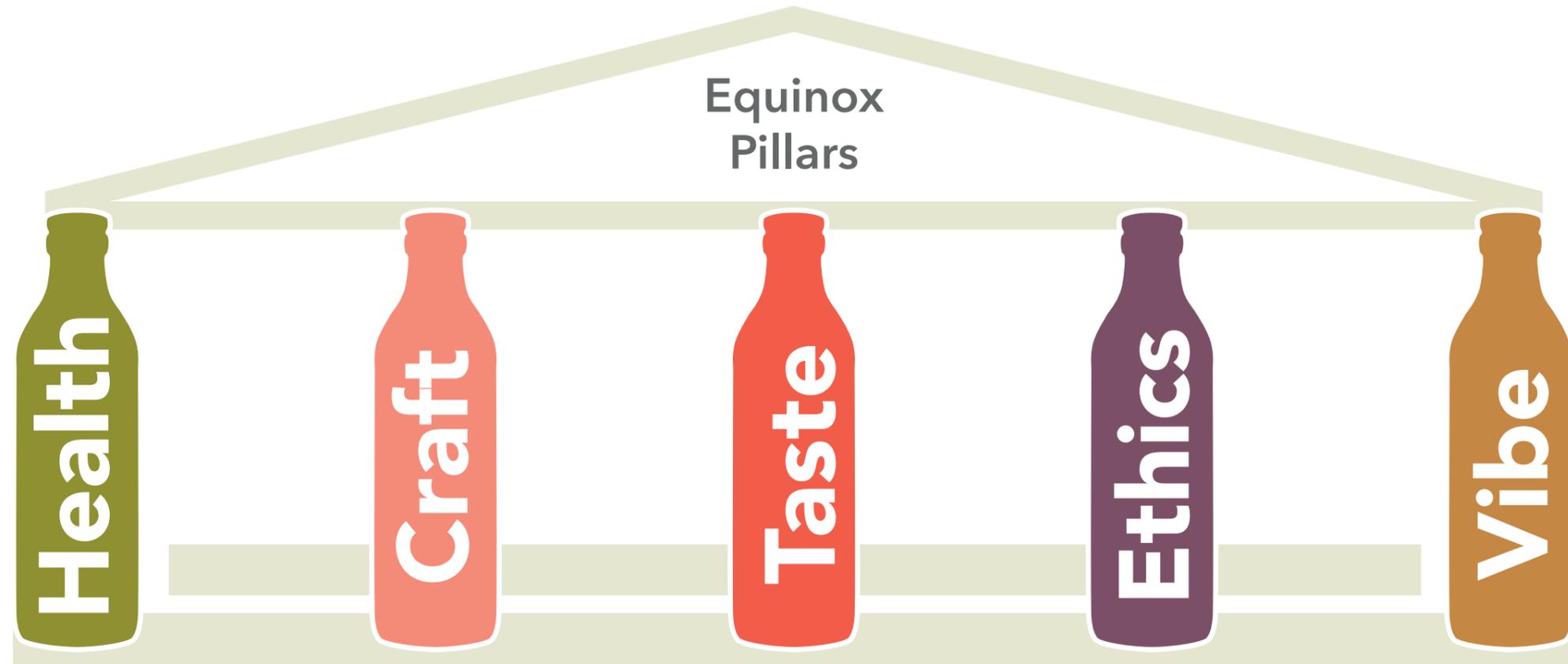
# FROM FEEDBACK TO IMPACT

Our Materiality analysis and stakeholder engagement strategy allowed us to see which issues now and in the future were most important to us as a company and to our customers. The core areas highlighted of health (physical, social

and mental), ethics (social and environmental) and education (business and food as a force for good) provided us with the foundation for the development of a core set of guiding values that bring to life our ethos and our brand identity.

May 2019, we did a significant piece of work with social design agency Social Kinetic to understand the core energy of our products, our brand values and how we can connect with our customers and community through a lens that is directly relevant

and adds value to their lives. From this work, we distilled the five pillars of Equinox as the core values and ingredients that drive why we exist, who we are and how we do business. These are Health, Craft, Taste, Ethics and Vibe.



## 01 HEALTH

Health starts in the gut – Through producing, consuming and experimenting with healthy, organic living foods and beverages, we begin a journey to inside out health and vitality.

## 02 CRAFT

We love our craft – We believe in making authentic, living Kombucha with great care and attention to detail. We are passionate about living, fermented kombucha brewed in a traditional manner and work to continuously improve our craft so our booch is the best it can be.

## 03 TASTE

Taste is primary - Taste connects us and expands our sensory experience of life. It gives pleasure, reduces stress and relaxes our overworked bodies, minds and souls. For us, great taste is the doorway through which better decisions happen, whether these are related to food or life!

## 04 ETHICS

Ethics are the foundation of who we are - We are always learning and discovering what our customers, communities, employees and ecosystems need from us and doing our best to respond in ways that are healthy for all. People, Planet and Profit have equal importance to us and we consider the needs of all stakeholders as we decide how to grow and innovate responsibly.

## 05 VIBE

Our vibe is that of a challenger brand. We love to laugh and have fun, whilst experimenting in the alchemy of kombucha, yet we are serious about its health benefits and challenging traditional soft drinks. We aim to be authentic thought and deed leaders who inspire trust in those around us by walking our talk.

## Real Kombucha, Real Health

**Producing a fully organic, authentic, real living Kombucha comes with a set of health credentials for both people and the planet.**

All our tea based Kombuchas class as **low in sugar**, ranging from 2.6g per 100ml (Peach & Turmeric) to a top of 4g per 100ml (Garden). Our coffee Kombucha comes in only slightly more of 4.3g per 100ml, all well beneath the 5g limit for sugar tax. This is important to us as it means our products are low sugar, healthier alternatives to traditional soft drinks.

### Kombucha and the rise of gut health

Kombucha is an **"ancient fermented tea beverage"** that has a natural effervescence. Once fermented and cultured, the beverage contains a host of beneficial bacteria, yeasts, organic acids, antioxidants and B vitamins imparted to it by its mother culture, often referred to as a **SCOBY** (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast).

What makes Kombucha vital to gut health? In part, it's down to the acids kombucha contains.

Acetic acid is what gives kombucha its distinctive flavour. It's the most abundant of the three most common 'organic acids' found in kombucha. The other two are glucuronic acid and gluconic acid. They're all produced as a by-product of the fermentation process used to make kombucha.

Kombucha contains gluconic acid, which was proven in a study way back in 1994 to support the growth of **bifidobacteria**. Bifidobacteria are good bacteria and are found in our guts. They help support a healthy gut and for this reason, they're often added to **probiotic supplements**. The more support we give these good

guys with gluconic acid from the mighty kombucha, the happier our gut!

A study published in the Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry in 2000 found that kombucha was effective at inhibiting the growth of some common bacteria pathogenic to humans. This means that under lab conditions, kombucha restricted the growth of harmful bacteria. The bacteria in this study included E. coli, salmonella and campylobacter and listeria, that can cause the stomach upsets, sickness and diarrhoea associated with food poisoning. This means that drinking kombucha regularly could help us fight off food poisoning bacteria.

And this is down, in part, to acetic acid, a known anti-bacterial agent. According to a health review published in the scientific *Wiley Online Library* in 2014, acetic acid is largely responsible for these antibacterial effects of kombucha. It also works in conjunction with the proteins in kombucha to increase this effect.

The glucuronic acid in kombucha has a variety of health-supporting roles in the body. A study published in 2004 in the *CyTA Journal of Food* explains that this acid helps support the liver's detoxing duties, helping it do its job of processing drugs, chemicals and pollutants. Glucuronic acid also helps keep the balance of our sex hormones such as oestrogen and progesterone in check and helps to increase the activity of antioxidants.

Finally also very relevant in a year when we are still suffering at the hands of a global pandemic, Kombucha is also linked with supporting a healthy immune system due to its antioxidant content. One of these antioxidants is **ascorbic acid**, better known as **vitamin C**. It also contains glucaric acid, that showed promising antioxidant results in a study in 2011. Antioxidants help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress that can damage our cells, leaving us vulnerable to disease.



For all these compelling reasons, we believe that Kombucha can become a healthy alternative choice for soft drinks, mixers and high sugar fruit juices contributing to the health of our customers now and into the future.

### Customer research and awareness

In Sept 2020, we engaged in a piece of consumer research asking a sample of **2000 people** in the UK how they were feeling about health foods and beverages in light of COVID-19. This was important to us as we wished to understand how our customers were thinking about their health and how we could connect with them as a brand in more useful, value added ways.

**The research showed us that as many as 61% of people surveyed saw their health as either very important or essential.**

This trend was also reflected in the foods they were choosing to consume. We found that: **39%** of people were eating healthier foods, **27%** eating more natural foods and **23%** reading food labels more often.

However, the survey did show a lack of awareness surrounding what we choose to drink in relation to our overall health.

As consumers, people remained most interested in fruit juices (53%) and alcoholic beverages such as beer and wine (44%) and only 19% had reduced their alcohol intake in the last 12 months.

There also continued to be ignorance surrounding drinking Kombucha to keep our gut in check. The research revealed

that only a third (33%) of people knew what Kombucha was, with 12% thinking it was a food and 2% thinking it was a type of yoga.

In line with this, the research unveiled confusion around how best to care for our gut. Almost half of people asked (48%) believe that probiotics are always better for improving our gut health, 14% believe that in order to cleanse your gut you must detox, and 1 in 10 believe bacteria is bad for your gut. Contrary to this belief there are trillions of bacteria living within our gut, many of which contribute to keeping us alive and well.

**The positive aspect of this research shows us just what a massive opportunity there is for a brand like ours, to do real education in the space of gut health and fermented foods and beverages.**

Many people are as yet unaware of the potential positive benefits that drinking real, authentic Kombucha can have on their overall wellbeing and the health of their immune system and so we have plenty we can talk about with people across the UK and beyond!



### Looking ahead - 2021-2022

As we move out of lockdown and into a whole new landscape in 2021, products like ours will become increasingly important to customers who are looking to choose food and drink that helps them stay healthy.

We plan to spend time improving our understanding of the specific health outcomes that are provided by regular drinking of our kombucha as well as engaging our customers into the process of new product development and design.



### Growth the right way

**We are grateful that 2020 provided us with the opportunity to continue to grow our business, launch new products and redesign the way we craft brew our already award winning Kombucha.**

In Spring 2021, we will be bringing online a new fermentation and mixing plant, designed from the outset to be more energy efficient, allowing us to increase our brewing capacity and produce new and innovative products that require enhanced craft brewing techniques. Our brewers are very excited about this evolution in our craft technique and have been busy thinking through our new processes and products.

### The packaging challenge

Since the founding of the company in 2012, having a positive impact on the environment has been central to our vision and mission. This has meant that we have always prioritised packaging that can be fully recycled and has as low an impact in its production as possible.

This has driven us down the road of using glass bottles and more recently aluminium cans as our primary materials however, the road to sustainable packaging has been far from straightforward! Over the last few years we have prioritised suppliers who can manufacture glass bottles for us with as high a recycled content as possible. Our current glass suppliers create bottles for us with recycled content ranging between **14-35%** which is industry standard for UK clear recycled glass. The aluminium in our cans is comes from **74.5%** recycled sources ([crowncoke.com](http://crowncoke.com)). However we still have work to do on consumer education to get our glass bottles and cans into the recycling bin itself.

The UK has one of the best records in Europe of glass recycling with **68.8%** of glass being recycled ([britglass.org.uk](http://britglass.org.uk)) and **75%** of our aluminium cans ([recyclemore.co.uk](http://recyclemore.co.uk)). Encouraging people to place their empty booch containers into the right bins is a message we will continue to emphasise on social media!



### People at the centre

Our people will always be at the core of our craft process and culture and their development and wellbeing, ensures the health of the business overall. As a newly certified B Corp (more on that later!), it is vital to us that we place equal importance on the human social ecosystem of the organisation as we do on the environmental impact we have with our craft products and processes.

During 2020, we were blessed to experience continued growth in customer demand and therefore a need to expand our production capacity and leadership functions in equal measure. 70% of the roles we added to our teams were internal promotions which allowed us to recognise our growing talent and develop our next layer of leaders to grow with us into the future alongside introducing specialised skill sets at a senior leadership level.

We also designed and started to deliver our own internal Equinox Leadership training that encompasses our craft culture, our leadership values and ethos, continuous improvement and lean manufacturing processes as well as social and environmental trainings related to B Corp.

### Looking ahead - 2021-2022

Training and mentoring will be key for the development of our people and our craft as we move into the next year full of new opportunities to expand our product offerings, integrate our vision and culture into our community investment strategy and play an important role in the creation and securing of new employment roles at a time when they are most needed.

In addition to The Equinox Leadership training are planning a series of management specific skills workshops, as well as co-designed trainings with our community charity partner *The Real Junk Food Project*.

## The power of partnerships

Genevieve talks with Stewart Dodd, River Cottage CEO.



Stewart Dodd, River Cottage CEO.

**In April 2020, Equinox and River Cottage entered into partnership to explore launching a new range of organic Kombucha based on flavours inspired by the English countryside. Genevieve talks with Stewart Dodd, River Cottage CEO about the strengths and learning that the partnership has brought both companies so far.**

**Stewart, our partnership has been one of the highlights for Equinox in 2020 (and beyond!), can I ask was there anything specifically that attracted you to work with us?**

*Yes, many things! We looked at several Kombucha companies. One of the things for us that was a real positive was the fact we were going down the*

*“ ~ 100% organic route and that Equinox were committed to that was fabulous. ”*

*And then of course there is all the stuff around packaging that you are also working on. We might not have solved it all yet but we have jointly committed to do so.*

*We feel the same – **organic is a non-negotiable for us** and it's not always easy. One of the most exciting things about our partnership for us is around shifting the narrative. How can we change the perception around organic so its not just seen as a white middle class, nice to have, but something that allows us to grow our own food and forage for healthy ingredients. When we come back to the ingredients of our products, I get very excited about looking at **encouraging the growth of UK organic farming and local provenancing of our herbs and botanicals.***

*Yes, I mean obviously the River Cottage tag line of **'food to inspire change'** is relevant here. Historically we had **'slow'** (seasonal, local, organic and wild) and all of the ingredients in our Kombuchas are **'slow'**. These shared values in our partnership seem like a perfect symbiotic relationship. We find this when we work with people who are really open to shared learning and change is that we use our joint values as the platform to explore how we can help each other bring them to life in new ways. That's true collaboration.*

*Agree – I feel this is all connected. One of the things we are fond of saying in the Equinox world is that **we are a challenger brand** and that doesn't just mean externally. **It means we challenge ourselves to take on those tricky issues, like eradicating plastic from our products or local sourcing of UK organic herbs, and work at them until we find a solution.** We don't pretend to get it right immediately but learn and share our story as we do so. I think our partnership is a great example of living that challenger ethos. Neither of us pretend we have all the answers and that drops you into a space of curiosity and innovation where what you learn is shared and not only helps our businesses to grow but the wider ecosystem too!*

# The power of partnerships

Genevieve Boast talks with Stewart Dodd cont.

“Yes, helping all of UK manufacturing is key.”

I mean on our farm there is an abundance of stuff you can forage. Our chefs have to go out and pick things from the hedgerow and create amazing things from that where previously they would have been used to Michelin Star restaurants and everything being provided for them. Hugh is great at pushing people out of their boundaries and the people that stick around are those who jump into the challenge and become advocates for new ways of doing things. There is a not a lot here that you can't eat!

And this for me is the narrative around organic that we are creating. It's not just about agriculture, it's about what's on peoples' doorsteps and in their local park that they can go gather and experiment with. **Kombucha is still a bit of a challenger product - people are still getting their heads (and guts) around what it is and how it can help them.** That's where we learn a lot from you guys in terms of how to educate people in ways that aren't evangelical or full of jargon.

I think that's important. We have 10 partners now who we think are great and we are creating a community around all the River Cottage brands who are all trying to educate people in their own ways. We would love for our products to be on the shelves of major retailers in the next few years as they are so good they speak for themselves.

**Education and experience are key here I feel.** Such as the plastic challenge. This is something Hugh has been very vocal about for years now and it's a tough issue to crack but awareness is growing. Not only is it challenging to find innovative non plastic products (such as our labels which we have yet to crack). I would love your view on the wider systems challenge of plastics Stewart.

As you know, in the world of COVID, global supply chains are challenging right now and in the last few months we have had several issues procuring glass that is recycled and of high quality.

As more brands rightly move away from single use plastic, we are seeing that the glass industry isn't yet geared up to cope with the demand, nor are the aluminium producers and innovation into plastic alternatives is not yet producing at scale. How have you experienced this challenge in your campaigning?

So we have been doing something called Supper Club since the start of the pandemic and its only now almost a year on that we have achieved **100% compostable packaging.** We are using **Bagasse**, a company that makes sugar cane packaging products that you can put into your garden waste. We have also been using aluminium trays and veg lids. The foil is not terrible and can be recycled by most councils. **The problem with plastic is that there is very little transparency around where it goes and where it ends up.**

Anyone that comes on our courses, get given containers that they can take away with them which embeds the message and thinking about reuse. Plastic individually isn't the issue, its single use and waste that is causing the massive problem. So reuse is the way forwards. But in the retail world, this becomes really challenging. You can't expect to go into Waitrose and fill up your empty bottles with Kombucha. So we need alternatives.

Yes we are looking at that but its complex and expensive to return glass bottles, clean them and refill. We just aren't a big enough company to develop that yet!



I am not sure anyone is really set up for that any more and that's the problem. When I was young we would collect glass bottles and return them for refilling. I don't know of anyone who does that any more which is a real issue.

The issue with plastic is definitely one of transparency – we truly don't understand where it goes and how it is processed (or not) in the waste cycle.

Agree completely – Hugh did a lot of work on this and it's terrifying. He would travel to a Malaysian beach and find UK retailer plastic bags there. None of this is positive.

“So our business has a commitment to eradicate SUP (single use plastics) completely and in our partners' products.”

Gelf, our head chef has done an amazing job here erasing it from the Kitchens and we have just found a vac packing machine that is compostable. So there is not a lot of SUP's in our business and our delivery companies are heading in the right direction but it isn't solved yet.

It's definitely a journey isn't it. For our Kombucha we are still having to use plastic based labels but we are searching for a different solution for that with several different companies. Glass is one of the most highly recycled materials in the UK so we have a degree of confidence that it will make it back along the recycling chain where the plastic is burned off before the glass cullet is melted again. Not great but better than landfill. It is a challenge but one that we will crack!

Transparency is key. Hugh highlighted lots of issues last year so that people could be made aware of



some of the hidden challenges such as take away cups from Starbucks that are plastic coated and therefore not recyclable. **Making people aware so that they can make better choices is the key here.**

We have to educate and invite people into these tricky systems challenges so that they can explore some of these complex issues and potentially change their behaviour in the long run. I see one of the key strengths of River Cottage being your ability to excite and engage people around important topics. Where do you think the real opportunities lay in the next year to do more of this together?

Hugh's new book is interesting here. He talks about the 'live' side of food and how this is good for your gut which is a topic that is resonating widely right now so I think there is a growing trend here. The fact that so many people in the UK discovered sourdough bread during lockdown is telling in and of itself! We would love to get all of our River Cottage partners together and share all of the knowledge we have about making 'live' products we could start to communicate in new ways as an ecosystem of brands. **This kind of self propagation off each other will help us to expand into the right fields together**

I agree – this is core to the way we operate (as you know!) at Equinox. Together we can accomplish much more than we do separately which is why we signed the B Corp declaration of inter-dependence. Thank you Stewart! It really is an honour and a pleasure working with you and the team at River Cottage!

Likewise – we are looking forwards to expanding our working relationships with you as well as the range this year and into the future.

Find out more about River Cottage and their approach to sustainability at <https://www.rivercottage.net/sustainability> and <https://www.rivercottage.net/plastic-policy>

### Equinox Kombucha is a 100% organic.

By being certified organic, we are having a positive impact through eliminating toxins and chemicals in our production processes and the source agriculture that grows our ingredients. The UK government has reported that organic farming is better for wildlife, causes lower pollution from sprays, produces less carbon dioxide and reduces the risks of global warming. In a world where we are experiencing massive biodiversity and species loss at an alarming rate, organic farming definitely represents a solution to many of these escalating issues (*Organic Trade Board, March 2021*). The impact of organic is measured by a number of different organisations, The Soil Association being one of the main ones we affiliate and certify with in the UK.

**The Soil Association** is a charity based in the United Kingdom. Founded in 1946, it has over 27,000 members today. Its activities include campaign work on issues including opposition to intensive farming, support for local purchasing and public education on nutrition; as well the certification of organic food.

Organic farming delivers huge and measurable benefits for wildlife, society and our ecosystems given farmers work to a strict set of standards, which must legally comply with strict EU regulation, to ensure that their farms sustain the health of the soil, animals, plants and people. These standards are built on the key principles of organic agriculture: health, ecology, care and fairness (*Soil Association, 2021*). Currently, organic soft drinks are a rare commodity with living organic soft drinks being even more rare and special. **We strongly believe that organic Kombucha is a game changer in the food industry** and wider society given that regular consumption addresses a number of worldwide health concerns, namely diabetes and obesity.



### Organic as a commercial differentiator

Being one of the few authentic organic Kombuchas in Europe, we believe is an important USP for us as it contributes to the award winning taste of our products – **we won 3 Great Taste awards in 2020** and have been winning them every year since 2016! In our minds, having consistently great tasting products, opens the door for people who would be less likely to buy organic, to try something they often end up loving which has the potential to convert them into healthier ways of eating and drinking overall.

By being certified organic, we are naturally having a positive impact through eliminating toxins and chemicals in our production processes and through encouraging the growth of the wider organic market in the UK. Being organic also allows us to have a different conversation with our customers to understand how organic products are becoming more important in people's health and lives.

According to recent research by The Soil Association\*, the organic food and drinks market grew in 2020 by 12.6% to £2.76BN in the UK alone and now over **£50M is spent each week on organic products**. Sales of organic products in supermarkets increased by 12.5% in 2020 alone and by 36.2% in online sales!

For us, this represents a shift in the consumer narrative around 'organic' and the fact that more people are now placing the health of themselves and their ecosystems as a key priority in how they shop and what products they purchase. We wish to be a brand that is at the frontline of supporting the rise of organic farming and food in the UK, as well as encouraging more companies to switch to organic ingredients in their products!

\*Soil Association Organic Market Report 2021

### Taste is the gateway

The challenge of UK organic herb sourcing Being fully organic does come with some challenges however. Due to the rigorous standards required for wild ingredients to be certified organic, several smaller UK farmers find it challenging to produce locally grown, organic herbs and botanicals in the quantities required to make this kind of farming cost effective.

As an example, when we were developing the River Cottage range of Kombucha's in 2020, we struggled to obtain local UK sources of key organic ingredients. The truth is that currently the UK organic specialist herb farming system is lagging behind that of Europe and according to DEFRA farming land conversion to organic decreased 14.7% in 2019\*. There is a lot that brands like ours can do in this space to catalyse the right conversations to happen to introduce innovation to this system challenge.

### Looking ahead - 2021-2022

In 2021 we intend to work closely with key partners such as River Cottage to explore the complexities of local organic herb farming in the UK and see how synergies can be explored between UK organic farms and the processing companies such as *Organic Herb Trading* to find new solutions to local UK sourcing of organic herbs and botanicals.



## We are a B Corp!

After beginning our journey to certification in May 2019, we submitted our **B Corp at the end of Feb 2020 and were certified in September of the same year!** As well as being a fantastic achievement that the whole Equinox team was proud of, B Corp has really helped to integrate sustainable values and ethics into the DNA of the company ecosystem.

**The certification process and associated B Corp Impact Assessment (BIA) helped us to think deeply about every aspect of our vision and tactical strategy from the way we manage and govern, to our people processes and practices, our environmental management systems and our community and customer engagement strategies.** It has given us a framework to innovate and evolve as a sustainable manufacturing business and access to the fastest growing global ethical business network around today!

## Stakeholders at the centre

As discussed at the start of this report, stakeholder engagement and feedback has been central to our strategy and its execution. From changing our company articles of association to state that our business decisions are governed by what is beneficial for all key stakeholders (social and environmental), we play significant time and resource into the gathering and actioning of stakeholder feedback, both internal and external.

## Understanding our environmental impact

One of the first steps we took on our journey to becoming a B Corp was to understand our current environmental impact and where there were potentials for continuously improving our practices and processes to reduce energy, water and waste.

*The Leeds Enterprise Partnership* supported us in providing expert environmental consultants to evaluate our footprint and assist us in implementing an environmental management system to track usage and carbon impacts. We currently measure our scope 1, 2 and some 3 emissions, looking at energy, water, fuel, business mileage and material procurement of all our key components. In the financial year ending 2020, we had a carbon impact of 460 tonnes across our core operations and manufacturing sites in West Yorkshire. **As a fast growing manufacturing business we are taking the steps we can to reduce our carbon impact and invest in energy providers and technology that are low impact renewables.** Our new fermentation unit will be using more efficient processes to reduce the energy and water requirements of our processes.

In late 2019, our landlord in Mytholmroyd added solar panels to the roof of our brewery and office site, supplementing the renewable energy we are supplied by fellow *B Corp Bulb*. **We are also currently in negotiations with our landlord in Sowerby Bridge to move to ever increasing levels of low impact renewable energy.**



## B Corp - a score we can be proud of!

### Where we did well and where we want to do better

**To become a certified B Corp you need to achieve a score of 80 points and higher. It was a massive achievement for our business that we certified at 91.3 points for our first year.**

We scored particularly well in the Workers section due to a lot of improvements we implemented in our employee engagement strategy, health and wellbeing initiatives as well as a new talent development and training approach.

Environment is also a strong section for us due to our focus on organic and our environmental management systems.

### Looking ahead - 2021-2022

Although we don't need to recertify until 2023, we have already identified the key aspects of our 'beyond B Corp' strategy in the coming year and will be focussing on community engagement and investment in our local Calderdale area, see page 26. We aim here to really embed Equinox as a catalyst B Corp organisation in Yorkshire, working with other aligned companies to tackle some of the tough issues we are facing around **diversity & inclusion, employment and access to healthy food** in our region through a new *Community Learning Hub*.

We also have plans to engage our customers across Europe in physical and social research as well as involve them more effectively in the development of new product ranges and the measurement of their impact. See page 30 for more details!



# OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM

## Understanding diversity & inclusion in Calderdale

2020 brought us multiple challenges in the realm of community health and wellbeing. Beyond physical health and immunity that have both been primary topics as we have moved through the COVID-19 crisis, we have also been thrust into multiple challenges socially with mental, emotional wellbeing and inclusion, topics that have impacted marginalised and disadvantaged communities more than most.

In May 2020 amongst the upsurge of Black Lives Matters protests, **we decided to undertake an in-depth study with key changemakers and service users in our local area of Calderdale**, to understand how diversity and inclusion was operating in our region as well as some of the key barriers and challenges that we were up against in looking to positively disrupt these systems.

**Beth Morgan from Rooting and Fruiting has acted as our community liaison, identifying key stakeholders in the areas below that have been identified as material to our business through our 2019 and 2020 materiality analysis with customers, employees and shareholders.**

Beth interviewed key community contacts in grassroots diversity and inclusion, environmental biodiversity, flood prevention, food security and sovereignty, policy and network development and health and wellbeing.

**Our plan is to publish and disseminate the interviews and associated social systems mapping in Spring 2021 to encourage the interaction, co-design and leveraging of shared resources by multiple local organisations.**



## Getting booch to those in need

As the first lockdown hit in March 2020, we took the moment of pause to stop and find out who in our local ecosystem needed a donation of living booch to boost their immunity and mental wellbeing!

Working with Beth from *Rooting and Fruiting* we established which Care Homes, Food Banks and Key Workers were in most need and over the course of 3 months donated over 10,000 bottles of Kombucha!

As the unpredictable year progressed, **we continued to work with Beth as well as Adam Smith and his team from The Real Junk Food Project to donate a further 10,000+ bottles and cans to families who found themselves in need of food and healthy drinks.**



## Creating spaces and places for wellness and community connection

Knowing how important biodiverse, community spaces are for wellbeing, we continued to work with Beth to co-sponsor a new community garden space close to the Springhill Medical Practice in Halifax. Beth worked closely with local organization Incredible Edible to coordinate socially distanced workers, creating a beautiful garden space from a disused piece of land.

The garden continues to provide an outdoor space for community connection as we move out of lockdown and into the rest of 2021!

# The power of partnerships

Genevieve talks with Beth Morgan, Rooting & Fruiting Co Founder.



Genevieve Boast, People & Sustainability & Beth Morgan, Co Founder Rooting & Fruiting.

**In September 2019, we started working with Beth Morgan, Co Founder of Rooting & Fruiting, a local grassroots organisation in Calderdale, to understand the real needs of our local community and how we as a business could support and nurture positive social and environmental change. Here, Genevieve and Beth explore the nature of true community engagement and investment.**

We have been working together for 18 months or so now and you were one of the first 'friendships' we developed in our journey towards B Corp. So tell me a bit about what your vision and what you are doing in your work right now.

*Wow yes – a lot! I started Rooting and Fruiting as a radical micology business back in 2012 and that's very much at the heart of what we do. From the perspective of radical micology and how that integrates into all of our work, it's around networks. So the mycelium networks of mushrooms that grow under the ground have a way of connecting up all the facets of an ecosystem and can help drive that ecosystem. So even though a lot*

*of our work is in medicinal and edible mushrooms, underlying that is how we bring lots of different people and lots of different resources together and kind of stir things up.*

*My focus is around community gardening in health care settings and that has a vast amount of underlying structure to it. **We do everything from horticulture therapy and toolkit design, to staff engagement and training with a specific focus on forest gardening.** So ecological processes and engaging communities.*

*Finally, I do a lot of consultation around social and ecological design and underlying this is permaculture design principles. This is a much more holistic set of principles for keeping humans and nature in balance. A key part of this is something called co-design which we have been using for Equinox.*

“Co-design brings people together to find innovative solutions to their own local issues rather than using old design practices that separate individual parts of the system.”

Wow so much of that resonates with how we are approaching systems change and understanding our local ecosystem challenges. Perhaps you could summarise how things have changed over the pandemic in the last year and what the current social acupuncture points are that you see as key to creating positive change in Calderdale?

*So when you approached me last year to look at inclusion and diversity and understand how we could make that core to the organisation in a way that reflects what is happening locally in the region, I started to use my network to look at*

# The power of partnerships

Genevieve Boast talks with Beth Morgan cont.

*bringing people together and seeing where there was energy to affect change. I don't quite know how we came across doing interviews with grassroots changemakers but at the time that seemed like the right thing to do.*

“ I wanted to have honest conversations at a ‘friend’ level to see how we could move things forwards during COVID and in general with the economic pressures of Brexit.”

*It's good to find out where the acupuncture points are that we can manipulate in the local ecosystem to get the ball rolling in the right areas, rather than just the areas that are portrayed in traditional diversity and inclusion.*

I think this is really important and something that has really come out of the interviews you have been doing. In the past this kind of community investment has been driven with either a not-for-profit mindset of ‘where is the funding and how can we adapt our programmes to fit the funders needs’ (which isn't always what the community actually needs), or its been driven from the business level which is ‘here's our focus and if you want to access our money then you have to fit that’. That's not the conversation we are having here. **We have been asking “what does our community want and need and how can we as a business adapt to that” which is quite ground-breaking.**

*That's true – all the professionals we have interviewed want to talk about this and they want to talk about this in a very honest way. The other thing we did was provide professional photos for*

*the interviews which served a dual purpose of us investing in them (by providing photos that they can use independently in their work), and they in turn invested their time and expertise in us by wanting to help contribute to building the picture of diversity and inclusion in Calderdale. This in and of itself was inclusive! We documented some beautiful stories here and created a photo journal which doesn't happen often in our region and brought those stories to life.*

*Also what has come out of this is a challenge that has been around in grassroots for some time which is that we are undermining our impact by not working collaboratively. We don't currently have the opportunity to create the right partnerships because we are constantly being redirected due to the nature of traditional grant funding. **There are some fundamental partnerships that could work well and we can give those partnerships time and space to innovate together!***

I agree – its been a real revelation going through that process because as a business we could attach to any one thing. We could say it's all about access to healthy food, or we could say it's all about diversity and inclusion. But what feels more fundamental is it being about ‘and’ rather than ‘either/or’. It's about creating spaces, places and times where all the amazing work that is already underway in our region can connect and cross-fertilise each other, sharing information and sharing resources. This for me loops back to the mushrooms! It's the question of ‘how can we as Equinox be a ‘mycelium organisation’ that helps to tackle systems change rather than symptoms change.

*Yes – we have talked about this before in terms of investment. We should be looking in terms of long term investment. If you are doing community investment work, sometimes you only make an impact 10 years down the line! The work is about the journey and not the destination.*

*What we should be doing is supporting partnerships to come together at the grassroots level with no*

*other objective than to come together and meet the real and changing needs of the local community. And to be responsible, honest and transparent in meeting that need which is not how grant funding or local government works. They can't work like that which is ok. If that doesn't work, we need to mould a new system that is responsive to the community needs.*

*This is exactly what Calderdale has lacked which is businesses that can put money, time and resources into this kind of support.*

“ Perhaps we need to start to find groups of small to medium businesses like Equinox that can collaboratively work together to support this kind of response systems funding and change.”

*There are also lots of wealthy individuals in our areas that might wish to support.*

*Maybe it's about using these interviews as a platform to generate interest in a wider group of supporters. That way we have what is needed in the community being funded by the community (and its businesses) for the changing needs of that community!*

It's such a powerful model of collaborative community research and impact investment. Personally, I am really excited to see where this will go in the next few years and its been a great honour to work on it with you! 2021 will see us continuing to work with you Beth, as well as key community organisations like The Real Junk Food

*Project to create these shared spaces where innovation and connection can happen. I am so excited to see where this work leads us and the whole system of the Calderdale community.*

*Definitely! And we are only just getting started.*

Find out more about Beth and her work at Rooting and Fruiting at <https://www.facebook.com/rootingandfruiting/>



# OUR VIBE IS THAT OF A CHALLENGER BRAND

05 VIBE

## Becoming thought and deed leaders

Our vibe and culture begins with the products we craft produce. We believe that by creating an organic, living, traditional Kombucha at a price point that people can afford, means we are bringing ethical, healthy and innovative products to the mainstream as an alternative to high sugar or sweetener filled soft drinks.

We try to do this in a way that is fun, vibrant and relevant to the current social and environmental issues that we are facing both in the UK and the world. Addressing key topics in positive ways whilst not coming across as superficial or cliché.

We truly care about the impact we have on our customers and engage them where possible into a dialogue around our five pillars of impact to understand what is important to them and how we can deliver products and information that are relevant to their lives. This is challenging to do in a conscious and authentic way and we are still learning!

For us the journey of becoming thought AND deed leaders means that we take action on the things we can control, set ambitious goals and impact targets (even when we don't know we will achieve them) and admitting when we don't get it right. This means that we are constantly learning and experimenting until we have a solution. Often with tricky system issues we don't have the immediate answer. So we spend time investigating the underlying issues so that we can understand things on a deeper level before trying to solve them. This is the way we strive to we walk our talk in being a learning organisation that works hand in hand with our stakeholders to grow the right way.

## Developing our friendships and partners

During 2020 we were blessed to link arms with an amazing group of friends and partners, expanding the Equinox reach and ecosystem through a growing network of businesses who truly care about what they do, how they do it and who they benefit.

In 2021, we will be reaching out to more amazing organisations in friendship such as The Real Junk Food Project who we intend to cosponsor a Kindness Sharehouse in Calderdale to redistribute excess food, catalyse a community learning hub and connect the dots between multiple local grassroots organisation for collaboration, learning and innovation. Truly we believe we can only grow in partnership with others in a sustainable way.

## Looking ahead - 2021-2022

As we move into a new year, we hope to spend more time, resources and energy developing our growing subscription customer base into an Equinox Community, enhancing the dialogue we have with our loyal customer advocates and engaging them as a key stakeholder group into key business decisions such as new product development and launches, material impact analysis and community investment projects and approach. For us this is being a true challenging brand and B Corp, working directly with the beneficiaries of our business to deliver ongoing value.



# The power of partnerships

Genevieve talks with Vic Reddington, Sociability Group Founder.



Genevieve Boast, People & Sustainability & Vic Reddington, Founder Sociability Group.

**At the start of 2020, we began work with Vic Reddington (Sociability Group) and Laura Hackett (Ink Creative) to give our marketing and social strategies a make over. Genevieve (our sustainability lead) works hand in hand with them both integrating our social and environmental impact into the DNA of how we communicate internally and externally and she talks here with Vic about the theory and practice of ethical, mindful marketing.**

So Vic you have been working in the realm of product and digital marketing for many years now – how has your journey changed in the last year with the pandemic?

Well it's crazy – I have been doing marketing in all its forms for more than 15 years now. Way before digital marketing took off where now in the current climate digital is a non-negotiable.

In the last year I think everyone has come on board with the idea of authenticity in marketing and the need to be more real. In some ways, we are all closer than we have ever been before. The barriers have

come down between the brand and the customer because you know that the people that are behind the brand are also sat at home much like they are. So not owning that and communicating that honestly, means that you are almost not owning what is making us all human right now!

Mmm it's almost as if you liken it to the trend over the last year on Instagram away from 'influencer' façade and the illusion of 'living my best life' towards people seeking more raw, real, honest humanity, whether that's on social or in more traditional marketing channels.

“ I call it the transition from 'Me' to 'We'.

People want that personal story and to see the people behind the brand ”

and they want to connect which is really what digital, social and really all good marketing should be about which is connection. But there is that balance within that that everyone is so connected all the time, how do you do that in a responsible way that is not just pushing people to spend more time on their phones. It's about developing a dialogue.

Yes that's the key isn't it. And I guess this does loop us back around to B Corp in that when we started looking at the Customers section and asked ourselves how do we really involve our customers as a key stakeholder group that informs both what we communicate and how we do so, the word 'dialogue' really catalysed our approach. It moved us beyond just how do we get more followers, likes and comments on social media into asking 'how do we have a an actual conversation with our customers and understand what true voice is, true desire and true value.

# The power of partnerships

Genevieve Boast talks with Vic Reddington Cont.

Yes that's the benefit of the B Corp framework as it focussed on the interconnection between everything. It's no longer just product information because actually what people want to see are values and actions that back that up. People are much more conscious in terms of what they are buying and who they are buying from. Now people have more time and are thinking about everything more and can be more considered about their purchasing choices. They can be more conscious. What's lovely about what we have been doing with Equinox is that we are not just going along with that but we are actively encouraging people to ask these questions.

What do you actually want to know? We won't just sit here and preach to you. What do you want us to tell you about and what do you want to talk about?

One of the biggest lessons in the last year at Equinox for me has been honestly talking about tough issues and topics (such as diversity and inclusion) and not knowing the answers. We tried really hard to 'ask our customers' questions that prompt new thinking and acting off the back of their answers, allowing us to continually assess whether we are connecting to the issues that really matter to people.

Yeah and I think it's about intention in our marketing. We start with asking 'what is the intention behind this and who is it serving'? And if its not done with an intention for adding value and serving a core purpose then actually why are we saying it and doing it?

“ We ask some simple questions that keep it true and grounded. Its mindful rather than mindless. ”

Mindful Marketing! That's often why a lot of people get involved in marketing in the first place – to create connection and add value. I wonder

what would happen if we started to redefine our marketing KPI's to fuse the commercial with the mindful!

Its really powerful – I've experienced it before where some businesses are resistant and then some are completely open and come from that place in their whole business. If you come from a point of view from your marketing that you are giving value and setting out to do what you intended to do then people will know that. Customers can smell authenticity and they can smell fakeness.

“ Obviously you still need to be doing all the right things with data as your mechanic but the message needs to be right and authentic to get the best result. ”

Agree - this is where I have really seen the world of marketing ramp up in the last year through 'unravelling'. We have had all these really complex mechanics through big data, algorithms and customer intelligence but as you said if the underlying intention isn't embedded and real in an organisation and isn't reflective of their true personality and culture, people sniff under that in a milli-second now. If I think about the all brands out there (not just B Corps) that are truly authentic and sharing their journey as it unfolds and being honest about not knowing all the answers. They are the ones I go back to again and again even if they don't get it right because I respect them and their approach to business.

There is no where to hide now and it makes for a much more level playing field and for a better playfield because of it. And we will see people rise now because they have a much better opportunity

to tell their story and it be received by the people who are ready to listen.

That's why I think B Corp is so interesting from a marketing point of view. To become a B Corp a business has had to go through this rigorous process of really proving that they are doing what they say they are doing. From every level they are walking their talk and so to communicate this is a wonderful platform now. And they join forces with other brands who are also walking their talk.

This I feel is where marketing is really going now and this is a lovely change which is through collaboration between aligned brands with similar messages.

“ It's transforming the old story around competition. There was a time when you wouldn't like your competitors' messages or talk about it or engage with them in any way. ”

Whereas now, you want to be sharing that audience and sharing through joint initiatives. We are stronger by growing together.

You are reminding me of a conversation I had years ago with a friend who works in innovation. He said to me "the organisations that will survive and thrive in these times are the ones that embrace their competitors as friends". That kind of ecosystem approach to customer engagement, education and marketing is massively powerful and confronting to many brands still. We are seeing coalitions of brands starting to emerge which is really exciting.

Yes I don't think you will ever get rid of the competition but brands are starting to bring 'their best selves' to the party and work alongside others which create innovation and collaborations.

So if you had to list of the top 2-3 things that you have learned in the last year in mindful marketing what would they be?

**Authenticity** is an overused word but one that is so important and is threaded through everything and every part of the business.

**Collaboration** – with other B Corps, with the wider partner ecosystem and we aren't there yet but it will get there and now is the time to do it.

**Intention** – its about being intentional. There is nothing put out that is not really considered even down to a single post on social. And there's power in the levels of that and the care put in.

Thanks Vic – lots to be excited about in the coming 12 months !

So much to be excited about and so much more than we will learn in the process!

Find out more about Vic and Laur at [www.socialabilitygroup.com](http://www.socialabilitygroup.com) and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/victoria-reddington-4a1b4642/> and <https://www.ink-creative.co.uk/>



# THE REAL JOURNEY BEGINS

*As I write the closing to our first ever sustainability impact report for Equinox, I am struck by how multifaceted the journey has been.*



The companies mission and purpose is to disrupt the soft drinks industry by producing 'uncommonly good' living, organic products, in sustainable and ethical ways. This is a relatively easy thing to say and not so easy to live and role model on a day by day basis!

The B Corp framework, community and certification has provided us with a solid foundation and ongoing support system for how we move towards ever more clean, green and ethical ways of manufacturing our kombucha. In the weeks prior to publishing this report, we have joined over 200

B Corps in the UK by pledging our support to the Better Business Act <https://betterbusinessact.org/> whose mission is to change UK law to ensure that every business in the country places equal importance on people, planet and profit through becoming 'purpose driven'. Again – this is much easier said than done and lived. But just because we don't know how we will do something now, doesn't mean that it won't happen. Often these big goals follow a different road than we would have predicted but they teach us a great many things in the process. Taking Equinox through the journey to becoming a B Corp in 2019-2020 taught me this.

Equinox was named after the bi-annual event that seasonally transitions from Winter to Spring and Autumn back to Winter. It is also the time of year when there is an equal amount of light and darkness in the 24 hrs of which it occurs. For us, our business strives towards this kind of balance in what we say and how we do it. We embrace the fact that we are not perfect and we rarely know the answers to our sticky problems when we embark on the road towards solving them. Take our joint commitment with River Cottage this year to move towards paper, recyclable labels on our bottles. Currently, neither company knows how we will do this as every alternative to plastic that we have tried thus far (and there have been many!) won't stick or adhere to wet, chilled kombucha! However, we will persevere together until a solution is found. Perhaps we could describe this as stubborn. Or perhaps innovative. Personally, I feel it's a balance of both.

As an organisation, we have a tendency to dive head and heart first into problems which can be painful at the time, but also means we don't avoid or bypass the truly important and tricky parts of transformation. These are threshold moments. Times when as a team you can decide to go forwards or stand still (worse yet, ignore things and go backwards). Each equinox presents us with a threshold into a new season of opportunity and growth. We just have to choose to move forwards in the direction that benefits us the most ('us' being our employees, customers, community

and ecosystems). This is what living from equinox to equinox has taught us. Face the tough stuff, embrace the good and move forwards together in the direction of a vision that is shared by our stakeholders. This inspires growth the right way and learning as we encounter new situations and opportunities.

The journey towards being a thought and deed leader is not straight forwards or easy. It often involves making decisions that may be less lucrative from a purely commercial standpoint yet

instinctive or intuitive as to what is 'right' for our customers, people and ecosystem. Striving for balance between people, planet and profit, whilst being guided by evolving purpose is the name of the game as we move into 2021. At Equinox we will continue to aspire to be both thought and deed leaders, learning a hell of a lot along the way! We hope you join us for the journey in some way.

*See you on the road!*



# EQUINOX

ORGANIC  
KOMBUCHA

**Uncommonly Good.**

