

East Sussex Assembly Conference 2013
17 October 2013, Winter Garden, Eastbourne

CONFERENCE REPORT

BACKGROUND:

The East Sussex Assembly meets once a year to receive a report on the East Sussex Strategic Partnership's (ESSP) activities and to focus on a topic that will be of interest for Assembly members. Around 40 delegates attended from partner organisations across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This year there was a specific focus on economic growth, and this was divided into two sections the business environment and skills. This focus was decided on by ESSP members and Assembly members from recommendations made at the previous years' conference.

Introduction

The 'Economy, Jobs and Prosperity' is one of the key themes of 'Pride of Place' (the ESSP's Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex). Big issues in East Sussex are: low paid jobs; low skills and poor educational attainment; low job density; areas of high deprivation, too little affordable housing and poor transport; and inappropriate and insufficient business accommodation. ESSP's priority is to narrow the economic performance gap within and between communities in the county and between the county and the region, in order to develop a thriving, diverse and sustainable economy where everyone can prosper.

This event focussed on the topic of 'Economic Development', looking at the East Sussex context and a number of examples of partnership working taking place to successfully promote economic development and tackle local challenges. The issues and activities will be viewed through a number of perspectives: rural/urban, local/countywide and reactive/proactive initiatives.

There was also an, informal 'Market Place' with stalls that gave delegates the opportunity to network, find out more about and sign up to some of the economic development initiatives.

ASSEMBLY ITEMS:

1) The Picture in East Sussex – James Harris Acting Assistant Director - Economy (Head of Economic Development, Skills & Infrastructure)

James Harris introduced the topic, providing both background and the context of the economy within East Sussex. He spoke about the contrasts within the county and how economic growth is important for improving the quality of life of residents, and reducing

deprivation and demand for services. James highlighted the importance for East Sussex to provide an environment in which businesses can flourish and that this cannot be achieved without partnership working.

2) Lets Do Business - Graham Marley, Chief Executive

Graham Marley gave an introduction to Let's Do Business and Locate East Sussex, which is the one-stop shop designed to attract new business investment in the county. Locate East Sussex is funded by a partnership of East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Wealden District Council, Rother District Council, Lewes District Council and Hastings Borough Council.

The scheme is aimed at promoting the county as a superb hub for start-up and existing companies, and to encourage local employment growth. In April, The Let's Do Business Group, won the East Sussex County Council tender to manage the scheme. Marketing is being managed by Eastbourne-based PR and Marketing agency, Cobb PR.

The Locate East Sussex team gives advice and access to business contacts and funding streams outside of the main high street lenders.

3) The Creative Industries in East Sussex – Sally Staples, Cultural Strategy manager

Sally Staples spoke about the creative industries in East Sussex, giving a definition and a look through the priorities of the Cultural Strategy that was endorsed by the ESSP earlier in 2013. Sally got everyone thinking about what East Sussex's 'shop front' looked like and how we can promote East Sussex as a place to visit.

4) Rye Partnership- Chrissy Stower , Chief Executive Officer

Chrissy Stower spoke about the work of the Rye Partnership and its development of a local community response to the socio-economic problems prevalent in the area.

Rye Partnership is a membership organisation consisting of private, public, community and voluntary representatives. In 2010 the Rye Partnership successfully tendered for the operation of a community centre at the former Tilling Green primary school. The Rye Partnership and its partners work with local residents to:

1. Promote and encourage participation from the local community;
2. Offer education and training opportunities;
3. Provide a range of advice and information;
4. Provide leisure and social activities for all ages.
5. Work with local employers and training providers to assess the areas of skills gaps and their training needs;
6. Provide access to employment, volunteering and training opportunities;
7. Provide a one to one mentoring service for people seeking employment and/or training.

5) Supporting Young People into Employment - Jessica Stubbings, Education Development Manager

Jessica Stubbings spoke to the group about the work going on to support young people into employment. She spoke about the County Council's plan (2013/2014) to:

- Improve life chances of people with learning disabilities by supporting them to find and keep either voluntary or paid employment;
- Improve the skills and qualifications of all children and adults to help drive economic regeneration; and to
- Increase the number of children that are in education, employment or training until they are 18 years old.

We heard from an apprentice, Jess, who had completed an apprenticeship with East Sussex County Council and who has since found permanent work. Jessica encouraged all partners to Volunteer to *Inspire the Future* through the Inspiring the Future website which needs more volunteers from all sectors and professions volunteering to visit local state schools and colleges to talk about their jobs, careers, and the education routes they took.

6) Heathfield Works! - Frances Conway, Chief Executive

Frances Conway spoke about Heathfield works! A project of the charity Tomorrow's People. This was the first rural pilot programme here in Heathfield, East Sussex, to raise awareness of not only the hidden deprivation but the extra barriers that young people face, poor and expensive transport links, limited broadband in some areas, once they leave school lack of local support or advice to find and get a job, or deal with personal issues most have extended families and no role models. Heathfield Works! is a ten week voluntary programme to help young people get into work, education or a path to both.

Heathfield Partnership Trust, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, Churches Together, Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, the Parish Council, Local Employers and the community in general that had all been generous with financial donations, gifts in kind and sharing their expertise and time, showing a real community social responsibility.

7) Offenders & Employment - Mary D'Arcy, Director-East Sussex Local Delivery Unit and John Lindford, Job Deal Team Manager, Surrey, Sussex & Hampshire - NACRO

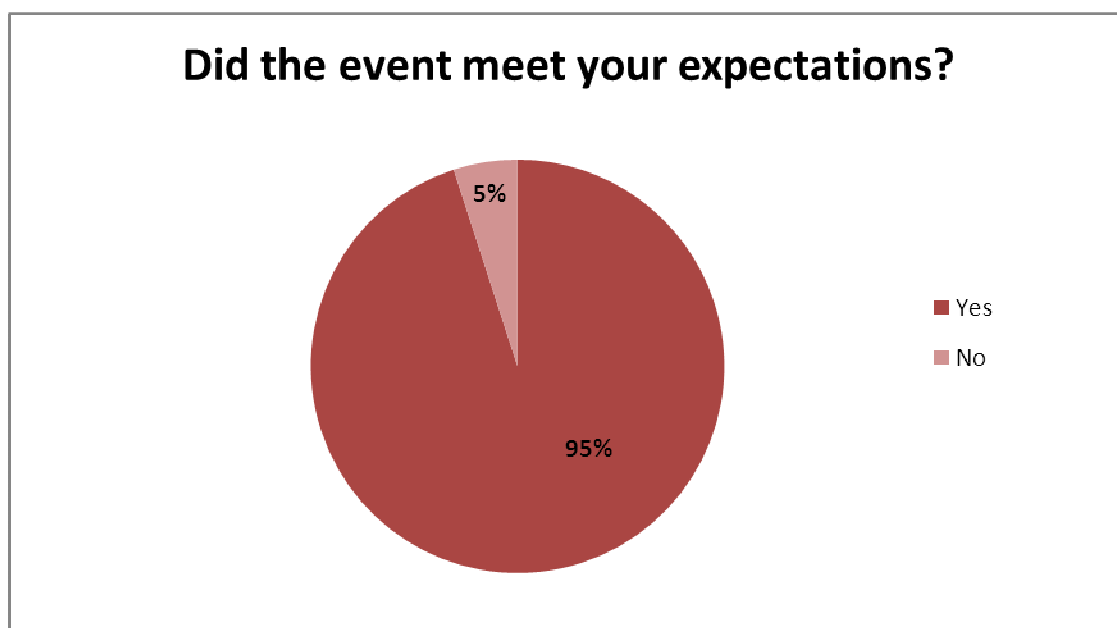
Mary D'Arcy spoke about the barriers to employment faced by offenders in East Sussex and the importance of a job in ensuring an ex-offender doesn't reoffend.

John Lindford spoke about the partnership work of Nacro with Surrey and Sussex probation services and used a case study to highlight the problems and how they try to overcome them. John and Mary spoke about the importance of engaging with employers and Job Centre Plus to increase the opportunities for ex-offenders.

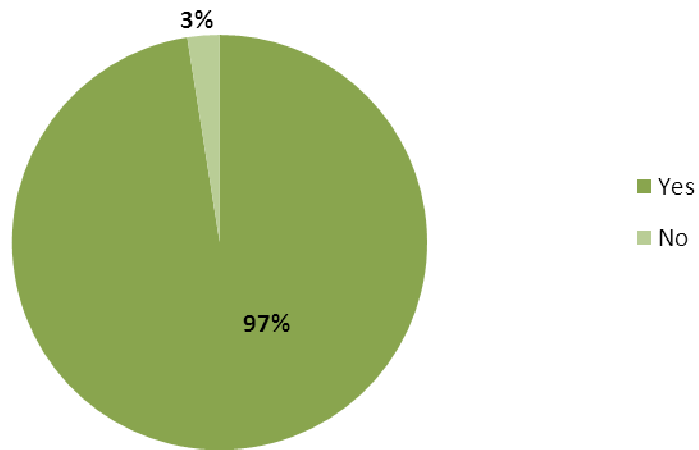
All presentations from the Assembly speakers can be found at the ESSP website: <http://www.essp.org.uk/Meeting-papers-and-reports/East-Sussex-Assembly>

FEEDBACK:

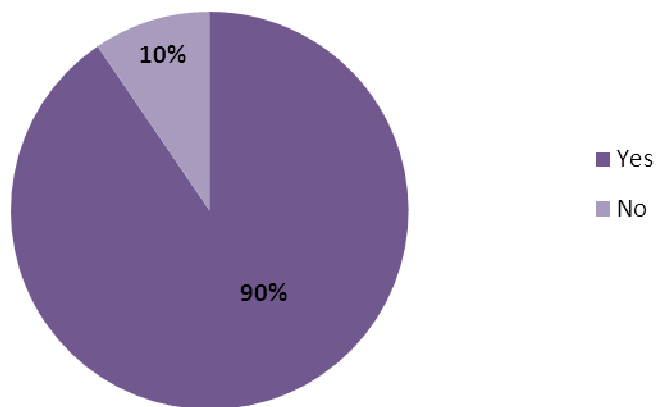
All delegates were provided with an event feedback form. The following results are based on the 20 forms returned. The results are set out and main points are summarised below.



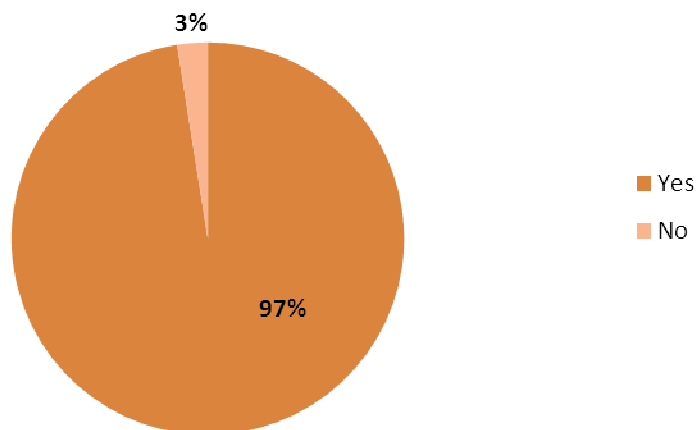
Was the content appropriate?



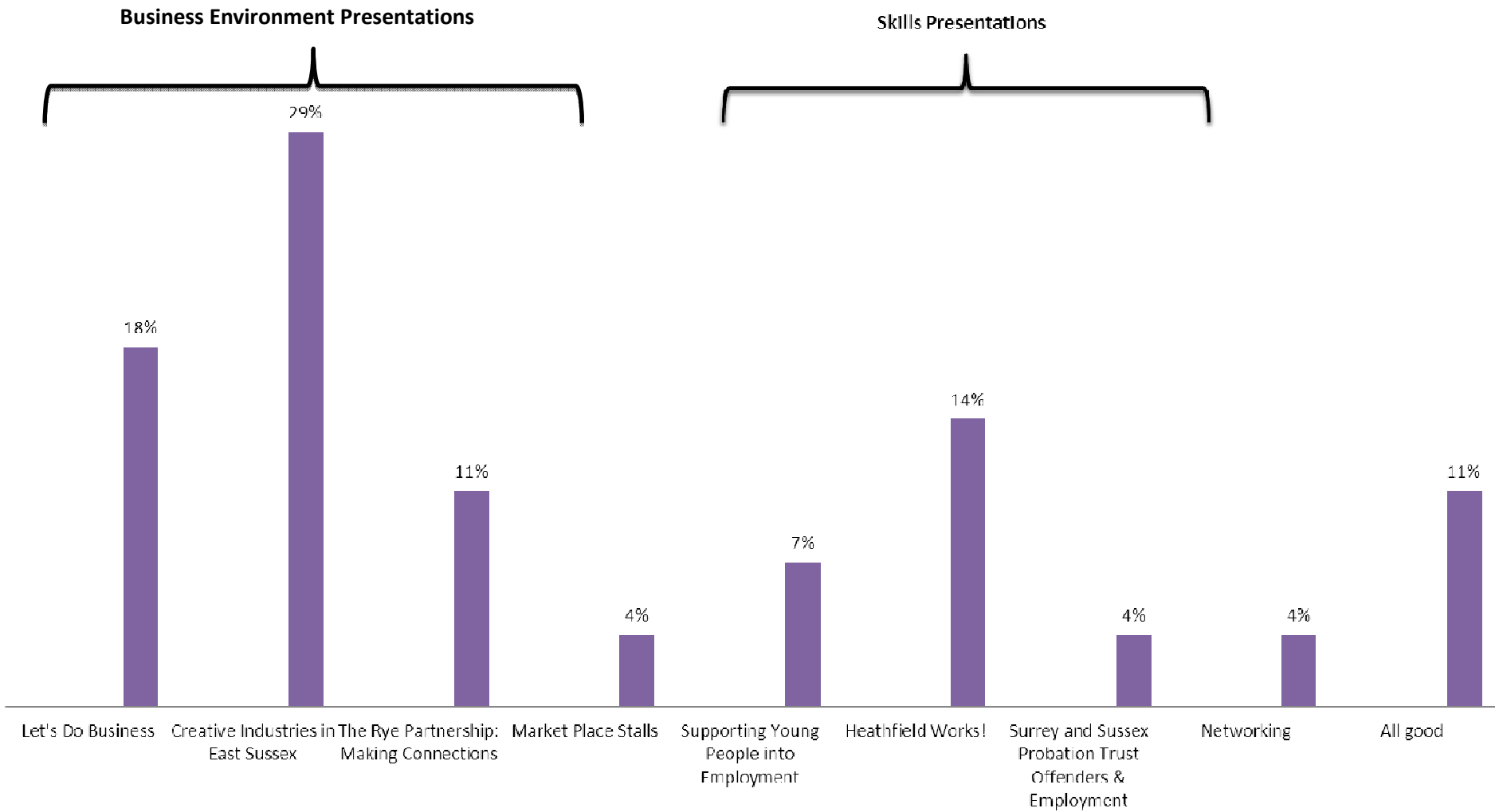
Was the timing of the event appropriate?

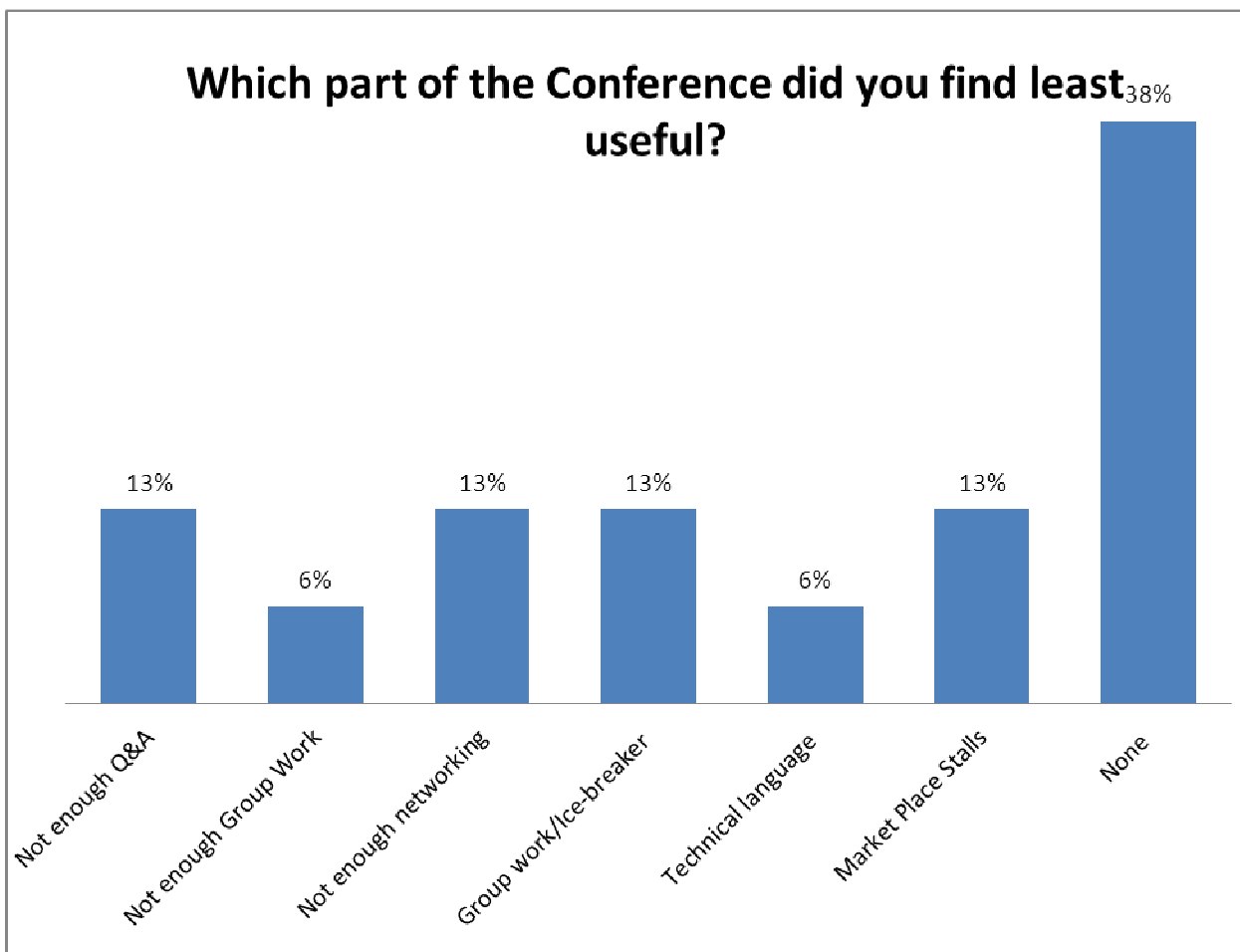


Was the pre-event administration sufficient?



Which part of the Conference did you find most useful?





Responses to the questions asking which part of the conference was most/least useful praised the presenters and gave encouraging feedback.

All presentations received positive feedback, in particular the Creative Industries in East Sussex item (29% of respondents found it 'most useful'). Other positive comments include:

- Opportunity to hear about what's happening and space to think about how healthcare could better connect
- Our brand – promoting East Sussex as a business destination
- Supporting young people into employment – knowing/understanding initiatives taking place
- Ideas that can be replicated elsewhere
- Hearing from Let's Do Business – useful to hear about what they offer and to consider possible synergies
- Both sets of presentations were really useful and insightful
- Variety of presentations and information
- All the presentations were informative and relevant to the purpose of the conference. Best ESSP Assembly to date. Well done!

- The whole event was refreshingly vibrant and inspiring. Loved the creative industries presentation. Networking very useful – people I know and people I didn't know
- This was the best Assembly conference I have attended in the last few years. Very good choice of diverse topics covered by the speakers

The majority of respondents felt that no part of the conference was 'least useful'. Some comments highlighted areas for improvement, and the following points will therefore be considered when planning future events:

- Dedicated Q&A time; although all speakers were asked to leave time for questions there was a lot of run over for speakers and it was difficult to fit that in
- Give a dedicated time for networking

Overall, the content of the event was seen as appropriate and useful. We will continue to ensure that content is relevant to organisations invited to future events. Attendees' suggestions for next year's focus will be considered when planning the Assembly 2014. The suggestions were:

- Keep on economy
- Role of public sector in developing business/economy
- The focus was very much on youngsters this time but our JSA register for 25-49 is much higher. It would be good to have some focus on this age group
- Access to services – government funding reduction – impact on rural business services
- More connection with improving health outcomes
- Holistic look at lives of young people
- Education
- Use time and collective intelligence of Assembly to better effect

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The ESSP is recommended to:

1. Note the presentations to the Assembly;
2. Note the feedback and suggestions for next year's Assembly; and
3. Consider different ways of engaging with the Assembly.