

North Lancashire Social Enterprise Forum

Evaluating the 2009 festival

We have had very positive feedback from everyone involved in the festival. This is reflected in the forms that were returned to us, which echo verbal comments made directly to the organisers.

Attendance exceeded our early expectations and whilst we would of course have liked the festival to have done and achieved even more, given it was the first of its kind and had many different aspects to it, we can view it as a great success. Not least because of the interest it has attracted from people outside of the North Lancashire area. We understand other Lancashire hubs are planning events inspired by our own.

The three aims of the festival were:

a) To bring the network together.

The festival was much more successful than holding our traditional network meetings.

- It should be remembered how weak the network was before the festival, and that was why we had given up on our old terms of reference.
- More joint working has happened through the festival than probably in the previous two years of the NLSE forum.
- We have built a new and extensive contact list with many organisations now better in touch with each other and with greater awareness the principles and practise of social enterprise.
- Many organisations never before involved from for example the art and culture and other sectors have also become involved through the festival
- We have a new website too, and generated a lot of goodwill for the future.
- Personal contacts between key members in the network have been strengthened
- 14 different organisations appeared in the festival brochure and on our new website.



- A number of local social enterprise champions were celebrated during the festival and received our thanks at the evening celebration.
- 57 people signed into the morning conference, though more than that number were likely involved during the morning (e.g. Cornerstone staff and helpers etc).
- At least 40-50 people and over 15 organisations were directly involved in running stalls at the marketplace.
- Around 50 people also attended the evening celebration.

b) Raising awareness of the network and social enterprise in general:

This was definitely achieved both on the day and via the publicity and general interaction before and during the festival. Numerous emails, brochures and letters were distributed

to people across Lancashire and beyond. The festival brochure promoted SELNET, SENW and the Social Enterprise Coalition in addition to our own network and members. Some of the participants had travelled a considerable distance to take part.



It is impossible to accurately estimate the numbers of general public engaged through the marketplace, but many hundreds of local residents passed through the market, picked up information or made purchases from it.

We also had interviews on the local community radio station and a small amount of coverage in local press.

c) Encouraging the Council and the Public Sector to support social enterprise

- The festival was opened by Cllr Archer, lead member for the economy and cabinet member for Lancaster City Council.
- Councillor Langhorn, leader of the council sent his personal best wishes to the festival and apologies for not being able to attend.
- The deputy mayor attended the evening celebration
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership supported the festival financially and promoted the festival through mailings to all its members.
- Every councillor received information and an invite to the conference through member services.
- Senior council regeneration officers took part in the morning conference and panel debate.



- A number of other public agencies got involved too either by attending the conference or received information about social enterprise.

More now needs to be done to turn this into concrete results in terms of contracts or inclusion within local strategies. However the network has always previously struggled to have any meaningful contact with the council, so this was a great beginning.

Money and in kind support

Financially we broke even and made a small surplus, due to the extra grants and sponsorships we received on top of SELNET's original contribution of £1200.

- We secured a total of over £2300 in cash to run the festival.
- We also secured many hours of in-kind support including volunteers to run the day, and the use of the Cornerstone centre for the conference.
- Tables, chairs and other equipment from Furniture Matters to support the marketplace
- Loan of the marketplace yurt for the day, and a range of interesting and valuable raffle donations.
- Volunteer helpers on the day and running up to it.
- Work put in by many people to help publicise the day.

On top of this should be recognised the time that local social enterprises and others contributed in running stalls, facilitating workshops, supplying food and refreshments, and so forth, all making the day a huge success in many ways. Putting a price on these in kind donations is not easy, but would run in many hundreds of pounds if valued on a 'full cost recovery' basis.

Thanks:

Thanks, apart from that mentioned elsewhere should go to Folly for Portable Pixel Playground, Diversity FM, Global link, Littledale Hall, and Lancaster City Council for their involvement in the day. Also the Storey institute for hosting the evening event and going to great lengths to support arrangements despite being so newly open. Thanks also to all the others essential in making the day a success. You know who you are.

We hope to build on all this work in the future.



In terms of showing our community the commitment, energy and enterprise of North Lancashire social enterprises the festival was truly priceless.

Feedback from participants

We have included all text based comments below, and turned the smiley faces ratings used (☺⑤ ④ ③ ② ①☹) into a percentage score. Converting to a percentage is not easily calculated, but below is my best estimate at overall feedback ratings. These closely accord with all the informal feedback we received, so I feel give a good picture of how people felt on the day. Of course not all individuals gave these ratings, but collectively they reflect the figures given below.

The first entry shows how we calculated the overall rating.

Question	<u>Conference</u> (13 replies)	<u>Marketplace</u> (12 replies)	<u>Post event</u> feedback (4 replies)	<u>Overall</u> (weighted by numbers responding)
What did you think of the festival? 5 x (6) = 30pts 4 x (4) = 16pts 3 x(3) = 9pts 2 x (0) 1 x (0)	= 55 out of a possible 65pts = 85% agreed is was a good day	92%	95%	89% felt it was a good day
Did you enjoy the day?	88%	89%	100%	90% enjoyed the day
Did you learn something new?	92%	83%	65%	85% learnt something new
Valuable in improving what you do?	82%	85%	70%	82% felt it was of value
Should public bodies like the council do more to support Social Enterprise?	99%	95%	85%	95% felt social enterprise worth supporting
Do you think more people will support social enterprise after the festival?	82%	75%	70%	77% felt that now more support was likely
Should we repeat it?	95%	93%	100%	95% though we should repeat the festival

Very few ratings were of level 2 (which would be regarded as being a negative result) and none were of level 1. No-one consistently rated the day as below 3. We did not require contact or monitoring information so we cannot say if particular groups or sectors were more or less satisfied.

Comments about the morning conference:

Best things

- Good coverage of all aspects [of social enterprise].
- I found the networking and collaboration workshop useful. [Seeing] people coming in for the workshops [was] very inspiring.
- I think the workshops were really fantastic.
- Information and networking opportunity.
- Raising awareness and understanding [of social enterprise]
- Workshops, networking and the panel.
- Meeting such committed people.
- Hearing from the SE academic on the panel debate.
- The seminars in the morning were the best bit of the day

Could be better

- Information on grants and loans to take away
- More information on legal structures of SE's, advice on writing a business plan
- Toilets needed better signposting.
- More use of video
- More time to attend workshops. Workshops too noisy, short and unstructured
- [It was] hard to hear speakers, so manage it better or use a different room.
- Share the delegate list

Other comments

- Good place to engage with others of like mind.
- Definitely beneficial. I look forward to attending again in the future.
- Thanks, informative, enjoyable day.
- Please contact Business link NW - we are putting a SE champions team together to assist where we can.
- Really motivated me to think of ways we can be more financially sustainable.
- We'll know about the council's support by the end of the day!

Marketplace comments:

Best things

- Networking and Meeting other groups
- The weather helped everyone feel good.
- Diversity FM - they should go professional
- Good mix of organisations
- The number of organisations and people participating
- Friendly stallholders

Could be better

- Allocation of stall places beforehand. More tables available for stallholders.
- Needed a higher profile and better awareness about the day. More stalls, more promotion. Local adverts that it was happening.
- More social enterprises taking part.
- Information stall on what is social enterprise.
- Wish there were more young people involved.
- Helpers available when we arrived to set up.
- Poor access to toilet facilities
- We could have tried to be more interactive (planned our own stall better)

Other comments on the festival

- Too much reliance on email and online publicity. Use post and paper more.
- We want support from the council (as long as they don't spoil it!)
- Social enterprise really benefits our society.
- Our first venture into working in Lancaster, so a great way to start.
- It was great to meet people in a different setting on a beautiful day and see the wide range of different activities the sector is involved in.
- I attended the afternoon in market square and thoroughly enjoyed the event.
- It would have been good to see more waste-related groups there, but having invited all of LCRN's members I do not think there was anything else you could have done!
- More SE's exhibiting – maybe from the success of the day more will catch and get involved next time?
- As with any event like this, more involvement from more organisations, especially Health/Education Social Care commissioners
- Publicity leaflet was great but a bit late – also could have had newspaper articles to promote the event.
- It was an excellent day, all credit to the organisers. Thank you for organising the festival

Closing remarks from Jez Hall, festival coordinator.

I'd like to thank all the people that helped me. In particular Jo Williams from One Voice, and of course all the others who attended steering meetings and helped out on the day - too many to mention. I'm not going to repeat all the positive things about the festival.

The evaluations above speak for themselves. I would instead like to pick up on a few of the comments. I'd first like to acknowledge that the festival was very Lancaster based and probably we could do more in future to engage in Morecambe and rural areas.

Publicity: We did overall do a great job publicising the festival, but it's never enough.

For example we sent out repeated press releases before the day, but got little press coverage in response. Organising the brochure was hard work, as I had to get information in early, then chase people who were late, learn to use new technology and software and then get it then to the printers and out in time. I couldn't have done it without having Kelly Kane's support.

My role: As this was the first festival we can always learn about doing this type of thing better. On the one hand I think I controlled everything a bit too much, on the other it was a complex ambitious day so someone probably had to lead on it. I'm not sure I always got the balance right, and as it is the first event of this complexity that I had organised I had lots of learning to do myself. Particularly things like the legal requirements for the marketplace, and the work involved in putting the publicity together.

Too much to do: Though successful in the end, the evening in particular could have been better organised. It was the least successful part of the day, and this shows in the failure to get any evaluation forms back. Similarly to have had a person responsible for an information stall on the marketplace would have helped. This isn't anyone's fault but my own in not getting some-one else to lead on each part of the day. The morning really benefited from having Jo Williams and One Voice in such close support. Having a similar individual or organisation leading on each different part of the day would have helped reduce my workload and allowed me to be more strategic and effective.

Keeping the focus: The festival attempted to do many things, and on the whole succeeded wonderfully. Maybe we were too ambitious and tried to be all things to all people. Maybe we could have been focused. On the other hand I think we achieved a real splash, and hopefully it will lead to more and greater things.