Forest Research

Reaching New Audiences: Evaluation of engagement events for forestry businesses

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May 2016

The Research Agency of the Forestry Commission

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An appropriate citation for this report is:
Ambrose-Oji, B., 2016, Reaching New Audiences: Evaluation of engagement events for forestry businesses. Forest Research report to Forest Services, FC England, Bristol. 61pp.

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Executive Summary

1. Between 2014 and 2016 Forest Services undertook a series of interlinked engagement activities as part of the Woodlands Into Management (WIM) programme. This projects overarching objective is to get more woodlands into management by targeting the supply side of the forestry economy. To do this the events aimed to:

- Provide local businesses with information and knowledge about the possibilities for developing and expanding their enterprises
- Link the businesses with Leader, Countryside Productivity and LEP funding streams as appropriate to the scale and development objectives of their enterprise
- Establish new relationships between businesses and Forest Services, i.e. connecting with new customers not yet known to Area teams nor in receipt of forestry related capital grants
- Facilitate networking amongst businesses important to the local woodland and forest economy.

2. Four kinds of engagement events were included in the evaluation, namely: Pie and Pint introduction and networking events; Masterclass events looking at grant applications; follow-on business advice from a FACE consortium advisor; and machinery demonstrations.

3. The evaluation assessed the short term impacts of the engagement events, using mixed methods and evidence types, including:

- Event observations – a total of 12 Pie and Pint, Masterclass and machinery demonstrations events all around the country
- Area team evaluation forms – 385 completed by business participants on the day of the Pie and Pint and Masterclass events in 2015/16
- On-line survey - 178 valid responses from businesses answering the survey 4 weeks to 18 months after participation in Pie and Pint, Masterclass and machinery demonstration events
- Business interviews – 15 telephone interviews conducted 2-16 weeks after participation in the Pie and Pint and Masterclass events
- Assessment of costs and "value for money" - cost information connected with 39 events was collected by Area teams and used to calculate median and average costs of events per participant

4. At least 1720 businesses took part in the engagement events. The on-line survey suggested those who attended engagement events were: private woodland owners (22%), forestry contractors (14%), fuelwood processors (13%), forestry agents (11%) and farmers with woodland (8%). The on-line survey showed 10% of participants had never had any previous contact with FS, and a further 52% had only ever had infrequent contact.

5. The estimated cost of events per participant using the upper and lower average and median values were as follows:

- Pie and Pint events range between £201.43 - £203 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £93.75 - £120.97 without
- Masterclass events range between £221.44 – £243.46 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £70.74- £165.58 without
- Machinery demonstrations range between £165.71 – £186.02 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £50.18- £96.04 without

6. The on-line survey illustrated that businesses attended the engagement events for different reasons: 8% of the sample said they came to the events to meet other people and business like themselves; 31% said they were definitely at the engagement event because of their business objectives; 34% said they attended because they were looking for a general level of advice or to update their knowledge. Event evaluations showed that these figures varied by Area and by event. Pie and Pint events were introductory, so an average of just 22% of participants at Pie and Pint events in the Southwest Area had a specific business project in mind; this contrasted with 70% of those participating in Masterclasses in East and East Midlands having a specific project they wanted to progress.

7. Business objectives were related to growing a commercial business (33% of on-line survey responses) or bringing more woodland into active management (13% of on-line survey responses) both of which relied on mobilising timber.

8. Qualitative data demonstrated the barriers and challenges small businesses experience realising these objectives. These included barriers to productivity such as: costs of developing woodland access and storage facilities for logs and millable/milled timber; availability and cost of appropriate small extractors, tractors, trailers and equipment such as log splitters and chippers; capital and cash flow, e.g. strategies for business growth in a market which is seasonal and returns small margins; advice on when and how to scale up a microbusiness without exposing the business to high risk; how to manage VAT registration and sustainable small business growth; assessment and penetration of alternative markets for timber to firewood, i.e. advice on what products other than firewood could be marketed from specific tree species and how/where to sell.

9. Businesses indicated that the five most frequently used sources of business advice are: Forestry Commission (43% of the sample), other woodland owners (23% of the sample), forestry agents and consultants (22% of the sample), the Royal Forestry Society (16%) and CONFOR (13%).

10. Of all the events and interactions respondents were asked about, face to face contact with FC staff was rated most highly with 26% of respondents who interacted in this way describing the knowledge they gained as “absolutely critical” to their business decision making. Looking at just the business engagement events: the FACE advice ranks most highly with 30% of responses ranking the advice given as “really valuable” and 13% as “absolutely critical”; the scores for Masterclasses were similar with 28% of responses ranking the advice given as “really valuable” and 12.5% as “absolutely critical”.

11. Businesses explained that it was attendance and participation in a range of different interactions that influenced their decision making. It was rarely one single event. The importance of the "decision making journey" facilitated by the events series is highlighted. Businesses do not make a clear distinction between the different events and interaction opportunities for offered by Forest Services, so experiences at one venue or with one aspect of Forest Services functions, may influence uptake of other opportunities.

12. The value of the networking facilitated by the engagement events was highlighted by businesses. Around 25% of respondents said they had met important new business contacts as a direct consequence of the events. Some businesses attributed the discovery of new business opportunities and the acquisition of new contracts to these connections.

13. The on-line survey showed that between 1-18 businesses – depending on the engagement event - went on to do something different or new as a direct consequence of taking part in an engagement event. Overall that represents about 15% of the total sample. FACE advisors and face-to-face interactions with FC staff had the most catalytic impact with 43% and 50% of respondents respectively reporting they did something different as a consequence of those interactions.

14. The on-line survey tracked impacts brought about as a consequence of participation in the specific engagement events that are the subject of this evaluation namely:

- The local economy

  11 businesses (9% of sample) said they had gone on to employ more people

  10 businesses (8% of sample) said they had won new contracts to manage additional woodland

- Business efficiency and income

  17 businesses (14% of sample) said they had increased their business income

  11 businesses (9% of sample) said they had reduced their operating costs

  16 businesses (13% of sample) said they had increased their operating efficiency

- Increased woodland management

  15 businesses (12% of sample) said they had increased timber volumes

  18 businesses (15% of sample) said they had managed more woodland

15. Conclusions. The engagement events met their objectives in terms of value for money criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The evidence from businesses suggests the events: attracted new customers; were rated as useful; facilitated knowledge acquisition and the building of business networks; promoted changes to business behaviour; and had some perceived impact on the efficiency, productivity and amount of woodland mobilised and woodland managed. The Forestry Commission continues to be valued as the government specialist in forestry and forestry or woodland businesses.

Reaching New Audiences: An evaluation of engagement events for forestry businesses

1. Introduction

The remit of the Forestry Commission England has broadened in recent years: Forest Services (FS) interest is in supporting owners to realise multifunctional woodland management with benefits for ecology, society and economy. One of FS's recent work streams has been to enable economic growth and increase employment in the forestry sector[1].

Between 2014 and 2016 Forest Services undertook a series of interlinked engagement activities as part of the Woodlands Into Management (WIM) programme. The goal of these engagement activities was to contribute to achieving the Government policy aspiration to increase the amount of woodland under active management to 66% by 2018, but also to stimulate the local woodland/timber-based economy, and increase the amount of timber coming to market.

The engagement activities were specifically designed for forestry microenterprises and SMEs, including timber processors and saw millers, forestry contractors, and owner-producer businesses. The aim of the events was to:

- Provide local businesses with information and knowledge about the possibilities for developing and expanding their enterprises
- Link the businesses with Leader, Countryside Productivity and LEP funding streams as appropriate to the scale and development objectives of their enterprise
- Establish new relationships between businesses and Forest Services, i.e. connecting with new customers not yet known to Area teams nor in receipt of forestry related capital grants
- Facilitate networking amongst businesses important to the local woodland and forest economy.

[1] Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement, Defra, January 2013

The theory of change applied was that engagement events would support some businesses into increased economic activity, and any activity stimulated by grants for new equipment or other eligible business requirements would result in an increase to the area of woodland being actively managed.

The engagement consisted of four different events namely:

1. a series of events for **'first contact' communication with businesses**, led by Area teams, in the form of breakfast briefings and **'pie and pint' evenings**. These events explained the current grant landscape and available business support, and showcased the business development journey of some successful local grant recipients.
2. a series of **application masterclasses** led by Area teams and partner organisations (e.g. LEADER[2] reps and FACE[3] advisors providing detailed information about grant requirements and the grant application process for businesses considering grant uptake. The focus was on capital grants related to forestry that were open or expected to be open and available to businesses at or close to the time of the masterclass.
3. two local and two national scale **demonstrations of small forestry machinery**, conducted by FC Technical Development showcasing the kind of equipment eligible for grant and likely to improve business efficiency and productivity
4. the provision of **focused and specific business and technical advice** provided under contract by the **FACE consortium**.

Additional actions ensured interested businesses continued to receive 'light touch' support from FS Area teams, e.g. email alerts, newsletters with information about available grants and supporting events, invitation to events, access to online content, provision of information and technical materials e.g. leaflets and case study examples.

2. Evaluation objectives and method

2.1. Methodological limitations and caveats

The evaluation was commissioned to assess the impact of the engagement events listed above. Traditional evaluations measure change from a baseline position to a point post-intervention when the expected or desired objectives, i.e. the change, should have been achieved. However, in the case of business support activities which are designed to provide knowledge and information to aide business decision making, measurable changes may take months or years to manifest after the point of engagement with a business. In addition assessment of impact brought about by knowledge acquisition is notoriously

[2] www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-development-programme-for-england-leader-funding
[3] http://forestryace.eu/

difficult to assess as it where it is unlikely interventions such as the FS events are the only factor that has changed business behaviour. It was beyond the scope of the evaluation, within the time period and resources available, to undertake an evaluation that included a full economic assessment of the costs and benefits of the events programme, or estimates of economic multipliers within the local economy, or suggest the area of woodland brought into active management.

This evaluation has therefore used a mixed methods approach to assess business reaction to the engagement events, to understand more about the "business journey" that may have been made through engagement with the programme, and to establish what the short and medium term outcomes of the engagement events were from the businesses perspective.

2.2. Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were:

1. To understand more about the nature of the range of business that took part in the business support events, i.e. their business context, challenges and issues around actions that support woodland management, the sources of business advice they normally use, what business support they are looking for
2. To assess how far the engagement events met their objectives
3. To explore any significant changes brought about as a direct consequence of participation in the business support events, to include: attitudes, perceptions, level of knowledge, intention to act, implemented actions
4. To calculate the costs and the value for money of the business support events, and to assess the cost per participant against an assessment of reported influence.

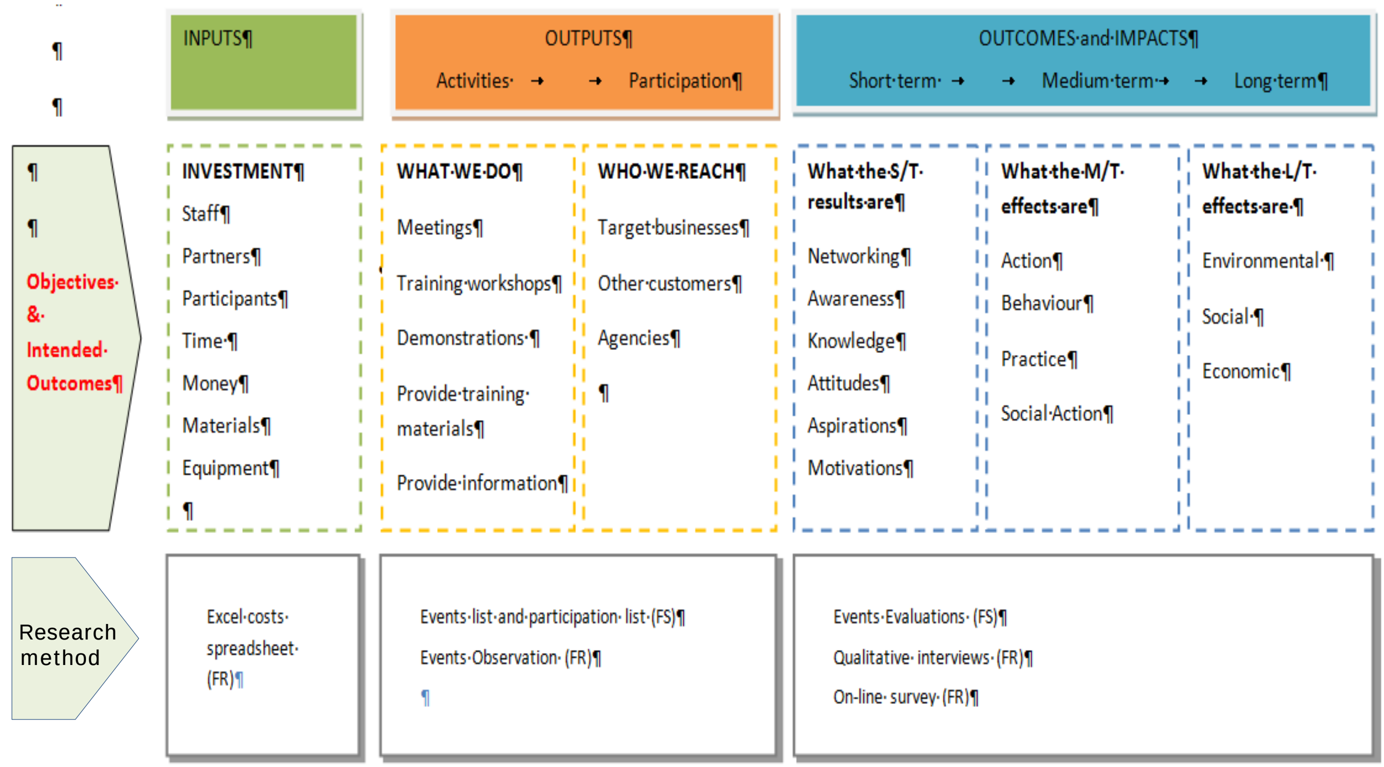
2.3. Method

Figure 1 shows the Evaluation Framework defining the different elements of the evaluation, what was to be "measured", and which research tool would be used to record data.

- "Inputs" include all the investment items at full economic cost to provide a measure of cost effectiveness or value for money.
- "Outputs" included details of the events themselves and records of which businesses took part in them, as well as observations of the events across the FS Areas.
- "Outcomes and Impacts" concentrated on short and medium outcomes, using i. Area partnership team's event evaluation forms, ii. a series of qualitative interviews and iii. an on-line questionnaire to assess changes to business owners knowledge, awareness, attitudes, or any actual changes to their behaviour or business practice.

A detailed description of each research method is provided in the sub-sections which follow below.

Figure 1. Evaluation framework used in the assessment of engagement events



2.3.1. Cost effectiveness - Value for money assessment

Government Guidance stresses the value for money realised by projects and programmes as a key issue when evaluating public sector interventions. Cost effectiveness relies on collecting the following data:

- total public spend on events/actions
- total costs of staff time used in development, administration, delivery and all other tasks associated with the intervention
- consumable and other inputs
- investment materials (including software development and capital equipment)
- user (i.e. forestry businesses attending events) inputs and time.

However, cost effectiveness is difficult to assess in projects and programmes, such as the FS engagement events, that have multiple objectives, where attribution of impact is not certain (i.e. where we can not be sure that the FS events are the only factor that has changed business behaviour), and where measures of achievement may not be realised within the evaluation period.

Government Guidance[4] and the National Audit Office[5] suggest a complimentary method is a qualitative Value for Money (VfM) assessment which uses stakeholder ranks or scores against three aspects of an intervention package, i.e.:

- Economy and Relevance – did the intervention meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries at the best possible price?
- Effectiveness – did the intervention actually prompt changes?
- Efficiency – was the intervention timely, was it a good use of beneficiary time and effort?

The cost effectiveness method used in this evaluation combined both techniques.

FS Area teams were provided with an EXCEL template (see Annex 1) which they recorded the costs of:

- **FC staff time** used to develop, organise, deliver and follow-up on the engagement events. Staff time was calculated using standard FCF day rates for different Pay Bands.
- **Partner time** (includes for example FACE advisors, LEADER and LEP representatives) used to develop, organise, deliver and follow-up on the engagement events. Contracted day rates were used to value time.
- **Material** costs (e.g. venue hire, catering, printing)
- **Travel and subsistence** costs for FC staff and partners actual costs and mileage at the standard £0.45 were applied
- **Other** miscellaneous costs
- **Time and travel costs incurred by businesses** attending the events. Participants time was costed at £13.29 the average hourly wage for the UK including (Office National Statistics), with an average travel distance for all participants applied at the standard £0.45

Area teams were asked to included data for all 2014, 2015 and 2016 events. No adjustments were made for annual differences, e.g. applying a rate of inflation.

The data were then collated, and a cost per participant calculated using two measures of central tendency, average and median values. The median is a better measure than the average where the sample is small, and if the values in the sample are skewed, or there are significant outliers, i.e. very small or very large measures. The costing data per engagement event is a small sample with a very wide range of values by Area: Therefore the median is an appropriate measure. The arithmetic average and median values were calculated for the total cost per participant, as well as the total cost per participant excluding the costs to businesses of their time and travel.

[4] See for example: HM Treasury Magenta Book https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book and Green Book https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-andevaluation-in-central-governent,
[5] See for example: National Audit Office https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/general-principles/value-for-money/assessing-value-for-money/

The resulting average/median cost per participant by event type, was then compared with the results of the on-line questionnaire and interviews with businesses which asked respondents about the importance/relevance of the different engagement events, and the effectiveness in terms of which events actually had any influence and led to tangible change. This provided an assessment of the value for money of the events.

2.3.2. Events observation

Evaluators visited a total of 12 events: one pie and pint event, and one masterclass in each Area, as well as two machinery demonstrations. The event observations were designed to:

- Observe the consistency of messaging across events in different Areas
- Understand better the characteristics of the local business audience at the events
- Understand any specific local and Area-based differences to the business context
- Provide an opportunity to mix with business participants informally to learn more about their business needs and motivations for attending events
- Recruit businesses willing to take part in a research interview.

A record of the events attended is included as Annex 2, and the event observation recording sheet is included as Annex 3.

2.3.3. FS Area teams events evaluations

Area teams conducted their own evaluation of 2015/16 events. At the end of every meeting business attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form before leaving the venue. These event evaluations asked businesses about their opinions of the event and any suggested improvements. Businesses were also asked about whether they had business projects in mind, and their intentions to act on what they had learnt during the meeting. Table 1 shows the size and Area coverage of the sample. An example Area team evaluation form is included as Annex 4.

Table 1. Numbers of event attendees and returned evaluation forms for 2015/16 events

	Area					TOTAL
	YNE	NWWM	EEM	SW	SE	
Attendees						
Pie and pint	40	78	66	279	no data	463
Masterclass	22	31	61	-	no data	114
Machinery demonstration	127	467	-	85	no data	85
TOTAL	**62**	**109**	**127**	**364**	**0**	**662**
Evaluation sheets returned						
Pie and pint	31	77	60	108	no data	385
Masterclass	19	31	59	-	no data	109
Machinery demonstration	no data	no data	-	no data	no data	0
TOTAL	**50**	**108**	**119**	**108**	**0**	**385**

Source: Area team records collated by CAM

2.3.4. Interviews with business owners

Interviews with business owners were undertaken to explore:

- The type and scale of business and the business context
- Specific business barriers / challenges experienced around business development and active management of woodlands
- Sources of business advice and support currently used (i.e. business and woodland management – not just FC provided)
- Understanding motivations for taking part in the engagement event and how this linked to the business model and business aspirations
- Any significant change(s) brought about by attendance at the engagement event, including: attitudes, perceptions, level of knowledge, intention to act, and actual actions.

The interview schedule is included as Annex 5. The interviews were conducted over the phone between 2 and 16 weeks after the respondent had attended the engagement event. This was done to provide time for any short term influences and actions to emerge. Each interview lasted between 40-80 minutes. The interview was recorded digitally and summary transcripts prepared. Analysis of the transcripts looked for emerging themes, as well as differences and similarities in the responses between businesses, Areas and the types of events attended.

The sample

The sampling approach was to include:

- the wide diversity of forestry businesses representative of those taking part in events across the country
- new business entrants to forestry
- new customers to FS.

The sampling frame was constructed by recruiting businesses through initial contact at the events visited by the evaluators: the aim was to recruit 2-4 businesses in each Area. This gave a potential England-wide sample of between 10-20 interviewees who had attended events in 2015/16. In addition, Area teams were asked for the contact details of between 2-5 businesses that took part in events during 2014. This recruitment process created a list of 35 business owners who said they were willing to be interviewed. Including the two cohorts in the sample was designed to capture any short term and medium term impacts of the events.

Businesses were then contacted by email and or by phone to arrange a date for telephone interview. In the case of the 2015/16 cohort interviews were undertaken between one and three months after attendance at the event. Allowing for a period of time to pass after event attendance meant that any short term impacts in terms of actual attitudinal change or behaviour change or actions amongst businesses would be picked up. It also allowed businesses a period of reflection about their experiences and opinions of the event/s they attended.

Of the 35 businesses recruited interviews were achieved with 15 in total: 13 engaged in 2015/16 events and 2 from 2014 events. There were 3 new customers in the sample. The characteristics and Area spread of the sample is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. FS Area coverage and type of businesses interviewed

Type of business	Area				Grand Total
	EEM	NWWM	SEL	SW	
Agent/consultant - SME				1	1
Arboriculturalist	1*	1			2
Community forester			1		1
Contractor - SME			2		2
Development Officer, Trust	1				1
Estate forester/manager	2				2
Forestry consultant - microenterprise		1			1
Fuelwood processor and supplier - microenterprise		1*			1
Ranger, Charity			1		1
Sawmill - microenterprise	1*				1
Woodland owner / contractor - microenterprise	1			1	2
Grand Total	6	3	4	2	15

EEM = East and East Midlands, NWWM = North West and West Midlands, SEL = South East and London, SW = South West, YNE = Yorkshire and North East

* indicates a new customer

2.3.5. On-line survey of businesses participating in events

An on-line survey was designed to ask engagement event participants more about their:

- business and how it related to woodland management and timber mobilisation,
- business objectives and motivations
- attendance at the engagement events
- other events and sources of advice businesses used
- the relative value of the events compared with other sources of business advice
- actions and changes brought about by attendance at engagement event.

Inclusion of questions about other sources of advice and attendance at other events or opportunities to engage with services or sources of advice are important when assessing attribution to the FS events, i.e. the degree of impact to any changes that can be attributed to the FS events rather than other sources of advice available at the time.

A copy of the survey is included as Annex 7. The survey was open from October 2015 until end of April 2016. Recruitment to the survey was through emails sent directly from the

Area teams to their list of event participants and newsletter database, as well as being circulated by the RFS in their April newsletter. Participation was encouraged by offering a £100 voucher to respondents.

A total of 224 responses were given, of which 178 were valid. Valid responses were those that "qualified" i.e. were provided by people who actually took part in the events. Of the 178 responses there were 56 partial responses. This was because not all respondents answered all questions. This is not unusual in social surveys, it does not invalidate the overall sample, but means that the sample size varies question by question. A note of the sample size is given for each of the results reported.

An accurate figure for the total number of participants attending events over the three years is not available. A recent assessment by Area teams put the total number of participants in all the 2014-2016 engagement events between 1900-2000[6].

The sample size therefore ranges between 12% and 9%.

The survey data were exported into EXCEL, cleaned and coded, and analysed using the pivot table function to create descriptive summaries.

3. What happened and who came?

The following section explores the "Inputs" and the "Outputs" elements of the Evaluation Framework.

3.1.1. Event attendance

The number of participants by Area attending events is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of businesses attending different engagement events 2014-2016

Engagement event 2014-2016	Number of participants by Area					
	SW (15/16 only)	NWWM	YNE (15/16 only)	EEM	SEL	TOTAL
Breakfast briefing	NA	NA	NA	NA	No data	**0**
Pie and Pint	279	308	48	213	No data	**848**
Application Masterclass	20	41	22	52	No data	**135**
Machinery demonstration	85[1]	467	127	58	No data	**737**
TOTAL	**384**	**816**	**197**	**323**	**0**	**1720**

[1] there was no accounting for this event in the financial analysis, because cost data for the machinery demonstration was not available at the time

Source: Area teams attendance record sheets collated by CAM and event costs records sent by Area teams

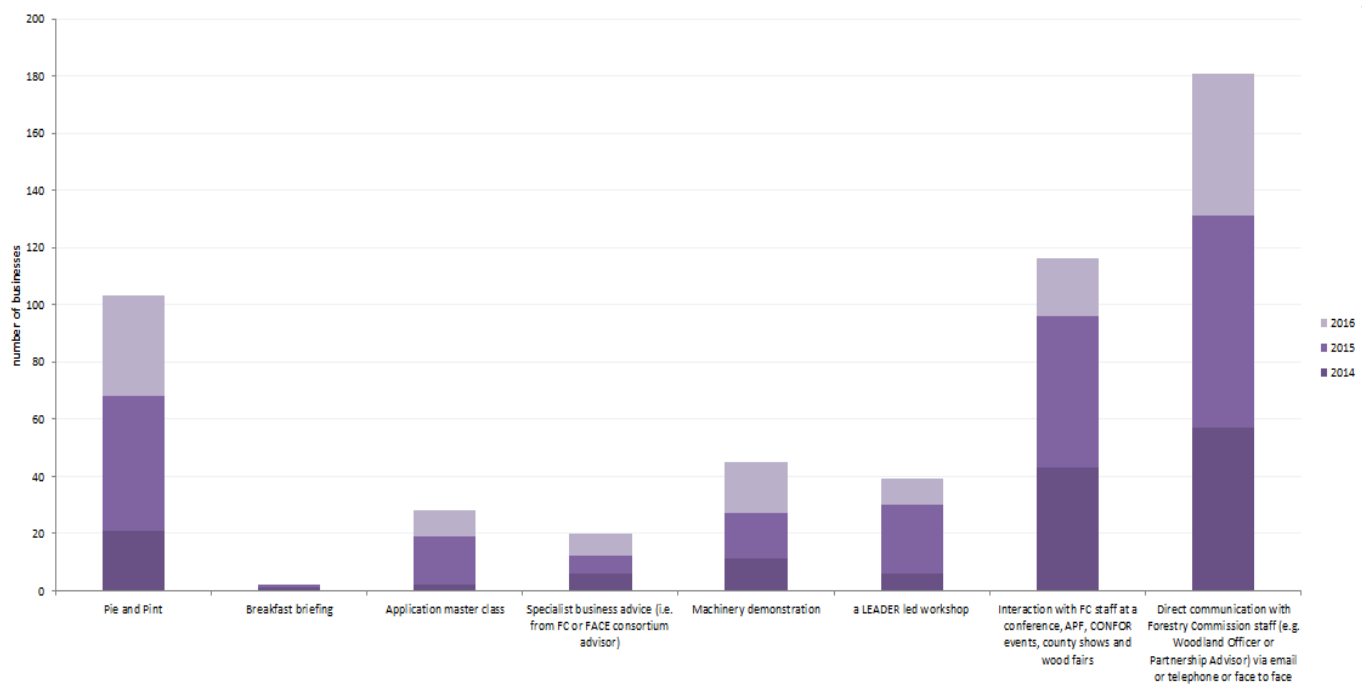
[6] Interim Paper to FS Board "Analysis of Forestry Business Support" 2014/15

The table shows that at least 1720 participants attended the events. Data for events held in 2014 in South West (SW), Yorkshire and North East (YNE) Areas were not available. Data for any of the events held in South East and London (SEL) were not available.

The on-line survey summarised the range of events and interactions businesses in the sample had taken part in over 2014-2016. Figure 2 demonstrates the relative importance (i.e. frequency of engagement) of the events compared with other interaction opportunities. What is highlighted here is:

- businesses use a combination of events and other interactions as part of their business practice
- the importance of business interactions with FS staff at venues such as woodland and forestry shows, and direct communication through email, telephone etc.

Figure 2. Business attendance at different engagement events and interaction opportunities (n=178)



Source: On-line survey

NB. The LEADER events were follow-on workshops and events organised and led by LEADER groups as part of their grant application processes

The on-line survey data revealed that:

- 38% of businesses attended more than one event over the course of one year or two years
- this was highest amongst new businesses less than 3 years old, with 37% attending two events or more

- and lowest amongst the most established businesses over 10 years old with 27% of attending more than one engagement event.

Looking at the additional interaction opportunities with FS and partner staff (i.e. interaction at other events or through direct communication):

- 83% of respondents in the on-line survey engaged with FS staff in these ways as well as taking part in the events
- Many younger businesses engaged with FS staff in multiple ways: 62% of business less than 3 years old[7] and 67% of businesses under 5 years old[8], benefited from these forms of contact as well as participating in the engagement events
- This compares with 37% of businesses between 5-10 years and 47% of businesses over 10 years old who engaged with FS staff in multiple ways as well as taking part in the engagement events.

This data presents a clear picture of individual businesses using more than one event or interaction opportunity to facilitate their decision making. This can be understood as the development of a "business journey" where engagement varies and builds over time.

3.1.2. Characteristics of the businesses attending engagement events

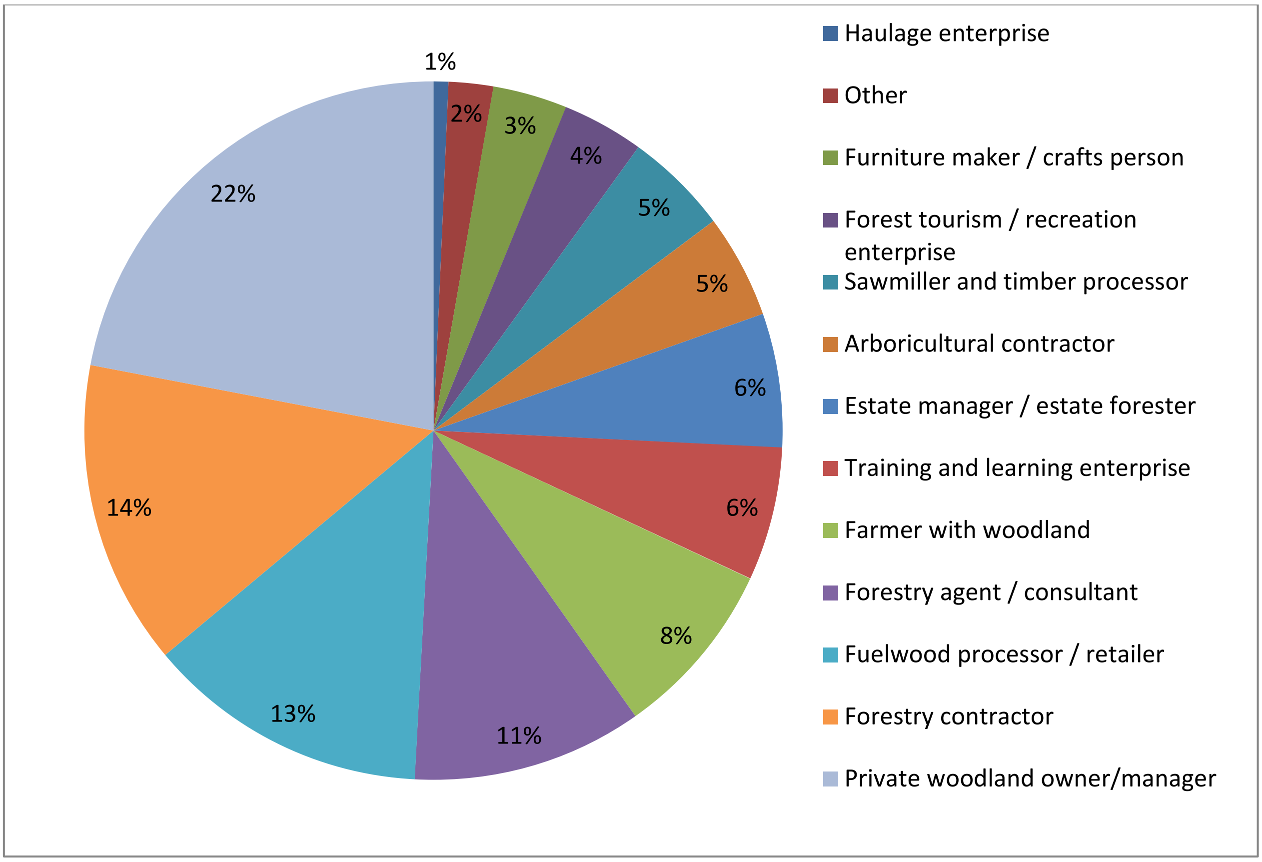
The on-line survey provides description of businesses by type and other characteristics. Figure 3 shows that, in the main, those who attended engagement events were: private woodland owners (22%), forestry contractors (14%), fuelwood processors (13%), forestry agents (11%) and farmers with woodland (8%). However, this picture ignores some of the complexity: The business interviews and event observations evidenced many businesses with mixed business model, for example contracting and arboriculture businesses that also sold training services and processed firewood for retail sales.

The majority of those businesses attending engagement events were well established (46% were 10 years old or more), with a smaller number of newer entrants (around 14% of enterprises were less than 3 years old). Most of the businesses were single person operators, or a couple, with no employees (around 42% of the sample) or had fewer than 10 employees (41% of the sample), with an annual turnover of less than £50k (48% of the sample).

Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6 below summarise this graphically.

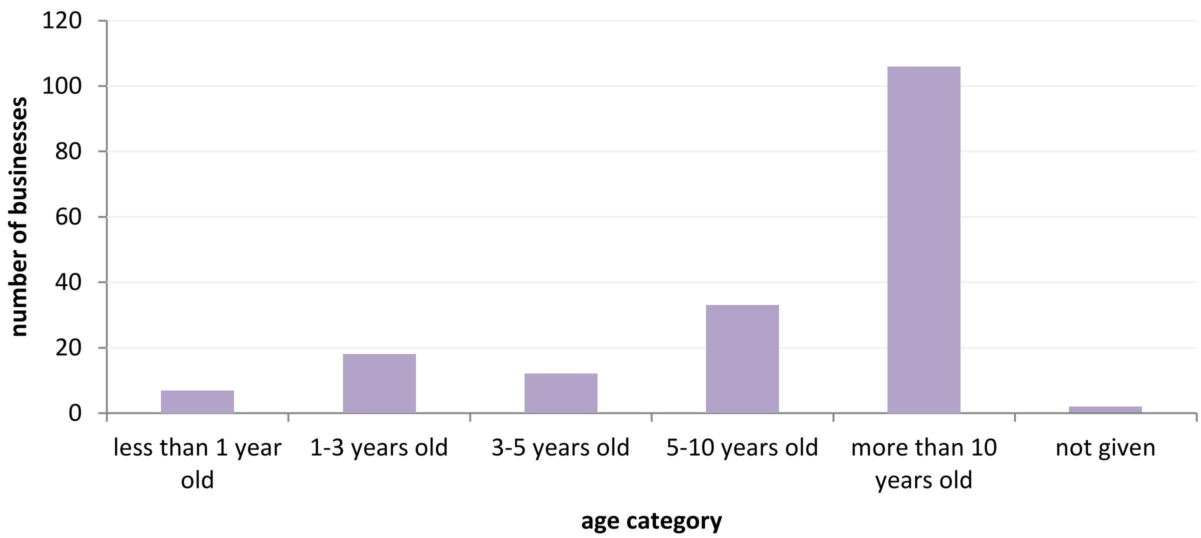
[7] Just 2.2% of woodland owners/managers in the sample have businesses less than 3 years old
[8] Just 6.7% of woodland owners/managers in the sample have businesses less than 5 years old

Figure 3. Type of business attending engagement events 2014-2016 (n=178)



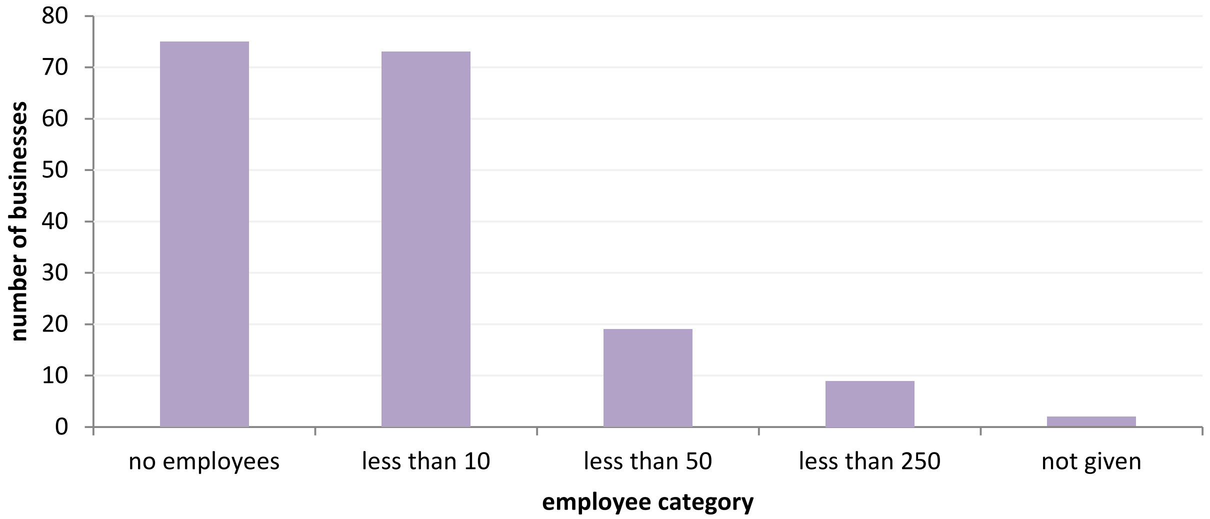
Source: On-line survey

Figure 4. Age of business attending engagement events 2014-2016 (n=178)



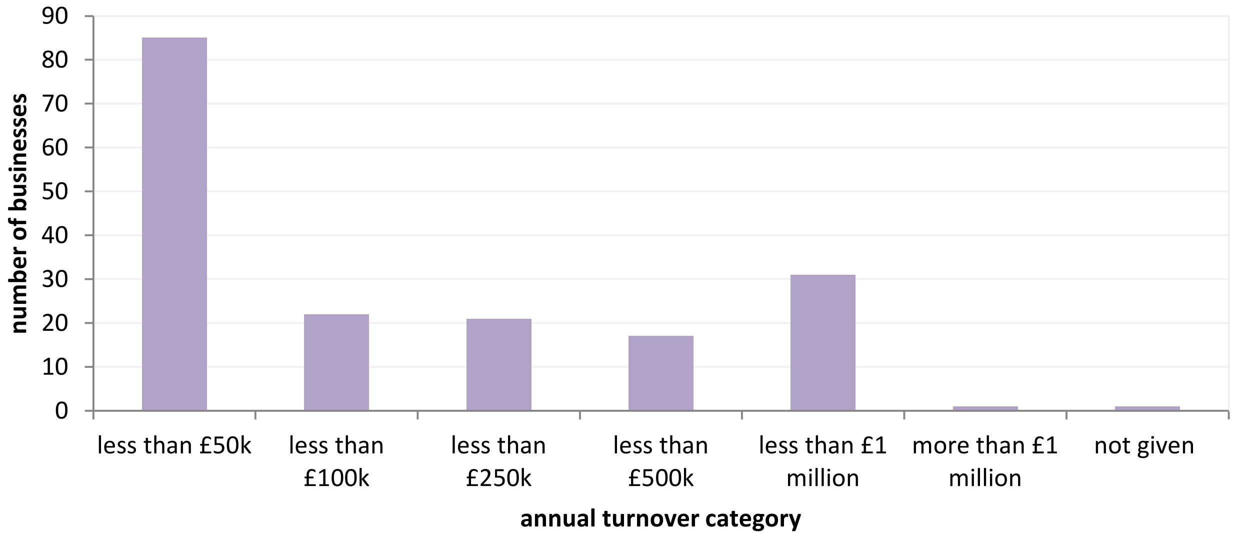
Source: On-line survey

Figure 5. Number of employees in business attending engagement events 2014-2016 (n=178)



Source: On-line survey

Figure 6. Annual turnover of business attending engagement events 2014-2016 (n=178)



Source: On-line survey

The on-line survey showed that 87% of the businesses had some influence on the management of woodland, with just 13% of those businesses who attended engagement events not operating in woodland themselves. This included for example, timber processors and saw millers.

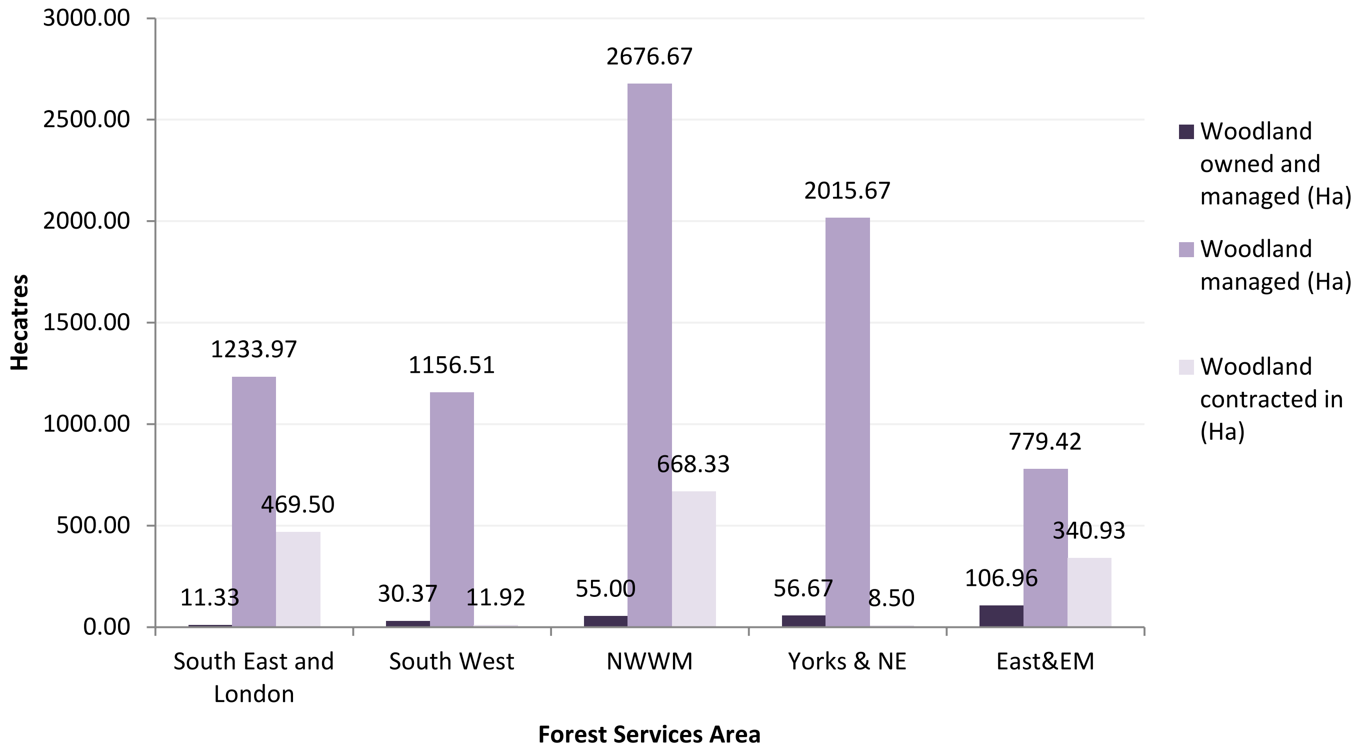
The average area of woodland that businesses had influence over varied according to the business and ownership model. Of those businesses responding to the on-line survey who:

- owned and managed their own woodlands, the average woodland area was 61.7 Ha

- for those managing woodland on behalf of owners, the average area they operated over was 585.3 Ha
- and for those contracted to undertake specific operations the average area was 383.4 Ha.

Figure 7 shows the same data disaggregated by FS Area. There are regional differences: the average area of woodland managed for owners by businesses in North West and West Midlands and Yorkshire and the North East is considerably larger than in other Areas; in the South West, Yorkshire and North East the average area of woodland contractors work across is very small, and even smaller compared to that of woodland owner/managers.

Figure 7. Average area of woodland that businesses operate in, across FS Areas (n=155)



Source: On-line survey

3.1.3. Reaching new customers

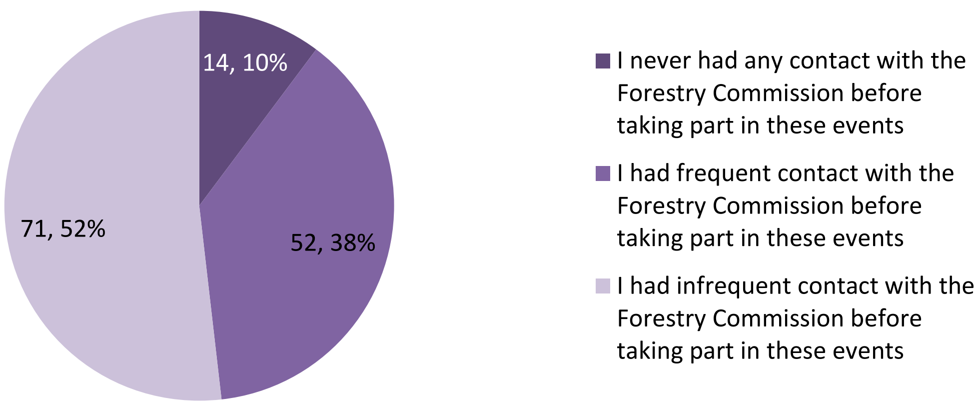
A recent assessment of by the Area teams estimated that 1060 participants or 57% of those at the engagement events were new customers to FS: "New" was defined as businesses with no previous *or recent engagement* with FS through grants or regulations work[9].

[9] Interim Paper to FS Board "Analysis of Forestry Business Support" 2014/15

The on-line survey provides a different measure of reach to new customers, across the three years, and across Areas. As Figure 8 illustrates, around 10% of event participants were new customers, in this case defined as businesses that said they had **never** had any kind of contact with the Forestry Commission before. The data showed half of these were businesses less than 3 years old.

To make an equivalent comparison with the FS definition of new customer means taking into account businesses that had **no recent** engagement with FS as well as those who never had any contact with the FC. In this case the online survey shows that 62% of businesses might be classed as "new customers", i.e. the participants who had had no previous contact, as well as those having infrequent contact with the Forestry Commission.

Figure 8. Number of new customers (n=137)



Source: On-line survey

Evidence from the business interviews and the event observations tells us more about who the new customers and the new entrants to forestry were. Those encountered by the evaluators were:

- New graduates of land-based degrees in professional roles, e.g. land agents and forestry consultants
- Young farmers diversifying the farms income portfolio
- Estate managers and estate foresters
- Arboriculturalists moving into forestry work.

3.1.4. Communication, information dissemination and networking

FS recruiting businesses to the events

Evidence collected through the interviews and at the events suggested that the communication methods FS used to contact businesses influenced who came to the engagement events. Area teams used different methods to advertise and promote the events. Email contact was the main communication route, and this relied on up-to date databases for example, in 2014 the EEM team pulled together a database of some 500 businesses which came from contacts Woodland Officers had, and an internet search of businesses across each county. Business interviewees listed a range of communication routes that had brought them to the events they attended:

- The majority of existing customers were alerted by word of mouth, or through direct email contact from Area teams.
- A smaller number of existing and the majority of new customers mentioned promotion by other organisations and FS partners, for example: one new customer in EEM Area mentioned the Woodland Communication Day organised by the Norfolk & Suffolk Woodland Working group; an existing customer in EEM Area the RFS newsletter. A number of new customers in SW Area heard about events through and NFU and CLA mailings, and one in SEL through an arboriculture forum.
- Other new customers were recruited through direct contact with FS staff at wood and forestry fairs and shows.

Dissemination of information and messaging

Evaluator observations of the Pie and Pint and Masterclass events over the country evidenced a very strong consistency in messaging and the type of information provided to businesses.

- The Pie and Pint and Masterclass events provided clear **explanations about the range and structure of grants** related for forestry and forestry businesses, but focused attention on those available at that time, i.e. LEADER and depending on Area the LEP growth programme.
- The key message was that available grants now and in the future would **emphasise business development, productivity, and increasing employment**.
- All Area teams **emphasised the degree of support available to business** during the business planning, and grant application process, including facilities such as email lists for national alerts about grant opportunities, signposting websites, etc.
- Some of the Area teams brought along additional Forestry Commission branded resources for businesses, e.g. short guides explaining different aspects of woodland management

Questions and concerns raised by businesses

One objective of the event observations was to assess whether there were any particular trends in terms of business views and attitudes to the conduct of the events and the information provided. What emerged were a common set of queries and concerns related to:

- The time required to apply for grants and the time taken between grant application submission and notification of success/failure is relatively demanding for small businesses and can disrupt normal business planning and decision making

- Grant payment intervals and the system of payment in arrears which requires businesses to finance in advance acts as a major barrier to microbusinesses and SMEs
- Worries about sanctions and grant repayments if businesses were not able to deliver the anticipated outputs
- The difficulties of creating realistic financial projections because of the nature of the forestry sector and the uncertainties about market evolution
- Fears about the grant application process through LEADER groups and expectations that businesses would present their application to a community audience for voting, and whether this was a fair process and just how time consuming it would be for applicants
- There were also a whole host of questions about forestry grants and processes which were not the explicit focus of the events, for example, questions about Countryside Stewardship grants and support for the preparation of woodland management plans.

Networking

The Pie and Pint and Masterclass events followed the same format across the Areas. Time was built in for participants to circulate and meet each other as well as have the chance to meet FS staff and partners. The only variation that might have affected the effectiveness of this part of the meeting programme was the layout of the venues, some of which lent themselves more easily than others to this kind of networking activity. Evaluators recognised the convivial atmosphere of the introductory Pie and Pint events as being pivotal encouraging businesses to chat to each other. In the case of the Masterclass events, building in the chance for participants to work together on workshop exercises and grant application examples fulfilled a valuable function building links between businesses.

3.1.5. Costs of events

Detailed table of costs for the engagement events in four of five FS Areas is provided below in Table 5.

It is emphasised that these costs are not the financial costs, i.e. the cash money spent. The costs presented here are an assessment of the full value of the inputs including FS staff, partner and business time. Actual and estimated costs were included in the calculations. The calculation of costs is explained further in Annex 1. The value of people's time was the main cost, so how this time was accounted for is important. In some cases the time was covered in real cash terms so actual costs were counted, e.g. partner costs paid for by the FACE contract, but in the case of businesses attendee time was based on an estimated travel attendance time and an average wage rate that assumed travel to the business events was classified as working time.

The costings in Table 5 illustrate the significant influence that staff costs have on the total costs of events. This is particularly true where FS teams involved senior staff from higher pay bands, or partners working at market day rates. Valuing the costs to businesses of their time and travel adds a significant cost element to all of the engagement events.

- The estimated cost of machinery demonstrations ranged between £165.71 – £186.02 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £50.18-£96.04 without

Table 4 presents a set of average and median costs per participant, representing a "cost of support" per business, by event type. The figures are calculated in two ways, as an average and as a median cost, remembering that the median may be the most representative value. The figures are presented three ways, i.e. to show:

i. Full cost per participant

ii. Cost per participant excluding the estimates of costs to businesses

iii. Cost per participant excluding the estimates of costs to businesses and to partners

Regardless of measure used the Pie and Pint and Masterclass are the most costly per participant, and the machinery demonstrations were the least costly event per participant. Using the upper and lower average and median values we can see that:

- The estimated cost of Pie and Pint events ranges between £201.43 - £203 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £93.75 - £120.97 without
- The estimated cost of Masterclass events ranges between £221.44 – £243.46 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £70.74-£165.58 without
- The estimated cost of machinery demonstrations ranged between £165.71 – £186.02 per participant when including costs to businesses and partners, and between £50.18-£96.04 without

Table 4. Comparative costs of engagement events per participant

Event	Average cost per participant	Average cost per participant excluding costs to businesses but including partner costs	Average cost per participant excluding costs to businesses and to partners
Pie and Pint	£203.00	£120.97	£96.69
Masterclass	£243.46	£165.58	£70.74
Machine demo	£186.02	£96.04	£86.94
Event	**Median cost per participant**	**Median cost per participant excluding costs to businesses but including partner costs**	**Median cost per participant excluding costs to businesses and to partners**
Pie and Pint	£201.43	£116.98	£93.75
Masterclass	£221.44	£156.77	£72.96
Machine demo	£165.71	£50.18	£50.18

Table 5. Cost of the engagement events in South West, East and East Midlands, North West and West Midlands, and Yorks and North East Areas

Area	Year	Event	FC staff time	Partner time	Materials	T&S FC and partners	Other costs	Business attendees time and travel	Total cost	Participant numbers	Cost per participant	Cost per participant excl. costs to businesses	Cost per participant excl. costs to partners & businesses
SW	15/16	Pie and pints	7,429.80	4,500.00	2,934.00	1,676.45	-	22,306.05	38,846.30	279	139.23	59.28	43.16
SW	15/16	Masterclass	446.06	1,350.00	148.00	181.50	-	1,599.00	3,724.56	20	186.23	106.28	38.78
EEM	15/16	Pie and pints	12,382.10	4,000.00	1,869.63	2,311.20	114.43	8,983.95	29,661.31	101	293.68	204.73	165.12
EEM	15/16	Masterclass	2,841.38	7,500.00	784.00	988.65	495.00	5,316.48	17,925.51	52	344.72	242.48	98.25
EEM	14/15	Pie and pints	15,238.52	-	1,992.60	1,635.75	189.00	9,962.40	29,018.27	112	259.09	170.14	170.14
EEM	14/15	Machine demo	1,278.82	-	824.77	806.85	-	6,700.70	9,611.14	58	165.71	50.18	50.18
NWWM	15/16	Pie and pints	2,395.64	3,000.00	1,671.10	336.90	-	9,274.20	16,677.84	116	143.77	63.82	37.96
NWWM	15/16	Masterclass	1,829.56	2,400.00	199.60	342.00	-	3,277.95	8,049.11	41	196.32	116.37	57.83
NWWM	14/15	Pie and pints	1,786.76	2,700.00	1,660.00	281.10	-	15,158.40	21,586.26	192	112.43	33.48	19.42
NWWM	14/15	Machine demo	2,386.34	5,400.00	900.00	478.65	-	36,869.65	46,034.64	467	98.58	19.63	8.06
YNE	15/16	Pie and pints	3,864.40	2,400.00	629.11	2,434.75	-	3,621.60	12,949.86	48	269.79	194.34	144.34
YNE	15/16	Masterclass	1,240.31	2,400.00	324.25	373.35	-	1,086.25	5,424.16	22	246.55	197.18	88.09
YNE	15/16	Machine demo	18,140.00	2,000.00	5,945.00	1,641.00	-	9,582.15	37,308.15	127	293.76	218.31	202.57
	TOTAL		71,259.69	37,650.00	19,882.06	13,488.15	798.43	133,738.78	276,817.11	1,635	211.53	128.94	86.45

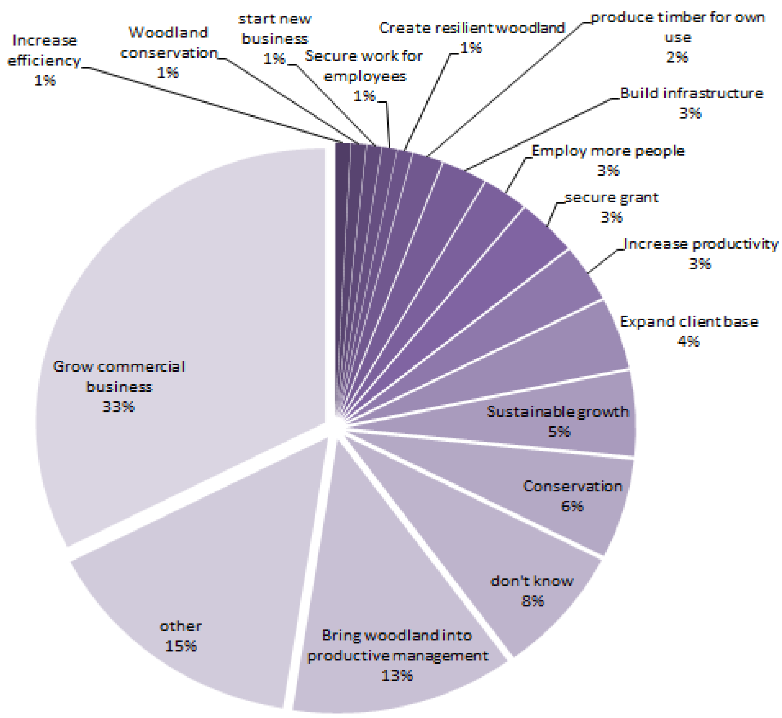
4. Why did businesses attend the events?

Figure 9 illustrates how the on-line survey respondents described their primary business objectives. This demonstrates that the majority of businesses (33% of the sample) are motivated to grow their business commercially with 5% specifically mentioning **sustainable** business growth. About 15% of the sample explicitly stated their aim was to bring woodland into productive management. There are also a sizeable number, 8% of the sample, who did not have a specific business objective.

When respondents were asked whether they attended the engagement events to further their business objectives:

- 8% of the sample said they came to the events to meet other people and business like themselves
- 27% said that their reason for attending was "somewhat" related to their business objectives
- 31% said they were definitely at the engagement event because of their business objectives
- 34% said they attended because they were looking for a general level of advice or to update their knowledge.

Figure 9. Primary business objectives of enterprises attending events (n=120)



Source: On-line survey

Two Area teams recorded information about businesses objectives in relation to the engagement events. In EEM the records showed that an average of 58% of attendees came to the Pie and Pint events with a specific project in mind, with 70% of those participating in Masterclasses having a business project to progress. In the SW the figures were lower with an average of just 22% of participants at Pie and Pint events having a specific project in mind.

The following subsections use evidence from the interviews with businesses to explore in more detail the reasons they had for attending the events. The reasons for attending were broadly similar to those outlined by respondents to the on-line survey so are grouped under those main sub-headings.

4.1.1. Growing a commercial business

Of the 15 businesses interviewed, 6 (40%) said they were looking to grow a commercial enterprise, by:

- Adding a forestry/woodland element to an existing land-based business
- Growing a contracting or sawmilling microenterprise to maintain viable income
- Expanding all or part of an arboricultural or contracting forestry SME's business

Adding a forestry/woodland component to an existing enterprise

The main motivation amongst these respondents was looking for advice on business strategies that could bring woodland into their other commercial activities and scope grants for equipment that would help realise these objectives. For example, one estate forester explained how:

> …. *it's a new venture for the estate owner, I'm the first estate forester and even though I can see the potential he's not so sure it's worth spending money on developing the woodland, the estate can make money with the other activities in the business portfolio, his attitude is very much 'why should I invest in woodlands if they are not going to make me money in the short and medium term?' I need to persuade him the finance stacks up, that a relatively small outlay on machinery to extract timber can make a significant difference. He has been to one of the events as well, it was good for him to see the forestry world himself, the 40% grant might be attractive* (estate forester, SME, EEM)

Another interviewee identified an important client group they wanted to service. These were farmers requiring advice on how to commercialise their woodland holdings as part of a diversification strategy:

> *there is a whole cohort of young lads of 20-25 up to 30 in this region who want to set up a business that they can do alone as part of their farm diversification strategy but they really struggle to get any kind of interaction between the agricultural and forestry worlds, to work out what they might be able to do and how. I have found it quite hard to work out where the information is that I need for forestry when it*

comes to advising my clients, clients like these, I need that up to date information if I'm going to support them growing their enterprises (land agent, SME, NWWM)

Five of the interviewees mentioned the continuing demand for firewood being one of the main drivers of landowners looking to expand into commercial woodland enterprises. Understanding what grants and business support was available for this kind of business was of significant interest.

Growing a microenterprise to maintain viable income

Three interviewees explained that they attended the engagement events to find out more about how they might expand their microenterprises. For them finding out more about the availability, cost, and grants they might apply for small scale machinery was particularly important, as was being able to talk through a business plan and business strategy for the kind of enterprise they were trying to grow. One microenterprise in EEM is a case in point when they described their situation:

> *To be honest we're motivated by conservation and bringing woodlands into good condition again, biodiversity and all that, and we just didn't think about how we could make money out of it, but if it's going to be a business then we needed to know from the experts that it was a viable idea, and if so, how to make that business actually give us an income, because at the moment it doesn't really keep us off the streets, it's about £6 grand a year in actual earnings, we want some sustainable growth, but we seem to be just too small at the moment. After going along to the first meeting we realised we needed to spend money on alpine tractor, we just can't get the wood out by hand any sense, and income depends on productivity [sic.* meaning they find it hard to get the wood out through manual handling and their profitability depends on a productive rate of extraction*]. The FACE advisor was brilliant, we talked it through with them and really we had to get on top of the season, get logs out and money in, so they showed us how it was better to get the tractor now, not wait for a grant, because it made more sense from a business point of view to have the equipment now not later. I am using our personal savings for the purchase* (Contractor microenterprise, EEM)

Expanding an SME's business

Two interviewees described the need for their SMEs to expand, both were contractor/arboriculture businesses one in EEM and one in SEL and both had spotted opportunities for expansion around the processing and retail of firewood so there interest was in machinery too. As one person described it:

> *We are growing quite quickly and there is a real opportunity to expand the logs and fuelwood side of the business but we need capital for big machinery a telehandler for the excavator, a large firewood processor, we thought the scheme could be the right vehicle, but I am not sure the seminar at the masterclass was very clear on that. We did have a follow-up visit from one of the advisors afterwards, and that was*

> *great, they pointed out what was or was not eligible, we're thinking about it there's more work to do on the model, the costs and margins.* (contractor SME, EEM)

4.1.2. Bringing woodland into productive management

Some people were motivated to bring woodland into productive management, not necessarily for commercial reasons, but for some of the other benefits actively managed woodland provides. Two interviewees talked about the biodiversity and conservation benefits of productive management, so were looking for small scale equipment that could be used on conservation sites and extract product for sale. A woodland ranger working for a large charitable trust explained:

> *I wanted to convince the higher ups in my organisation that conservation woodland can pay for itself, you know times are tough and we should be making sure the woodland earns its keep, I don't mean just money for profit, our primary aim is not a crop but coppice and conservation restoration. I know what we need to make it workable that's a small 3 tonne trailer and mini tractor, with just 40% funding finding the match is the sticking point though, the higher ups want to know and be sure that the woodland will pay that back, it's a risk to them isn't it? I want to work through the costings and demonstrate what our sales could be and how working these woods can bring in cash as well as biodiversity benefits* (Charitable Trust, SEL)

A community forester was typical of some new entrants to the sector, still in the early stages of managing their woodlands they are beginning to learn the value of productive woodlands and how they can provide economic returns:

> *We've got a small woodland and we are just realising that as a community we need to start managing it if we want to keep the features the community values, the biodiversity and such like. So we have about 25 volunteers now who come and do work, some 30 trees have been felled and others thinned, it's amazing what we have managed to do in a short time, and we wondered if we could get some simple tools to help us turn the material into things we could sell. (*Community forester, SEL)

4.1.3. Mobilising timber

Two of the interviewees spoke at some length about their motivations for attending the engagement events being about getting timber to market. One young estate manager was describing why he was not able to sell his harvest of 100 cubic meters from thinning and putting coppice back into rotation again. A large part of his problem has been extraction to roadside. He was looking at the availability of grants and machinery such as alpine and four wheeled tractors that could help the estate access and extract timber. The estate manager felt this would not only help with moving lower value products such as roundwood from thinning, but could also help bring more valuable timber out of the forest and into market. The interviewee representing a charitable Trust explained that they wanted to expand out of firewood which is their current product, and provide a milling service and sell slabs or slab benches as well as processing and seasoning construction grade material.

They saw a major benefit to bringing timber other than smaller roundwood out of their estate and into local markets.

4.1.4. Challenges and barriers

During the interviews and event observations the factors and issues businesses considered to be their main barriers emerged. Businesses were looking for advice about whether and how grants or technical support was available to overcome these challenges. The main barriers to increasing business and woodland productivity mentioned were:

- Woodland access, i.e. track infrastructure through the woodland and to roadside
- Storage facilities for logs and millable/milled timber
- Moving to mechanised handling and processing to increase productivity, e.g. availability and cost of the right kinds of small extractors, tractors, trailers and equipment such as log splitters and chippers
- Capital and cash flow, e.g. strategies for business growth in a market which is seasonal and returns small margins
- Assessment and penetration of alternative markets for timber to firewood, i.e. advice on what products other than firewood could be marketed from specific tree species and how/where to sell

Other challenges were also mentioned including:

- Poor understanding of woodland and forestry sector by landowners, along with a tension between woodlands being considered uneconomic on the one hand, but full of valuable firewood on the other. This presents difficulties to small businesses providing woodland management building traction and a firm client base for their services. As one interviewee put it:

  > *Some landowners want to know how much we will be paying THEM for woodland management, they think the firewood is a really valuable commodity that your'e going to extract, they don't get the idea that you pay a manager to keep the wood in good condition especially when its far away, off the beaten track, and no good for getting wood out of*. (contractor, microenterprise, EEM)

- The small business dilemma of when and how to scale up a microbusiness without exposing the business to high risk. A number of businesses mentioned this and the need for good quality business advice of the sort the FACE advisors were able to give, to assess when and how they should begin to expand.
- The current VAT regime acting as a disincentive and barrier to growth. The tax regime was described by three contractor/arboricultural businesses as a major barrier to taking on staff or building the business. Businesses saw business expansion and the need for VAT registration as a risk and barrier to their business growth because the application of

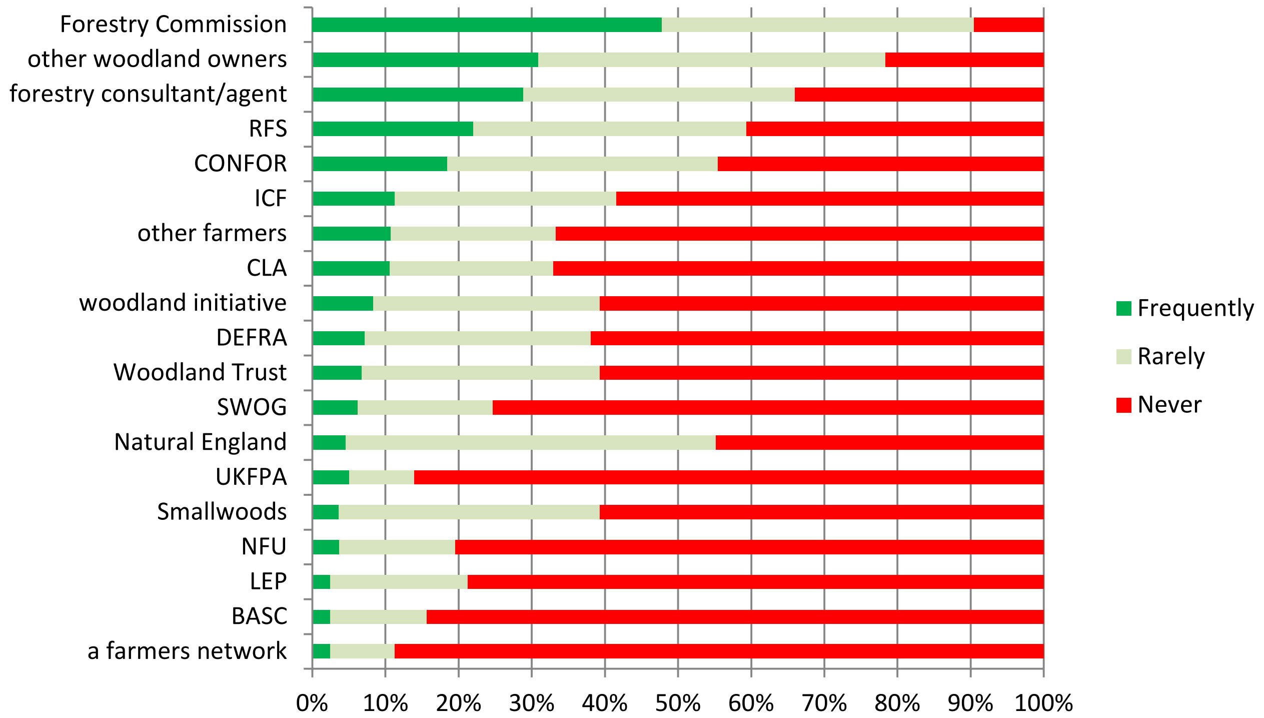
VAT would increase prices to customers, and this was seen as being uncompetitive in a very strong market place.

5. Did the events facilitate appropriate knowledge transfer and networking?

5.1.1. Sources of business advice

The on-line survey asked businesses about the sources of woodland/forestry businesses advice they normally use. Businesses indicated that the five most frequently used are Forestry Commission (43% of the sample), other woodland owners (23% of the sample), forestry agents and consultants (22% of the sample), the Royal Forestry Society (16%) and CONFOR (13%). The sources of advice a majority of businesses said they never used included other farmers (86%), the NFU (80%) and UK Forest Products Association (83%).

Figure 10. Where businesses tend to go to for their forestry business advice (n=128)



Source: On-line survey

Whilst the on-line survey suggests the Forestry Commission might be the most frequently cited source of business information, there were some negative comments expressed in the on-line survey and during the event observations. For example, one person commented:

> *I'm trying to think of what it is over the last 20 years that the Forestry Commission has passed on to me in terms of useful knowledge, and I can't think of one thing to be honest* (on-line survey respondent)

and another was typical of several who expressed frustration quality and speed of support around grant payments and other business issues in a changing system:

> *in the past there was a much closer relationship with the FC admin person, they were close geographically, you knew them, when they moved to Worcester you weren't geographically close but still knew them. Then when they moved to Exeter it became more removed which is fine as long as everything is straightforward but when things go wrong it has become harder to resolve the business problem so I try the RPA helpline but that's often busy* (microenterprise, SW)

Whilst these comments may relate to the wider context and are not about the business engagement events in particular, these perceptual barriers may affect the outcome of FS initiatives. Customers do not perceive subtle differences in organisational structure and the different areas of FS work and delivery, they build-up a perception of the organisation as an entity. The opinions businesses have about the Forestry Commission and the advice it can give, are likely to affect their behaviour and the uptake of opportunities for knowledge transfer and information dissemination. By the same token, there were also some comments about the nature of the grants themselves, rather than the relevance and effectiveness of the support and advice being provided during the engagement events:

> *Grants seem to be OK when you are well established but not really if you are a start-up with little working capital so I am not sure how much help it's been* (microenterprise, contractor, EEM)

> *It's ridiculous we can't claim for the kind of machine we are looking for, it's going to be used for forestry so why that can't be taken on trust, and don't get me started on the need for three quotes, that wouldn't help us one bit if we actually find the second hand machine we want (woodland owner, contractor, SW)*

If businesses do not think that the grants on offer suit their circumstances and their objectives then they will not take them up regardless of the quality of the business advice provided. This underscores the importance of taking into account the range of impacts and benefits, other than grant uptake alone, that businesses said they gained from attendance at the events. The value of networking and peer to peer knowledge exchange facilitated by FS would be a case in point, particularly as the on-line survey emphasised the importance of other woodland owners as a source of advice.

5.1.2. Knowledge facilitation through engagement events

Looking now specifically at the engagement events, results from the event evaluation forms distributed to participants by FS staff on the day at 31 different events, showed that for 27 of those events, 100% of attendees said the event was useful. In the case of three Pie and Pint events in the SW 87-92% of attendees said the event was useful and for one Masterclass in NWWM 93% of attendees said the event was useful. The evaluation forms captured some positive comments indicating immediate impacts on the participants:

"*Has shed light on grants that I had not considered and firmed up my initial intentions to sort a management plan…*" (EEM, evaluation form for Masterclass)

"*Has encouraged me to look into expanding our forestry operations and adding value to our timber products*" (EEM, evaluation form for Pie and Pint)

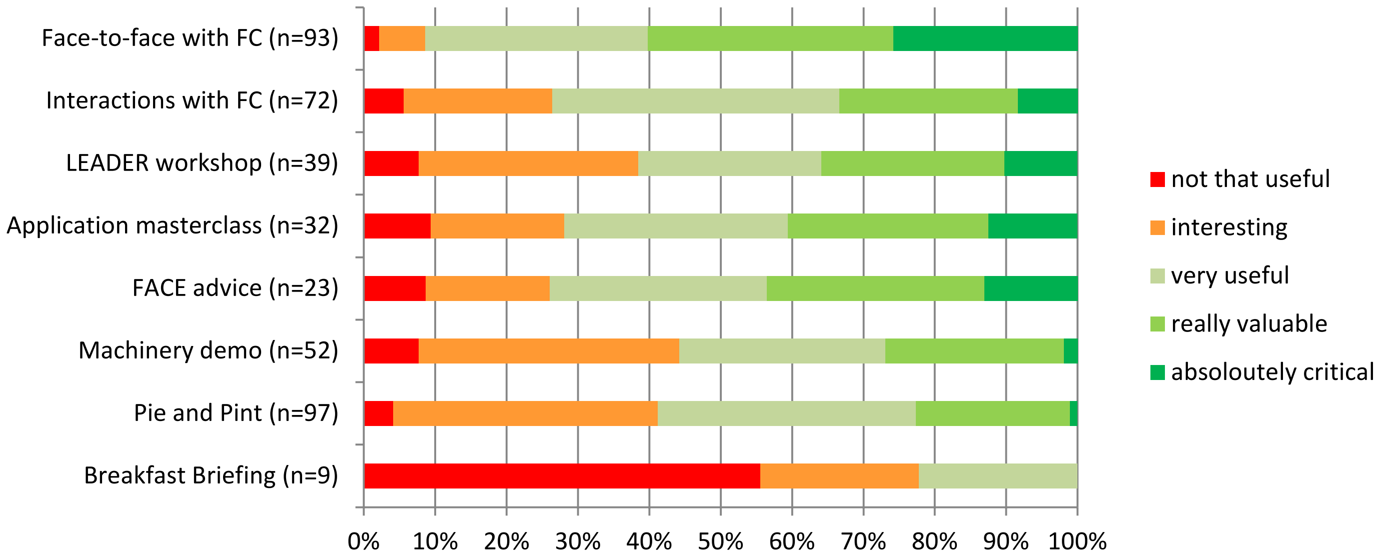
"*Encouraged me to look to expanding further than first envisaged*" (EEM, evaluation form for Pie and Pint)

The on-line survey and business interviews were conducted some months after the events had taken place, in order to judge whether there was any impact in terms of business actions and behaviour. Questions in both surveys were designed to provide a comparative measure impact between different aspects of the engagement events and follow-on activities. Respondents to the on-line survey were asked if the events they attended provided the kind of knowledge they were looking for in terms of acting on their business objectives. Figure 11 illustrates the response. Of all the events and interactions respondents were asked about, face to face contact with FC staff was rated most highly with 26% of respondents who interacted in this way describing the knowledge they gained as "absolutely critical" to their business decision making.

Looking at the business engagement events alone, the Masterclass rates most highly with a greater number of "really valuable" scores, 28% of responses, and "absolutely critical" scores at 12.5% of responses. The FACE advice ranks similarly to the Masterclass with 13% "absolutely critical" and 30% "really valuable" scores.

The Pie and Pint and Machinery demonstrations rank similarly to each other with around 1.3 – 1.9% "absolutely critical" and 22-25% "really valuable" scores.

Figure 11. How businesses rated the value of the engagement events and other interactions in terms of providing the information and knowledge they were looking for



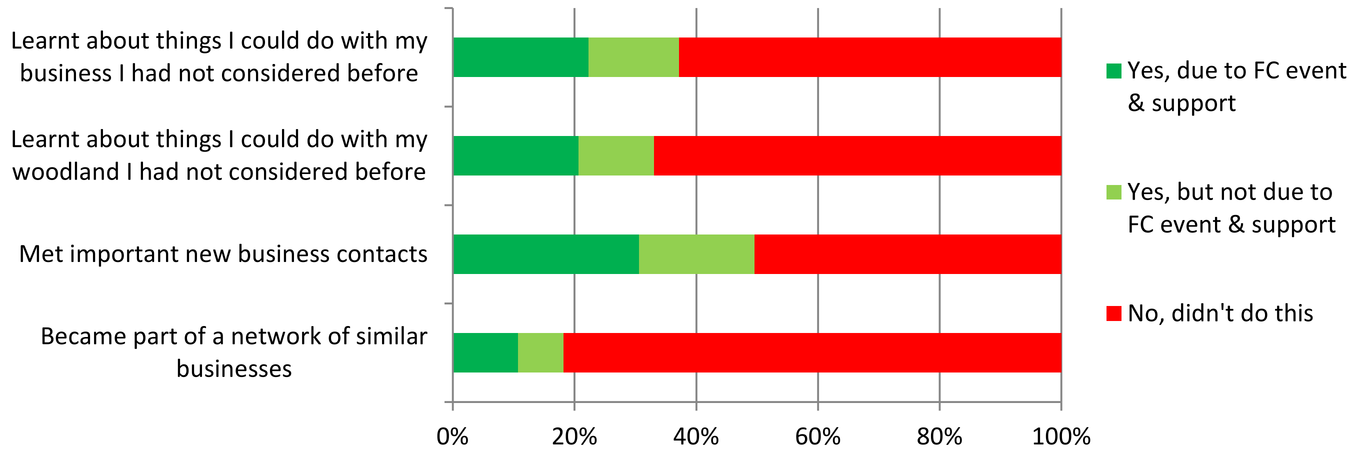
Source: On-line survey

What this tells us is that a single source of information and knowledge exchange is not enough to prompt changes to business practice, and interactions with FS staff are a fundamentally important part of the decision making process.

An additional question in the on-line survey asked respondents whether the information gained at the engagement event made any material difference to: their degree of knowledge, understanding and awareness of forestry sector grants and business growth opportunities (i.e. impacts to their human capital); and their professional networks and business contacts (i.e. impacts to their social capital). Figure 12 illustrates the responses, and shows that around 20% of businesses learnt new things that they could do with their businesses and their woodland that they had not considered before, which they identified as a direct consequence of the engagement events.

It is important to note that around 25% of respondents said they had met important new business contacts as a direct consequence of the events. Around 11% of respondents said they had become part of a network of similar businesses, i.e. informal as well as formal networks and groups.

Figure 12. The legacy of engagement events building social and human capital (n=121)



Source: On-line survey

Evidence collected during the interviews and event observations provides more information about how relevant the knowledge was in terms of meeting business needs, and whether businesses found the events and the knowledge provided an efficient use of their time. The themes which emerged across all the interviews reflected what was found in the on-line survey. Respondents identified the knowledge transmitted during the different events that was important or valuable to them, namely:

- Signposting information about grants and business support services – Pie and Pint events in particular provided this information
- Facilitating information and knowledge exchange with experts – discussions during the Pie and Pint events and the Masterclasses led to the identification of advisors, services,

or business owners that provide more in depth knowledge and guidance. Knowledge exchange with experts that followed on included sessions with FACE advisors

- Providing knowledge about, and introductions to, other businesses in the local economy –business networking went on at all of the engagement events and respondents emphasised the value of these business networks for sharing information, getting new ideas, and generating new business.

Signposting information about grants and business support services

When discussing the Pie and Pint and Masterclass events interviewees felt their expectations had been met in terms of improved understanding of the grant landscape and how available schemes may or may not be able to help them. Event participants were looking to refresh their knowledge where they had received grants in the past, for example:

> *I really needed to refresh my memory about grants. The business benefited from an FC grant before, that's what I bought the machinery with, a band saw 6 years ago and a JCB 10 years ago. The impact of these purchases on the business was really positive it enhanced the value of the timber we sold. Attending the events gave me the broad scope of grant application structure, which was useful, that's what I was there to get and that's what I got* (arboricultural contractor NWWM)

Or they were exploring the specific help that could be given for their specific business problem or business project:

> *One of the major limitations to productivity is replacement machinery which is what we wanted to know more about as well as coming to look and see what the current grant situation was …. the meeting fulfilled our expectations. I came away with a clearer idea of what sort of things we could think about in terms of the enterprise, and how we could get some assistance from the scheme to improve the enterprise. The follow-up was the really important bit, and it's the FACE advisor that was the crucial factor to our submitting a grant application* (owner/saw miller EEM)

Or they were looking for a **general overview and introduction** to the contemporary grant landscape for their own business, or for providing advice to other forest and woodland owners and businesses:

> *We knew the grants were probably there we just didn't know how to find out about them, and it's been eye opening finding out just how much help is actually available to overcome the barriers, the mental barriers anyway, that put you off applying* (land agent, SME, NWWM)

One interviewee did have some suggestions about what further support he would find useful:

> *If I could go to a seminar where they went through a case study of a woodland creation grant application I would find that very helpful. I haven't put in any grants of this sort*

> *with the new system and not for lack of interest from clients but I would have to do a lot of reading up of this process before I could try it* (forestry consultant, microbusiness, NWWM)

Obviously this interviewee is talking about Countryside Stewardship Grants which were not the focus of the business engagement events being evaluated. However, this point of view serves to highlight once again, how businesses may not able to distinguish clearly between the different grants, advice streams and areas of business delivery that are the focus of Area teams. It suggests that there is more work to be done targeting the most appropriate businesses to take part in FS-led events, or, being prepared to provide signposting material to provide an appropriate response to the needs of customers who may not find the most appropriate help for themselves.

Facilitating information and knowledge exchange with experts

Some of the business interviewees confirmed that they had learnt new things that their business could undertake, or new approaches they could follow:

> *We realised that the grants were worth pursuing so we submitted an application. But we got other things out of the meeting and follow up too, like some guidance on how to improve our current operations, and some reassurance about how best to maintain our supply of quality product managing the moisture, all these things and the business advisor were good value* (Trust, EEM)

5.1.3. Building social and business networks

There were a significant number of comments from business about the value of the contacts made during the networking that the engagement events facilitated. For some attendees these contacts stimulated new business. For other attendees it provided them with an entrée into the local economy. As the participants themselves put it:

> *Yes we sort of got what we came for. We found out is wasn't for us, a £5k minimum capital scheme is too large, it's not for us, but it was great making and renewing contacts and especially meeting a couple of local foresters* (Community forester, SEL)

> *It was so much more than getting information about grants, I have made some serious new contacts, and of course I have to say coming along to something like this is just so much better than getting a snotty email, we can see you are humans trying to do a good job, not just nameless civil servants* (on-line respondent)

> *It was a really useful way of networking, we made some new business contacts and ended up doing business with them* (Trust, EEM)

> *I found out I wasn't eligible for the grants, and I'm not inside the LEADER area boundary, so there is no direct impact in that sense, but it has been worth going along to the event as I met a new business contact looking for chestnut which I could supply, it's been good for establishing new relationships and catching up with the current status of things* (microenterprise, contractor, SW)

> *Whilst I was there I found somebody looking for the kinds of services I supply, and I knew somebody selling oak that somebody else there was interested in buying, so in that sense having the chance to chat over a drink has been really useful in a business sense, making new connections and contacts* (microenterprise, contractor/fuelwood processor NWWM)

> *I got introduced to lots of local contacts interested in getting timber from me. I also got to know the people from the FC better; it was great to be able to put a name to a face* (estate manager, EEM)

The business decision-making journey

The collation and understanding of information and the building of knowledge is an iterative and cumulative process. Business explained very clearly how ideas they have about growing their businesses or undertaking new activities take a while to gestate before they reach the decision making and planning stage. It is the cumulative and combined effect of providing broader more general information, and more focused in depth knowledge that seems to have provided what businesses wanted and needed. As one person put it:

> *Things have been in my mind for a while swooshing around, events like that are really useful for getting the juices going and then generating a proper focus, concretising what it is you want to do and therefore how you might go about doing it. I've got ideas for the expansion having come along to a couple of FC events now, from what I learnt I think it looks doable, if not this year then next, the knowing is only part of it, I need to find the time to build the next step* (microenterprise, contractor, SW)

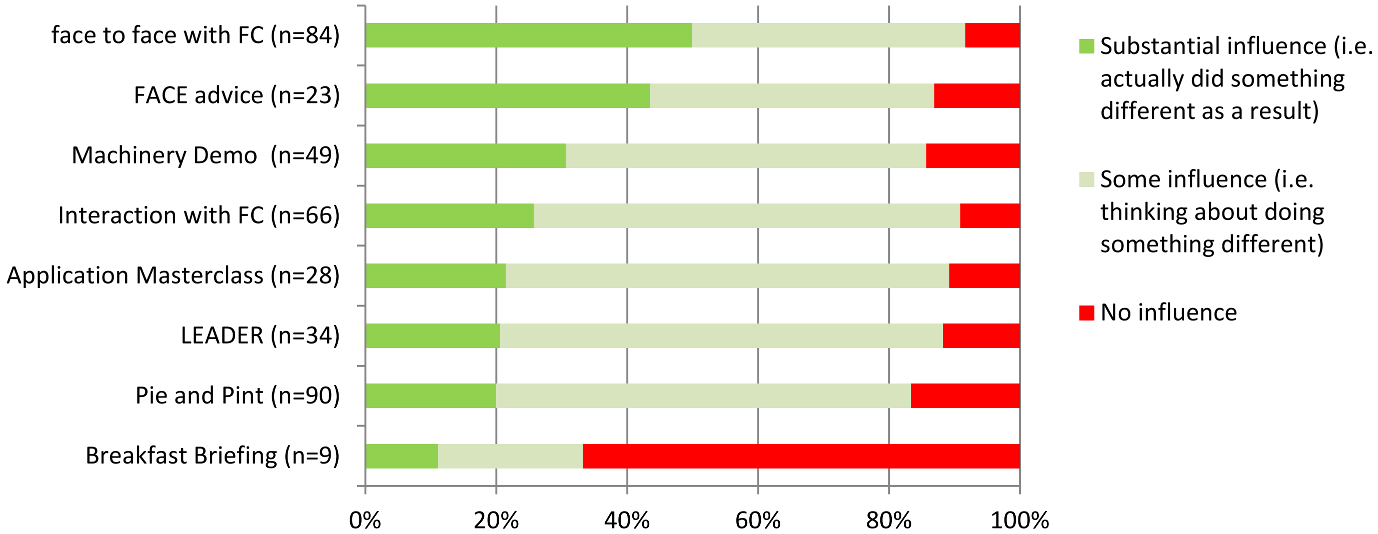
And another said:

> *This is my third of these events, I did the Pie and Pint and looked at machines last year, as well as this Masterclass, and then I am quite active with the RFS as well and do their trips, so all that, showed me really what was a goer, I'm not sure the grants on offer now suit us, but it looks like some of my business development ideas aren't stupid! (*microenterprise, fuelwood processor, NWWM*)*

6. Did the events change business behaviour?

The on-line survey showed that between 1-18 businesses – depending on the engagement event - went on to do something different or new as a direct consequence of taking part in an engagement event. Overall that represents about 15% of the total sample. Between 20% and 21% of respondents did something different as a result of attending the Pie and Pint and Masterclasses respectively. The machinery demonstrations prompted 30% of attendees to do something different. However, the other opportunities for interaction, with FACE advisors and face-to-face with FC staff had the most significant impact with 43% and 50% of respondents respectively reporting they did something different as a consequence.

Figure 13. How businesses rated the influence of the events on their decision making and actions (n=122)



Source: on-line survey

NB. The LEADER events were follow-on workshops and events organised and led by LEADER groups as part of their grant application processes

A couple of the interviewees mentioned the constraints on businesses working to change business practice. From their perspective the current year had been very busy, getting used to the new RPA systems, as well as attending other sector events relating to grants and business development, particularly the woodland management planning workshops and tree health workshops. As one person explained:

> *I'm not sure the FC events* [i.e. the engagement events being evaluated] *have influenced my business, it's more that the events have reflected what's happening in the world of grants. I need to know about that. Lots of people have been developing their woodland management plans as a result of FC advocacy this year, some of us have been side-tracked into that activity so perhaps these other events* [i.e. the engagement events being evaluated] *will pay off next year or when the next grants open up, we'll have the eligibility with the plans in place then* (forestry consultant, microbusiness, NWWM)

Again, this demonstrates that the FS managed business engagement events cannot be understood outside the context of other forestry related activities. The reasons whether or not businesses go on and act on the information and advice provided at the engagement events may be related to the wider context, and if there are important influences in that wider context taking up businesses attention, the expected impacts of the business engagement events make take some time to emerge. This kind of comment is also indicative of some business customer's not perceiving differences in the different focal work streams and responsibilities Area teams have. Forestry, forestry grants and “The Forestry Commission” are part and parcel of the same thing to many business eyes.

6.1.1. Business planning, applying for and securing grants

In fact business planning was one of the frequently mentioned activities that came about as a consequence of attending the engagement events. Refining plans based on what they learnt at events, as well as developing new business plans were both mentioned: Two interviewees described their situation as follows:

> *We have reached a critical point with our business we have to find a way to expand if the business is to be profitable, we have more demand for fuelwood that we can supply, so although some of the things we need are not eligible for grant, we will be putting in an application for some things and finding other finance for others. It’s been important to us to know about the series of events, the introduction to general ideas in one and then proper follow-up with the masterclass and the FACE advisor. We have got a proper 10 year business development plan in place now because of the advisor and he spotted some areas where we could make savings and increase efficiency so that was really helpful*. (Charitable Trust, EEM)

> *I am not sure it would be fair to say that I am going to do something different, I am not taking up a grant, they don’t look as if they suit my circumstances, but I must say that the meeting has been a bit of a catalyst, I am thinking about doing something more around woodchip, I’ve swapped ideas and opinions with a few people over a beer about that one*. (microenterprise, contractor, SW)

There was some evidence from the on-line survey that businesses went on to apply for and secure grants: In answer to the question “what have you done since interacting with the Forestry Commission” 36 businesses (30% of the sample of 121) said they had gone on to prepare woodland management plans so that they would be eligible for future grants, 47 businesses (39% of the sample of 121) said they had gone on to apply for a grant and 39 businesses said they had secured a grant (32% of the sample of 121). These results do not identify which grants the businesses applied for or secured. Even though the question was designed to be specific to the grants discussed at the engagement events, businesses may have not interpreted the question in this way. Again, this suggests that businesses do not necessarily distinguish between one kind of interaction or another with FS leading to any specific outcome. In other words, there is a business journey where businesses use more than one event or one kind of interaction to build up their business decisions. Learning at events may not be confined to the main FS purpose or message and could lead to business action around other forestry issues. This may be particularly important if they have a mixed forestry business model, e.g. are a woodland owner as well as a forestry contractor.

The number of respondents mentioning woodland management plans is important: Only owners or managers of woodland need management plans to access grants e.g. Countryside Stewardship. The forestry businesses that were the target audience for these events mainly work under contract or buy timber so management plans are not directly relevant to them to access the capital grants the events provided information about. However, forestry business and contractors in the supply chain do see a link between their business objectives and woodland management plans. Approved management plans are for example, used to meet the legality and evidence requirement s for approved woodfuel sales under the Renewables Obligation and Renewable Heat Incentive. Many of the businesses who answered the on-line survey had mixed business models, e.g. were woodland owners as well as running an additional fuelwood processing business, so management plans were important to them. Disaggregating the data shows that amongst businesses that owned or managed woodlands the percentage of respondents producing management plans as a consequence of FC/partner support and taking part in FC events ranged between around 23% to around 32% (see Table 6).

Table 6. Number of owners/managers producing Management Plans

Produce a woodland management plan?	woodland owner/manager	farmer with woodland	estate manager	forestry agent
no data	19	7	8	15
No, didn't do this	19	5	2	6
Yes, but not due to FC/partner support	12	5	4	6
Yes, due to FC/partner support	17	8	6	8
TOTAL	67	25	20	35
% of that group doing so due to FC/partner support	25.4	32.0	30.0	22.9

Source: on-line survey

6.1.2. Behaviour change impacts

Evidence of impacts is limited to the on-line survey. Of those businesses that took part in the interviews only two had attended engagement events during 2014, for the other 13 enough time had not elapsed between attending the event for there to be measurable impact. Figure 14 shows that impacts brought about as a consequence of participation in the specific engagement events that are the subject of this evaluation were to:

- The local economy

  11 businesses (9% of sample) said they had gone on to employ more people

  10 businesses (8% of sample) said they had won new contracts to manage additional woodland

- Business efficiency and income

  17 businesses (14% of sample) said they had increased their business income

  11 businesses (9% of sample) said they had reduced their operating costs

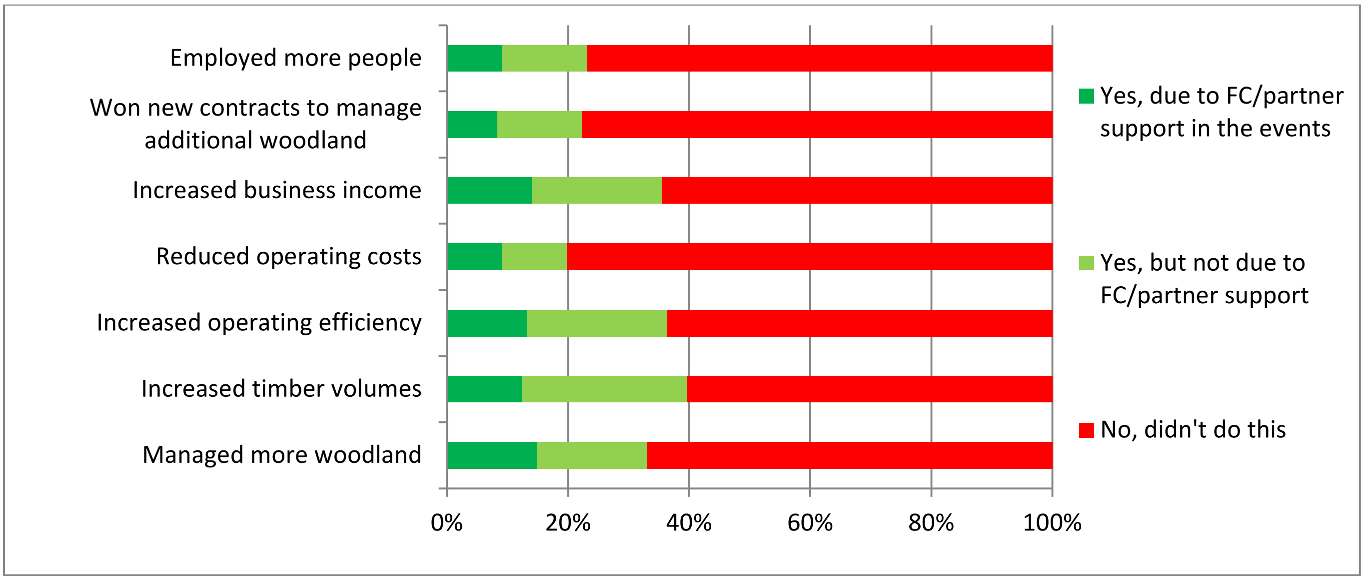
  16 businesses (13% of sample) said they had increased their operating efficiency

- Increased woodland management

  15 businesses (12% of sample) said they had increased timber volumes

  18 businesses (15% of sample) said they had managed more woodland

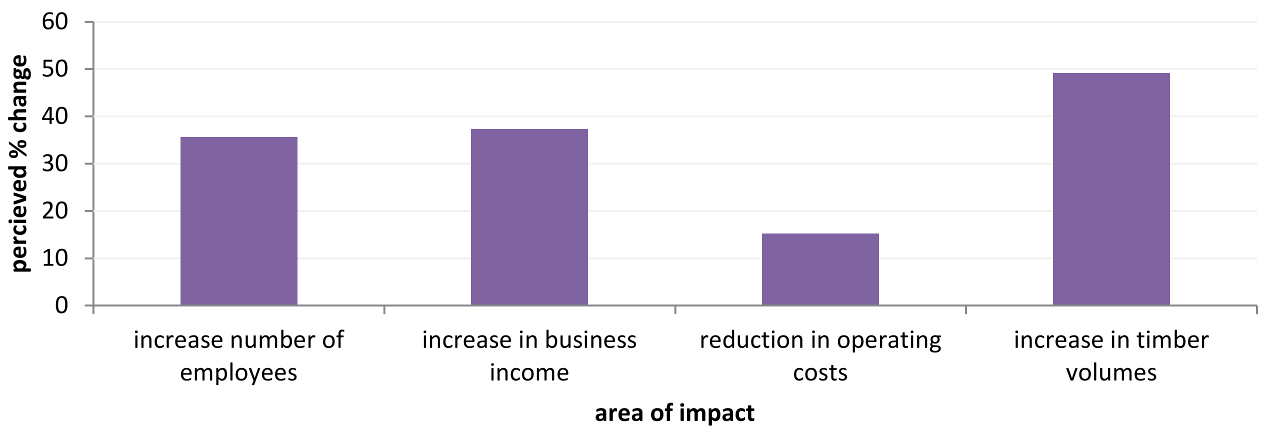
Figure 14. Reported business impacts brought about by participation in the events (n=121)



Source: On-line survey

The businesses who reported these impacts were asked to indicate the scale of that impact. The results are summarised graphically in Figure 15. These are perceived estimates of impact and are not measured. The most significant perceived impact is the increased volumes of timber produced, where businesses reporting a change perceived production to have increased at over 40%. Increases to numbers of employees and business income were perceived to be over 30%, and a reduction to operating costs of more than 10%.

Figure 15. Perceived degree of impact – average % change - brought about by participation in engagement events



Source: On-line survey

7. Conclusions

This evaluation did not set out to provide an economic assessment of the costs of the events against the value of any outputs. The time interval between the engagement events and business actions was in the majority of cases too short to realise tangible impacts, and there is significant uncertainty assigning attribution to any changes in key indicators directly to the business engagement events. Therefore, the conclusions resist making quantified statements about this kind of value. Synthesising results from the four different evidence sources against the objectives of the evaluation (i.e. see page 5) the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Did the engagement events meet their objectives?

1.1. The engagement events facilitated knowledge exchange for sector sustained growth

i. There is enough evidence to suggest that the engagement events provided businesses with knowledge they needed and wanted. Nearly all of the businesses attending the events said they were useful, and for those businesses who attended to realise specific business objectives or particular projects in mind the evidence suggests they were able to make decisions about how best to progress those ideas.

ii. It is not possible to state that any one of the engagement events was any more effective than another, nor is it possible to state that these "one-to-many" events were more worthwhile than face to face contact with FC staff and partners. Businesses make decisions to change their practice and develop their economic and woodland management activities over time. It may take a few years for a business idea to grow and for the business to assess the costs and benefits as well as the practicalities of putting the idea into practice. The engagement events together provided both "broad and general" information and knowledge as well as "deep and narrow" technical advice influencing different points in that "business journey".

iii. Face to face contact with FC staff or with a specialist advisor e.g. FACE consortium member, providing the "deep and narrow" technical support was critically important to a large number of businesses following through on their decision to act. This was true for new customers as well as established customers.

iv. The value of the FACE advisor was highlighted by a number of businesses. The evidence suggests that new customers make most effective use of the FACE advisor after engaging in other events which demonstrate the wide set of business strategies and potential equipment and funding available.

1.2. The Forestry Commission is recognised as the government specialist in forestry and woodland and forestry businesses

i. Respondents were not always able to provide a view of Forest Services limited to their experiences of the engagement events being evaluated. From a customer's point of view all of their interactions with the Forestry Commission contribute to building up their opinion of Forest Services. This meant that research participants expressed some criticisms related to specific functions of Forest Services, particularly: the speed and ease of forest grant application and delivery processes; a level of discontent about of the structure of available grants; and difficulties and frustrations they experiences around changes to the organisation of the FC. However, whilst these kinds of perceptions may influence business uptake of opportunities such as the engagement events, businesses still recognised and valued Forest Services as forestry business experts able to provide appropriate business support or to signpost appropriate support.

ii. The most frequently used source of advice for forestry businesses continues to be the Forestry Commission.

iii. On-going relationships with Forest Services field teams and other partner agents proved important. Businesses felt this was the most efficient way of keeping up with developments in the grant landscape, and the most effective method of finding out more about issues affecting their woodland businesses e.g. tree pests and diseases.

1.3. Linking and networking was achieved

i. The business contacts and networking that the engagement events facilitated was noted by the businesses as particularly valuable. This led to some tangible actions by the businesses but also led to new initiatives by FS Area teams, for example, the EEM business directory which was produced as a direct result of local feedback from businesses.

1.4. The engagement events went some way to attracting new customers and intended businesses, i.e. microbusinesses and SMEs, mobilising, processing and marketing timber.

i. Using a variety of communication paths and platforms was shown to be very important to reaching and engaging new and existing customers. Connecting with new customers and new entrants was facilitated by using novel communication routes, including promotion by partners and other organisations and initiatives involved in farming, arboriculture and land management. Existing customers were well served by direct communication from Area teams.

ii. New customers at the event included new entrants to the sector, some of whom were farm owners or new forestry and land-based sector graduates.

2. Did the events have any significant impact on business behaviour?

i. The events did have an impact on some aspects of business behaviour, however the degree of attribution is difficult to ascertain, because it is the knowledge learning and advice picked up from a combination of events and interactions with FS that catalyses business action.

ii. There was evidence of short term impacts to the majority of business owners in terms of awareness, knowledge, attitudes and aspirations supporting the development of their business activities.

iii. Medium term outcomes in terms of action prompted by these changes was reported by a small number of businesses (between 9-15%), with perceived impacts to numbers of jobs created, local contracts secured, business costs reduced and the amount of timber mobilised or woodland managed.

3. Did the engagement events meet value for money criteria?

In terms of providing a cost effectiveness assessment, it is not possible to make a direct input to impact calculation because the impacts of the engagement events are time delayed and diffuse. Assessing the qualitative evidence and on-line survey data against the three key Value for Money criteria the following views can be supported:

3.1. The events met Relevance criteria – the information and knowledge provided at each of the different kinds of events met the needs of the majority of business participants, numbers useful and numbers critical

3.2. The events met Effectiveness criteria– the engagement events prompted changes. At least 15% of businesses had gone on to do something different, and more than 30% secured grants, with perceived impacts on the local economy, business productivity and woodland management

3.3. The events met Efficiency criteria – the majority of business participants saw the events as a good use of their time, even if they did not apply for any grants, the knowledge they acquired and the business networking that was facilitated promoted tangible business benefits.

Annex 1. Event costs template

Pie and Pint events 2015/16

FS staff costs - time							*TOTAL*
Staff time preparation for events	number of staff		days		day rate		
PB2							0
PB3							0
PB4							0
PB5 Ops							0
PB6A							0
Staff time delivering the events	number of staff		days		day rate		
PB2							0
PB3							0
PB4							0
PB5 Ops							0
PB6A							0
Staff time following up after the	number of staff		days		day rate		
PB2							0
PB3							0
PB4							0
PB5 Ops							0
PB6A							0
Staff time evaluating the events	number of staff		days		day rate		
PB2							0
PB3							0
PB4							0
PB5 Ops							0
PB6A							0
Partner costs - time							
Partner time preparing for even	number of staff		days		day rate		0
Partner time delivering events	number of staff		days		day rate		0
Material costs							
Venue hire	show fee if any				actual spend		0
Catering, e.g. for event participants					actual spend		
Photocopying and office supplies					actual spend		
Advertising and marketing					actual spend		
Equipment costs, e.g. projector hire					actual spend		
			Rail fair LEADER launch London				0
Travel and Subsistence - FS staff and partners							
Staff travel costs to event venue	number of staff		actual mileage		unit cost		
PB2							0
PB3							0
PB4							0
PB5 Ops							0
PB6A							0
Staff overnight accommodation	number of staff		nights		rate		0
Staff meals (If not covered in cat	meals				actual spend		0
Partner travel costs	number of people		estimated mileage		unit cost		0
Other costs							
Please specify	some kind of item		Speakers		actual spend		0
FS staff liaison with FACE conso	number of staff		mileage				0
Business Attendees costs							
Attendees time	participants		hours travelling and at event		average hourly wage		0
Attendees travel costs	participants		mileage		unit cost per mile		0
						GRAND TOTAL	0

All figures used in the calculations of cost were supplied by the Area teams from their own records of actual costs and through worked estimates

FS Staff costs were calculated using the following day rates

FS Average paybill by pay band converted to notional day rate	
SSG+	438.76
SSG	359.75
PB1	333.12
PB2	259.84
PB3	216.23
PB4	178.42
PB5	137.32
5OPs	157.80
PB6a	126.21
6aOps	139.17
PB6b	103.93
PB7	77.77

Partner costs were calculated using the actual day rates or pro rata hourly rates charged, or where these had not been applied, estimates of time use were made and a pro rata day rate of £250-400 was applied depending on the partner who took part.

Material costs were based on actual receipted costs for catering venue hire etc.

Travel and subsistence for FS staff and partners

Was based on actual costs including train tickets, mileage claims (@ £0.45 per mile i.e. standard FC mileage rate), the cost of overnight accommodation and any subsistence claimed.

Business attendees costs were calculated as follows:

Travel costs were calculated by assessing the distances travelled by individuals from their business addresses, and summing

an average distance per participant x the mileage @ £0.45 per mile (i.e. standard FC mileage rate)

plus an average travel time per participant

plus the time spent at the engagement event

The value of attendees time was costed at £13.29 per hour. This figure comes from Office of National Statistics figure for the UK for 2015 and is the median value for hourly wages for full time employees.

Annex 2. Event programme and event observation sample

AREA	Engagement event	Location	Month	Year	Sampled
Yorkshire & North East	Pie and Pint	Northumberland	January	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Durham	January	2016	
	Pie and Pint	N. Yorkshire	January	2016	Yes
	Pie and Pint	S. Yorkshire	January	2016	Yes
	Application masterclass	Northumberland	February	2016	
	Application masterclass	N. Yorkshire	February	2016	
	Machinery Demonstration	N. Yorkshire	March	2016	Yes
East and East Midlands	Pie and Pint	Liecestershire	October	2015	
	Arboricultural specialist	Essex	October	2015	
	Application masterclass	Bedford	October	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Lincolnshire	November	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Norfolk	November	2015	Yes
	Application masterclass	Derbyshire	November	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Cambridgeshire	November	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Hertfordshire	November	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Derbyshire	December	2015	
	Application masterclass	Suffolk	December	2015	Yes
South East and London	Pie and Pint	Hampshire	January	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Surrey / Sussex border	January	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Berks / Bucks / Oxon	January	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Kent / East Sussex border	January	2016	Yes
	Application masterclass	Oxfordshire	January	2016	
	Application masterclass	Surrey	January	2016	
	Application masterclass	East Sussex	January	2016	Yes
	Advice and info clinics	Sussex, BN8 5AF	September	2015	
	Advice and info clinics	Surrey	October	2015	
Southwest	Machinery Demonstration	Wiltshire	September	2015	Yes
	Pasty and Pint	Somerset	November	2015	Yes
	Pasty and Pint	Devon	December	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Cotswolds	January	2016	Yes
	Pie and Pint	Dorset	January	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Wiltshire	January	2016	
	Pasty and Pint	Cornwall	February	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Devon	February	2016	
	Pie and Pint	Wiltshire	February	2016	
North West and West Midlands	Pie and Pint	Cumbria	October	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Cumbria	October	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Lancashire	November	2015	
	Application masterclass	Cumbria	November	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Shropshire	November	2015	
	Breakfast briefing	Cheshire	November	2015	
	Pie and Pint	Worcestershire	November	2015	Yes
	Application masterclass	Shropshire	November	2015	
	Application masterclass	Cheshire	December	2015	Yes

Annex 3. Event observation sheet

WiM Event Observation Summary Record Sheet

Date		**Type of event**	
Location		**No of participants (i.e. not staff/partner)**	
Area		**No of staff**	
Observer		**No of partners**	

1. **Describe who was present.**

2. **Describe the agenda and general conduct of the meeting.**

3. **What were the key messages delivered by the Area team?**

4. **What were the main questions/issues that were raised by businesses?**

5. **Were there any questions or issues that proved particularly challenging?**

6. **Were there any questions or issues that were specific to the Area context?**

7. **Were there any follow up actions promised by the Area team?**

Contacts for follow-up interviews

Name	Type of business	Email	Telephone

Annex 4. FS event evaluation form

Demonstrating how grants can help your forestry business

Venue ……….Pie and Pint event

Date

Feedback form

Name ………………………………………………………………………………………

Organisation ……………………………………………………………………………………

Email ………………………………………………………………………………………

Contact number ……………………………………………………………………………

Would you like to be contacted by email with further funding information in the future?

Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Have you found the event useful

Yes ☐ No ☐

1a If yes, has it changed your mind on what to do or firmed up your intention to go act?

Comments:………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. Do you have a specific project idea or piece of equipment in mind?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide details:

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Would you like further advice?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes we will send you an expression of interest form so we can see what type of advice would be helpful.

4. What could we improve/do differently if we run other similar events? Was there anything you would have liked covered?

Comments:………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

THANK YOU

Forestry Commission England

Annex 5. Business interview schedule

WiM Reaching New Audiences
Interviews with businesses: Schedule

Date		FS Area	
Respondent		Type of business	
Interviewer		No of employees	

8. Please can you describe your business and your business model?

How long has the business been running? Why and how did it start?

What is the primary focus of the business?

What is the business model? Is there a business plan? Are there key objectives?

What size – employees and turnover?

Has the business been growing/declining – why?

Are there seasonal variations in operation?

Is there any difference in any of the above now (i.e. at the time of interview) compared with the period before interaction with Forest Services in the business support events?

9. Can you tell me a bit more about your timber supply?

If a woodland owner/manager or woodland agent/consultant describe the kind of woodland the business is connected with e.g. broadleaved, conifer, mixed, sensitive sites, PAWS etc. How much active management producing timber thro' thinning or felling is being undertaken. The kinds of markets for the timber.

If a contractor does the business have a particular woodland management specialism? What kinds of woodlands is it operating in? How much active management producing timber thro' thinning or felling is being undertaken. What markets does the timber go to.

If a secondary processor or sawmill or fuelwood business where does the wood/timber come from? How much and what kind of wood is being used for what purpose and what markets? Is wood imported or exported? Volume of sales. Main supply chains and onward sales chains.

10. Could you describe any specific business challenges you experience? How are these connected to woodland management?

Probe around specific business issues to tease out understanding and root causes of any barriers and challenges experienced.

What are the impacts of those challenges?

11. Could you explain more about how and why you came to take part in the FC event.

How did the business find out about it?

What contact/relationship did they have with the FC prior to taking part in the event?

Have they taken part in other FC events – which ones?

What was their main motivation for participation?

How did this link to their business model or any of the business challenges they mentioned?

How long have they been considering these kinds of issues?

12. Where else have you sought business advice?

Explore what source of business advice (including woodland management advice) they have used or would normally look towards.

What kind of advice do these sources provide?

Why use these sources of advice?

13. Can you explain how effective the FC event was in terms of, a. meeting your objectives/reasons for attending, and b. in comparison with other types of business advice you may have received?

Probe for detail. Try ranking or scoring as a measure of "effective" if this seems appropriate. Link perceptions of "effective" against business challenges, business objectives and woodland management issues mentioned earlier in the conversation.

14. Has anything changed as a consequence of attending the FC event?

Probe for detail – make sure we look for attribution, i.e. would these changes have happened anyway or are they really just because of the FS business support event?

Have there been changes in perceptions or attitudes towards business possibilities – towards the FC – towards woodland management potential?

Any intended actions as a result of the event?

Any actions actually implemented as a consequence of the event?

For the 2014 cohort are there any changes to the size of the business (employees/turnover) or efficiency?

Any changes to the amount of woodland managed – directly or indirectly?

What about other important changes such as social networking, social capital, building relationships with FC and other woodland/forestry businesses and landowners. Remember measures of interest to FC – new "customers", increase in business activity, better understanding of business opportunities, increased connection to forestry sector, increase in area managed.

15. What next?

Probe for detail. What are your future plans?
Is there any other support you feel your business might need?

Annex 6. Businesses interviewed by type and FS Area

No.	Area	cohort	Event attended	Type of business	New customer?
1	EEM	2015	Pie and Pint	Sawmill - microenterprise	Yes
2	EEM	2015	Pie and Pint	Estate forester/manager	
3	SW	2015	Pie and Pint	Woodland owner / contractor - microenterprise	
4	SW	2015	Pie and Pint	Agent/consultant - SME	
5	NWWM	2015	Pie and Pint	Fuelwood processor and supplier - microenterprise	Yes
6	EEM	2015	Application Masterclass	Arboriculturalist	Yes
7	EEM	2015	Application Masterclass	Woodland owner/contractor	
8	NWWM	2015	Application Masterclass	Forestry consultant - microenterprise	
9	NWWM	2015	Application Masterclass	Arboriculturalist	
10	EEM	2014	Pie and Pint	Estate forester/manager	
11	EEM	2014	Pie and Pint	Development Officer, Trust	
12	SEL	2016	Pie and Pint	Community forester	
13	SEL	2016	Pie and Pint	Contractor - SME	
14	SEL	2016	Application Masterclass	Ranger, Charity	
15	SEL	2016	Application Masterclass	Contractor - SME	

Annex 7. On-line survey instrument

1. Introduction

Thanks for clicking through to this survey. You might already have filled in a short evaluation form after attending one of the Forestry Commission's events. This on-line survey is different, it asks some more detailed questions about your business, your business planning, and some questions about any impact the business support activities may have had on your business. The information you provide will help the Forestry Commission understand more at an England-wide level, about what kinds of businesses are attracted to these events and find them most useful, and how far any impacts there might have been relate to the Forestry Commission's own objectives. There are 25 questions to answer, which should take you between 10 - 20 minutes to complete. The survey is anonymous, we don't ask you to identify yourself. We really appreciate you taking the time to answer the questions. As a token of our appreciation we will enter you into a prize draw for a £100 Amazon voucher which we will draw in April. You'll just need to leave us your preferred contact method for us to be able to put you into the hat. OK let's start ....

1. If you would like to be entered into the prize draw for a £100 Amazon voucher please leave your preferred contact details in the box below.

2. Information about you and your business

In this section please could you explain what kind of enterprise you represent and something about the kind of woodland or timber markets you operate in. This information helps us to understand much more about the business context you are working in and the kinds of businesses the Forestry Commission have reached and supported.

2. Which part of England do you operate in? ***Please select all that apply.***

https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/aws.smartsurvey.co.uk/_files/cabinet/59059/46963_GB-map-FS-areas.gif

*

- South East and London
- South West
- North West and West Midlands
- Yorkshire and North East
- East and East Midlands

3. What kind of enterprise are you? ***If you have a mixed business model please tick all the boxes that apply.*** *

- Private woodland owner/manager
- Farmer with woodland
- Estate manager / estate forester
- Forestry agent / consultant

- Sawmiller and timber processor
- Fuelwood processor / retailer
- Furniture maker / crafts person
- Forestry contractor
- Arboricultural contractor
- Forest tourism / recreation enterprise
- Haulage enterprise
- Training and learning enterprise
- Other (please specify)

4. How old is your enterprise?
If you are a private woodland owner rather than an enterprise please indicate how long you have owned the woodland for. *

- less than 1 year old
- 1-3 years old
- 3-5 years old
- 5-10 years old
- more than 10 years old

5. How many people do you employ? *

- no employees
- less than 10
- less than 50
- less than 250

6. What is you average annual turnover? *

- less than £50k
- less than £100k
- less than £250k
- less than £500k
- less than £1 million

7. What kind of woodland do you own or manage, or what kind of woodland does your enterprise operate in? *Please select all that apply* *

- Broadleaved (i.e. > 80% broadleaved species)
- Conifer (i.e. > 80% conifer species)
- Mixed mainly broadleaved (i.e. 50-80% broadleaved species)
- Mixed mainly conifer (i.e. 50-80% conifer species)
- Coppice
- Coppice with standards
- Young trees / new planting
- The enterprise does not operate in woodland

8. Please estimate the area of woodland you own, manage or that your enterprise operates across? *We are looking for your best estimate in hectares (Ha). Please provide an answer for all that apply.*

Woodland owned
Woodland managed
Woodland operated in

9. What is the market for any products that come from the woodland you own, manage or operate in? Please tick all that apply

	Sell to local markets	Sell to national markets	Export	Use ourselves	used
Millable timber (e.g. large logs)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small roundwood for fuelwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small roundwood not for fuelwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stumps and branchwood (e.g. brash)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Game products (e.g. venison)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are there any other important products or services?

10. Please can you estimate the volume of any timber you produce annually? *We are looking for your best estimate in cubic metres (m3). If cubic metres don't make sense for your business please tell us what measure you are using.*

Millable timber
Small roundwood for fuelwood
Small roundwood not for fuelwood
Stumps and branchwood

11. If you process timber, what kind of timber does your enterprise handle and what are the main products produced? *Please tick all that apply.*

	Planks, boards etc	Beams and specialised construction products	Hardwood logs	Biomass pellets chip	Veneers, furniture and crafts
Mainly hardwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mainly softwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mixed hardwood and softwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other (please explain)

12. If you process timber where do you source your supply? *Please tick all that apply*

	Direct from local woodland	British timber from local markets	British timber from national markets	Imported timber	Do not use
Millable timber (e.g. large logs)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small roundwood for fuelwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small roundwood not for fuelwood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stumps and branchwood (e.g. brash)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. Please can you estimate the volume of timber your enterprise deals with annually? *We are looking for your best estimate in cubic metres (m3). If cubic metres don't make sense for your business please use the "Other" option to identify a better measure.*

Millable timber
Small roundwood for fuelwood
Small roundwood not for fuelwood
Stumps and branchwood

Other

5. Information about the Forestry Commission events you took part in

Please can you tell us about the Forestry Commission supported events and activities you took part in. We are interested to know about events you have attended between 2014-2016. We are interested in knowing more about the other sources of advice you may use.

14. Please identify any Forestry Commission activities you have taken part in, and which year this happened. We are looking for an answer to each question - please click "not applicable" if you didn't attend a particular event. *

	2014	2015	2016	Not applicable
[illegible] event				
Breakfast briefing				
[illegible] master class				
Specialist business advice (i.e. from FC or [illegible] advisor)				
Machinery demonstration				
a LEADER led workshop				
Interaction with FC staff at a conference, APF, CONFOR events, county shows and wood fairs				
Direct communication with Forestry Commission staff (e.g. Woodland Officer or Partnership Advisor) via email or telephone or face to face				

Were there any other woodland business related events you took part in which are not included on this list? These could be Forestry Commission events or events organised by other organisations. Please make a note of them below.

15. Could you describe the level of contact you had with the Forestry Commission before taking part in these activities *

- I never had any contact with the Forestry Commission before taking part in these events
- I had infrequent contact with the Forestry Commission before taking part in these events
- I had frequent contact with the Forestry Commission before taking part in these events

16. Have you ever had a forestry grant or business grant before? Please tell us which grant(s) and what it was for, or answer "none" if you haven't had a grant. *

17. Where would you normally tend to go for your woodland/forestry business advice? Please tick off those that apply.

	Never	Rarely	Frequently
CONFOR			
Institute of Chartered Foresters			
[illegible]			
NFU			
Small Woods Association			
Woodland Trust			
Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG)			
Royal Forestry Society			
A Farmers Network (e.g. [illegible])			
Professional forestry consultancy/management company			
DEFRA			
Natural England			
Country Land and Business Association (CLA)			
British Association for Shooting and Conservation			
Local Enterprise Partnership			
Chamber of Commerce			
Bank or financial advisor			
Small business development advisor			
Other woodland owners you know			
Other farmers you know			

Other similar businesses you know			
Woodland Initiative (e.g. Northwoods in the North East)			
Forestry Commission			

Other? Please tell us who

6. Your business objectives

18. Do you have any of the following formal business planning tools? If you do, please tell us roughly how long these have been in place. *

	1 year or less	1-5 years	More than 5 years	Don't have this
Woodland Management Plan				
Business Management Plan				
Business development plan / plan for growth				

Other (please specify):

19. Please describe your three most important business objectives for the next five years. *We are looking for an answer in each row. If you do not have clearly defined business objectives please enter "don't know" as your answer.*
*

	Objective
1st	
2nd	
3rd	

20. Was seeking advice specifically related to these business objectives your primary motivation for attending the Forestry Commission event? *

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- No, I was looking for general level of advice, support and ideas
- No, I was specifically looking to meet other people with similar situations to mine

21. Please tell us how valuable you think the business support activity (activities) that you took part in were providing you with the kind of advice you were looking for. *We are looking for an answer to each question - please click "not applicable" if you didn't attend a particular event.* *

	Not that useful	Interesting	Very Useful	Really Valuable	Absolutely critical	Not applicable
Pie and Pint event						
Breakfast briefing						
Application master class						
Specialist business advice (e.g. from FC or FACE consortium adviser)						
Machinery demonstration						
a LEADER led workshop						
Interaction with FC staff at a conference, APF, CONFOR events, county shows and wood fairs						
Direct communication with Forestry Commission staff (e.g. Woodland Officer or Partnership Adviser) via						

email or telephone or face to face

Other (please specify):

7. Tracking any changes

In this section, we are interested in finding out more about the impacts that you feel the Forestry Commission business support has had on you and your enterpris appreciate that there may be no impacts in the short term, but please try to answer the following questions as fully as you can.

22. Please rank the degree of influence the activity that you took part in had on you or your business. We are interested in finding out if you have star thinking about doing something differently, or if you actually acted on the advice and did something new or different. We are looking for an answer to eac question - please click "not applicable" if you didn't attend a particular event. *

	No influence	Some influence (i.e. thinking about doing something different)	Substantial influence (i.e. actually did something different as a result)	Not applicable
Pie and Pint event				
Breakfast briefing				
Application master class				
Specialist business advice (e.g. from FC or RACE consortium advisor)				
Machinery demonstration				
a LEADER led workshop				
Interaction with FC staff at a conference, APF, CONFOR events, county shows and wood fairs				
Direct communication with Forestry Commission staff (e.g. Woodland Officer or Partnership Advisor) via email or telephone or face to face				

23. If there was some influence, please can you tell us what is it that you are thinking about doing differently?

24. If there was substantial influence, can you tell us what you actually did that was new or different?

25. Please can you tell us about anything you did for your business since interacting with the Forestry Commission. We are interested in what you dic was a direct consequence of interacting with the Forestry Commission. *

	Did you do this?
Applied for a grant	
Secured a grant	
Produced a Woodland Management Plan	
Produced a Business Management Plan	

Produced a Business Development Plan

Managed more woodland

Won new contracts to manage additional woodland

Increased volumes of timber products

Increased operating efficiency

Reduced operating costs

Employed more people

Increased forestry/processing business income

Met important new business contacts

Became part of a network of similar businesses

Learnt about things I could do with my woodland that I had not considered before

Learnt about things I could do with my business that I had not considered before

Were there any other impact(s) not listed above?

8.

The very last question is coming up!

26. Can you quantify the scale of the changes you mentioned in the last question, i.e. since interacting with the Forestry Commission in the business support events? ***Please provide an indication of the size of the impact using the slider. Please include all that apply.***

Increase to number of contracts?

Increase to timber volumes?

Reduction in operating costs?

Increase to number of employees?

Increase to business income?