

Business Networking in the Calder Valley:

Elland

19th March, 2018

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1. Executive Summary

- **A survey was conducted in February-March 2018 to gather information to support business networks and associations in the Elland area.**
- **131 individuals from 129 businesses from a range of sectors, locations and businesses responded** 26 (21%) responded by email (4% return rate), 11 (8%) via social media and 96 (73%) via face-to-face contact (representing approximately 1 in 3 of over 250 face-to-face contacts made).
- **19% (24) of respondents had attended a networking event in the Elland area in the previous year.** The events were useful for meeting and connecting with local businesses, and also for the chance to meet local councillors and council officers to find out about plans for the local area.
- **81% (107) of respondents had not attended a networking event in the Elland area in the previous year.** The most frequent reason given for not attending was: 'not aware of events' (67%). Time of day may have been a barrier to smaller Retail/Town Centre businesses, while perceived relevance was low amongst some larger industrial businesses with an inter/national or specialist focus.
- **When asked to choose three of a list of eight business networking activities that would appeal to them, the top responses were Informal Networking (53%) and a Social Media Group (51%),** particularly amongst the Professional sectors and Retail/Town Centre businesses.
- **Business Support (41%) and Joint Promotions & Events (41%) were also popular.** The former with the Manufacturing group of sectors in the surrounds of Elland, and the latter with Retail/Town Centre businesses.
- **When asked to choose three of a list of nine potential benefits of business networking , the top responses were a 'Stronger Business Community' (45%) and to 'Expand my Network of Contacts (44%).** 'New work/Leads' (42%), 'Promotion of My Business' (42%) and 'Support to Develop & Grow' (41%) were also frequently perceived benefits.
- **Each sector expected different benefits from networking in terms of sustaining their businesses.** Retail/Town Centre, and smaller, businesses were focused on 'Promoting my Business'; the Professional... group of sectors were more focused on 'New Work/Leads'; the Manufacturing... group including larger industrial businesses were more likely to choose 'Support to Develop and Grow', 'Expand my Network of Contacts' and 'Connecting Outside the Area'.
- **Comments suggested that respondents felt that networks and associations could benefit Elland by increasing footfall in the town centre and by building identity and promoting the town.** This might be achieved in part by bringing different types of businesses together and encouraging trade and spend within the local area. Specific issues for the town centre were mentioned, particularly the lack of banks and parking, the type and quality of businesses and restricted Saturday opening.
- **Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were found to be the most popular days for meetings/events. Morning or early evening were the most popular times for meetings/events.** Current networking events in Elland tend to be breakfast meetings, whereas many businesses who had not recently attended networking events expressed a preference for events later in the morning.
- **UCVR will use information provided by businesses in Elland to inform its work with business networks in the area.**

2. Background & Method

Background: UCVR has been commissioned by Calderdale Borough Council to support business networks along the Calder Valley, particularly in flood affected areas (Todmorden, Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd, Luddenden, Sowerby Bridge, Brighouse and Elland). To understand how local businesses can benefit from networks or associations, and how UCVR and the borough can best support networking, UCVR is conducting a series of surveys along the Calder Valley.

Following successful surveys of over 250 businesses in the Todmorden and Sowerby Bridge areas, the research was repeated in Elland. Elland has a number of business networks and community groups which meet locally. However, these tend to be location or sector specific (e.g. town centre, business park based). While the surrounds of Elland are prospering in terms of industry and employment opportunities, Elland Town Centre itself had been challenged first by the loss of the bridge to the town centre after the 2015 floods and then by the loss of all high street banks. A need to bring more businesses together for the benefit of Elland is apparent.

Aims: The aim of the survey was to collect input and contact details from businesses interested in networking in the Elland area. The survey aimed to collect information about preferred activities, anticipated benefits and barriers to participation. UCVR will communicate the survey results to local networks and council officers working with Elland businesses, who may use the information to encourage wider and more proactive networking in Elland, tailored to local needs and run by local businesses.

Questionnaire Design: The earlier surveys were revised slightly to suit the area, in collaboration with UCVR's board, UCVR's lead on business networking and with input from those involved in running groups in the area. A draft questionnaire was shared with a small number of businesses in the area.

Distribution: All types of business were included in the target audience (e.g. limited companies, partnerships, sole traders, social enterprises and cooperatives). However, participation was not restricted and all those with an interest in networking with the business community in Elland were encouraged to participate. The distribution area covered the Elland ward (including the town centre, industrial estates and business parks), West Vale high street, Greetland, Stainland, Holywell Green, Barkisland, Ainley Top, Salterhebble and Exley.

The questionnaire was distributed via email and via social media, to:

- Calderdale Borough's email contact list for business support (created through flood support and other business support requests; c. 601 businesses in the areas listed above)
- Local facebook pages (e.g. Elland Banter, Elland Action Group, West Vale Action Group)
- Twitter (@UCVR_ @BizNet_UCVR @DillonResearch @allaboutelland @KarenbizSB @BGCalderdale)

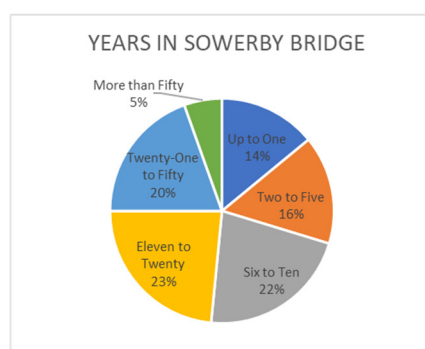
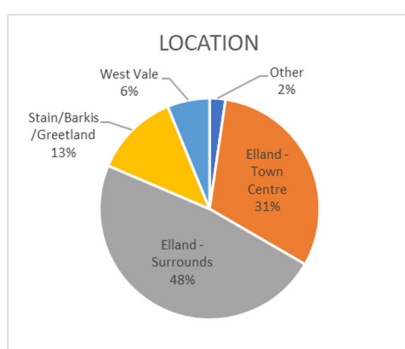
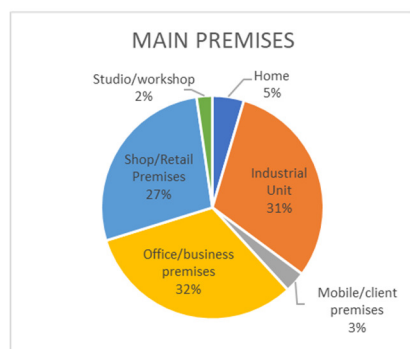
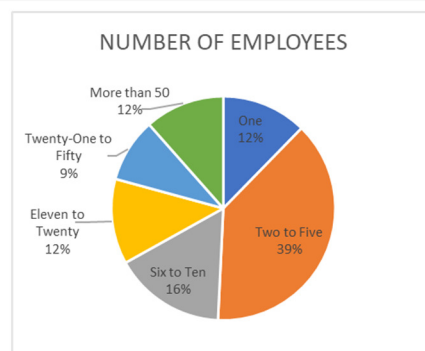
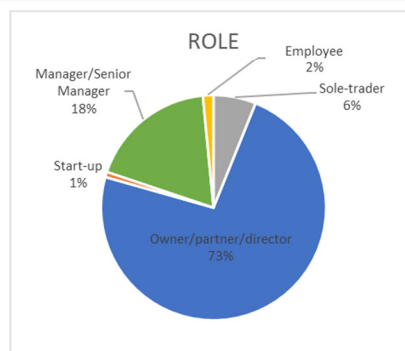
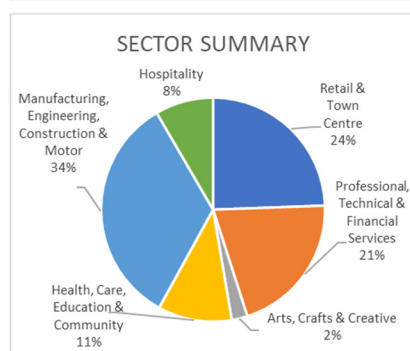
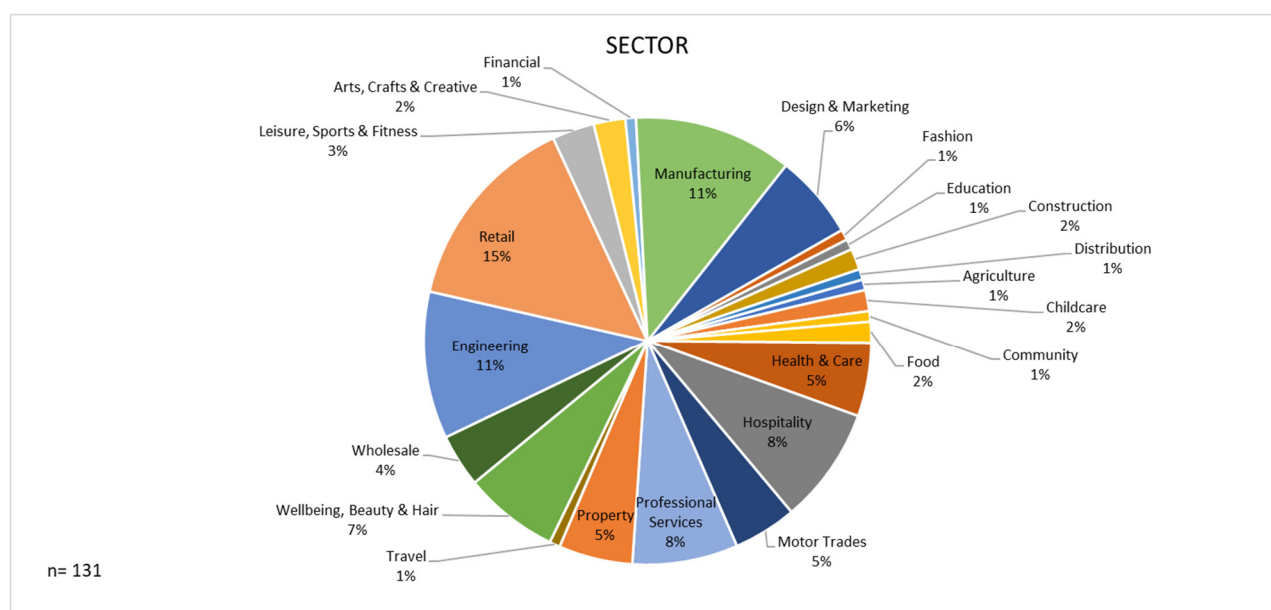
Visible businesses were also visited on foot, with a focus on the town centres (Elland and West Vale) and industrial estates and business parks around Elland, Greetland, Stainland and Barkisland.

The survey was open from Tuesday 27th February to Friday 16th March, 2018

3. Participants

131 individuals from 129 businesses from a range of sectors, locations and businesses responded

- 26 (21%) responded by email (4% return rate), 11 (8%) via social media and 96 (73%) via face to face contact (representing approximately 1 in 3 of over 250 face-to-face contacts made.)
- The largest sector groups were Retail... (24%), Manufacturing...(34%) and Professional...(21%)
- Most respondents were either owners/partners/directors of businesses (78%) or senior/managers (18%)
- Half of respondents worked in businesses with five or fewer employees (51%); a third had more than ten employees, with some of the largest employers in the area represented (e.g. six with >100 employees)
- Most respondents (90%) were based in business premises.
- Most respondents (79%) were based in Elland town centre or the industrial estates and business parks around the town. However, all areas connected to Elland were also represented.
- Around a third of respondents (30%) had been operating in Elland for five or less years, but most were longer term. Some (5%) had been in Elland over 50 years, with four older than 100years.



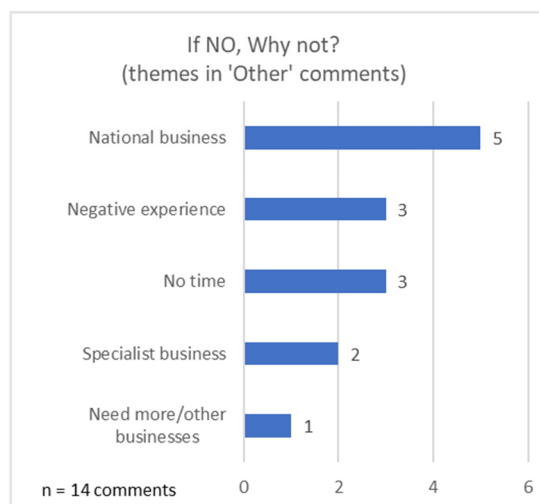
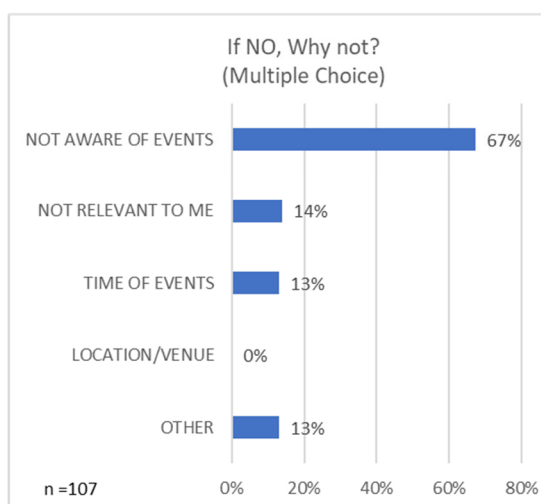
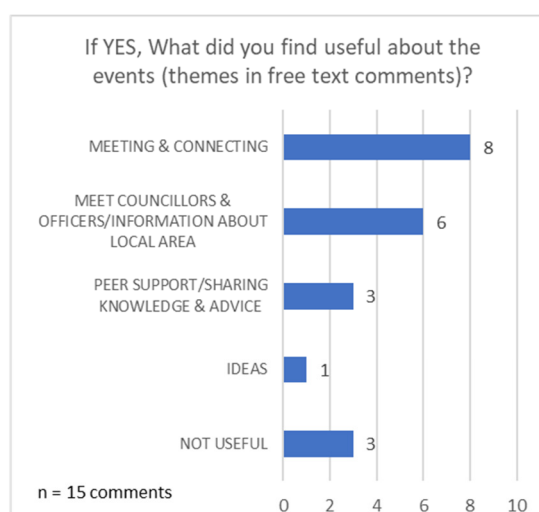
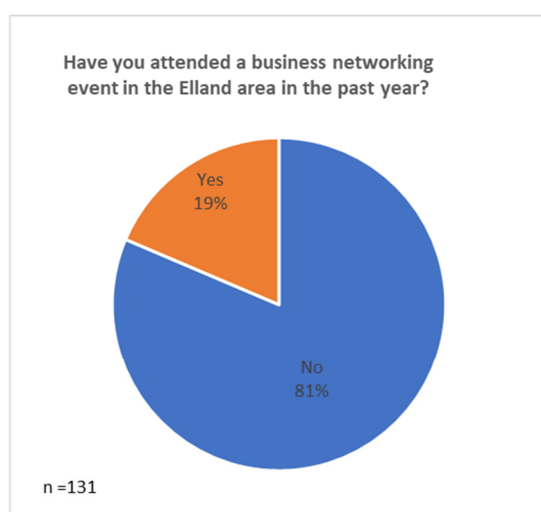
4. Experiences of Business Networking in Elland

19% of respondents attended a networking event in the area in the previous year (24 in total)

- The following local groups were mentioned: Elland Business Group/Forum, Bertie's breakfast, Vapour Media breakfast, Best Networking breakfast at Caffè Shop, other council or local events to discuss local plans and issues (e.g. Development Board, flood information), hosting of a Calderdale Manufacturers Alliance meeting, Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce meeting, LEP event in Halifax and charity/Rotary Club events.
- The events were useful for meeting and connecting with local businesses, and also the chance to meet councillors or council officers and hear and feed into plans for the area.
- Businesses that had recently attended events were most likely to be smaller and town centre businesses (excepting sole workers), and were relatively more likely to be some of the youngest and oldest businesses.

81% of respondents had not attended a networking event in the area in the previous year.

- Of four choices, the most frequent reason for not attending was 'not aware of events' (67%). 'Time of events' (14%) and 'not relevant to me' (13%), were also frequent reasons for not attending, whereas 'location/venue' was not noted as a concern..
- The time of events may be a particular barrier for retail/town centre and the smallest businesses, whereas perceived relevance may be a barrier for larger manufacturing and related businesses in the surrounds of Elland (Appendix 1).
- Specifically, perceived relevance may be low for businesses who trade mainly nationally or internationally, or in a specialist field, and therefore do not immediately see benefit or opportunities in networking locally.
- A small number of respondents reported negative experiences of networking in the area, such as challenges in gathering support or effecting change, which made them reluctant to take part or take a lead at this time.

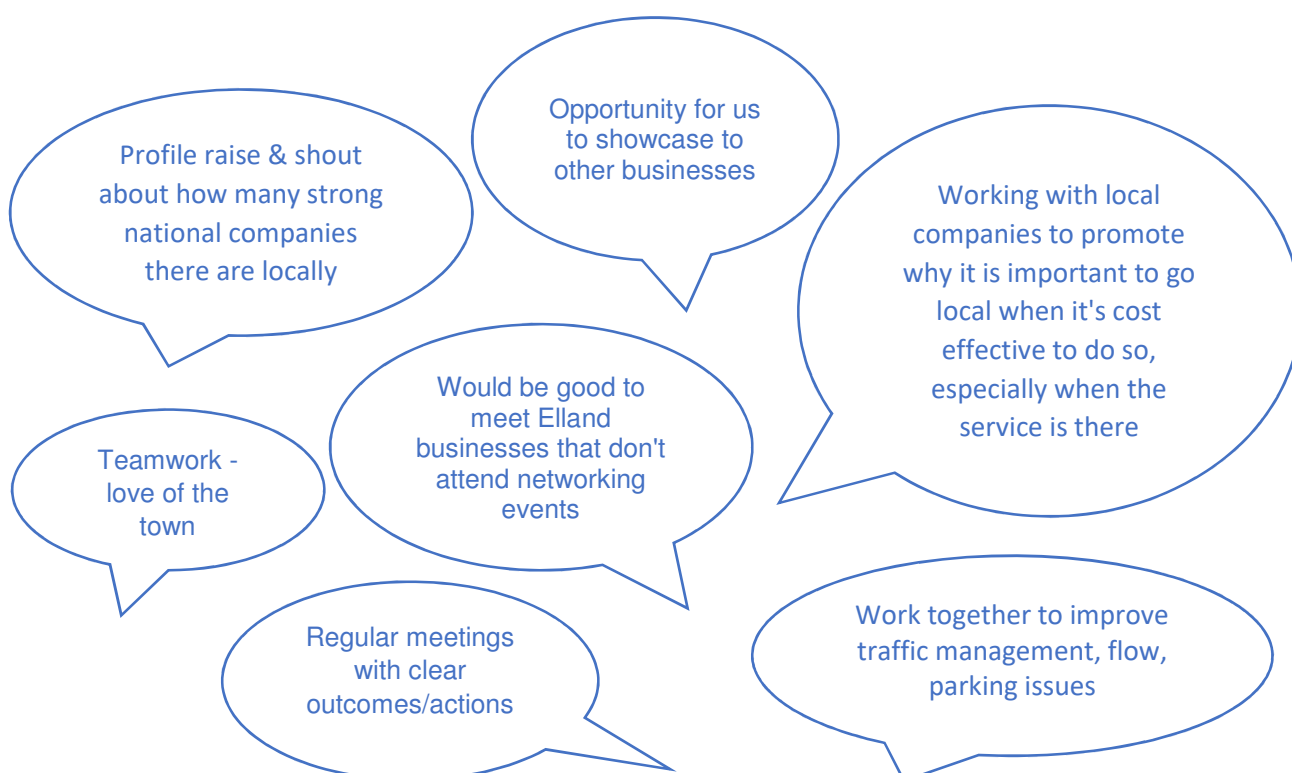
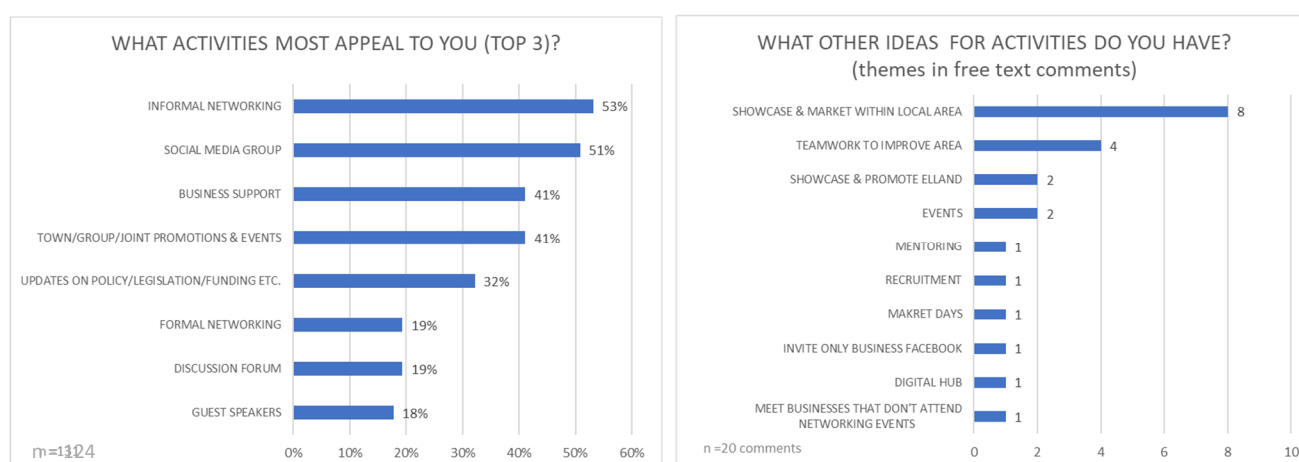


5. Business Networking Activities

When asked to choose three of a list of eight business networking activities that would appeal to them, the top responses were Informal Networking (53%) and a Social Media Group (51%). Business Support (41%) and Joint Promotions & Events (41%) were also popular.

- Less frequently chosen were Guest Speakers (18%), Discussion Forums (19%) and Formal Networking (19%)
- Informal and social media networking were characteristic needs of the Professional... and Retail/Town Centre sectors in particular, especially smaller businesses (Appendix 2).
- Town/group/joint promotions and events were particularly popular with the Retail/Town Centre businesses.
- Business support (41% overall) and Updates on Policy/Legislation/Funding (32% overall) were top choices for the Manufacturing...group of sectors in the surrounds of Elland.

When asked for other ideas for activities, comments mainly related to showcasing, promoting and marketing within the area, to encourage businesses to trade locally. Teamwork to improve the local area was also mentioned.



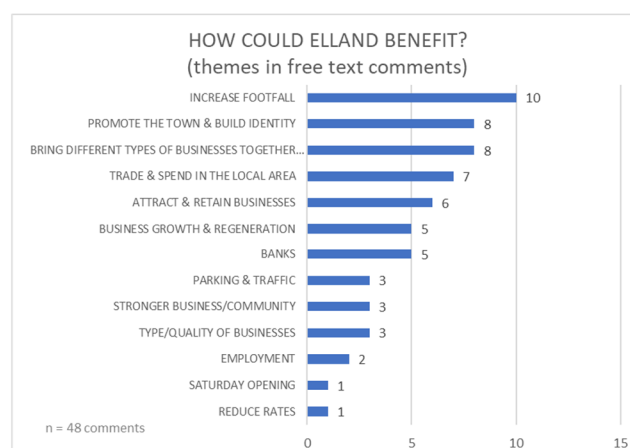
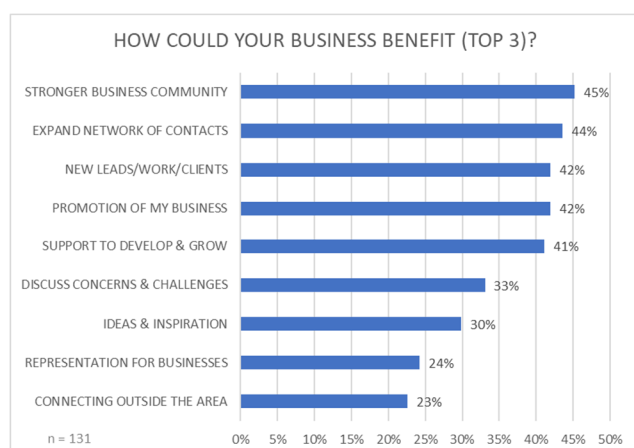
6. Business Networking Benefits

When asked to choose three of a list of nine potential benefits of business networking, the top responses were a 'Stronger Business Community' (45%) and to 'Expand my Network of Contacts (44%)'.

- 'New work/Leads' (42%), 'Promotion of My Business' (42%) and 'Support to Develop & Grow' (41%) were also frequently perceived benefits.
- Each sector expected different benefits from networking in terms of sustaining their businesses (Appendix 3). Retail/town centre, and smaller, businesses were focused on 'Promoting my Business'; the Professional... group of sectors were more focused on 'New Work/Leads'; the Manufacturing... group and larger industrial businesses were more likely to choose 'Support to Develop and Grow', 'Expand my Network of Contacts' and 'Connecting Outside the Area'.

Comments suggested that respondents felt that networks and associations could benefit Elland by increasing footfall in the town centre and by building identity and promoting the town.

- This might be achieved in part by bringing different types of businesses together and encouraging trade and spend within the local area.
- Specific issues for the town centre were mentioned, particularly the lack of banks and parking, the type and quality of businesses and restricted Saturday opening.



Elland is too disjointed. There are many new businesses who are trying to raise the profile of Elland and I think we all need to get together

Help businesses to grow and employ people. Out on a limb here, would be good to meet other businesses who could use our services.

As soon as the banks left the area went down hill. There is no reason to go to Elland

Elland is a lovely little town, lots to offer, people unaware of the town

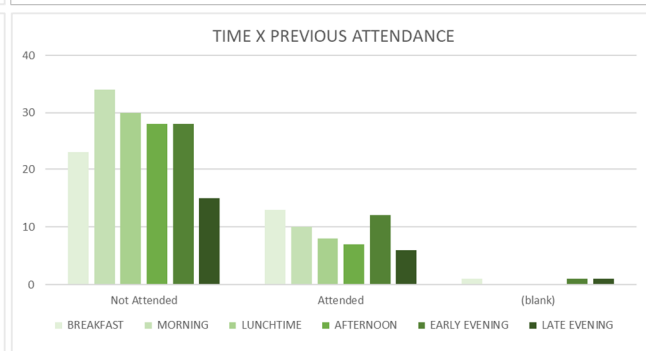
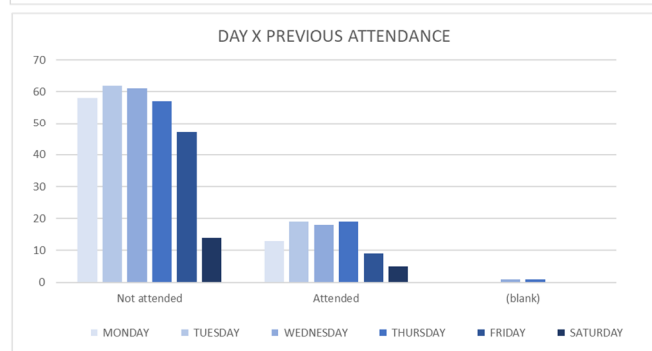
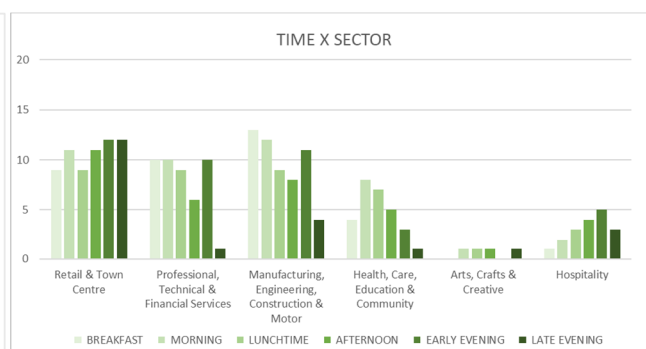
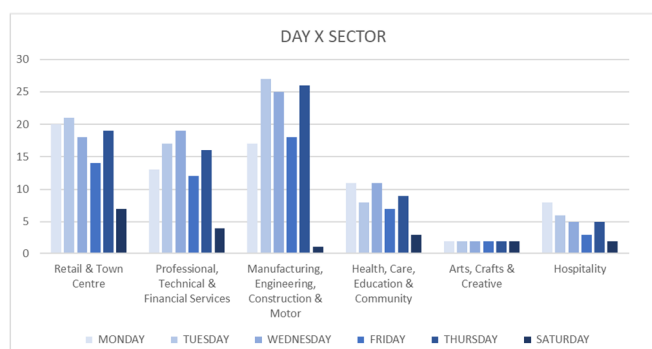
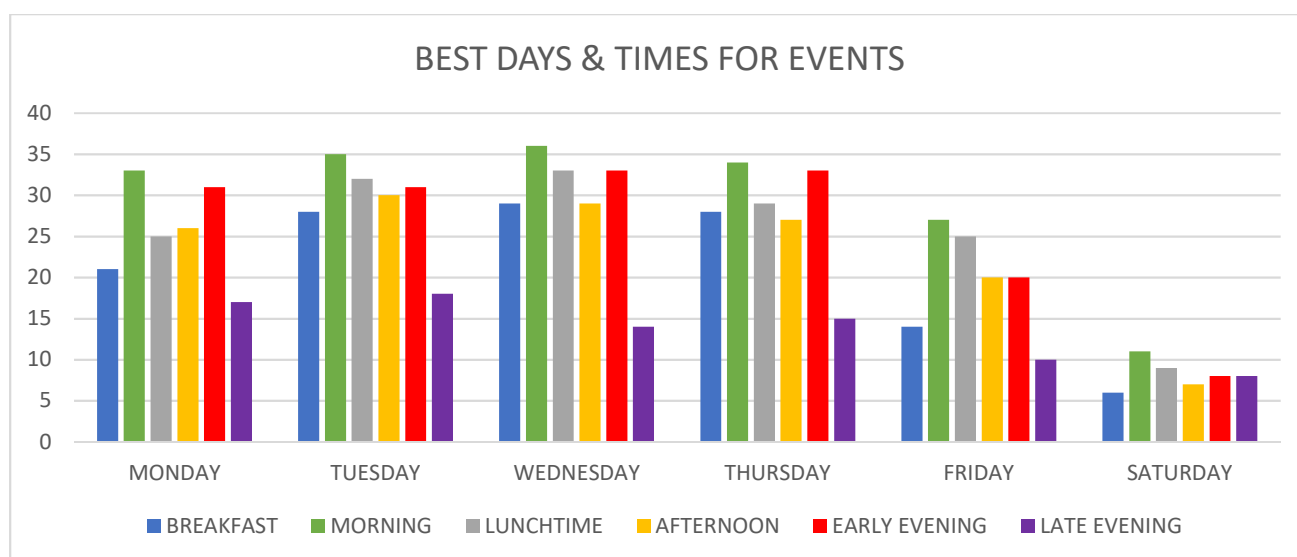
It would help local businesses see just how good Calderdale is, especially if they look outside Calderdale for their work. There is a lot of work here right under their noses if they look and its right on their doorstep.

It would create a stronger community amongst local businesses, helping to revive the area and attract new businesses to Elland.

7. Preferred Days and Time

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are the most popular days for meetings/events. Mornings are the most popular time for meetings, followed by early evening..

- However, even the most popular time slots represent only a third of respondents.
- Different sectors differed slightly in their preferred times, with evening meetings preferred more by some in the Retail/Town Centre and Hospitality sectors.
- Most of the current networking events in Elland are breakfast meetings, which may have been a barrier to many respondents. Those who had not attended previously preferred events slightly later in the morning. This may be related to travel times or attending events outside working hours.



All charts show frequency of responses (n = 131; multiple responses)

8. Supporters

A small number of respondents offered support with networks and associations, particularly venues.

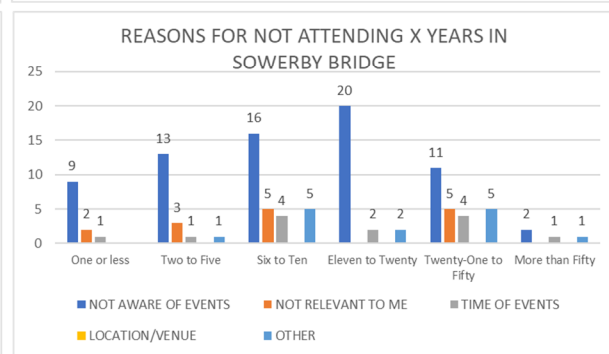
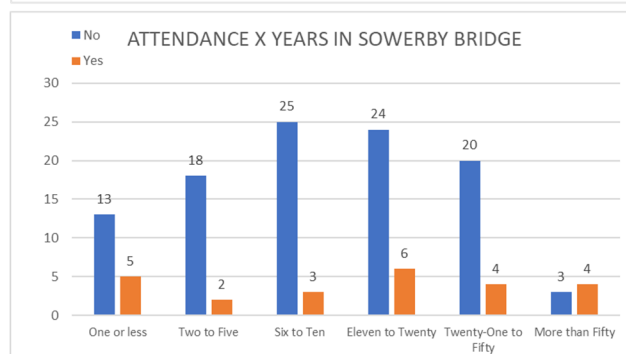
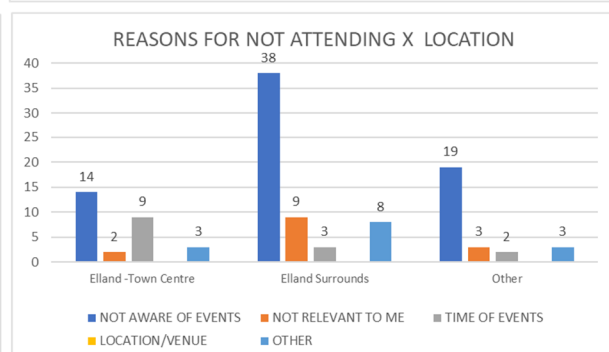
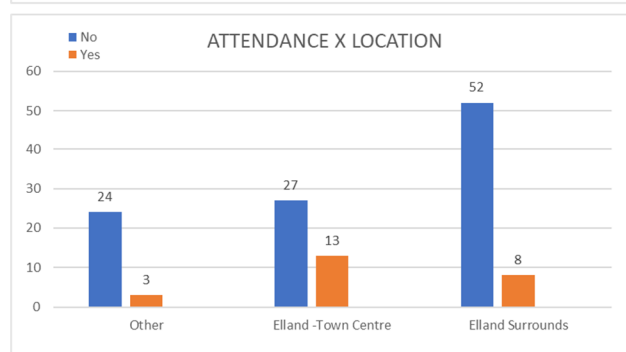
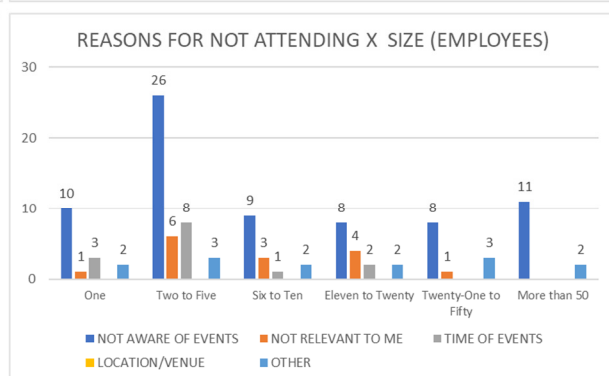
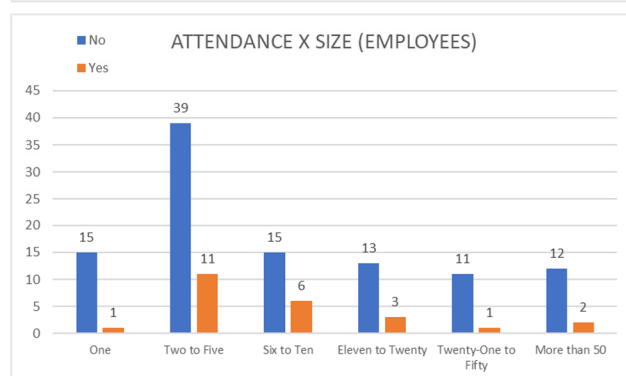
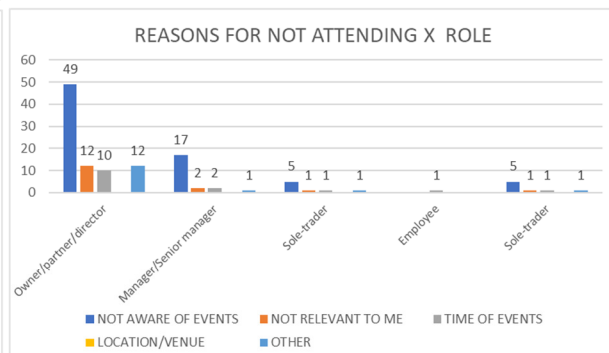
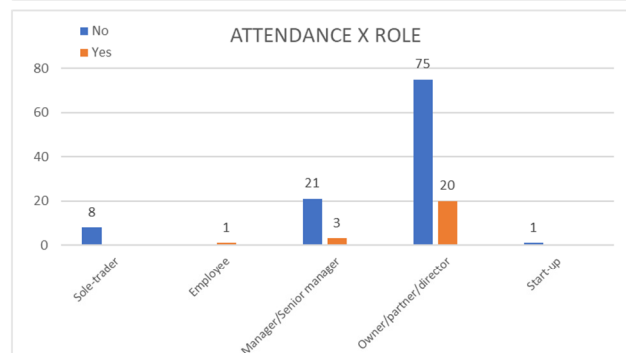
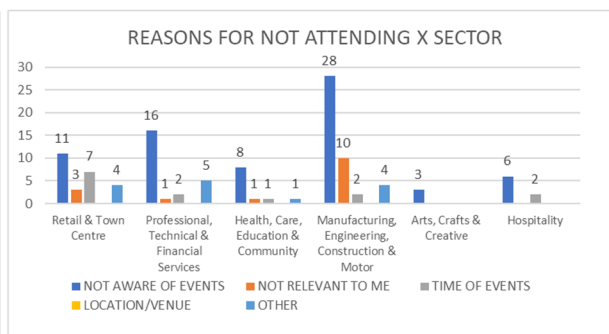
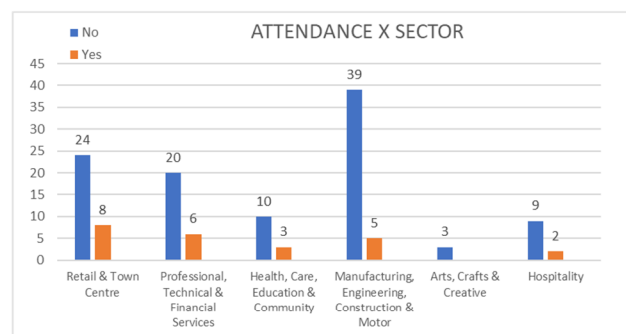
9. Acknowledgements

This report was prepared for UCVR by Dr Cath Dillon, an independent research consultant based in Calderdale. Cath is a certified member of the Market Research Society and a member of the Social Research Association, and works within the guidelines of these organisations.

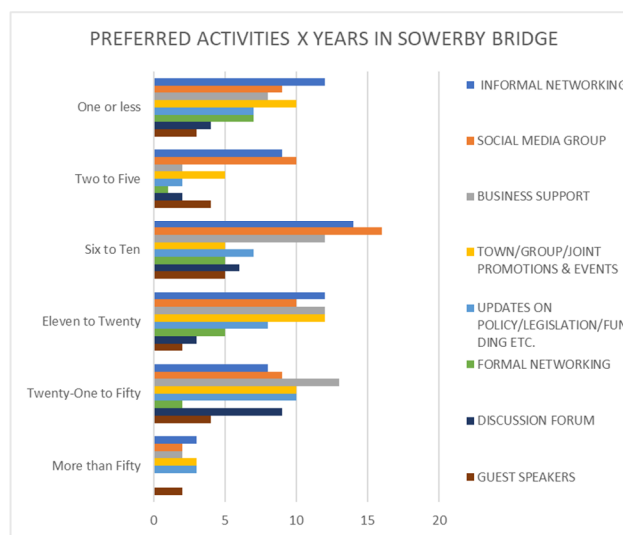
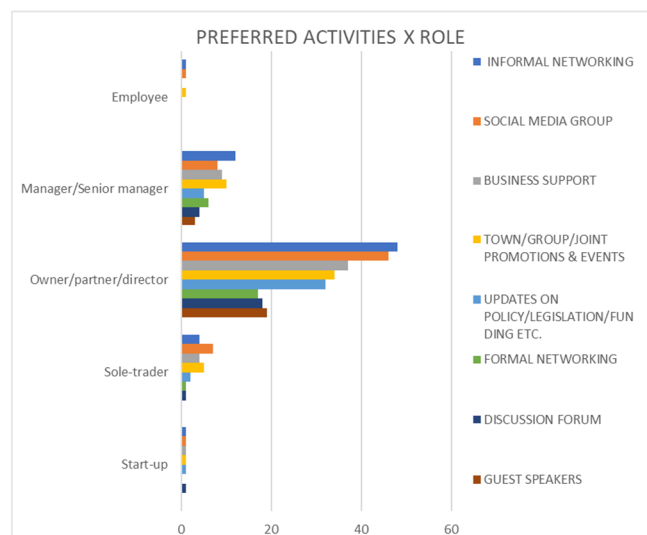
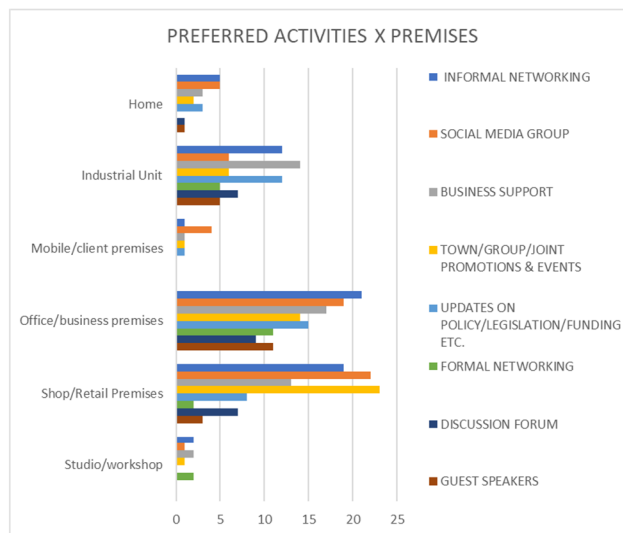
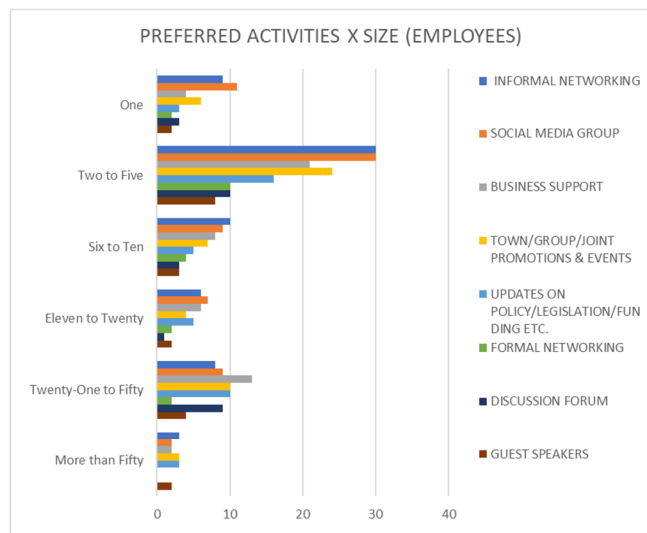
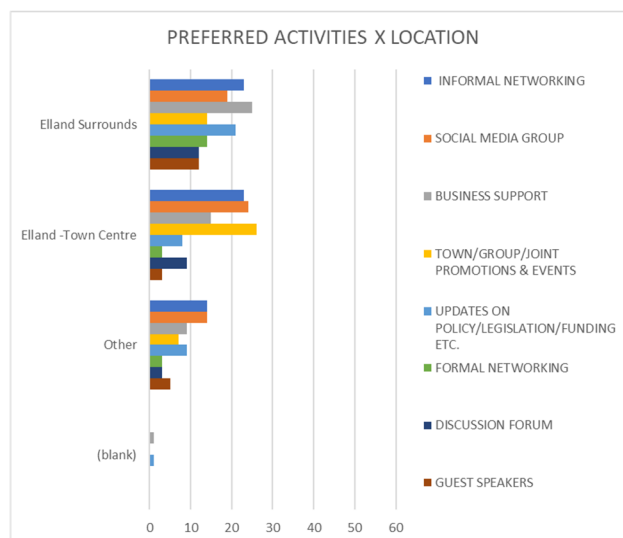
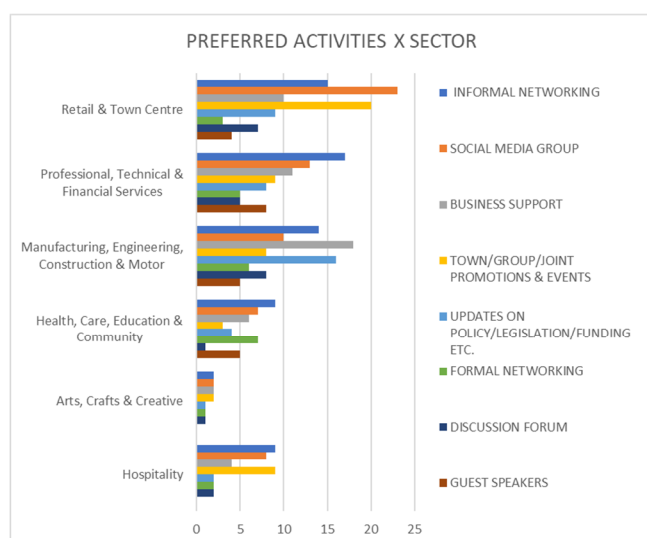
Thanks to the Stephen Curry, Sarah Moss, Angela Whiley (Calderdale Council) and other members of Calderdale's Business Support team for sharing their thoughts on business networking in Elland during the development of the research and for promoting the survey.

With thanks to the many businesses and organisations in Elland who took time out to express their interest and contribute their ideas.

Appendix 1: Networking Experiences by Subgroup



Appendix 2: Preferred Activities by Subgroup



Appendix 3: Perceived Benefits by Subgroup

