



Cuckmere Pathfinder Project

Summary of Findings for the Landscape, Visitors, Heritage and Economy of the Cuckmere: Evidence Presentation Stage 1 (Public Event)

Held on 8 February 2011 at the County Hall, Lewes

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project is for East Sussex County Council to work together with the local community to reach consensus on how best to manage change at the Cuckmere Estuary. Some change at the Estuary is inevitable over the long term, and it is important to start planning for that change now. The County Council wants to make sure that everyone's views have been taken into account and all the options have been carefully considered in making decisions about the future of the Cuckmere. The £250,000 Pathfinder Project is being funded by DEFRA and will run until June 2011.

1.2 Engagement Plan

[Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections](#) with [Rhoden Green Marketing and Communications](#), was commissioned by East Sussex County Council to work with them on the design and implementation of the engagement and communication elements of the Pathfinder project. Two workshops were held in summer 2010 at which the Environment Agency presented its reasons for withdrawing current flood maintenance, and members of the community put forward alternative management solutions. These were the first in a series of workshops and events held as part of the Pathfinder Project, which will culminate in a major public event to be held on 7 June.

At the second workshop, held on 14 December, a range of options for the future were presented and participants were encouraged to share their views on which options should be taken forward for more detailed assessment. The full programme of intensive workshops and public events is given at Appendix 1. On 8 February participants were invited to hear the results of four evidence focused pieces of work: heritage assets; landscape; visitor and economic studies which are explained further in 1.4 and 1.5.

1.3 Who is involved?

The Cuckmere Pathfinder Project is being managed by East Sussex County Council who appointed a Project Officer, Adrian Davies, as part of the DEFRA funded programme. The Project Officer reports to the Project Board made up of members of the community, the County Council and the Cuckmere Estuary Partnership (CEP). The membership of the Project Board is included at Appendix 2. Working closely with the Project Board, and with an overlapping membership, is the Community Forum. The Forum was established in November 2009 further to the recommendations that came from the community engagement events run in the same year. It has an extremely active role in working through options for the future management of the Estuary.

1.4 Background to the evidence studies

East Sussex County Council maintains a database¹ of information relevant to the Cuckmere as part of the Pathfinder Project. This has been developed over time and collates the wealth of existing information which has been produced and commissioned by different organisations and academics. It includes site based reports and best practice from other areas and includes subject areas such as coastal management, ecology, geomorphology and climate change. This evidence is essential to the process of agreeing on a strategy for the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary. An evidence audit, and the community engagement carried out to date, examined the gaps in knowledge and information. As a result the study areas required to fill the main evidence gaps were identified as historic environment, visitor research, economic impact and landscape character.

1.5 The evidence studies

The four evidence studies were commissioned by the Pathfinder Project, the objectives for which were approved by the Project Board and are summarised below.

¹ Available at <http://www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk/About-project/New-research.aspx>

a) Visitor Study

The visitor study was commissioned from Tourism South East in early July 2010 with the following objectives - to identify:

- Who visits the Cuckmere Valley;
- The main purpose of their visit;
- Where they come from and how far they have travelled;
- How often they visit;
- The aspects of the Valley they value most;
- What other places they visited in the area;
- How much they spend in the local area;
- The main mode of transport used; and,
- How they found out about Cuckmere Valley.

It was agreed that the research would be carried out on site in the winter and summer to establish seasonal changes.

b) Economic Study

The economic study was commissioned in October 2010 from effec. The following objective was defined for the study:

To determine the current economic benefit Cuckmere Estuary brings to the local area examining:

- Expenditure by visitors
- Net economic income to the local area
- The number of local jobs supported by visitor expenditure
- The agricultural value of the land within the Estuary

c) Heritage Assets Study

The Heritage Assets study was commissioned in August 2010 from Oxford Archaeology. They were asked to meet the following objectives in their research:

- Provide an updated evidence base for the historic environment of the Cuckmere Haven and the heritage assets it contains.
- Provide a gazetteer of heritage assets, associated GIS files and a report.
- Identify the extent and significance of all identified heritage assets as well as the consideration of archaeological potential and allow for the exploration of options for the conservation and/or recording of heritage assets against a number of coastal change scenarios.

d) Landscape Assessment Study

The Landscape study was commission in November 2010 from David Huskisson Associates. Their brief was:

- To extend the existing landscape assessment [Jacobs Babbie - March 2006] to include an assessment of the impact and significance of the Coastguard Cottages and the sea defence works associated with them in the landscape.
- Provide a baseline assessment of the landscape and visual significance of the Coastguard Cottages and the Cable House... [and] the area of artificially reinforced cliff sea defence wall.

The character assessment should take into account the cultural significance of the cottages and the Cable House.

2. Event content

2.1 Event Purpose and Outcomes

The event was divided into four main parts, and the full programme is available at Appendix 3 of this report. The first introductory session explained the purpose of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project and this particular event. The second took the form of presentations on the Visitor and Economic Studies by Tourism South East and eftec respectively followed by facilitated discussion groups. Thirdly participants had the opportunity to hear the results of the Heritage Assets and Landscape research, again followed by facilitated discussions. Finally a plenary session was held to summarise the small group views.

The expected outcomes of the event were described as follows:

- To enable participants to hear and to reflect on the four evidence focussed studies
- To enable participants to feed in to the second stage evidence research.

In the introductory plenary session, Andy Robertson, Assistant Director Policy, Transport and Environment, East Sussex County Council explained the background to the Pathfinder Project. He described the role of the Cuckmere Estuary Partnership, the Community Forum, the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project Board and East Sussex County Council. He explained that the current community engagement programme aimed to lead to a process through which some kind of consensus could be reached on the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary. Andy referred to the existing research database held on the Cuckmere Pathfinder website; and encouraged all members of the community to take part in the process.

Henrietta Hopkins, the lead Facilitator, explained the purpose of this event as being to hear and understand additional evidence. She emphasised that the facilitation team were present to enable all those who wished to express their views and feed in to the next stages of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project.

2.2 Workshop Evaluation

Over 60 people attended the event. Each participant was asked to complete an evaluation form to assess whether the session had met people's needs. The full results of the evaluation are included in Appendix 4. In summary:

- 81% heard about the event from direct communications from the Cuckmere Pathfinder team either through the leaflet or a direct mail invitation posted or emailed to them;
- 83% found the process of booking their place at the event either good or excellent;
- 81% found the information provided before the event either good or excellent;
- 95% of participants said they had enough opportunity to express their views;
- 63% of participants found the presentations to be either good or excellent;
- 87% found their round table facilitator to be either good or excellent.

Participants' comments on the event are included in full at the end of Appendix 4. Some people found the range of existing knowledge and understanding of the participants a barrier to fruitful discussion. Others found it a useful opportunity to air their views which set the groundwork for future engagement sessions. There was concern that there was too little time to read the reports in advance of the event.

3. Event findings

In the summary which follows the discussions of each group are written up in relation to the evidence presented. The full transcripts of the discussion are included in Appendix 4.

3.1 Cross-theme discussions

There were some comments made which are common to all the research areas. For example each discussion group raised the importance to them in considering the entire Cuckmere Valley in future management decisions for the Estuary. As one participant reminded the Pathfinder project,

'Don't forget the impact north of the A259'.

Comments about the process of the Pathfinder Project were raised. One participant raised the following point:

'I gained the impression that many of the people present were rather more interested in the future options rather than the material present'

and another had serious concerns about the various levels of understanding of participants,

'There is a widening gap between those who have been attending meetings and are consequently well-informed and those who haven't and aren't...Are our carefully thought-through views, arrived at after hundreds of hours of reading and discussion, just going to be drowned out by the noise of the new-comers' views?'

The community engagement activities of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project include intensive workshops on the options (14 December); the criteria for assessment (8 March) and analysing these against the evidence reports and the technical and visual modelling being carried out to support the decision-making process (12 April). Alongside these run a series of public open events on the new evidence being researched to better understand the current situation at the Cuckmere Estuary (8 February); the 2nd phase of the evidence research to understand what might happen at the Estuary in the future under different management options (5 April) and the final assessment event (7 June). This process has been designed to allow as many people as possible to be involved in the decision which will affect the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary.

This leads to another point made by a participant around the views of the general public. They said,

'Consultants reports may miss the 'laymans' views - these need to be taken on board - make use of local people to take a view on possible future landscapes'.

A balance needs to be achieved to enable all those who wish to be involved in the process to express their views; whilst recognising the knowledge in existence amongst members of the Community Forum and others who have been intensively part of the discussion since the first community engagement events in 2009.

One participant raised the issue of the Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in any future planning for the Cuckmere Estuary. We are recommending within this report (see section 4, page 8) that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) area is included in the Pathfinder website to address this and other issues.

3.2 Visitor and Economic Studies

The Visitor Studies report was presented by Dr Parves Khan, Head of Research for Tourism South East. The PowerPoint presentation and full report are available on the Cuckmere Pathfinder website.² The points raised by participants are included in full in the transcripts of flip charts to be found at Appendix 4. To summarise the main issues expressed at the event it should be noted that there was some confusion over the term 'visitor' which was taken by some as meaning exclusively tourists, people who were not local to the region but were visiting the Cuckmere as part of a holiday or visiting friends and relations. The presenter reassured people that 'visitor' in this context meant anyone visiting the Cuckmere at all, whether walking their dog from Seaford or on a week-long holiday. Nevertheless, in the small group discussions two participants summarised this view as follows,

'All / most of the discussion is about visitors, there must be some consideration of the residents'

'Residents in area possibly affected should be considered equally (if not more so) than visitors'.

One participant expressed surprise that the survey didn't demonstrate a greater recognition of the Coastguard Cottages as an important part of the landscape.

'Surprised that the study didn't reveal a higher interest in the Coastguard Cottages, particularly as it's used by the British Tourist Board on their promotional materials'

This was addressed by the consultant who acknowledged that it was a surprising finding. Other participants expressed the view that the Cottages are an integral part of the landscape, but may not be highlighted by visitors for that same reason.

There was a concern that the timetabling of the research meant that those visiting the Cuckmere for educational visits were not captured by the study. A view echoed by a number of participants was put forward by one,

'It is important to carry out visitor research during term-time to adequately reflect the number of school / educational visits.'

This was explained further by a representative of Sussex Wildlife Trust who on an additional post-it reflection said,

'There are approximately 180 to 200 schools per year = 7,500 - 8,000 children.'

Others expressed the view that if educational visits had been excluded from the survey material, then so perhaps had others including people using the bus service and those coming down from the nature reserve to walk to the river mouth. One participant who submitted an event on the note afterwards said,

'We were very concerned that the actual surveys were selective. Apparently they were undertaken in August and did not catch the visitors from educational groups. Also no account has been taken of the interest within the Eastbourne area itself or the schools.'

There was a feeling from that the survey results did not reflect what they had seen in walking at the Cuckmere,

'What locals observe i.e. many foreign students visit from Brighton by bus but this was missed from the survey.'

² <http://www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk/About-project/New-research.aspx>

The *Current Economic Value of the Cuckmere Estuary* was presented by Dr Rob Tinch of effec. As with the visitor study the view was expressed that the views of local people should be taken in to account. It was suggested that the view of the previous owners of the Golden Galleon should be taken in to account, and others asked if the farmers views had been taken in to account. Dr Tinch explained the process by which the data had been gathered which, as with the other reports, can be found fully described on the Cuckmere Pathfinder website.³

Other participants picked up on the issue of agricultural value of the Cuckmere:

'The thrust is that the local economy is overwhelmingly dependent on tourism - farming comes nowhere.'

'It is important to recognise more value to agricultural land than land value, e.g. landscape contribution'

The second point on farm land value leads to a more general point made by one participant in the small group discussions,

'Financial benefits need to include the intangible values of the land i.e. pleasure, stress relief, enjoyment.'

This is supported by another participant who said,

'I would like more evidence on accommodation and wider values that can't be measured in monetary terms'

and another participant who submitted a post-event note which stated,

*'There is one vital 'economic' factor that does not feature and that is the **value** to the visitor through simply being there! What is the value of experiencing the tranquillity, or hearing a skylark singing or the stress-relief of just being in tune with nature? It is paramount to define this before a coherent assessment of the TOTAL value of the visitor experience can be established.'*

This leads to another main point raised during the discussion on the value placed on accommodation. One participant, a local hotel manager, said,

'I am surprised to see that visitors' spend seemed so low, particularly for accommodation. I believe that this is very difficult to assess but I know that tourism / walking is one of the highest contributors to our income.'

Other participants had a question on the methodology,

'Is focusing on the average spend helpful when some people come and spend nothing at all because they are locals and visit once or twice a week?'

The questions raised by participants which are relevant to the second stage of the economic study will be taken up by effec as they continue their work and brought back to the second public event on 5 April.

³ <http://www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk/About-project/New-research.aspx>

3.3 Heritage Assets and Landscape Studies

The heritage assets and the landscape studies reports were welcomed by participants. They found them illuminating on the importance of the Cuckmere Estuary. As one participant commented after the event,

'I think it is an outstanding report, and everything I would have expected of Oxford Archaeology - a very good firm.'

Another post event comment in relation to the heritage study made this point:

'This study, perhaps more than most, demonstrates the widespread concerns about the valley's future. The findings have raised the significance of the estuary to that of NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. After all the Cuckmere estuary is the sole example of an undeveloped valley in South East England.'

Suggestions were made for areas for further consideration for the former which can be found described in detail in the flip chart transcripts in Appendix 4. They include heritage assets north of the A259. A participant who submitted a note after the event said,

'The archaeological work was impressive, BUT it is confined to the lower reach downstream of Exceat Bridge. Why? The future implications for the estuary will impact on the whole tidal reach up to Milton Lock. The archaeology does not just stop at the A259.'

Participants also expressed interest in the fact that flood prevention had been,

'going on in the Cuckmere for centuries' and, 'this study has identified many aspects of its past history, not least of which is that land drainage operations have been undertaken from at least medieval times.'

Participants welcomed the value placed on the Coastguard Cottages and Cable House in the landscape report. One participant expressed the view that it is,

'Critical that the Coastguard Cottages & the Cable House are now included in the debate'

Others commented on the human scale which the Coastguard Cottages bring to the landscape. As one participant said,

'the interplay between the human element as illustrated by the Coastguard Cottages and the rest of the Cuckmere landscape is both poignant and highly significant.'

4. Next steps

4.1 Points to clarify the process and evidence available

As a result of the discussions held during the event Hopkins Van Mil recommends that the following next steps are taken:

- A 'frequently asked questions (FAQ)' area is included in the website to explain the work that has been carried out to date and provide specific answers to the questions raised during this and future workshops and events;
- Additional mailings are required to explain the process further to those whose involvement in the discussion has begun at this first public event for the Pathfinder Project; and for those who do not have access to the Internet;
- Briefings which affect the project, such as those on Marine Conservation Zones are included in the Cuckmere Pathfinder website (as FAQs?);

- Participants are given sufficient time before the events to digest any new evidence material thoroughly; or an explanation of the timescale is included and participants are actively encouraged to be aware of existing evidence before attending an event;
- As one member of the Community Forum has suggested, for each of the future public events a member of the Community Forum, Project Board or Project Team should take an active part in each of the smaller break-out sessions to encourage people to understand the knowledge that has gone before the event.

4.3 Function of this report

This report is a summary of the discussion on 8 February. It will be sent to the Project Board for comment, distributed to all those who attended the workshop, and published on the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project's website. The media will be informed of the report via a press release and follow up telephone calls.

Hopkins Van Mil would like to thank all those who took part in the workshop and contributed their views. We would also like to thank the presenters: Dr Parves Khan from Tourism South East; Dr Rob Tinch from effec; Dr Klara Spandl from Oxford Archaeology and David Huskisson from David Huskisson Associates for summarising their evidence work so clearly.

Hopkins Van Mil 28 February 2011

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Appendix 1

Timeline for intensive workshops and public events

14 December 2010	Options Identification (Intensive Workshop)
8 February 2011	Landscape, Visitors, Heritage and Economy of the Cuckmere: Evidence Presentation Stage 1 (Public Event)
8 March 2011	Assessment criteria agreement (Intensive Workshop)
5 April 2011	Landscape, Visitors, Heritage and Economy of the Cuckmere: Evidence Presentation Stage 2 (Public Event)
12 April 2011	Options Assessment Pilot (Intensive Workshop)
7 June 2011	Planning for Change at the Cuckmere (Public Event)

Appendix 2

The Pathfinder Project Board

The Pathfinder Project is led by a project board made up of local residents and members of the County Council and Cuckmere Estuary Partnership (CEP). The members are:

- Michael Ann, Cuckmere Community Forum
- Jane Cecil, National Trust, CEP
- Alan Edgar, Cuckmere Community Forum
- Councillor John Freeman, Seaford Town Council and CEP
- Richard Mann, Cuckmere Community Forum
- Carolyn McCourt, Cuckmere Community Forum and CEP
- Andy Robertson, East Sussex County Council
- Chris Wick, Environment Agency and CEP
- Tony Whitbread, Sussex Wildlife Trust

Appendix 3

Programme

(Please note that timings are approximate)

5.30 - 5.40

1. Introductory remarks

- A short welcome by East Sussex County Council
- An overview of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project
- An introduction to this evidence presentation event

5.40 - 5.55

2. Presentation of the Cuckmere Heritage Study: Oxford Archaeology

5.55 - 6.10

3. Presentation of the Cuckmere Visitor Study: Tourism South East

6.10 - 6.25

4. Presentation of the Landscape Study: David Huskisson Associates

6.25 - 6.40

5. Presentation of the Economic Study: ettec

6.40-6.50

6. Points of clarification on all presentations

6.50 - 7.20

6. Facilitated discussion on the focussed studies

7.20 - 7.50

7. Plenary discussion

7.50 - 8.00

8. Close & brief summary of next steps

Appendix 4

Transcripts of Plenary and Small Group Discussions

Clarification questions asked of Visitor Survey Study in plenary session:

- Q: Use of bus service compared to the car - was this a surprise? It is an excellent bus service
- Q: Wouldn't it be less beautiful without the meanders? Why not ask that question?
- A: we didn't want to be that specific, appreciate it was a difficult question
- Q: Did you explain what was possible?
- A: Everyone was invited to talk to the Pathfinder Project Officer
- Q: No one used canoe facilities - it seems surprising
- A: 1% of summer visitors and 0% of winter visitors said they were visiting to use the canoe facilities
- Q: Surprised that educational visits were so small - when did you do the survey?
- A: July to September and again in November, December and January. It was related to when we were commissioned to do the work
- Q: Surprised that the study didn't reveal a higher interest in the Coastguard Cottages, particularly as it's used by the British Tourist Board on their promotional materials
- A: yes, we were surprised too - but we asked them for the main purpose of their visit and the most important aspects of the valley
- Q: Could it be the way the questions were asked?
- Statement: If the survey was taken in June / July there would have been more educational visits
- Q: Define visitor
- A: Anyone who visits the Cuckmere whether local or not
- Q: Where were people surveyed / interviews carried out. I'm frequently in the nature reserve and I didn't ever see anyone interviewing
- A: The interviewers were in the car park

Clarification questions asked of Economic Study in plenary session:

- Q: Visits in Seven Sisters car park - what about visits to other 2 car parks e.g. Golden Galleon?
- A: This estimate is for the whole area
- Statement: People who stay in Eastbourne will visit the Cuckmere
- A: We contacted a sample of tourism related businesses in Eastbourne, but we didn't get a response
- Statement: It depends how you define local
- Q: Foot & Mouth, floods - both leading to a down turn in tourism. Have you talked to the Golden Galleon about it?
- A: Interesting - we haven't spoken to the previous Golden Galleon owners about it.

Clarification questions asked of Heritage Study in plenary session:

- Q: The study has focused on the southern end - is there a similar picture for the North / Alfriston?
- Statement: the Airfield (?)
- A: We are happy to take all further contributions you may wish to make

Note: there were no points of clarification raised on the Landscape Study

Final Plenary Session:

In the final session each of the small groups summarised their findings. The notes from these sessions can be found in the transcripts below.

Q: What is the proposed next phase?

A: There are several next steps:

- Consultants will use information gathered this evening to inform the next stage of their research
- On 5 April there will be a further evidence presentation event for the full public
- This is followed on 7 June by a major public event at which the evidence will be assessed against the options (agreed on 14 December) and the evidence, together with the technical and visual modelling. This is a major event at which the proposal from the wider community for the future management of the Cuckmere will be agreed
- In between those events are intensive workshops for those who have more in-depth knowledge of the subject including the Project Board, the Community Forum, the Cuckmere Estuary Partnership. More information on all the workshops is on the website www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk
- The next intensive workshop is being held on 8 March and will select the criteria by which the options will be assessed

Q: We looked on the website but couldn't find the reports for tonight's event

A: They are all on www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk and available in hard copy at both Seaford and Eastbourne libraries

Statement: You haven't explored long shore drift e.g. Newhaven Spur - this causes erosion and you haven't considered it this evening

A: This will be touched on in the 2nd stage evidence event..

Transcripts of the Small Group Discussions Group 1 (HH)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Visitor and Economic Studies

Summary Points set out in the plenary session:

- Defining the area and its relationship to the rest of the valley is key to both visitors and the economy
- There is a fear of change - people need to be told what the options are before they consider their view on it

Group discussion:

- You can't divorce economics from the physical nature of the Cuckmere
- You can't isolate the Cuckmere from Alfriston
- Difficult to define the area covered by the studies - lack of clarity specifically on lower Cuckmere, what about north of A259?
- It's an artificial barrier to isolate Seaford from the rest of the valley for the purposes of the study
- The effects on A259 and north of it are really important
- Alfriston has its own tourist attractions
- Money spent has been done on the basis of an average. A lot of people spend nothing at all; some might spend a lot in Alfriston; or spend money in the car park
- To look at meanders was a primary concern for visitors
- Coastguard cottages are included in that (the view) as well as the Seven Sisters
- 14% (queried?) might not come back if significant changes happen to the landscape - this is useless data as the changes were not described - what is change? what is significant?

- The concrete road is fantastic for children
- What happens if the concrete road disappears?
- There is no mention of angling as a use for the Cuckmere
- Is that because there aren't many anglers?
- The issue with the research is that there is nothing to compare it against, we have no baseline to assess whether this is accurate or not (visitor & economics study)
- It would have been simpler to ask the farmers for the economic impact data
- Future visits - what would happen if there was a bridge at the mouth?
- The Cuckmere is an excellent place for disabled access
- Our understanding is drawn from experience
- We need more information on the geology for future studies
- One point that has not been mentioned - the tidal Cuckmere is of interest to marine conservation and decisions on the marine conservation zones will be made in Summer 2010 (date checked - end of 2012), it's important to recognise that this estuary is under consideration as part of this and if it is designated no change will be possible.

Heritage Assets and Landscape reports

Summary Points set out in the plenary session

- Archaeological and historic study is of interest North of A259
- How do you handle a site like this? There are no easy answers
- Critical that Coastguard Cottages & the Cable House are now included in the debate
- Who is going to pay for coastal defence in the future?

Group discussion

- There is a WWII Command Post just up from the Golden Galleon, it's built in to the landscape - restore it?
- Archaeological activity north of A259 - they've found a leprosy hospital and there are lots of other sites going up the Estuary which are relevant
- The Archaeological Society in the valley should be consulted. Peter Bidmead leads it.
- Klara made a powerful presentation, it is surprising that there isn't more emphasis on this at the Cuckmere Haven interpretation centre
- Supplies were sent to Arramanches on D. Day from the Cuckmere
- The hulls of medieval warships were built on the beach
- Barges went up to Alfriston (and smugglers!)
- Interesting point about Coastguard Cottages in the landscape study - there is a lot of symbolism there with humans battling against the elements, it's the human scale in the landscape
- History in medieval times, there is a history of clearing the river mouth
- I am wary of 19th century archaeological romanticism, are we in danger of over interpreting the site?
- There is a debate to be had about how much we want the area to be interpreted
- Shouldn't it be opened up to encourage tourism?
- Surely we have a responsibility to open up the Cuckmere for people living in London and other cities so that they have somewhere to come and enjoy out of the city?
- Or do we want to invest resources in to making it more available for economic (not just aesthetic) gain - National Park Authority will be responsible for that
- How much coastal plain erosion has taken place? It's a mystery although people say there has been 40m lost in the last 100 years, how much was lost before that?
- What about incursions of the sea south of the A259? What impact will that have north of the A259

Group 2 (RH)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Visitor and Economic Studies

Summary Points set out in the plenary session:

- Visitor surveys must take place during school and university terms because educational visits and visits from overseas students missed
- Give visitors an idea of possible changes and ask them what they think
- Surveys must look at customers in Golden Galleon
- Don't forget impacts north of A259
- Engage with public perceptions of landscape and heritage
- Include study of present biodiversity and future impact

Group discussion:

- Underestimated the educational visits which are numerous
- Meanders are important for learning to canoe
- Seven Sisters is Seaford's 'local park'; East (left-hand) Cuckmere is for Eastbourne - this was missed in the survey
- Query about focus on car parks for the surveys
- Many people walk, bus and a mixture
- Concerned re: tick box survey to justify Cuckmere's value
- Golden Galleon customers were missed - they are spending money & have visited Cuckmere and are the reason for the pub's business
- importance of the wider area
- Local observation that many foreign students visit from Brighton by bus - surveys missed that
- Cottages may be lost within 10 years - loss of iconic view of homes

Future pointers:

- More detail on the changes that might happen & what people think about that e.g loss of meanders / loss of cottages
- Survey during school terms
- Ask people what they think about loss of footpaths & disabled access, especially concrete paths - closure of footpaths could lead to a public enquiry
- More detail on Golden Galleon business
- Don't ignore impact of visitors from Eastbourne coming to Cuckmere - Eastbourne is an important holiday destination
- Look at student visits and school parties
- The economy presentation seemed to use figures that didn't make sense
- Take in to account all the suppliers coming in to local businesses like the Golden Galleon

Heritage and Landscape Studies

Group discussion

Reflections:

- Curious not to start afresh with landscape assessment and build on earlier assessments with narrow focus on Coastguard Cottages
- Another welcomed taking in to account the importance of the wider area
- Presentations seemed to be saying 'Let's Save the Cuckmere Valley'
- It's traditional for man to intervene in the development of the landscape
- Earlier surveys didn't place value on human impacts
- Very little about impact further upstream - highly likely more heritage value in wider area than was surveyed

Future pointers:

- Critical for next states to have an accurate definition of impact and options
- Haven't had much information about grazing land and different animals and affect on bio diversity - sheep farming crucial to chalk downlands
- What would be lost with regard to flora and fauna if valley is flooded
- Any ecological studies?
- Some thought given to this in the community forum report - more input is required, need to have more information about potential losses to decide on future option
- Flooding would result in loss of grazing land
- Still questions about the area that has been assessed and should be assessed in the future
- Consultants reports may miss the 'laymans' views - these need to be taken on board - make use of local people to take a view on possible future landscapes
- Potential future landscapes need to be seen and the timescales and seasonal differences explained
- Will river mouth have to be cleared of shingle or will it be self cleansing if no flood defence
- Long shore drift and other coastal developments have impacts that must be considered since 1987
- You need to talk to the former owner of the Golden Galleon - he has a wealth of information on business
- Sussex Wildlife Trust Education (Mary Benjamin - school leader) - there are approximately 180 to 200 schools per year = 7,500 - 8,000 children. Probably represents less than 1/2 total school visits
- Contact Patrick Coulcher, East Dean - expert on beach & flora and fauna in the area; Tony Rowswell, Peter Longstaff Tyrell; Make use of the knowledge of local experts, fishermen etc - talk to local people with on site knowledge rather than go by vague, sketchy surveys
- Longshore drift at Newhaven Harbour Spur and erosion of sites should be considered

Group 3 (BJ)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Visitor and Economic Studies

Summary Points set out in the plenary session:

- Impact of Southdowns park
- Clarification of exact area affected
- Change can be positive as well as negative

Historical features are underestimated (is this in the right place?)

Group discussion:

Reflections

- Alfriston not included
- Re 'change': was no option today - what would encourage visits?
- Education: was missed due to time of survey
- Definition of 'local' - Brighton? 4 miles? - clarification
- Expenditure on accommodation - figure appears v. low, concerned at this
- Impact of Southdowns park: traffic, car parking
- Car parking is becoming more expensive therefore impact on public transport & number of people to the Cuckmere may increase
- Clarification: re coach trips
- Consideration of exact geographic area being researched

Pointers for the future

- Access for all
- Provision of walking routes
- Where to allow mountain bikes
- What will happen to the flood plain where we live?
- Water escape routes e.g. an underpass beneath the road
- An 'iconic area' - any change will affect perception of area
- Change can be positive or negative
- What additional facilities could be provided? e.g. bird watching hides; landing stage
- Impacts on whole valley - roads etc

Heritage Assets and Landscape Studies

Summary Points set out in the plenary session:

- Coastguard cottages (req. full consideration)

Group discussion:

Reflections

- Coastguard cottages must be saved. Iconic attraction
- But coastguard cottages require too much concrete to protect
- Views are always two way re. cottages
- Man v. elements is a worthy point
- Historical features are underestimated, unseen
- Will change damage or enhance perceptions?
- Should promote historic landscape, it's not necessarily no. 1. Historical information is not available to the general visitor
- Educational / historical advantages
- National Park could emphasise cultural heritage
- Has SNP had input in to this?
- Ongoing problem for children crossing road from Visitor Centre
- Historical evidence dealt with below A259, should be extended north
- Has modelling included the northern areas?

Pointers for the future

- Hard to know where will the water go?
- Losses to archaeology
- All of educational value
- Road system - should we look at this too? To enable easier access
- Will more visitors spoil the area for everyone? Not just designated area
- Visitors will park everywhere
- Access must not be lost
- How many visitors just come and sit in their car?

Group 4 (HI)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Visitor and Economic Studies

Summary Points set out in plenary session

- Questioning of visitor numbers
 - Timing of when survey done eg missing bus passengers, missing educational visitors
 - Part of date data (what does this mean?)
- Gather visitor views and changes to Cuckmere against specific proposals
- More specific explanation of value of coastguard cottages (started to be addressed in landscape report)

- Recognise more value to agricultural land than land value, eg landscape contribution
- Consider evidence above the A259
- How we value the site and identify attributes – look beyond financial value and to the qualitative feelings
- Questionnaire design: suggestions:
 - If it were changed to X would you still come
 - Make sure conducting interviews at the right times / periods
 - What do we want to achieve from redesign of Cuckmere?

Group discussion:

- April & phase 2 - you are helping us to think about the attributes of the area
- Are we looking to increase visitors / economics
- A: we are filling known evidence gaps - the value placed on different attributes is up to the community to decide
- If few people / visitors spent little money should it still be valuable?
- My concern is too much focus on the financial value of the area
- You need to establish your base, all various options affect the visitor numbers
- Q: what value (e.g. finance) is qualitative value?
- Concern that the survey didn't focus on the right questions
- What would you feel if x happened? should be asked
- The beauty is in everything
- Qualitative discussion is needed on the feelings of the options
- I'm worried about the impact higher up the valley - Alfriston's agricultural land
- Don't look at 79 hectares in isolation
- Whole valley should be factored in to the economic survey especially valuable agricultural land
- Area is not being looked at in a large enough aspect
- Flooding and sea level rises are key
- You are looking at a larger area
- How can we model in a way that reassures people?
- We are doing the modelling now - we will take in the wider perspective
- Need to consider whole valley not just southern part of A259
- Flood defences in Seaford, archives and information should be used as part of studies
- Hydrodynamic report of river is needed for the modelling - it will be costly! But it is needed!
- A: some of this is happening
- Q: exactly when was the visitor survey conducted? It has to cover all times of the week and relevant times of the year

Heritage Assets and Landscape Studies

Summary Discussion reported to the plenary session

- Heritage study was v good, much more heritage than people knew about, therefore it needs to be publicised
- Cost of keeping the river open, need more than one view on how much it could cost
- Value the whole valley with regards to recreation

Group discussion

- Need to look at the whole river up the valley eg modelling, review existing evidence - fit for purpose?
- Landscape assessment – needs to account for updated context in next stage (eg man made features are significant and important)
- Make sure all the reports are integrated / reflect each other
- Heritage was very informative and it was very good! Would like it to go further up the valley
- Interest if more documentation from the past was included

- They used to plough the shingle
- 1840 diaries - Church Farm and Beswick Court Farm - consultants could use this information, they talk about a staithe
- Interesting - always has been a strategy in place for keeping the river open
- Worry this won't continue
- Concern is that it will flood back up the river and will impact on Alfriston
- What is the cost of taking away the shingle?
- It is £50,000
- Farmers might be interested!
- Why not tender for it
- What is the impact of flooding on heritage assets - should they be protected?
- they are of high significance
- There is a link between understanding the heritage better, and how we value it and its potential with regard to tourists
- Landscape - interesting the remit this time was different to the previous occasion - makes me suspicious about remit first time
- Putting value to cottages was interesting too - human scale, man-made scale within larger landscape is the value
- Devil's advocate might say get rid of them!
- Policy of revert to natural processes this may not be appropriate for all settings
- Area north of A259 could be used for recreation which fits with National Park remit
- Look historically at what the river was like, how wide it was etc as part of the next stage
- Landscape study was undertaken to cover the coastguard cottages

Group 5 (AR)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Visitor and Economic Studies

Summary Points reported to the plenary session

- Need better info on educational impact, value, visits
- Future at car park is paramount
- Would like more evidence on accommodation and wider values that can't be measured in monetary terms
- Concern of North A259

Reflections:

- Tourism - Survey misses school period – general consensus. May have missed some key respondents eg wildlife enthusiasts. Numbers using bus service surprisingly low. Better marketing for transport services
- Economic – Number of accommodation outlets not accurately reflected eg more than 80 listed. Did it encompass all B&Bs? Financial side solely focused in money. No analysis of financial bodies (eg?)
- Need more info on economic expectations of Galleon

Pointers for future consideration

- What are the options for activities eg walking (canoeing) if Cuckmere is flooded
- Current area is non tidal – canoeing would stop for beginners
- More info on the 'not sure' why people visit
- Total no of visitors may have been underestimated because outside car parks feed into Cuckmere
- Were all access points covered
- Not enough info on valve (any further details as to what this is?) from A259 to Alfriston
- Clarification of time scale for flooding
- Better marketing for public transport

- What is impact on tourism of the seven options
- Canoeist numbers are wrong 1% of 450,000 = 4,500. Actual numbers from canoe manager 15,000
- How many canoes are bought for use on meanders
- Financial benefits need to include the intangible values ie pleasure, stress relief, enjoyment. These are NOW value benefits
- Need to check further on numbers of people who use buses? Question of where survey taken (car park)
- Low result from frequent bus service, Eastbourne – Brighton
- Schools in area – how many visit. Good teaching material – Geography, nature, poetry, sport facility
- Economic survey – the thrust is that the local economy is overwhelmingly dependent on tourism – farming comes nowhere
- Visitor survey – no reason to expect visitors to react badly to managed realignment schemes
- Visitor survey – confirms The Community Forum's Tourism Group view – it's access to the beach, the Haven that is crucial
- Do schools visit from South London? Ie further than 'local'

Heritage Assets and Landscape Studies

Summary points reported at Plenary Session

- How much archaeology still needs to be investigated
- Chyngton Brooks needs to be investigated
- Understanding of Cuckmere Haven to include Seven Sisters
- More investigation into flood protection

A. Reflections:

- Archaeology – all WWII stuff is on the edge of the flood plain – need to be conserved. Report highlights that flood prevention had been going on for centuries. Interested in medieval drainage. No mention of fact that Newcot was not mentioned (what does this mean?). Given vagaries can different sources of funding be applied for cultural aspect. Very important area for education eg geography
- Landscape – undervalues Cuckmere haven in the round (undervalued). Advent of National Park to promote beauty and enjoyment of area. Coastal cottages had been undervalued but important in setting and definition of the wider whole. High and Over – is a key point not to lose sight of

Pointers for future consideration

- (A) Chyngton Brooks Town port needs to be investigated – wider area of educational opportunity (archaeological) not being fully explored
- White Horse was not mentioned
- Value of the Seven Sisters (Estuary was looked at in isolation) – you cannot see Seven Sisters apart from Seaford Head on bottom of Cuckmere Valley therefore access must be maintained to beach
- No mention of solutions for the way forward
- Cost of future possibilities
- Preservation of the beach
- More info on rising sea levels
- To allow the Estuary to 'return to native' will reduce the chance of ease of archaeological studies being carried out
- In most photographs of Seven Sisters, coastguard cottages are in the foreground to give human scale – emphasises importance of coastguard cottages
- Time scale – S.E England tipping, ?rate, ? long term – 100 year effect

Group 5 (SL)

Visitor and Economic Studies

Reflections

- Tourism – most people hate change, value Cuckmere, surprising not more negative – question on change / would you cease to come
- Surprised not looking at future changes
- Gap on education numbers (school holidays)
- Reports do show the value (visitors and economics) even if some think too low
- Reconciling value of coastguard cottages
- But a lot value overall landscape

Pointers for future consideration

- specify possible changes and what they think of those and options
- identify more on education visits – wildlife visits / Ranger (eg school parties)
- further research on visitor numbers (eg car park revenues, bus ticketing) because questioned as seem too low / figures out of date
- some questioning of figures – timing of when research done eg to account for bus times – needs further interrogation
- don't factor out coastguard cottages – more specific research on value of cottages
- agricultural value is more than its land value – but impact of agricultural landscape important
- what makes The Downs the Downs – agriculture contribution (landscape)
- function of the river in draining the valley (a gap in research)

Heritage and Landscape Studies

Reflections

- V good especially archaeological
- Scoring top marks!
- 600 years had to maintain valley to retain river mouth
- Most features coastal / estuary based – national and relevant to area
- Salt works – shows was being flooded
- Has been managed for very long time – is a manmade estuary – ie conversion to natural – what is that?
- Has always been a managed landscape
- Coastguard cottages good to recognise
- Landscape report good extended envelope to Littleington
- Valley very narrow – therefore effect concentrated

Pointers for future consideration

- Manmade features are significant and important
- River modelling / hydrographic (new research)
 - Need to look at the whole river up the valley
 - Need to look at existing evidence – is it fit for purpose?
 - Does it extend far enough
 - Whole valley approach
- Landscape assessment – moving forwards needs to account for updated context and human element
- Make sure all reports interpreted

Evaluation Form Additional Comments

- Definition of area under threat (ie N of 259)?
- All / most of the discussion is about visitors there must be some consideration of the residents
- Good venue and car parking sorted
- Disappointing because of v mixed levels of interest / information
- ? Wait to see results!
- Excellent
- There is a long way to go
- Much is unknown about future proposals/options
- I hope the next meeting will have more emphasis upon the possible alternative courses of action
- Purpose could be more clearly defined
- I gained the impression that many if the people present were rather more interested in the future options rather than the material present
- Probably judge today after the other 2 meetings?! Thank you for a very interesting evening; time went much too quickly
- Information given prior to the event was limited but good
- Little time between finding out and attending
- Long reports only on web prior to event
- I didn't receive any information
- Information at meeting was good
- After registering an interest, heard no more until receiving confirmation of registration before knowing time and place
- Residents in area possibly affected should be considered equally (if not more so) than visitors
- Difficult to read report on website in time available before the meeting
- Too many people present without any prior knowledge - going right back 18 months!
- More information on possible financial limitations
- Coming to this whole topic for the first time I really need to know what the likely impact of the different options will be - so April5h meeting will allow me to judge more effectively than I yet can
- A very good start for the 2 other meetings

Appendix 5

Notes arising from the Cuckmere Pathfinder Meeting Sent to the Facilitation Team on 14 February

The facilitation team received three emails from four participants as a result of the 8 February event. They wished to raise concerns about the process being taken forward. Their emails are presented below so that others can read and understand their comments.

Email 1:

Evidence Presentation Workshop 1 – feedback

A few thoughts in the wake of last night's presentation. The presentations themselves, and the reports on which they were based, were fine, but there were big problems with the ensuing discussion.

There is a widening gap between those who have been attending meetings and are consequently well-informed and those who haven't and aren't. Obviously people joining at this stage are going to have missed all the discussions that have been going on in the Forum and the sub-groups for the last 12 months – their choice, by the way. But the new-comers could at least have read the reports, even though they were only made available at the last minute. In my group I am fairly sure I was the only one who had read the Heritage Assessment report, and I had read it three times and made five pages of notes on it, little of which I was able to use in the discussion. People were commenting on things they thought Klara had overlooked (eg the importance of the Cut), so I was at least able to point out that although this was not in Klara's (excellent) summary it was in the report. This was frustrating, because even the late-comers to the process could have looked at this and all the other reports on the Pathfinder website – they just hadn't bothered. There were several tangential questions, such as, 'How is all this going to be paid for?' – which was completely outside the remit of the evening's discussion.

For me, this was intensely frustrating, as I felt we were being taken right back to the level of discussion at the initial Turkey Barn community engagement – the summer before last.

How to move it forward? I think before the next public engagement event (or indeed before the next intensive workshop) people attending the meetings need to be urged to go to the Pathfinder website and read as many of the reports as possible. We really can't keep going back over 'first thoughts' at this late stage. A classic example of this was the irrelevant and misinformed point about longshore drift made in the plenary session. In our group, we had a chap who was a fund of similarly irrelevant and wrong historical information about the Litlington White Horse!

Another point to consider is making the discussions longer. If there is to be this wide experiential gap among the group members, doubling the discussion time would help, as it would allow some of the ideas to be followed through, explored and perhaps corrected. Maybe consider allocating at least one group convener

from the [Community] Forum to each group to help in this (not to facilitate, just to leaven the discussion)? I should add that in the first discussion I was not given the opportunity to speak, even though I indicated that I wanted to; in the end I had to speak over somebody else, which of course they did not like. This is partly a facilitation problem, of course, and I don't think our facilitator was able to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant points.

A disturbing thought is that maybe we have been completely wasting our time in the Forum discussions. Are our carefully thought-through views, arrived at after hundreds of hours of reading and discussion, just going to be drowned out by the noise of the new-comers' views?

Email 2:

I felt that all the presentations were good, but I was less happy with some of the reports.

The Landscape was a rewrite of a previous one with a change in attitude towards the Coastguard Cottages, I think it would have been better to start again without the previous direction towards 'a naturally functioning estuary'.

Heritage was very interesting and revealed new information about that part of the valley, It made one realize that work should start on areas like Chyngton Brooks as soon as possible.

Visitor Survey although it backed up our estimate for numbers, and was packed with detail, seemed to be unconvincing.

Business Survey also strangely constructed on costs, giving average costs, rather than actual or banded costs of accommodation etc.

Clearly considerable cash is generated by the visitors, key ones being the car parking, and pubs. So extended car parks will be needed in any managed retreat scheme.

I did wonder how these reports were going to lead us towards the next phase, maybe more work on the valley North of the A259 and more convincing evidence before we can move on.

Email 3:

Our wider concerns.

Having received these four reports we must express our concerns that the whole issue is being totally eclipsed by the ESCC's statement that "change is considered to be inevitable". This is pre-judging the whole issue. Is it intended to abandon all the infrastructure that has established the river regime we see today? Are we writing off all the public and private investment undertaken over the centuries? What waste! What sacrilege! Surely the whole task is being viewed through the wrong end of the telescope!

There seems to be an inevitability that 'we' cannot afford to maintain the river regime in its present state. On what basis can this statement be made? Granted changes have occurred

since time began, however, the Archaeology Study tells us that man-made activity is in evidence since medieval times. BUT these have always been driven by man's need. Have we now reached the point where the current thrust of our activity should be to maintain the status quo? The Dutch would not stand by and be raped by the sea.

Last Tuesday no opportunity was given, to set out a real vision. For example:-

- the four studies were confined to the lower reach below Exceat Bridge
- there was no mention of the predicted tidal conditions anticipated over the next 100 years
- there was no indication of the capability of the tidal reaches to accommodate fluvial flood waters from the wider catchment
- there was no indication of the future flood risk to the A259;
- there was no indication of the frequency of flooding on the road to West Dean and Littleington or the roads approaching Alfriston either from the north or the south.
- in fact there was very little unfettered thinking.

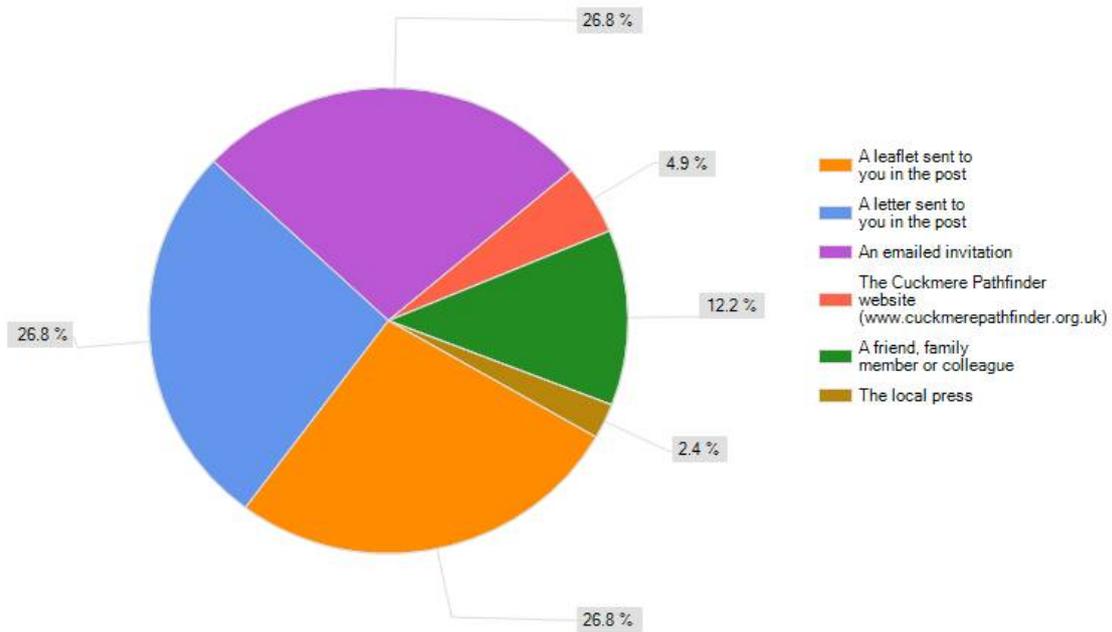
These are fundamental questions that need urgent attention if the 'right' solution is to be found. We would hope that future presentations will be able to provide the answers.

We have written on a number of occasions to the various agencies involved and put forward an engineered solution that we still consider worthy of detailed consideration. It involves the commitment of diverse but interested parties working together. Most of these bodies are funded in one way or another through the public purse so it should be incumbent upon them all to work in harmony and to understand who their paymasters are. However, if a general view was taken to maintain the *status quo* this could be achieved by **the construction of a tidal gate (or lock structure) near to the present training walls where the river discharges into the sea.** This structure would be open to the vast majority of tides (rather similar to the Thames Tidal Barrier) but would be closed at the peak of abnormal tides or during rare storm surges. The provision of such a structure would minimise the routine maintenance needed along the tidal reaches, enable the meanders and the marshes to drain out in their conventional way, safeguard the access to Alfriston, West Dean and Littleington and avoid the flooding of the A259 and its causeway. Such a solution would lead to securing the value of the landscape, keeping the iconic view of the meanders with its canoeing activities etc., and demonstrating harmony amongst the participating Public Authorities.

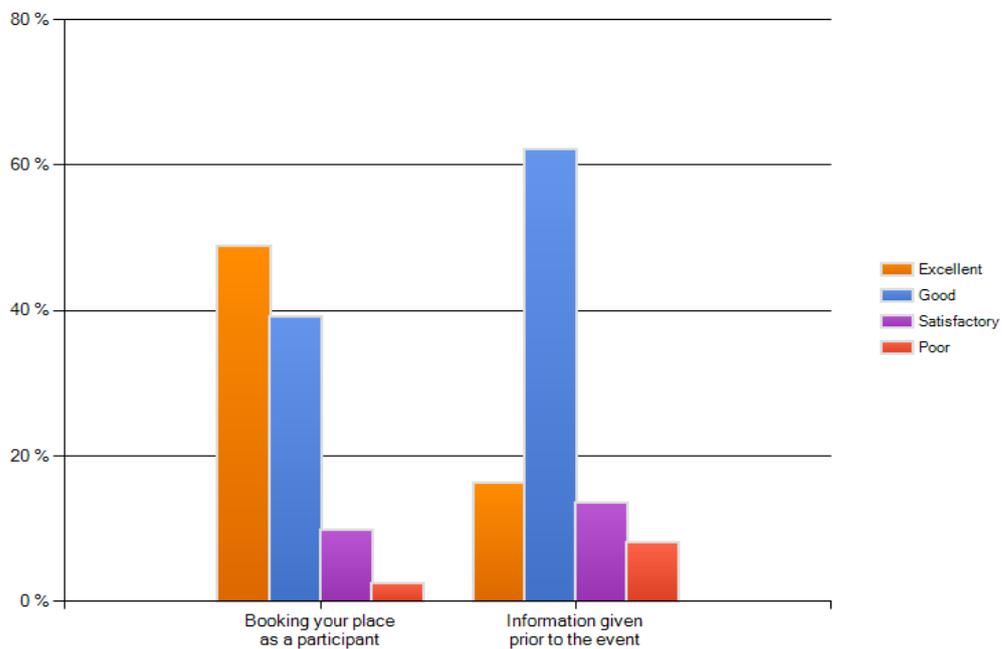
It cannot be beyond the capabilities of the collective bodies involved to see the benefits of this wider picture and to take the necessary action to implement such a solution. We are passionate about the Cuckmere and we all bear a responsibility to future generations to appreciate this iconic landscape.

Appendix 6 - Summary Event Evaluation

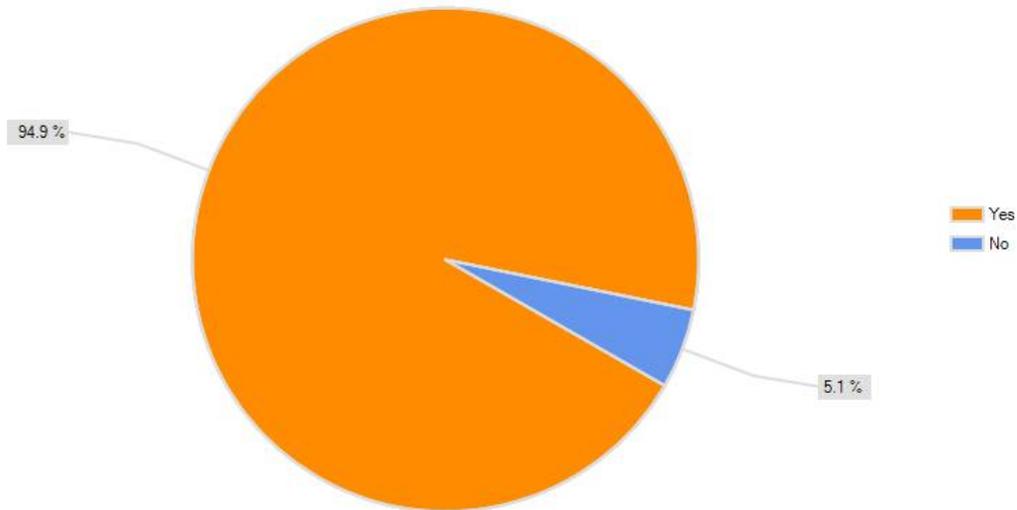
How did you find out about today's event? (please tick one box)



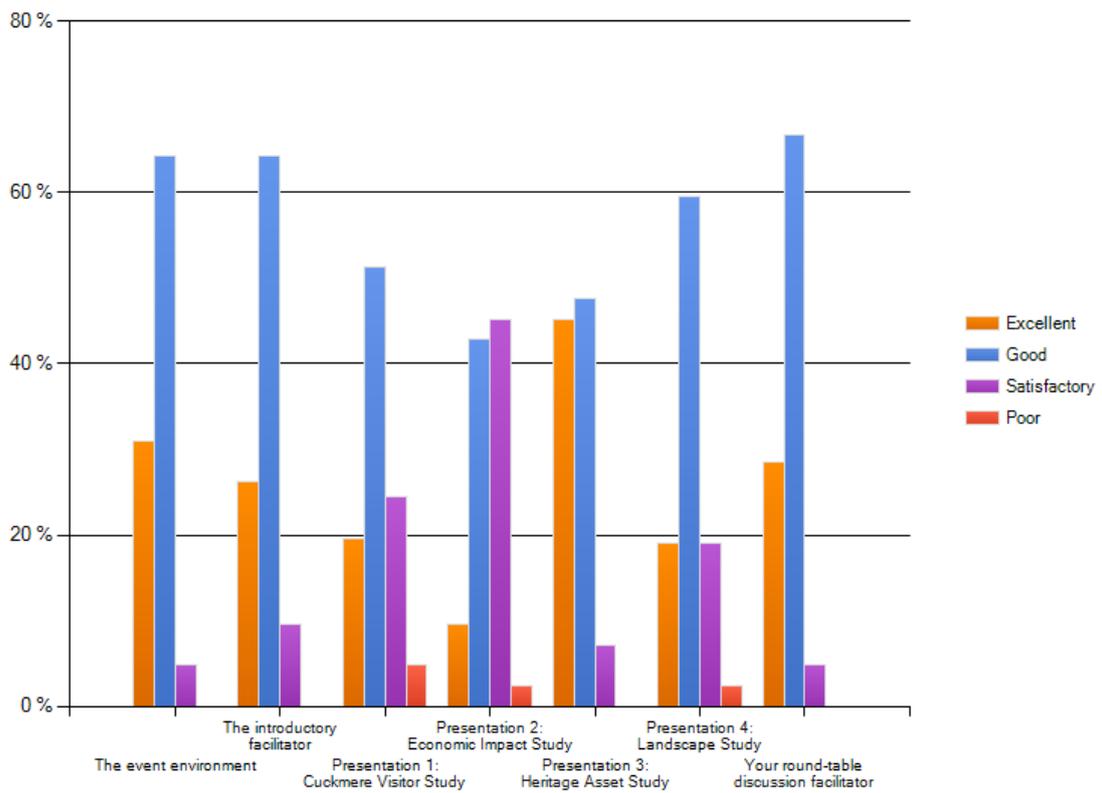
How did you find the following pre-event activity?



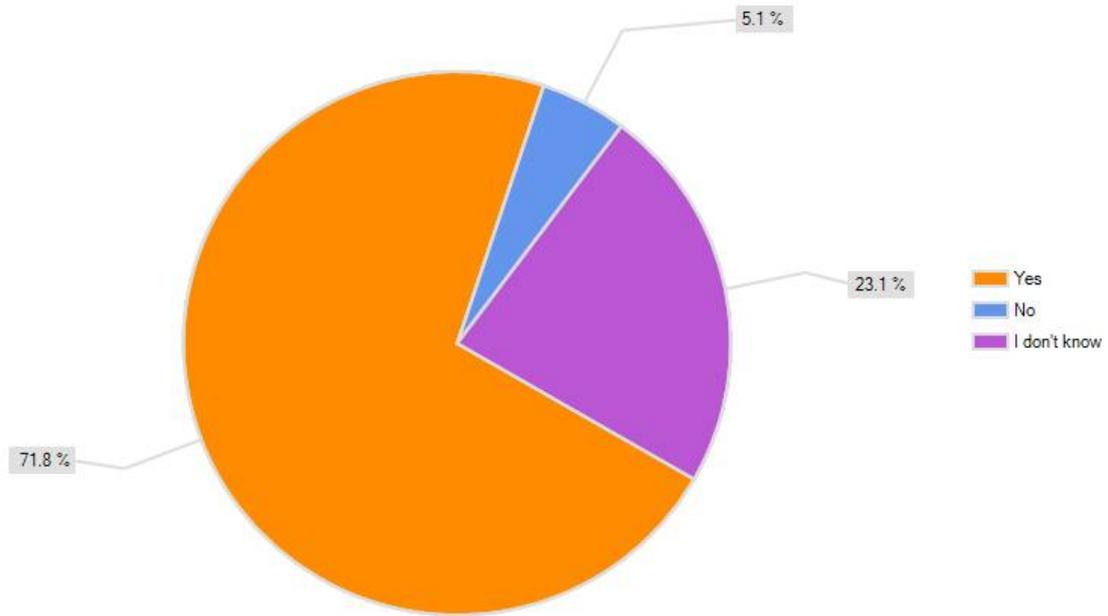
Did you have enough opportunity to express your views?



How did you find the following during the event?



In your view did the workshop meet its objectives?



Note: the comments made on the evaluation forms are included at the end of Appendix 4.