

Market Place

# Event Report



# Market Place Town Celebration Project

## Event Report

The MarketPlace project initially saw four towns hosting pilot markets, incorporating a mini-festival feel, with a range of live music from local musicians and DJs, street performances, workshops, locally-sourced food and drink as well as children's activities. The project kicked off in Saxmundham in December 2021 and during the early spring made its way to Beccles, Lowestoft and Leiston, with each event reflecting a sense of place including stand-out businesses and key characteristics. Phase two of the project saw two more live pilot events taking place over the last days of summer 2022 in Halesworth and Southwold, with more events focussed on creating a sense of place within each location.

The project has demonstrated that it is possible to deliver vibrant and successful events that bring people together to celebrate their local area, while also supporting local businesses, entrepreneurs and creative talent. The project has also helped to create a sense of place and community within each of the locations, and has been a great way to bring people together to enjoy the best of what Suffolk has to offer.

### Locations

**Saxmundham** 3rd December 2021  
**Beccles** 5th March 2022  
**Lowestoft** 9th March 2022  
**Leiston** 26th March 2022  
**Halesworth** 3rd September 2022  
**Southwold** 22nd October 2022

### Stats

**398** Businesses  
**91** Local Makers  
**46** Musicians  
**1500** Number of visitors

## **Challenges**

Getting buy-in from businesses within the towns was challenging, especially if they already felt over-stretched, however, we worked with them to make the events a success. It was important to understand their concerns and their perspective as well as discussing solutions and new ways to tackle already encountered challenges. We wanted it to be a collaborative project this sometimes-meant things took longer than expected as there were a number of opinions and ideas to take into consideration.

As one-off events raising awareness and promoting could be challenging, we tackled this by using social media, printed advertising, radio, press articles and word of mouth.

## **Feedback**

Most towns reported that the events led to increased footfall in the town centre, increased visitor numbers, increased spending in local businesses, and a general feeling of positivity in the town. In some cases, the events also led to the discovery of new local attractions, the development of new partnerships between local businesses, and better communication between local organisations. Overall, these events have been seen as a great way to bring people together and to create a sense of community.

## **Legacy**

We are looking forward to how the legacy of the Market Place project will continue to develop in each town as time moves on. We are hoping that the towns will continue to use the spaces that were activated through the project and to continue to build on the relationships formed with local businesses and organisations. We are also hoping to see events become more regular and successful with each town developing a unique and vibrant local market culture.

Examples:

Saxmundham has a regular monthly market and continued to develop Fromus Square, an underutilised space showcase in their Market Place event.

Beccles has developed the Pony trail which was introduced as part of the Mad about Art event with local artist Sarah Cannell.

Halesworth is planning two new events off the back of their involvement both using the Market Place as a featured location just as it was piloted in their event.



The Saturday Rewind event was great. From the moment that the first act started on stage there was a warm and friendly buzz. People stopped and bought books and hand made prints from the book bike and it was great to meet some old friends and new amongst the other traders and performers. A great day made all the more enjoyable by Penny Bun's fantastic pastries! It would be great to think that events like this could be a regular feature in Lowestoft's calendar.

Hugh Davies, Books and Prints



We really enjoyed being part of the Wild about Art event and were lucky enough to display one of the ponies, our customers loved seeing them. We would love to see other events like this take place in Beccles, it certainly brought excitement and cheer to our community.

Community Champion Morrisons Beccles



“

A fabulous turn out of people of all ages bringing the community back together again and raising the profile of Leiston town centre and businesses.

Chairman of Leiston Town Council

”



“

There was a buzz about the town and the event brought lots of people into Halesworth who came in all the shops and cafes. it was brilliant, and the music, art etc. was so much fun.

Excellent atmosphere and footfall was fantastic. The customers were very interested and we sold lots within the shop.

Feedback from Halesworth Shop Owners

”

# Town Celebration Comparison

## Survey Headlines

**60%** or more people visiting 5 of the 6 events said similar activities would encourage them to visit market towns

**Music, Kids activities, and live performances** were highlighted as reasons for attending the events

**50%** or more people visiting 5 of the 6 events said it was the sole reason they visited the town that day

**Cultural experience** was the most popular answer when asked what attracted the public to the events

**Walking and driving** was the most popular form of transport to the event

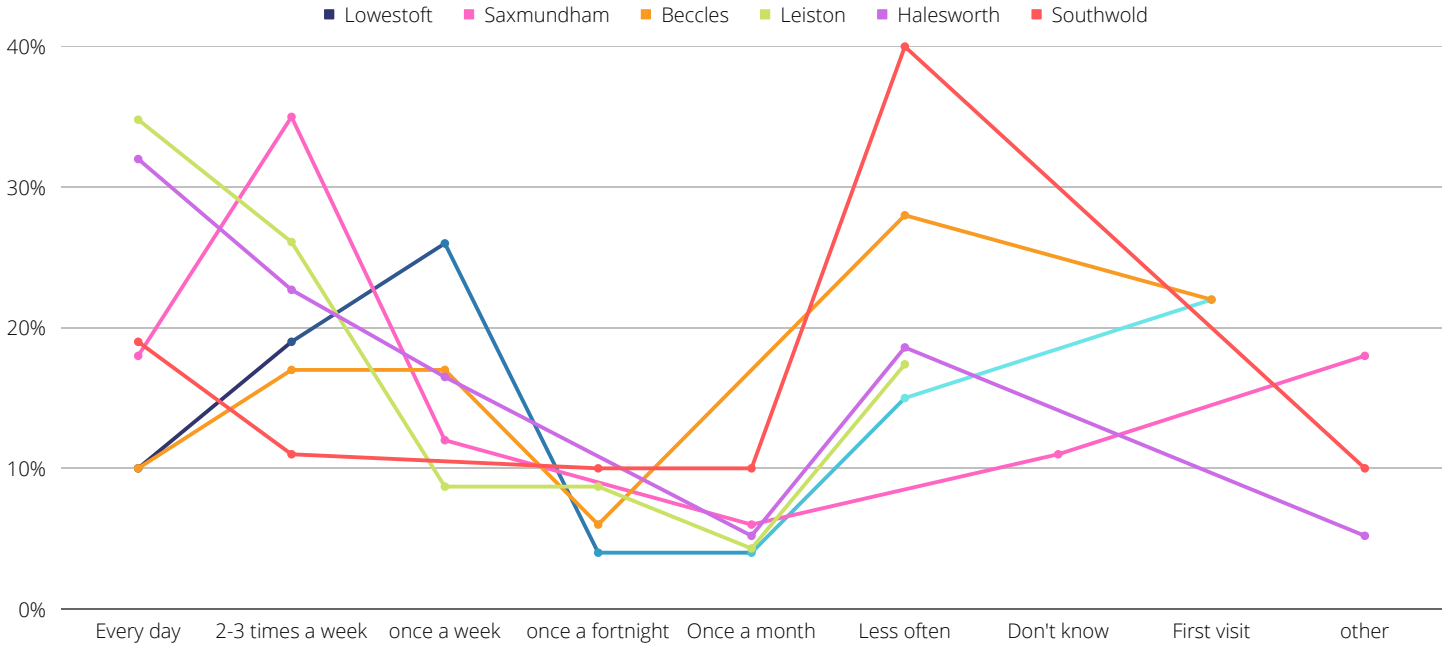
**Social media and word of mouth** were the most successful forms of advertising

**Shopping** is the main reason visitors are usually in the market towns

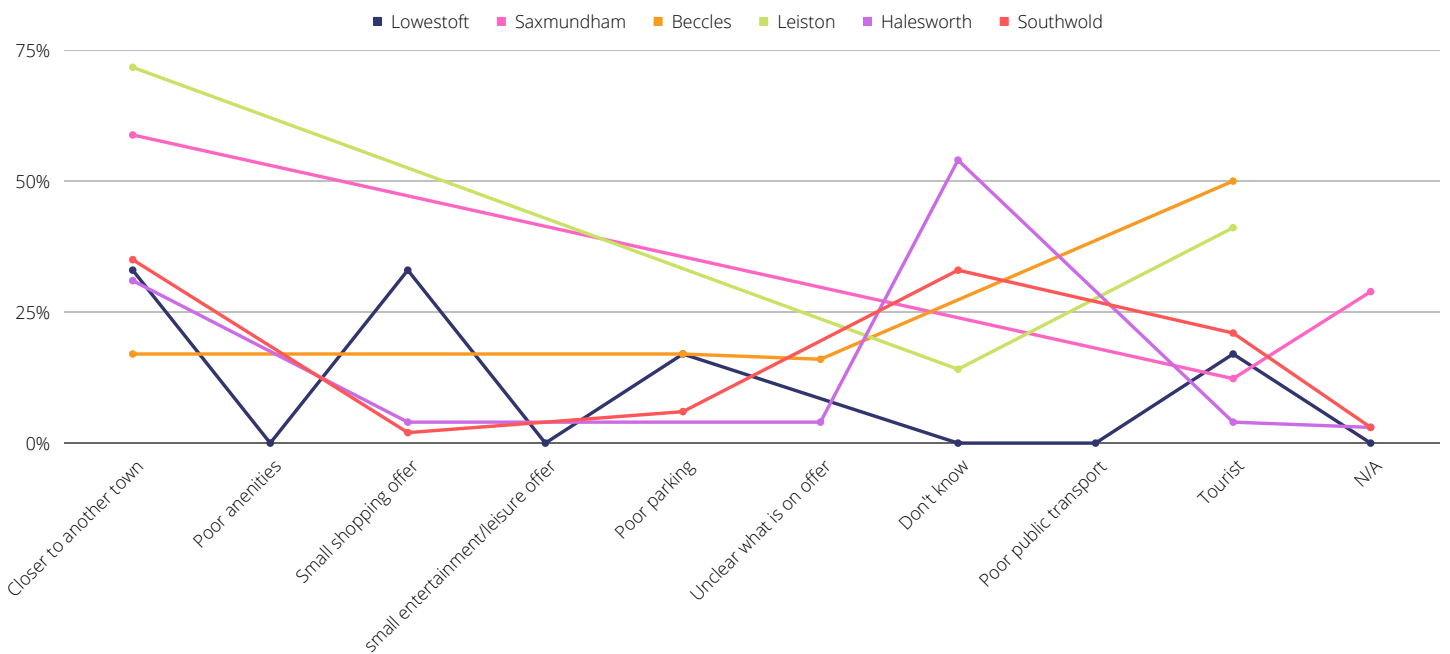
3 locations showed over **75%** of people would travel further to attend similar events

## Town Celebration Comparison Survey Results

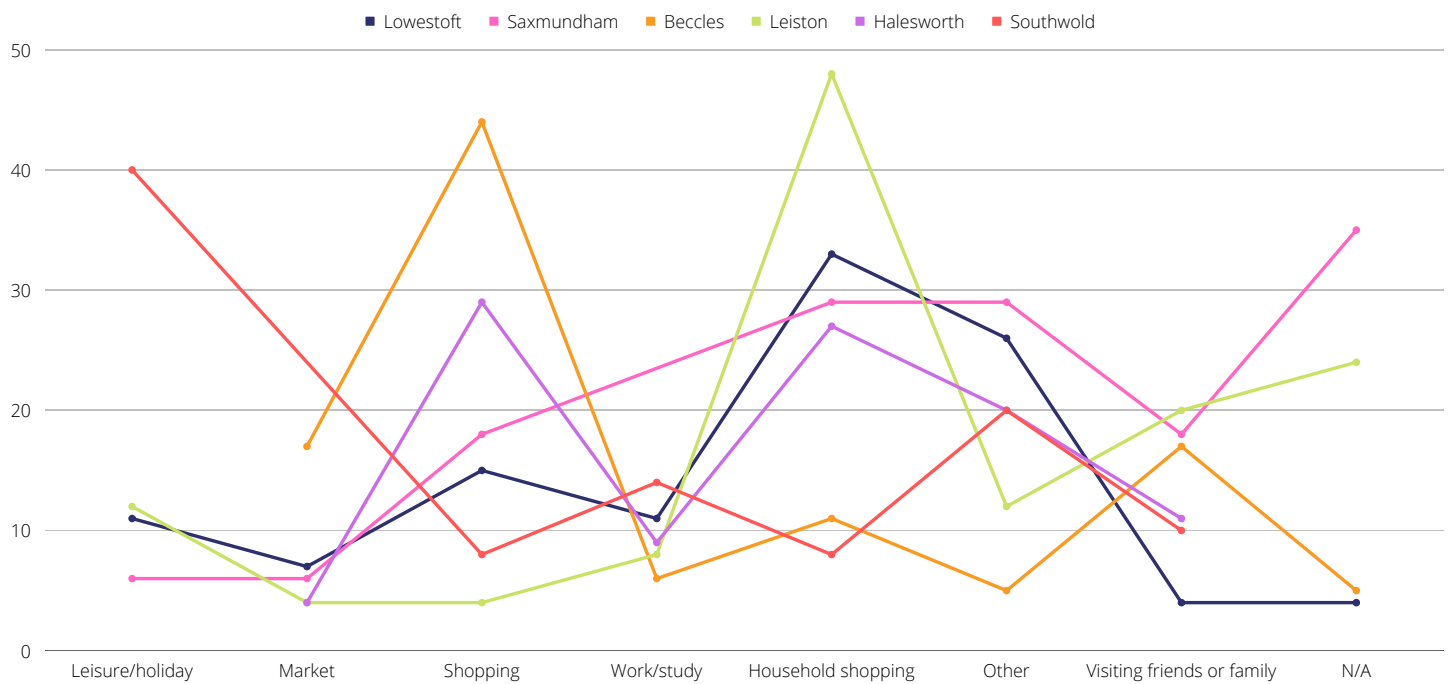
### How often do you visit the town centre?



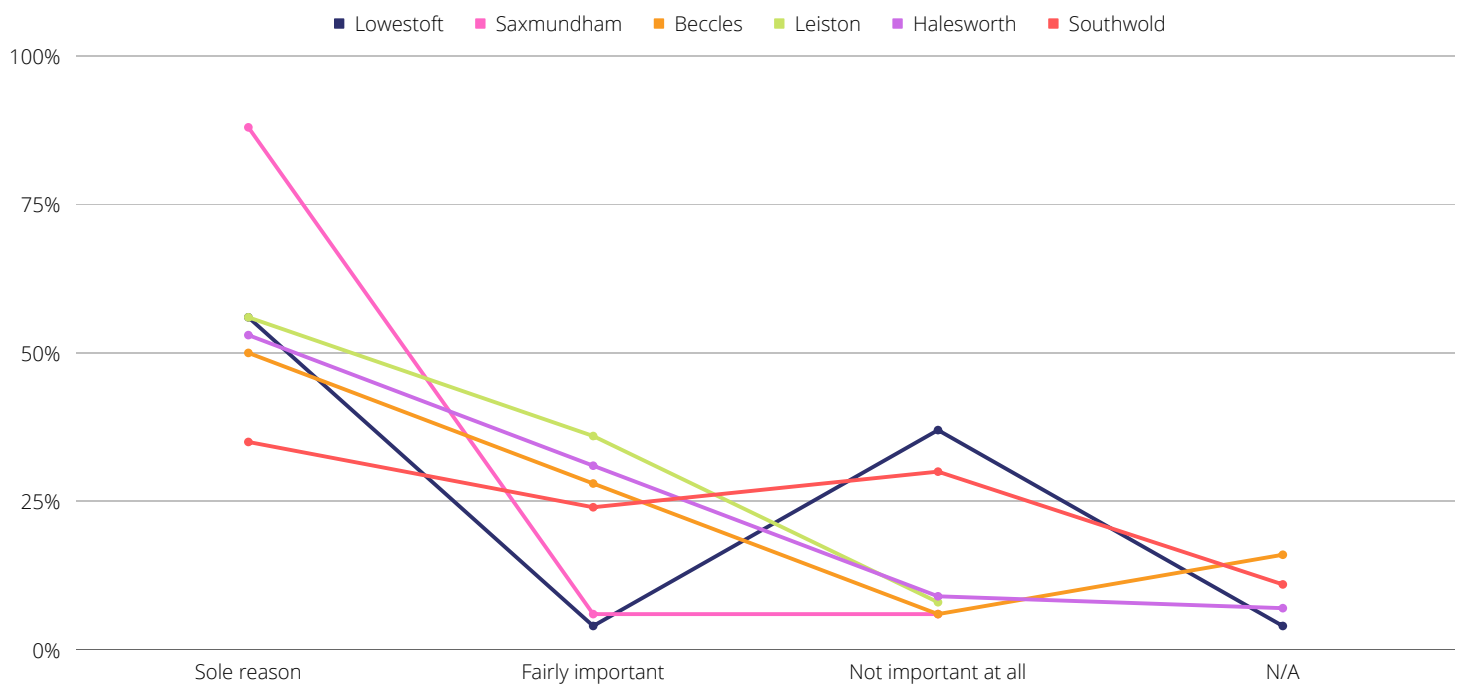
### Reason for not visiting the town often?



## What brings you to the town centre when you visit ?



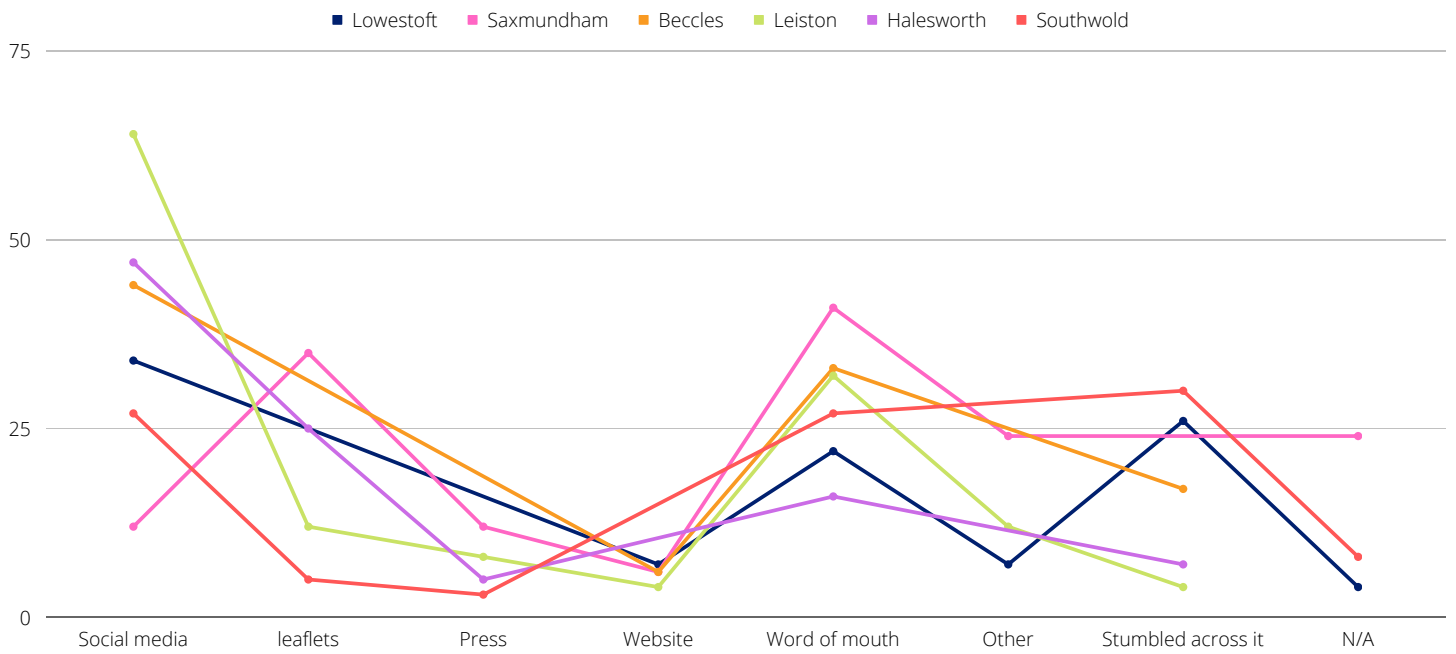
## How important was the event in your decision to visit the town centre today?



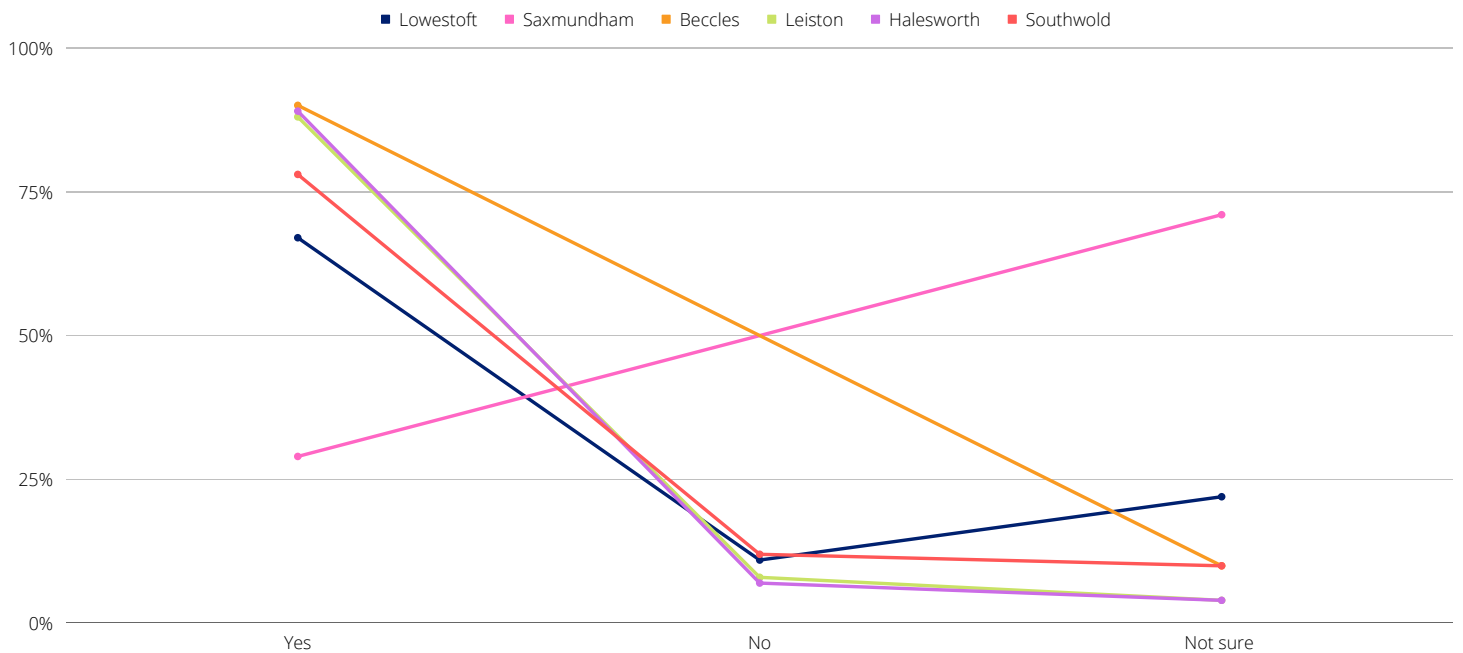


# The Event

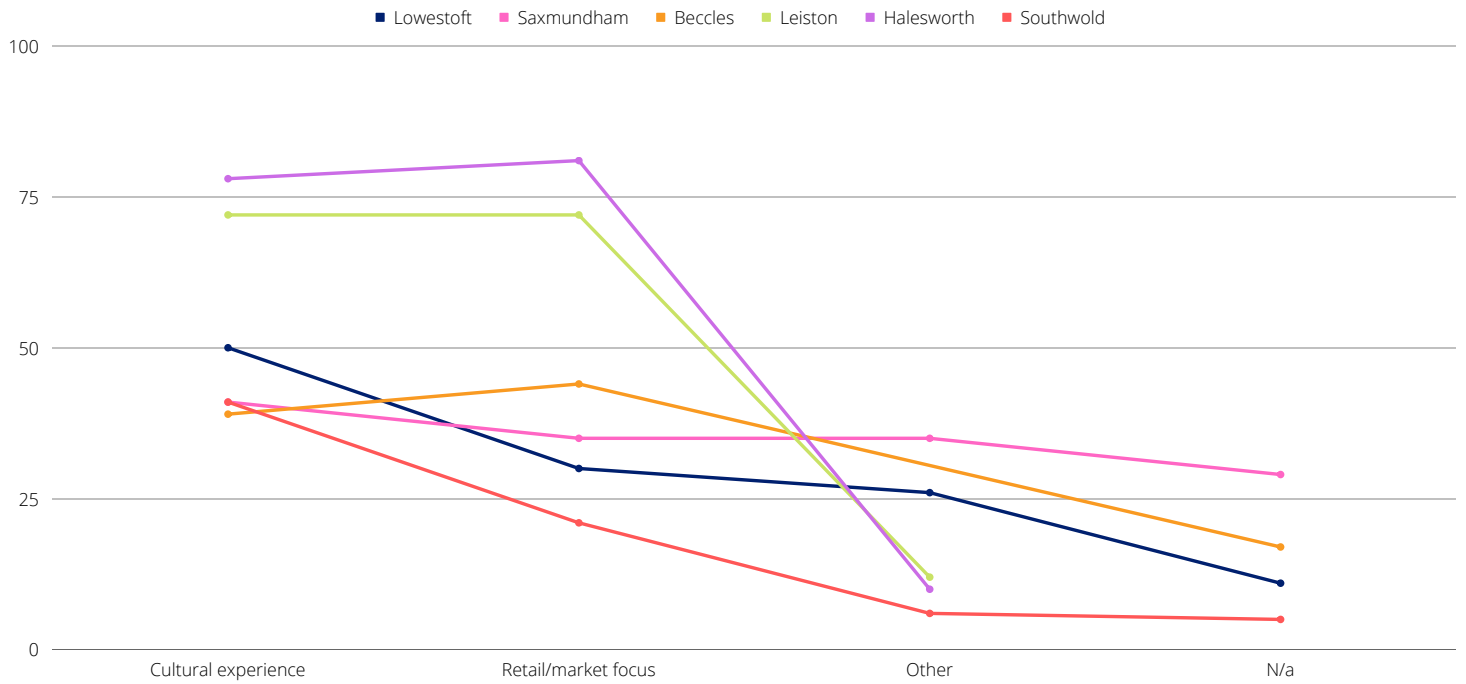
## How did you hear about the event?



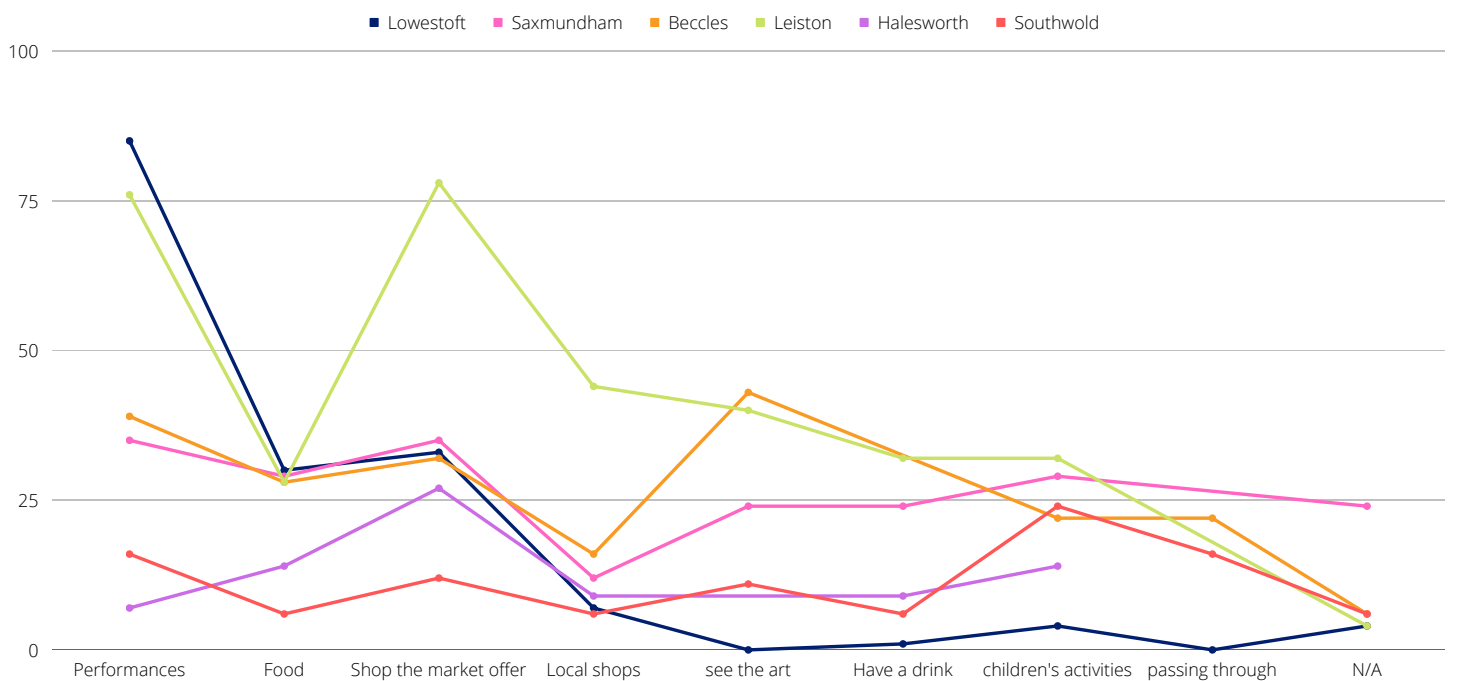
## Would monthly events or markets like today's encourage you to visit the town more often?



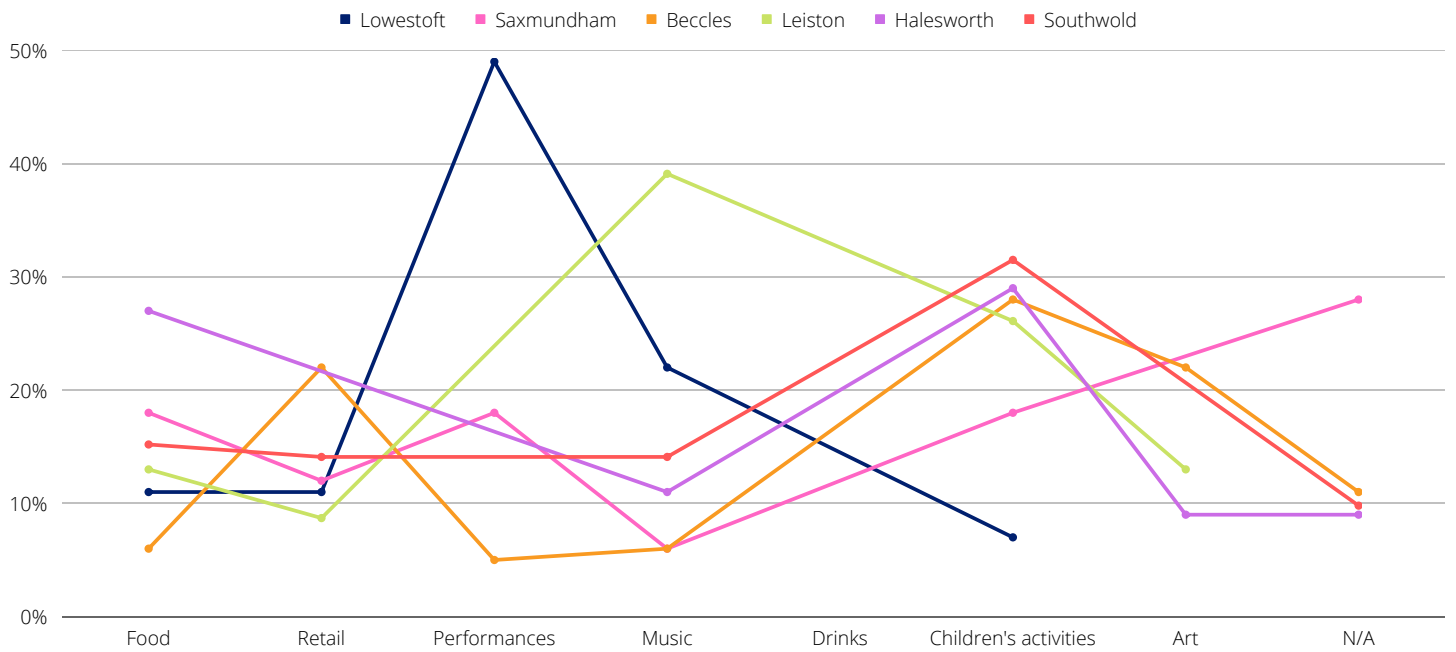
## What was it that attracted you to this event?



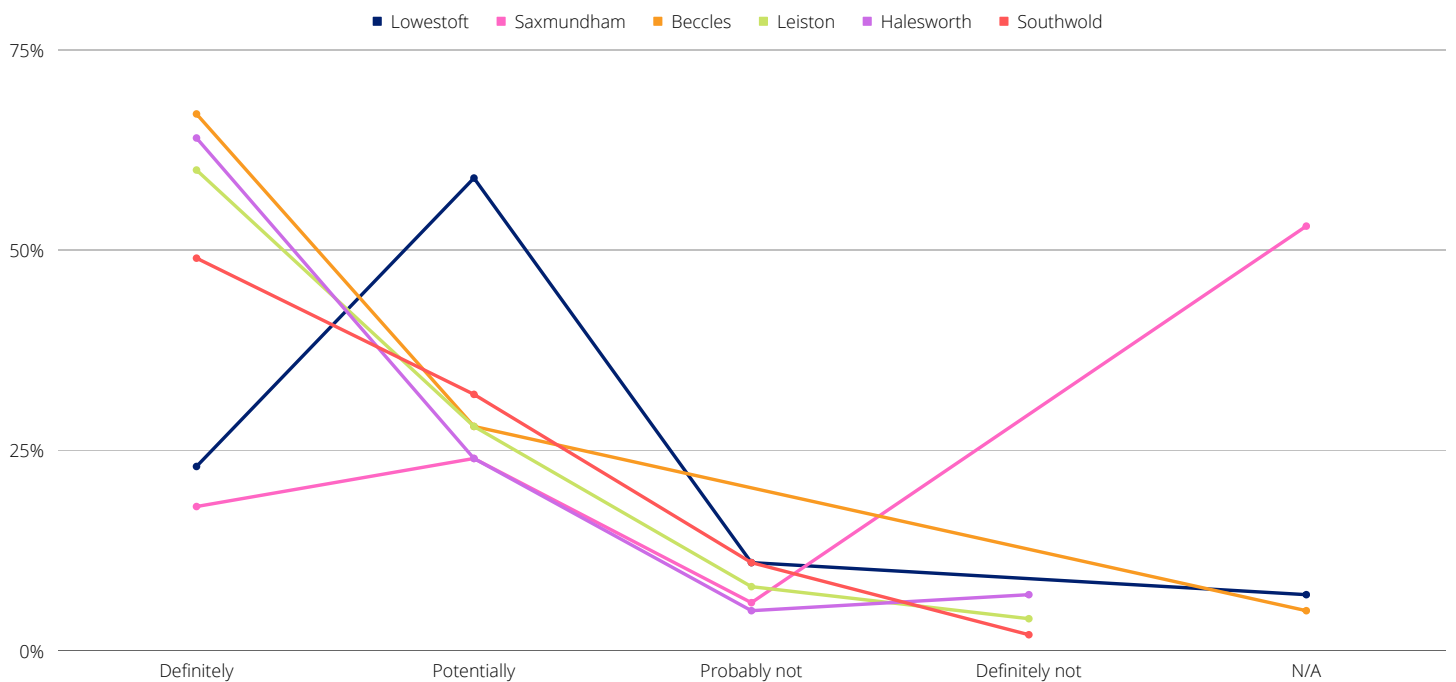
## Is there anything in particular that you have come to see at todays event?



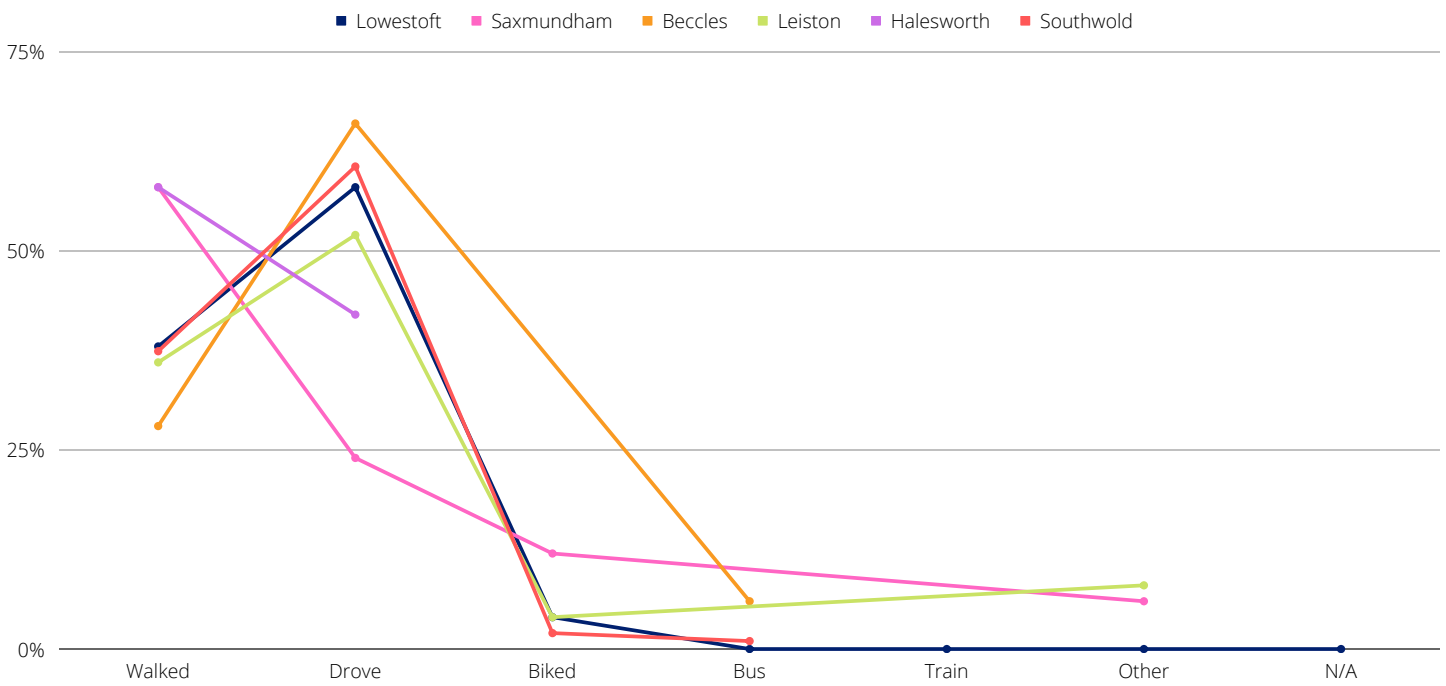
## If you had to choose one reason for attending the event, what would it be?



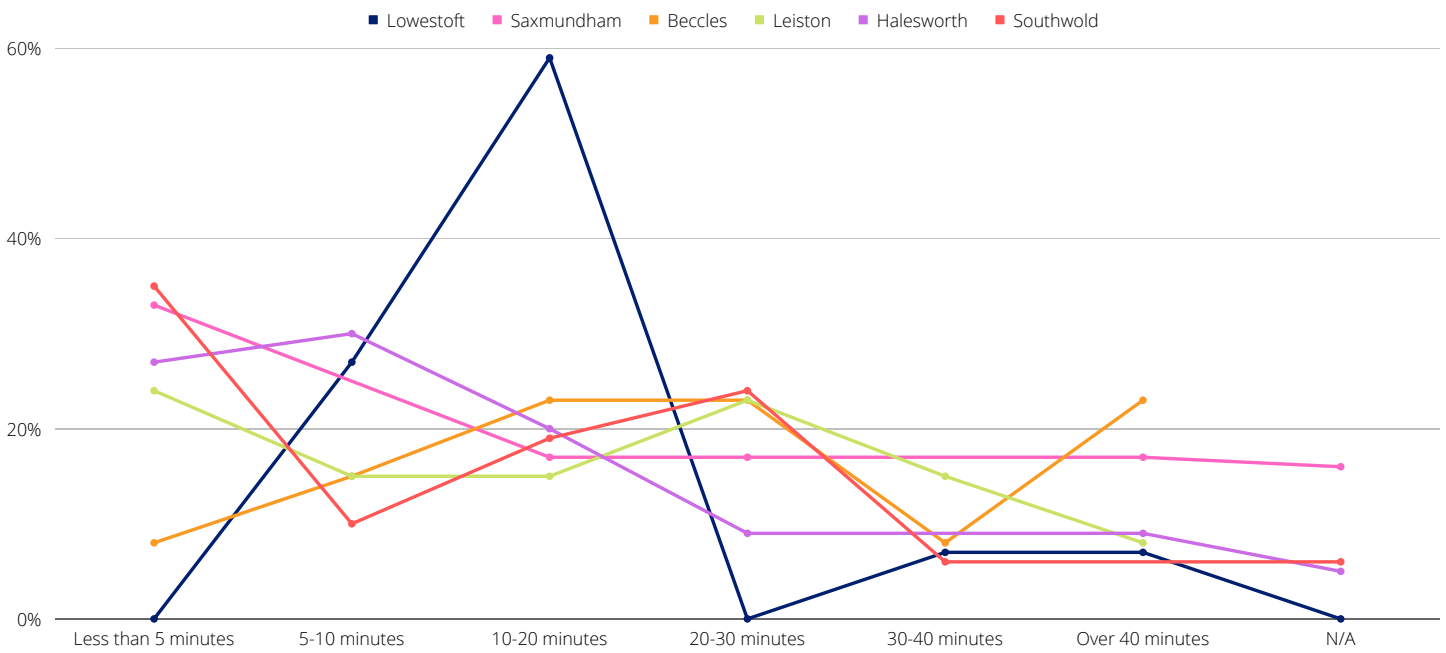
## Would similar events encourage you to visit neighbouring towns?



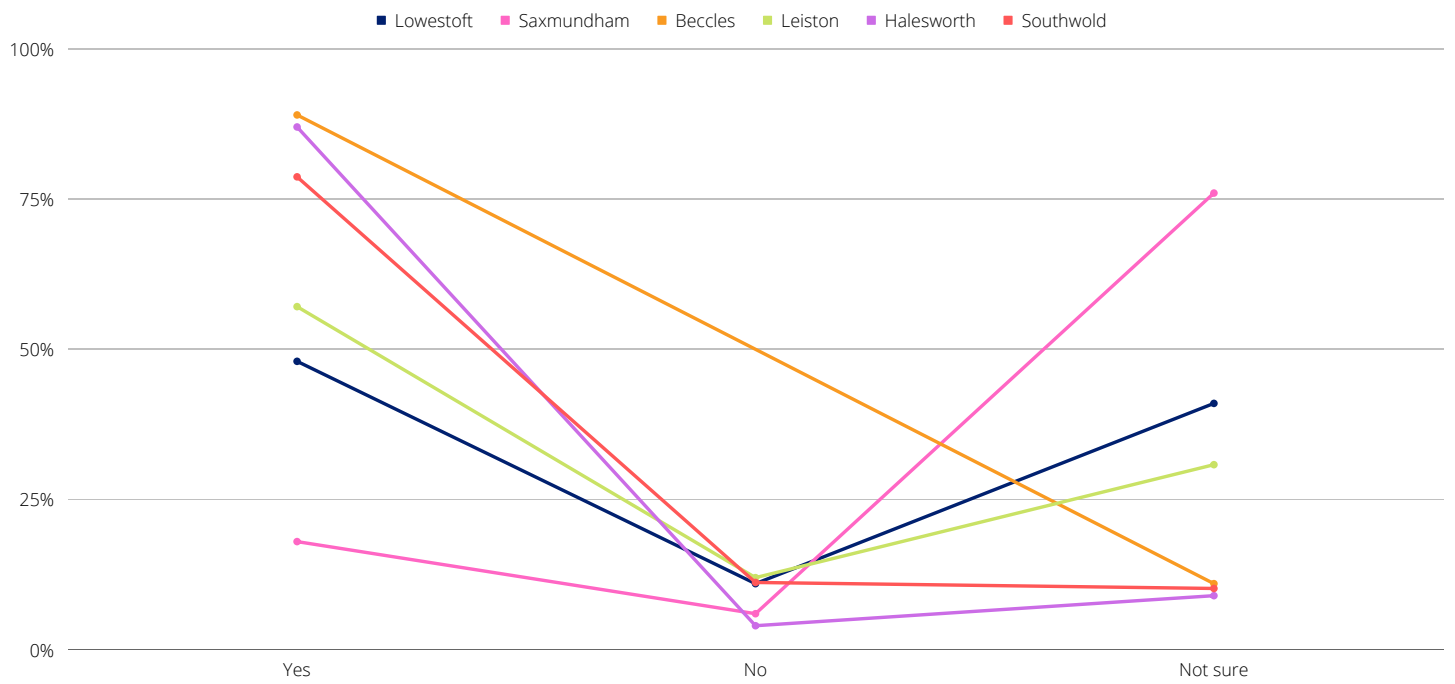
## How did you get to the event?



## Travel time.



## Would you travel further to visit a similar event in another town?



# Market Place Town Celebration Project

## Consultation Report

The second phase of the MarketPlace project saw a series of consultations in East Suffolk market towns centred around understanding and supporting existing events programmes.

In January 2022, online research sessions were held with key stakeholders from Bungay, Lowestoft, Framlingham and Felixstowe to find out about the challenges they faced when putting on events, as well as to understand the strengths of each town. Feedback from these sessions were compiled and reported to our events team, who responded to the issues raised in each town with a bespoke online workshop for each town.

These workshops were felt to be a positive space that effectively raised issues of place-making, fundraising, collaborating and futureproofing. The workshops were followed up with a digital toolkit of useful resources, delivered to all involved as a means of encouraging practical next steps and putting ideas into action.

This research process was repeated across January 2023 in Aldeburgh, Southwold, Wickham Market and Woodbridge, which again saw plenty of meaningful interactions and learnings.

While many towns faced unique challenges, it was particularly interesting to see how common themes emerged across the region: a lack of volunteers and overreliance on individual event organisers; struggles to join up thinking between arts organisations and businesses, and a desire to increase visitor spend within the town at pop-up events.

Though the information sharing was felt to be productive and useful, feedback showed that what was particularly helpful was the chance for a mix of organisations from across each town to be able to meet, talk and share ideas in a neutral, supportive space.

### Facts

- 12** Sessions
- 105** Individuals, business & organisations
- 18** Hours of research-gathering conversations

“

It was our pleasure to host you all on Tuesday - a fantastic workshop.

Aldeburgh Participant

”

“

Thank you for the very interesting presentation today, I found it useful and encouraging.

Woodbridge Participant

”



“

Just wanted to reach out and say thank you... It was a really informative and engaging workshop, the knowledge and expertise from you all at First Light has certainly helped me learn and grow new ideas as a result. Since the Workshop, I have been in contact with several organisations, about running a fair on the park green which connects us. Everyone's response so far has been really positive so hopefully as a result of the workshop, we are able to come together as a community to create a fair from the feedback and guidance you provided.

Southwold Participant

”