

## Uckfield Upskills Project



Opening of the Training Café

The Uckfield Upskill Project provides an Information Technology (IT) suite within the Wealden Skills Centre.

The project has provided a fully equipped IT suite that is now able to provide IT courses for apprentices, local businesses and the community as a whole. The project contributes greatly to the development of skills for adults and has tackled priority agendas such as Inclusion, Life Long Learning and the development of business links.

The Wealden Skills Centre is the result of the strategic partnership involving the Wealden Skills Partnership, Uckfield Regeneration Partnership (URP), local businesses, the community and voluntary sector in the Wealden District of East Sussex. The success of partnership working

was demonstrated in June 2006, when the project obtained regional recognition as the winner of the South East Regional Market Towns Award for Partnership and Strategic Working.

The success of the building has led to an expansion into neighbouring industrial units, which has enabled a training café for learners, that workers from the neighbouring workforce access weekdays between 7.30am and 1.30pm.

In 2007/08 a local branch of Morgan Estates used the skills centre to train over 500 staff and help them to gain their CSCS cards.

The project has enabled a range of partners to access further clients and additional funding, including some of the most hard-to-reach learners. ACRES the rural college for Wealden, was able to attract a number of NEET (not in education employment or training) adults onto digital photography courses. Initially the college ran a pilot that was so successful it has been able to attract core LSC funding, and the course has now run for the last two years.

The college also uses the centre to attract other learners who would be more uncomfortable returning to learning in a traditional college setting; recently it attracted a number of young mums who want to return to work but feel that they currently lack the necessary skills.

Partners have decided to expand the number and variety of courses on offer to include Apprentices, CSCS, ITQ's, NEBOSH, Basic Food Hygiene, Personal Safety Awareness, Flexi – IT workshops, EDCL and Customer Service training. This is on top of the huge number of courses that were run from the start of the project.

Funding: Small Rural Towns Programme £110,000 over three years.

For more details about the centre and the courses on offer see [www.wealdenskillscentre.co.uk/index.html](http://www.wealdenskillscentre.co.uk/index.html)

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## Battle Means Business

The main purpose of the project was to set up, organise, and promote a Business Fair, with the intention of staging the event annually. The fair has now been run for four years including 2008 and a wide range of business support is made available to visitors, including presentations and specialist advice/ training sessions such as, business start-up, IT support, financial advice, health & safety regulations and social enterprises.

In 2005 the project won the Business

and Economy Category of the AMT awards, in its first year.

The Fair goes from strength to strength. NatWest 1066 Business Centre is now its major local sponsor.

Organisations and businesses who have participated include Ten Sixty Six Enterprise, JobCentre Plus, Trading Standards, The Princes Trust, a local Business Centre offering small business start up units, surveyors, Chartered Accountants, engineers,

exhibition contractors, a health club & beauty clinic, travel advisers, workplace health advisers, ladies fashions and other local businesses.

The idea for the project came from the heart of the economic community, the Battle & District Chamber of Commerce during the town's healthcheck project. The project received support of £9,750 from SEEDA for the initial Fair.

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