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*** Welcome to the Thanet & East Kent Insider ***

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

29 April 2008

1. Reduce your AA Breakdown Cover costs

Chamber members can obtain discounts of as much as 59% on AA breakdown cover for their fleet of vehicles. Prices are scheduled to increase from 1st July. If you are serious about reducing your breakdown cover costs, this is your opportunity to do something about it. To take advantage of this special offer, telephone 0800 55 11 88, quoting reference 0360.

2. Credit Card Processing

Full details on how to reduce the cost of credit and debit card processing to as little as 1.2% of the transaction sum plus 18p are now available from the Chamber. All current valid Chamber members are eligible to apply. For details without obligation, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Credit Card processing"

3. Do you like the Royal Mail?

This is your opportunity to express your views to The Times which is seeking feedback from businesses on the service offered by Royal Mail. Chamber members from across the UK are being asked to assist in this in order to get a fair reflection of commercial usage. The survey will take no more than a minute or two to complete and will be available online until May 2nd. See <http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/6798219242988449773/royal-mail-survey.html>

4. 5 Star Service

Congratulations to Chamber member, 5 Star Computer Systems Ltd, which has been named as one of the three finalists in the 2008 Small & Medium Enterprises Awards for Kent. The winner will be announced at a Gala Dinner on 12th June 2008. Managing Director, Andrew Clarke, attributes the sustained growth since 1994 to a sharp focus on service. He offers clients a range of choices to interact with the company; email, internet and a local telephone helpline. Unlike 50% of Kent SMEs, he has a clear strategy for growth. The corporate objective of the company is "to grow to be a 4m company by 2010" and to become "the leading service provider brand in the South East". For more information, telephone 01843 844 020 or email sales@5-star.co.uk

5. Thanet District Council

As mentioned in previous editions of The Insider, the Chamber Property Forum exists to represent the property interests of Chamber members. Forum delegates Terence Painter of Terence Painter Properties, Dr Fiona Sherriff of Margate Harbour Arm Ltd and the Chamber Chief Executive will be meeting Sandy Ezekiel, leader of Thanet District Council, on the afternoon of Thursday, 1st May 2008. Among the topics on the agenda are the marketing of Thanet, business rates on commercial property, the Westwood Cross Development and Marlowe Innovation Centre. Chamber members will be kept fully informed of the results.

6. Interreg IVa

On 24th April, the Dunkerque Conference Centre played host to a symposium on the funding available from the EU budget under the France-England-Flanders-Netherlands "2 Seas" cross-border co-operation programme. The morning began with a welcome from Michel Delabarre, the current mayor of Dunkerque

and former Minister of State who stated that if he declared that no money is available, he was sure that the 500 delegates would immediately disappear. What he did not mention was that it is tax on companies that provide the funds for Interreg and, indeed, pay the salaries of all state officials including himself. The morning deteriorated somewhat with a series of speakers making declarations such as “the Channel represents an opportunity and not a barrier” which was voiced repeatedly in various languages. If anybody would like this in Flemish, I am now happy to oblige. The afternoon revealed some better news. The deadline for applications for categories 1, 2 and 3 has now been extended from 27th June to 25th July 2008. The whole of Kent qualifies for funding and 50% of project costs are eligible. Unlike previous rounds of funding where large partnerships were encouraged, the current round for the period 1 Jan 2007 – 31 Dec 2011 specifies no more than 10 partners. Two is acceptable. Not for profit companies and charities are eligible to apply. Eligible costs include staff salaries, administration, external consultants, travel, accommodation, equipment and investment. A total of 169m Euros is available. For details and a 169 page guide, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “2 Seas Interreg IVA Report”

7. The Queen

Did you know that Her Majesty the Queen is the Paramount Chief of Fiji and Lord of Man? Perhaps you did, but you may not know that she has attended a concert by the South African a cappella ensemble, U'Zambezi. You will have the opportunity to do the same on Saturday 12th July 2008 at the Winter Gardens Margate when the Thanet Fairtrade Initiative presents the Fairtrade Island Concert starting at 7.30 pm. Professional performers will be joined by staff and students of the Marlowe Academy, St Anthony's School and Hartsdown Technology College. The concert is sponsored by Chamber members Levicks, Cariss and Multimedia Clinic. If you believe in the values of Fairtrade, want to support your local schools or just like eating quality bananas, telephone 01843 296111 for tickets; £6.00 for adults, £3.00 for children.

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