

Thanet & East Kent Insider

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

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1. Art & Business

As most readers of this weekly bulletin will be aware, the main objectives of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber are to boost turnover and reduce costs for our members. Maintaining or increasing margins is essential if companies are to meet the rising tax burden and fulfil their obligations to employees and shareholders. Being the cheapest in the market place may be the overriding aim of national companies with outlets across the UK, but local traders can achieve an advantage from exceptional service and more attention to quality. The Arts Festival highlighted in the attached file features Chamber members, Caroline Lovely of Lovelys Gallery and Joanna Hunt of Cloudberry who undoubtedly bring a quality approach to all aspects of their operations in Thanet. If you have some free time on Saturday 15th May, please do come along to the festival. You will note that a delegation from France will be part of the activities. One of the top wine-growers in Beaujolais will be presenting his wines which will be of interest to anyone wanting to stock up for the summer. We are especially keen to attract more overseas visitors to East Kent to benefit from the advantageous exchange rates. For more details, see <http://www.doverartsfestival.org.uk/>

2. The Open Money Box

The Open Championship scheduled to take place at the Royal St George's Golf Club in Sandwich next year was the central focus of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber's Hotels and Restaurants Forum last Wednesday. We know from data produced by Comperio Research, a division of IMG, that the 2007 Open at Carnoustie contributed £14 million to the local economy and £26 million to Scotland. The 2005 event at St Andrews brought in £23.1 million of new money to Fife with a contribution to Scotland of over £70 million. We learned yesterday that France, yet to produce a major winner, is eager to take advantage of the golf premium and has submitted a bid to host the 2018 Ryder Cup. KPMG reports optimism returning to the golf industry generally following a difficult two years. For a copy of the KPMG Report "Golf and the Economic Downturn", email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "KPMG Golf Report". Whichever way you look at it, any business in or near Sandwich in July 2011 that can offer a product or service of interest to the visitors and suppliers could reap a rich harvest. The 2003 Open Championship in Sandwich attracted 183,000 visitors.

3. What About Renting Out My House?

Chamber members at the Hotels & Restaurants Forum heard a detailed account of the accommodation bonanza in prospect for July 2011. In a beautifully measured and apposite presentation, Gillian Gayton, Major Projects Manager at Dover District Council (DDC), recounted that one enterprising home owner whose property skirts the Royal St George's links course will receive £34,000 for letting his house for two weeks. Even quite modest accommodation within 20 minutes of the links course can expect tenants to pay a rental in thousands for the privilege of being close to the action. Gillian advised members at the Forum wishing to release their houses or apartments to go through official channels to ensure the best and safest return. Colebrook Sturrock is the official agent for property lettings over the period of the Open. DDC's Open Golf Office will charge a £60 registration fee for a range of services and inclusion on the Open Golf website. The fee includes costs of an assessment visit and administration. More information is available direct from DDC by telephone to 01304 240477 or by email to opengolf@dover.gov.uk.

4. What are Hotels and Restaurants Going To Do?

It was evident from the delegates at the Forum that the owners of large hotels in the area were evenly divided between those who were fully booked almost immediately after the Sandwich venue was announced and those who were cannily refusing bookings for the period in order to assess the best deals that could be made. Members were all agreed that excessively high prices would damage long-term tourism interests and could dissuade the Royal & Ancient Golf Club from selecting Sandwich in the future. There was keen interest in corporate events bookings and measures to extend the brief season beyond the immediate practice and playing days. Although the championship itself is limited to just four days, Thursday 11th July to Sunday 15th July 2011, official practice begins on Sunday 11th July and many media organisations will want to have their crew in place well before the big name players arrive.

5. What's It Got to Do With Dover?

The Royal St George's Golf Club is located within the area administered by the Dover District Council. DDC has acquired an excellent reputation for understanding and supporting local businesses. Although originally planned for 2013, Tim Ingleton at DDC and Cllrs Paul Watkins and Nigel Collor were determined to bring the event forward so that it could showcase East Kent prior to the 2012 Olympics rather than suffer in the shadow of a post Olympics analysis. It was no surprise to hear delegates to the Forum praising the excellent organisation and traffic management in 2003, the last time the Open Championship was in Sandwich. As Phil Thorley of Thorley Taverns, tel: 01843 602010, put it, "The parking was understandably some distance from Royal St. George's, but it was very well arranged and we didn't mind walking a way to the

course. There were no traffic hold-ups to worry too much about and it was just very well done.” With twenty-five pubs, hotels and restaurants in Thanet, Phil knows what he is talking about. Matt Collins of the Bell Hotel, tel: 01304 613388, the only major accommodation outlet in Sandwich, is looking to impress his guests so that they return in the future. Express By Holiday Inn at Manston, tel: 01843 820250, has received strong interest for the Open Championships and is looking to develop long-term repeat business. Suzannah Chapman of Stonelees Golf Centre, tel: 01843 823133, expects a boost in membership numbers and an increase in bookings for the new facilities about to open at the Stonelees Clubhouse. Even Cloudberry, tel: 07980 920370 makers of fine patisserie, is looking forward to a surge in demand for its cakes and delicacies. Other delegates expressed their thanks to the Chamber for organising the Forum and are looking forward to being kept up to date on additional measures designed to increase turnover as a result of the Open Championship in Sandwich.

6. How Are We Doing?

Unemployment figures for Kent are beginning to show definite signs of a recovery. As mentioned before in these columns, month-to-month changes offer little indication of trends. When the year-on-year results start to show gains, it is time to breathe a sign of relief and perhaps even think of booking that holiday you have been promising yourself for the last two years. Nine of the twenty-three wards in Thanet show an increase in employment. The annual Thanet increase of 9.2% compares favourably with the 83% recorded in May last year. Shepway and Maidstone record a percentage annual rise of 12.1% with Dartford bringing up the rear in Kent with 14%. The ever excellent Research & Intelligence department at Kent County Council also informs us that the biggest annual fall in unemployment in Kent is in the Tunbridge Wells district, closely followed by Tonbridge and Malling. Prawn sandwich makers and that splendid shop just outside Tunbridge Wells that hires hats for Henley, Epson and Wimbledon can once again count their blessings.

7. Give Us The Facts

Well, you did ask. Here are the bare facts, not seasonally adjusted.

| | March 2010 | | Change since March 2009 | |
|------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|
| | Unemployed | % of workforce | Number | % |
| Ashford | 2,066 | 3.1% | 88 | 4.4% |
| Canterbury | 2,507 | 2.7% | 117 | 4.9% |
| Thanet | 4,360 | 6.0% | 367 | 9.2% |
| Dover | 2,527 | 4.1% | 229 | 10.0% |
| Maidstone | 2,593 | 2.9% | 280 | 12.1% |
| Shepway | 2,743 | 4.8% | 296 | 12.1% |
| Kent | 36,846 | 3.7% | 2,654 | 7.8% |
| South East | 156,288 | 3.1% | 6,382 | 4.3% |
| GB | 1,558,194 | 4.2% | 79,998 | 5.4% |

8. Superstar Patronage

Chamber Member Sarah Thorne Theatre Club in Broadstairs has announced its first patron. The gasp from the arts establishment can probably be heard in John O’Groats. Director Michael Wheatley-Ward has achieved the astonishing coup of securing the patronage of Judi Dench. Arguably one of the greatest actresses ever, Dame Judith Olivia Dench, CH, DBE, FRSA is undoubtedly the leading female performer in British film and theatre today. She must also have the biggest mantelpiece. With ten BAFTAs to her credit, seven Laurence Olivier Awards, two Golden Globes, an Academy Award, a Tony Award and two Screen Actors Guild Awards, she has come a long way since her first tentative steps in the York Mystery Plays of 1957. The Sarah Thorne Theatre Club is offering an attractive summer programme that includes the works of Alan Ayckbourn and George Bernard Shaw as well as musical offerings from Cole Porter and the classics. On 13th June 2010, the programme features a Murder Mystery evening with the audience challenged to find the culprit. It’s probably too much to hope that Dame Judi Dench will appear on stage in one of her best known roles as “M” from the James Bond films” and say “You think I’m an accountant, a bean counter, more interested in my numbers than your instincts” but there’s only one way to find out. To book your tickets, telephone 0845 2626263 from 1000 hrs to 1400 hrs from Monday to Friday.

9. That’s My Cruise

As the name suggests, Chamber member That’s My Cruise specialises in cruise ship holidays. An expanding order book means that proprietors Vincent and Sandra Gudynas will be moving to new premises in Ramsgate shortly. Anyone booking a cruise through That’s My Cruise in their opening week from 10th May 2010 will be offered a complimentary private transfer from any home in Kent to Dover. That’s My Cruise is also offering Chamber members a free lunch on board Holland America Lines newest ship, Eurodam, which will be in port in Dover on Wednesday 8th June. There are 8 places available on a ‘first come first served’ basis. If you are interested in a splendid lunch or a holiday with a difference, give Vincent or Sandra a call, tel: 0800 0289754.

10. Thanet College

The new principal of Thanet College, Graham Razey, visited Thanet & East Kent Chamber last week accompanied by the Deputy Principal, Anne Leese and Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Karen Pilgrim. After just six days in office, Graham's timetable was understandably full. However, demonstrating yet again that Thanet College is fully committed to working closely with the East Kent coastal business community, there were discussions extending over three hours on the training needs of local companies, the prospects for inward investment, the relatively low skills available to employers at NVQ level 3 and the challenges to the public sector from the reduced funds available to Further Education. Also on the agenda were the property needs of Thanet College which are currently under review. Following the cancellation of the relocation project, the College is looking at upgrading its existing facilities and possibly offering a strictly limited number of local centres. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is keen for members to compete to supply the College. We expect to host a suppliers' workshop in the near future when Thanet College will outline its purchasing policies with a view to including more local companies on its purchase ledger. A keen sportsman with a sharp eye for business opportunities, Graham Razier brings a fresh approach to our local FE College and we wish him every success.

11. Thanet Male Voice Choir

Thanet Male Voice Choir will be celebrating its Harmony in Europe weekend on 7th – 9th May 2010 at the Winter Gardens, Margate. Singers from Italy, France and Germany will be joining our very own Thanet Male Voice Choir for a concert at 1930 hrs on the evening of Saturday, 8th May 2010. Harmony Ladies Choir, Männerquartet Frohsinn, Coro Monte Pizzo and Chorale Crescendo will all be singing sweetly. Now, which choir do you think is from Germany? Tickets are priced at a modest £6.00 and are available from the Winter Gardens box office, tel 01843 296111 or book via the website at http://www.margatewintergardens.co.uk/box_office/book.asp

12. Turner Contemporary

Booking is essential for the Turner Contemporary business networking breakfast scheduled for 11th May 2010 at Quex House, Museum and Gardens. Paul Gray, Head of Operations and Research, will give the latest news on the construction of the gallery and will outline the advantages to local businesses having a world-class facility in Margate. For more details or to book, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Turner Contemporary Breakfast".

13. Our Sponsors

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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
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Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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