

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Maintaining The Highest Standards

The current dilemma facing the Pakistan cricket team has put a sharp focus on the values we maintain in our professional lives. There are no such concerns with Chamber member TCB Property Maintenance. Since its inception in 2005, this Cliftonville company has lived up to its mission statement: "To carry out work with honesty, commitment and integrity, behaving to others as we would wish them to behave to us, to treat our employees fairly with the opportunity to fulfill potential and receive a fair reward." Powerful words indeed, which a string of satisfied customers are pleased to endorse. Chris and Ann Young wrote to TCB recently; "We would like to say a big thank you to you all for the brilliant work carried out by you all, from the builders, decorators, everyone in the office, you were all professional, friendly & trusting, as you transformed our fire damaged house back into our home, nothing seemed too much."

2. What does TCB Property Maintenance do?

The company undertakes renovations, restoration and property maintenance to domestic and commercial properties. The country's leading insurance company, Aviva has given its approval. Trading Standard's Buy with Confidence Scheme also now accredits the company. All tradesmen employed are routinely police checked. Mrs Capes, another delighted customer, wrote: "I would like to say thank you for sending a firm who are brilliant at their job, whose workers have been polite, friendly and a pleasure to have about. I would definitely recommend TCB to anyone who needed work done." Any business large or small would be proud of such a ringing endorsement. For details of how this Thanet & East Kent Chamber member can help you, give TCB Property Maintenance a call, tel: 01843 228484, or see the website at www.tcbproperty.co.uk.

4. £700,000 Business Breakfast

We are grateful to the business-minded senior management of Thanet College for their support for local business. As listed in last week's edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider, this Chamber will be hosting a business breakfast with the theme of how Thanet College can support local businesses by spending £700,000 on purchases from local companies. The college is reviewing its list of suppliers to see if it can redirect as much as possible of its spending towards suppliers from the East Kent coastal business community. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is delighted to have been selected as the host for this pioneering initiative and looks forward to the presentation at the Thanet & East Kent Chamber Business Networking Breakfast scheduled for 21st September 2010. Booking is essential for this event which will take place at the Fayrency Hotel, Kingsgate, Broadstairs from 0730 – 0900 hrs on Tuesday 21st September 2010. To book your place, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Business Breakfast £700k". The fee of £13.00 for Chamber members includes a full English breakfast served at table and hot drinks on arrival. A vegetarian option is available. There will be ample time for networking for delegates to promote their own products and services.

5. Minimum Wage Increases

We are grateful to Mark Hurdman of Levicks Chartered Accountants, tel: 01843 862716, and Jon Cleverdon of Jon Cleverdon Limited Chartered Accounts, tel: 3 01843 866599, for their emails of last week outlining some imminent changes to the minimum wages payable from next month. Readers will be pleased to know that both these prestigious Broadstairs accounting firms are in agreement that the new National Minimum Wage rates effective from 1st October 2010 will be £5.93 per hour for workers aged 21 and over, £4.92 per hour for 18-20 year olds and £3.64 per hour for 16-17 year olds. The Low Pay Commission expects around 970,000 workers to benefit from the

increases. For the first time there will also be an apprentice minimum wage rate of £2.50 per hour, which will apply to apprentices who are under 19 or those that are aged 19 and over but in the first year of their apprenticeship.

6. Centre of Gravity To Move

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber Chairman, Bill Moses, was quoted in the Kent Messenger of 18th June 2008 as saying: "The money going into bureaucracy and quangos would be better spent on small and medium enterprises (SMEs)." Pointing the finger firmly at SEEDA, he went on to say: "Expensive reports flatter the quangos that produce them but deceive the companies that pay for them." Unelected self-serving bodies received short shrift from our Chairman who claimed that the beautifully produced quango reports "are of little help to a small shop in Margate trying to compete with chain stores or a local haulier facing steep increases in the cost of diesel." It seems as if the redoubtable former head of Sally Line and Sealink is getting his way as SEEDA is facing the chop and similar bodies are likely to follow suit. Local companies may soon find that the centre of gravity for local enterprise might move from the so-called 'capital of the South-East' in Guildford, where the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) is based, to a location closer to home and closer to the needs and interests of the private sector in East Kent. In collaboration with our associates at the Dover District Chamber of Commerce, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber has written to the leaders of Thanet District Council and Dover District Council to make the case that the two largest business support organisations in the East Kent coastal business community should be fully represented in any future Local Enterprise Partnership. Roger Gale MP, Laura Sandys MP and Charlie Elphicke MP have each received copies of the letters. Perhaps we should leave the last word to Bill Moses who has a justifiable horror of inefficient self-appointed public bodies funded by the taxes imposed on successful private sector companies. As he put it, all they do is "simply consume taxpayers' money, tick boxes and create very little." The Thanet & East Kent Insider insists that the proposed Local Enterprise Partnership must include the two biggest Chamber of Commerce if it is to have any serious private sector representation.

7. Thanet Chamber Expands

Following a board meeting last Thursday, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber is pleased to announce the appointment of five new directors. Chief Executive, David Foley noted: "A fast growing membership and an increase in our commercial activities in support of our members required an expanded board of directors. We are delighted to have secured the services of all our first choices. We are confident that their experience and advice will help the Thanet & East Kent Chamber meet the challenges of the next few years as our economy grows." Chamber Chairman, Bill Moses, added: "This is a top team which will give confidence to Chamber members and inward investors alike. Any local company with ambitions to increase turnover and reduce costs can surely now see the advantages of working with the Chamber to ensure that their needs and interests are represented where it matters."

8. New Chamber Director: Lynn Orin

Lynn is the Matron and Deputy Health Manager at the Spencer Wing, Thanet's private hospital located next to the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate. An acknowledged expert on health matters, Lynn brings a wealth of experience of the interface between government and industry. Having presided over a four-fold increase in turnover during the last few years, she is well aware that for a modern workforce to be at its most productive, companies have to take into account the full range of physical and emotional needs of their employees.

9. New Chamber Director: Alastair Narraway

Alastair is the Managing Director of OFP Timber-framed Homes. Beginning his career as a carpenter, Alastair subsequently graduated as a building surveyor. With environmentally-friendly construction being very much part of the regeneration agenda of East Kent, Alastair's experience will be invaluable in ensuring that the Chamber supports members with forward-looking strategies that give full consideration to current and future legislation relating to property. As a direct employer of 32 staff and with an additional 50 workers dependent on the operations of OFP, Alastair understands what it takes to grow a company in harsh trading conditions and how to expand it when the economy improves.

10. New Chamber Director: Adam Freeland

Adam manages Pfizer Social Club and is conversant with the challenges faced by one of Kent's largest companies which has been operating in the UK for 50 years. Pfizer employs around 90,000 people in 180 countries. There are about 4,000 UK staff employed directly by the company. The company's investment in UK research and development is of the order of £550 million. It is a little known fact that on average every day 2.7 million people in this country take medicine manufactured by Pfizer. Adam's background in organising social and sports events for East Kent's largest company will be of great service in the Chamber's drive to boost tourism and raise the area's profile among key decision-makers in government and the private sector.

11. New Chamber Director: Rob Prince

Rob is the Operations Manager at China Gateway International plc. Extensive landholdings at Manston, Farthingloe and Dover give CGI a unique insight into planning, currency and infrastructure issues in the East Kent coastal business community. The company's strong ties with China will ensure that Chamber members will be among the first to know of new trading opportunities with the world's fastest growing economy. As a regular international traveller, Rob will help to present a compelling case to inward investors and those businesses thinking of expanding their operations.

12. New Chamber Director: Warren Dunham

Warren brings unprecedented knowledge of IT and electronic communications to the Chamber. As the driving force behind the expansion of Sota Solutions in East Kent, Warren can advise on the future IT needs of companies in this rapidly expanding industry. Sota Solutions has its head office at Kent Science Park near Sittingbourne. Warren will ensure that the interests of Thanet & East Kent Chamber members in mid Kent are fully represented in our operations. Sota Solutions operates a unique 200km fibre network running from London to Ramsgate. One of the issues the Chamber is promoting is how to connect local companies to this superfast electronic highway so that our information and communication systems can compete with the sunrise industries in China, Brazil and India.

13. Shoes, Sales & George Bush's Finest Hour

Shoes have been in the media for various reasons. Yesterday, Tony Blair suffered the indignity of having shoes hurled at him at a book signing in Dublin. Fleet-footed as ever, he avoided being hit. In fairness to our former Prime Minister, the BBC reported that there were more people queuing for a copy of his memoirs than protestors exposing their socks. Readers will recall that in December 2008, President George Bush managed to dodge a flying shoe when Muntadar al-Zaidi, a correspondent with an Egyptian news bureau, gave his opinion of American intervention in Iraq with this traditional Arabic gesture of contempt accompanied by the insult, "This is a farewell kiss, dog". When asked afterwards what had happened exactly, President Bush remarked: "All I can report is it was a size ten." From a man who addressed the Pope as "Your eminence", thereby reducing the rank of the head of the Catholic church to that of a cardinal, and called out in Spanish "Amigo, amigo" to the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, this was undoubtedly his finest hour. Readers will note that it took a shoe to bring out the best in him. Shoes appeared earlier in the week when a Chamber member sent us the following account. We do have our doubts about this story, but readers must judge for themselves. "Two UK shoe salesmen found themselves sitting next to each on a return flight from an undeveloped country in central Africa. The salesman from Northampton was looking particularly glum and confessed that before leaving for the airport after his week-long trip up country, he had sent an email back to base with the words, 'There's no market for us here, nobody wears shoes'. His neighbour, from a Thanet-based manufacturer, admitted that he too had sent an email home before leaving his accommodation. His version read: 'There is a huge market here, nobody wears shoes.'" Now which salesman would you want working for you?

14. Our Sponsors

Girlings Solicitors has been managing the legal affairs of commercial and private clients for over a century. Twenty-six partners and one hundred and twenty members of staff ensure a comprehensive range of services from the local offices in Ashford, Canterbury, Folkestone, Herne Bay and Margate. Offices in France and Spain complement

specialist departments for charities, individuals and companies. For details, telephone 01843 220274. Express By Holiday Inn took on the daunting task of restoring the former Prospect Inn at Minster. The result is a spectacular hotel that combines the best of Oliver Hill's 1930s design with ultra modern facilities and technological support. Conveniently located for business guests and holiday makers in East Kent, the meeting rooms and 105 bedrooms are available at competitive prices throughout the year. For details, telephone 01843 820250. Adecco is the world's largest HR solutions company offering a comprehensive service of temporary and contract staffing, permanent recruitment, outsourcing, outplacement, career services, training and consulting. Officially designated as a 2009 British Superbrand, Adecco is represented in Thanet and Dover by its Broadstairs office, tel: 01843 609292. CARISS design, install and support education and business computing systems as East Kent's leading specialist company in Open Source Software. To lower your carbon footprint, reduce your power consumption and adopt a thin client system, call CARISS, tel: 01843 823724. Mach Associates are the high-fliers in providing Internet technologies and specialist software solutions with a particular expertise in servicing the travel industry. A Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and with ISO9001 accreditation, Mach Associates also offers reduces telecom operating cost through VOIP/PBX phone systems, tel: 0870 321 9986. Sota Connect offers a comprehensive IT service covering best-value voice, data and Internet services for companies of all sizes as well as public sector organisations. The company operates two state-of-the-art data centres of over 10,000sq ft. Sota Connect owns and operates a unique 200km fibre network from London to Ramsgate with high bandwidth Internet access giving superfast Internet connections, tel: 0800 072 2420.

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