

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Manston Links With Manchester

Warm relations with Chamber member Manston Airport and our good friends at the BBC produced a welcome invitation to the inaugural Flybe flight from Manston to Manchester. The opportunity to explore new business opportunities on behalf of our membership was too good to miss and the invitation was gratefully accepted. Unlike the launch of the Manston to Edinburgh flights on 27th May this year, there was little fanfare to accompany the arrival at Manston of the Bombardier Q400 aircraft scheduled to take the first group of passengers to the hub at the heart of North West England. It appears that the expansion of Manston is now an accepted fact and its future success is expected.

2. What About All That Queuing And Waiting?

Manston offers many advantages over South East England's main points of entry by air; Heathrow, Stansted, Gatwick and Luton. Processing at the departure desks was prompt and polite. We were issued with our tickets within four minutes and directed towards the departure lounge. There was a rapid transfer from departure lounge to aircraft; 3 minutes. Security checks were thorough but expertly managed. The lounge is not cluttered by retailers or unnecessary offers. Travellers looking for low cost flights may find a measure of reassurance in knowing that their ticket revenue is not being squandered on non-essential fripperies. This is a no-nonsense service that boosts your budget not your waistline, a source of comfort to both your Chamber's Chief Executive and new Chamber Director, Rob Prince of China Gateway International Plc, a fellow traveller.

3. What About The Flight?

Boarding the aircraft could not have been simpler. There was plenty of seating room for the short flight. With over half the seats free, passengers were able to spread out in considerable comfort. The cabin crew staff was polite and professional. There was just time for a coffee and a short interview with the BBC Reporter before the pilot announced that it was time to fasten seat belts for the descent. Even the strong winds did not deter the pilot from making a smooth landing at Manchester Airport after a flight lasting just 59 minutes. The terminal building at Manchester was located close to the aircraft and there was a speedy transition to the arrivals lounge and exit point. We located a taxi immediately outside the building and reached the centre of Manchester within twenty minutes.

4. What Did You Do In Manchester?

We went directly to the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce where, by prior arrangement, we were greeted by senior staff members and the Head of Asia Pacific Development for UKTI, the UK Trade and Investment department responsible for boosting our exports. After an exchange of pleasantries and a re-enactment for the benefit of the BBC camera, we had a productive meeting. Your Chamber CEO gave an overview of the Thanet & East Kent economy with an emphasis on companies with an existing connection with Manchester. He also handed over copies of a two-page Profile of Thanet listing statistical data and a summary of recent developments. Rob Prince outlined the activities of China Gateway International Plc and its operations in East Kent, noting in particular the close ties with Wigan and China. Further discussions covered the iniquitous Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007 and the commercial advantages to the UK of continuing investment in road, rail and airports. We also touched on the likely reorganisation of government funding following the projected abolition of regional development agencies such as SEEDA. Any Chamber members wanting the contact details at UKTI or the Greater Manchester Chamber should email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Manchester Contacts".

5. What About the Return?

A short taxi ride took us from Manchester city centre to Manchester Airport, a twenty-minute journey with no traffic congestion on the way. The taxi driver asked if we wanted a domestic or international flight and duly dropped us at Terminal 3. Manchester is an international Airport with scheduled flights to 53 countries including USA, West Indies and the Maldives. Deciding which is the correct terminal is not an issue at Manston where all flights depart from the same point. Checking in was simple. We were assisted by a uniformed Flybe representative who,

immediately recognising technophobes, processed our tickets at the self-service check-in terminal. The same speedy security checks followed as at Manston. Gentlemen had to remove their belts and women were obliged to remove their boots. In case, you are wondering, we saw no men wearing boots and no belted women. The walk to gate number 142 was considerably longer than the walk to the gate at Manston but the few steps thereafter took less than a minute. The return flight lasted 45 minutes, the same duration as just one half of a Manchester United or Manchester City football match.

6. What About Parking?

The parking charge for 24 hours at Manston was just £2.00, a considerable saving over the London-based competition. London Heathrow Terminal 5 long stay car park charges £16.20 for two hours. In other words, for the price of parking your car at Manston for 24 hours, you can park at Heathrow for less than 15 minutes.

7. Was It A Big News Story?

The BBC South East News of 6 September 2010 carried the story at 1830 hrs and 2225 hrs. According to the Head of Business at BBC South East, the inaugural flight “received very strong positive feedback and that night’s programme received one of our biggest audiences for some time.” Viewers may have been disappointed not to have seen Wayne Rooney welcoming the Thanet visitors. We understand that he was busy elsewhere at the time, as some Sunday newspapers have since discovered. There are many companies in East Kent, such as Silent Gliss, the leading global supplier to discriminating buyers of motorised and manual curtain and blind systems, which have strong sales in the North West. They welcome the new link unreservedly and join us in wishing Flybe and Manston Airport every success in the future.

8. Manston Airport: Have Your Say

Manston Airport is hosting a meeting of the Airport Consultative Committee on Friday, 17th September 2010 in the Airport Departure Lounge starting at 1830 hrs. The management of the airport has contacted Thanet & East Kent Chamber with an open invitation to any Chamber members or readers of our weekly business bulletin who would like to attend. Just turn up and have your say. That is the beauty of our democratic system. Nobody in North Korea would offer the same.

9. Eurocell Has Arrived

Chamber member Eurocell has completed its move to EuroKent Business Park, Ramsgate CT12 6PB. Eurocell’s Dave Ashley will shortly be announcing an Open Day when visitors will have the opportunity to view the range of products of the UK’s market-leading manufacturer and distributor of quality UPVC profiles for UPVC windows, UPVC doors, UPVC conservatories, UPVC fascias, UPVC soffits, UPVC guttering and rain water systems. Eurocell is part of the Tessenderlo Group, a multi-billion-pound global plastics and chemicals group. A sign of the recovering local economy, Eurocell’s arrival in Thanet will be welcome news for builders, estate agents and anyone looking to improve their home. If you cannot wait until the announcement of Eurocell’s Open Day, Chamber members are invited to give Dave Ashley a call, tel: 07753 928602.

10. Get Your Share of £700,000

We have a few places remaining for our Business Networking Breakfast on 21st September featuring a presentation by the senior management of Thanet College on how Thanet’s Further Education College is seeking to reallocate its supplier budget of £700,000 towards local companies. 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 is a supplementary charge for non-members. There will be ample time for networking to allow delegates to promote their own products and services.

11. Petrol Prices

We are delighted that The Thanet Gazette has joined our campaign to highlight the excessive fuel costs imposed on residents, workers, tourists and visitors to Thanet [The great isle fuel rip-off, 10 September 2010]. First reported in the Thanet & East Kent Insider of 8th May 2008, the disparity between the price of a litre of unleaded petrol in Asda Canterbury and Tesco Broadstairs is having an economic impact on the retail behaviour of shoppers. The Thanet Times picked up our story in its edition of 3rd June 2008 under the headline “Boffin’s Petrol Warning” and quoted

the Chamber at length noting that the “Head of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber has been keeping a beady eye on the ever increasing prices and has been using Tesco in Broadstairs as his guinea pig”. Our weekly bulletin has returned frequently to the campaign. The edition of 24th September 2008 stated: “Once again we conclude that Asda’s ‘Everyday low prices’ is outperforming Tesco’s ‘Every little helps’”. Sadly for motorists in Broadstairs, Tesco has not improved its offer. The Thanet Surcharge then was 4p a litre, Tesco 110.9p, Asda 106.9p. During the past week, Asda and Morrisons in Canterbury have been offering one litre of unleaded fuel at 110.9p. Motorists filling up at Tesco Extra in Broadstairs have been charged 115.9p. The Thanet Surcharge has increased by 25% to 5p per litre. Motorists in Thanet deserve better. We are sometimes asked what the Extra in Tesco Extra stands for.

12. FS Perrins Dairy

Peter Kingston has contacted the Chamber asking if anyone can recall his grandfather’s business at 22 Station Road, Westgate-on-Sea, known as FS Perrins Dairy. Anxious to embellish his family history, Mr Kingston would welcome anyone who could supply any useful information about his enterprising relative. The Chamber will be happy to pass on any news. Please send any comments by email to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “FS Perrins Dairy”.

13. HMRC Scam Warning

We are again grateful to Mark Hurdman of Levicks Chartered Accountants who relates a scam alert concerning HM Revenue & Customs. He writes: “I would like to remind all readers of the Insider that HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) would not inform customers of a tax rebate via email, or invite them to complete an online form to receive a rebate of tax. A growing number of clients have been in contact in respect of this phishing scam. Do not visit any websites contained within the email or disclose any personal or payment information. HM Revenue & Customs regularly update taxpayers on their website of the current scams; the link to their site is <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/security/examples.htm>. The email addresses used to distribute the emails purport to be from valid Revenue websites, but this is part of the scam. If you are in any doubt as to whether you are due a rebate, please contact Mark on 01843 862716 for a full review.” You have been warned.

14. Times Have Changed, Me Old Flower

Regular Readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will be aware that these pages have often referred to the Doncaster Rovers football team. A recent review of its history from 1980 until it was taken over by the plastic surgeon tycoon, John Ryan, noted how the team had risen from nothing to a state of absolute mediocrity. Without the enhanced charms of Melinda Messenger, and the resulting increased wealth of the team’s benefactor, the history of this South Yorkshire outfit may well have ended in the ignominy of the lower reaches of the Conference League. As it is now, the team is enjoying discreet and measured success in the Championship competing against much better known sides such as Leeds United, QPR, Middlesbrough and Portsmouth. However, senior readers may recall that in the 1950s Doncaster had a brief flurry of fame in the second tier of the national leagues inspired by their best ever player, Alick Jeffrey, and one of the UK’s first black footballers Charlie Williams. Charlie later became a genuine celebrity. He was the first black comedian to appear regularly on television and delighted audiences with his stories and well-known catchphrase “Me old flower”. The editor of the Thanet & East Kent Insider was a spectator at this afternoon’s Watford vs Doncaster match. In conversation with a Donny supporter, he learned that the late Charlie Williams is still revered in South Yorkshire. At a time when black players and actors suffered the cruellest criticism, Charlie apparently rose above the nastiness of the day and could charm any audience. His response to hecklers when appearing in Working Men’s Clubs was to say; ““If you don’t shut up, I’ll come and move in next door to you”. Once when entering a restaurant in the posh suburb of Bessacarr, he was told by the restaurant manager in a brutal tone; “We don’t serve darkies”. Charlie replied; “Just as well, because I don’t eat them”. Much revered by other comedians including Lenny Henry and Gary Wilmot, Charlie was awarded the MBE in 1999. Wayne Rooney, take note.

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