

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Another Business Opportunity

Following the success of the £3.5 million business engagement scheme with Thanet College, another local enterprise is anxious to work with Thanet & East Kent Chamber members who are able to supply any of the following items: beds, furniture, flooring, kitchen equipment or textiles. To obtain your official supplier registration form, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "PGC Supplier Form Chamber Member".

2. Whisky & Taxes

In the 1949 war film, *Twelve O'clock High*, the central character is played by Gregory Peck. He drinks liberally from a bottle labelled *Vat 69*. In those days, to most British audiences *Vat* was a scotch whisky; a fine blend named after the cask number 69 which tasted the best of the hundred blends produced by William Sanderson in 1882. A panel of experts had been especially assembled to taste each of the casks before making the critical decision. Now, there's a job worth having. A contemporary review in the *New York Times* of Gregory Peck's performance asked: "How much can a man give?". Many companies struggling to pay their Value Added Tax today may have some sympathy with that point of view. Fortunately, we have some skilled accountants to assist us with VAT issues. Mark Hurdman of Levicks Chartered Accountants, tel: 01843 862716, has written to the Thanet & East Kent Insider with some useful guidance. As he puts it: "HMRC have recently issued a reminder about paying VAT by cheque. From 1 April 2010, all VAT-registered businesses with a VAT-exclusive turnover of £100,000 or more, and all newly-registered businesses regardless of their turnover, must submit VAT returns online and pay electronically. Businesses that are not caught by the above rules can still pay by posting HMRC a cheque but, from 1 April 2010, all cheque payments sent to HMRC by post are treated as being received by HMRC on the date when cleared funds reach HMRC's bank account, not the date of receipt. So sufficient time must be given for the cheque to reach HMRC and clear into HMRC's bank account. A cheque generally takes three bank working days to clear." Thank you, Mark. If you have got any money left after paying your VAT, you can always treat yourself to a tot of *Vat 69*. Our advice would be to speak to your accountant before you pay HMRC. After all, if he works his magic, you might be able to afford the whole bottle. VAT advice is available from the following Chamber members: J Cleverdon of Broadstairs tel: 01843 866599; J W Accountancy Services of Shepherdswell tel: 01304 830 229; Levicks of Broadstairs tel: 01843 862716; Michael Martin Partnership Ltd of Whitstable tel: 01227 770500 and Neville Weston of Ramsgate tel: 01843 594571.

3. Relieved About Relief

We are grateful to Laura Sandys, Member of Parliament for South Thanet, Sandwich and the Stour Villages, for updating us on the government's thinking on Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR). The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Robert Neill, said in a debate in the House of Commons on 21st October 2010 that the coalition government is looking "to find a practical way to make small business rate relief automatic." Such an initiative would certainly be welcomed by local small businesses with a rateable value below £18,000. Currently, over half the companies in England and Wales eligible for SBRR do not claim it. All private sector firms in East Kent should also find encouragement from Bob Neill's assertion that in giving local authorities wide-ranging powers to grant business rate discounts, this should not be misinterpreted as providing an excuse for local authorities to raise supplementary business rates arbitrarily or as he put it: "We are also taking legislation to ensure that no new supplementary business rate can be imposed without the backing of local firms in a referendum." Turkeys are usually temperamentally opposed to voting for an early Christmas. It would require a powerful argument indeed to persuade East Kent firms to add to their statutory costs. For more details of the current SBRR in Thanet, telephone 01843 577557.

4. Predict & Prevent For Start-Ups

Joanna Eve is the Promotions and Events Coordinator at the Kent Adult Education Centre for Thanet. She has written to the Thanet & East Kent Chamber with news of a one-day course designed specifically for people who are interested in starting up in business on their own. The training will take place at Hilderstone Broadstairs Adult Education Centre on Saturday 6th November 2010 from 1000 hrs – 1600 hrs. Included in the programme are sessions on marketing, competition, pricing, profit and loss, cash flows, simple business plans, VAT, expenses, banking and dealing with lawyers and accountants. For more details, Joanna recommends that any interested parties should call in at Hilderstone College in St Peter's Road Broadstairs CT10 2JW or telephone 0845 606 5606 quoting code: AY007 BRO-10-J. The Thanet & East Kent Insider has often commented on the benefits of a Predict & Prevent strategy in preference to Find & Fix. This looks like a good example.

5. News From Dover

Dover Community Radio Station (DCR) attended an event labelled "You Decide" on 15th October 2010. This was an evening arranged by Kent County Council Councillors at which local groups put forward their proposals to access the Local Schemes Grant. The audience heard a succession of three-minute presentations and voted on each one by means of an electronic pad. DCR was looking to obtain £3,000 to fund trial radio broadcasts during the Dover Regatta Week and the Dover Town Carnival in July 2011. Such was the strength of the presentation that DCR was awarded £2,921.

6. Pretty As a Picture

Not all the golfers pictured on the official Chamber photography website at <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/ddcc> may be described as 'pretty' but they all had a pretty wonderful time at the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club earlier this month. Whether under the watchful gaze in the clubhouse of its patron, Prince Andrew, or on the course under the rather sterner professional eye of club professional, Andrew Reynolds, all those who took part confessed to a splendid day at this magnificent venue which has hosted two Open Championships and has again proved to be an excellent host to the Thanet & East Kent Chamber and Dover District Chamber of Commerce members. Those new to the photo website might not realise that it allows you to order an extensive range of products from simple colour prints of different sizes to photobooks, mugs, calendars, jigsaws, mousemats, bags and t-shirts. True enthusiasts could surround themselves at work and home with images of themselves and their teammates. The Chamber's official photographer, Rosie Anton tel: 01304 620663, has yet again produced some stunning shots of which all our sponsors and players can be proud. The enthusiastic support of Chamber members for the annual October Golf Day has encouraged us to consider a spring tournament at Prince's Golf Club on 1st April 2011.

7. Competing With The Chinese

In an interview with Thanet & East Kent Chamber members in January this year for BBC Radio, Lord Digby Jones stated that we now live in a world "where India wants your lunch and China wants your dinner". The tide of British companies seeking a low-cost manufacturing base has certainly not come to a stop. But, in last week's edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider, we reported on the opportunities available to companies wishing to export to the growing market of Chinese consumers. One of Thanet's most successful companies is doing just that. Debbie Heath, the charismatic PR & Marketing Executive at TV One, informs us that this Margate-based supplier of hi-tech equipment has won the accolade of Systems Product of the Year. This is a significant triumph for Managing Director, Steven Mattingly, who received the warm approbation of his peers earlier this month at a gala dinner at London's Radisson Blu Portman Hotel when comedian Rufus Hound presented him with the award. All Thanet-based manufacturers can take a measure of pride in the achievement which shows that East Kent manufacturing can compete and win in world markets. As any professional football team can confirm, sustained success is more difficult; but take note, this is the second year running that TV One has won the Premier League trophy for audio-visual suppliers. The technically-minded reader might like to know that the winning product relies on internal CORIO®2 scaling and

conversion technology, designed and developed exclusively by TV One, which is the backbone of the C2-6104A multiviewer. The low-cost 4-Window Video Processor accepts DVI up to 1920x1200@60Hz and 1080p, as well as RGB, component and composite video inputs up to 2048x2048 at virtually any refresh rate. Most of us may not appreciate the electronic wizardry that TV One has produced, but industry insiders inform us that the recommended retail price of £2,850 is spectacular and should guarantee its commercial success. Steve Mattingly has assembled a formidable team at TV One and we add our congratulations to the many he is receiving from around the world. Even if our competitors in India and China do occasionally eat our lunch and dinner, it is comforting to realise that afterwards they may well be watching a screen powered by an East Kent supplier and a Thanet & East Chamber member to boot.

8. Beleaguered Public Sector Workers

A news release last Wednesday from Badenoch & Clark and Adecco focused on the provision of "Nationwide career clinics for beleaguered public sector workers". This is a significant factor in Thanet where the public sector accounts for over 35% of the workforce. In the Dover District the government pays for the salaries of just over 30% of those in work. The figure for Canterbury is higher than both these districts at 40.3%. Ashford fares rather better at 24.2% as does Swale at 25.8%, but public sector workers in Maidstone, 33.3% and Shepway 31.8% have little reason to feel comforted. [All data from NOMIS 2008 reproduced by the Thanet & East Kent Chamber under the terms of the Click-use License no. C2010000980]. Commenting on the cuts announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review of 20th October 2010, the authors point out that: "The Public Sector has invested a significant amount of time and effort in cultivating a reputation as an attractive place to work. Today's news delivers a severe blow to the reputation of the public sector as an employer of choice". The advice offered to public sector workers facing redundancy is: "they will need to be flexible in their search for work and should not disregard finding temporary work in the first instance as they seek to manage the transition." The Badenoch & Clark press release of 18th October 2010 was headed "Morale in the Public Sector hits all time low". Nicola Linkleter, Managing Director of Public Sector at Badenoch & Clark, pulls no punches when she writes: "My advice to public sector employers is to learn from your private sector colleagues, and fast." Thank goodness therefore for the services available from the following private sector Chamber members who make their living by matching workers to jobs and by helping them to feel a little more valued and a little less beleaguered: Adecco tel: 01843 609292; HRGO tel: 01843 591798; Maximus Employment and Training UK tel: 01843 808410; TNG (Avanta Enterprises) tel: 01843 570250 and 247 Recruitment (Kent) tel: 01843 294004.

9 Get Stufed Or Should That Be Get Stuffed

We are grateful to Suzannah Chapman of Stonelees Golf Club, tel: 01843 823133, who is delighted with the new fast train service from Ramsgate to London St Pancras, but not so happy with the standards of literacy on the electronic signage on display in the carriages. Suzannah is of course quite correct in asserting that "immediately" should not be spelled like that if you are over five years old. Regular readers will recall some of the submissions we received at the Thanet & East Kent insider earlier this year from members regarding public signs on display in the UK. Among the star attractions was that reported in the edition of 7th August 2010. This related to a sign located outside one of the buildings at Northampton General Hospital which read: "Family Planning Advice: Use rear entrance". A recent edition to our library is a road sign in Brentwood. It shows a double roundabout. Motorists are directed to the right for Brentwood Cathedral and the Council Offices. Anyone turning to the left is informed that it leads to the "Secret Nuclear Bunker". We can only assume that our nation's enemies in Brentwood cannot read English. A chamber member in Canterbury recalls a shop in Whitstable which bore a large that sign that read: "We buy junk, we sell antiques". Now there's an honest retailer. As Basil Fawley might say: "We should have him stuffed".

10. Our Sponsors

Girlings Solicitors has been managing the 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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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk

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