

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Growth Without Gridlock

Next week, Kent County Council will launch its plan to ease congestion on our roads. It is entitled, Growth Without Gridlock and consists of a “transport delivery plan to keep Kent moving”. Among the issues to be addressed are: Third Thames Crossing, Duelling of the A2, Operation Stack, High Speed Rail, Parkway Station at Manston and Local Control of Highways Spending. The new strategy will also consider linking new infrastructure to local planning through the District Local Development Framework and improving the transport network to boost business in our Kent villages. As Kent County Council looks to make savings of £340 million over the next 4 years, identifying the priorities for public spending on our roads will be a key issue. The Thanet & East Kent Insider expects to report on the launch in next week’s edition which Thanet & East Kent Chamber members will receive promptly on publication.

2. Business Networking Breakfast

This is a reminder of the Transport & Tourism Business Networking Breakfast scheduled for Friday 10th December 2010. Speakers include Neil Wiggins, Chairman of the Dover People’s Port Trust Limited; Charles Buchanan, Managing Director of Manston Airport; Paul Howe, Managing Director of Carol Peters Travel and a Senior Manager of Norfolk Line, a division of DFDS Seaways which operates cross-channel ferries. Delegates will be welcomed with a cooked breakfast and the opportunity to promote their products and services to those present. Booking is essential. To reserve your place, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Transport & Tourism Breakfast”.

3. News From Europe

The Your Europe Newsletter for November 2010 published by the Enterprise and Industry department of the European Union focuses on innovation in small businesses and research & development. We learn the EU has set a target of 3% of EU GDP to be spent on R&D by the year 2020. The current rate has remained at around 1.84% since 2005 which contrasts rather sharply with that of 2.5% in the United States and 3% in Japan. Apparently, the US obliges its federal agencies to devote 2.5% of their external budgets to “funding innovative projects by SMEs”. This is surely a measure that would be welcomed by SMEs in East Kent. European directives have created considerable obstacles to bringing new ideas to market. A European Patent valid in 13 European countries costs about 20,000 Euros. A US patent can be obtained for 1,850 Euros. You do not need a Ph.D. in economics to know which of the two systems is the more favourable to innovation and commercial success. The EU Commission is proposing a patent for 27 EU member states, but at a cost of 6,200 Euros this would still be over three times more expensive than the US equivalent.

4. Jobs Fair

Chamber member Canterbury Christ Church University is organising a Job Fair for Friday 21st January 2011. We are grateful to Fontemaria Totaro and James Corbin for bringing this event to our attention. The day

promises a variety of exhibitor stands, presentations and workshops that will “provide a forum for future and current graduates to network with potential employers.” Asda, Reeves and IBM have confirmed their participation and CCCU is expecting a wide range of employers to use the occasion to attract the best candidates. Employment agencies will also be interested in surveying the market place. Further details can be found at <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/support/careers-and-student-development/events/jobfair.asp>.

5. Thanet College & Chaucer School

Thanet College held its Star Awards last Thursday evening. Unlike awards ceremonies in many educational circles, the Star Awards are the subject of a democratic vote from other members of staff. Thus the winners enjoy the prestige of knowing that their performance has been judged as outstanding by their colleagues and peers. This system should have much appeal to readers working at institutions with a forward-looking leadership anxious to recognise the achievements of their best workers. Fortunately for the leadership of this Chamber of Commerce, such arrangements have not yet been adopted here. Also celebrating success last week was the Chaucer Technology School in Canterbury which has enjoyed five years of successive improvements in its GCSE results at A - C grades under its inspiring head, Simon Murphy. Hosting the evening at the King's Hall Herne Bay last Wednesday, Simon paid tribute to his invited speaker for the presentations, Paul Carter, the Leader of Kent County Council. Afterwards, he said that the trip to the United States in 2005 by over 90 head teachers to visit Microsoft which had been organised by Paul Carter had inspired him to put new technology at the forefront of his policies and had been a significant factor in the progress of his school. The Thanet & East Kent Insider has often reported on best practice. We congratulate Thanet College and Chaucer Technology School for putting innovation at the heart of their agendas.

6. Parcel Delivery Service

Many readers and one public authority have contacted the Thanet & East Kent Insider asking us to publicise an alleged scam involving a company called PDS, Parcel Delivery Service, which invites readers to telephone a premium rate number in Belize at great cost to the owner of the line. It is also alleged that the scam is on a hot list provided by Royal Mail, Trading Standards and various other bodies. Readers might like to know that there was a scam of this type which was closed in 2005. Kind-hearted citizens might be tempted to warn their friends and associates, but the official advice from PhonePayPlus, Sophos and many other reputable organisations is very much to the contrary. In a statement dated 17th November 2010, PhonePayPlus states: "PhonepayPlus, the phone-paid services regulator, is aware that a chain e-mail about an alleged postal scam is being circulated on the internet. The email refers to the Royal Mail, Trading Standards and ICSTIS (PhonepayPlus' former name). PhonepayPlus appreciates that recipients of the email may want to find out more information about the alleged scam and has therefore issued the following statement: The chain email refers to a service (operating on 0906 6611911) that was shut down by PhonepayPlus (then ICSTIS) in December 2005. PhonepayPlus subsequently fined the company that was operating the service, Studio Telecom (based in Belize), £10,000. The service is NO LONGER running and has NOT been running since December 2005. You do NOT need to contact PhonepayPlus, or the Royal Mail, about this service as it was stopped almost five years ago. If you receive a copy of the email warning you about the alleged scam, please do NOT forward it to others. Instead, please forward this statement from PhonepayPlus." Of course, like capital letters, crooks appear all the time. The vast majority of them do not live in Thanet or East Kent. It is entirely possible that some bright spark might attempt to pervert the Christmas spirit and try to revive the scam. Our advice is to keep your boss happy. Do not succumb to any requests from any unknown sources to call unfamiliar telephone numbers in exotic locations.

7. Grants From Europe

Information on the grants available from the European Union is available in a beginner's guide on the website at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/publications/financial_pub/pack_rules_funds_en.pdf. More detailed information on grants can be accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/index_en.htm. Careful navigation through the latter website reveals a page entitled "Financial Transparency System". A quick search on European Commission beneficiaries shows that the UK received two grants totalling over 2.75 million Euros (£2.33 million) for "PROVIDING ACCOMODATION SECURITY, LIFE SUPPORT & OTHER SERVICES TO EC OFFICIALS IN IRAQ". Perhaps some of the funds could have been spent on spelling classes. Of course, we all make mistakes, but, unlike the EU, we do not all have a budget of £107 billion to make mistakes with.

8. Mayor Takes Great Strides

Unfortunately, in this case the 'strides' in question did not belong to the mayor but refer to the Australian slang term for underwear. Anyone focused on next year's council elections may be relieved to know that whatever your criticisms of the behaviour and policies of local councillors, it is unlikely to rival the opprobrium heaped on Ian Stafford, gardener, handyman and erstwhile mayor of Preesall and Knott End. We are grateful to one of our readers who took time away from the imposing intellectual demands of his day job to give us the sordid details of this public servant who fell from grace. In fact, Grace might be one of those who lost her nether garments as a result. Twice elected mayor of a quiet town near Fleetwood in Lancashire, Ian Stafford carried the hopes of his electorate to make the area a better place; unfortunately, he also carried to his home the underwear of some its female citizens. Following a spate of thefts, an undercover operation recorded the Mayor on camera stealing the items from the bedroom of a female victim. Police took little time in getting to the bottom of the matter and on visiting his house they found nearly £900 worth of women's underwear. Candidates for the main political parties at the next election can breathe a little more easily from knowing that this particular Mayor was an Independent; perhaps a little too independent for most people.

9. Our Sponsors

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