

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

5th December 2010 Issue No.: 135

1. Tourism & Transport

This is the final reminder of the Chamber's Transport & Tourism business networking breakfast scheduled for 10th December 2010 in Cliftonville. Speakers include Charles Buchanan, Managing Director of Manston Airport, Neil Wiggins, Chairman of Dover People's Port Trust Limited, Chris Laming, Commercial Director of P&O Ferries and Peter Howe, Managing Director of Carol Peters Travel. If you have an interest in transport infrastructure, tourism or boosting the footfall to your business, this is the event to attend. Booking is essential. Tickets cost £12 for Chamber members and £16 for non-members. To obtain your ticket, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line Transport & Tourism Breakfast. Bookings close at 1300 hrs on Wednesday, 8th December 2010.

2. Growth Without Gridlock

In last week's edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider, we promised readers a report on the Growth Without Gridlock presentation in Maidstone last Wednesday. This welcome initiative from Kent County Council seeks to produce a co-ordinated transport strategy for the next twenty years. In welcoming delegates to the inner sanctum of KCC at County Hall, KCC's leader, Paul Carter, thanked those attending for braving the severe weather conditions. It was with a self-conscious irony that he noted the absence of 40% of the delegates due to the ice and snow on the roads. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is of course made of stern stuff and was fully represented as were our good friends at the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and the Dover District Chamber of Commerce. So that was the East Kent private sector's most serious supporters eager and willing to hear the news and we were not disappointed. Each resident, worker and tourist has an opinion on what should be done to address the traffic jams on our roads. Delays in delivering goods to our shops are as frustrating as hold ups on the school run. KCC's transport delivery plan is not called Growth Without Gridlock without good reason. It sets out a series of proposals that are designed to promote trade, boost jobs and minimise delays. What distinguishes this plan from many others is that it not only lists the cost of the improvements, but outlines a funding stream to pay for them.

3. Who Pays?

One of the proposals to help pay for the programme is a Port Landing Charge on international passengers in Dover and Ramsgate. This would put our local ports on a par with common practice at airports. Another proposal is for the revival of the Britdisc. First mooted by Paul Carter's predecessor, Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, foreign lorries entering the UK would pay a surcharge. UK hauliers currently operate at a distinct disadvantage to many of their continental counterparts. Why should foreign lorries be allowed to fill their tanks with 1,000 litres of cheap diesel bought in Luxembourg and then undercut our domestic hauliers whose taxes pay for the roads they use? This is not what the European Union was designed to do and not what British membership should allow. If it means renaming the Britdisc with the fancy French title KCC proposes of 'vignette', we accept that in polite silence. We do not want our East Kent lorries to go the way of Grimsby trawlers. Over a 20-year period, the income generated from a vignette and the associated additional spending on fuel duty would amount to a staggering £9.5 billion which would meet over half the costs of the road infrastructure improvements envisioned.

4. What Would We Get For the Money?

A key element in KCC's plan is a third Thames crossing between Gravesend and Chadwell. Delays at the Dartford crossing are estimated to cost the UK economy £40 million per year. A third

Thames crossing is projected to contribute 6,000 jobs and £334 million a year to the UK Gross Value Added with significant reductions in journey times. The new crossing is scheduled to connect the A2 with the M11. Dover's port traffic of around 5 million vehicles a year would be split between the Eastern Docks route via the A2 and the Western Docks via the A20/M20. This measure involves the rather quaintly named "bifurcation". The mention of this word can bring a swift change of subject in discussions with the average Joe who may not want to admit that he or she has no idea what the word means. This is a handy technique that officialdom has used for centuries to baffle unwelcome enquiries. If you do not believe us, go to the pub this evening and say to the bar staff, "What do you think of bifurcation?" With luck you may just get directions to the nearest opticians. It may be that now at last, bifurcation may lose some of its mystery. In a fluent presentation, the leader of Dover District Council, Paul Watkins, outlined the main benefits of the planned improvements to the Channel Corridor and the ending of the horrendous Operation Stack which costs our benighted UK haulage industry £1 million a day. The priorities for Growth Without Gridlock also include a Parkway Station at Manston which would bring journey times from London to Thanet much closer to the golden 60 minutes. Following discussions with Chamber members, later editions of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will bring more comment on Tax Increment Funding, a Variable Tariff on the Thames Gateway, Integrating the Bus Network and improvements to the A21 West Kent corridor.

5. Will East Kent Companies Have a Voice in Growth Without Gridlock?

The answer to this question is with Kent County Council and the new Local Enterprise Partnership. If these two public bodies wish the two largest business support organisations in the East Kent coastal business community to be represented then the Thanet & East Kent Chamber and the Dover District Chamber of Commerce are more than willing to participate.

6. YMCA

The Thanet YMCA is a local organisation that is part of a national charity. The branch in Margate benefits from an Employment Engagement team which specialises in liaising with local companies to satisfy their recruitment needs. This is a free service for employers. For further details, Chamber members are invited to telephone 01843 221555 or 07900 137750.

7. More Success In Thanet

We offer our congratulations to Karen Simmons of Medics on the Move for winning the Landlord & Lettings South East Region Letting Agent of the Year Award at a ceremony in Birmingham last month. Beating seven other finalists including Countrywide, Martin & Co and Belvoir, Karen and her team have every reason to be delighted with the stellar progress of this relatively new company which covers the East Kent coastal business community from Herne Bay around to Dover and inland to Canterbury. Keen to put customer service at the top of the agenda, Karen is anxious to build on the success and is currently looking for more rental properties to add to their client list. Industry indicators point to a growing rental market. Medics on the Move is also equipped to assist professionals looking to buy a property. As Karen puts it: "On average a buyer looks at 19 houses before finding the right one?". She undertakes to "do all the leg work, leaving you free to step in and review a short list of homes which meet your needs." For details call Karen tel: 07809 736327 or email karen@onthespotproperty.com.

8. Thanet and KCC

On the evening of Monday, 6th December 2010, Kent County Council was due to hold a meeting of the Thanet Local Board at St Saviour's Church of England Junior School, Elm Grove, Westgate-on-Sea. The meeting has been postponed due to the inclement weather. These gatherings provide an opportunity for KCC Councillors to get feedback from local people on the impact of regional

policies in Thanet. We will keep readers informed of the new date. You may be assured that the Thanet & East Kent Chamber will be in attendance to represent the interests of the private sector.

9. Fare Increases

Roger Gale MP for North Thanet has described the recently announced 12.8% increase in fares on East Kent services by Southeastern Trains as “an absolute disgrace”. What irks him most is that the promised upgrading of signalling is considerably behind schedule and that the line between Thanet and Ashford remains distinctly unimproved. As he puts it: “Why should people have to pay to subsidise a service that does not serve their needs?”. This is one MP who will not be voting in favour of a franchise renewal for Southeastern Trains. Readers might be interested to know that Japan has been operating a high speed railway network since 1964. In the past 46 years there has been not been a single fatality due to a train accident or collision. The current average delay on the 186 mph bullet train between Tokyo and Osaka under all conditions is under 30 seconds. It does snow in Japan.

10. VAT and Aunty's Sweater

We are grateful to Mark Hurdman of Levicks Chartered Accountants, tel: 01843 for providing some welcome advice on the implications of the imminent rise in VAT scheduled for 4th January 2010. In an exclusive communication to the Thanet & East Kent Insider, he writes: With the standard rate of VAT set to increase to 20% from the current 17.5%, it is a good idea to be aware of the rules on the correct rate of VAT you should be charged on purchases around the busy New Year period. When buying goods or services on or after 4 January 2011 from a retail business such as a shop, restaurant or hairdressing salon, all purchases should be subject to 20% VAT. Businesses that are passing the VAT increase on to customers will increase their current prices by just over 2%. The exact calculation is 120/117.5. It is up to each individual business to decide whether it wants to pass the VAT increase onto its customers in this way. If however you pay for something you have taken away (or the supplier has delivered) before 4 January 2011 then the sale took place before 4 January 2011 and you should be charged VAT at 17.5%. It is common for retailers to give refunds, particularly in the period after Christmas. If you are given a refund on or after 4 January 2011 for a sale made before 4 January 2011 this will be made at the old VAT rate. If you want to exchange goods, for example a jumper for another size or colour, you may find the gross cost has increased and you have to pay more. The replacement item will have been sold at the new VAT rate.” So now you know. If you really want to exchange that yellow, purple and orange sweater that your aunty bought you for Christmas, take it back to the shop before 4th January 2011. For anything more complicated, you might like to give Mark a call at Levicks, tel: 01843 862716.

11. Fake or Genuine

With Christmas shopping beginning to dominate retail trade, Crimestoppers is reminding us all that buying counterfeit goods can be dangerous and can lead to unintended support for organised crime. We are also notified that buying counterfeit goods by credit card can produce a serious risk of identity theft. Some fakes are obvious and require little more than a cursory glance to determine that the luxury goods may not be quite as luxurious as the seller would wish them to be. If someone is deceiving you, Crimestoppers would be grateful for a telephone call to 0800 555 111. Sometimes discrimination is more difficult than simply spotting that Roleks may not be the correct spelling of the brand name. The Thanet & East Kent Insider offers an insight into buying a Rolex watch. Make your purchase from a recognised Rolex agency and you should not have a problem. Rolex dealers in Kent do not sell on-line. If you are offered a new Rolex with a stainless steel case inset with 18ct yellow gold, a champagne diamond dial with a date display and an 18ct gold fluted bezel for just £1,000, perhaps someone wants to marry you or, more likely, the watch is stolen or a fake. The recommended retail price is £7,040. If the second hand of the watch in question has two movements per second, it is a fake. The genuine Rolex moves five times a second. If the watch feels light, it is a fake. A good Rolex is heavy. Finally, if the person selling the watch looks fake the chances are that the watch is the same. Finally, of course, if the seller is a member of the Thanet & East Kent

Chamber and can produce a member of the Chamber logo, then you should have every confidence in the transaction.

12. Finding Staff

News has reached the Chamber of a local educational establishment wishing employ a handyman to assist with the security and maintenance of their premises. We have our doubts about this story, but readers must judge for themselves. Of course, what is undoubtedly true is that the organisation could have saved itself time, money and headaches by using one of the following Chamber members; 247 Recruitment of Cliftonville tel: 01843 294004; Adecco of Broadstairs tel: 01843 609292; Connexions Partnership Kent & Medway of Maidstone tel: 01622 607578; Direction Recruitment of Ramsgate tel: 01843 598694; HRGO of Ramsgate tel: 01843 591798; Maximus Employment & Training of Ramsgate tel: 01843 808410, TNG (Avanta Enterprises) of Ramsgate tel: 01843 570250 and tel: YMCA of Margate tel: 01843 221555. To get back to our story, the enterprising head was reluctant to rely solely on references, a CV and the advice of his caretaker. He wrote the advertisement himself. Turning his back on the pre-interviews and personality profiling offered by the employment agencies in the Chamber membership, he wanted to interview all the candidates personally. He opted to absent himself from managing his area of expertise to deal directly with recruiting a handyman. Setting aside a whole day for the process, he asked the first candidate into his office. "Mr Jones", he began, "We are planning no major works here for the next year, but it is important that the successful candidate can undertake some simple maintenance tasks. Now in the corner of the room is a sink. I would like you to remove the tap and replace the washer with this one here. Can you do that?" Mr Jones looked at the new washer offered and said adamantly. "I don't do plumbing". Taken aback momentarily, the Head moved on to his next task. "Oh I see. Well then, here is a short plank of wood and a saw. I would like you to cut this down the middle in a straight line". "Ah well", said the candidate, "I'm not much good at carpentry I'm afraid." Striving hard to contain his frustration, the Head continued, "In that case perhaps you could do the last job and that is to paint the bottom left quarter of this door with the gloss paint here". As the Head was about to hand over the paint and brush, Mr Jones said, "I don't do painting". Containing himself no longer, the Head blurted out, "You don't do plumbing, you are no good at carpentry and you cannot paint. Tell me Mr Jones, what makes you think you are so blessed handy?". "Well, headmaster", said the candidate, "You see I live just around the corner".

© David Foley December 2010



David Foley
Chief Executive, Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Industrial Professor, Thanet College
Fellow, Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce
Tel: +44 (0) 1843 609289
Fax: +44 (0) 1843 609291
Email: davidfoley@tekcc.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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

For details of membership, email admin@tekco.uk

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited (TEKC) is a company registered in England and Wales with company number 4518138. Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited, Kent Innovation Centre, Thanet Reach Business Park, Millennium Way, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2QQ. Tel: 01843 609289 Fax: 01843 609291 TEKC is not VAT Registered. Important: This e-mail may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient it may be unlawful for you to read, copy, distribute, disclose or otherwise use the information used in this e-mail. If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail, please telephone, fax or e-mail us immediately. Errors and omissions may occur in the contents of this e-mail arising out of or in connection with data transmission, network malfunction or failure, machine or software error or malfunction, or operator error. TEKC accepts no responsibility for any such errors or omissions and you are advised to confirm the accuracy of the contents of this e-mail before relying on it for any purpose. All the information in this email is written in good faith and believed to be correct at the time of writing. TEKC cannot be held responsible for any agreements, financial transactions or liabilities incurred in relation to any of the companies, organisations or events mentioned in this email. You are advised to seek the appropriate professional advice before undertaking any financial transaction or incurring any liability of any description.