

# **Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber**

## **Thanet & East Kent Insider**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2011     Issue No.: 147**

### **1. Life After Pfizer**

The Life After Pfizer business networking breakfast last Friday hosted by the Thanet & East Kent Chamber and the Dover District Chamber of Commerce featured four key speakers, each with a different but uniformly positive response to the recently announced departure of Pfizer from its site at Sandwich; Laura Sandys MP. Cllr Bob Bayford, Kevin Ashman and John Pegg. After a splendid cooked breakfast from the kitchens of Pfizer Sports and Social Club, the packed room of Chamber members and their guests heard how East Kent was reacting passionately and with alacrity to the massive threat to jobs and the local economy represented by Pfizer's withdrawal. Before introducing the speakers, the Chambers' Chief Executive made the two announcements detailed below, which were declared to be designed to stimulate growth and promote the bottom line of companies in East Kent.

### **2. Presidential Announcement**

Thanet & East Kent Chamber announced that Laura Sandys MP for South Thanet & Sandwich, and Roger Gale MP for North Thanet have accepted the invitation from the board of directors to serve as Co-Presidents with immediate effect. The Chamber presidency is a non-political, honorary position requiring great skill in looking after the commercial interests of local companies and their workforce as well as encouraging inward investors. Charlie Elphicke, Member of Parliament for Dover and Deal, has also accepted a similar invitation to serve as President of the Dover District Chamber of Commerce. The boards of both Chambers are delighted to have such a top team batting for our companies here in Kent and at Westminster. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber enjoys particularly warm relations with all elected officials in its area of operations. We have often featured news from Clive Hart, Leader of the opposition Labour Group at Thanet District Council and a leading light in the Labour Party. We welcome views from all and every sector of the East Kent coastal business community. We will continue to make every possible effort to represent the views of members to our democratically elected representatives cogently and usually politely .

### **3. Business Advisory Clinics**

The two largest business support bodies in the East Kent coastal business community announce the launch of a series of business advice clinics. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber and the Dover District Chamber of Commerce will be hosting the 30-minute consultations in Dover and Broadstairs once a month throughout the year. The sessions will be open to enterprises of all sizes who would like to benefit from the opportunity to discuss with commercial specialists any aspect of their business in total confidence. There will be no

charge for the service. Chamber manager Sylvia Fagg said: “The Business Advice Clinics will be staffed by successful businessmen and women who understand what is needed to beat the competition”. The sessions are expected to provide professional assistance to both start-up companies looking to locate in East Kent and to established firms wanting to increase their sales. The clinics take place on the first Friday of the month in Broadstairs and the first Wednesday of the month in Dover. For more details or to book a place, contact one of the following: Broadstairs:, email [manager@tekc.co.uk](mailto:manager@tekc.co.uk) or telephone 01843 609289; Dover: email [mail@doverchamber.co.uk](mailto:mail@doverchamber.co.uk) or telephone 01304 824955.

#### **4. Laura Sandys Speaks**

The first speaker at the Chamber’s Life After Pfizer business networking breakfast was Laura Sandys MP. She explained how the government had moved quickly following Pfizer’s decision to leave Sandwich. She noted that the impact of Pfizer’s decision was of national significance. The personal commitment of the Prime Minister and Ministers David Willetts and Vince Cable will ensure that a solution to the threat to our local economy will be found. In a curious way, which was noted by many delegates in the room, the demise of Pfizer’s may have some benefits for the area which would not otherwise have accrued. Laura welcomed the national attention on our transport links and pledged her support for improving these as a key incentive in what she dubbed ‘Project Phoenix’; the revival of the Sandwich site following the departure of Pfizer. She maintained a diplomatic straight face without further comment when relating how David Willett’s journey by train to Ramsgate had taken two and a half hours instead of the eighty minutes listed in the timetable. Laura stressed that the research laboratories on site in Sandwich were ‘world-class’ and suitable for a variety of scientific uses in the field of Life Sciences and other related disciplines. Some in the audience gasped when she described the site as stretching over 3 million square feet. Indeed, first time visitors to Pfizer are often taken aback by the sheer size of the area covered by its operations. Laura stated that the Kent & Sandwich Taskforce will be pressing government for the establishment of an Enterprise Zone to include key economic growth points in the area and for short-term direct government support to act as a catalyst for economic expansion. Laura ended by saying that tourism should be a key element in regeneration and that improving the accommodation offer is necessary to attract more visitors.

#### **5. Cllr Bob Bayford Speaks**

If the Martians ever do land in Thanet and make the demand: “Take me to your leader”, they would be unhesitatingly shown to the office of Cllr Bob Bayford. His official title is “The Leader”, in his case of Thanet District Council”. Not surprisingly, Bob was confident that a solution to the Pfizer issue would be found in short order. He said that an application to the Regional Growth Fund had already been made to help finance a Manston Parkway Station. If the current application is rejected, he is hopeful that the next round of funding would see a generous allocation for this key infrastructure development in Thanet. He berated critics of the Turner Contemporary who fail to understand that the money allocated for this project was from an account labelled ‘Arts Regeneration’ and was not available for any other project in Thanet. Rejecting the funding would have been to the detriment of every business and

resident. He remains confident that the gallery will meet its target of 150,000 visitors in the first year. Echoing Laura's call for a 'bigger footprint for an enterprise zone', he then listed some of the recent developments in Thanet including the windfarms, Dreamland Heritage Amusement Park and Westwood Cross. In an upbeat message to delegates, he ended his presentation by reminding everyone that Thanet had been voted in the top twelve places to visit in 2011.

## **6. Kevin Ashman Speaks**

Kevin Ashman is a development executive at StratLand Management, a division of Cordea Savills. He briefed delegates on his company's plans to build a Parkway Station at Manston Airport. Kevin's previous experience as Director of Development Management at Prudential Property, gives him a significant advantage in bringing good ideas to fruition. His current company lays claim to seventeen projects in five regions of the UK with over 9,000 homes built. All of this has been achieved with just the occasional assistance of Regional Growth Funds. Public Private Partnerships have been successful with developments in the North of England. His company has championed the phased release of consented land for development. Kevin stressed the importance of 'rural modal interchanges' and the ability of his company to 'react proactively'. He was positive about discussions to date with Network Rail and Kent County Council and was confident that StratLand's plans would provide 'high quality links to the airport'. His outline of the benefits to local businesses was music to the ears of Chamber members as he detailed the need for 'robust local supply chains'. He also said how his company has a fine record in promoting apprenticeships and creating jobs in the regions where it operates.

## **7. John Pegg Speaks**

Regeneration was very much at the heart of John Pegg's presentation. But, he also received the rapt attention of his audience as he narrated that nowhere in the UK was there a memorial to the 1.7 million servicemen and women, civilians and merchant navy personnel who died in the two greatest conflicts of the twentieth century. He outlined his plans for a National War Memorial on Dover's Western heights which would feature the names of every person killed in the service of this country in the first and second world wars. This would include fatalities from Commonwealth nations serving with our forces. With reference to a model on display, he related how white granite-faced walls three metres high would show the inscription of 1000 names per metre. They would be listed in alphabetical order by year with no deference to rank or nationality. Thus, there would be a series of walls for each year of the conflict from 1914 to 1918 and from 1939 to 1945. John is hopeful of securing support from the National Heritage Fund and would like to see construction start early in 2012 in order to be ready for an official opening on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014, the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. With tourism moving up the government's agenda, John's estimate of around 500,000 visitors a year would produce a transformational effect not only on Dover but on the whole of the East Kent coastal business community as national and international tourists would be encouraged to stay overnight. Manston Airport as well as many hotels, restaurants and ferry companies would

undoubtedly see a significant boost to their turnover from the successful conclusion of the project. More details are available from the Chamber by email to [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line "National War Memorial".

## **8. Time For A Few Questions**

There were many questions following the presentations, some of which were answered fully by other delegates. For instance, Charles Buchanan from Chamber member Manston Airport was happy to respond to a question relating to the airport itself. He said how the freight business benefited from Mothers' Day through the surge in demand for imported flowers. He also summarised the timetable of the current flights to Edinburgh, Manchester and Jersey and said how much his parent company, Infratil, was looking forward to expanding the list of destinations in order to respond to local demand from the catchment area. Elias Dencker of The London Array answered a question on the construction of the windfarm off the coast of Ramsgate which is being built by a consortium of Danish Oil and Natural Gas (DONG), E.ON of Germany and Masdar of the UAE. The media was well represented by the award winning BBC Business correspondent, Mark Norman, Kent Regional News's Yam Zenderai and Mathew Beech of the KoS Media Group. There is not space here to list all the questions and answers given but Mark Norman received a detailed response from Laura Sandys to his enquiry over the specific initiatives the government is planning in response to the Pfizer withdrawal.

## **9. Final Word On Pfizer This Week**

In liaison with our associates in Dover District, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber has prepared a three-page illustrated summary of the current position relating to Pfizer's withdrawal. This is available free to Chamber members on application by email to [manager@tekc.co.uk](mailto:manager@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line "Pfizer Summary".

## **10. Not Lost In Translation**

We congratulate Chamber member Burravoe Translation Services on its 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. Under the wise management of Annette Bunn, this company has gone from strength to strength and is now a member of the Association of Translation Companies as well as the Institute of Translation and Interpreting. Annette tells us that Chamber members can benefit from a 5% discount on translations over 500 words, a 10% discount for over 5,000 words and a 20% discount for over 20,000 words. We presume from this that any Chamber member wanting a new translation of Tolstoy's War & Peace would get this for free, but you must negotiate that for yourself with Annette. We are able to confirm that Burravoe Translation Services now offers translations in over 100 language combinations including Russian and English. Students of history will know that inaccurate editing and bad translation can lead to unfortunate consequences. In the case of the Ems Telegram, the consequence was the Franco-Prussian War. If you want that European trader who owes you 15,000 Euros to send you a banker's draft rather than an Exocet missile, use professional translators and

there are none better than those of Burravoe Translation Services. For details, contact Annette direct by telephone to 0 1233 647744 or by email to [translations@burravoe.com](mailto:translations@burravoe.com).

## **11. Quiz Night at Stonelees**

Stonelees Golf Club will be hosting a Quiz Night on the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011. The entry fee is just £2 per person and the maximum team size is set at 8 people. If your company, family or friends are looking for a good night out, then contact Stonelees direct by telephone to 01843 823133. Fans of television's Eggheads and other quiz programmes realise that the capital city of Australia is not Sydney or Melbourne, nor is the capital of Turkey Istanbul and neither Geneva or Zurich is the capital of Switzerland; but then the wise, talented and extremely good-looking readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider know that already, don't you.

## **12. Party Time In Margate**

News of the "Party on the Pier" scheduled for the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011 on Margate's Harbour Arm reached the Thanet & East Kent Insider too late to for a detailed account to be included in this week's bulletin. We confidently expect that Nick Dermott's talk earlier today entitled 'An Illustrated History of the Pier' to have been well received and for Robert Poulter's New Model theatre production of 'Merry Margate 250 years of Margate's History' to have attracted a good audience. As we await the grand opening of the Turner Contemporary on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2011, we can expect increasing artistic and commercial activity in preparation for the well-moneyed patrons who will surely flock to Thanet. John Kampfner, Chairman of the Turner Contemporary, is keen to emphasize that anyone with the best interests of Thanet at heart will want to support the new gallery. John is particularly eager that taxi drivers and hairdressers should see that their future employment prospects will be considerably enhanced by the success of the Turner Contemporary. As the most successful editor of the New Statesman in modern times, our John knows a thing or two about publicity and marketing. What a shame therefore that he continues to be such a strong supporter of Chelsea when Doncaster Rovers has so much more to offer.

## **13. Kentish Flats Wind Farm**

We have reported extensively on the £800 million Thanet Offshore Windfarm which opened last September. The Swedish company behind the project, Vattenfall, has reacted favourably to requests for greater participation in future projects from local companies. Vattenfall is looking to extend its current 30 wind turbines at Kentish Flats and is looking for local companies interested in competing for work. As a consequence, Vattenfall is hosting a potential supplier event at Darwin College, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NY on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The event begins at 1000 hrs and is expected to last until 1300 hrs.

## **14. DFDS Seaways Joins The Team**

The Chamber is grateful to DFDS Seaways for sponsoring the Chamber Spring Golf Tournament at Prince's Golf Club on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. A full list of sponsors will be published

nearer the date. DFDS Seaways operates the Norfolk Line ferries from Dover to Dunkirk. Prices for return travel for a car and up to four passengers start at £19. Details are available at the website at <http://www.norfolkline.com>. Regular readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will know that the Autumn Golf Tournament at the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club is scheduled for Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

## **15. Skills and A Levels**

The latest figures published by the Office for National Statistics show skills levels for Thanet and the South East from December 2009. At NVQ level 3, which equates to two A-levels or above, the working population of Thanet is listed at 42.1%; 10.5% below the score for the South East as a whole which stands at 52.6%. There is clearly some difficulty experienced by local companies in recruiting junior and middle managers. An increasing number of schools are in the membership of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber as they seek closer relations with employers. There is also a duty for employers to seek to understand the world from the point of view of schools, many of which are working in less than satisfactory conditions with outdated premises and leaking temporary buildings. Some Chamber members will have children of their own currently studying for A level exams next June and might welcome the sensible advice to Year 13 students that we have recently received from one school and which we are pleased to repeat here. 1. A level grades mark the end and culmination of thirteen years of schooling. 2. A level grades act as an entry criteria to university. 3. A level grades are a key indicator of intellectual and academic ability that will remain on students' C.V.s for the rest of their working lives. 4. Your A level results will stay with you for ever and will be of great importance to your future plans and career, whatever that may be.

## **16. Meningitis**

One Chamber member has every reason to be thankful for the services provided by the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother hospital in Margate where his young son was eventually diagnosed with meningitis and is now making a full recovery. Prompt action is essential in such cases where delays can result in brain damage and death. The symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia are similar and can be summarised as follows: fever, vomiting, severe headaches, muscle pain, pain in the joints, hand and feet shivering, mottled skin, body rash, stiff neck, dislike of bright lights, extreme drowsiness, confusion, and seizures. A more detailed account is available from the website at [www.meningitis.org/symptoms](http://www.meningitis.org/symptoms). We are grateful to Warren Dunham of Sota Solutions for drawing our attention to the dangers of misdiagnosis.

## **17. Champion Coaches At Your Service**

Carol Peters travel has been shortlisted for the 2011 title of UK Coach Operator of the Year. This is a significant achievement for Thanet's premier coach company and recognises the success of the company in managing its fleet of 10 coaches with exceptional attention to service. Happy customers of the excursion programme have added to the praise heaped on

Managing Director Peter Howe from those who booked holidays through the company at any of the 13 Warner Leisure Hotels that feature in the current holiday brochure. The office staff are always keen to offer help to the disabled and those less active members of the population, but Gary and Julie Herbert are taking this a step further, in fact many thousands of steps further, on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2011 when they will be running in the London Marathon to raise funds for The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease (NACC). Inflammatory Bowel Disease afflicts 250,000. NACC is the main charity supporting sufferers. Gary and Julie welcome contributions at [www.justgiving.com/julieherbert26](http://www.justgiving.com/julieherbert26)

## **18. A Story With A Punch**

A caller at the Chamber relates the following account following his visit to one East Kent coastal holiday resort famed for its beaches and deckchairs. We have our doubts about this story but we leave it to readers to judge for themselves. "I hadn't been on the seafront for years but there it was right in front of me. There was quite a crowd watching this man and woman having a shouting match. After a minute or two, they starting fighting and were really laying into each other. Then, a policeman arrived. Straightway without investigating the matter in any way at all, he started bashing the man on the head with a truncheon. The man wrestled the truncheon from the policeman and then he started hitting the policeman with it. Then just as the fight was at its peak, a crocodile arrived and stole all the sausages". With apologies to anyone reading this called Judy.

## **19. Our Sponsors**

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Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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