



Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. No Cloud Over Cloudberry

Chamber member Cloudberry enjoyed glorious late afternoon sunshine with not a cloud in the sky for the official opening of its weekend outlet at Whitstable Harbour Village earlier today. Director Joanna Hunt delighted her guests with her signature Scandinavian dishes which are the speciality of this quality producer of desserts and cakes. Chamber Finance Director Somesh Jain was particularly impressed by the Budapest Roll which despite its name is a Swedish delicacy that melts in the mouth and tastes even better than it looks. Joining in the celebrations was William Opie, Chairman of Produced in Kent, who is understandably delighted that so much of Cloudberry's output is sourced in Kent. Joanna has already shared some of the secrets of her boutique bakery with some East Kent schools. Delegates to the Chamber networking breakfast at the Fayrency Hotel earlier this year will recall the delicious cup cakes that accompanied their first cup of coffee on arrival. Any restaurant wanting to invigorate their dessert trolley should make contact with Joanna before her order books are full from those fancy London media types who populate Whitstable at weekends in the summer. Anyone not called Tristram or Melissa is invited to contact Cloudberry direct by email to joanna@cloudberrycafe.co.uk.

2. Preparing For Profit

A Business Networking Breakfast, Preparing For Profit, is scheduled for Thursday 30th June 2011. Full details will appear in the next edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider. The event will last from 0730 to 0900 hrs and will feature speakers from education and training organisations who will focus on the skills required to boost your bottom line.

3. Don't Get Caught Out

We are grateful to Steve Elliot of ACAS for the reminder of changes in legislation relating to Retirement, Bullying and Harassment, Absence and Discipline and Grievance Procedures. We have had much feedback from members who again complain that the constant tide of legislation is impacting adversely on their business. One solution for the smaller businesses is to pass on the anxieties to someone else so that you can do what you do best. If you

nevertheless find enjoyment from constantly updating your company's handbook and HR procedures, the ACAS website at www.acas.org.uk will keep you informed as to where you can find access to the legislation and training. An alternative is to speak to one of the Chamber Solicitors who operate schemes to save you the anxiety of a public shaming at an Employment Tribunal or massive fines for not doing what you didn't know you had to do even though common sense might tell you shouldn't. More information is available from the following experts: Barnes Marsland of Margate tel: 01843 221466; Brachers of Maidstone tel: 01622 690691; Girlings of Margate tel: 01843 220274; Macalister White of Ramsgate tel: 01843 572789; Robinson & Allfree of Ramsgate tel: 01843 592361.

4. Minimum Wage

The Adult National Minimum Wage will rise by 15p to £6.08 an hour from 1st October 2011. Other rises are as follows: 18 – 20 year olds up 6p to £4.98 per hour, 16 – 17 year olds up 4p to £3.68 per hour, apprentices up 10p to £2.60 per hour if under 19 years old or in the first year of their apprenticeship. The minimum wage was introduced into the UK in 1999 when the rate was set at £3.60 per hour. New Zealand pioneered the system in 1894. Although the introduction of minimum wages was much criticised by UK businesses, the International Labour Organisation reports that “minimum wages are a nearly universal policy instrument implemented by most countries in all regions, except the Middle East” and notes that in the UK “minimum wages increased by 25 per cent in real terms between 2000 and 2007, without noticeable adverse impact on employment.” [Update on Minimum Wage Developments, ILO, Geneva March 2009].

5. Pfizer

The Open Day at Pfizer last Wednesday brought together a wide range of bio-medical companies, employment agencies and allied business service providers. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber stand was kept fully occupied with enquiries from Pfizer staff and other interested parties. Given some of the generous redundancy packages available, there is a clear opportunity for ex-Pfizer staff to remain in the area and invest their new funds in a start up company in East Kent. Skills refined and enhanced at the world's leading bio-medical company can produce important benefits for our local economy if we can provide the assistance and support necessary. There is a notable difference between working in research where the emphasis is primarily on innovation and intellect and completing the back office tasks that are essential to any business expecting to last longer than its first set of annual figures. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber has welcomed the chance to work with these start ups and will be looking to local Chamber members to provide the products and services that are so important to new companies.

6. Bank Of England

The Bank of England was the host yesterday for a presentation of its Inflation Report for May 2011. The official forecast shows some marked differences from the crystal ball gazing of three months previously or, to put this in official language: “The near term profile [inflation] is markedly higher than in February, largely reflecting renewed increases in energy prices”. We have commented extensively in the Thanet & East Kent Insider on recent sharp rises in energy costs and so this is unlikely to be a surprise to Chamber members. Other factors contributing to increased inflation include the rise in VAT in January 2011 to 20% and higher import prices. In brief, the result is that inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index is likely to reach 5% before the end of the year. The BoE considers that CPI inflation is “likely to fall through 2012 into 2013 as the impact of external price pressures and the increase in VAT dissipates”. The BoE is of course tasked with steering a difficult path between raising interest rates to prevent unacceptable levels of inflation and yet keeping interest rates low enough not to stifle growth. The consensus is that the UK interest rate will rise before the end of the year but perhaps just once rather than the three times that was previously mooted. It is worth noting that the UK's debt as a percentage of GDP is on a par with Greece and Ireland. The fact that the UK government can borrow money on much more favourable terms reflects the strength of our institutions, the widely held belief that we will be able to make the scheduled repayments and an acknowledgement that the UK has never defaulted on its financial obligations. The BoE is held in high esteem by overseas governments and financiers. Everyone in East Kent with a mortgage, a loan or borrowings related to the interest rate can be thankful that our national bank retains the confidence of world markets. For a copy of the latest Inflation report with all its 56 pages of grisly details, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “BoE Inflation Report May 2011”.

7. TV One Sale

We are grateful to Maria Silva of TV One Europe for an update on this multiple award-winning company based at Westwood Industrial Estate in Margate which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. TV One and its wholly owned

subsidiaries in the United States, Taiwan and China have not surprisingly caught the eye of Magenta Research Ltd and its US parent, Nortek Inc, which has its headquarters at Providence, Rhode Island, USA. The result is a sale of 100% of TV One's stock to Nortek. The Magenta CEO, Keith Mortensen, believes implicitly in the advantages of its latest purchase and states in an official press release: "TV One's combination of its proprietary CORIO® scaling technology, unique products and solid growth is a perfect fit with Magenta," This is echoed by David K. Barnes of TV One who welcomes the new opportunities with the words: "As part of the Nortek family of companies, I look forward to maximizing the opportunities that will take TV One to the next level. I personally look forward to being part of that continuing success." The two companies will be showcasing their latest innovations at InfoComm in Orlando from 15th to 17th June 2011. We wish this pioneering Chamber member every success under its new ownership. The Nortek Group's accounts for 2010 reveal net sales of USD 1,899 million, up 5% on the previous year. We expect that the vastly increased research and sales capacity now available to TV One will support the company's proprietary CORIO® scaling technology which has been so successful in export markets for video, audio and multimedia processing.

8. News From Dover

The Secretary of State for Transport, Philip Hammond, issued a ministerial statement last week which brought a step nearer the sale of the port of Dover to Dover People's Port Trust Limited. In stipulating a new period for consultation, the minister has implicitly accepted the arguments put forward by DPPTL that Dover should not be sold off like a Premiership football team to any foreigner with a few dollars in the bank. Indeed, the criteria he puts forward stipulates that no prospective purchaser will be approved "unless the sale is considered likely to deliver an on-going and significant level of community participation in the port." Given that DPPTL achieved 97.5% support in a recent referendum in Dover, it seems that the community bid has taken a major step forward. The ferry workers union, Unite, issued its own press release which stated: "The people of Dover, the workers at the port and the ferry operators all back the 'Peoples Port', that is why the government should make this a reality." An unusual combination of a Conservative MP and a traditional union produced a comment from The Guardian newspaper that "Politics can produce odd bedfellows." But it is not so odd when you consider that the present management of the port has reduced its workforce by two thirds in the last few years and is in open dispute with the customers which account for 80% of its income, namely the ferry companies. As we have stated in previous editions, the ports of Ramsgate and Whitstable are also publicly owned. There is a wind of change blowing through the East Kent coastal business community and it is not only the offshore wind turbines that are newly energized.

9. A Position of Authority

One sailing enthusiast in our Chamber membership is waiting to hear if his application for tickets for the Olympic sailing event next July has been successful. Weymouth Bay and Portland Harbour will be the venues with the first event scheduled to begin on 27th July 2012. As a regular sailor, he is up to date with all the latest maritime gossip from around our shores. He has told the Thanet & East Kent Insider of one recent communication breakdown with the local Coastguard. We have our doubts about this story but we leave it to our readers to judge for themselves. As he puts it: "Our company had just acquired a motor yacht and our marketing staff were as keen as mustard to take full advantage. During Ramsgate Yacht Week, we took it out for the first time with the boss at the wheel, resplendent in his new skipper's cap and blazer. You can imagine that with a full complement of our best customers and plenty of champagne and canapés, we had a great party. We anchored off the Goodwin Sands and drank our fill until the sun went down. When we went to start the motor to come home, we couldn't get the engines going. After over half an hour of struggling and with no mechanic on board, it was clear that we were well and truly in trouble. With the seas getting ever choppier, our new skipper decided he ought to get on the radio. Fortunately, the instructions to tune into the emergency channel were next to the wheel. "Mayday, Mayday", blurted out the boss in a tone more suited to Captain Mannerling than Admiral Lord Nelson. After several repeats and to much relief all around, he received the reply: "This is Dover Coastguard. What is your position?" Adjusting his collar and tie in a vain attempt to restore some lost authority, our boss said: "I'm Managing Director of a medium-sized but expanding double-glazing company". Strange things happen at sea, indeed.

10. Our Sponsors

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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.
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