



Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Thanet & The Media

The recent worldwide coverage of East Kent in the media during the 2011 Open Golf Championship and the successes of the Turner Contemporary have focused attention on the economy in and around Thanet and Sandwich. Warm relations with both ITV Meridian and BBC South East have allowed the Thanet & East Kent Chamber to make its case on television three times in the last week. As always on these occasions, the Chamber is keen to support our members. We aim to entice more visitors to our shops and restaurants, more buyers for our companies and more clients for the many quality professional services offered to inward investors and start-ups. Increasing cooperation with our sister Chamber, the Dover District Chamber of Commerce, has increased our impact at regional and national level. The 2012 joint Chamber diary will go to press at the end of this month and will serve as the definitive business directory for the East Kent coastal business community. We thank all those members who have contacted us recently with their advice and comments and we will continue to reflect these in all our activities.

2. Our Port, Our Future

Readers are reminded of the Business Networking Lunch “Our Port, Our Future” offered by our associates in Dover. Featuring a talk by the Chairman of the Dover People’s Port Trust, delegates will hear details of what has been described as “one of the most significant developments in Dover’s long maritime history as the main UK passenger port for continental Europe”. Regular readers will know that DPPT has the support of residents, unions, ferry companies and local businesses in its bid to buy the port of Dover. An integral part of the offer to government is the establishment of a £50 million investment fund with a heavy emphasis on purchases from local companies. Booking is essential. The lunch will take place at the County Hotel at 1215 hrs on Friday 29th July 2011. Places can be booked by telephone to 01843 609289 or by email to manager@tekc.co.uk. A two-course lunch is included in the price of £15.00.

3. How Are We Doing?

Unemployment is just one economic indicator, but unlike interest rates, exchange rates and inflation, it is measured on a local basis with relative ease. We are grateful to the ever-excellent Research & Information department of Kent County Council for its masterly presentation of the June 2011 data; see the larger Thanet wards and East Kent districts listed below. As always when reviewing the figures, we are less interested in the changes from month to month and more interested in the year-on-year difference. Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells are the only districts in Kent to record

an improvement in employment from June 2010 to June 2011. Thanet again shows the biggest yearly increase of 9.4% and can take little comfort for being joined this month by Gravesham. Thanet also has the highest number of unemployed. The trend confirms our belief at the Chamber that our monthly Business Advice Clinics can make a difference. On offer since last April, these free sessions are designed to assist start-up companies and to provide targeted support to established enterprises. Bookings can be made by telephone to 01843 609289.

	June 2011		Change since June 2010	
	Unemployed	% of workforce	Number	%
Central Harbour	363	7.3%	-13	-3.5%
Cliftonville West	731	14.8%	+88	+13.7%
Dane Valley	359	7.1%	+49	+15.8%
Eastcliffe	394	8.3%	+41	+11.6%
Margate Central	422	13.9%	+70	+19.9%
Newington	209	6.8%	+14	+7.2%
Ashford	1,822	2.6%	+80	+4.6%
Canterbury	2,240	2.3%	+123	+5.8%
Dover	2,203	3.4%	+69	+3.2%
Maidstone	2,338	2.5%	+114	+5.1%
Shepway	2,345	4.0%	+22	+0.9%
Swale	3,038	3.6%	+84	+2.8%
Thanet	4,279	5.5%	+368	+9.4%
Kent	33,320	3.2%	+1,258	+3.9%
South East	132,561	2.5%	-1,574	-1.2%
Great Briain	1,434,373	3.7%	+45,612	+3.3%

4. Perceptions Of Corruption: Exporters Take Note

The recent revelations regarding the News of the World and associated allegations of illegal payments have focused attention on the issue of corruption in public life. The Bribery Act 2011 has been in force in the UK since the beginning of this month. This British response to a growing menace to international trade has been described by Richard Alderman, head of the Serious Fraud Office, as “the toughest bribery legislation in the world”. Transparency International has for many years monitored illicit payments through its much respected Corruptions Perceptions Index. The CPI rankings should not be confused with the Consumer Price Index although rises in both have a significant effect on our trading performance. Transparency International has published its 2010 Global Corruption Barometer which maps the experiences of over 90,000 people in 86 countries. The biggest increases were in Chile, Colombia, Kenya, FYR Macedonia, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Senegal and Thailand, although it should be noted that more half the people in sub-Saharan Africa reported paying a bribe, the worst results anywhere. In a sad commentary on elected bodies, few people around the world trust their governments or politicians which top the list for accepting bribes. Over 80% of those interviewed claimed that political parties are corrupt or extremely corrupt. The media was perceived as being around twice as honest as politicians. Military authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations fared the best. Of the countries listed, the UK scraped into the top twenty, ahead of the United States (2nd) and France (25th). In joint first place for having the least corrupt societies are Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore, followed by Finland, Sweden, Canada, Netherlands, Australia, Switzerland and Norway. For a copy of the report, please email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Corruption Perception Index”.

5. Thanet Technology

Simtek EMS Limited of Margate is currently celebrating its seventh year as an independently owned business and what a success it has been. When Richard Samuel and Lee Boulton bought the company, it was not at the sharp end of technological development. Richard and Lee describe the company’s premises in 2004 as “a tin shed equipped with the surface mount equivalent of two bicycles and an overwhelming reliance on the seasonal marine electronics market.” Today Simtech inhabits purpose built premises of 18,000 sq. ft. complete with hi-tech equipment which the owners

now describe as “the SM equivalent of three F1 racing cars”. The number of employees has doubled. Sharp increases in efficiency and production have meant that the company surpassed its 2004 turnover in the first quarter of this year. Finding new markets for a diversified range of products has mitigated the previous problems of seasonal peaks which dated back to the company’s early days making marine radar. Customer satisfaction has been the key to growth with 93% of current clients gained through the recommendation of happy buyers. Accredited to ISO9001 since 2006, Simtek is one of an increasing number of East Kent manufacturer’s to take advantage of a growing sector of our local economy where easy access to European markets, high production values and a committed workforce have proved that quality pays. For more information about the full range of Simtek products in Professional Audio, Marine, Automotive, Medical, Satellite Communications, Aeronautical and Visual Display Assemblies, give the company a call, tel: 01843 233120.

6. Warning From Mark

We are grateful to Mark Hurdman of Chamber member Levicks Accountants, tel: 01843 862716, who would like to highlight for readers that HMRC is again alerting taxpayers to a surge of fake 'phishing' emails sent out by fraudsters in the run-up to the tax credits renewal deadline. Mark tells us: “The email informs the recipient they are due a tax rebate and provides a click-through link to a cloned replica of the HMRC website. The recipient is asked to provide their credit or debit card details. Fraudsters then try to take money from the account using the details provided. Since the beginning of April 2011, when the first tax credits renewals forms were sent out to claimants, more than 46,000 phishing emails have been reported. During the same period of time HMRC helped shut down more than 150 scam websites. HMRC strongly advises taxpayers to: 1. To check the advice published at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/security/examples.htm> to see if the email you have received is listed. 2. To forward suspicious emails to HMRC at phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk and then delete it from your computer email account. 3. Do not click on websites, links contained in suspicious emails or open attachments.” Levicks has offices in Broadstairs, tel: 01843 862716, and Canterbury tel: 01227 455183.

7. Boosting Spend In Our Shops, Hotels & Restaurants

Laura Sandys MP has consistently raised the profile of out-of-season tourism and its value to our business community. In a parliamentary exchange last March with the Minister for Arts and Culture, Ed Vaizey MP, she said: “With the forthcoming April opening of Turner Contemporary ... now more than ever we have a chance to market the area as an all year, all weather tourism destination.” She continued: “If we effectively market the area to attract visitors throughout the year and not just in the summer months, we could create more jobs and boost the amount of money spent on our local high streets.” Chamber members with bills to pay every month of the year will appreciate the emphasis our Chamber Co-President is putting on stimulating off-season trade. Her fellow Co-President, Roger Gale MP, has a distinguished history of support for tourism going back to his first years in Parliament in 1983. He has always been keen to educate any decision-makers on the value of this important element in our economy. As he put in one of his “Roger and his views” columns: “Hotel and Catering, the service and tourist industries, represent and considerable proportion of this Country’s job and wealth creation and to ignore that fact is to demonstrate a woeful lack of understanding amounting to a dereliction of duty.” We support wholeheartedly these views and will be liaising closely with Roger, Laura and our associates over measures to overcome any barriers to trade and inward investment in matters such as planning.

8. No To Golf Academy

Last Wednesday’s meeting of the Thanet District Council’s Planning Committee featured the usual combination of applications for domestic and commercial ventures. In such meetings up and down the country, the applications from the private sector generally give an insight into the local economy and the relevant planning authority’s vision for business. Under consideration last Wednesday was an application from an inward investor to change an empty business unit near Manston airport and turn its 288 sq. metres into a prestigious indoor Golf Academy, complete with the latest technology. The facility would create 6 jobs with more to follow. It would add considerably to the tourism offer in Thanet providing an all-year round attraction for training in all weathers. Kent Highways had approved the proposal and there were no objections on the basis of fire or safety or from neighbouring companies. This Chamber encouraged the investor to bring the proposal to the planning committee and joined Cllr Mike Roberts in speaking in support at the meeting. As the most deprived district in Kent with the highest percentage of failed companies, the greatest proportion

of unemployed in the county and worst performing High Street in the country, it is logical to assume that Thanet would welcome a high class proposal of this nature which would capitalise on the magnificent marketing boost the area has received from the worldwide publicity following the recent Open Golf Championship and the success of the Turner Contemporary. It is disappointing that the Planning Committee refused the application. Some objections were voiced by members of the planning committee which seemed centred on the premise that an empty unit at Manston should be used exclusively for storage and industrial purposes because there are plenty of prospective tenants who would acquire the lease. Although the investor in question is now looking at alternative premises in neighbouring districts, we will be encouraging him to take the application to appeal where a more business-friendly interpretation of Planning Policy Statement 4 might be expected.

9. High Speed To London St Pancras

We have received many enquiries from members enquiring about the High Speed train service to London. Although there have been some concerns over the price of the tickets, most callers are looking to get to London for a meeting in the morning. The current HSI timetable came into force on 22nd May and will last until 10th December 2011. The journey times listed take into account the new HSI services to Deal and Sandwich. .

Fastest Weekday Journey Times To London St Pancras Arriving 0800 - 0900 hrs on HSI

From	Mins	From	Mins	From	Mins
Ashford International	35	Deal	101	Margate	91
Birchington-on-Sea	86	Dover Priory	70	Ramsgate	82
Broadstairs	89	Faversham	62	Sandwich	107
Canterbury West	62	Herne Bay	67	Whitstable	71

10. Restaurant & Hotel Reports

A chamber member has just reported to the Thanet & East Kent Insider that last Tuesday, he visited a restaurant/hotel on the outskirts of Canterbury with a view to having a quick lunch with some friends. He asked the waitress: "Is there one of your main meals which can be served relatively quickly as we have an appointment at 2.00 pm?" The waitress replied: "Not really. You see we only have one microwave working". The Chamber member and his friends left immediately and are unlikely to return in the near future. Staff training was obviously somewhat lacking at this establishment. To be fair to hotel owners everywhere, we must understand that guests are not always perfect, as another Chamber member related to us recently. We have no doubts about the Canterbury story, but we leave it to readers to judge for themselves about this one. "After a frantic few months preparing all our year-end accounts and tax returns, I wanted to spend a few days in the Cotswolds, nice and relaxed and with no pressures. I sent an email to a lovely looking family-run hotel near Gloucester that I had found on the Internet. In my email, I wrote something along the lines of: 'I would like to come and stay at your hotel on Thursday week for four nights. Would it be alright if I took my dog with me? He's a well-behaved black labrador called Buster. He would be happy to stay in my room at night without any trouble.' Within a few hours, I received a reply which stated: 'Thank you for your email. I have been managing this hotel for 37 years. During all this time, no dog has ever complained about the food. No dog has ever stolen bath towels, broken plates or insulted visiting tradesmen. I've never needed to evict a dog nor has any dog ever passed fake currency, tried to settle the bill with a stolen credit card or run away without paying. I have never been obliged to evict a dog for being drunk and disorderly or had to call the police due to it swearing at three o'clock in the morning. Of course, Buster will be welcome to stay at my hotel and if your dog will vouch for you, you will be welcome to stay as well.' I did go and both Buster and I had a wonderful break. We will certainly return".

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

For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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