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***** Welcome to the Thanet & East Kent Insider *****

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider
17 June 2008

1. New Website

Cariss is offering readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider a special deal on websites. Order before 3rd July 2008 and Cariss will design your website and train you to manage it for just £600.00. This represents a saving of £150.00 on the published price. Cariss will translate your ideas into a themed website that will promote your products and services 24 hours a day, every day of the week. To create or upgrade your current version to a Joomla[®] website, telephone Cariss on 0844 576 5421. Details can also be found at www.cariss.co.uk where the company's "open and honest" approach is outlined.

2. Business Rates

The Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007 which came into force last April has brought the building and refurbishment of commercial property by the private sector to a virtual stop. It is accepted that this was not the government's intention but the consequences, however unintended, threaten to retard regeneration of our East Kent coastal towns and severely restrict the opportunities for established companies to expand and new companies to secure premises. This Chamber is campaigning for a review of the law. Last Thursday, I accompanied Chamber member Mick German of MPG Properties to a meeting at King's Hill, Maidstone attended by 20 private sector developers plus Kent County Council and Locate in Kent. For feedback from this meeting and information on the Chamber campaign to date, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Business Rates Update".

3. Calling all veterans

Today is the 110th birthday of Harry Patch, First World War veteran and the last survivor of the Battle of Passchendaele of 1917. Interviewed last year, Harry said, "I've never got over it. You never forget it. Never." To ensure that Harry's sentiments are shared by a new generation, the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate is organising a Veterans Day on 4th July 2008 from 1030 hrs to 1630 hrs. With the active support of the Ministry of Defence, the Marlowe Academy is inviting 150 veterans to a lunch and celebration. If you know of any former member of the armed services who might be free to attend, telephone Mandy Mulvihill on 01843 593326 or write to Veterans Day Event, Marlowe Academy, Stirling Way, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6NB.

4. More about the Marlowe

Chamber member, the Marlowe Academy, was in the news again earlier this month for winning a "Creating the Future" award. Caroline O'Connor and Mandy Mulvihill joined other winners from Newcastle, London, Manchester, Northamptonshire, Cornwall and Brighton. Citing the Marlowe Academy as "a shining example to other schools", the judges also noted the 35% improvement in GCSE results and the close ties with the local business community.

5. Unemployment in Kent

Kent County Council has released the unemployment figures for Kent for May 2008. Thanet still heads the list with a figure of 3.2%. Although there has been an increase from the previous month, the year-on-year numbers show a welcome fall of 5.8%. Shepway shows an unemployment rate of 2.5%, Dover 2.1% and Canterbury 1.3%. The figure for Kent is 1.7% and for Great Britain 2.2%.

6. SEEDA

The South East England Development Authority is a government-funded organisation tasked with producing and implementing a Regional Economic Strategy. You might agree with the SEEDA Chairman, James Braithwaite, who writes in his annual report that "SEEDA's successes are shared with the businesses, communities and other public bodies with whom we work in such close partnership". A spokesman for the Taxpayers Alliance, Mark Wallace, has a different view and was quoted last Sunday as saying "People like Mr Braithwaite are given enormous powers and unlimited access to public budgets and no-one, apart from the Secretary of State, can remove them." and "Unelected bodies like SEEDA are riding roughshod over the taxpayer." Whatever your view, we would like to know. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber has a duty to raise the profile of our area in order to secure the best possible advantages for our members and the local economy. I will be joining the Chamber President, Bill Moses, for a meeting with Dr Susan Priest of SEEDA at the beginning of July. This will be followed a few weeks later by a second meeting in the company of Sandy Ezekiel, Leader of Thanet District Council. It would be most helpful to know what SEEDA means to you. Please send comments by email to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "SEEDA Comments".

7. Lewis Hamilton: Six Facts and some Pure Speculation

Fact 1: Our friends at HSBC tell us that Lewis Hamilton, the British Formula One driver, is to star in a new television campaign for Abbey in which an Airfix car springs to life. Fact 2: The bank, formerly known as Abbey National, has been owned by the Banco Santander since 2004. Fact 3: Banco Santander is sponsoring the British Grand Prix at Silverstone and the McLaren Mercedes team to which Hamilton belongs. Fact 4: Local company Hornby recently posted profits of £9m, up 17% on the previous year. Hornby Managing Director, Frank Martin, attributes some of the increase to the success of the Formula 1 Scaletrix sets. Fact 5: Hornby purchased Airfix in 2006. Fact 6: Readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will know that one of the companies widely tipped to join the China Gateway at Manston is Aigo, which also sponsors McLaren Mercedes. Pure Speculation: Does this mean that Lewis Hamilton will soon be found relaxing with a bucket and spade on Margate beach? Is Thanet about to be plagued with paparazzi anxious to capture some magic moments with the star attraction of British motorsport? Will Lewis Hamilton complain that unleaded petrol from Tesco Broadstairs costs 3p a litre more than at Asda in Canterbury? If we hear anything, you will be the first to know.

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