



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

1st October 2011 Issue No.: 171

1. Thanet Offshore Windfarm: One Year On

It is now just over a year since Vattenfall opened the world's largest Offshore Windfarm. On the 23rd September 2010, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber was among the many guests invited to the opening. In our edition no. 126 of 25th September 2010, the Thanet & East Kent Insider reported on the speeches by Thanet District Council's Cllr Bob Bayford, Vattenfall's President, Øystein Løseth and the government's Chris Huhne, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. We noted at the time the flawless English of Øystein Løseth. We also pointed out that the two English presenters had resisted the temptation to speak in Swedish. As we seem to read every week in our national papers some horrendous tale about cost overruns and the mismanagement of large public sector contracts, it is appropriate to recall that Vattenfall took over the Thanet Offshore Windfarm project at a time when it was not much more than an idea with planning permission. Within little more than two years, the company had transformed the idea into 100 turbines 115 metres high, covering 35 square kilometres with a capacity to generate 300 MW. The important facts to record are that this renewable energy generation plant was constructed on budget, on time and on the shore of our East Kent coastline. As this Chamber remarked to BBC Radio Kent a few days ago, this excellent example of project management proves that there is more to Sweden than Abba, Volvo and crispbreads. We also welcomed the example that Vattenfall has set in terms of Foreign Direct Investment, an issue that is very much current as we look to develop the Enterprise Zone at Sandwich and aim to bring manufacturers and logistics companies into our empty warehouses and brownfield sites across East Kent. When Chris Huhne said last year: "We are in a unique position to become a world leader in this industry", he surely meant as a leader in research, development and manufacturing and not just as an importer and end user.

2. Pavilioned In Splendour

The Pavilion in Broadstairs was the setting on 20th September 2011 for the splendid TBN Thanet Trade Fair. Busy for the most of the day, the showcase event brought together a number of Chamber members including Kent International Airport at Manston, Barnes Marsland Solicitors tel: 01843 221466, Levicks Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 862716, The Spencer Wing tel: 01843 234555 and Sharp Printing Services tel: 01843

600123. Whether it was a case of testing your blood pressure at the Spencer Wing or testing your tax bill at Levicks, visitors were guaranteed a warm welcome at the stands and the opportunity to see some successful local businesses present their products and services. Chamber Marketing and Membership Officer, Graham Rayner, was kept fully occupied throughout and pronounced the day “an undoubted success”.

3. In Children We Trust

The Thanet Local Children's Trust Board Meeting in September featured a 211 page document entitled: “Extended Services Select Committee Report”. This is a comprehensive document that covers the Kent County Council (KCC) area. It has been produced under the enlightened and spirited chairmanship of Ramsgate’s own Cllr. Robert Burgess. The report will be of interest to anyone who believes that the skills that our children learn at school should amount to more than academic competence. Robert’s committee of eight KCC Councillors examined in detail every aspect of out-of-school activities from the Kent Freedom Pass, which it would like to see extended “to include all 16 to 19 year olds in full-time secondary education or non-advanced Further Education”, to the obligation for all primary schools to provide “high quality childcare from 8am to 6pm, five days a week, 48 weeks a year”. The committee even managed to produce two pages on “the Big Society, Total Place and Localism”. This Chamber particularly likes the proposals to increase the use of school facilities as venues to “encourage civic engagement and people’s empowerment in the democratic decision-making process”. These are fancy terms perhaps, but if regional decision-making in schools can be brought closer to the communities they serve, then there must be hope that Thanet District Council’s planning committee can eventually learn about the businesses they regulate, make more informed choices and thus avoid silly decisions such as the recent rejection of a Golf Academy at Manston. If you cannot locate the select committee report on the KCC website, email manager@tekc.co.uk and we will gladly send you a copy.

4. Sun Shines on Broadstairs Food Festival

Chamber Member Barnes Marsland Solicitors must have felt that all their birthdays had come at once this weekend as record temperatures and glorious sunshine shone on Broadstairs Food Festival. Practice Manager Maureen Reid had expressed her pleasure at supporting the festival which is now in its third year and already an established part of the East Kent tourism timetable. “We are proud to be able to support such a successful local community event”, said Maureen. Thanet College provided its professional expertise to the proceedings, aided in no small part by a ringing endorsement from former pupil Gary Rhodes who wrote: “It is great that Thanet College are so involved again and that they continue to be one of the leading catering colleges in the UK. I am proud to be associated with Thanet College as it was there that I began my career”. He added: “I always enjoy my visits to Broadstairs with my family and I am sure you will as well.” We offer our congratulations to the organisers at Broadstairs Events Support Trust and suggest that they keep on friendly terms with Maureen Reid. Anyone who can include sunshine in a sponsorship deal must be worth their weight in gold.

5. Business Advice Clinics

The Chamber continues to offer free business advice to companies of all sizes trading in the Thanet and Dover Districts. These usually take place on the first Friday of the month in Broadstairs and the first Wednesday of the month in Dover, Due to our corporate Golf Day on Friday 7th October, the October Broadstairs Business Advice Clinic will take place one week later on Friday 14th October 2011. As always, bookings can be made by telephone by contacting the appropriate office: For Broadstairs telephone 01843 609289 or email manager@tekc.co.uk. For Dover telephone 01304 924955 or email mail@doverchamber.co.uk. More details are available in the short film to be found at <http://www.kentbusinesstv.com/business/david-foley-from-tekc-talks-about-their-business-advice-clinics/>

6. Hartsdown Hits The Heights

Hartsdown Technology College provided a night to remember at the Winter Gardens, Margate on 22nd September 2011. Billed as an Awards Evening, Principal Andy Somers presided over a programme that would have probably bewildered the school’s founders fifty years previously, but provided a rich demonstration of some outstanding talent for the VIP guests attending on the night. In his introductory speech, Andy referred to

the excellent reports from last July's Ofsted inspection and mentioned that Hartsdown's new academy status was already bringing benefits and more fruitful links with Thanet College, Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent. He reserved his warmest comments for the students who "never cease to amaze and delight us all with their talent, commitment, dedication, and above all boundless enthusiasm." The first students on stage provided a brilliantly contemporary dance which owed more than a little to the Hakka of the All Blacks New Zealand rugby team and kept the audience enthralled. Every department in the school had made a short film. There was even a credible impersonation of David Attenborough. The presentation of the awards was crisp and prompt. Guest of honour was singer/songwriter Ben Mills, known to many as a finalist on The X Factor in 2006, but now with an army of new fans in Thanet following his work at Hartsdown. The Hartsdown choir performed a full harmony a cappella version of Queen's Somebody To Love with Ben Mills as lead singer. It was 'awesome'; so much so that Ben is going to make a full recording and may include it as bonus track on his next album. Awards evenings are not supposed to be this interesting or this enjoyable or this entertaining. Where was the doddery governor recalling when he was caned? There was not a stuffed shirt on the stage all night. After delivering a short and notably gracious speech, Ben treated the audience to his version of the James Morrison song "Undiscovered" with its haunting refrain: "You see the look that's on my face, you might think that I'm out of place I'm not lost, no, no, just undiscovered". The perfect ending to a great evening.

7. Thanet Earth Update

The Chamber is often asked to provide an overview of the East Kent economy and we are pleased to oblige. Recently, we have received quite a few questions about Chamber member Thanet Earth along the lines of "Is it still there?" The answer is a definitive "Yes, it certainly is". Anyone driving to Thanet from the West can hardly fail to spot the 91-hectare site with its three huge greenhouses alongside Seamark Road between the A299 and the A28. We do not know the exact number of people currently employed there, but Thanet Earth confirms that over 95% of the staff working on site live in Kent, with the overwhelming majority residing in Thanet or in the Herne Bay area. The complex is a true example of science in action with the hydroponic systems in operation leading the way in the UK and making a significant contribution to our knowledge of vegetable growing under glass. Since opening in 2008, the company has paid around £10 million in wages and salaries, a significant contribution to the local economy in these troubled times. The innovating force behind the project is the Fresca Group which maintains its office there as Thanet Earth Marketing and has the task of selling the crops of tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers to UK outlets, mostly supermarkets. In the last year, the parent Fresca Group survived exchange rate fluctuations, rises in base input costs and a European 'cucumber crisis' to post a group turnover figure for 2010-11 of £389.53m. Profits before tax amounted to £7.285m; a creditable performance in harsh trading conditions. Most remarkable of all though are the financial results at Thanet Earth itself. In a statement released two months ago, Executive Chairman Christopher Mack declared: "In a notable turnaround of fortune, I have to offer particular congratulations to the Thanet Earth Marketing team. It's still such a very young business, but a huge turnaround in fortune in just one year is remarkable and should be applauded. This business has turned a £4.4m loss into an operating profit that's approaching £1m this year – a remarkable achievement and a welcome piece of good news." As Thanet Earth is clearly the apple of the eye of the company Chairman, we must offer especial congratulations to Managing Director, Ian Craig. He and his team have outperformed the market in large measure which suggests a rosy future for Thanet Earth. It also gives us every hope that the company will develop the full site in Thanet with the promise of an eventual total of 500 jobs. We note the plans by the Fresca Group to meet a growing demand for prepared and convenience foods and trust that Thanet Earth can play a role in the added value production process.

8. Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club

This is a reminder to all those companies attending East Kent's largest corporate Golf Day at the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club on Friday 7th October 2011. Bacon rolls and coffee will be served from 0815 hrs. Tee off times start at holes One and Ten from 0850 hrs. Lunch will be served from 1300 hrs. The prize-giving ceremony is anticipated to start at around 1630 hrs. This prestigious venue has hosted two Open Championships and has maintained royal connections since the year 1900 when the Prince of Wales, later to be King Edward VII, stood on the first tee. The current club patron is Prince Andrew, Duke of York. With a prize table

approaching £30,000 on offer, all golfers can expect a frisson of expectation as the members of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber join battle with their traditional rivals at the Dover District Chamber of Commerce.

9. New Members

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber continues to grow its membership at a pace. We are delighted to welcome the following new members KJA Bookkeeping Services Ltd of Canterbury, tel: 07941 653034; Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum of Ramsgate tel: 01843 609686; Theatre Royal of Margate tel: 01843 282953; Turners Roof Specialists Ltd of Whitstable tel: 01227 275667; K B Occupational Health & Safety Services Ltd of Ramsgate tel: 07702951175; Two Chimneys Ltd of Birchington tel: 01843 843157; Kinetic Advance Ltd of Ramsgate tel: 01843 594433; AI IT Web Design of Broadstairs tel: 01843 604664 and Michaels Wholesale Foods Ltd of Broadstairs tel: 01843 604601.

10. A Message From Laura Sandys

Our Chamber Co-President Laura Sandys MP invites local businesses to attend a “Small Business and Employer Event” at the Ramsgate Jobcentre, Queen Street, Ramsgate CT11 9EW on Friday 7th October from 0815 hrs to 0930 hrs. Laura will be in attendance together with the Jobcentre Plus District Manager, David Ashmore, to discuss apprenticeship and work experience programmes as well as other employment and training issues. A convinced fan of apprenticeships, Laura states: “I took on an apprentice earlier this year and have not looked back. She is currently studying for a diploma in Business Administration and I believe that she will gain a huge amount of experience from her time in my office. We have also undoubtedly benefited from her presence on the team. I cannot recommend taking on an apprentice enough!” Any Chamber members wishing to attend are invited to contact Laura’s office first by telephone to 01843 589434 or by email to laura.sandys.mp@parliament.uk copied to penny.dadds@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk.

11. Waitrose

Is there a Waitrose store near you? There might be if you live in Kent near Ramsgate, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks, Ramsgate, Ashford, Gillingham, Paddock Wood or Hythe. There will be if you live in Canterbury from 6th October 2011 for that is when the former Aldi store in New Dover Road, Canterbury opens its refurbished doors as a fully fledged Waitrose. As the largest stockist to declare its allegiance to Kent Crisps, Waitrose is expected sell our favourite Oyster flavour crisps as well as the Ashmore Kentish Cheese, Biddenden Cider and Sea Salt flavours now produced by Kent Crisps on its Quex Park Estate near Birchington. In a paean of praise for this Chamber member, Waitrose’s product manager for local and regional produce, Tracey Marshall, said: “Kent Crisps are a quality local food, traditionally made by producers respected by their communities. All this makes them perfect for our shoppers and we are delighted to stock them.” Any food producer would be happy with that.

12. Avoidance Not Evasion

Tax evasion is a crime, tax avoidance is what has inspired some very clever people since Income Tax was first introduced in 1799 as a temporary measure to support the war against French forces under Napoleon. Over £6 million was raised in that first year; 60% of the target, but sufficient to encourage nearly every UK government to refine and perfect ways of extracting money ever since. Thus it was with a ready heart and an open mind that the Thanet & East Kent Chamber accepted the invitation to send two representatives last week to the Tax Strategy Seminar ‘Keep More of What You Earn’ organised by Cleverdons Chartered Accountants. We are very glad that we did. If you can fund this country’s top tax lawyer to the tune of £20,000 for a half-day consultation, then read no further. For the rest of us, the guidance that Cleverdons can offer on how to keep the vast majority of retained earnings is undoubtedly most interesting. It would be ill-advised and unfair to divulge the details of the tax strategies available, but it is fair to state that if you generate a trading surplus of at least £100,000, you will probably find it interesting to have a word with your accountant about the most appropriate tax scheme for you. Jon Cleverdon would welcome your call, tel: 01843 866599. One of the most interesting comments from Jon’s main speaker was: “If we had a flat rate tax system in the UK of say 20% across the board, then all of us tax advisors would be out of a job”. The fact is that we do not have a flat rate tax system and it would take a brave government indeed to take such a radical step.

13. Disability Hub Event

This Chamber is happy to promote and to contribute to the Disability Hub Event due to take place on Friday 28th October 2011 at St George's C of E Foundation School in Broadstairs from 0930 hrs to 1530 hrs. Billed as "An opportunity to learn about the support and services available for assisting disabled people into employment", the sessions will cover KCC Support Programmes, pre-employment training seminars, case studies and the advantages of employing a disabled person. Chamber Co-President Laura Sandys MP will open proceedings and will outline her government's commitment and support. There is no charge for attendance, although the organisers would appreciate any donations to help defray expenses. For a booking form and more details, contact TVCSF by email to cara@tvcsf.org.uk.

14. A Rose By Any Other Name

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet" is one of the most quoted lines in literature. The words come from the mouth of Juliet in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, first performed 411 years ago. That may well be true about a rose smelling sweet, but what if the rose catches fire? That is when you realise that you should have previously called on the services of the Fire Strategy Company in Manston, or to give the firm its trading name after 1st October 2011, Zeta Fire Services. Since purchasing the Fire Strategy Company on 12th May 2010, Zeta Compliance Group plc has been integrating its products into the group's operations and is now happy to present the firm as Zeta Fire Services. Telephone enquiries are welcome to 0844 999 4109 and emails to info@zetafireservices.co.uk. We are assured that company smells just as sweet after 1st October 2011 as it did before.

15. An Animated Question

We received a telephone call late one afternoon a few weeks ago from one of our Chamber members who had returned to his roots in Glasgow to enjoy a family holiday. In accordance with a long established tradition, he had enjoyed the lunchtime hospitality on offer in many of the bars in this great city that is still basking in the glory of its designation as the 1990 European City of Culture. After an exchange of pleasantries and knowing of this Chamber's affection for the UK's greatest writer, our Glaswegian friend said: "Tell me then, what is the difference between the author of Romeo and Juliet and the author of Snow White?" Not quite understanding the meaning behind the question, no-one in the office could find a suitable answer. Then it was that an almost hysterical chuckle came down the telephone line followed by the answer in a thick accent; "You see William Shakespeare writes well and Walt Disney".

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David Foley
Chief Executive, Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Tel: +44 (0) 1843 609289
Email: davidfoley@tekc.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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