



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

21st January 2012 Issue No.: 178

1. Business Networking Breakfast

This is a reminder that the Thanet & East Kent Chamber is hosting its January Business Networking Breakfast at the Holiday Inn Express at Minster on Friday 27th January from 0730 hrs to 0900 hrs. The main speaker will be the Managing Director of Manston Airport, Charles Buchanan, who will outline the latest news regarding the airport and the potential opportunities for suppliers and for future employment. The meeting will be attended by the Chamber's Co-President, Sir Roger Gale. Booking is essential. To book your place, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Business Breakfast 27 January 2012". Tickets include a cooked breakfast and cost £12 for Chamber members and £16 for non-members.

2. Free Business Advice Clinic

Thanet & East Kent Chamber in liaison with the Dover District Chamber of Commerce offers a free monthly Business Advice Clinic. Subject to space available, any private sector company or social enterprise may book a 40-minute session and benefit from free guidance from a senior lawyer, a chartered accountant and business leaders with outstanding records of success. Launched last March with the objective of replacing the regional Business Link service, the clinics have already attracted over 70 clients including start-ups, established companies and voluntary groups. The next Business Advice Clinic is scheduled for 3rd February 2012 in Broadstairs. To book your place, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Business Advice Clinic" or telephone 01843 609289.

3. Pfizer Update

On Friday, 27th January 2012, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber will be announcing the name of a buyer of part of the Pfizer site. Following extended negotiations with the parent company in the United States, the successful purchaser is now in possession of the freehold and will be making a further significant investment in the premises. Full details will be announced next Friday. Chamber Chief Executive David Foley said: "This sale marks an important vote of confidence in East Kent and will undoubtedly encourage other companies to consider investing in the Discovery Park at Sandwich".

4. Fire Rescue & Safety Precautions

We are grateful to the Kent Fire and Rescue Service for a dramatic account of a rescue in Dover. Thanks to a smoke alarm, no lives were lost. Sacha Taylor informed the Chamber that: "A smoke alarm proved its weight in gold for an elderly woman in Dover when it sounded and alerted her to a fire in her home. When fire crews arrived at the house in Salisbury Road at around 5.40pm, the woman had already been led to safety by a neighbour, having heard her smoke alarm sounding and realising her kitchen was on fire. It appears that a pan left on a hob had overheated and started the fire, which set light to the basement kitchen of the property. Crews in breathing apparatus extinguished the fire and also rescued the woman's pet dog from the property. It was given oxygen therapy at the scene." To ensure that you, your business and indeed, your dog, escape in a similar fashion contact Safety & Management Solutions based at Manston. This company offers: "a complete fire risk assessment service providing you with a simple and cost effective process to manage fire risks at your business or event which meets the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Order) 2005." For more details give Paul Sadd a call, tel: 01843 821406 or email info@samsltd.co.uk. Paul also informs Chamber members that a few pounds spent now might save a lot more later, or as he puts it: "As of April the HSE will undertake visits to businesses where some form of intelligence or information indicates that there may be a problem. This includes accident reports, previous information or tip offs from other agencies or the public. Introduction of Fee For Intervention (FII) in which the HSE will be charging Directors of Companies £124 p.h. should they visit a business and find a material breach. From the information we have, a conservative estimate of fees in respect of an enforcement notice could be in the region of £1,500 or in respect of a prosecution the costs could be as much as £100,000."

5. Energy Prices

At last some good news about energy prices. Martyn Young of Atlantic Business Resources joins several members in welcoming the recent announcements about lower costs for electricity and gas. In an email to the Chamber he writes: "The mild weather has been the major factor in keeping prices low for the UK as there has been no call on the storage for power generation. As the days are getting longer and the forecast to the end of January is for mild weather it is unlikely that the weather will drive up prices for the rest of the winter period, and I cannot foresee a major increase in global manufacturing in the first half of 2012, so I believe we may be in for a few months of relative price stability barring wars and natural disasters." For more information on how you can reduce your energy costs, the following experts will be pleased to help you. Martyn Young of Atlantic Business resources tel: 0781 353 7456, David Batten of Auditel (UK) Ltd tel: 01843 581322 and Jeremy Bailey of Auditel tel: 01843 588776.

6. Commercial Energy Costs

Anyone with an oil-fired heating system at home or in the company will be less happy with recent price movements than those with gas or electric systems. We are grateful to E.ON for the January 2012 market report which shows the price movements below.

Supply	Year	Month
	Dec 2010 – Dec 2011	Dec 2011
Average front month power contract price	14% lower	9% lower
Average front month gas contract price	3% lower	9% lower
Average front month oil contract price	17% higher	0% higher
Average Annualised power price	4% lower	4% lower
Average Annualised gas price	7% higher	1% lower

7. Chamber at House of Commons

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber was represented at the House of Commons on 12th January 2012 at a meeting chaired by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Mike Penning MP. Regular readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will have little difficulty in guessing the main subject of the discussions at which the interests of East Kent business received a fair hearing.

8. Some Economic Indicators

The CPI annual rate of inflation fell to 4.2% in December 2011, reflecting the fall in energy prices and discounted clothes in the critical pre-Christmas retail sales. To put this in context, in the period from 1989 until 2010, the average UK inflation rate was 2.72% with a peak of 8.50% in April 1991 and a trough of 0.50% in May 2000. Any local store managers with shares in their business will know that volume is not necessarily the best guide to increased margins. The well-worn saying that "Turnover is vanity, profit is sanity" will be familiar to clothing retailers contemplating their trading figures from the last two months. Nevertheless, the Office for National Statistics tells us that we spent £42.1bn in the retail sector in December, considerably more than the £29bn in November 2011 and the £39bn in December the previous year. There is less reason for good cheer in viewing the unemployment figures for December 2011. Thanet again posts the highest unemployment rate in Kent with the

latest figures showing 6.0% of the workforce looking for jobs. Most worrying of all is the rate for youth unemployment which shows a jobless rate in Thanet for 18 to 24 year olds of 14.2%, the highest in the South East and a distinct contrast to the scene in Canterbury where just 3.3% of young people in this age band are registered as unemployed. District unemployment figures for East Kent appear below.

9. How Are We Doing?

Here are the unemployment figures from the Office for National Statistics, culled from the latest publication of the ever-excellent Research & Evaluation team at Kent County Council.

Area	December 2011		Change since Dec 2010	
	Unemployed	% of workforce	Number	%
Ashford	1,934	2.7%	+152	+8.5%
Canterbury	2,451	2.4%	+470	+23.7%
Dover District	2,601	4.0%	+451	+21.0%
Maidstone	2,518	2.6%	+405	+19.2%
Shepway	2,808	4.6%	+346	+14.1%
Swale	3,434	4.1%	+409	+13.5%
Thanet	4,767	6.0%	+693	+17.0%
Kent	36,215	3.4%	+5,022	+16.1%
South East	140,023	2.6%	+12,202	+9.5%
Great Britain	1,509,736	3.9%	+141,426	+10.3%

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10. Hartsdown Lifts Our Hearts Up

Hartsdown Technology College has some answers to youth unemployment with imaginative programmes that engage their students in business. Pete Barnett informs the Chamber that the college is living up to its name. Manufacturing and product design students are currently making an exhibit for display in reception that demonstrates the steering and brake mechanisms on a car. Students at Thanet Skills Studio will be giving the design a thorough test. Progress in film technology from Super 8 to digital light projectors will also be the subject of an exhibit. Retailers are not being ignored. Pete writes that McDonalds has been particularly helpful to Hartsdown students. "Sean Barber, who is the franchisee for two outlets in Dover, discussed various aspects of McDonald's with them, including industry sectors, competitors, how the recession has affected disposable income of families, and how this, in turn, has affected different businesses. In a question and answer session he passed on important advice about preparing for job interviews and he outlined what employers look for in job seekers. He talked about the motivation and enthusiasm to work as among the most critical aspects of what he looks for in potential employees." Many Chamber members will applaud these words. The soft skills of punctuality, being polite to customers and dressing appropriately are much valued by employers.

11. Funding Alert

We are grateful to Cara Thorpe at TVCSF for keeping the Chamber updated on the Kent Big Society Loan Fund targeted at social enterprises in the county. The scheme is funded by Kent County Council (KCC) and managed in partnership with the Kent Community Foundation (KCF). We learned that £3m will be available over three years, with the first £1m allocated to KCF to provide loans from January 2012. KCC will top up the fund by £1m each year until 2014. The deadline for the first round Loan Enquiries is 15th February 2012. Some charities and voluntary bodies may not be overwhelmed by the 4% administration fee which raises the interest rate charged on a typical £30,000 loan over three years to 12.4% APR. Full details are available at http://www.kentcf.org.uk/loan_funding.html.

12. Digital Switch Over

Thanet Community Networks is hosting a useful information session on the Digital TV switchover which will begin in Kent on 20th May 2012. Margate Media Centre will host an information session starting at 1000 hrs on Tuesday, 7th February 2012. The BBC is offering a scheme that provides "full support for to elderly, disabled and disadvantaged people." Our good friends at the Thanet Citizens Advice Bureau will also be on hand to advise individuals on how to reduce their fuel costs. For more information, email cara@tvcsf.org.uk or call in at the Margate Media Centre, 11-13 King Street, Margate, Kent CT9 1DA.

13. Summer Dates

We are grateful to Roger Gabriel of the Kent Economic Board for a list of key dates this summer from the start of the Olympic Torch Relay in May to the closing ceremony of the Paralympics in September.

May	19 th Olympic Torch Relay starts
June	2 nd – 5 th Queens Diamond Jubilee 8 th Start of the European Football Championships in Warsaw 11 th /15 th /19 th June England's matches in the European Football Championships 21 st Opening of the London 2012 festival 25 th Wimbledon Tennis Championships
July	1 st Final of the European Football Championships in Kyiv 7 th – 15 th Big Dance 2012 9 th July – 20 th July Olympic Torch Relay visits South East 27 th Opening Ceremony 28 th – 29 th July Cycling Road Race in Surrey 28 th July – 11 th August Rowing at Eton Dorney
August	1 st August – Time Trial Cycling at Hampton Court Palace 4 th Super Saturday 12 th Closing ceremony 24 th Paralympic torch relay 27 th Light a Lantern festival 28 th – 29 th August 24 hour Paralympic torch relay from Stoke Mandeville to the Olympic Stadium 29 th Paralympics opening ceremony 31 st – 2 nd August/September Rowing at Eton Dorney
September	5 th – 8 th Para Cycling at Brands Hatch 9 th Paralympics closing ceremony

14. Avoidance Before, Evasion Now

We thank Jon Cleverdon of Cleverdons Chartered Accountants for notifying the Chamber of an immediate change in taxation legislation. Remembering for the moment that tax avoidance is a legal initiative that reduces your firm's payments to HM Customs & Excise whereas tax evasion is an illegal measure that could see you face a big fine and a prison sentence, make what you will of the following change in tax liability: "The legislation blocks a tax avoidance scheme involving post-cessation trade relief, after the Government heard of an avoidance scheme that seeks to generate post-cessation trade relief for set-off by users of the scheme against their other income or capital gains." If you are not an accountant and you understand every nuance of that sentence then you probably don't get out as much as you might and you should consider taking up a hobby such as stamp-collecting to bring some relative excitement into your life. For the rest of us, we are happy to leave the explanation to one of the following experts: Acorn Bowman Finance & Investment Management of Broadstairs tel: 01843 609365; J Cleverdon Chartered Accountants of Broadstairs 01843 866599; J W Accountancy Services of Shepherdswell tel: 01304 830229; Kemps Accounting Solutions Ltd of Broadstairs tel: 01843 861188; KJA Bookkeeping Services Ltd of Canterbury freephone: 0800 804 8952; Levicks Chartered Accountants of Broadstairs, Canterbury and Maidstone tel: 01843 862716; Michael Martin Partnership Ltd of Whitstable tel: 01227 770500 and Neville Weston Chartered Certified Accountants of Ramsgate tel: 01843 594571. Advice on pensions is also available from County Financial Services of Birchington, tel: 01843 265070.

15. Venerable Elvis Speaks

Given the current high unemployment in Thanet and the challenge employers throughout the UK are finding in recruiting workers with the right skills, we looked again at the Review of Skills by Lord Leitch published in December 2006 which found that: "In OECD comparisons of 30 countries, the UK lies 17th on low skills, 20th on intermediate and 11th on high skills. 7 million adults lack functional numeracy and 5 million lack functional literacy. 17 million adults lack Level 1 numeracy – equivalent to a low level GCSE. The proportion of people with low or no qualifications is more than double that in Sweden, Japan and Canada." Surely, this has improved in the last five years? When faced with a matter of such national importance, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber traditionally turns to Thanet's resident hermit, the Venerable Elvis. Thought to be at least 230 years old, this wise man lives in a humble dwelling located in the hinterland between the disused power station at Richborough and the abandoned quarry in Manston. His whereabouts are unknown to everyone except our intrepid reporter who always notes carefully the words of wisdom emanating from the great man's lips. Who could forget the Venerable Elvis's comments on the demise of Pfizer and the lack of innovation in the Sandwich pharmaceutical sector? As we recorded in the Thanet & East Kent Insider edition of 6 August 2011, the Venerable Elvis said "I often find that others pinch my ideas, sometimes even before I have thought of them myself." Thus it was with some hope and expectation that one misty morning last week, our reporter took the secret path to the Venerable Elvis's cave and asked him: "Why are we so poor at maths in the UK?" Thanet's esteemed hermit

stroked his long grey beard and said in that thin voice characteristic of many spiritual figures down the ages: "There are ten types of people in this world; those who understand binary and those who do not." We are indeed blessed to have such a wise man in our midst.

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

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Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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