



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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I. Business Networking Breakfast

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber hosted a Business Networking Breakfast at Express By Holiday Inn on Friday 27th January 2012. The largest meeting ever held at this splendid venue heard the latest information on Manston International Airport from its Chief Executive, Charles Buchanan. Following a full and wholesome English breakfast served at table and to warm applause, Sir Roger Gale received the congratulations of the room on his recent knighthood. In typically modest fashion, the Chamber Co-President gave much of the credit for the new prefix to his name to his super secretary wife, Suzy, and to the constituents of all political persuasions that have inspired him since he first came to office in the 1983 general election. It is for others to decide whether life in North Thanet would now be substantially different if his main opponent had won the election 28 years ago. We shall perhaps never know the thoughts of Cherie Blair on Manston Airport but we learned that Sir Roger is a fan of responsible development and sees a bright future if the current proposals by Infratil are accepted. As this was the first Chamber breakfast attended by Cllr Clive Hart since his arrival in office as Leader of Thanet District Council, he was also invited to speak. Cllr Hart welcomed the opportunity to address business leaders with commercial interests in Thanet. He said that he recognised the importance of a flourishing business community. Although he characterised himself as "I suppose I'm centre left in

politics”, he promised to listen carefully to what the company owners are saying and to take this into account in his policies and planning.

2. What Did The Airport CEO Say?

The main speaker was Charles Buchanan, the Chief Executive of Manston Airport, who outlined the plans for the airport expansion which he described as proportionate and reasonable. The parent company Infratil has invested considerable resources into the area creating jobs for locals and custom for suppliers. Around 100 people are currently in employment, but this could expand significantly if the airport could attract an international airline to base three large aircraft at Manston. There are considerable advantages to being the home base for passenger aircraft; most obviously the requirement for an extensive local servicing and supply network. Such an arrangement would produce an expected 15 trips a day to a northern European hub giving passengers from Manston the opportunity to travel all over the world with just one change.

3. What's APD?

Charles outlined the taxes on international travel, known as Air Passenger Duty, which are levied by the UK government and contrasted this with the modest or nil surcharges required by most European governments. There are 22 European countries which have no APD on international flights. We also know that Holland abandoned its air tax scheme after a year as its harmful effects on the Dutch economy were nearly four times greater than the revenue it produced. Some might argue that APD enhances the appeal of Manston since a short hop to a Northern European Airport would attract a much lower rate of APD than a long-haul flight from the Heathrow or Gatwick. Research by the Thanet & East Kent Chamber reveals that a return ticket to Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific Airlines in economy class can currently be purchased for £536.46 of which £351.46 is taken in taxes and surcharges, leaving the airline just £185, around a third of the ticket price.

4. What Does Infratil Want?

Much of the presentation centred on the need to accept the airport's proposals for night flights. An average of fewer than 2 flights per night in the period between 2330 hrs and 0600 hrs should be sufficient to meet the requirements of Infratil and their potential client airlines. An airport has operated at Manston for nearly 100 years and it is fair to assume that anyone who has bought a house in the vicinity since 1915 would have been fully aware of the airport's operational requirements, either as a base for the RAF, for the United States Air Force or for civilian flights.

5. What's All This About Parsons Brinkerhoff?

Thanet District Council had commissioned an independent report from Parsons Brinkerhoff, a US-based project management firm, owned since 2009 by Balfour Beatty. Entitled "Validation report on documents submitted by Manston International Airport relating to a proposed night-flying policy", the report comments on the proposals submitted by Infratil to Thanet District Council on 27th October 2011. Despite media reports to the contrary, Charles Buchanan explained that Parsons Brinkerhoff's conclusions largely supported the independent report he had submitted from York Aviation. Quotations from Parsons Brinkerhoff's text such as "Overall we are satisfied with the approach and values used

for the aviation / operational aspects of the proposed policy”, “The arguments with regard to the wider economic impact are robust”, “The overall approach conforms to what we would consider ‘industry standard’ for an economic impact assessment” and “The applicant has presented a substantive noise assessment to underpin their night noise policy, and at first glance this seems to tick all the right boxes” do indeed back that conclusion. Charles Buchanan accepted that at this stage it might be difficult to estimate the exact number of jobs created by the development of the airport, but even if the final total fell short of the 3,000 claimed, it would still be a large enough number to have a significant impact on the depressed economy of Thanet. Regular readers will recall that youth unemployment in Thanet is currently the highest on the South East.

6. What Did The Other Delegates Say?

The audience consisting of some of East Kent leading business figures was understandably supportive of the airport’s expansion. Contributions from Thorley Taverns, Sota Solutions and Flambeau Europlast all confirmed the boost to business that improved air links are expected to bring. Invited to comment further, Cllr Hart said that the following week he would be introducing a consultation scheme that was “reasonable, proportionate and appropriate” in contrast to the monstrous process costing £50,000 that his predecessor, Cllr Bob Bayford had bequeathed his administration. Responding to these remarks, the recently ousted Leader of Thanet District Council, Cllr Bob Bayford, said that his administration had considered that the people of Thanet deserved a full 12-week consultation from an independent and reputable market research company and that Cllr Hart’s plans would produce a less representative and therefore less democratic result.

7. Have Your Say On Manston

We know some of the details of the consultation which has now been launched and will be open until Friday 2nd March 2012. Thanet District Council invites “all members of the public as well as Town and Parish Councils, Chambers of Commerce, Community and Residents Associations and Special Interest Groups established in Thanet” to submit their views. This should be done either by email to consultation@thanet.gov.uk or by letter to Consultation, Thanet District Council, PO Box 9, Margate, CT9 1XZ. In order to be considered, all communications must include the writer’s full name and address with the postcode clearly marked. The council has declared that the interpretation of the responses to the consultation will carry “a strong weighting for the opinions of those directly affected by the proposals”.

8. Has the Pfizer Site Been Sold?

At the end of the Business Networking Breakfast, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber made the first public announcement concerning the sale of part of the Pfizer estate at Sandwich. With the assistance of the Chamber, local businessman Tony Harrison has purchased the Pfizer Sports & Social Club. Located on a 17 acre site at Richborough, these magnificent sports and leisure facilities already include four football pitches, a cricket pitch, a bowls lawn, tennis courts, a large indoor sports hall, squash courts, fitness centre, games room, al fresco eating area and changing facilities that would not disgrace a five-star hotel. Discussions are taking place to develop further facilities including a swimming pool and Golf Academy. It is expected that up to 75 jobs will be created. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is co-operating with the new owner on establishing a list of quality suppliers. Readers will recall that Thanet District Council rejected the plans for a Golf Academy at Manston on the basis that the warehouse in which it was to be based should be made available for one of the many industrial tenants looking for premises. The Chamber appeared before Thanet

District Council's planning committee on 25th July 2011 and stated that if the council refused planning permission: "it would be a difficult task to explain to the television networks and the press why our council prefers an empty shed to a thriving golf academy". That difficulty remains. The former Pfizer Sports & Social Club is located in the Dover District where a more business-friendly regime operates. The warehouse at Manston is still empty.

9. A Question Of Image

The Chamber is blessed with a gifted official photographer who has made her images available on-line. Anyone who came to the Chamber Business Networking Breakfast described above, attended the pre-launch of the former Pfizer Sports & Social Club or played in one of our recent golf tournaments will be interested to see if their picture appears on the website. To see if you number among the 1517 photographs on display, see <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/DDCC>. All the high quality images are available for purchase either as standard prints or in various exotic formats such as Valentine Day Gifts, chocolate boxes, iphone cases, jigsaws and fridge magnets. There is even an option to have you or your staff pictured on a cuddly teddy bear.

10. The Chamber & The Media

Thanet & East Kent Chamber has featured heavily in the local, regional and national media in the last ten days. Chamber policy is to support the interests of our members in every way possible. Our good friends at BBC South East and ITV Meridian both featured the Chamber's comments on matters relating to Pfizer in their main news broadcasts on 27th January 2012. The previous Wednesday, BBC Radio Kent had hosted a debate between the Chamber and a Phil Rose of the No Night Flights Group which later that morning furnished the material for a phone in which presenter Julia George declared had attracted more calls than any she could ever remember. Our support for the efforts to market the Discovery Park to London & Metropolitan complemented those of Chamber Co-President Laura Sandys MP in the ITV Meridian broadcast still available for viewing at <http://www.itv.com/meridian-east/pfixer-site-sale71581>. This item includes shots of the former Pfizer Sports & Social Club and its new owner together with Chamber members invited to the pre-launch.

11. Bay View Restaurant

Karen Evans of Thanet College has contacted the Chamber with news of the new menus available every weekday except Wednesdays from the Bay View Restaurant located on the main campus in Ramsgate Road, Broadstairs. Business lunches are on offer from £9.75 and a Table D'Hôte, which even without its circumflex accent (Table d'hôte) must be good value at £11.25 for three courses. The famous Thursday gourmet nights will be sprinkled throughout the year as will themed evenings. For more details or to make a reservation, contact the Bay View Restaurant direct by email to restaurant@thanet.ac.uk or via the main switchboard, tel: 01843 605030.

12. Games Greeters 2012

Maxim PR has contacted the Chamber with news from Visit Kent and Kent County Council about the 300 places available for volunteers to help with the London 2012 Olympics. Games Time Kent Greeters are needed to provide support and advice to residents and visitors in the period from 17th July to 9th September 2012. They will be involved

along the route of the Torch Relay, special events and overnight stops at Dover and Maidstone, and at key transport hubs in Dover, Ebbsfleet and Sevenoaks during the Olympics and Paralympics. If you are over 18 years old with an overriding enthusiasm for the Games, the county and meeting new people, you are invited to apply. No specific skills or qualifications are required and full customer service training will be given including access to an online Welcome to Kent training programme. In return for volunteering, Games Time Kent Greeters will receive free travel and refreshments, an official 2012 uniform, a backpack and a souvenir 2012 pin badge. The supremely efficient Chief Executive of Visit Kent, Sandra Matthews-Marsh, is quoted as saying: "This is a tremendous opportunity to play a significant role in the greatest sporting spectacular in the world – helping Kent people and our visitors capture all the excitement of the Games." Any interested parties may try and find a library which is still open to collect an application form or go on-line to www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/gamestimegreeters or easier still, complete and return the form attached to this edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider.

13. Contrasts in Football

Our attention has been drawn to an article in the Washington Post concerning the son of the President of Equatorial New Guinea, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue. The US Justice Department followed closely the purchases of the dictator's son who allegedly bought a USD 6.6 million house in Los Angeles in 2001 followed by eight Ferraris, seven Rolls-Royces, four Mercedes-Benzes, two Lamborghinis, a Porsche, an Aston Martin and a Maserati. Not content with his new toys, in 2005 he bought two high-performance racing boats costing USD 2 million and the following year a USD 38 million Gulfstream G-V jet. US government lawyers stated that his wealth was "inconsistent with his salary". Last month, the BBC reported that the same Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue promised to pay the Equatorial Guinea's team at the Nations Cup USD 1 million if it won its first match against Libya. The team duly obliged with a late goal three minutes before the end of the match. Regular readers will know that this publication has often featured the progress of the Doncaster Rovers football team to whom the word "languishing" is often applied. Currently, languishing in the relegation zone of the Championship, we understand that none of the team has been promised a million dollar bonus; a meat pie and two woodbines if they lose by fewer than three goals may be closer to the mark. Elevated to the second tier of the Football league in 1901, Doncaster Rovers achieved a respectable 7th place at the end of that first season. This has been the height of the club's achievement and has been unmatched since. The moderate success of that initial foray clearly induced an overweening confidence from which the club has never recovered. The low point was reached in 2005 when the then chairman, Ken Richardson was arrested and eventually jailed for hiring three men to burn down the club stadium. Detectives described the then Doncaster Rovers Chairman as "the type that would trample a two-year-old child to pick up a 2p bit". Ever since, supporters arriving at the turnstiles for home matches have been especially careful not to let drop any change.

14. Turner and the Elements

If there is anyone in Kent who has not heard of the Turner & The Elements exhibition at the Turner Contemporary in Margate? If so, those beleaguered individuals should their head in shame. This magnificent collection of some of Britain's greatest artist's finest works is available with free entrance until 13th May 2012. Joseph Mallord William Turner died in 1851, twenty-three years before the first Impressionists Exhibition in Paris. Such is the power that Turner's works continue to exert on the artistic mind, that even respected critics like Alistair Sooke, Deputy Art Critic of the Daily

Telegraph, can be bamboozled into imprecision. He wrote in the Review section of the Daily Telegraph on 28th January 2012: “A dramatic new exhibition at Turner Contemporary in Margate, where the artist stayed with his mistress during the 1830s”. This may come as something of surprise to Chamber members who will know that the Turner Contemporary gallery didn’t open for business until April 2010. The deputy art critic of the Daily Telegraph will need to be a little more precise with his phrasing if he wants the top staff job, but Alastair Sooke did get it right in describing Turner as “the father of modern landscape painting”. Chamber member David Batten of Ramsgate knows how to direct his energies with efficiency. His letter to the Times published on 1st February 2012 rightly remonstrates with the paper’s Rachel Campbell-Johnston’s casual dismissal of Margate’s best-ever art offerings. As the redoubtable head of Auditel (UK) Ltd put it: “Rachel Campbell-Johnston misses the point when she suggests seeing the Turners in the Tate in London rather than the Margate Contemporary. Turner was inspired by the cloudy skies of Thanet and especially by the sunsets. Where better to see these beautiful sunsets, seascapes and skies than in their actual location, especially after visiting the exhibition.” Well written, sir. David Batten should expect free drinks from the publicans and café owners of Margate for the next six months at least. Any proprietor reading this and wishing to ensure that their reward should reach the right lips should click on <http://www.itv.com/meridian-east/pfixer-site-sale71581> and fast forward to 02:15 where Mr Batten gives a measured and sober response to the London & Metropolitan news story.

15. The Chamber & BNI

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber was the guest of our good friends at the BNI Viking Chapter last week for a breakfast meeting at the Smugglers Restaurant in Birchington. Many Chamber members will be familiar with the efficient and practised referral systems in operation at the BNI and will know how effective these can be when orchestrated with the professional skill and enthusiasm of Mr Robert French and his team. If the early bird really does catch the worm, there was a large flock present to devastate the local invertebrates at 0600 hrs last Thursday. Responding to the plea to “get there early for networking”, delegates were in fine voice as they passed the names of potential clients to each other. This Chamber welcomes the close co-operation with many BNI chapters in East Kent and looks forward to working together to increase business for all our members.

16. Boost To Local Business

In cooperation with our sister body, the Dover District Chamber of Commerce, this Chamber will be hosting its next Business Networking Breakfast on Friday 2nd March 2012 in Sandwich when the main speaker will be our Chamber Co-President, Laura Sandys MP, who will speak about the latest news on the £40 million Regional Growth Fund earmarked for East Kent and give some guidance on assistance to exporters. Booking details will follow in the next edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider. Exporters will be pleased to know that the Dover and Thanet Chambers are working in close cooperation with the Université François Rabelais de Tours. As part of an official programme, from now until the end of May 2012, the Chambers will benefit from the services of Charlène Mineau who will be assisting our staff with administrative duties as well as helping to promote East Kent companies in France.

17. Exaggeration In Excess

Sports reporters are not renowned for understated and calm accuracy, but there are limits. The BBC is rightly prized worldwide for its independent journalism and objective coverage. When it comes to reporting on sports, that

reputation is sometimes threatened through the passionate enthusiasm of its commentators. Thus, it was perhaps not surprising that the BBC's commentator on the International Athletics match on Saturday 28th January 2012 should greet the win by England's finest with the words; "Kwakyee wins it by a mile". A mile is of course 1,760 yards in old money or 1,609.34 metres for those youngsters more familiar with metric currency. A win by a mile is unlikely in any international athletic contest but may be just possible in a marathon or a long distance race. Paul Dickinson was speaking from Kelvin Hall in Scotland about an indoor 60 metre race. It does not require any great skills in arithmetic to calculate that for the lovely Jeanette Kwakyee to win by a mile, the other competitors must have started over 1549 metres behind the start line and to have remained motionless at the gun. Perhaps the other runners got caught on the wrong side of Glasgow's busy Argyle Street. The real answer is of course that the commentator is guilty of misleading hyperbole above and beyond the call of duty. If the same loose standards were applied to other broadcasting departments it could be more than misleading. Imagine if at the next General Election, Jeremy Paxton were to declare on Newsnight that the Monster Raving Looney Party is set to win a thousand seats or that this country was in debt to the tune of one thousand million pounds sterling. Apologies for that last comment about our debt because a trillion pounds is indeed the size of our current national deficit. We understand from our good friends at the BBC that the ever-excellent Katherine Downes will shortly be leaving BBC South East to join the sports reporters based at the new HQ at BBC Manchester to cover the local area and the London Olympics. After wiping away our tears at this sad loss to our region, we can at least expect a sharp improvement in sports reporting. Thus, we may not need to repeat our complaints about hyperbole. It is always easy to see the sins in others, but there is a limit. After all, we must have asked the BBC a billion times not to exaggerate.

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