



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

14th April 2012 Issue No.: 184

1. New Jobs, More Opportunities, Hovercraft Demo

Next Friday, the BayPoint Club on the site of the former Pfizer Sports & Social Club will be announcing details of the first phase of its development programme. Within the next few months, the BayPoint Club will have in place a new 72-station gym incorporating the very latest technology together with a variety of new facilities for corporate clients, families and sports enthusiasts. The second phase of development envisages capital spending of around £5 million and will require the services and products of a wide range of local suppliers. Thanet & East Kent Chamber members are invited to a free briefing at 1000 hrs on Friday 20th April 2012 to be followed by a hovercraft demonstration on the extensive estate behind the club. To register your attendance, please email davidfoley@tekc.co.uk before 1730 hrs on Tuesday 17th April with the subject line "BayPoint Club Briefing" and receive prompt confirmation with further details.

2. Regional Growth Fund

We are grateful to our Chamber Co-President, Laura Sandys MP, for informing us of the latest developments about the Regional Growth Fund. The Directors of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber have been invited to a briefing on 27th April 2012 by the Leader of Kent County Council, Paul Carter, who will announce more details about the "Expansion East Kent Regional Growth Fund", as it is now called. Members will recall from previous editions of the Thanet & East Kent Insider that £5 million of the original £40 million has been allocated to improving the rail link between Ashford and Ramsgate. We will update Chamber members on the on the details at the first opportunity.

3. Turner One Year On

Monday, 16th April 2012 will mark twelve months exactly since the opening of the Turner Contemporary on Margate's sea front. Whatever your views on modern architecture, the news that over 400,000 visitors have passed through the doors provides a fine riposte to the critics who tended to voice their discontent with life in general along the lines of: "It will never be built. If it is built, it will never attract 150,000 visitors in year one. If it does attract 150,000 visitors, they won't spend any money. If they do spend their money, it will probably rain every day". It is unfortunate perhaps that it has not rained enough in East Kent, but few can doubt that Chamber member Turner Contemporary has made a significant contribution. Not only has Margate Old Town been buzzing with visitors in a fashion unprecedented since the closure of Dreamland, but the image of Margate in the national and international media has undoubtedly improved and is improving. The Independent gave some initial grudging approval: "... that Turner Contemporary's opening show opens with a Turner may fill you with apprehension. Happily, it needn't." [Independent, 24th April 2011] More recently, the national press has acknowledged the truth that an art gallery in Margate can in fact work. "The Turner Contemporary gallery has at times been overwhelmed by its own success" [Guardian, 28th February 2012]. Congratulations to Victoria Pomery and her team who, like many newly-promoted football teams, will be hard-pressed to match the success of their first year.

4. Beware Of Imitations

News has reached the Chamber of someone telephoning local companies purporting to be "the Chamber of Commerce for Thanet". Chamber members will be aware that the largest business support organisation in the district is the Thanet & East Kent Chamber and we are proud to serve business of all sizes in Thanet. We maintain excellent relations with the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors, the BNI, town Chambers in Sandwich, Deal and Broadstairs, Kent Invicta Chamber based in Ashford and of course our sister Chamber the Dover District Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1850. None of these reputable bodies would ever attempt to pass themselves off as being the Chamber of Commerce for Thanet. If you receive unsolicited nuisance calls, please let us know and we will take the appropriate action. You might also consider registering with the Telephone Preference Service, see www.tpsonline.org.uk, which after a period of 28 days would make such calls illegal.

5. Parking Charges

We agree with Thanet District Council Leader, Clive Hart, that the new car parking charges in Thanet are "fairer and easier for everyone to understand" [TDC 20 March 2012], but along with our good friends at the Federation of Small Businesses, we remain concerned at the impact of parking charges on our High Streets. In the absence of a Park & Ride scheme in the East Kent coastal business community, traders in Margate, Ramsgate, Cliftonville and Broadstairs must look with envy at Birchington where the first thirty minutes of on-street parking is free. You would have to have avoided all local newspapers recently and every reference to the patron saint of independent shopkeepers, Mary Portas, not to be aware that High Streets are in increasing competition with out-of-town shopping centres where parking is usually free. An authoritative report from government pinpointed another threat to the corner shop last December in its unheralded report on High Street business with the bland statement of fact that: "E-commerce accounted for nearly half of all retail sales growth in the UK between 2003 and 2010" [Understanding High Street Performance, Genecon LLP & Partners, BIS December 2011]. The report by the blessed Mary Portas of the same month also drew attention to the growth in the UK of purchases using a mobile phone. She quoted the Genecon research and in particular the revelation that "We have seen dramatic growth in 'm-commerce' – sales over mobile devices – of more than 500% in the last two years." [The Portas Review, An independent review into the future of our high streets, Mary Portas, 5 December 2011]. It is surely no-coincidence that youth employment in Kent is at its lowest where there is a vibrant retail sector such as in Canterbury (3.5%) and highest where shopkeepers find it more difficult to attract the passing motorist such as Thanet (14.8%), Swale (12.1%), Shepway (10.7%) and Dover (10.6%).

6. Business Advice Clinic

The Chamber's free Business Advice Clinics continue to attract new and established companies anxious to secure impartial and experienced guidance on how to increase their profits and beat the competition. By their very nature, all discussions remain confidential, but it is no secret that the panel drawn from a list that includes a bank manager, lawyer, plc Chief Executive, UK Business of the Year winner, Chartered Accountant, local entrepreneurs and other enlightened private sector professionals has encountered a steady stream of spirited and ambitious business owners who will now be better prepared to survive and prosper in the future. Last month's session was attended by a senior policy advisor from the government's Department for Business Innovation & Skills. Yesterday's panel included a senior manager from Barclays Bank who will return to his office with a better understanding of the financial needs of companies trading in the East Kent coastal business community. To reserve your place at the next Business Advice Clinic, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Business Advice Clinic".

7. Wage Incentives

We are grateful to Anthony March, Jobcentre Plus Partnership Manager, for sending us details of a government scheme to provide wage incentives. As Anthony puts it: "From 2 April 2012 Wage Incentives worth up to £2,275 each will be available for employers who can offer an 18 to 24 year-old from the Government's Work Programme, a job lasting at least 26 weeks. The Wage Incentive will be available if you employ someone for 16 hours or more each week. There will be a part-time rate of £1,137.50 for work between 16 and 29 hours and a full time rate of £2,275 for 30 hours or more. This will be paid 26 weeks after the employee starts work. Small businesses (less than 50 employees) can also claim a part payment 8 weeks after the employee starts work. More details of this scheme are available from Chamber member Avanta. Contact Lauren Watson, tel: 07974318950 or email lauren.watson@tng.uk.com.

8. Apprenticeship Grants

Apprenticeship Grants for employers of 16 to 24 year olds are aimed at helping eligible employers to offer young people employment through the Apprenticeship programme, by providing wage grants to assist employers in recruiting their first apprentice. The sum of £1,500 is available in addition to the training costs of the Apprenticeship framework which are met in full for young people aged 16 to 18 and 50% for those aged 19 to 24. Priority will be given to small and medium sized companies with fewer than 250 employees which are recruiting an apprentice for the first time. Details of the national scheme are available from the National Apprenticeship Service, tel: 08000 150 600. For questions about your particular training needs, contact one of the following Chamber members Profile Development and Training Ltd tel: 01843 609300; Saint John Ambulance tel: 01732 876417; Thanet Community Networks tel: 01843 609686; Training Solutions, Thanet College 01843 605040; Avanta Enterprise Ltd tel: 01843 570250; Canterbury Christ Church University tel: 01227 782196; ISSLLP tel: 01843 822508.

9. Education Reforms

The government has announced plans to reform A-Levels to take more account of the needs of the top universities. In the last few years, lecturers at the UK's highest ranked universities have been finding that their first year undergraduates are not properly prepared for the serious studies that await them. There is general consensus in Higher Education circles that A-levels have become less of a university entrance exam and more of a school leaving certificate. While welcoming a more purposeful examination system, the Chamber shares the concerns of many head teachers that increasing the influence of elite universities may not be entirely beneficial, The National Association of Head Teachers makes the point that reforms should be "a suitable preparation for all universities and not only the Russell Group." School leavers seeking to follow an academic course at a British university should of course be better prepared for the intellectual challenge ahead. Ultimately though, our success as a trading nation depends on all our school leavers being trained to contribute to the success of our companies. The influence of a select group of universities on our A-level curriculum should be balanced with a realistic understanding of the skills and qualities required by employers. We have mentioned before that successful companies in East Kent have difficulty in recruiting school-

leavers who are blessed with the simple virtues of turning up for work on time, being polite to colleagues and customers and wearing the appropriate clothes. There are reasons for high levels of youth unemployment. In restructuring our educational system, we must give due credence to the soft skills required by employers as well as the intellectual rigour demanded by sometimes poorly dressed academics at our elite universities who do not always arrive on time for their classes.

10. What Is “The Russell Group”?

The Russell Group is the name given to the universities who lay claim to “the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector.” The twenty members which expect their graduates’ CVs to be top of the pile are in more or less alphabetical order: University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, University College London, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics & Political Science, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton and University of Warwick. If you interview candidates who have been educated at one of the above universities, you should expect high performance and intellectual ability. You might also want to make sure that they arrive on time and have cleaned their shoes.

11. Kevin Lynes

We make no apology for repeating our press release following the sudden death of Cllr Kevin Lynes. “It was with a profound sense of shock that we learned of the sad and unexpected passing of Cllr Kevin Lynes, a most gifted cabinet member of Kent County Council. Kevin was known to many of us in East Kent as the Chairman of Dover Pride where his skill and diplomacy were very much in evidence in harnessing the competing claims for a new economic direction for Dover. Kevin was also a regular visitor to the Thanet coastal towns in support of projects such as the London Array and the Turner Contemporary. He will be sorely missed as a colleague and friend at the forefront of business support.”

12. Faster Broadband

We have been asked by Thanet District Council to urge local businesses to vote for superfast broadband as part of a campaign to “Make Kent Quicker”. We wholeheartedly support Kent County Council’s initiative to improve the speed of the broadband links available to businesses in the East Kent coastal business community. If you can spare a few moments to support this campaign, please register your vote at www.makekentquicker.com KCC promises to use the information obtained in communicating with “service providers and BDUK to persuade them that there is a business need to invest in upgrading Kent’s Broadband infrastructure in areas of market failure.” This was an issue close to the heart of the late Cllr Kevin Lynes.

13. TV One

One of East Kent’s most successful companies TV One has recruited a new Sales Manager for France, Dominique Giral. We learn from the Margate-based HQ that Dominique will be based in Paris “to enhance the presence of TV One in the market and increase product training for TV One in France.” We wish him every success as he promotes TV One’s multi-award-winning video technology in the Broadcast and Pro AV markets. Inevitably, he will have to visit Margate to familiarise himself with the manufacturing base. We just hope that he does not get so fond of our native Thanet cuisine that he will find it hard to return to the Michelin-starred restaurants of Paris. But we do urge TV One staff to ensure that Dominique becomes fully acquainted with the products of Chamber members Shepherd Neame and Wantsum Brewery. A pint of Wantsum’s Black Prince can be found in many local pubs. Of course, it may not be necessary to inform Dominique that it is named after the eldest son of Edward III who defeated the French at the battles of Battles of Crécy and Poitiers.

I4. Theatre In Action

We are grateful to the Sarah Thorne Theatre Club for updating the Chamber on its community credentials. We understand that in the current year this enterprising, self-sustaining theatre in Broadstairs will host an astonishing number of productions by local bodies including the following: Millers Amateur Dramatic Society, Thanet Light Orchestra, Ellington/Hereson School, Page-Mason School, Sarah Thorne Junior Drama Group, Masque Theatre School, Actors Union Equity Group, Hilderstone Players, Thanet Festival Events, Christmas Youth Classical Concert, KCC Platform Theatre Community Project, Adult Education End of Course event, Sarah Thorne Adult Drama Group, Haddon Dene School, Ramsgate Operatic Society, Minster Players, Broadstairs Dickens Players, Broadstairs Folk Week, Dickens Festival Week, Canterbury Festival and Hilderstone Players. We have learned that paid admissions have increased year-on-year by 25%. We wish Michael-Wheatley-Ward and his team all the best for the Spring and Summer seasons. Is it too early to book for the Puss In Boots Pantomime? Send Michael an email to Michael@sarahthorne-theatreclub.co.uk and you will surely get an answer.

I5. Escape In Broadstairs

We are grateful to Jo Harfleet of Kent Fire & Rescue Service for her account of how a free fire alarm saved the lives of a Broadstairs couple. As Jo put it in an email to the Chamber last Thursday: "A smoke alarm fitted free of charge by Kent Fire and Rescue Service proved its worth after a fire broke out in a Broadstairs home in the early hours of this morning. Two fire engines from Margate were called to the house in Percy Avenue at 2.36am after the elderly couple were woken by their smoke alarm and called the fire service. Watch Manager Mark Fishlock said: 'The homeowners had gone to bed several hours earlier, leaving their open fire burning. Despite having a fire guard, a stray ember flew out setting fire to a rug in their lounge. Luckily the couple had closed the doors before going to bed, which helped prevent the fire from spreading and limited the damage.' Mark added: 'Without the working smoke alarm in their home, the outcome could have been very different. I'd like to urge everyone to get one of these life-saving devices installed and to test it regularly. As this incident shows, smoke alarms can save lives.' Crews wearing breathing apparatus used a hose reel to put the fire out and a positive pressure ventilation fan to clear the house of smoke. A thermal imaging camera was used to check for hidden heat not visible to the eye." Kent Fire and Rescue Service offers safety advice and services, call free on 0800 923 7000 or go to www.3breaths.info. Businesses requiring a bespoke solution to their fire and safety worries are invited to contact Paul Sadd of Safety & Management Solutions, tel: 01843 821406.

I6. All The Fives

Some members have forwarded to the Chamber a text from Facebook that states something along the lines of: "This year, July has 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays and 5 Sundays. This happens once every 823 years. This is called money bags. So, forward this to your friends and money will arrive within 4 days. Based on Chinese Feng Shui" We would like to point out that when Feng Shui was founded over 1,600 years ago, forwarding texts by email was not a noticeable feature of daily life; and if that is not enough to convince you, look at your calendar. July has 5 Fridays much more often than once every 823 years. You will know this if you can remember what you were doing on every Friday in July 1983, 1988, 1994 and 2005. You might also like to look ahead to July 2016 and 2022. One of the first principles of Feng Shui is to avoid dripping water and leaks. The needless outflow of water represents the departure of your wealth. Rather than spend your time with emails in Outlook and Facebook, your outlook and your face might improve if you fix that bath tap or replace your leaking drainpipes. Bearing in mind the shortage of water in these parts and the sharp rise in water charges, the East Kent economy as a whole might benefit from some true Feng Shui applied to our plumbing, roofs and downpipes. The following Chamber members would be pleased to help: Andrews Building Services of Cliftonville tel: 01843 292661; Complete Roofing Contractors Ltd of Broadstairs tel: 01843 602195; Connoisseurs Renovations of Margate tel: 01843 231399; Cutting Edge of Hersden tel: 01227 713720; Dormans Site Salvage of Manston tel:

17. Horses For Courses

Following one of the closest finishes ever in a Grand National earlier today, we received this account from a Chamber member who has a much bigger account in several betting shops in the district. We have our doubts about the story, but we leave it to readers to judge for themselves. As he tells it: "In the leafy suburbs of Sandwich, a horse was idly watching the preparations for a game of cricket between Nelson CC of Ramsgate and Broadstairs Cricket Club. As the Broadstairs captain was walking out to the pitch, the horse walked slowly up to him and said: 'Any prospect of having a game?' Somewhat taken aback by this, the captain said: 'Remarkable. But now you mention it, our opening bat didn't turn up and we are a man short. Do you fancy going in at number 1?' 'That's fine by me, old boy', said the horse and within a matter of minutes he was taking his stance to face the first ball of the innings. In an astounding feat of batting, the horse scored a boundary with every shot, finishing the over with a resounding six over the pavilion. While the fielders hunted for the ball the horse wandered slowly up the pitch for the customary chat with his batting partner. The captain said in admiration: '28 for nought after the first over, that's the best start we have ever had'. The horse said laconically: 'I didn't quite middle that last six, but I will try harder next time'. After retrieving the ball, Nelson CC's demon seam bowler thought he would try his luck against the Broadstairs captain and duly ran up to the bowling crease. His first ball moved slightly in the air and off the pitch but the captain managed to get an edge and ran for a single. The horse did not shift from its crease and the captain was obliged to retreat rather humiliatingly back to his wicket. When the ball was dead, the captain strolled over to the horse and said: 'What's that all about then? Why didn't you run?' The horse looked him firmly in the eye and replied: 'Look mate. If I could run, do you think I would be messing about with a silly game of cricket?'"

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