



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

22nd September 2012 Issue No.: 194

I. Renewable Profits, Renewable Energy

On Friday, 19th October 2012, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber will be welcoming a group of French companies eager to establish links with firms in East Kent. The day will begin at 1040 hrs with a welcome followed by formal presentations, lunch and networking sessions and is scheduled to end at around 1530 hrs. The French delegation of 18 will feature key decision-makers from forward-looking companies in Northern France plus officials representing over 600 French firms with commercial interests in the UK. The sessions represent an ideal opportunity to explore new markets in the following sectors: renewable energy, maritime services, security systems, fire protection, offshore maintenance, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, logistics & transport, buildings maintenance, warehousing, commercial property, industrial equipment and business research. The price of £20 for Chamber members includes a buffet lunch and refreshments at the Sandwich venue. To reserve your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Renewable Profits 19 October 2012".

2. Do I Have To Speak French To Attend?

In common with most senior figures in French business, our visiting delegates speak English. Interpreters will be available if required, but we expect that they will probably not be necessary unless there are particularly technical terms to be discussed. There will be ample time to meet fellow managers, directors and company owners from East Kent. We expect the day to provide a valuable opportunity to generate new business.

3. Media Watch

The Chamber has again been featured in the press, on television and on the radio in support of members and their commercial interests. The overwhelming backing of members for the development of Manston Airport was reflected in the ITV Meridian News broadcast available at <http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2012-09-04/could-reshuffle-indicate-expansion-at-manston/> Click on the title “What future for Kent’s airports?” and fast forward to 1:55.

4. Village Shop Wanted

The East Kent Business Advice Clinic operated by the Thanet & East Kent Chamber in liaison with the Dover District Chamber of Commerce has been approached by an investor looking to buy a village shop in East Kent, ideally with a Post Office; but all options will be considered. Any readers with news of a suitable property for sale or lease are invited to send details to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Village Shop For Sale”.

5. Commercial Energy Costs

We are grateful to Martyn Young of Zero Trace Procurement, tel: 01227 475506, for his expert commentary on power and gas prices which he summarises as “We may start to see some seasonal increases, but nothing dramatic.” Despite a 7% rise last month, contract prices for power are still cheaper than a year ago, The front month contract price for gas rose by twice the annual UK inflation rate in August alone suggesting that commercial gas users might have to tighten their belts, although the annual increase remains steady at 7%. Sustained rises in oil prices reflect increasing demand from a recovering US economy supported by uncertainty in Iran and reductions in supply from the North Sea. Prices for Brent Crude Oil rose by around 18% in the two months from 1st July to 31st August 2012. Our good friends at E.ON provided the data for the table below.

6. The Facts About Energy Costs

| Supply | Year Aug 2011 - Aug 2012 | | Month August 2012 |
|--|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Average front month power contract price | 11% lower | | 7% higher |
| Average front month gas contract price | 7% higher | | 5% higher |
| Average front month oil contract price | 2% higher | | 8% higher |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| Average Oct'12 Annualised power price | 14% lower | Aug'12 | 6% higher |
| Average Oct'12 Annualised gas price | 11% lower | Aug'12 | 3% higher |

7. Active Listening Boosts Margins

Following his previous contributions to the Thanet & East Kent Insider, Philip Tilston of chamber member Polylink Solutions, tel: 07875 924191, has now submitted the sixth in his series of management advice texts. Entitled simply “Listening”, Phil gives us his view of the commercial advantages of being an active listener. The wisdom of the ages is apparent in Phil’s conclusion, which quotes an equation about our ears and mouth that is often attributed to Epictetus (55 –135 AD), who also gave us “Keep silence for the most part, and speak only when you must, and then briefly.” Epictetus had a point and so does Phil, who tells us: “Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another. A critical component for effective communication is listening. Yes, listening as opposed to merely hearing. This is easier said than done. People speak at 100-175 words per minute but are capable of listening intelligently at 600-800 words per minute. As a result, it is easy for part of our minds to drift while others speak and believe that we really are listening. Active listening however involves listening for the content of the message, listening for the feelings of the speaker, watching the speaker’s body language, understanding the speaker’s point of view and replaying back to the speaker your understanding of what he said. This requires your full concentration. For example you should not be thinking about what you will say when the person before you finishes speaking, as that will detract from your listening. Replaying back to the speaker your understanding of what he has said ensures that there is a consistency of understanding between you. This is especially important when dealing with employees at remote locations or people of different cultures. That overseas customer you have been trying to secure may have a different understanding of what you each agreed. Be aware of any bias or pre-set positions you have, we all have them and being aware will help prevent them from becoming obstacles. Try the steps above in one or two meetings and you will be surprised at the difference. Remember also that we have one mouth and two ears; they should be used in that proportion.” Thank you, Philip. All advice gratefully received.

8. Speak Less, Sell More

If we are to promote our East Kent businesses, we need to sell more. Successful sales staff know that they should tailor their presentations to the needs of their customers. As Philip Tilston has indicated above and as any car showroom sales person knows, it is not wise to lecture full blast the first customers who walk through the door in the morning. Rather than regale them with stories of how wonderful the used cars are, a successful seller will begin with some open questions such as: “Is the car for work or leisure?” “Are you looking for a hatchback or a two door?” “Do you prefer petrol or diesel?” Carefully avoiding any questions that might produce a “no” in the response, the high achieving sales person will allow the customer to speak at length and enjoy the vast majority of the dialogue. When the customer has finished his detailed account of the difficulties in convincing his mother-in-law that a 1956 Bentley would not fit in his garage, the seller might say: “We have one model

that matches your needs. It has a 1.6 litre engine which will give you a comfortable drive on the motorway when you go to your monthly meeting in Birmingham. It has a petrol engine which you prefer. It is an automatic as you wanted. It has completed just 5,475 miles, well under the 10,000 you stipulated. It is blue, your wife's favourite colour, and the interior upholstery is in black, which your mother-in-law said she liked on the Bentley. It is within your budget at £8,495. Let's take a test drive now in the Renault Clio Expression 1.6VVT which is parked on our forecourt." Reducing your sales patter to the key decision-based issues is a mark of the star salesman as well as the star actor. Michael Caine revealed one of the secrets of success on the BBC Breakfast With Frost Show in 2000 when he related a brief conversation on his first visit to Hollywood many years previously when he had met John Wayne in the lobby of a Beverly Hills hotel. With his helicopter parked outside and a large black cowboy Stetson on his head, Hollywood's all-time top money-making star said: "Now listen, if you want to be a big star, talk low, talk slow and don't say too much". This must be good advice to any sales person, although the Stetson is optional. Anyone interested in the Renault described above should contact DP Lead & Sons, tel: 01304 824155, where the vehicle is available for sale at their premises in River, Dover Kent CT16 3AB. Other Chamber members in the motor trade with a reputation for quality sales include BSB (GB) Ltd of St Peters tel: 01943 604955; East Kent Components of Dover tel: 01304 204697; Kent Car Craft of Broadstairs tel: 01843 587376; Lakeside Commercials of Sandwich tel: 01304 620318; Land Rover Solutions of Canterbury tel: 01227 719191; RP Greaves of Dover tel: 01304 205427 and Walmer Adamson Motors of Deal tel: 01304 381300.

9. East Kent Funding Fair

Chamber member Thanet Community Networks has kindly forwarded details of the Moneywise: 2012 East Kent Funding Fair to be held at St George's C of E Foundation School on Friday 26th October 2012. Among the speakers will be the Chamber Co-President, Laura Sandys MP, and Kate Sawdy of the Big Lottery Fund. Aimed at the voluntary sector in East Kent, delegates will hear of the many funding opportunities available and will receive guidance on a wide range of third sector issues. Tickets cost £10 and are available from the website at <http://www.thanetcommunitynetworks.org.uk/forthcoming-events-training/>.

10. Planning Rules To Be Relaxed

Unnecessary red tape received some sharp criticism from Local Government Secretary, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP earlier this month when he announced a series of measures "to support locally-led sustainable development". Chamber members will recall that Kent County Council Leader Cllr Paul Carter has often commented that 25 years ago just two certificates were required before building work could commence. Today there are at least 25 official permissions required, which inevitably discourages investors to build or renovate premises at a time when construction is sorely needed to get the property market moving. Eric Pickles has stated that the National Planning Policy Framework published by the government last March reduced the government's central planning guidance "from 1,000 pages to just 50". He has acknowledged that complex developments take time to bring to

fruition and he is extending the planning permission for such projects. Not everyone welcomes the proposed changes which Eric Pickles claims are targeted at recalcitrant local authorities that delay development to the detriment of the local economy. Hilary Benn MP, the Shadow Communities Secretary, addressed the National Housing Federation conference in Birmingham last week and pointed to the 400,000 houses that already have planning permission but have yet to be built. Businesses in East Kent will be hoping that planning reforms will bring developments at Farthingloe, Western Heights and Manston a step closer. Make up your own mind by listening to Eric Pickles at http://news.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/hi/house_of_commons/newsid_9749000/9749366.stm

11. Kent Breakfast

We are grateful to Andy Rayfield of Chamber member Maxim PR, tel: 01892 513033, for drawing our attention to the breakfast meeting sponsored by Visit Kent and Produced in Kent scheduled for Wednesday, 24th October 2012 at Penshurst Place and for 14th November 2012 at Brogdale, near Faversham. Hotels, B&Bs, pubs, cafes and any Kent business serving breakfasts will be invited to join a new scheme aimed at promoting the county's produce. The aim is to "encourage the breakfast makers of the county to ensure that at least 60% of the ingredients used are sourced from within Kent." The campaign is funded by Defra's Rural Development Programme for England. For more details, see <http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/index/training-support/kent-breakfast/> or telephone Ruth Wood at Visit Kent, tel: 01227 812900. As the initiative is supported by Kent Downs and Marshes, we might expect lamb chops to become a new Kent breakfast favourite.

12. Thanet Strategy For Economic Growth

Thanet District Council (TDC) has drafted a strategy for economic growth in the district. The Chamber is preparing a submission on behalf of companies in Thanet and is liaising with members accordingly. Members may submit their views to the Chamber by email in confidence to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line: "TDC Strategy". The full text of the draft strategy can be found on the website at http://www.thanet.gov.uk/business/regeneration/thanet_regeneration_board/strategy_for_economic_growth.aspx where there is also the opportunity to send your response direct to TDC on or before 19th October 2012. The Chamber welcomes this initiative. As the largest business support organisation in the district, we look forward to working with TDC to develop a more favourable climate for businesses trading in East Kent.

13. KCC Budget Proposals

We are grateful to Anne Charman, of Kent County Council, for drawing our attention to the KCC draft budget for 2013/2014 which is available on the website at http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/council_spending/budget_consultation.aspx. Introduced by KCC Leader Paul Carter in a video clip, the budget takes into account a reduction in expenditure of £300 million in the three years to 31 March 2013 which perhaps

explains the title of “Facing the challenge”. Responses to the draft will be welcomed up until the deadline of 1st November 2012.

14. Household Waste Changes

KCC completed its survey of views on Household Waste Recycling Centres in Kent earlier this year. As a result, new operating procedures will come into force from 1st October 2012. Respondents to the KCC survey numbered 3,499; 1,400 of these were on paper, 2,056 were received on-line and 43 detailed submissions were sent from councils, contractors and other agencies. Top of the list of concerns in Kent was fly-tipping, as the following chart shows.

- **Customer response summary:**

| Theme of comments | Number of online comments | Number of paper comments | Total number of comments | Most popular comments - ranked |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Materials will be flytipped | 377 | 169 | 546 | 1 |
| Believe these materials are generated by householders and they have a need for HWRCs to accept them | 278 | 81 | 359 | 2 |
| Customers want a 1-stop shop for all materials and convenience of service | 106 | 32 | 138 | 3 |
| Lack of information about alternative disposal points | 87 | 36 | 123 | 4 |
| Increased cost to councils for removal of flytipping | 35 | 8 | 43 | 5 |
| Risk of hazardous waste being disposed of inappropriately | 24 | 19 | 43 | 5 |

[See page 26, *Household Waste Recycling Centres: Public Consultation Report; KCC April 2012*]

The decision to close the Waste Recycling plants at Richborough and Hawkinge was confirmed in March 2012, despite some spirited local opposition. Other measures that will be in operation from next month include a £5 charge for accepting a maximum of two car tyres at specified centres, construction waste not to exceed “one average car boot load per visit” or 90 kgs, no commercial vehicles, vans or horse boxes to be allowed in the centres and trailers limited to 1m³ capacity. There are special arrangements for the disabled. A useful list of Frequently Asked Questions is available at http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/recycling_and_rubbish/ways_to_recycle/waste_and_recycling_centres/operating_policies/frequently_asked_questions.aspx. This guide also gives the dates for the temporary closure of the Herne Bay and Ashford Waste Recycling Centres.

15. What Can I Do With Commercial Waste Now?

The reforms to household waste disposal centres have been designed to prevent their use by traders masquerading as householders, which explains why vans will no longer be allowed to enter the sites. Flytipping can attract a fine of up £50,000 with a 5 year term of imprisonment for serious abusers. There is a simple solution to the disposal of commercial waste and that is to use fully licensed waste management companies in East Kent which are experts at providing legal, cost-effective strategies. You may even find that your waste has a commercial value. For more details, contact one or more of the following specialists: TW

Services of Sandwich tel: 01843 821500; MPL Waste Management of Margate tel: 01843 232584; Clearers South East of Aylesham tel: 01304 840283 and Brazil Brothers of Broadstairs tel: 01843 864162. These companies have a comprehensive range of complementary services. For instance, Brazil Brothers offers tree surgery and garden care.

16. Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage was introduced on 1 April 1999 at a rate for adults of £3.60 per hour. It currently stands at £6.08 per hour but will rise next month by 11p per hour. Company directors, volunteers, prisoners, monks and nuns fall outside the legislation: but for almost anybody else, the National Minimum Wage applies, regardless of what any employment contract might state. There are six criminal offences resulting from non-compliance, which in serious cases can lead to a trial in the Crown Court and a potentially unlimited fine. The new rates applicable from 1st October 2012 are: £6.19 per hour for workers aged 21 years or more; £4.98 per hour for workers aged 18 – 20; £3.68 per hour for workers above school leaving age but under 18 years old; £2.65 per hour for apprentices.

17. Evolution In East Kent

Branded clothing is the mainstay of Jay Sutton's business in Margate. In an email to the Chamber Jay writes that Evolution Branded Clothing is: "A no nonsense type of company. We will help anyone where we can. We aim to deliver a fantastic job using good quality materials, a good turnaround time at a fair price." He puts customer service at the top of his agenda and states: "We work silly hours and have never let a client down". Ably assisted by Joanne Sharp, Jay's services and products include T-shirt printing, Embroidery and Promotional Items. He adds: "We are able to produce badges, stickers, key rings, umbrellas, caps, mugs, towels and bags." Evolution also offers keen prices on a wire binding service and booklet stapling. Numbering the NHS, University of Kent Union, Canterbury College and the Turner Contemporary among his happy customers, Jay is looking to expand into new markets and will doubtlessly want to meet our French visitors on 19th October. To find out more about Evolution Branded Clothing, give Jay a call, telephone 01843 446459. Other Chamber members keen to assist with branded items include Trews Workwear of Ramsgate, telephone 01843 599466, and The Embroidered and Printed Clothing Company of Margate, telephone 01843 209555.

18. Secrets Of The Convent

We are grateful to one Chamber member who has shared her experiences of her early education at a convent school in East Kent. We have our doubts about this story, but we leave it to our readers to judge for themselves. As she put it: "It was quite a strict school. They treated us reasonably well, although we got the occasional slap if we did something that was deemed to be blasphemous or disrespectful to the principal or Mother Superior. In my class there was one spirited girl, Rebecca, who rebelled against the regime at every

opportunity. One of our form teachers, Sister Maria, lived in constant fear of eternal damnation and did her level best to pass that on to us, with little success, especially with Rebecca. One morning, we came down for our mid-morning break in the refectory. For once, Sister Maria was not in her accustomed place near the door with her beady eye on us. Instead, at one end of the long refectory table there was pile of bananas with a note in Sister Maria's handwriting that read: "Take one banana each only. God is watching you." Right at the other end of the table was a selection of chocolate bars that had been left over from the previous day's harvest thanksgiving service. Rebecca was the first to reach these. She picked up three and hid them quickly in her satchel. As we looked at her with reproachful glances, she said: "Take any amount you like. God is watching the bananas."

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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

It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk

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