



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Your Railway, Our Business

The Chamber Business Networking Breakfast on Friday 16th November 2012 featured a detailed account of the facts and figures associated with Southeastern Railway. Vince Lucas, Service Delivery Director, gave an absorbing talk on the background to his company which serves 179 stations over 1,094 miles of track carrying around 570,000 passengers each weekday on around 400 trains. Managing this formidable operation are 3,800 staff. We learned that Southeastern is able to predict income and passenger numbers thanks to a software model closely based on GDP which is correct to within 0.5%; a remarkable accuracy. Questions afterwards concerned the provision of a Parkway Station at Manston, the unfairness to Dover residents and businesses of the High Speed link service stopping at two stations in Folkestone one mile apart and the plans to upgrade the line from Ashford to Ramsgate. We also heard some more details of the Portas Pilot weekend tickets which can be bought online from the Southeastern website and offer an off-peak adult day return journey to Margate from London for £10.00, a considerable saving on the £31.10 it would normally otherwise cost. The scheme runs until Sunday 24th February 2013. There was no seat empty in the packed executive suite at the Holiday Inn Express near Manston as Vince gave an insight into his rise from humble beginnings in East Ham to a directorship at London & South Eastern Railway Limited where his decisions impact on 3,800 staff and most of the workers and residents in Kent and East Sussex. Hard work, night school and a passion for West Ham United have driven him to the top and we wish him continuing success as he takes the next step in his career next year away from Southeastern and we assume involved in one way or another with the HS2 link from London to Birmingham. Mention must be made of the excellent full English breakfast served at table by the friendly staff at the hotel. Manager Dave Otteson is the master of his domain and welcomes enquiries from Chamber members for accommodation and meeting rooms, tel: 01843 820250.

2. Thanet Air Show

We are pleased to announce that Chamber member AS Associates will be organising the Thanet Air Show to take place on Saturday 22nd June 2013. Among the many attractions expected at Manston are the Battle of Britain Memorial

Flight, the Red Arrows, the Typhoon, the Tornado GR4 and the RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team. There will be static displays and a host of interesting goodies to delight the aviation enthusiasts as well as visiting tourists looking for family day out. The revival of the Manston Air Show should boost in-bound tourism significantly as up to 18,000 visitors are envisaged. More details will follow in later editions.

3. Dover News

The Dover District Chamber of Commerce has announced an addition to its board of directors. With the portfolio of Maritime Sector, new recruit Dr Bill Moses MBE, brings his considerable experience of the ferry industry to his new role at the district's largest business support body. Bill is a well-known and much respected figure in the ferry sector worldwide. A former Group Chief Executive at Sally Line and Managing Director at Hoverspeed, Bill was also responsible for turning round Sealink Ferries in Dover and Folkestone following its privatisation before overseeing its subsequent successful sale. Dover Chamber Chairman Barry Williams said: "Bill's appointment marks a significant development in our support for one of the most important areas of our local economy." Regular readers will know that Dr Moses is the Chairman of Thanet & East Kent Chamber. His new responsibilities will strengthen our links with our sister body in Dover giving a more powerful representation of the East Kent coastal business community.

4. KLM in Manston

This Chamber has consistently supported the development of Manston and we shared the delight of our Chamber Co-President Sir Roger Gale MP when he introduced the senior staff of KLM airline to Canterbury Cathedral Lodge on 13th November 2012. Under the beaming smile of Manston Airport's Chief Executive Charles Buchanan, we received confirmation that KLM will launch twice daily flights from Manston Airport to Amsterdam beginning on 2nd April 2013. Departing at 0635 hrs and 1040 hrs, the new flights will connect to the worldwide KLM/Air France network at Amsterdam Schiphol which currently offers 133 destinations worldwide. We know from the example set by Southend Airport that when the public and private sector combine to support development, the results can lead to significant benefits for workers, residents and the local economy.

5. Isn't Manston Peripheral?

Critics who declare that Manston is too far from London, too far from markets and too far from good transport routes need to catch up with recent infrastructure improvements. This country's first High Speed rail service links nearby Ramsgate with Europe's number one financial centre in London; new dual carriageways now surround Manston. It is well-placed to serve the world's two largest offshore wind farms. The cross-channel ferries from Ramsgate and Dover provide quick and easy access to the UK's largest trading partners. Birmingham and Manchester may be peripheral to the European Union, but East Kent certainly is not.

6. Does This Mean That East Kent Will Take Off?

This news follows closely the announcement of a projected minimum of 3,000 jobs at the Discovery Park in Sandwich making for an excellent few weeks. Given the considerable savings in time and money to local long haul passengers transiting via Amsterdam, there is every reason to suppose that the arrival of KLM in Manston will stimulate employment in East Kent, reduce costs for exporters and boost tourism throughout the county. Positive news on quarterly employment figures, as outlined in detail in the previous edition of the Thanet & East Kent and below, do indeed point to encouraging signs of an economic recovery in East Kent. This Chamber is proud to claim authorship of the phrase "**Kent Loves Manston**" and looks forward to working closely with the national carrier that can fairly claim that it has been operating under its company title longer than any other airline in the world.

7. The Port Of Dover

There has been considerable consternation in Dover at the announcement of the sale by Dover Harbour Board of the Freight Services Agency to Motis Ireland Limited. The Chief Executive of the Port of Dover, Bob Goldfield, claims that "The deal has all been about delivering new opportunities for the business, adding value and securing its long-term future. This has to be good news for staff, our ferry customers, the community and, with the prospect of a lorry park, the county as a whole." Such is not the opinion of large sections of the business community or of the Unite Union. Readers will recall that Dover Harbour Board's plan to sell the port to overseas interests received short shrift from

residents. A poll conducted in March 2011 revealed 97.5% support for the alternative of a community-owned port which certainly did not include selling of parts of the business piecemeal. In an exclusive interview with the Thanet & East Kent Insider, Dover People's Port Trust Chairman Neil Wiggins questioned the legality of this latest manoeuvre by Dover Harbour Board and in a later written statement added: "There appears to have been no tendering process and no effort to ensure best value made by the DHB in securing the privatisation of this part of their undertaking. This latest sale of part of the business follows a pattern set by the DHB over the last few years of outsourcing key functions with little or no regard for local community or other stakeholders."

8. MediaWatch

The Chamber was represented on BBC Radio Kent last Friday when a story emerged of a pawnbroker in Chatham offering its services to businesses looking for short term finance. Click on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p010b6v9> fast forward to 2:09.20. This is available until Thursday 28th November 2012. That there is a need to address temporary cash-flow is beyond dispute. The latest figures from government show that fewer than half the companies in Kent survive five years; the figure for Thanet is 44.3% which marks a distinct improvement on the 39.2% survival rate of a few years previously. We know from many studies by BACS and others that cash flow difficulties are the main cause of UK business failure. Short term finance may sometimes cure the malady, but not when the medicine causes more problems than the illness. Greece is currently suffering the results of borrowing more money than it can pay back. Our companies do not have the option of selling the Acropolis to the Germans. The answer to company cash-flow problems is of course not to let it happen in the first place. Predict and Prevent is infinitely preferable to Find and Fix. Paying loans at high rates is clearly not the answer. Pawnbrokers may not be demanding quite the astronomical returns of some licensed money-lenders. For instance, Wonga is advertising a loan of £265 at an Annual Percentage Rate of 4,212%. This is not a misprint. The small print in the advert states 4,212% (four thousand two hundred and twelve per cent). Our advice to companies with a written note of the telephone number of a pawnbroker or of Wonga is to tear it into tiny pieces and put it through your shredder.

9. What Can I Do Then?

Our advice is to look for a better deal from one of the following: Lloyds TSB Commercial tel: 07725 068956; NatWest Bank 01304 211984; County Financial Services Ltd tel: 01843 265070; Joseph Bevan Partnership tel: 01304 240003; Regency Independent Financial Advisers tel: 01304 213902. Failing that a good accountant can stop is happening again; Cleverdons Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 866599; JHL Accountants Ltd tel: 01304 216296; Kemps Accounting Solutions Ltd tel: 01843 861188; Levicks Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 862716; Neville Weston tel: 01843 594571; Reeves & Co LLP tel: 01227 768231; Spain Brothers tel: 01304 201994; McCabe Ford Williams tel: 01227 373271 and Michael Martin Partnership Ltd tel: 01227 770500. Our East Kent Business Advice Clinic will also give guidance on particular financial needs, email: admin@tekc.co.uk for an appointment. If all else fails, remember the sage advice of the Venerable Elvis as quoted in the Thanet & East Kent Insider of 12th November 2011; "Always borrow from a pessimist, he isn't expecting to be repaid".

10. More Media On Manston

Our good friends at Kent Regional News give a balanced account of KLM's imminent investment in East Kent with an article that quotes the Leader of Thanet District Council, Cllr Clive Hart as well as the Leader of the Opposition, Cllr Bob Bayford, and yet still manages to find space for a few words from the Manston Chief Executive, Charles Buchanan, see <http://www.thisiskent.co.uk/Flights-Manston-Amsterdam-create-28-jobs-Kent/story-17338947-detail/story.html>.

11. Thanet Tourism Awards

Orchestrated in fine style by Johnny Lewis of Academy FM and graced with the presence of Kent's most outstanding tourism chief, Amanda Cottrell, the 2012 Pride in Thanet Tourism Awards at Margate's Winter Gardens brought some much deserved recognition to many Chamber members. Cllr Iris Johnston and Kent County Council's Chris Hespe were among those who paid tribute to all those who had made the most of the opportunities presented by the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the Olympic Torch Relay and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Carol Peters Travel featured again by winning the award for Transport Employee of the Year. BeBeached was rewarded for its growing reputation for service; customers will be fully aware of the delicious home-made dishes on offer at this first port of call

along Margate's Harbour Arm. Quex gained yet another award for Attraction Employee of the Year. It was no surprise that East Kent College won two awards for Hospitality and Tourism Students. It can surely not be long before this pioneering college is acquiring the national esteem and reputation that will surely follow from its innovative investments across a range of courses and not just for catering for which it is still best known outside East Kent.

12. Aviation And The Environment

We are grateful to Paul Twyman of the Kent International Airport Consultative Committee for drawing our attention to the debate in the House of Lords on the Government's Civil Aviation Bill which has now reached the Report Stage where it is open to amendments. Paul tells us that that the record of the proceedings may not interest everybody as it "is not for the casual reader". He is certainly correct. However, if you do have difficulty sleeping and you find it a comfort to read that "(1) The CAA, in carrying out its functions, must have regard to the economic and social impact of services, provided by airport operators and users of airport facilities, on the UK as a whole.(2) In performing its functions under subsection (1) the CAA must evaluate any changes to regulations governing airport operators and prepare a report for the Secretary of State", then you will enjoy the text that will magically appear when you click on "<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldhansrd/text/121107-0001.htm#12110780000569>" but do remember that you have been warned.

12. Regional Growth Fund

If you have been away on a cruise without any access to email or telephones or if you have been asleep for three weeks, perhaps after reading parliamentary reports on the Civil Aviation Bill, you may have missed the many invitations extended to local businesses from Paul Carter, Leader of Kent County Council, to attend the Grow For It presentation at Dover Cruise Terminal 2 on Wednesday, 28th November 2012 at 1830 hrs when the guest speaker will be Doug Richards, a Dragons' Den panellist. The Grow For It campaign is a Kent County Council initiative to "combine a range of London and Kent-based events to raise the region's profile, as well as giving businesses the opportunity to access critical funding support such as KCC's interest-free loans for growing businesses." Five East Kent companies will be unveiled as recipients of the Expansion East Kent interest-free loan scheme funded by the Regional Growth Fund which has £35 million available for companies in the districts of Thanet, Dover, Canterbury and Shepway. This Chamber has been assisting some of the successful applicants and looks forward to sharing their joy during the evening, but unfortunately not their funding.

13. Selling At An Exhibition

One of our Chamber members recently attended an exhibition overseas and asked for some advice on materials for the corporate stand. This local company had noted how some publicly-funded stands were well-provisioned with expensive materials. This Chamber replied: "The publicly-funded stands on these occasions are almost always well-stocked. But, there are areas where you can gain an advantage. Often the assistants on these tax-payer funded stands have no real motivation in promoting the goods or services they are purporting to sell. They hand out expensive brochures and feel they have had a good day's work by the amount of material they have distributed; more so on the last day of an exhibition because they do not want to carry any materials home. The lean, private-sector, owner/manager firms are much more cost-sensitive and as a result more effective. They keep any expensive brochures behind the stand and have a cheap one-page b&w hand-out for casual enquiries. More importantly, rather than sit back and wait for questions, they actively interrogate selected visitors and record their contact details. In other words, if a training manager in a Loden coat passes by, he is interrupted in his passage and addressed directly with a friendly question. Another distinguishing feature of successful private sector exhibitors at such events overseas is that they do not get involved in long-winded conversations with non-commercial visitors who are keen to practise their English or share their prejudices with anyone who will listen. The cost of attending exhibitions is high, not only because of the direct expense of hotel, food, stand and travel, but the cost of being absent from the home base and lost business from other sources." We welcome additional comments from Chamber members with experience of exhibitions so that best practice can benefit more of our East Kent companies.

14. How Are We Doing?

When we reported on unemployment at the beginning of this year, the picture across Kent was uniformly bleak. There were year-on-year annual rises in the number of jobless adults in every district of Kent. With the exception of Dartford

(+2.8%) and Ashford (+7.0%), these were all double-digit increases. East Kent was particularly hard hit with the Dover District recording +20.2%, Canterbury +18.8%, Maidstone +15.3%, Thanet +14.3% and Shepway +10.3%. Since then there has been something of a recovery, with the last quarter's figures showing net job gains in Thanet, Dover and Shepway. The table below reveals an improving economy. If the trend continues, we can expect the annual rates to show job gains across all 12 districts of Kent in the New Year.

	October 2012		Change since Oct 2011	
	Unemployed	% of workforce	Number	%
Thanet District	4,787	6.1%	+217	+4.7%
Canterbury District	2,303	2.3%	-123	-5.1%
Dover District	2,547	3.9%	+142	+5.9%
Maidstone	2,481	2.6%	+23	+0.9%
Shepway	2,639	4.3%	-13	-0.5%
Swale	3,316	3.9%	0	0.0%
Kent	35,034	3.3%	-368	-1.0%
South East	133,835	2.5%	-5,835	-4.2%
Great Britain	1,483,957	3.8%	-18,571	-1.2%

15. Thanet District Council Budget

We are grateful to Louise Askew of Thanet District Council (TDC) for outlining the changes in TDC's budget. Cuts of around 28% in the past two years have made it more important than ever to secure the best deals for residents and workers in the district. Savings of £1.5m in 2012/13 are to be made following a review of staffing levels, sharing services with other local authorities and from efficiency savings. Louise has asked all Chamber members to register their comments either online at http://www.thanet.gov.uk/files/budget_consultation_2013_14.htm, by telephone to 01843 577120, by email to consultation@thanet.gov.uk or in writing by completing a consultation form obtainable from Thanet's Gateway Plus in Cecil Street, Margate), Ramsgate District Office in York Street, Ramsgate or at any public library in the district.

16. Get Your Words Right

Any printing you produce for public consumption tells the world about the standards your company maintains and respects. Getting a professional designer and a good local printer can spare you the agony of seeing your mistakes on 5,000 leaflets or being reminded by a ten year-old schoolboy that you cannot spell accommodation. Rainbow Media of Scotland may suffer this fate by inviting customers to its website where it offers "Stationary design £99.00." We presume that this is for envelopes and letterheads that do not move around very much. If you are looking to get your words or design right first time with printing of your stationery with an 'e', you will be handsomely accommodated by one of the following: Davis Davis Design of Dover and Folkestone tel: 01304 213008; Sticki Media Ltd of Whitstable tel: 01227 638083; Alphabet Signs of Cliftonville tel: 01843 229891; AR Adams & Sons of Dover tel: 01304 211202; Lanes Limited of Broadstairs tel: 01843 861314; Monster Marketing Limited of Ramsgate tel: 01843 853311; Oyster Press of Whitstable tel: 01227 772605; RG Print Ltd of Whitstable tel: 01227 264663; RK Graphics Ltd of Dover tel: 01304 821000; Seaward Color Copy Ltd of Broadstairs tel: 01843 602557; Sharp Printing Services of Broadstairs tel: 01843 600123,

17. Pantomime In Broadstairs

Chamber member Sarah Thorne Theatre Club reminds readers that its pantomime this year will be Puss In Boots. The published dates for the show start on Saturday 22nd December 2012. Manager Michael Wheatley-Ward points out that he welcomes enquiries from special schools, charities and voluntary bodies for groups to attend at special rates in the period Tuesday 18th to Friday 21st December 2012. The theatre will be celebrating its 6th repertory season next summer and offers a number of best-value sponsorship opportunities for local companies. Let's face it, any theatre that can boast Judi Dench and David Suchet as its patrons must have something special about it. For more details, contact Michael at the box office on any weekday between 1000 and 1400 hrs by telephone to 0845 2626263.

18. A Vacant Look While The Penny Dropped

We congratulate Ann Barnes on being elected to the new post of Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent. Since taking the oath on 22nd November 2012, she must have been besieged by requests to visit every part of Kent as well as being expected to solve all crimes still on the books and to prevent those that have yet to happen. This Chamber does not wish to add to her heavy burden, but we would appreciate her views on the following curious incident reported to us. We have our doubts about this story, but we leave it to readers to judge for themselves. "It all happened one dark night last year when the heavy snows hit East Kent, removing all but the bravest and the most foolhardy from our roads. One particular East Kent Police Station had recently been re-equipped. Unfortunately, on the night in question, the snows had prevented the night shift from turning up on site and as a result the police station was left unmanned overnight. The morning shift arrived at 0700 hrs to find the back door had been forced and various items of office equipment had been stolen. Worst of all, all the brand new lavatories had been removed entirely. Ferocious attempts by every officer in the building to trace the thieves proved fruitless. That afternoon, a rather despondent spokesperson reluctantly admitted to the waiting reporters: "We have done our best, but I'm afraid the truth is that we have nothing to go on".

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