



## **Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber**

### **Thanet & East Kent Insider**

**12<sup>th</sup> May 2013 Issue No.: 202**

#### **1. South East Air Show Breakfast**

Our South East Air Show Chamber Business Networking Breakfast will take place in Sandwich on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013. Any company based in East Kent wishing to boost its turnover will have an interest in hearing how it can benefit from the huge number of visitors expected. If you want to know how to influence buyers attending the event, to meet key decision-makers, to promote your products or simply to enjoy the day as a spectator, you should register to attend the breakfast meeting next Friday morning from 0730 hrs to 0900 hrs. Not only will you enjoy a full English breakfast in the company of like-minded managers and ambitious entrepreneurs, but you will hear from the Chamber member organising the event the latest news on the aeroplanes booked, the names of famous people attending and details of how you can access the wallets and credit cards of the 20,000 or so people expected to attend on the day. DAT1 of Westbrook, tel: 01843 835213, has already shown how an ambitious local company can make the most of this marvellous opportunity. If you are free on next Friday morning before the office opens, you can do the same. Booking is essential. The price of £12 for Chamber members includes a full English breakfast with a vegetarian option. To reserve your place, email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line "South East Air Show Breakfast 17 May 2013". There is a limited number of places for non-members. Full details will follow with confirmation.

#### **2. Get a Share of £1.5 Million**

Chamber member the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate is keen to spend its money with other Chamber members. The new dynamic head, Cassie Ellins, is keen to spend the Academy's money with members of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber. As she put it at a recent meeting with the Chamber: "We need to be buying locally. We spend around £1.5 million a year on products and services and we want to spend that with local companies." With this very much in mind, the Chamber is organising a Meet The Buyer Chamber business breakfast on Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013 when Chamber members will have the opportunity to hear how they can access this budget and become a supplier to the Marlowe Academy. The Marlowe Academy operates in close liaison with its sister schools and feeder primaries. Any successful supplier will also be eligible to increase their turnover by accessing the group spend of around £5 million per year. Too good to be true? Come to our business breakfast on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013 from 0730 hrs to 0900 hrs in Ramsgate and find out for yourself. Booking is essential. Full details will follow with confirmation. There will be plenty of time for networking. The price of £12 for Chamber members includes a full English breakfast with a vegetarian option. To reserve your place, email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line "Get a Share of £1.5 million".

### **3. Change to Win**

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 2013, the Chamber hosted a Change To Win business networking breakfast at the Walpole Bay Hotel, Cliftonville. Chamber members heard from two pioneering speakers. First on the podium was Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, Finance Director of Hadlow College. "My philosophy has always been not to think like everyone else and to break preconceptions". These were qualities that were sorely needed in 2002 when he first looked at the books of Hadlow College. Faced with closure, police investigations for financial irregularities, a falling student roll and an IT department managed by a lecturer in fruit, Hadlow was on its last legs. Urgent action and successive 60 hour weeks prevented its immediate closure and Mark took a well-earned holiday to celebrate. On his return, he found that in his absence all the college's reserves had disappeared. "Around £1 million in VAT and professional fees had been forgotten". Mark outlined to Chamber members the strict financial and cultural measures he introduced to stabilize and finally expand the business. From being one of the worst colleges in the country, in 2010 Hadlow achieved "outstanding" status in its Ofsted report. A £500,000 loss has been turned into a £500,000 surplus, acreage has increased 400%, reserves have risen to £13 million and annual turnover has soared to £17 million. Mark's work has won numerous accolades including the prestigious Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales 'Finance for the Future Award' for 2012. Hadlow College certainly changed and it certainly won.

### **4. Who Was The Second Speaker?**

Our second speaker was Neil Wiggins who is the Chairman and driving force behind Dover People's Port Trust. Neil gave a brief history of the port of Dover and the likelihood three years ago of Britain's busiest passenger port being sold to overseas interests with little regard for the economy of East Kent. The threat galvanized the community of Dover right across the political spectrum. For the first time since the Trust Ports Act of 1606, a port community has been brought together, confirmed by a 98% majority in a public poll, and taken the necessary measures to secure the funds to make a serious offer to the government for the ownership of its harbour and associated installations. Following a decision by the Secretary of State for Transport published on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012 which rejected outright the current management's plan to flog the harbour on the open market, DPPT is now in prime position to meet the government's stated objective of ensuring that a future owner will have "an enduring and significant level of community participation in the port." The government reached its decision having considered representations from a variety of bodies including DPPT and our sister Chamber, the Dover District Chamber of Commerce which has been monitoring port developments since 1850. Businesses in all sectors can learn from the examples of Hadlow and DPPT. However bleak the outlook, the right people can make the right changes for the benefit of the whole of the local economy.

### **5. Do You Look Beautiful?**

Regular readers will know that images from selected events are available for viewing and purchase at [www.photoboxgallery.co.uk/ddcc](http://www.photoboxgallery.co.uk/ddcc). Mark Proctor of new Chamber member Mark Proctor Photography attended our recent event at the Walpole Bay Hotel in Cliftonville and posted some images on his website at <http://markproctorphotography.co.uk/blog/?p=398> Do you recognise the journalist with a beard? Mark tells the Chamber that: "I shoot weddings, portraits, families, kids and any other random projects that catch my eyes, here, there and everywhere." More examples of Mark's distinctive style can be seen at <http://markproctorphotography.zenfolio.com/f790257241>

### **6. More About Marlowe Academy**

You may not agree with old Etonian Tom Sykes's claim that "The truth is that public schools are fertile grounds for drug use" and you may not believe his stories about drug-taking at Eton and Harrow, but faced with the evidence from Kent police, you have to agree that the Marlowe Academy is drug-free. That was the conclusion from an exercise undertaken at the academy as part of its recent Crime Awareness Week. With no previous warning to staff or students, Kent police undertook a training exercise there involving 20 police officers and 2 drugs dogs. Principal Cassie Ellins reports that it all went very well and adds: "The real bonus is that no drugs were found on any of our students". Keen to improve links between police and pupils, Cassie is determined to help pupils "steer their choices and develop a stronger sense of community responsibility."

### **7. Life At Lakesview**

Something is afoot at Lakesview International Business Park at Hersden, near Canterbury. The recent decision by 9 votes to 8 of Kent County Council's planning committee to give the go ahead to allow a black bag rubbish dump to be created at Lakesview has produced a fierce backlash from the companies and investors on the estate.

### **8. Wasn't There a Protest Meeting There Recently?**

There certainly was. At a breakfast meeting convened by the Thanet & East Kent Chamber, company owners and neighbours expressed their frustration at the decision taken in Maidstone that seemingly took no account of the interests of the hard-working employees and householders in the area. Steve Snell who owns two units at Lakesview pointed to the "devastating

effect” on the value of his investment. Tom Kennedy of UK Stone Imports has an office located just 3 metres from the projected boundary of the dump. He commented on the “hit and miss” farce of the planning committee’s decision which required a recount resulting in an alleged change of voting patterns. He was considering a judicial review of what in his opinion could have been a “seriously flawed process”.

## **9. What Do Other Companies There Think?**

Paul and David Lawrence of Ale Business Machines thought that a close examination of the planning committee’s actions could reveal “something disgraceful going on” and thought that the “procedural comedy” may have led to a “complete stitch up” which they later defined as an example of “Carry on politics”. Peter Robin is the Managing Director of Robin’s Packaging, a company established by his grandfather in 1930. He is “extremely angry” at the planning decision. His supplies the food and pharmaceutical sector and has always enjoyed the highest possible rating for cleanliness and hygiene. He considers having a black bag rubbish dump in such close proximity will have an intolerable impact on his operations.

## **10. What About Manual Workers and Manufacturers?**

Painter and decorator Dave Mannings described the planning committee’s decision as “disgraceful”. Alan Barker of Premier Framework Displays which manufactures high quality signs and display material on site said that he had undergone a similar experience in North Kent when a rubbish dump had been opened next to a flourishing business park. “The number of tenants fell sharply from 42 to 2. It became like a ghost town”. He added that rats, seagulls and foxes are impossible to keep out no matter what preventative measures are tried.

## **11. What About Residents?**

Jill Leith of OGC Maintenance endorsed everything said at the meeting. She said that she was horrified at the prospect of a rubbish dump so close to her house and to her businesses premises. She also lamented the awful effect on her neighbour’s food company.

## **12. What Harm Is There In A Little Dust And A Little Smell?**

Charles Pearce of EKTRA said he was “extremely worried” as he operates a healthcare business that is an approved and preferred provider to GP practices. He would like the planning permission revoked as it clearly takes no account of the local perspective. Cllr Georgina Glover who represents Marshside on Canterbury City Council said she was “very dissatisfied with KCC planning” and promised to do her best to get the decision overturned.

## **13. What About Future Investment At Lakesview?**

George Wilson MBE of GW Holdings has invested in over 1 million sq ft of commercial property in Kent. He spoke against the waste dump proposal at the KCC Planning Committee hearing and was most concerned at the potentially damaging effect on property values in the area of Lakesview. Sham Darwish of Kent Independent Security said that he had just established a training facility at Lakesview and did not want to share it with vermin, smells and dust from a rubbish dump.

## **14. What Was The General Opinion?**

There was unanimous agreement among all the companies represented that the passing of planning permission for a rubbish dump at Lakesview amounted to an attack on the small and medium enterprises in the area. Further discussion resulted in the conclusion that it might be convenient for councillors in the leafy suburbs of Mid and West Kent to consider it perfectly acceptable for rubbish to be dumped on the doorstep of East Kent companies, but it was manifestly unfair to the firms and families in and around Hersden.

## **15. Is There An Alternative?**

There certainly is an alternative available close by. All those present were baffled by the lack of environmental concern shown by the KCC planning committee. It was agreed that East Kent is blessed with an industry-leading waste management facility at TW Services in nearby Richborough. Excellent road links, advanced recycling processes capable of handling 750,000 tonnes of domestic and commercial waste every year and a ‘zero to landfill’ policy make the TW Services option a much better choice than a business park, especially as it is already fully compliant with ISO 9001:2008, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001:2007 standards.

## **16. What Does The Chamber Think?**

Chamber Chief Executive David Foley said: “At a time when small and medium enterprises are widely accepted as being the essential engines of growth in our economy, it is difficult to understand why the KCC planning committee has chosen to discourage start-up companies in Hersden, disaffect current companies at Lakesview and deter inward investors in this part of East Kent. The new regime at Kent County Council will surely wish to review this decision as a matter of urgency.”

## 17. A Banking Story

Regular readers will know that we receive regular reports of unusual incidents taking place in East Kent. The following tale is from a senior executive in financial services. We can make no claims about its truth or otherwise, but we leave it to the judgment of our wise and wonderful Chamber members to decide for themselves. “He was new to the banking world was young Jim but he was determined to make the best possible impression at his new job at a merchant bank in the City. For the first time in his young life, he decided that he should have a bespoke suit. Accordingly, he went to East Kent’s top tailor, chose an appropriate worsted material and returned for regular fittings. At the end of the afternoon after some four weeks of keen anticipation, the three-piece piece business suit was finally ready. Jim donned his new apparel and marvelled at its perfect fit; ‘No-one in Savile Row could do better,’ thought Jim as he explored the floating canvas in the jacket and the perfectly matched regulation four buttons on each sleeve. Aware of his father’s dictum that a gentleman never fastens the bottom button of his waistcoat, he admired himself at some length in the tailor’s long mirror. Awakened from his self-indulgent reverie by a discreet cough, he made the decision to wear the suit on his way home. Jim paid his large bill promptly and in good humour. Just as he was approaching the door to leave, he noticed that there were no pockets in his trousers. Hardly believing that this could be true, he checked again and sure enough, there were indeed no pockets there at all. ‘Excuse me’, he said tentatively to the master tailor, ‘This suit is all very splendid, but I can’t help but notice that there are no pockets in the trousers, none at all.’ ‘Ah just so,’ said the tailor, ‘but you did say that you were going to be a banker in the City, didn’t you, and whoever heard of a banker who put his hands in his own pockets?’” We must admit, the tailor did have a point.

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It's happening now, it's happening in East Kent.  
For details of membership, email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk)

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