



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Chamber Business Networking Breakfast

On 14th March 2014, the Thanet and Dover Chambers of Commerce will be joining with Kent County Council to offer a business networking breakfast in Sandwich targeted at companies with an interest in a healthy workplace. Entitled "Healthy Workplace, Healthy Profits", the session will be introduced by Chamber President Laura Sandys MP and will feature contributions from Andrew Scott-Clark, KCC Director of Public Health Improvement, Kaz Hardy, KCC Public Health Specialist, Lynn Marchant, known to many members for her work with Kent Mindful Employer, and a local company with direct experience of the benefits of a healthy workplace. As might be expected for such a meeting, a healthy breakfast will be provided. Places are limited to 100 delegates. Attendance is free of charge for Chamber members. There will be plenty of time for networking. Booking is essential. To reserve your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line: 'Healthy Workplace Breakfast 14 March 2014'. Full details of the venue near Sandwich will follow with confirmation. The event will start at 0730 hrs and be finished just before 0900 hrs.

2. A Taster Event

Broadstairs Food Festival brings together producers in East Kent who put food quality at the top of their menu. Festival Director Jo Scott invites Chamber members to a preview of next summer's event. Interested parties will be welcome at The Discovery Park, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich on Thursday, 6th February 2014 from 1030 hrs to midday. Jo tells us that: "Local food and drink producers will be offering tastings of apple juice, beer, smoked meats, cheeses and salmon – with Discovery Park's in-house baker, Paul, providing assorted breads." Attendance is recommended by Barnes Marsland Solicitors who inform us that: "Community involvement is important to our business and we have been happy to work with the festival since it began". For more details give Jo a call, tel: 01843 871 102, or email her direct to web@a-jdesigns.co.uk.

3. Town Centre Revival Business Networking Breakfast of December 2013

The Chamber Business Networking Breakfast "Town Centre Revival" last December took place at the Walpole Bay Hotel in Cliftonville. The main speaker was Chris West, Coastal Towns Manager for Whitstable and Herne Bay, who

gave a detailed account of a series of initiatives to revitalise town centres and meet the challenge of Internet shopping and chain stores. Chris's prescription for a healthy High Street drew on the measures taken to transform Whitstable from a moribund, backwater to the thriving retail centre it has become today. Chris talked of the importance of creating an experience rather than just a series of purchasing opportunities. He outlined how independent retailers can provide the specialist goods and services that chain stores tend to ignore. Rather than berate supermarket chains, Chris emphasised the benefits to nearby shops from the footfall generated by a quality supermarket. He described a possible solution to parking problems and suggested how carefully managed events can produce a significant boost in turnover for associated shops. A fan of loyalty cards, Chris delivered a potent argument in their favour and said that the support of a wide range of retailers was vital to the successful launch of contemporary schemes which embrace the Internet as their friend rather than reject it as their enemy. Chris pointed to the crucial role of good signage in attracting customers. In conclusion, he said that shopkeepers work best when they work together and he would welcome the opportunity to explain further how the example of Whitstable might inform other coastal towns in revitalising their retail offers. In thanking Chris for his invaluable insights, the Chamber Chief Executive also thanked the Walpole Bay Hotel for hosting the meeting and for providing magnificent full English breakfasts which were much enjoyed by all the Chamber members in attendance.

4. TransEuropa Ferries News

We are grateful to a senior figure in the ferry industry for forwarding news about two vessels which belonged to the defunct TransEuropa Ferries. Chamber members will recall that TransEuropa operated cross-channel ferry services from Ramsgate until 18th April last year when it ceased sailings. One week later, the company filed for bankruptcy owing Thanet District Council £3.4 million. In an article emanating from the much respected publisher Shippax, described as "the leading provider of most extensive and comprehensive ro-ro, cruise and ferry shipping information", we learn some curious facts about the sale of the Gardenia and Larkspur. "Former Transeuropa Ferries LARKSPUR has been acquired by the same company which bought the former GARDENIA. Bunker company Oilchart, one of the creditors of the bankrupt ferry company, acquired LARKSPUR for €840,000, which is below the estimated scrap value. GARDENIA was sold earlier for €750,000, also below scrap value. GARDENIA became ARDENIA. LARKSPUR might soon change name too, and become ARKSPUR. The future of the ship is being investigated." Shipping professionals will have their own views about the background to the transactions and the reasons for sale prices reported to be below scrap value. The Chamber could not possibly comment.

5. Waste Disposal Consultation

We are grateful to John Prosser, Minerals & Waste Planning Policy Manager at Kent County Council, who has contacted the Chamber with a request for comments on the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30. A consultation exercise began last Friday and will remain open until midnight on Sunday, 16th March 2014. Chamber members are invited to view the final draft version which can be found at <http://kent.limehouse.co.uk/portal/mwocs/pre-submission> and to send their comments on-line via <http://consult.kent.gov.uk/portal>, by email to mwdf@kent.gov.uk or by post to Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Team, Planning and Environment, Kent County Council, Invicta House, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XX. The completed plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State. John informs us that: "When adopted by the County Council, the Minerals and Waste Local Plan will become the development management policy framework against which planning applications for minerals and waste related developments will be determined by the County Council. It includes the criteria for assessing the suitability of new minerals and waste sites and it provides an assessment of the need for additional minerals resources and waste management infrastructure in Kent during the period up to 2030." Chamber members in East Kent will note that all mineral import wharves and railheads as well as all current permanent mineral and waste sites are part of the review. Surveyors, estate agents, architects and anyone with a professional interest in property development may wish to contribute. We have received some pertinent comments from companies based at Lakesview Business Park near Hersden who feel strongly that their views were not taken into account when planning application No.: KCC/CA/0426/2012 for a waste processing facility was considered.

6. Big News

Our good friends at Visit Kent and Maxim PR Marketing agency inform us that the Kent Big Weekend 2014 website will open for ticket applications tomorrow, Monday, 3rd February and will close three weeks later on Monday, 24th February 2014. There will be 25,000 free tickets available relating to 115 visitor attractions in Kent. There is expected to be competition for tickets for many of the venues necessitating a ballot to find the winners from among Kent households. Visit Kent tell us that the Kent Big Weekend on 29th and 30th March 2014 is intended to celebrate with residents the success of our tourism and hospitality companies which now contribute "more than £3.4 billion a year to the Kent economy and support 64,600 jobs." The chief executive at Visit Kent, Sandra Matthews-Marsh, who was recently elected to the prestigious position of Chair of the Tourism Society, states: "The Kent Big Weekend really highlights what a wide range of attractions and destinations our county has to offer its 57 million visitors each year." To join in

the fun, click on <http://www.mykentbigweekend.co.uk> and follow the links to register for your free tickets. Many of the attractions are featured in the Visit Kent image library which can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/visitkent>.

7. How Are We Doing?

The latest unemployment figures reveal a continuing strengthening of the local economy with falls in the year-on-year claimant count of over 20% in every district of Kent except Thanet and Swale where the reduction is still a healthy 13.3% and 18.7% respectively. Across the county, the data gives evidence of over 5,800 fewer workers claiming unemployment benefit in December 2013 than twelve months previously. Tunbridge Wells leads the list with a reduction of 29.1%. Despite an increase of 44 on the unemployment register from the previous month, the Dover district can still claim that 527 more people now have a reason to get up in the morning that they did not have one year ago, which equates to a diminution of 20.0% in the claimant count. Every ward in the Dover area shows a gain from December 2012, including the troubled wards of Castle, St Radigunds and Tower Hamlets. In the past, some of the highest unemployment in the South East has been recorded in and around Margate and yet significant annual falls in the registered unemployed have been registered in Margate Central (-8.1%), Cliftonville West (-12.2%) and Newington (-8.2%). If the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) was correct in its World Economic League Table report of 26th December 2013 predicting that the UK economy would overtake that of Germany by the year 2030, then these are the sort of figures we should be seeing. This is good news for investment, good news for start-ups and good news for Chamber members trading in East Kent. A comforting thought is that the CEBR notes that at the time of the World Cup in June this year, the UK economy will remain well ahead of all South American countries which shows that “at least Britain will beat Brazil at something”.

8. Give Us The Facts

Unemployment based on Claimant Count data supplied by ONS for resident adults aged 16 – 64.

	December 2013		Change since Dec 2012	
	Unemployed	% of workforce	Number	%
Thanet District	4,177	5.2%	-638	-13.3%
Ashford	1,494	2.0%	-407	-21.4%
Canterbury District	1,776	1.8%	-495	-21.8%
Dover District	2,100	3.1%	-525	-20.0%
Maidstone	1,768	1.8%	-579	-24.7%
Shepway	2,127	3.2%	-603	-22.1%
Swale	2,726	3.2%	-629	-18.7%
Kent	21,939	2.4%	-5,808	-20.9%
South East	98,453	1.8%	-33,424	-25.3%
Great Britain	1,143,413	2.9%	-316,234	-21.7%

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9. Media Watch

The Thanet and Dover Chambers of Commerce have featured prominently in the press and in radio broadcasts in the last fortnight. The Observer on Sunday devoted a full page to the East Kent economy on 26th January 2014, see <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/jan/26/thanet-conflict-confusion-pfizer-recovery>. The reporter from the Guardian Group had been much impressed on his visits to Chamber members Summit Aviation, Flambeau Europlast. Discovery Park and Turner Contemporary, but noted the confusion caused by a lack of planning certainty. He quoted the concerns of this Chamber about planning difficulties in Thanet. Regular readers of the Chamber bulletins will recall the case of plans for a Golf Academy at Manston which were rejected out of hand by Thanet District Council leading to the investor moving to a neighbouring district where a more business-friendly regime operates. Support for Discovery Park and the award by the government of over £6 million to refurbish premises were the lead story in last Wednesday’s business news for East Kent. The Chamber was pleased to follow the housing minister at the Department for Communities and Local Government, Kris Hopkins MP, on BBC Radio Kent to record support for the award, click on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01pw75h> and fast forward to 02:05:10: available for the next three days. We understand that Dover District Council has never rejected a planning application by Pfizer for this site, although no doubt some spirited discussions must have taken place since the company first took up residence in Sandwich in 1954. Under its current owner Discovery Park Ltd, this magnificent facility is going from strength to strength and can fairly claim to be the most successful of the UK’s 24 Enterprise Zones. The BBC also invited the Chamber to comment on the case before the High Court last week concerning the RSPB inspired judicial review of the planning permission given

to Lydd Airport to expand its runway and develop its facilities. Mindful of the boost to East Kent that flourishing airports at Manston and Lydd could produce, the Chamber was pleased to respond, see attached voice files and below.

10. What Is All This About The RSPB?

Most workers and residents in Kent would probably agree that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is a thoroughly worthwhile organisation, which diligently looks after the best interests of our native species of birds. It is also a powerful lobbying group with over a million members who are not short of a tweet or two. We read that the RSPB began life in 1889 as the Plumage League with a mission to protect all birds not killed for food – except for the ostrich. The Dover District Chamber of Commerce which incidentally started in 1850, 39 years earlier, believes that the RSPB should make a similar exception for East Kent airports. We feel that mounting a hugely expensive action in the High Court against Lydd Airport is a sad misuse of its funds at a time when it should embrace the democratic will of local people and accept that it simply got it wrong over Lydd. The people who live in Shepway should be allowed to elect their own representatives, make their own decisions and look after their own lives without interference from the RSPB Bedfordshire base, magnificent though its HQ building in Sandy might be,

11. What Is The Problem?

After seven long years of democratic processes, last April the Secretary of State for Transport and Communities and Local Government gave the green light to Lydd Airport's plans for a 249 metre runway extension with a 150 metre starter extension and a new passenger terminal. In March 2010, Shepway District Council had voted overwhelmingly in favour. Now it seems that the RSPB does not accept what local people want, what local people need and what local people see as their future. Imposing RSPB Bedfordshire idealism on Romney Marsh priorities could impact severely on the employment prospects of Shepway residents. We understand that for every job on site at an airport, nine are created off-site. Southend has shown what a huge boost to the economy a flourishing airport can be. Manston near Ramsgate with its KLM flights to Amsterdam and onwards to 200 destinations has attracted inward investment and start-up companies. A resurgent Lydd Airport could nourish Romney Marsh with a similar effect.

12. What About The Environment, Then?

As for environmental credentials, measures to save the world are not enhanced by encouraging East Kent residents to drive to Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton and Stansted to catch a flight rather than take the short journey to Lydd or Manston. The RSPB might be better advised to turn its attention to addressing the plans for an airport in the Thames Estuary, which offer a genuine threat to birdlife. In its latest submission to the Charities Commission, the RSPB stated that one its main objectives is to: "recreate and conserve natural habitats" The workers and families of Shepway deserve a place in that habitat and should be entitled to be conserved and their jobs recreated. In summer 1958, Silver City's Ferryfield base at Lydd recorded more aircraft movements than any other UK airport with around 250,000 passengers taking the short hop across the English Channel to France. With modern aircraft and today's technology, flights from Lydd will undoubtedly be safer, quieter and more environmentally friendly than 56 years ago. As John Lennon might have put it: "All we are saying is give Lydd a chance."

13. Expansion East Kent Update

On 21st January 2014, Kent County Council welcomed the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP to Canterbury Cricket Ground for a celebration of the Expansion East Kent funding programme which to date has seen £19.3 million distributed as interest-free loans to over 54 promising companies. The audience of senior public officials and business leaders was reminded that there is still over £15 million left in the fund to which companies in Dover, Thanet, Shepway and Canterbury may apply. After an introduction from John Gilby, Leader of Canterbury City Council, the newly honoured Leader of Kent County Council, Paul Carter CBE, outlined the objectives of Expansion East Kent and drew attention to the 1,538 jobs that have been created or sustained since 2012. Miranda Chapman of Pillory Barn then took the microphone for a brief discussion with three of the companies that have benefited from the scheme. This was followed by the premiere of a short film which introduced the audience to some beneficiaries, including Chamber members The Sands Hotel and London Fancy Box, both of which exude quality in all aspects of their operations. The film is now available on the Internet at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPiYY-68zao> and is well worth a viewing. Not all the recipients are as well-known as London Fancy Box, but Chamber members will be happy that fellow members Viking Recruitment received £1,300,000, BayPoint Club £400,000 and Flying Fish Hovercraft just over £150,000. The 4 jobs created at CupCake Café for £16,715 will be just as welcome to this ambitious outlet in Margate Old Town as the 72 new posts resulting from Viking Recruitment's enterprising plans for a maritime college at Whitfield. The afternoon ended with a farewell address from Greg Clark who modestly refrained from speaking about the stages in his own rise to fame from humble beginnings at a comprehensive school in Middlesbrough. After a stellar academic career at the University of Cambridge and a doctorate at the London School of Economics, he worked for the Boston Consulting Group and for the BBC as Controller for Commercial Policy. He is currently Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Minister of State

in the Cabinet Office. That is not a bad record for a lad whose father was a milkman and mother a shelf-filler at Sainsbury's. If the recipients of Expansion East Kent funding fare as well, our East Kent economy should have no fears for the future.

14, Generation Education

Government funded apprenticeships are being offered to employers by Generation Education of Ramsgate. Grants of up to £4,275 are available to companies willing and able to employ an apprentice aged 16 to 24 years. For more details, contact Jon Todd by telephone to 01843 832838 or by email to jontodd1980@outlook.com or enquiries@generationeducation.co.uk.

15. Tough Banker

Established Chamber members will recall that the tribulations of Doncaster Rovers make occasional appearances in this bulletin, often as an underdog in contrast to the many successes of more fashionable teams. Our domestic banks have also suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous criticism in recent years, but are recovering their reputation as more finance is being released to local companies. Barclays is a well-known name in British banking. What is less well-known is that one of its founders is reported to have scored the first own goal in history. It was not a question of him failing to repay a loan, but an incident in a football match which has only recently come to light. Arthur Fitzgerald Kinnaird (1847 – 1923), who also captained Kent in 1868, was the leading footballer of his day. He appeared in nine FA Cup finals, a record unsurpassed today. Bereft of the new technology that now informs Premier League officials if a ball has crossed the goal line, in the 1887 FA Cup Final referee S H Wright bravely awarded a goal to the Oxford University team when the Wanderers goalkeeper Kinnaird inadvertently crossed his own goal line while holding the ball. Fortunately for the then Hon Arthur Kinnaird, his side scored two goals to win the match 2 - 1. Any disappointment at almost scuppering his team's chances of cup glory did not hinder his banking career. In 1896, his family firm of Ransom, Bouverie & Co merged with others to form Barclays Bank. Bankers were expected to be tough and versatile in those days. As an outfield player, Kinnaird was of the Norman Hunter "Get your retaliation in first" school of footballer. When his wife expressed the fear that her husband might return home from a match with a broken leg, a team mate is reported to have replied, "Quite possibly madam. But if he does, it will not be his own." Doncaster Rovers cannot claim any famous antecedents and certainly not anyone of the calibre of Lord Kinnaird who later served as President of the Football Association for 33 years with such success that he was given the FA Cup as a reward for his services. However, Doncaster did manage to draw 0 - 0 with Middlesbrough yesterday. One commentator noted drily: "Doncaster were lucky to get nil."

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

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