



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

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

**17<sup>th</sup> April 2014 Issue No.: 207**

#### **1. Chamber Breakfast With Sir Roger Gale MP**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014, we will be hosting a Chamber Business Networking Breakfast featuring the Chamber Co-President, Sir Roger Gale MP, as guest speaker. Sir Roger has the unique distinction of being the only former pirate radio station disc jockey to sit in the House of Commons. He can also claim a distinguished career as the Director of Children's television for the BBC. Whether his experience of keeping immature minds informed, educated and entertained has served him well since he entered the House of Commons in 1983 may be one of the questions Chamber members will put to him after his talk. What is not in doubt is that as a distinguished Parliamentary Committee Chairman, Sir Roger has seen many changes in the commercial, cultural and social fabric of the nation since he first took office as MP for Thanet North when the leaders of the main political parties were Margaret Thatcher of the Conservative Party, Michael Foot of the Labour Party and David Steel and Roy Jenkins as joint leaders of the SDP-Liberal Alliance. Top of the UK singles charts on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1983 was Every Breath You Take by Police and of the album charts Thriller by Michael Jackson. We are expecting a full house for this event. There will be plenty of time for networking. Booking is essential. The price of £12 includes a full English breakfast with a vegetarian option. To reserve your place, Chamber members are invited to email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line: "Sir Roger Gale Breakfast 2 May 2014". The meeting will start at 0730 hrs on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 and will finish at 0900 hrs. Full details of the venue near Manston will follow with confirmation.

#### **2. Banking, Finance and Investment**

The Dover District Chamber of Commerce and the Thanet & East Kent Chamber will be hosting a Banking, Finance and Investment Conference on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2014 starting at 1030 hrs. Of interest to anyone concerned with the best use of their money, the conference features a star-studded list of speakers headed by Ian McCafferty of the Bank of England. Ian sits on the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank and plays a leading role in setting the UK Interest Rate. Formerly Chief Economic Adviser to the Confederation of British Industries, Ian was also at BP as Head of Macroeconomics and Chief International Economist for NatWest Markets. Ian knows about money and can help Chamber members in East Kent to make the best use of it. Also speaking from the podium will be Mark Davies, Communications & Corporate Affairs Director for the Post Office. With over 11,700 UK outlets, the Post Office is the

fastest growing UK financial services provider and the leading supplier of travel money. One in three UK SMEs visit their Post Office at least once a week. Formerly at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Mark is a communications expert who spent 13 years in journalism with the Liverpool Echo, the Liverpool Daily Post, CNN and the BBC and is the ideal person to outline how the reinvigorated Post office can support your business. We shall also be welcoming overseas companies keen to trade with firms in East Kent. Ambitious Chamber members wanting to manage their financial affairs better or meet new potential customers should keep 13<sup>th</sup> June free from 1030 hrs. More details will follow by email to members on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

### **3. Congratulations to Laraine**

In an email to the Chamber, Maidstone MP Helen Grant wrote some warm words about a board member of Dover District Chamber of Commerce, Laraine Soliman. Well-known in maritime circles for her marketing expertise in promoting Dover's cross-channel ferry services, Laraine is also a regular panel member of the East Kent Business Advice Clinic administered by the Thanet and Dover Chambers of Commerce. Less well-known is her work as a volunteer and supporter of community initiatives in and around Maidstone. Helen Grant MP confessed to being privileged and honoured to present Laraine with an award for Star Neighbour at the Celebrate Maidstone Gala earlier this month writing: "Laraine is a real pillar of the community, loved and respected by her whole street". The Thanet & East Kent Insider congratulates Laraine and looks forward to her supporting Chamber members for many years to come.

### **4. East Kent & the IMF**

The International Monetary Fund has blessed the UK with encouraging news for companies and investors. We are an attractive proposition and that's official. No less a publication than the Financial Times has noted the endorsement of the UK recovery by the IMF. Reporters Chris Giles and George Parker make this abundantly clear in an article last week which states that: "the International Monetary Fund retreated from its criticism of his austerity policies and predicted Britain will grow faster than any other rich economy this year." [Financial Times, 8 April 2014]. Chamber members will appreciate that low inflation, increasing consumer confidence and falling unemployment rates across the UK are encouraging signs indeed. The hard evidence from independently audited figures is there for all to see. As the late Stanley Unwin might have said "Oh gloribold perspectico for Britly economy. Deep joy".

### **5. Changes at the Port of Dover**

Shipping and Ports Minister Stephen Hammond MP, set out his policy for the future of Dover on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2014. In an official communiqué, the minister stated: "The agreed plan for the way forward will give greater community involvement in the strategic leadership of the port, with community non-executive directors being added to the board. It will also give the harbour board greater financial powers, to provide it with flexibility by allowing it to enter joint ventures and borrow against its assets. These changes will allow the board to raise substantial funds to invest in the future. The investment this will help deliver should bring real benefits to the port, its customers and the local community." The Dover District Chamber of Commerce is consulting with key stakeholders and Chamber members to ensure that the maximum benefits are brought to local companies in what seems to mark the first steps in the biggest change in the strategic management of the Port of Dover since it was accorded Trust Port status in 1606. The Chamber will be pressing for maximum sensitivity to the needs and economic interests of the local community and will be playing a full part in representing the views of Dover People's Port Trust which now numbers over 1,000 members.

### **6. East Kent & IMF Again**

On the most influential figures in international financial markets is Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. Lagarde's words on how to stimulate the world economy are studied closely by finance ministers the world over and then sometimes promptly ignored as they pursue the best interests of their national economy. In a speech in Washington DC on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014, Lagarde criticised the USA for not following the governance reforms she had recommended, but was obliged to admit that the USA has been more successful than mainland Europe in recovering from the recession. Similarly, she admitted that the risks from low inflation were not such a factor in the USA and UK as they are in most of Europe. When senior figures from the European Union give speeches in the USA, it seems almost compulsory to quote from European writers and thinkers; we have more of them than the hosts. The USA's actions may produce more revenue per person, but we can take pride in thinking a lot and we have been thinking a lot for a lot longer. Christine Lagarde did not disappoint and gave some sharp blasts from Aristotle and Victor Hugo calling for bravery and perseverance. Of course, it is a legitimate question to ask: "What on earth can this vegetarian French lawyer say which could possibly be relevant to a company trading in East Kent?" Surprisingly perhaps, the answer is "Quite a lot".

### **7. Alright Then, What Did Christine Lagarde Say About East Kent?**

Without mentioning East Kent by name, much of what Christine Lagarde said in Washington is directly pertinent to us. Lagarde insists that: "more public and private investment is essential to close infrastructure gaps" and of course we have a crying need for a railway station at Manston and improvements in the railway line to Dover to bring them both

within the magic 60 minutes of travelling time to London St Pancras. Lagarde states that: "innovation and productivity that underpin the services sector are the drivers of a modern economy. Think technology, communications, or finance." In East Kent we need to offer particular support to start-up companies investing in sunrise industries, research and development firms at Discovery Park and elsewhere and the supplier network to our East Kent ports and ferry companies. When the 7<sup>th</sup> most influential woman in the world [Forbes, The World's 100 Most Powerful Women, May 2013] demands: "Now is the time for brave action", she was probably not thinking of boosting footfall in the High Streets of Folkestone, Dover, Ramsgate and Margate, but if a full range of retailers are to survive the threat posed by off-shore on-line retailers, brave action is undoubtedly required. Finally, we can perhaps forgive this formidable lady's addiction to American spelling when we read in the text of her speech that: "In countries with high levels of youth unemployment or informality, labor market reforms can be critical in avoiding a lost generation." Large falls in the jobless figures throughout East Kent mask unacceptable levels of unemployment among 18 to 24 year olds. Showing the way forward are initiatives such as East Kent College's new recruitment agency and the efforts of the local offices of Adecco, Morgan Jones and Viking Recruitment. Also supporting our East Kent business community with their enlightened approach to bringing education and employers closer together are the Charles Dickens School, Cliftonville Primary School, Dover College, Dover Grammar School for Boys, Hartsdown Technology College, Marlowe Academy, Ripplevale School, Saint Lawrence College and St. George's C of E Secondary School.

## **8. Broadstairs Folk Festival**

Broadstairs Food Festival has become an established feature of summer in the East Kent coastal business community. It is not only the happy visitors and stallholders that benefit. An authoritative survey has been received by the Thanet & East Kent Insider which shows that the 14,843 visitors to the 2012 Broadstairs Folk Festival generated an economic impact of over £3 million which perhaps explains why it was listed and why it was the only event listed in the Top 21 Things Not to Miss in the 2013 Rough Guide to Kent, Surrey and Sussex. The 2014 celebration starts on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August and gets into full swing the following day with around 70 events a day until the close on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August. Full details are available on the website at [www.broadstairsfolkweek.org.uk](http://www.broadstairsfolkweek.org.uk) where you also find out about you can be a Friend of Broadstairs Folk Week and qualify for priority booking for headline acts. Regular visitors will know that many of the events are free to attend. Thanet District Council is one of the sponsors of the week along with Chamber members Canterbury Christ Church University, Business Computer Solutions and Shepherd Neame. Do not confuse Broadstairs Folk Week with Broadstairs Food Festival which takes place in October and will feature in our next edition.

## **9. A New Image**

You do not have to be legendary rocker like Rod Stewart with 100 million record sales to know that Every Picture Tells a Story. Nor is it necessary to marry a succession of beautiful blonds to appreciate that the correct pictorial image can boost your business. Mark Proctor of Mark Proctor Photography could be just the person you need if your brochure is looking dated or your website needs a new image. Mark can be reached by email to [markproctorphotography@hotmail.com](mailto:markproctorphotography@hotmail.com), by post to 4 Omer Ave, Margate, CT9 3BX and by telephone to 07950 946 546.

## **10. Save Money for Free**

David Robert of Sustrans is offering a free service to companies in East Kent looking to save money on their travel costs. In an email to the Chamber, David writes: "With almost half of SMEs spending more than 10% of their annual budget on business travel, the rising cost of transport and travel is having a significant impact on their bottom line." He has been successful in securing funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Kent County Council and Thanet District Council, to support this service which is free of charge to local companies. Louise Skipton of Sustrans gives some hard evidence to interest decision-makers: "Evidence shows that for every 100 employees engaged, Sustrans projects generate a reduction in 24 sick days each year" and if that is not enough, she adds: "incorporating more active travel like walking and cycling into daily routines can lead to healthier, happier and more productive staff." For a healthier, fitter and more productive staff, email David Robert at [david.robert@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:david.robert@sustrans.org.uk) or give him a call to 07768 034729.

## **11. Flood Relief**

We are grateful to our good friends at Kent County Council for forwarding details of the latest Flood Support Schemes available from the government. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) makes the following stark assessment of the inundations that crippled many companies in East Kent: "The country has been battered by extreme weather conditions – from tidal surges affecting the east coast to prolonged and extensive flooding in what has been the wettest winter in over 250 years." Claire Cooper, Head of the DCLG Recovery Team, has written to local authorities with details of the support available. It is listed under the headings of Bellwin Scheme, which covers financial assistance to local authorities, Severe Weather Recovery Scheme, Farming Recovery Scheme, Repair & Renew Grant, Business Rate Relief, Council Tax Relief, Business Support Scheme, Support for Tourism Industry, Time to Pay and Banking Sector Support. For a copy of the assistance available, chamber members are invited to email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line "Flood Support Schemes" and we will send you the papers.

## **12. Business Rates**

The Chamber receives many enquiries about Business Rates and we are always happy to respond to particular cases where Chamber members are concerned that they may be paying too much. In most cases, we find that the assessment is correct and that the Valuation Office Agency based at Palting House in Folkestone has made a correct assessment according to the current legislation and government guidance. However, occasionally we find that some Chamber members qualify for Small Business Rate Relief for which they have not applied. In brief, if you use just one business property and its rateable value is below £6,000, until 31 March 2015 you should qualify for 100% relief, not 50%. For premises with a rateable value from £6,001 to £12,000, the rate of relief decreases in stages from 100% to 0%. You can check this information for yourself on the government's website at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief/small-business-rate-relief>

## **13. Confusing the Legislators**

When Shakespeare wrote "She's neither fish nor flesh" in Henry IV, Part I, he was probably not thinking of a hovercraft, but the problem Falstaff outlines in the Boars Head's Tavern in Eastcheap in Act III could indeed be applied to the legislative difficulties associated with any past acts relating to hovercraft. Do they float or do they fly? Are they for the Navy or for the RAF? Russ and Emma Pullen should know because they are the brains behind Flying Fish of Sandwich, Europe's largest manufacturer of small hovercraft. In an email to the Chamber Russ explains: "Hovercraft have always confused nautical authorities. Right back to when Sir Christopher Cockrell pioneered the technology in the 1950's, neither the air force or navy could quite decide who was to take hold of the new vehicle." After lamenting the demise of the large cross channel SRN-4's, Russ adds "Small hovercraft have a modest, but growing role to play in recreational, utility, commercial and military operations. But they remain a thorn in the side of overstretched maritime authorities and have never had their own set of regulations for commercial operations." Rather than just sit back and complain about the injustice of inadequate provisions, Russ and his team got together with Griffon Hoverworks of Southampton and others to form a manufacturers association and produce a 'Hovercraft Code of Practice' (HCoP) which is due to be adopted this year. The net effect of this initiative is that small hovercraft can soon be regarded as a practical proposition for many different uses in areas inaccessible to other vehicles such as mud flats, intertidal areas, estuaries, shallow rivers and flooded inland areas. Russ tells us that: "One golf course in Essex even uses a small craft to remove the dew from the greens early in the morning". We know that one group of businessmen travelling from the Indian subcontinent to attend the East Kent Banking, Finance and Investment conference on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2014 has expressed a keen interest in the 8 – 12 person hovercraft for use in emergency relief operations. Hovercraft appeal on many levels. As Russ puts it: "They're extremely economical and cannot hurt sea animals as there's no propeller in the water." Or as Falstaff said to Hostess Quickly: "What thing! Why, a thing to thank God on."

## **14. Manufacturing In Margate**

Small manufacturers are enjoying a quiet revival in the UK. This is certainly true in Margate where Morris Miniatures has been making picture frames and mirrors since 1991. Recent investments in computerised mount cutters, training and research have allowed this company to steal a march on its rivals and extend its customer base. Owners Carl Morris and Eileen Oyediran have also nurtured the traditional skills required to make traditional canvas stretcher bars. Only a handful of UK companies remain to produce these in bespoke sizes. For more information about framing and associated gift products, contact Carl and Eileen direct by telephone to 01843 232224 or by email to [eileen@kaizengallery.co.uk](mailto:eileen@kaizengallery.co.uk).

## **15. All The Fives**

One Chamber member with an abiding interest in numbers has written to the Chamber to point out a curious fact that may be of benefit if you want to tease your family or win your local pub quiz. He asks: "What will happen in August 2014 that happens just once in over 800 years?" If you are tempted to reply: "My marketing manager will buy me a drink" you may well be right, but that is not the answer that he is seeking. According to our resident East Kent numerologist, August 2014 contains five Fridays, five Saturdays and five Sundays, a statistical rarity that occurs just once every 823 years. So now you know.

## **16. Media Watch**

The Chamber has had a high profile in the media recently, at times giving full voice to the East Kent coastal business community's support for Manston Airport. This was apparent on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 when the Chamber was featured on both the ITV Meridian and BBC television news programmes to mark the anniversary of KLM's first flight from Manston to Schiphol. Nashreen Issa's report for ITV was more optimistic than some newspapers at the time, see <http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/story/2014-04-02/manston-offer-withdrawn>. BBC Radio Kent marked the end of scheduled KLM flights from Manston the following week with regular bulletins and interviews throughout the day. These provided an opportunity to promote the attractions of East Kent to potential inward investors and also gave the

chance to restate the case for a Manston Parkway Station and for further reductions in Air Passenger Duty, see sound files attached.

## 17. More On Manston

At the time of writing, hope burns bright that Manston Airport may be saved as a functioning airport for East Kent and indeed for the nation. Leading the campaign to resist closure are our Chamber Presidents, Sir Roger Gale MP and Laura Sandys MP, supported by the leaders of all the main political parties in East Kent. At a public meeting in Acol on the last Saturday in March, Sir Roger was quick to point out that there was a steadfast unanimity regarding the need to keep Manston operational and he was generous in praising the Leader and Deputy Leader of Thanet District Council for their support, noting that Clive Hart and Alan Poole “were elected on a manifesto to keep the airport open.” Both at this public meeting and in subsequent discussions, Sir Roger has been careful not to promise a solution, “It is not my job to negotiate deals”, but he has enlisted the backing of government ministers and impressed on senior civil servants the important role that Manston plays in the economy of East Kent. Many commentators will agree with his assertion that “Any business is only as good as its employees. They are the wealth of the firm”. The overwhelming view expressed by Chamber members is that Manston should be supported as a passenger airport. Confidential discussions with airport staff in the last week suggest that there is a viable business proposition available to a new owner if all current revenue streams are included on the balance sheet, but the longer the uncertainty continues, the more difficult it will be to entice passenger and freight aircraft to land at Manston.

## 18. Outstanding or Standing Out

At a time when our political leaders in all parties face accusations that they do not understand ordinary people, the Thanet & East Kent Insider thought it was about time we looked at this issue. It was not that long ago that friends of the late President of Kent County Cricket Club and long-time Sandwich resident. E W “Jim” Swanton were quick to dismiss claims that he was snobbish with the retort: “He was quite prepared to travel in the same car as his chauffeur”. One regular reader has contacted the Chamber with an account concerning Alec Douglas-Home from the time when this Prime Minister was facing a general election against the apparently working class Harold Wilson. In answer to a reporter’s remark that Sir Alec Douglas-Home, previously styled Lord Dunglas and later Baron Home of the Hirsell, may be too much of a remote aristocrat to understand the concerns of the average person, his daughter allegedly replied: “That’s not true. He understands ordinary people alright. He quite often talks to the estate workers.”

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

For details of membership, email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk)

Offices in Broadstairs, Sandwich and Dover.

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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