



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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I. Chamber Business Networking Breakfast: 18th Sept 2015

Most Chamber members will have already received news of our Chamber Business Networking Breakfast scheduled for 0730 – 0900 hrs on Friday, 18th September 2015. The main speakers will be Rebecca Smith, Senior Editor at Kent Regional News, and Graham Cooke, late of Radio Caroline and an established presenter for the BBC. Understanding how the printed and broadcast media operates can be of immense value to any ambitious company wishing to manage its media profile across all formats. The huge worldwide growth of social media has made the top social platforms of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn household names with Pinterest, Tumblr, Badoo and Myspace not far behind. In response, it has also stimulated the traditional media outlets of newspapers, radio and television to work more closely with Internet users in order to secure an audience for their output. Chamber members attending the networking breakfast will hear what pleases editors and how their company can make the most of the opportunities to showcase their products and services to current and potential customers. The price of £15 for Chamber members includes coffee on arrival and a full English breakfast with a vegetarian option. Booking is essential. To reserve your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line: “Chamber Breakfast 18th June 2015”. Full details of the venue near Sandwich will follow with confirmation.

2. Chamber Conference 6th October 2015: Managing Change

Our 2015 conference on 6th October 2015 will feature as keynote speaker, the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England, Victoria Cleland. Her presentation will interest anyone who handles cash or wants to know about the changes to our banknotes and coins. The 32nd person to occupy this prestigious post since John Kendrick took office in 1694, Victoria says: "My role covers far more than signing the banknotes." Indeed, it certainly does and she works in close liaison with retailers, financial institutions, Cash in Transit (CiT) firms and UK companies of all sizes. Victoria will brief members on changes in our currency planned for the next three years, including the introduction of polymer banknotes featuring Sir Winston Churchill and Jane Austen. Following extensive public consultation, the new notes will have enhanced counterfeit resilience and be 15% smaller than the current size. If you are interested in money, you should book a place, see item 6 below.

3. More About Our Conference Speakers

Also speaking from the podium on 6th October 2015 will be Des Kingsley, Managing Director of the UK's largest greenhouse complex at Thanet Earth. At a time when UK scientific research is under close scrutiny, Thanet Earth offers a shining example of commercial success in hydroponics in a highly competitive market. Chamber members may recall Des Kingsley's predecessor, Ian Craig, now Chief Executive of the parent company the Fresca Group, which has combined annual sales of more than £500 million. Thanet Earth is a great East Kent success story from which we can all learn some valuable lessons. Its proven methodology and practice may also offer a glimpse of a route towards the UK being self-sufficient in food and vegetables, a sector in which this country currently has a £7.8 billion trade deficit. [*Food Statistics Pocketbook 2014, DEFRA*].

4. Yet More About Our Conference Speakers

Last year, Emma Pullen joined Stella McCartney and Elisabeth Murdoch as one of the Management Today magazine's Top 35 Businesswomen Under 35. Emma runs the British Hovercraft Company (BHC). As a hands-on Director, she is fully involved in every aspect of the manufacture, marketing, sales and administration of Europe's largest manufacturer of leisure hovercraft. BHC is very much a family business and Chamber members will hear how Emma benefits from the support of fellow board members, husband Russ Pullen and father-in-law Ivan Pullen. Chamber members at the conference will also witness a demonstration of a BHC hovercraft so that they can see for themselves how this enterprising company has developed a great British invention and transformed it into a commercial product currently sold to individuals and firms around the world from its base in Sandwich.

5. Even More About Our Conference Speakers

Thanks to close liaison with Post Office Communications Director Mark Davies, the Post Office will be represented at our conference to give us details of the most radical root and branch reforms that have ever taken place at this beloved institution which has served the British public faithfully since 1660. Promoting a future as a multi-channel business that can satisfy the needs of SMEs across a wide range of services, the Post Office is changing rapidly as a commercial business with a public purpose. It will surprise many that 99.7% of the population lives within three miles of

Post Office and that a third of all small businesses visit every week. It may also surprise Chamber members that the Post Office is not reducing the number of its branches; with almost 11,800 outlets, the Post Office has the largest retail network in the UK. Under its inspiring Chief Executive, Paula Vennells, the Post Office is becoming much more than a challenger bank. Many chamber members will appreciate the wisdom in Paula's dictum that "Retail is Detail" and there is much to be learned from the way the Post Office is directing the future of its £1 billion a year business.

6. Chamber Conference of 6th October 2015: Booking Your Place

Chamber members attending the Chamber Business Conference "Managing Change" will receive refreshments on arrival and a cooked meal during the lunchtime break; a vegetarian option is available. Doors will open at 1015 hrs and the formal sessions will end at 1420 hrs with informal networking on-site until 1530 hrs. Chamber members qualify for a discounted ticket price of £30 inclusive. Full details of the venue near Sandwich will follow with confirmation. Booking is essential. To reserve your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line: "Chamber Conference 2015".

7. Now Is The Summer Of Our Discontent

The interruption to East Kent business caused by Operation Stack has been significant. Losses to the UK of an estimated £250 million a day during this summer of discontent have been felt most sharply by the owners of companies in East Kent who have had extreme difficulties in securing supplies, making deliveries to their customers and getting staff to and from the workplace. One haulier with a depot a few miles from Dover found that one of his trucks was prevented from taking the two-mile journey to Dover Western Docks when his driver was told to join the queue of lorries on the M20 west of Maidstone where he faced a two-day wait before he could join a cross-channel ferry. Our Chamber member understandably returned his truck to the depot and faced a difficult explanation to his valued customer who was less sympathetic to the actions of strikers at Calais than the French authorities appeared to be. Increasingly desperate pleas from the Road Haulage Association Chief Executive Richard Burnett included demands for the French military to intervene to protect "the thousands of British drivers whose lives are now being put at risk on a regular basis". [*RHA Press Release, 7 July 2015*]. Although the main issues causing the French ferry workers to strike have now been resolved, the long term effects to Dover and its environs from being branded a no-go trading area have yet to be assessed. It is simply unacceptable that Kent County Council, Kent Police and Dover coastguard should have to pay upfront the costs of illegal actions in Calais with no compensation payments seemingly available for those businesses which have suffered the most.

8. Is Disruption by Ferry Workers at Calais Over?

The strike action by dissident ferry workers at Calais is over for the time being. Reports in the French press differ in their conclusions. Notre Temps lists the deal that has been signed by Scop, representing the ferry workers, by Eurotunnel the former owner of the My FerryLink ferries, by DFDS the new owner and by Alan Vidalies, the Secretary of State for transport who hosted the negotiations. We are informed that 402 out of 487 Scop workers made redundant last July will be

reemployed. DFDS will accept 202, Eurotunnel will take on 150 directly, 130 of these with the freight ferry Nord-Pas-De-Calais and the other 20 to be absorbed in its other activities, and one of the subcontractors will employ the remaining 50 staff for its security operations. Other French publications are not so sure. Libération, the centre-left daily now owned by Édouard de Rothschild, which has had its own staff problems in recent years, is a little more sanguine about the resolution of the strike. In an article written on 7th September 2015, Libération's special Calais envoy, Stéphanie Maurice, states: "Many remain sceptical about this last project: it can only happen if the British Competition and Markets Authority gives a green light and nobody sees how the arrangement could be viable". She ends her long article with a quotation from a source close to the action who suspects that the whole sad affair will resurface in two years. The Dover Chamber President, Charlie Elphicke MP, is adamant that EU legislative reform is urgently required as "It's increasingly clear the Schengen Agreement is not working." [*Charlie Elphicke MP: This Calais chaos must end, 8 Sep 2015*]. The Chamber will be working with all our elected representatives to promote the interests of our East Kent members on this critical issue.

9. Port Of Ramsgate

A lot of nonsense is broadcast about the Port of Ramsgate ranging from proposals that its future as an O&M base for super yachts is assured to widely over-optimistic assessments of its capacity to accommodate all the cross-channel commercial traffic diverted from Dover. Of course, everyone is entitled to their opinion whatever their expertise in the highly competitive ferry industry, but there is little excuse for perpetuating obvious errors of fact. Here is one of the worst offenders from a source that describes itself as 'The World's Leading Ferry Website'. The text may have been corrected if you are reading this after September 2015, but this is what is currently stated: "Ramsgate has been a port for many thousand years. Indeed, the Christian missionary St Augustine of Canterbury, widely considered the founder of the Church in England, entered England through Ramsgate in the late 4th Century", see <http://www.aferry.co.uk/ramsgate-ferries.htm>. Wrong by 200 years. We trust that any ferry passengers booking via the website might find a more punctual schedule, although if Operation Stack is in force, they may be in for a long wait, but perhaps not two centuries. For some accurate information about the Port of Ramsgate, see below.

10. Port of Ramsgate: the Facts

In the last year of Sally Line's cross-channel ferry service from the Port of Ramsgate in 1998, Thanet District Council benefited from receipts of around £1 million in harbour dues. This is in sharp contrast to the disastrous results of the last few years when the council-owned port has received damning indictments in the national media. The princely sum of £3.4 million was lost in uncollected harbour dues from the failed TransEuropa Ferries followed by the announcement last month of £2.3 million to be paid in compensation for banning live animal exports without the legal authority to do so. Financial mismanagement on such a scale inevitably imposes considerable costs on every business and ratepayer in the district. Chamber members will understand why the Thanet & East Kent Chamber has orchestrated a series of meetings in the House of Commons, at Kent Council HQ and with the new regime at Thanet District Council to discuss a series of practical measures to revive Ramsgate as a cross-channel ferry port. If the support from our central, regional and local

government in the UK could match that already offered at many meetings across the channel, there is every hope that 500,000 passengers could be flowing through the Port of Ramsgate in its second full year of operations. It was not that long ago when five Kent ports provided a cross-channel ferry service; Sheerness, Dartford, Ramsgate, Dover and Folkestone. It is surely not fanciful to suggest that the fastest growing economy of the G7 nations requires more than one short sea route to protect our £100 billion a year trade route.

11. HR Support In Shepway

Chamber member QBH Solutions is offering free advice to companies in Shepway with fewer than 50 employees. In an expanding local economy, there will be many firms looking to recruit staff and perhaps not entirely sure of compliance issues. Chamber members looking to supply to large companies at home and overseas may be seeking ISO 9001 status or to join the Investors in People scheme which is now offering a sixth generation management standard. If you are simply keen to update your Human Resource skills and ensure your spreadsheets and databases do support all your staffing needs, David Burton and his team will be pleased to see you on 16th October 2015 at Basepoint Business Park in Folkestone. Published comments from satisfied customers include the words ‘down to earth helpful and friendly professional’, ‘very skilled at building a rapport’, ‘brilliant, they provided us with Job Descriptions, Contracts and an HR policy pack’, ‘easy to understand terms with no jargon’ and ‘loyal, committed and determined’ as well as intriguing insights on David Burton himself such as ‘We also become good friends and continue to be so. He and his wife came to see me in Scotland a few months ago’. To book your free place, email info@qbhsolutions.co.uk. More information is available on the website at www.qbhsolutions.co.uk. If you want to speak to Mr Burton direct or just want to know if his trip to Scotland was to secure supplies of the best single malt whisky, Chamber members are invited to call his mobile, tel: 07795 564089.

12. Paying the Right Tax

Geoff Smith of MHA MacIntyre Hudson has contacted the Chamber with news of significant changes in allowances for Buy To Let investors as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Summer Budget. Despite the increased burdens, Geoff maintains that there is still the opportunity for ‘tax efficient remuneration’. With Corporation Tax scheduled to fall to 18% in April 2020, the UK should become an increasingly attractive country in which to do business. Jon Cleverdon of Cleverdons Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors tells us that “Among the many surprise announcements made by the chancellor during the summer budget, it was the changes to dividends taxation that caught the wider business community off guard”. Jon also notes that “the average person in the UK has £38.19 a week in spare cash to spend however they want”. Of course not one of our Chamber members is average and, as Jon knows better than most of us, averages can be misleading. After all, if Bill Gates walked into your office tomorrow, the chances are that on average everyone in the room would be a millionaire.

13. Minimum Wage and Tax Avoidance Schemes

Harry Kemp of Kemps Chartered Accountants informs us that 285 employers have been named and shamed since October 2013 for failing to pay their employees the minimum wage. He quotes

Nick Boles MP, the Minister of State for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills: “From October 2015 the National Minimum Wage will increase to £6.70. Employers should be well aware of the different rates for the National Minimum Wage depending on the circumstances of their workers.” Following a uniformly favourable High Court judgment over Accelerated Payments Notices there is also a sober warning too from HMRC’s David Richardson that “Those who use tax avoidance schemes need to know they can no longer hold on to the money while their affairs are investigated. They have to pay their tax up front like everybody else.” This judgment is expected to bring forward £5.5 billion in payments to the Exchequer by March 2020. Surely there is enough in the pot to compensate companies who have suffered the slings and arrows of an outrageous Operation Stack. What about a few pennies Mr Chancellor for our East Kent Business Advice Clinic? After all, a success rate of over 95% must be better than Business Link ever managed.

14. What Can I Do About Managing My Money?

Just as the management of the Port of Ramsgate should be in the hands of professionals, the same applies to maximising your income, managing your accounts and presenting them each year to Companies House. If your accountant or advisor is not on the following list, you might ask yourself if you could do better and give one of the experts a call: MacIntyre Hudson LLP, Mr Adrian Dante 01622 754033; Cleverdons Chartered Accountants, Mr Jon Cleverdon 01843 866599; Kemps Accounting Solutions Ltd, Mr Harry Kemp 01843 861188; JHL Accountants Ltd, Mr John Humphrey 01304 216296; Levicks Chartered Accountants, Mr Mark Hurdman 01843 862716; McCabe Ford Williams, Mr Michael Whittaker 01227 373271; Michael Martin Partnership Ltd, Mr Ian Curtis 01227 770500; Neville Weston, Mr Christopher Weston 01843 594571; Wilkins Kennedy, Mr Derek Read 01304 897650; JW Accountancy Services, Ms Julia Westbrook, 01304 830229. Financial advice and wealth management guidance is available from the following: Regency Independent Financial Advisers, Mr Barry Williams, 01304 213902; Rift Research & Development, Ms Norma Thomas, 01233 653002; St. James' Place Wealth Management, Mr Paul Baldwin, 01959 561606, Lloyds Commercial, Mr Simon Mount, 07725 068956.

15. Wages & Salaries in Kent

As noted above, the National Minimum Wage for workers aged 21 years and over will £6.70 an hour from 1st October 2015. From 1st October 2016, the National Living Wage will be £7.20 an hour for workers aged 25 years and older. But whatever the legal obligations, every responsible employer will want to know how much to pay to guarantee a loyal staff, encourage a motivated workforce and promote a sustainable, profitable business. Accepting that remuneration is just one of many reasons to attract and retain good employees, a look through job vacancies currently published in the press and on employment websites will act as some guide. Of course, there are geographical variations which can take into account travel costs and local conditions such as competitor behaviour and living costs. We are grateful to the ever-excellent Research & Evaluation Department of Kent County Council for its clear analysis of the median earnings for residents of East Kent. The latest figures from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings relate to last year, 2014. They provide a useful guide to staff costs and salaries for full-time workers. The median full-time weekly earnings for workers living in Kent in 2014 was £541.40, above the national average of

£520.80 but below the South East regional figure of £567.00. Residents of Thanet have the lowest median weekly full-time earnings, assessed at £450.90. Dover district resident earnings of £532.9 are a little under the Kent figure but comfortably over the GB rate by £12.10 a week.

16. Give Us The Facts

The table below shows the ranked resident based weekly earnings for the districts of Kent. Also added are the percentages of the population in each district with an education of NVQ4 and above as rated in February 2014 in the Annual Population Survey. For our purposes, NVQ4 can be described as the level above 2 A levels. The rankings are roughly as you might expect with the more educated earning a higher salary, although Canterbury and Ashford both show a marked difference of 5 places in their earnings and NVQ rankings.

Earnings Rank	District	Amount	NVQ4+	NVQ Rank
1	Tunbridge Wells	£646.40	40.1 %	3
2	Sevenoaks	£628.10	41.0 %	2
3	Canterbury	£574.40	29.4 %	8
4	Tonbridge & Malling	£569.50	43.1 %	1
5	Dartford	£562.80	30.0 %	7
6	Gravesham	£536.60	37.8 %	4
7	Swale	£534.70	27.9 %	11
8	Dover	£532.90	28.6 %	10
9	Maidstone	£515.40	31.2 %	6
10	Ashford	£506.30	35.0 %	5
11	Shepway	£481.40	28.7 %	9
12	Thanet	£450.90	22.1 %	12

17. Public Lecture In Canterbury

Canterbury Christ Church University is offering Chamber members free admission to a public lecture at Old Sessions House, Canterbury on the evening of Wednesday, 30th September 2015. Dr Ted Malloch will be offering insights on modern business practices under the title of 'A Responsible Way to Reorient Global Business'. After four years at Yale University where he directed the Spiritual Capital Initiative, Ted Roosevelt Malloch is now a Fellow in Management Practice at the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford. While in a previous post of President of the CNN World Economic Development Congress, he was described by Margaret Thatcher as "a global Sherpa". His time negotiating the commercial heights of Wall Street with Saloman Brothers and the diplomatic niceties in Geneva at the United Nations suggest that he will have some pertinent comments to make on the recent banking crisis, the prevailing attitudes to economic migrants and the duties of company directors. To reserve your place, find the website <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/about-us/public-lectures/public-lectures.aspx> and click on the box marked 'DETAILS'

18. Ship or Bust

Chamber Chairman, Dr Bill Moses MBE, a renowned authority on all issues connected to the successful commercial operation of ports and ferries, offers his professional comments on the issues facing the Port of Ramsgate. He writes: "Talk of a freight ferry service pursued by the council leads us to ask whether resultant port activity handling unaccompanied trailers, nominal local employment, minimal income and inevitable road congestion would create anything more than a very small tick in the 'port activity' box? But is there an alternative and if so what could it be? It has been said many times before that councils should not be allowed to run businesses and the port of Ramsgate might be considered no exception. That stated, if the activity were to be properly structured, the benefit not only for the port but the local community could be very considerable. Take for example a passenger ferry service that if appropriately conceived and marketed could generate significant stimulus for local hotels, guest houses, restaurants, retailers and attractions. As well as generating reasonable port revenue, the exponential benefit of a relatively small percentage of passengers staying and spending money in East Kent could be very considerable; revitalizing high streets and creating direct and indirect employment on a large scale. In the meantime, turning the ferry terminal into a Sheerness overspill car park does little to convince anyone that fortunes are improving, least of all council tax payers. The terminal appears sadly neglected and by all accounts it is. But, while some aspects of deterioration are clearly visible, the increase in siltation, exacerbated by a lack of scouring caused by ships coming and going, is less obvious. Dredging is an unavoidable legacy which will cost a considerable amount to rectify. A few ships entering the harbour from time to time is not the answer and certainly cannot compare with the benefits to us all of a professionally managed ferry passenger service.

19. Chamber Golf Day

The Chamber is pleased to report that 27 of the 30 places available to corporate teams of four players at our annual Chamber Golf Day have been booked or reserved. With just three team places left, Chamber member companies wishing to participate are asked to email admin@tekc.co.uk as soon as possible. The Chamber Golf Day will again take place at Royal St George's Golf Club Sandwich which has hosted 14 Open Championships and is the course featured as "Royal St Mark's" in Ian Fleming's book Goldfinger where James Bond plays the most famous golf match in the history of fiction. The 2015 Chamber Golf Day will feature a glittering array of prizes including a new Jaguar XE. We understand that unlike James Bond's car in the film Goldfinger, the cars supplied by Barretts Jaguar of Canterbury should not give front seat passengers undue cause for concern; they do not have an exploding ejector seat. For more news about Jaguar's local partnerships and business contract hire offers, see <http://www.barretts.canterbury.jaguar.co.uk/jaguar-for-business/business-partnerships>.

20. Newcomer Of The Year

Chamber member Corporate Creations beat all the other newbies to be accorded the title of Newcomer of the Year at the British Promotional Merchandise Association 2015 awards. A regular at Chamber events, Corporate Creations Director Jean-François Chodecki has made a flying start to his new division following the early successes of Hot Craze, a self-confessed 'supplier of gadgets

and gizmos'. Corporate Creations offers to "design, create and procure the perfect unusual bespoke promotional gadget or product to represent your brand and get you noticed" and adds the enticing promise "All these value added services come at no extra cost to you." More information can be seen on the company website at <http://www.corporate-creations.co.uk/> and Jean-François's beaming smile is available to view, also as a free service, at <https://bpma.co.uk/bpma-conference-2015-winners>.

21. Maritime Gaff

This edition of your chamber's business bulletin has had a definite maritime theme; understandable perhaps from the largest business support body in the East Kent coastal business community after a challenging summer when our resurgent local economy has been unfairly restricted through congestion beyond our control. It was therefore refreshing to hear of the positive experiences of one Chamber member who returned from a reportedly wonderful cruise around the Caribbean, despite an unfortunate start to his vacation which he relates to us here. We have some doubts about this story, but we leave it to our good-looking and intelligent readers to judge for themselves. As our Chamber member put it: "This was the first time I had ever been on a cruise. My wife and I had always been happy enough with Butlins and why not? Billy Butlin had a hotel in Cliftonville, you know, but we always went to Minehead. It used to flood sometimes which could be a little awkward, but the redcoats were marvellous and our children always had a great time when they were young. An uncle passed away last year and much to our surprise, as we were not that close, he left us a tidy sum and so we thought, we'll buy some fancy clothes, get ourselves a passport and go on a cruise. On the first evening away from Miami, there was a formal dinner. Whether or not it was because we were first timers I have no idea, but we were invited to the captain's table. Anxious not to make fools of ourselves, my wife and I put on our new evening outfits and arrived bang on time to be sat down either side of the captain. There he was in all his finery with an aperitif in his hand and there was me more used to a boiler suit and an adjustable spanner in mine. Keen to get the evening off to a friendly start, by way of conversation I said tentatively: "Captain, please tell me, do ships like yours sink often?" He looked at me with a cold stare and replied. "No, sir, only once".

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It's happening now, it's happening in East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekcc.co.uk
Offices in Broadstairs, Sandwich and Dover.

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