



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

14th August 2016 Issue No.: 214

1. Resilience: Business Networking Breakfast 8th September 2016

The Chamber has often written about the benefits of Predict & Prevent in preference to Find & Fix. The speaker at our Chamber Business Networking breakfast next month is a world-class specialist on the subject much in demand in Australia, New Zealand, UAE, Germany, Belgium, China, France and USA. Formerly Head of Safety for Virgin Atlantic and founder of the Tall Buildings Fire Safety Network, Russ Timpson advises companies of all sizes on business continuity. In December 2015, he was awarded the title of International Fire Professional of the Year at Fire Magazine's annual Excellence in Fire & Emergency Awards. His expertise extends to advising on a wide range of measures companies can put in place to stop a disaster before it happens and to mitigate the effects when it does. 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: "Resilience Breakfast 8 September 2016". Full details of the venue near Ramsgate will follow with confirmation. There will be plenty of time available to promote your products and services to other delegates.

2. Trade Delegation To Ostend: 14 – 15th October 2016

Supported by its sister body the Dover District Chamber of Commerce, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber is organising a Trade Delegation to visit Ostend on 14th – 15th October 2016. In liaison with our good friends at DFDS Seaways, the visit will bring Chamber members from East Kent to meet companies in the EU interested in establishing post-Brexit commercial links. Arriving on the

afternoon of Friday, 14th October 2016, Chamber members will enjoy an informal meeting with a selection of local companies interested in their products and services followed by a formal dinner and presentations. Overnight accommodation at a central hotel will allow for some time on Saturday, 15th October for follow up meetings or leisure before returning on the Dunkirk – Dover Ferry in the afternoon. Further details will be available exclusively to Chamber members later this month so that the next time people ask you “What can be done about Brexit?”, you can tell them “New business opportunities for East Kent companies.”

3. Chamber Golf Day 25th October 2016

The Chamber is delighted to confirm that 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 2016 Chamber Golf Day on 25th October 2016 will feature a glittering array of prizes. Companies are invited to submit teams of 4 players, see attached booking form. Sponsorship opportunities are available on each hole of the course and the prize table will again feature significant contributions from Chamber members keen to benefit from East Kent's leading corporate golf tournament. For more details, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Golf Day 2016”.

4. Suggestion To Avoid Congestion

Severe congestion blocking the main roads leading to Dover during the first weekend of the school holidays last month provoked the wrath of Dover District Chamber President Charlie Elphicke MP who described the traffic queues as “completely unacceptable” and called on the UK government to apologise. There was little relief available from public services during a wait of up to 16 hours for families, coach passengers and lorry drivers stranded on the main roads leading to the port. Our President's views were echoed by the much respected head of the Port of Calais, Jean-Marc Puissesseau, who confessed to being ashamed of the effect on British people heading for France. Directing his ire towards French officials he said: “When we know that there will be big traffic, as it was yesterday because it was starting holidays, it should be organised.” Many Chamber members will recall Jean-Marc Puissesseau's statement of 2013 that: “All that is good for Calais is good for Dover” and it follows that the reverse is true as well. What is bad for Dover is bad for Calais and is bad for every local company trading over that weekend, especially for restaurants, shops and businesses expecting deliveries. One hotel manager told the Chamber: “Some of the guests booked into our hotel never arrived and we now have the thankless task of arranging refunds with little chance of recovering the loss of income.” Chief Executive of your Chamber, David Foley, made these points to reporter Tom Savvides in a live broadcast on ITV Meridian News stating: “This was a situation that was predictable, it was preventable, it took a long time to find and we have yet to discover if it has been fixed”. Calling for a more effective liaison with the authorities by Dover Harbour Board, he listed the difficulties faced by many companies in the East Kent coastal business community: “Not everyone works nine to five, Monday to Friday. Deliveries could not be made, staff could not get to work and most importantly the customers were simply not there.” The Chamber will be working with public bodies to avoid a repeat of the nightmare traffic conditions that impacted so badly on so many of our Chamber members.

5. Past Events

Images from a selection of past events can be viewed on the official Chamber photographer's website at www.rosieantonphotography.co.uk/menu/clients/dover-thanet-and-east-kent-chamber.

Recent contributions include pictures from the visit of the Danish Ambassador His Excellency Claus Grube, Chamber Question Time, Make Business Rates Your Business and Ebbsfleet Garden City: Growing Opportunities For You.

6. Conference Report

First on the podium at the Chamber's Managing Change conference was Tim Checketts, formerly Chief of Staff at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and the current secretary of the Royal St George's Golf Club. He gave a pithy account of the usefulness of having a clear understanding of acceptable success criteria before embarking on any large scale radical changes. He suggested that in some circumstances a company may be serving the best interests of its staff, customers and shareholders by accepting an 85% success rate with a particular initiative and moving on rather than wasting energy and resources in striving for an unachievable complete compliance.

7. What About Thanet Earth?

The UK's leading hydroponics facility at Thanet Earth was represented by its Managing Director Des Kingsley who gave an insight into a possible route to food self-sufficiency in the UK. It would require significant changes to our inherited view of what constitutes good agricultural management to repeat the Thanet Earth complex across the country, but it is worth noting that the UK now imports over half of its food supplies. The recent problems at the Port of Dover have illustrated all too clearly that there are security risks attached to an over-dependency on the goodwill of remote suppliers. The resounding success of Thanet Earth remains an inspiration to young scientists throughout East Kent. Combined Heat & Power technology ensures that tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers are grown in ideal conditions that not only ensure a low carbon footprint but contribute electricity to the National Grid as well.

8. Chief Cashier of Bank of England

The keynote speaker at the Chamber conference was Victoria Cleland, Chief Cashier of the Bank of England. Her convincing arguments about the advantages of polymer banknotes also show that changes to our most familiar objects and behaviour can be generally accepted if presented fairly and accurately. The new £5 note is made of thin flexible plastic, will be introduced on 13th September 2016 and will feature a picture of Winston Churchill. Expected to last 2.5 times longer than the paper version it will replace, Victoria assured Chamber members that "You can spill red wine on it and it will wipe away cleanly". More surprising to her audience was the revelation that the largest denomination note issued by the bank is not for the sum of £50, as often assumed, but for £100 million. Not available from supermarket cashpoints, these special notes are kept in secure storage and play an important role in backing the value of notes from Scottish and Northern Irish banks.

9. Other Speakers

Additional insights on successful change management were provided by the Head of Planning at Southern Water, Dr Alison Hoyle, the Managing Director of Europe's largest manufacturer of leisure hovercraft, Emma Pullen, the Chairman of Ramsgate Ferry, Dr Bill Moses and the Head of Policy & Briefing at the Post Office, Mike Granville. The largest retailer in the UK with nearly 11,800 outlets, the Post Office has just undergone the most radical transformation ever experienced since its establishment in 1660. Heading resolutely towards non-subsidised sustainability, the new Post Office prides itself on being a commercial multichannel business with a public purpose. It is a remarkable fact that 99.7% of the UK population lives within three miles of a Post Office. Throughout the day's presentations and during those valuable discussions at lunchtime and breaks, it was apparent just what a huge task is involved in implementing successful change in

established organisations. From the examples provided, successful change management seems to require strong leadership from senior directors who share with all staff a common strategy that fully recognises the needs of its customers, is not fixated on imposed targets and yet manages to maintain and promote genuine two-way communication with workers and suppliers. Does that describe your company?

10. How Are We Doing?

The latest unemployment figures list the total number of people claiming either Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit, as reported in July 2016 by the Office for National Statistics with selected extracts published by the ever-excellent department of Strategic Business Development & Intelligence at Kent County Council. These figures portray a snapshot of our local economy and provide an impartial measure of business activity in East Kent. Thanet remains the unemployment blackspot in Kent with the highest number (2,645) of registered unemployment benefit claimants. Year-on-year unemployment has grown 13.3%. In June 2013, the number of claimants in Thanet was 4,578. Thus, over a period of three years, unemployment has in fact fallen by 42%. The Dover district has also seen a rise in unemployment in the year to June 2016 of 5.4%, but in June 2013, 2,293 adults were registered claimants indicating a three-year fall of 45%. Similarly, the three-year figures for Kent show a reduction in the jobless total from 31,869 to 14,040, a fall of 56%. South East England has reduced claimants from 119,382 in June 2013 to 56,365 in June 2016, a fall of 53%. However, no matter which rose-tinted prism is used to view the data, it is glaringly apparent that the East Kent coastal business community has continued to lag behind the rest of the county and indeed the South East region in its recovery over the last three years. More worrying still perhaps are the figures for the last 12 months which show that Kent as a whole has increased its registered unemployed by 6.3% in stark contrast to the South East region which has reduced its jobless figures by 2.9% and Great Britain by 4.0%. After a period of recovery since 2008, Kent has suffered a challenging 12 months to June 2016. Some will claim that Brexit is the reason for the pronounced downturn and will probably claim the same for many other unpleasant facts as well. This is of course a wholly false conclusion as regards the unemployment numbers which largely relate to a period before the referendum of 23rd June 2016 when the expectation was that the UK would vote to remain in the EU. But, as any sharp operator will tell you: “You should never let a good crisis go to waste”.

11. Give Us The Facts

Unemployment

	June 2016		Since June 2015	Since June 2013
	Unemployed	% of workforce	%	%
Thanet District	2,645	3.3%	+13.3%	-42.2%
Dover District	1,260	1.9%	+5.4%	-45.1%
Canterbury	1,195	1.2%	+20.7%	-44.0%
Shepway	1,290	2.0%	+8.4%	-47.8%
Kent	14,040	1.5%	+6.3%	-55.9%
South East	56,365	1.0%	-2.9%	-52.8%
Great Britain	706,385	1.8%	-4.0%	-48.7%

12. Keep It Clear

As part of its community engagement programme, Southern Water has launched a campaign called “Keep it clear”. Targeted at preventing blockages and interruptions to wastewater disposal, the initiative calls on commercial and residential users to flush the “The Three Ps” and nothing more. One of the Ps stands for Paper. We have sufficient faith in the practical skills and extensive knowledge of our Chamber members not to need to explain the composition of the other two words beginning with P. Apparently, cleansing wipes, nappies, ear buds, dental floss, plastic razors, industrial waste, gravel and a whole list of unsavoury items cause unnecessary blockages in our drains. We learn that such items should be bagged and binned. Southern Water has offered residents the chance to win a prize. If you can answer a few simple questions about waste disposal, you could win a handsome waste bin, described by the utility as “A designer Wesco Bin in the colour of your choice worth £130”. Enthusiastic quizzers lacking a designer waste bin should click on www.southernwater.co.uk/winabin.

13. Brexit & East Kent

A few Chamber members have expressed their concerns about the effects of Brexit on their balance sheets. For some companies, these anxieties are due to an alleged government failure to prepare for a majority voting in favour of leaving the European Union. For others, it is the result of the vote itself. The early intervention of the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, was a significant factor in calming the markets which in the first three days after the vote saw a trade-weighted fall in the value of the pound sterling of 9% and a 14% fall in the FTSE 250. One Chamber member wrote about a fall of over £800,000 in the year end income which his company is obliged to post to its overseas parent; this is compounded by an additional sharp increase in the costs of its raw materials. There will doubtlessly be winners and losers in the fluctuations of the exchange rate since 23rd June 2016, but many more Chamber members will wonder why more attention had not been given to planning for the effects of an anti-EU vote. Chamber members will have some sympathy for the heartfelt plea at the end of the same letter: “I am totally disillusioned with the lack of a credible plan to take our nation forward since the referendum. I can only hope stability returns sooner rather than later, before we need to take action to protect our business”. Thankfully, some stability has returned to the financial markets since that letter dated 6th July 2016. Also, that particular East Kent company, a significant employer with over 100 staff, benefits from a far-sighted Managing Director who is well-equipped to manage change and will doubtlessly make the best of the challenges he faces.

14. KPMG and Bank of England On Brexit

The Vice Chair of KPMG UK, Melanie Richards, has described a 2-2-2 Plan which she says relates to “The first two weeks, the first two months and then the first two years”. She adds that: “There is no magic in that last two years bit because you are always planning. But, I think the first two weeks and the first two months are pretty important to make sure you have got yourself in gear”. That is sound advice, you may think, but likely to be expensive if you want specific guidance on your own company’s prospects. The Dover District Chamber of Commerce has been liaising with the Bank of England for the last 165 years but can find little cheer in the dispassionate data collected by the bank’s experts in the latest Agents’ Summary of August 2016 which forecasts “a negative effect, overall, on capital spending, hiring and turnover over the coming year”, although manufacturing fares a little better. Wellington boot and umbrella manufacturers may be the only ones to find

some comfort in the revelation that: “Consumer spending growth had also slowed, although that appeared to have partly reflected the effects of unusually wet weather.”

15. Reduce Your Energy Bills

Chamber member Zero Trace Procurement warns of rises in energy bills due to possible changes unrelated to wholesale prices. As Procurement Director at the ZTP Canterbury Office, Martyn Young is able to utilize a unique trace management system to facilitate the tender process for each new corporate client, reducing energy bills and contributing to enhanced profit margins. If that is not good enough for you, take note that Martyn trained as a Chartered Management Accountant and can even make the uses of data cubes in forecasting models linked to multi-disciplinary profit optimization sound interesting. To bring a smile to your face when calculating your savings on energy costs, email martynyong@ztpuk.com or telephone 01227 203109.

16. Ramsgate Ferry

A recent report in the Thanet Gazette quoted a Thanet District Council spokesman as saying: “Arrangements for the commencement of sailings to Ramsgate Port are still ongoing. Although timings have changed, positive negotiations are still ongoing.” This was greeted with some mirth by one local businessman who contacted the Chamber. “They have been on-going since Sally Line withdrew in 1999”, he said, “The problem is nothing is going on.” Of course there has been some activity with the arrival of car imports, but as another Chamber member noted last week: “As far as I know, no parked car has ever spent the night at a local hotel or bought a meal in a restaurant”. The Chamber notes the progress of Ramsgate Ferry which is campaigning to restore passenger ferries from Ramsgate. With an estimated economic impact of £6,000,000 a year from a revived cross-channel operation, there is no doubt that retailers, hoteliers, attractions and suppliers will be following progress closely. On 4th August 2016, Ramsgate Ferry presented its 14th Roadshow to an audience of travel and tourism professionals at The Dorchester Hotel in London’s Park Lane. For more details, see www.ramsgateferry.com.

17. New Members

The Chamber is pleased to welcome the following new members to the Chamber: Town & Country Housing of Tunbridge Wells, tel: 01892 501426; MLM Consulting Engineers of Ashford tel: 01233 610530; Total Jobs Contacts of Ramsgate tel: 07803 163051; Princes Leisure Group of Sandwich tel: 01304 613022; Ash Civil Construction of Ramsgate tel: 01843 593268; Simply Auto Enrolment Solutions of Bury tel: 0800 00 96299; Wade Business Solutions of Broadstairs tel: 03333 660721; Café Rouge of Westwood Cross tel: 01843 808943; Cummins Power Systems of Manston Park tel: 01843 255000; Jonathan Viner Gallery of Margate tel: 07968 548764; Southern Water of Worthing tel: 01634 824201; Myspace Self Storage of Broadstairs tel: 01843 602020; The Freedman of Walmer tel: 07793 321126; The Retreat of Sandwich tel: 07951 057730; Tammet Systems of Aylesham tel: 01227 711072; Brilliant Hotels of Dover tel: 01304 821230; Beautiville Salon of Cliftonville tel: 01843296870.

18. Robert Maxwell

Finally, here is an account related by a Chamber member that may be of interest to us all and in particular to any of the 30,000 Mirror Group pensioners who discovered to their horror that the funds set aside to support their comfortable old age had been plundered by Robert Maxwell. His demise in November 1991 provoked a series of enquiries into his business affairs that revealed

some unsavoury practices and led directly to the 1995 Pensions Act. Known to his sternest critics at Private Eye as Cap'n Bob, Maxwell was prone to emotional outbursts and instant decision-making that increasingly impacted on his financial acumen. Proffered by a distinguished Chamber member, we have some doubts about this story but we leave it to our good-looking readers to judge for themselves. "What happened was Maxwell saw a dishevelled worker, tie undone, shirt hanging out, passing his open office door and he shouted at him to halt. When the individual replied: 'I'm sorry, I can't, I'm in a hurry', Maxwell stormed out of his office and blasted the beleaguered employee with the words: 'In that case you are sacked. I can't have workers like you in my company'. Calling for his cashier to attend immediately, he bellowed at the worker: 'What is your monthly salary, tell me now, come on, come on, I'm a busy man.'. 'I don't know', came the hesitant reply, 'it depends, each month is different.' Grabbing £2,000 from his cashier, he handed the cash over to the worker and said in front of the astonished staff now accumulating around the scene: 'Do you see how generous I am? This man is sacked, but I am sweetening the pill. Now make sure he is never allowed in this building again.'" As our Chamber member relates: "The worker was in fact a courier delivering a parcel who had never worked for the Daily Mirror in his life. That summer he took his family on a splendid holiday, all courtesy of an angry Robert Maxwell." The message for fellow Chamber members and bull-headed company owners alike is that if you really want the pleasure of sacking particular individuals you dislike, you have to make sure you employ them first.

© David Foley 14th August 2016

David Foley
Chief Executive
Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Dover District Chamber of Commerce
Email: davidfoley@tekc.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited (TEKC) is a company registered in England and Wales with company number 4518138. Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited, Kent Innovation Centre, Thanet Reach Business Park, Millennium Way, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2QQ. Tel: 01843 609289 Important: This e-mail may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient it may be unlawful for you to read, copy, distribute, disclose or otherwise use the information used in this e-mail. If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail, please telephone, fax or e-mail us immediately. Errors and omissions may occur in the contents of this e-mail arising out of or in connection with data transmission, network malfunction or failure, machine or software error or malfunction, or operator error. TEKC accepts no responsibility for any such errors or omissions and you are advised to confirm the accuracy of the contents of this e-mail before relying on it for any purpose. All the information in this email is written in good faith and believed to be correct at the time of writing. TEKC cannot be held responsible for any agreements, financial transactions or liabilities incurred in relation to any of the companies, organisations or events mentioned in this email. You are advised to seek the appropriate professional advice before undertaking any financial transaction or incurring any liability of any description.