



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Market Hard, Sell Easy; Marketing With A Difference: 10 Feb 2017

The Thanet and Dover Chambers of Commerce will be hosting a Chamber Business Networking Breakfast on Friday, 10th February 2017 from 0730 hrs to 0859 hrs. Targeted at Chamber members wishing to boost their turnover for the year, the presenters will focus on innovative methods to bring customers to your door, to your website or to your registered agents at home or overseas. This is not just another plea to promote social media. Whatever the size of your company, you will be happy to hear a fresh approach on how to make it more profitable. Good marketing makes for easy selling. Even if you have not been dreaming of rewarding yourself with a new Jaguar 3.0 V6 340PS, you should still attend this Chamber business networking breakfast. Confirmed cyclists will also find plenty of interest. After all, a Trek Yoshitomo Nara bicycle costs three times more than the Jaguar. By contrast, the cost to Chamber members of attending our breakfast meeting is a modest £15 and 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: "Market Hard, Sell Easy Breakfast". Full details of the venue near Sandwich will follow with confirmation.

2. Be Wise About Water: 24 February 2016

Of all the standing charges that businesses are obliged to pay, the price of your water supply is often the least considered. That is all about to change with potentially significant benefits to businesses, charities and public sector organisations. To stay ahead of the competition, Chamber members are invited to attend our Be Wise About Water Chamber business networking breakfast to hear what market deregulation means for your company and for your costs. The Commercial Director of one of the UK's leading water retailers will explain what will happen when Business Stream enters the East Kent market next April and Southern Water will no longer be responsible for your non-household water bill. Booking is essential. To

reserve your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line: "Be Wise About Water Breakfast". Full details of the venue near Sandwich will follow with confirmation.

3. New Funding for Education and the Arts

We have been asked to find educational and arts organisation looking for financial backing for projects that test different cultural learning strategies. A fund of as much as £2.5 million has been earmarked for research into the impact on academic attainment of different cultural learning strategies. The funders are looking at the effects on resilience, self-confidence and creativity through activities that involve arts and cultural activities, particularly in areas of high deprivation. A wide range of artistic practice may qualify including visits to venues and exhibitions as well as classroom-based endeavours. Applications from arts and cultural organisations, schools, universities and other non-profit organisations should be submitted before 15th February 2017. Chamber members are invited to email admin@doverchamber.co.uk with the subject line "Arts Funding Info" for more details and full information on how to apply.

4. Thanet Parkway Station: 9th March 2017

Offering a huge boost to the local economy, the construction of Thanet Parkway Station promises to bring a dramatic cut in the journey times between Cliffsend and London. Whatever the future of the Manston Airport/Stone Hill Park site, the arrival of an adjacent high speed train service to the nation's capital will undoubtedly encourage inward investment and stimulate economic growth. The Chamber has accepted an offer by the Thanet Parkway Station project management company to brief Chamber members on the latest developments and schedules. You will be invited to give your feedback to help shape the project prior to submission of a planning application. Chamber members wishing to attend this business breakfast on Thursday, 9th March 2017 from 0730 hrs to 0859 hrs should email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Thanet Parkway Station". The fee of £15 for Chamber members includes coffee on arrival and a full English breakfast with a vegetarian option. Booking is essential. Full details of the venue near the station site will follow with confirmation.

5. Dates For Your Diary

In response to requests from Chamber members, the following dates have been booked for breakfast meetings: 6 April 2017 on the theme of Property, Commercial & Residential and 19 May 2017 for Manufacturing. Another Chamber cross-channel day trip is provisionally booked for 23rd June 2017. Members can also expect another great Chamber Golf Day at Royal St George's Golf Club Sandwich on 24 October 2017. Images from a selection of recent past events are available to view on our official Chamber Photographer website at <http://www.rosieantonphotography.co.uk/menu/clients/dover-thanet-and-east-kent-chamber>

6. Thanet Draft Local Plan

Chamber members have until 17th March 2017 to comment on their preferred options in the Draft Local Plan for Thanet and to propose any changes to the Local Plan Preferred Options 2015. Not everyone is enamored of the opportunity to analyse their reaction to "mutual proximity, accessibility and supporting amenity infrastructure" or feels obliged to be enthused by "the need to clearly demonstrate how the SPA mitigation strategy as set out in Policy SP25 is being met". But, before you reject the dense technical prose of the economic planners, you should be aware that the main issues at stake will probably have a considerable bearing on your business and the commercial future of the district. The changes in focus include the re-designation of the former Manston airport site for mixed use development with 2,500 new dwellings and up to 85,000sqm of employment and leisure floorspace, as well as suggestions for Local Greenspace Designations. Full details are available on the website at <https://consult.thanet.gov.uk/consult.ti/TLPPOR/consultationHome>. Before you submit your comments,

you might like to read the useful Frequently Asked Questions listed under the heading Consultation Documents.

7. East Kent College And Gary Rhodes

Such is the success of East Kent College these days with its growing status as the official Further Education provider in the Dover, Thanet, Shepway and Canterbury districts that it is easy to forget that before the impetus generated by an invigorated senior management team that followed the appointment of Graham Razez as Principal, it was called simply Thanet College and tended to be described somewhat disparagingly as “That catering college in Broadstairs”. One Chamber member has reminded us of its most famous graduate, Gary Rhodes, and relates: “At a time when all the TV chefs were trying to outdo each other with ever more fanciful French sauces, Gary Rhodes was one of the first to celebrate British cooking and he owes it all to Thanet College”. Whether Thanet College can claim all the credit is perhaps a matter of conjecture, but there is no doubt in the minds of many celebrated chefs that Gary Rhodes made a major contribution to raising the status of British food, as confirmed in the This Is Your Life episode of September 1996. Gary’s spikey hair may have surprised Albert Roux of Le Gavroche, but Peter Barratt, Gary’s tutor at Thanet College, prefers to recall the Queen Mother’s mayonnaise when he joins Michael Aspel on stage after 11 minutes of the programme. The friendly banter of a teacher with his former student will bring joy to anyone who has ever taught a class of any description, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2IGXoICW60>.

8. Are Heavy Goods Vehicles Dangerous On Our Roads?

As many chamber members are involved in transport and logistics in one form or another, we are always grateful for updates from the Road Haulage Association. Apart from the odd unfortunate split infinitive as in “The RHA strives to proactively lobby issues on behalf of its members”, see <https://www.rha.uk.net/policy-campaigning/top-industry-issues>, it must be acknowledged that the RHA is a highly effective body that campaigns vigorously on issues such as fuel prices and road improvements from which every local company can benefit. We are grateful to the RHA for an update on the safety statistics for Heavy Goods Vehicles which will bring some comfort to transport operators in East Kent who are repeatedly hounded by ill-informed criticism of their vehicles and drivers. The RHA tells us: “HGVs have fewer killed-or-serious-injury accidents (KSIs) than the national average for all vehicles and have greatly improved their safety performance, new statistics from the Department for Transport show. HGVs were involved in 78 KSIs/billion miles 2015. This compares with: 117 KSIs per billion miles for all vehicles, 50% higher; and 118KSIs/billion miles for HGVs in 2004, showing a one-third improvement in HGV involvement in KSIs. Trucks do a high proportion of mileage on motorways, the safest of the UK’s roads.” In other words, lorries are safer than cars.

9. East Kent Councils Merger

Chamber members know that Thanet & East Kent Chamber and the Dover District Chamber of Commerce have deep roots in the commercial life of East Kent. The archives of the Dover Chamber reveal that there have been many attempts since the year 1850 to harmonise the activities of councils across the east of the county. Now it seems that the pressing need to reduce standing costs may indeed lead to a merger. Chamber members have been invited to comment on whether they agree with the conclusion that: “a single new district comprising the four East Kent coastal districts makes sense.” Transition costs of £6.8 million are projected to be more than covered in the savings that will be made over the six-year period from 2019/20 to 2024/25. Another factor to consider is that if the four district councils in Dover, Thanet, Shepway and Canterbury cannot agree on a merger, it could be imposed on them by central government. There are therefore some powerful reasons why your views should be taken into account. Details can be downloaded from the website at

10. New Chamber Manager

We are delighted to announce the arrival of a new member of staff, Mary Campbell. Known to many in East Kent in her previous position with Adecco, the world's largest HR company, Mary has extensive experience of the strengths and challenges facing local companies. Her in-depth knowledge of HR issues and a close familiarity with the property and maritime sectors serve to extend the range of direct support available to Chamber members and ensure that the Chamber's back office operations should keep pace with the rapid growth of the Chamber's activities. Mary welcomes enquiries from current and new members alike and can be reached by email to info@tekc.co.uk or by telephone to 01843 609289 or 01304 892484.

11. How Are We Doing?

Year-on-year unemployment data seems to indicate a sad picture for our county with the latest figures posted for December 2016 showing an increase of 11.1% in unemployment benefit claimants. The steepest annual rise has been in the Canterbury district which has seen an increase of almost 24% since December 2015. Thanet has the highest overall percentage of claimants at 3.4%, nearly five times higher than in Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells and three times the average for South East England. However, the annual comparison masks a substantial decrease in unemployment over the last four years. Since December 2012, the four districts of Shepway, Canterbury, Dover and Thanet have seen a fall in benefit claimants of between 50% and 57%. The unemployment rate is a significant guide to economic health. East Kent may be currently suffering from a winter cold, but it has definitively recovered from a serious illness. The family doctor is hopeful that the medicine produced by manufacturing, property and infrastructure development will ensure a restoration to full health before the end of the year.

12. Give Us The Facts

Unemployment

	Dec 2016		Since Dec 2015	Since Dec 2012
	Unemployed	% of workforce	%	%
Thanet District	2,750	3.4%	+17.3%	-57.1%
Dover District	1,400	2.1%	+12.9%	-53.3%
Canterbury	1,325	1.2%	+23.8%	-58.3%
Shepway	1,355	2.1%	+5.4%	-49.6%
Kent	14,825	1.6%	+11.1%	-43.1%
South East	59,395	1.1%	+5.8%	-45.0%
England	606,000	1.7%	+4.2%	-48.5%

13. Minimum Wage

The Chamber always welcomes the opportunity to represent the views of East Kent companies to government. We would like to thank Chamber members in the sectors of our local economy in focus who have responded to our requests to give their views and have accepted an invitation to meet the key decision-makers at the Low Pay Commission who advise the government. Chamber members may be aware that the 18th Low Pay Commission (LPC) report confirmed the government's plans to "move away from a low wage, high tax, high welfare society and encourage a model of higher pay and higher

productivity” (BIS, 2016b). Of course, this is set against two major changes in wage policy due to the UK’s vote to leave the European Union and the introduction of the National Living Wage (NLW) which is applicable to workers aged 25 and over. Chamber members may not be aware that the NLW is subject to a target level. The government’s stated ambition is that by the year 2020 the NLW will be around £9. The panel of commissioners who advise the government tend to be unanimous in their recommendations and so it is important that your Chamber of Commerce ensures that the trading position of East Kent companies and the particular strengths and challenges that we face in this part of the UK are reflected in their recommendation to government.

14. What Wages Must I Pay?

Your wages and salary rates are a matter for you, your accountant, your HR Manager, HMRC, your staff and your business plans for the next five years. What the Chamber can confirm is that if you wish to avoid spending time at Her Majesty’s pleasure in a small room with full board, a restricted menu and strictly limited opportunities to watch your favourite soaps, you should read the table below. A point to ponder is that although the economic cycle has fluctuated considerably since 2010, minimum wages have inexorably risen. Despite what your mum and dad may have told you, what goes up, does not always come down.

	25 and over	21 - 25	18 - 20	Under 18	Apprentice
April 2017	£7.50	£7.05	£5.60	£4.05	£3.50
October 2016	£7.20	£6.95	£5.55	£4.00	£3.40
April 2016	£7.20	£6.70	£5.30	£3.87	£3.30
		21 and over			
2015		£6.70	£5.30	£3.87	£3.30
2014		£6.50	£5.13	£3.79	£2.73
2013		£6.31	£5.03	£3.72	£2.68
2012		£6.19	£4.98	£3.68	£2.65
2011		£6.08	£4.98	£3.68	£2.60
2010		£5.93	£4.92	£3.64	£2.50

15. Spotting A Winner

The Chamber is always pleased to celebrate the successes of members. We hear with great delight that SACO AEI Polymers UK achieved record results at the end of the 2016. Part of a resurgent manufacturing sector in East Kent, AEI is a technology driven company in Sandwich which develops and manufactures thermoplastic & thermoset compounds, additives and catalyst master-batches for the wire & cable, pipe & tubing, building & construction and specialty markets. Also thriving in the building market is Barnard Systems of Dover with its steel modular construction operations. An increasingly buoyant property sector has produced excellent results at Eurocell Building Plastics in Ramsgate where turnover is at the top of the local leagues for the product, which is more than can be stated for Mansfield Town, the favourite football team of Eurocell’s manager, Dave Ashley. After all, when Doncaster Rovers is ahead of you in the table, it must be a matter of concern. If Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Principal of Canterbury Christ Church, ever wishes to trade in the futures market at the London Stock Exchange, he will certainly have every right to claim he knows how to spot a winner. His invitation to Dr Ted Malloch to speak at the North Holmes Campus in September 2015 on the theme of “A Responsible Way to Reorient Global

Business” will surely pay dividends. It is not only the middle name of “Roosevelt” that equips Dr Malloch to succeed, he is widely tipped to be the new US Ambassador to European Union with concomitant responsibilities over trade and security. Gareth Doodes, Head of Dover College, is another innovator in education who believes in bringing the real world into his school. Detective Inspector Bill Thornton of Kent Police was the guest speaker at the Headmaster’s Lecture last week. Dover College students and local dignitaries were treated to a fascinating insight into the emergency service that keeps us safe in our beds at night. Dover’s member of parliament Charlie Elphicke is one of many who have praised Kent Police for its performance last April when ‘mindless louts’ came to Dover and received a prompt and appropriate response from Bill Thornton and his team. As Charlie Elphicke put it: “More than 60 people have been charged and several jailed. This is exactly the sort of no-nonsense response the people of Dover and Deal demand.” Could DI Thornton be a future Chief of Kent Police? Chamber members will follow his career with interest.

16. Don’t Waste Your Time On Soaps

We have received some stern words about the frivolous behaviour of some workers who spend time watching inane television dramas instead of devoting their free hours to devising how to improve the profits of their company. A Chamber member whom we shall call Keith clearly feels angry that so much entrepreneurial drive and corporate progress is being blunted by the obsession some employees have with soap operas and the like. As he put it: “Why do people spend so much time watching Coronation Street? Personally, I have no interest at all in why Kevin Webster and his business partner Tyrone sacked Kev’s daughter after the arson attack. As for East Enders, why should anyone care if the reunion between sisters Denise and Kim Fox never takes place, especially after Kim was left so angry by Denise’s decision not to attend the family meal she had organised to say goodbye to Emerald.” Keith continued his diatribe by dismissing The Archers: “I can’t understand why people listen to this outdated programme. Frankly, why anyone in Ambridge put up with Rob Titchener for so long is beyond me. It was clear from the moment he met Helen, that he was a dangerous psychopath. But you have to feel sorry for Henry”. Keith concluded his criticisms by singling out the amount of time wasted by devotees of the BBC’s Casualty. “Alright, it is probably right for Charlie to marry Duffy at long last, but you would think he would have realised much sooner that a simple wedding day was what she wanted and when Louise stormed into Noel’s job interview, she may have saved his bacon, but her impetuosity will count against her in the long run”. Clearly, Kevin is not one to shirk his duty to his shareholders and his determination not to spend any time following television and radio dramas is very much to his credit.

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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.

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