



Your Business Bulletin from East Kent Chambers of Commerce

30th April 2020 Issue No.: 220

1. Recovery & Resilience Webinar for Companies 6 May 2020 at 1500 hrs

The Chamber is offering an expert briefing on how companies can respond and recover from a crisis. Horizonscan is a global leader in advising blue-chip companies on crisis management, winning a place in the CIR Risk Management Hall of Fame alongside Vodafone and Aviva for its pioneering approach to managing risk. Chief Executive Russ Timpson will offer advice and guidance to all participants. The webinar is free to all Chamber members as well as their associates, suppliers and clients. To register your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Recovery Private Sector 6 May 2020" and quote the email addresses of the participants. You will receive a prompt acknowledgement and full joining instructions will follow before 6 May 2020.

2. Recovery & Resilience Webinar for the Public Sector 7 May 2020 at 1500 hrs

The Chamber is offering an expert briefing on how public sector bodies in East Kent can respond and recover from a crisis. This webinar is open to East Kent councillors, council officers, NHS staff, government employees, care home managers and workers in the public sector. Horizonscan is a global leader in advising organisations in a wide variety of sectors, Chief Executive Russ Timpson will consider government best practice at home and overseas and offer detailed guidance on crisis management for public bodies. The webinar is free to all participants with an email address at a government-funded body. To register your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Recovery Public Sector 7 May 2020" and quote the email addresses of the participants. You will receive a prompt acknowledgement and full joining instructions will follow before 7 May 2020.

3. PPE Crisis in East Kent

We thank all those Chamber members who have contacted us with offers of support for our care workers in East Kent. Our doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, medical orderlies, carers, NHS staff and all front-line workers are battling above and beyond the call of duty in their efforts on our behalf. Many East Kent companies have responded generously with a range of skills and practical support and we thank them unreservedly for their whole-hearted commitment and community spirit. Offers of Personal Protection Equipment have been warmly welcomed. We have also received urgent requests for PPE from managers working in medical centres, care homes and hospitals. As a result, with other committed bodies we are looking to organise a scheme whereby the supplier and users are brought together on a local East Kent basis. This is intended to supplement and not replace any current channels.

4. PPE Crisis Response

The East Kent PPE (EKPPE) scheme seeks to break the logjam between PPE suppliers and PPE purchasers. EKPPE will not engage in financial transactions between parties nor will it invoice for goods, handle payments or engage in financial responsibilities of any description; these functions remain a commercial arrangement between supplier and purchaser. EKPPE will conduct some limited screening to monitor specifications, suppliers and purchasers but neither EKPPE nor the Dover District Chamber of Commerce can accept liability for any aspect of the service. EKPPE will make every effort to respond promptly to every request with goodwill and efficiency but it may not always be possible to provide a match between demand, supply and delivery. We ask that all communications should be sent by email to admin@doverchamber.co.uk with the correct subject line and at a specified time period as follows:

PPE Requirement

Between 1700 and 1800 hrs from organisations needing PPE.

PPE Supplier

At any time of day or night. From organisations or individuals who can supply PPE.

PPE Transport

Between 0700 hrs and 1100 hrs. From organisations able to pick up and deliver PPE within East Kent.

PPE Volunteer

From logistic professionals able to offer administrative skills in support of EKPPE.

All organisations and individuals communicating with EKPPE agree that operations will conform to UK government advice and guidelines as outlined at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>. They also agree that their contact details and their emails can be shared with other EKPPE users. Without express written permission, EKPPE will not use the data for any marketing purpose other than to advertise the service and to communicate with other EKPPE users.

5. Why do we need EKPPE?

Given the current mismatch between PPE supply and demand, it is extremely difficult for the UK government to record and respond to the local need by a care home in Dover for 2 boxes of 100 large latex-free premium vinyl examination gloves or by a mental health charity in Ramsgate for 100 FFP face masks or a doctor's surgery in Deal needing 50 x 500ml bottles of hand sanitiser. The skills and professional resources available to the East Kent Chambers of Commerce suggest that we have a reasonable chance of meeting some of those needs, thus reducing the pressure on the NHS and all that entails. We have already found a source of approved face masks at £1.10 each ex-works; similar products have been seen for sale retail at £10.00 per unit. EKPPE represents an opportunity for furloughed workers, skilled professionals, established suppliers and committed volunteers to join us in a short-term response designed to mitigate long-term damage to our East Kent community.

6. East Kent Chambers of Commerce Media Watch

Although managed and financed separately, Dover District Chamber of Commerce and Thanet & East Kent Chamber are often asked to comment on business issues relating to companies trading in East Kent. Under the banner of East Kent Chambers of Commerce, we do our best with media organisations to reflect the needs and interests of companies operating in our East Kent coastal business community. Last year, we received much attention from overseas channels wanting to know local attitudes towards our imminent departure from the European Union. The importance of East Kent to many other non-EU members was illustrated by the visit to the Dover Chamber by a team from Dagbladet, Norway's leading newspaper. Domestically, BBC Radio Kent, BBC Television, TRT World News, ITV Meridian and Sky News were all keen to hear the authentic voice of Chamber members.

7. That's past history, what about this year?

All history is in the past, that is why it is called history. As for East Kent's future, the year 2020 began in splendid fashion with some companies forecasting their best-ever returns. The promise of The Open in July 2020 and an expected growth in property, manufacturing and tourism had given cause for considerable optimism. Indeed, our foreword to the 2020 East Kent Business Directory made a specific request. "Let's be especially nice to our visitors this year. They come here, they spend their money and they go away again". Of course, since the beginning of the lockdown on 23rd March, they stopped coming, they stopped spending their money and so many revenue-earning opportunities stopped too. Our feedback from Chamber members was featured on ITV Meridian News when we stated that: "If this goes on beyond the middle of June, then this will have a severe cascading effect on the whole of the local economy". Some well-established companies such as George Hammond PLC of Dover and Shepherd Neame of Faversham can rely on their strong balance sheets, well-managed property portfolios and enlightened staff relations to have every confidence in retaining their customer base when travel restrictions are lifted. Shepherd Neame will certainly retain much goodwill after reopening its on-line shop earlier this week and promising a donation to the NHS for every transaction completed before the end of May. Other businesses of more recent vintage may not survive if the lockdown endures for longer than three months. Standing costs, interest charges and the potential consequences of wrongful trading may see some companies go to the wall however generous and understanding the government might be with small business rates relief, small business grant funds and guaranteed loans.

8. What can I do now to help me and my organisation?

The short answer is of course, to sign up for our webinar on Resilience and Recovery where you will hear practical, easy to follow guidance on how to safeguard your future and protect your ROI from being RIP. If you have difficulties in understanding your business continuity insurance, contact James Marrett at Ideal4U Insurance, email: info@ideal4uinsurance.co.uk, who will be happy to explain the basics to you. Similarly, if your tax position requires a review or you need to extend your financial year without penalty, then one of the following will be pleased to advise: John Humphries at JHL Accountants Dover, tel: 01304 216296; Harry Kemp at Kemp's Accounting Solutions Broadstairs tel: 01843 861188; Michael Whittaker at McCabe Ford Williams Herne Bay tel: 01227 373271; Mark Minus of MHA MacIntyre Hudson Canterbury tel: 01227 464991; Christopher Weston of Neville Weston Ramsgate tel: 01843 594571; Derek Read of Wilkins Kennedy Sandwich tel: 01304 249997.

9. Be Like Brian

If you are not free for one of our webinars and you have no elderly neighbours requiring medicines, shopping or help with their social-distancing arrangements, you may like to take a leaf out of the book of Brian Dale of Total Jobs Contracts Ltd. On learning of the lack of face shields at the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital in Margate, earlier this week he and fellow director Bradley Dale sourced, purchased and delivered 1,200 face shields with another 1,500 to follow. We salute you Brian and Bradley. You have been an inspiration to the founding of EKPPE and we will be doing our best to follow your example.

10. Update Your IT Skills

Not everyone is gifted at database management or setting up video conferencing for their staff and clients and not every computer whizz wears dirty jeans, manky trainers and an old t shirt. If you need to upgrade your on-line presence with the assistance of specialists wearing clean shirts and proper footwear, contact one of the following: Andrew Ward of ADM Computing Canterbury tel: 01227 473511; Martin Hynes of Business Computer Solutions Ltd of Ramsgate tel: 01843 572600; Chris Mafflin of Cariss (ICT) Broadstairs tel: 01843 823724; Steve McManus of Coastal Data Systems Ramsgate tel: 01843 823324; Mark Styles of Communicate Technology PLC Sandwich tel: 01740 661066; Richard Salter of Think Big Tech Sandwich tel: 01843 570000.

11. Update Your Premises

Since acquiring the Charles Dickens pub in 1975, Thorley Taverns has expanded its network of pubs, bars, restaurants and hotels to include 22 premises on our East Kent coastline. Taking advantage of the absence of guests and customers, company chairman Frank Thorley is determined to use the unencumbered access to refurbish and upgrade many of the establishments. The UK pub and restaurant sector has been hit hard by the lockdown. Except for a few off-licence sales and take-away meals, our East Kent pubs have witnessed their revenue fall to near zero and they may be scheduled to be among the last to be fully accessible to the public again. Shepherd Neame and Thorley Taverns have been big investors in East Kent, as evidenced by the large sums spent recently on The Lord Nelson in Dover, The Minnis at Minnis Bay, the Bell Hotel in Sandwich, The George in Broadstairs and The Botany Bay in Kingsgate.

12. What are Bounce Back Loans?

On Monday of this week, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, announced a new 100% government backed loan scheme for small business. In brief, we have been informed that from 4 May 2020, businesses will be able to apply for a loan on a simple, website form and be guaranteed a prompt response "within days" with no obligation to make any repayment for the first year during which period the UK government will pay any interest charges due. This initiative should address directly some of the cash-flow problems experienced by small businesses. Its success can be measured by how quickly the promised cash arrives in the applicant's bank account. If it takes less than a week, we can expect a significant number of jobs to have been saved. Of course, the problem with a loan is that you have to pay it back eventually and Chamber members will have to consider carefully their latest business plan and likely revenues; not an easy task.

13. More on Grants, Loans and Cash

We have received many enquiries from Chamber members regarding their entitlement to financial support during the COVID-9 crisis. In most cases, the answer has been a resounding "Yes, you are" and the telephone call has ended with all parties happy. There is now a government checker website where

you can be directed towards the financial resources to which you are entitled. Just log on to <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder/y>, answer a few questions and you may get a pleasant surprise.

14. File Sharing

With so many people working from home, there has been an increase in file transfers over the Internet between staff members of the same company. We understand that on occasions large graphics files can get lost in cyberspace with potentially disastrous results in terms of data security and intellectual property. The same team at ProjectFusion that created the Digital Court Room and Client Portal for compliance-led industries now offers a file transfer service dubbed “safedrop” which can send and receive files of up to 10Gb in size in complete safety. Conforming to ISO27001, safedrop offers a range of pricing to suit different budgets and claims the Home Office, Hampshire County Council and prestigious solicitors among its many happy clients. For more details, see the website at <https://www.safedrop.com> or telephone 0207 739 4352. On the same theme of document safety, the GDPR police can also nab you and up to 4% of your global turnover for mislaying printed data. Turtle Document Management can spare you the embarrassment and financial loss by collecting your paper and metal waste and disposing of it all securely and in conformity with UK legislation. Based in an indubitably super attractive oast house near Cranbrook, Turtle Document Management operates throughout Kent, Sussex and the home counties and would welcome the opportunity to collect the waste from any company trading in East Kent. Managing Director Darren Townsend will welcome your email enquiry to info@turtle.co.uk but if you wish to speak to him on the telephone, he can be reached on 01580 388188.

15. Local Support

One of the encouraging factors that has emerged from the COVID-19 crisis is that people and companies in East Kent do really care for each other and understand the importance of a sustainable economy. Dover District Council, Canterbury City Council and Folkestone & Hythe Council have reached out to businesses in their area. The same is true of the Members of Parliament in East Kent and we will be ever grateful for the guidance, goodwill and practical advice offered by Sir Roger Gale MP, Craig Mackinlay MP, Natalie Elphicke MP and Rosie Duffield MP. There is probably not a lot we can do in East Kent to address the issue of the leadership succession in North Korea, but there is much that has been achieved and will be achieved at a local level where we see more closely and more vividly what our problems are and how they can be overcome. Anthony Curwen has managed Quex Parks Estates with conspicuous success over many years. How he looks after seven farms so well with just three members of staff is a lesson to us all. When Anthony said earlier this week that “over centralisation concerns me” he is in effect placing a vote of confidence in our own capacity to work together in East Kent for the benefit of the whole community.

16. And Finally

When it comes to using limited resources to maximum advantage, there can be fewer better exponents than Switzerland. Denied many raw materials and without a seaport of its own, it manages to strengthen its currency year after year and offer a comfortable lifestyle to its citizens and workers. The cost of materials in Rolex Oyster watches is not very great, yet by applying brain power and astute business sense, they retail for £5,000 or more. One Chamber member contacted us last month with a story about Switzerland. We were not convinced of its veracity, but we leave it to our wise Chamber members to decide for themselves. He related: “The thing is you see, I was given this fancy Swiss watch for Christmas. It looked absolutely beautiful and I felt like a millionaire whenever I wore it. It said on the casing it was shockproof, waterproof and scratchproof. You can just imagine my disappointment when it caught fire”. He continued: “I cannot criticise Switzerland though with all those lovely mountains and tasty chocolates and of course the flag is a big plus”.

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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.

For images from some recent events, see <https://rosieantonphotography.co.uk/photos/chamber-of-commerce>

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