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***** Welcome to the Thanet & East Kent Insider *****

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber.

Thanet & East Kent Insider
12 August 2008

1. Insurance

Following the warm reception given to our guidance notes, "Ten Sources of Advice on Employment Contracts", we are pleased to make available "Ten Sources of Advice on Insurance". Sponsored by NFU Mutual, this handy one-page guide gives an objective account of points to note when renewing insurance and lists a series of websites where you can access the latest advice from government on your obligations as an employer and what you should do when things go wrong. To receive a free copy, Chamber members should email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Advice on Insurance". If you require guidance on employment contracts, use the subject line "Advice on Employment Contracts".

2. There's Money in Plant Pots

Last Wednesday, the University of Kent's Enterprise and Innovation Centre welcomed a party from Thanet & East Kent Chamber interested in exploring cooperation on research in the industrial application of porous ceramics. In layman's terms, a company that markets terracotta watering systems for domestic plant pots and hanging baskets, "water once and enjoy your holiday for 4 weeks" is looking for an industrial application of its technology. With the wholehearted support of the University, we are now looking at helping this company extend its markets and develop new products. Carole Barron, Director of Kent Enterprise at the University, and her colleague Dr Gary Robinson are keen to work with companies in Kent on research programmes, especially if there is a connection with bio-sciences. Carole predicts that the international biometrics market is poised for sustained growth, approaching revenues of US\$10 billion annually by 2020.

3. Get Your Money Back

You will not get all of it back, but you might get some. This refers to grants from public bodies which are financed with your taxes; both the grants and the public bodies. We are fortunate at the Thanet & East Kent Chamber to be able to call on the services of experts Brian Short and Jim Miller of South East Grants Advisory Service or SE-GAS as it is commonly known. If you need a new machine, want to employ more staff or undertake a new line of research, there may well be a government grant available to help you on your way. The beauty of working with Jim and Brian, the 'Ant & Dec' of the grants world, is that they do most of the work. At no cost to your company, SE-GAS will look at your requirements, advise you if a grant is available, how much you could claim and when you would be likely to receive your money. This Chamber holds regular Grants Workshops to assist you. A recent more liberal interpretation of the qualifying criteria for R&D grants means that many more Kent companies now qualify for funding. SMEs in Thanet are particularly fortunate as the whole of the area has Tier 2 status allowing for a greater level of support to companies. If you would like to be kept updated on the next Grants Workshop, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Ant & Dec Grants", we will know what you mean.

4. Rates & Sandy Ezekiel

As mentioned in previous editions of Thanet & East Kent Insider, this Chamber is apolitical and is happy to work with democratically elected representatives at all levels of government. We are grateful to Cllr Sandy Ezekiel, Leader of Thanet District Council, for his support to our campaign to revoke the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007 and look forward to a diplomatic meeting in his office with Roger Gale MP (Con) and Dr Stephen Ladyman MP (Lab) on their return from holiday. It is in the commercial interest of all Chamber members to oppose this legislation which was conceived in happier times, but now threatens to destroy large parts of the industrial infrastructure of our coastal towns in Kent. Readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will receive regular updates on progress. The unqualified support of our professional association, the British Chambers of Commerce, brings with it the backing of 100,000 companies with 5m workers – a loud voice when we wish to use it and on this issue we do.

5. Fees

This is a final call for members with fees outstanding. Please pay before 15 August 2008 to avoid an increase in charges effective from next week. If you have difficulty in paying, do contact the Chamber in confidence by telephoning 01843 609289 and we will be happy to discuss the matter with you.

6. Forklifts

This item is nothing to do with restaurants, although you do usually lift your fork when eating. What about Chinese restaurants? Alright, there are always exceptions. This item is about new Chamber member, Stuart Ainslie. His company, Kent Forklift Training, offers on-site training for drivers of forklifts. Any company operating forklifts will be aware that strict regulations govern their use and employers face heavy fines for ignoring the legislation. Stuart is happy to advise on all aspects of forklift use and welcomes enquiries from companies in Kent keen to keep their drivers safe and happy. Interested parties should give Stuart a call on tel: 01843 823463 or email him direct to info@kentforklifttraining.co.uk

6. Thanet Earth

Avid readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will know that that this Chamber will be arranging the first public presentation of Thanet Earth. Provisionally scheduled for mid October, we will announce the precise date shortly and give the opportunity for Chamber members to meet the main decision-maker of this amazing development which is due to produce 2.5m tomatoes a week when in full production. That is a lot of tomatoes. Anyone who has driven past the site near Birchington will have seen the vast greenhouses taking shape. The photograph below was taken last Wednesday and gives an indication of the size of just one of the seven greenhouses planned for the site. The projected investment of £80m provides a huge boost to business confidence and is guaranteed to have a significant impact on companies across a wide range of sectors. It's happening now and it's happening in Thanet.



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