

*** **Welcome to the Thanet & East Kent Insider** *** *Featuring our very first cartoon, see item 8.*

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from.

Thanet & East Kent Insider
19 August 2008

1. Chamber Charity Forum

Registered charities and not for profit organisations are increasingly important parts of our local economy. Given the current pressures on funding, this Chamber will be hosting a Charity Forum on 2 September at 1100 hrs at the Kent Innovation Centre, Broadstairs. The meeting is billed as an “informal gathering of like-minded professionals with an interest in the third sector”. Edwin Davison of Charity Funding Solutions will be visiting us from his Cambridge base to outline some of the successful fund-raising ideas he has pioneered. Rose Osborne of the Martha Trust will share her experiences of specific fund-raising events. The Forum will also serve as an exchange to share best practice and plan future cooperation. For further details, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Charity Forum”.

2. Marlowe Innovation Centre

When Lord Sainsbury of Turville opened the Kent Innovation Centre in Broadstairs on 16 October 2002, his opening speech included the words, “In any economy an appropriately skilled workforce is vital to the success of business”. His words rang true six years ago and still do today. The Marlowe Innovation Centre (MIC) is scheduled to hold its official opening ceremony on 10th September 2008. It will be interesting to note if HRH the Duke of Kent places the same emphasis on skills in his speech at the opening ceremony. I suspect that he will, as the building is located in the front garden of the Marlowe Academy. The MIC welcomes enquiries from prospective tenants interested in any of the 18 offices and 6 light industrial units available on an “easy in, easy out” basis. For details and a brochure email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Marlowe Innovation Centre”. If the Duke of Kent really likes the building, he may be tempted to quote from Christopher Marlowe’s poem, “Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?” After all, Marlowe was a local lad.

3. New Business, New Markets

Members of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber benefit from a unique opportunity to promote their products and services in Shepway. Following the partnership agreement with the Channel Chamber, Thanet & East Kent members can access contact details of all registered members of the Channel Chamber in Dover, Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, Hawkinge, New Romney, Dymchurch and Lydd. For a complete list, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Channel Chamber List”.

4. New Members

We welcome the following new members to the Chamber: Wincheap Barbers of Canterbury, tel: 01227 761465; CP Simons of Bovey Tracey, tel: 01626 833170; Bell Denning Solicitors of Broadstairs, tel: 01843 609355 and Gora Developments of London, tel: 020 6374565.

5. Please Be Seated, Your Majesty

Readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider of 29 July 2008 may recall an item entitled “Building on Quality”, which suggested that companies with a genuine commitment to quality might fare better in a downturn than enterprises competing mainly on price. The Chief Executive of Diageo had recently claimed that single malt whisky sales tended to hold up in a recession whereas some of the cheaper brands remained in the bottle longer than in the good times. I visited a quality manufacturer last week, Chamber member Claridge Upholstery. Founded 25 years ago by Steve Claridge, this company makes classic furniture to order at its HQ in Harold Road, Margate. Solid beech frames, mahogany facing and high quality leather ensure that these chairs and chesterfield sofas will remain in fashion for generations. Although all the furniture is handmade, prices are surprisingly reasonable. The British Embassy in Turkey was quite concerned last May when it was due to welcome the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Turkish Prime Minister. Such a distinguished gathering needed to be seated comfortably. Claridge Upholstery came up with the goods and now has a photograph of the group as proof. Steve can make the same furniture for you if you ask him nicely. Give Claridge Upholstery a call on 01843 290855.

6. Space in Margate

If you have a need for 3,000 square feet of space in Clarendon Road Margate for storage, classrooms, a children’s nursery, theatre group, community meetings or similar, we might be able to help. For details and a photograph, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Clarendon Road Building”.

7. Visitors to Kent

The Visit Kent research team has published its data for June 2008. Compared to last year, it shows a 17% increase in visitors to attractions. This is in line with anecdotal evidence that UK day visitors are increasing to some of our coastal resorts and excursion destinations. Germany and France topped the list of overseas visitors. The USA and Australia both registered a

respectable 14%. Occupancy rates of serviced accommodation fell 12% to 42.3% in Thanet with increases experienced only in Canterbury, up 3% to 65.9%, and Swale up 28% to 61.2%. The Kent average is 57.5%, up from 51.1% in 2007. Accommodation providers in rural areas of Kent seem to be faring better than those in towns and on the coast. The sharp rises in fuel costs may explain much of the downturn in carrier traffic. June figures for the Port of Dover show a year-on-year drop in passengers of 10.1%. The three top concerns of accommodation providers are the UK Economy, the weather and exchange rates. If you would like to take part in the survey or wish to have a copy of the full report, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "KTA Business Barometer June 2008".

8. Price, Quality and Service

In the current challenging trading conditions, it is perhaps more important than ever to give attention to the service you offer customers. Many members have reported some resilient trading over the past quarter. Their recipe is relatively simple. Competing too aggressively on price threatens your margins, compromising on quality threatens your future, but offering more care to your customers is often the cheapest and most direct way to boost your business; the executive below may have other ideas.



The image above appears by kind permission of Peter Dodsworth of Visual Humour. Are there any budding cartoonists out there who would like to contribute to the Thanet & East Kent Insider? If so, please email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Insider Cartoon" or telephone 01843 609289. Oh, and of course, you might like to mention if you are important or not.

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