

From: davidfoley@tekc.co.uk [mailto:davidfoley@tekc.co.uk]

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

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

24 September 2008

1. Visitors to Kent

The Visit Kent research team has published its data for July 2008. Compared to last year, it shows an overall 20% increase in visitors to attractions. It was the cities that welcomed the added numbers; visitors to the coastal and rural areas showed little change. Overnight stays in hotels declined by 10%. Indoor activities have been at a premium. The weather records for July 2008 show rainfall as being 72% above a 30-year average for England. Germany and France again topped the list of overseas visitors. The Lambeth Conference and the Folkestone Triennial may have assisted Canterbury, Shepway and Swale in maintaining an occupancy rate in serviced accommodation of 60% or above. Thanet showed the largest fall from 64% to 56%. Almost all the visitors to the Tourist Information Centres in Margate and Ramsgate were from the UK, whereas Canterbury registered just 15% domestic visitors. Channel crossings from Dover were down for the month by 7.5%, Yearly figures for the ferries will undoubtedly benefit from the continuing troubles at the Channel Tunnel which is still offering only one departure every two hours following the fire on 11th September.

2. Petrol Prices

Since this Chamber started the Broadstairs Petrol Price Index on 6 May 2008, we have witnessed some alarming annual projections showing a rise of over 70% in the price of one litre of unleaded petrol. Now 20 weeks from the launch of the BPI, we are pleased to report that the index shows the following: BPI Tracker: 0.0 BPI Annual: 0.0. In other words, the price of petrol at Tesco Broadstairs Extra is currently exactly the same as it was on 6 May 2008, 110.9p a litre. Before rushing to congratulate Tesco, it might be worth pondering why petrol is selling at ASDA Canterbury for 106.9 a litre. It will cost you £1.80 more to fill your car with 45 litres of unleaded petrol at Tesco Extra Broadstairs than at Asda Canterbury. Is that where the "Extra" in Tesco Extra comes from? Once again we conclude that Asda's "Everyday low prices" is outperforming Tesco's "Every little helps".

3. Chamber events

The following events are on the current Chamber autumn schedule. We expect to add a session on the Credit Crunch for a date in late October.

Tuesday 30th September: Credit Management

Thursday 2nd October: Chamber Training Forum

Friday 3rd October: Chamber Finance & Grants Workshop

Tuesday 14th October: Thanet Earth: Jam Today Business Networking Breakfast

Wednesday 12th November: Business Networking Breakfast

Wednesday 26th November: Business Networking Breakfast

Wednesday 10th December: Chamber Christmas Lunch

For details, email the Chamber at admin@tekc.co.uk with the appropriate subject line.

4. Paintings, Art and All That Stuff

Lovely's Gallery at 248 Northdown Road delights visitors to inland Margate. Established in 1891, this gallery sells fine art and associated materials. Local artists are well represented including Thanet's own Matthew Alexander whose works represent an eminently respectable alternative to Tracy Emin. Matthew specialises in landscapes and admits to learning much from his eminent father, Chris Alexander. If the vicar came round for tea, you would have no reason to feel embarrassed with an Alexander on the wall. Manager, Caroline Lovly welcomes enquiries and can be contact by telephone on 01843 292757.

5. A Hedge against the Crunch

At the Business-To-Business Show last week organised by our partners at the Channel Chamber, one enterprising stallholder featured Crunchie bars on his stand, a reminder to us all of the current perilous financial markets, but an indication perhaps also that there are some sweet tastes if you can find them. Despite its acknowledged health-giving properties, red wine does not appeal to everyone's palate. However, it may appeal to your pocket. The price of good wine is going up. The longer you keep a vintage, the rarer it becomes. Live-ex is a research company that is well-known for its fine wine index. It revealed last week that since January 2007, stock market prices have fallen by 15% whereas fine wine prices have risen by 50%. For advice on your wine, one of the following Chamber members will be pleased to help you. You might like to book a table for a meal while you are on the line: Thorley Taverns tel: 01843 602010;

Walpole Bay Hotel tel: 01843 221703; Kent International tel: 01843 588276; Express by Holiday Inn tel: 01843 820250 and Salmestone Grange tel: 01843 231161.

6. China Gateway

A planning decision on Phase One of the China Gateway is on the agenda of a full meeting of Thanet District Council on 9th October 2008. Commercial Group Properties plc (CGP) is promoting the development and anticipates 600 skilled jobs and 600 unskilled jobs on site. Up to 200 additional jobs are expected to be created in the main showcase building. Protests against the development have focused on a mixture of environmental concerns relating to the water table and somewhat dire predictions of disaster beginning with phrases such as “A Chinese investor recently told the newspapers” and “It is estimated that”. The identity of this mysterious investor is not revealed nor is the source of data behind the anonymous estimator. At a China Gateway Business Breakfast organised by this Chamber earlier this year, the Executive Director of CGP revealed that Aigo is one of the companies bidding to establish an outlet for its hi-tech goods at the Manston site. A committed sponsor of Mercedes McLaren, Aigo enjoys close relations with Britain’s Lewis Hamilton who is currently leading the Formula One World Championship. A Thanet investor recently revealed to the Thanet & East Kent Insider that “It is estimated that Lewis Hamilton may visit Thanet”. If he does, readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will be among the first to know.

7. More about Motors

Last week’s reference to the China Gateway and Psalm 136, “He built the earth on deep waters” has generated much comment from members. I have been reminded that motor vehicles have a long and distinguished history in the gospels. After all, the authorised version of the bible tells us that “Joshua’s Triumph was heard throughout the land”; he should have got that exhaust repaired at Invicta Motors, tel: 01843 853555 or Kent Autocare tel: 01843 223666 or Kent Volkswagen tel: 01843 226777 or Palm Bay Renault tel: 01843 220919 or St George’s Volkswagen tel: 01843 230300. The apostles themselves were great environmentalists and are surely rightly venerated by Honda for their pioneering car pool; as verily it is written that “The apostles were in one Accord”. Even with the Honda Accord Estate, it must have been a tight fit.

8. Sponsors

We are grateful to Adecco Recruitment, tel: 01843 609292; Girlings Solicitors, tel: 01843 220274 and Evans EasySpace, tel: 0800 039 3900 & 07753 799 333 for sponsoring this edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider.



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David Foley
Chief Executive, Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Director, Channel Chamber of Commerce
Fellow, Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce
Tel: +44 (0) 1843 609289
Fax: +44 (0) 1843 609291
Email: davidfoley@tekco.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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