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

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

8th October 2008

1. SEEDA

Regular readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will recall the edition of 17 September 2008 when we asked for your views on SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency charged by the government with overseeing the economy of South East England outside London. Yesterday, the SEEDA Director for Kent and Medway, Dr Susan Priest, visited the Chamber accompanied by Ian Muat, SEEDA Investment Development Manager. They met a cross-section of employers from the following companies; Boys & Maughan, BSW Timber Systems, Claridge Upholstery, Evans Easyspace, Express By Holiday Inn, G Casino, HRGO, Lovelys Gallery, Marmalade Design, Profile Development & Training and Terence Painter Properties. Dr Priest explained that SEEDA's budget of around £500m has to serve a large area but aims always to be business-led, not curtailed by local authority boundaries. She emphasized the role of SEEDA in orchestrating partnerships, ensuring the provision of skills and forward-funding utilities for inward investment. Dr Priest stated that SEEDA is open to change and will shortly be welcoming a new chairman to follow Allan Willett and Jim Braithwaite. Questions from members focused on the needs of Thanet & East Kent. It was not just a question of increasing the local spend, but of making sure local companies were consulted and the money was spent wisely. Dr Priest agreed to take into account all the comments made and looked forward to a closer relationship with the Thanet & East Kent Chamber so that the views of members informed SEEDA policy and spending priorities. The party then moved to BSW Timbers Systems for a tour of the factory and design studio. The day ended with a final presentation at G Casino in Broadstairs where the manager gave a positive account of why the Rank Group had made such a major investment in the area.

2. Reasons To Be Cheerful

The Ian Dury's well-known song, "Reasons to be Cheerful" could well apply to the resurgence of Thanet, especially the line "A bit of grin and bear it, a bit of come and share it". In contrast to many areas of the country, Thanet has many reasons to be cheerful. The Thanet Earth project is with us now near Birchington and is this week advertising two jobs at £40,000 p.a. and one at £30,000 p.a. When in full production an estimated 550 jobs in total will accompany the establishment of the UK's largest hydroponics facility. Thanet District Council is hosting a meeting tomorrow evening to decide on the future of Phase One of the China Gateway at Manston. A positive outcome will give the go ahead to 1,200 jobs and attract buyers with expense accounts from all over the UK and Western Europe. The Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate has already received full planning permission. Thanks to SEEDA and the Arts Council, construction will begin before the end of the year. The main contractor for the brand new Thanet College will be appointed shortly and the doors will open for new students in less than three years. The fast rail link to London is expected to run its first services from Thanet in December 2009. Enquiries are now pouring in for the Royal Sands development on Ramsgate Beach which will feature 107 luxury apartments with breathtaking views over Ramsgate Harbour. We must not forget the London Array wind farm which promises to use Ramsgate Harbour as its main service port and has £1bn to spend in the UK. Is there money in Thanet? You bet there is. You need only ask G Casino at Westwood Cross which has invested £11m in its spanking new operations and according to the Thanet Management, "We are doing very nicely, thank you." The message from this Chamber is "It's happening now and it's happening in Thanet".

3. Training Forum

At the Chamber Training Forum last Thursday, delegates were treated to two perspectives on training. Alan Kirkham, Workforce Development Coordinator at Thanet College, presented the new-look courses available. One of seven Further Education Colleges in Kent, Thanet College offers programmes that are becoming increasingly demand-led with less emphasis on what the College can provide and more on what the employer needs. A menu of short, intensive "Training Solutions" answered the questions many companies asked when looking to train their staff. Bill Pitt of EPEC Management Services gave delegates the benefit of his experiences at the Construction Industry Training Board and the

Canary Wharf Group where he provided a range of innovative programmes to meet the needs of companies. Describing himself as a “generalist trainer”, he can nevertheless draw on his own background as an MP to provide specialist training in “Dealing with the Media”, “Motivation” and “Presentation Skills”. Both Alan Kirkham and Bill Pitt gave a powerful endorsement of the benefits of Continuing Professional Development programmes. For details contact Alan Kirkham, tel: 01843 605036; Bill Pitt, tel: 01843 864969.

4. Thanet Earth Presentation

Bookings for the Thanet Earth presentation on 14th October 2008 close at 1400 hrs tomorrow, Thursday 9th October 2008. If you have not yet booked your place and wish to learn more about the science or the opportunities that accompany growing 2.4m tomatoes in a week, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line “Thanet Earth: Jam Today” and give a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.

5. Business Rates

In the Commons Unemployment Debate yesterday, Roger Gale MP praised the Thanet & East Kent Chamber’s campaign against the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007. He said graciously that in cooperation with Laura Sandys this Chamber had “recognised this danger before I did and before many members of this House woke up to what is happening”. Roger Gale also pointed to the iniquitous effects of the Act, “Some buildings that will be needed in the future are actually being pulled down”, referring directly to the wholesale destruction of commercial property in England and Wales since the Act took effect on 1 April 2008. Segro is Europe’s largest developer of commercial property and manages over £5bn of property assets in 10 European countries. In an email to the Thanet & East Kent Chamber, the Segro Chief Executive, Ian Coull, confirmed Roger Gale’s conclusion with the following statement. “Empty rates make it too costly to continue to provide cheaper older property - it simply makes more economic sense to demolish these buildings altogether, thereby actually reducing the amount of lower cost space available to businesses - the reverse of what was supposedly intended”. Quite right, Mr Coull. This Chamber will continue to campaign against this Act which threatens to take millions of pounds out of the economy of East Kent at a time when it is most needed. For a detailed campaign pack, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line, “Business Rates Campaign Pack”.

6. Finance & Grants With a Little Chocolate

Last Friday, we offered our third Chamber Grants & Finance Workshop of the year. Brian Short of the South East Grants Advisory Service (SE-GAS) gave a masterly presentation of the public funds available to promote businesses in Thanet and East Kent. He outlined the criteria required and the expert assistance available that in the last 12 years has produced a 95% success rate for applicants and has secured £27m in grants for local companies. Forward-looking chamber members included Claires Bridal House which is studying how to build on recent successes by expanding its operations to include an on-site marquee and reception area together with a full wedding service provision of floristry, photography, accommodation, transport, clothing and meals. BSW Timber Systems Ltd has a strong customer base serving the building industry from Thanet to the Midlands. The company is considering increasing its manufacturing capacity with added value products and additional premises. Chocolution is scheduled to launch its health-giving raw chocolate range on 23 October 2008 with a “100% positive chocolate experience”. The Sarah Thorne Theatre Club is another successful local organisation looking to expand and upgrade its facilities. Contact details: Claires Bridal House, tel: 01843 293587; BSW Timber System, tel: 01843 590777; Chocolution, tel: 01304 851974 and Sarah Thorne Theatre Club, tel: 580389. Brian Short and his colleague at SE-GAS, Jim Miller, do not perhaps get the credit they deserve for stimulating nearly 6,000 new jobs and safe-guarding 3,500 more since 1995. This Chamber appreciates what you do, Brian and Jim, and we will be asking you to present another workshop in early 2009. All readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will be welcome to attend.

7. Leaflet Distribution

This Chamber offers a leaflet distribution service at discounted rates. We undertake to distribute an A5 or pre-folded A4 leaflet to all chamber members. If you would like to take advantage of this, please dispatch to us 350 leaflets or leave them at reception at Thanet & East Kent Chamber Ltd, Millennium Way, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2QQ. Please don’t forget to include a cheque made out to Thanet & East Kent Chamber Ltd for the sum of £30.00 (members) or £100.00 (non-members).

8. Cash Flow

As widely forecast by this Chamber and our friends at Engee Accountancy & Credit Management, managing cash flow is becoming a defining factor in sustaining businesses through the financial crises which greet us every morning in the our newspapers and on our television screens. ILM Management Consultants of Broadstairs are more aware than most of the

need to plan ahead and structure your company to meet the new constraints. Illustrating the maxim, “Think global, act local”, ILM has an illustrious client list than includes Rolls Royce, Balfour Beatty, Wembley Stadium and Heathrow Terminal 5. Partner, Ian Mattison, is interested in talking to local companies about an “Order to cash business analysis” together with a variety of reporting tools designed to help you see how your business is performing in real time. For details, contact ILM on tel: 01843 861999. Ian also invites Chamber members to contact him direct on his mobile, tel: 079329145350.

9. Elvis Speaks Again

In last week’s edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider, we introduced you to the Venerable Elvis, Thanet’s own hermit, who lives in glorious anonymity in the mysterious hinterland between the defunct power station in Sandwich and the disused quarry at Manston. His wise proclamation that “If you don’t at first succeed, it is best to avoid sky-diving” was completely ignored by the world’s media. It seems also that yet again, the Sage of Thanet has been passed over for a Nobel Prize. In an exclusive interview with the Chamber, we asked the Venerable Elvis for any further guidance he could give the world in these troubled times. After a few moments stroking his beard in silent contemplation, he said, “If you give a man a fish, he eats one meal. If you teach him how to fish, he sits on Deal Pier all day drinking beer and comes home hungry”. We are indeed blessed to have such a wise man in our midst.

10. 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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