

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

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

8th January 2009

1. Thanet Off-Shore Wind Farm

We headline this first edition of 2009 as we left 2008 with news about Thanet Off-Shore Windfarm. This £780m development is scheduled to begin construction next month. The owners of the project, Vattenfall, can call on 100 years of experience in generating electricity and fairly claim to be the largest producer of heat and the fourth largest electricity generation company in Europe. The initial phase of construction will require piles weighing 500 tonnes to be driven into the sea bed off the coast of Ramsgate by a Sea Jack. These will appear just above the waves before being topped by a “transition piece” delivered and fitted by a very special ship, the Mayflower Resolution. Curiously, although this magnificent example of creative marine engineering was built in Qinhuangdao, China and is powered by two Mitsubishi S16R-MPTK-2 main generators, it was conceived and originally designed by the British Mayflower Corporation plc, better known for the commercial vehicle brands, Alexander, Dennis and Plaxton. The wind turbines will be linked in arrays of ten turbines each which will be connected to a series of sub stations leading to the final connection to the National Grid at a sub station located between the disused Richborough Power Station and the EDF site nearby. Locals will know that the cables will have to cross the A256 at Cliffs End. Vattenfall is committed to keeping disruption to a minimum and is likely to require the closure of the road for a short period at night during April this year. For more information on this exciting project in East Kent, keep your eyes on the weekly editions of the Thanet & East Kent Insider. As we say at the Chamber, “It’s happening now, it’s happening in Thanet & East Kent.”

2. Politics and all that stuff

As mentioned before in these columns, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber is apolitical by statute and by reason of the fact that we represent a broad spectrum of opinion and offer a wide perspective on commercial life in this part of the world. What unites members entirely is the wish to have a dynamic local economy which provides support for companies, jobs for the willing, opportunities for young people to make their career in this lovely county and a compassionate and understanding community able to support the schools, charities and public bodies that have chosen to join our Chamber. Our elected representatives have been most helpful and we have enjoyed widespread support from across the political divide. This does not mean that we must never remonstrate, complain or campaign, but we do have to be fair, balanced and prepared to listen as well as to shout. A full report will follow on the visit on the visit of Rt. Hon Jonathan Shaw, Minister for the South East, after his symposium at the Chamber in early February. The item below covers the views of a senior Shadow Minister.

3. What the Conservatives Told Us

Before an invited audience at the Russell Hotel Maidstone last Tuesday, Rt. Hon Theresa May outlined the official views of the Conservative Party on its policies to “Get Britain Working”. The Shadow Leader of the House of Commons paid particular attention to reducing employment costs for small businesses and abolishing income tax on savings for basic taxpayers. Older readers will be encouraged by her support for raising pensioners’ personal allowances from £2,000 to £11,490. Her announcement on hip replacement caused some uncomfortable shuffling on seats until it became apparent that she was calling for the abolition of Home Information Packs (HIPs) which have added considerable costs to the selling of residential property at a time when the market requires support. Both during the public meeting and afterwards in private discussions, this Chamber raised with Theresa May the issue of the unreasonable taxation regime faced by pubs and the owners of empty commercial property. The Shadow Minister took careful note of the feedback from Chamber members and we are confident that she will join our campaign for greater support for the East Kent coastal business community. We are grateful to Helen Grant and Laura Sandys for facilitating the exchanges..

4. New Sponsor

We welcome Express By Holiday Inn at Minster as a new sponsor of the Thanet & East Kent Insider. To celebrate this collaboration, the Hotel Group is offering readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider a special rate valid until the end of March 2009 for any bookings they make for themselves, their families, their colleagues or associates. Group Leisure Sales Manager Fraser Donaldson writes, "For the first quarter of 2009, 01 Jan – 31 March, we will offer your Chamber a rate of £49.95 per room per night. This includes all internet and movie access for the duration of the members stay. A separate code has been set up in the hotel and to book please ask your members to quote: "TEKC entertainment package". Once a reservation has been made the hotel will supply the standard terms and conditions and deliver these at the time of booking. This offer will apply to any staff associated to the chamber members personal or private enterprises." Sounds too good to be true? Telephone 01843 820250 and find out for yourself.

5. Your Views Matter

Recently the Thanet & East Kent Chamber has featured on ITV Meridian, BBC Radio and a wide range of national, regional and local media. We are anxious to ensure that we represent the views of members accurately and fairly. If you have any issue that is affecting your business or you wish the Chamber to highlight a problem or a success – oh yes we do like to know of your successes – then please email admin@tekc.co.uk and we will do our best to represent you in the corridors of power as well as in the windy back streets of Thanet. For the latest Chamber ramblings on BBC Radio Kent of this evening, look at the podcast of the Andy Garland Show of 8 January 2009 which will shortly appear on line for six days at www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/radio/bbc_radio_kent and fast forward to the end of the first news bulletin.

6. Chamber Diaries

The 2009 Chamber diary is worthy of your attention and is a much improved edition from last year. Not only will it prove to be a handsome addition to your desktop with its padded cover, embossed titles and brass corners, but it has the added virtue of containing the contact details of all our Chamber members and those of our partners at the Channel Chamber of Commerce. What a marketing opportunity - and available to accredited members free of charge. To collect your copy while stocks last, call in at the Chamber reception at Kent Innovation Centre, Millennium Way, Broadstairs CT10 2QQ during office hours between now and the end of January 2009. If there is any member who by virtue of incapacity or excessive seasonal cheer is unable to visit the Chamber in person, please let us know by email to admin@tekc.co.uk and we will make alternative arrangements.

7. The Big Boys in London

Our professional association, the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC), does much valuable work lobbying on behalf of members, providing new commercial opportunities and offering us the benefit of expert professional research. We agree with the BCC's assertion that today's cut in the interest rate to 1.5% is not enough. David Kern, Chief Economist at BCC, states further that the government "must also supplement lower interest rates with vigorous quantitative easing." He is referring not to the expansion of the waistline following Christmas festivities, although that is probably a good idea if you are not too vigorous, but to the printing of money. The basic idea is to increase the quantity of physical cash available so that banks can have more money to lend, making it easier for companies to borrow. This theory was taken to an extreme by Ben Bernanke, the chairman of the US Federal reserve who acquired the nickname 'helicopter Ben' after he brought to life Milton Friedman's theory that governments could in all seriousness be justified in dropping large quantities of cash out of helicopters for the general public to collect and spend. Such a scenario would mean that anyone living close to the airports at Manston and Lydd would have an unfair advantage. Now there's a thought. For the full text of the BCC press release, see www.britishchambers.org.uk/6798219246266367830/press-office.html

8. Advice to Company Buyers

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber understands the concerns of professional designers and printers when faced with an intransigent company demanding improved results from an unchanged design and an unmolested marketing strategy. We have heard of creative agencies inspired and ready to revolutionize their target market, only to be told that the company owner's features must adorn the first four pages of the corporate brochure. When all their attempts to produce a fresh look for the modern age have proved fruitless, they may wish to recite quietly to themselves the following rhyme, attributed to the late David Ogilvy, the Father of Advertising.

“If the client hums and sighs
Make his logo twice the size
If he still should prove refractory
Show a picture of his factory
Only in the direst cases
Should you show your clients’ faces?”

David Ogilvy had a way with words. Among his most famous slogans are “At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock” and it is also claimed that his line “Only Dove is one-quarter moisturizing cream” made Dove the leading brand of soap in the US. It just goes to show that words can paint a thousand pictures.

9. Shepway Business Breakfast

Our partners at the Channel Chamber have organised a Networking Business Breakfast at the Ramada Inn, Whitfield, Dover on Thursday 15th January starting at 7.30 am. These breakfasts have proved popular in the past and they continue to present an excellent opportunity to promote business-to-business trading across the East Kent coastal business community. To book your place, telephone Tracy Reynolds on 01303 270022.

10. Sponsors

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