

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

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

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29th January 2009

1. Bell Denning

On the move this week is the legal firm, Bell Denning Solicitors. Partner, Daryl Vas, informs the Chamber that with effect from Monday 2 February, the Bell Denning headquarters will move to 400 sq. m. of offices at 12 Cliff Street, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 9HS. The new main switchboard telephone number will be 01843 262020. Email addresses remain unchanged. As head coach of Thanet Wanderers, Daryl has a spring in his step following the dramatic 26 – 24 home win of the 1st XV against Sidcup last Saturday. Hungry supporters are now able to enjoy a pre-match lunch for £15.00 before all home matches at the St Peter's Recreation ground. For details, contact Dave Whitehead tel: 01843 581455. For those unversed in rugby terminology, if Dave asks you if you would like to sit next to an ex-hooker, be advised that a hooker is a perfectly respectable position at the centre of the scrum. Just make sure that the hooker does not bite your ear off; old habits die hard.

2. Bombsite Britain

Our friends at Property Week inform us that the Business Centre Association (BCA) has discovered that UK local authorities are now faced with a staggering empty rates bill of £690m, following the implementation of the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007 which came into force last April. The subject of a year-long campaign by this Chamber, this 'Bombsite Britain' tax has had a dramatic effect on the East Kent coastal business community. The public sector is also suffering severely from this self-defeating legislation. The BCA notes in its statement of 26th January 2009 that *"In a bid to avoid an annual £110,000 rates liability, Swindon Council budgeted £430,000 of public money to demolish a 14 acre industrial site."* At a meeting with this Chamber last Friday evening, Roger Gale MP, Stephen Ladyman MP and Sandy Ezekiel, Leader of Thanet District Council, restated their opposition to this iniquitous disincentive to investment. We do not give up when the interests of our members are under threat. Companies in East Kent can be assured that this Chamber will continue the campaign with renewed vigour.

3. Health & Well-being

Eastern & Coastal Kent NHS held a consultation event in Margate last Friday entitled "Promoting Mental Health and Well-being". Introduced by Karen MacArthur, the first few sentences of the presentation managed to quote the US Declaration of Independence, Mother Theresa, President Obama and the poet, Sylvia Plath. No-one was going to accuse our Karen of being parochial. One of the most telling statistics that followed was that half of all women and a quarter of all men are affected by depression at some time in their lives and 15% experience disabling depression. Although it might be comforting to learn that it is not only we Doncaster Rovers supporters who suffer, there is a serious message for employers to take a mature approach to the mental health of their workforce. It is almost 21 years since the establishment of Dover Counselling Centre (DCC) which was inaugurated in the wake of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster of 6 March 1987. You may recall that there were 193 passengers and crew who lost their lives in Britain's worst peacetime maritime disaster since the *lolaire* in 1919. The techniques pioneered and perfected by DCC continue to benefit the families of the bereaved but are in increasing demand by companies and individuals anxious to 'predict and prevent' rather than 'find and fix'. DCC welcomes calls on a completely confidential basis, tel: 01304 204123.

4. Fast trains to London

Following many requests from Chamber members, here is a summary of the journey times to London St Pancras effective from next December as posted by Southeastern Trains in the most recent published timetable. All numbers refer to minutes.

	<i>Now</i>	<i>From 13 Dec 2009</i>	<i>Saving</i>
Ashford	84	37	47
Birchington	105	86	19
Broadstairs	118	91	27
Canterbury West	110	61	49
Dover Priory	116	64	52
Margate	111	92	19
Ramsgate	129	81	48
Whitstable	88	72	16

Southeastern Trains has dropped the name Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) and now describes the line as High Speed 1 or HSI. The top speed of the 29 new Hitachi trains is claimed to be 140 mph, fast but still some way short of the newer technology being pioneered in Japan by JR Tokai. The new MagLev bullet train is expected to operate from Tokyo to Kansai and has been timed at 361 mph, a world record. If such a service were to be introduced non-stop from Ramsgate, newsagents in Thanet would surely object as there would barely be time to read the front page headlines before arriving in the capital. The world's first magnetic levitation train to enter into public service was of course British and began operations in 1984 from Birmingham Airport to Birmingham Railway Station. Chamber members in Whitstable, such as Clive Tucker at Oyster Press tel: 01227 772605, will know that the world's very first railway passenger service opened for business in 1830 and ran between Canterbury and Whitstable. In Britain we breed brilliant engineers and the finest creative minds, so why are we not the world champions of enterprise? Answers please to admin@tekc.co.uk and you are guaranteed a reply.

5. Twin Towers Alive and Well

The Thanet and East Kent Insider is always delighted to hear of success stories, especially when it involves making money from exports. We are therefore particularly pleased to congratulate Twin Towers Trading on another excellent year. Product successes include the "Forever Sharp Knife", which prompted one customer in California to write "I trimmed the branches of my Christmas Tree with it and also used it to slice my Christmas ham". There are few better adverts than the endorsement of satisfied customers, even if in the case of "Gregory T of Bakersfield, CA" you wonder if his Christmas guests noticed that the ham sandwiches tasted of pine. Ian George of Twin Towers Trading reports that the increased volume of business has necessitated a move from the current 5,000 sq ft of space to 8,000 sq ft conveniently situated next door in Continental Approach, Westwood Industrial Estate, Margate CT9 4JG. Ian welcomes enquiries by telephone to tel: 01843 232346. He might even tell you about his Eurochopper. Before you rise in indignation, this is a gourmet food chopper that promises to "shorten food preparation time with amazing results! Chop fruit, vegetables, cooked meats, nuts, even ice...with this sleek, compact time-saver. Cooking was never easier". Well, now you know.

6. Get The Money In

Since the beginning of the year, this Chamber has been actively engaged in assisting some members with debt recovery programmes. There is an increasing number of local companies which are currently seeking payment for goods supplied to previously reliable buyers who, for a variety of reasons, have not settled the invoices issued. Of course, it is always convenient to be paid in advance or to be paid by credit card with the purchase order. But, whatever your standard term and conditions, the current trading environment suggests that it might be wise to have established credit control procedures that are routinely applied to every transaction. Specialists such as Engee Accountancy & Credit Management, tel: 01843 599179, can advise you on implementation and training packages. The following accountants also have especial expertise in financial management: J Cleverdon tel: 01843866599; J W Accountancy Services tel: 01304 830229; Neville Weston tel: 01843 594571; Levicks Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 862716 and Reeves & Neylan tel: 01304 205461. For a free copy of this Chamber's Four Stage Guide to Debt Recovery, Chamber members are invited to email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Debt Recovery Advice".

7. Can You Afford A Ford

The Ford Motor Company may have just posted a fourth quarter loss of USD5.9bn with its CEO, Alan Mulally, quoted as saying, ""Ford and the entire auto industry faced an extraordinary slowdown in all major global markets in the fourth quarter that clearly had an impact on our results," but, Mark Spray of Invicta Motors Westwood reports "a fantastic month in December". Orders for new Ford models are buoyant and used vehicle sales are encouraging for January. Inward investment into Thanet may be part of the story or it could be that Mark and his sales team have found a formula to beat the recession. Always interested in doing a deal, Mark invites readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider to contact him by email to mark.spray@invictamotors.com or by telephone to 01843 853555. Members of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber qualify for a special discount.

8. Export or Die

If you rejected trading with our near neighbours in Calais and Boulogne because it was too much bother or there was no prospect of making a decent profit, then think again. The fall in the value of the pound sterling against the Euro has improved trading margins for East Kent companies by about 30% since last year. Still unsure? Well what if the government gave you up to £30,000 to investigate if it is worth your while. As much as 50% of the set up costs of establishing your export department could be paid directly to you if you have between 5 and 250 paid employees and have been in business for at least two years. We have teamed with our partners at the Channel Chamber and our professional association, the British Chambers of Commerce, to bring you this opportunity. For more information, log on to the website at

<http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/6798219243998547223/are-you-eligible.html> This Chamber can help you directly with interpreting and short translations if required. For extended texts in any language, contact Burravoe Translation Services. We have received nothing but excellent reports about the services provided by Annette Bunn and her team at Burravoe. You can contact Annette by email to translations@burravoe.co.uk or by telephone to 01233 647744,

9. And Finally...

Regular readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will know that Thanet is the home of a remarkable spiritual leader who nourishes our souls in troubled times with his illuminating insights into the human condition. The Venerable Elvis is Thanet's own hermit who lives in glorious anonymity in the hinterland between the disused power station in Sandwich and the redundant quarry at Manston.

Unversed in the devious plotting of international bankers and ill at ease in the company of fellow human beings, the Venerable Elvis is nevertheless occasionally inveigled out of his hovel to speak to the Thanet & East Kent Insider on an exclusive basis to give his comments on issues of the day. He shares with the Archbishop of Canterbury a penchant for stroking his grey beard when in deep thought. Indeed, anyone who suffers from shallow thinking might like to stop shaving for a week just to see what happens. Our trusted reporter met the Venerable Elvis early one misty morning last week and asked this time-honoured mystic what his thoughts are on the vulnerability of local companies and the difficulties in obtaining payment for goods supplied. After a long pause and seemingly endless fingering of his whiskers, the great man said, "If you lend a man £50 and you never see him again, it is probably worth it". We are indeed blessed to have such a sage in our midst.

10. Sponsors

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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk and be happy.