

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

5th February 2009

1. Minister Visits Thanet

Last Tuesday, Thanet & East Kent Chamber welcomed a dedicated visit from the Regional Minister for the South East, the Rt Hon Jonathan Shaw MP. In contrast to the arctic conditions in London and elsewhere, the Minister enjoyed a sun-drenched tour of Ramsgate, Broadstairs, Cliftonville and Margate visiting a variety of successful Chamber members looking to add value to their products and services. Included in the tour were BSW Timber Systems, MPG Properties, Margate Harbour Arm, Claridge Upholstery, Terence Painter Properties and Mach Associates. Later in the day, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber SME Group welcomed the Minister to the Chamber headquarters at Kent Innovation Centre where he was keen to listen to the concerns and advice of the 22 Chamber members gathered. Frank Thorley drew on his first experiences as a holiday-maker in 1946 and his current focus as the owner of 29 Thanet outlets in the Thorley Taverns Group. Robin Browne of Girlings and Andrew Baker of Boys & Maughan noted the decline in the footfall around the traditional seaside retailers and the challenge this posed for the providers of professional services. Huge Gage of Silent Gliss, Jeanetta Deeney of Cummins Power Generation, Mark Spray of Invicta Motors and all the members present drew the Minister's attention to the unique advantages of Thanet and the need for a specific approach to the social and commercial challenges. Jonathan Shaw took careful note of all the points made and confirmed that Thanet & East Kent would be very much in his thoughts when talking to the cabinet. For a more detailed report, Chamber members are invited to email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Minister Visits Thanet Report".

2. Surprise, Surprise: It Has Been Happening for the Last Million Years

Ian George, Managing Director of Twin Towers Trading Limited, has every right to comment on the weather. He is doubling the size of his warehouse to cope with the increase in business and feels naturally disappointed that others do not share his commitment to work. Commenting on the widespread closure of schools in England, he asks the question, "What message is this sending out to our school children about a work ethic?" Other Chamber members have pointed out that it is teachers who do not make the effort to attend and pupils are sent home with consequent disruption to work schedules for parents and those charged with looking after the children in the home. Not all educational establishments are caught by surprise and we congratulate Cliftonville Primary School, Christ Church College Broadstairs campus, Thanet College, Marlowe Academy, LanguageUK, the Royal School for Deaf Children and Margate Language Centre for how they handled arrangements. A special commendation must also go to radiographer Peter Cartwright of Ashford Kent who managed to get to work at Guy's Hospital by taking advantage of the few transport links operating last Monday and walking 18 miles through the snow. Here is a public sector worker who would cut it in business. For details, see the BBC report at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7870299.stm>

3. Portrait of Thanet

Following extensive research and discussions with members, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber has published a handy "Portrait of Thanet". It consists of a one-page summary of the business environment in Thanet and a second page of core data recording statistics such as 32.5% of workers in Thanet are employed in the public sector and 9.8% in manufacturing. There is also a list of current issues facing traders and a quote from Cllr Irish Johnston from 2003 that "One-fifth of all visitors to Thanet come for Dreamland". It concludes with some "Reasons to be Cheerful". Accredited Chamber members can receive a free copy of the report by sending an email to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line, "Portrait of Thanet".

4. Thanet Works

Earlier this week, the Chairman and Executive Director of Thanet Works attended a session of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber SME Group and listened carefully to the views of Chamber members on how the £4.2m of Working Neighbourhoods funding should be spent to support businesses, promote employment and raise skills levels in Thanet. Smaller companies have difficulty in funding apprenticeship schemes and providing the staff supervision required. All

parties were agreed that the funding should be directed towards producing long term benefits that meet the needs of employers and recognizes that they are in the best position to advise on practical and successful schemes. The Chamber will be hosting a business breakfast on Tuesday, 3 March 2009 which will feature a formal presentation of the Thanet Works programme and will be open to all interested parties. For details, email admin@tekc.co.uk after 11th February with the subject line "Thanet Works Breakfast".

5. You Pays Your Money and You Takes Your Choice

If you want to know where you should keep your money securely, you might like to consider making a choice between two safes which James Galbraith of County Financial Services is offering for sale from the company's offices in Herne Bay: a Tann Fortress 2 safe and a Dudley Balmoral safe. Any interested readers of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber Insider are invited to contact James direct on his landline tel: 01843 825608 or on his mobile tel: 07973 971115. If you are one of those people who only believes what you see written down, feel free to email James at James.Galbraith@countyfs.co.uk.

6. Government Contracts

The day after his visit to this Chamber, the Minister for the South East, the Rt Hon Jonathan Shaw, made a public announcement through the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (DBERR) encouraging companies in the region with fewer than 250 employees to register with a DBERR website to receive notification of public sector contracts. The service is free, relatively simple to join and typically provides you with daily alerts of sales opportunities for contracts with a value below £100,000. As Jonathan Shaw put it, "I would urge small and medium-sized companies from across our region to take advantage of the opportunities presented by this website." New contracts across the South East appear at the rate of around 3,000 per month. Interested? Have a look for yourself by logging on to <http://www.supply2.gov.uk>

7. New Members

We welcome the following new members: Standen Contracts & Groundwork of Canterbury tel: 01227 712514; the College of Auricular Acupuncture of Ramsgate tel: 01843 590433; South East Kent Grants Advisory Service of Margate tel: 07721 452294; I.P. Computer Consultants tel: 07971 316738; Royal Harbour Hotel of Ramsgate tel: 01843 591514; C Flooring tel: 01843 841430 and Country Mower Centre of Westbere tel: 01227 710685.

8. A Pie, a Pint and Something Else

While responding to an invitation from Warren Denham of Sota Solutions, tel: 01795 413500, for a pint and pie next week, I was reminded of the favourite story of the late John Bromley, former head of ITV Sport and a renown Fleet Street journalist of the old school. Returning home in the rain after a particularly unrewarding day at the office, he was contemplating the burdens of a heavy mortgage, diminishing bank balance and unpromising job prospects when he passed a pub. The blackboard outside declared, "Come inside for a pint, a pie and a friendly word". Seeking some temporary relief and sympathy from his plight, he decided to take a later train home and made his way to the bar. With his pint and pie on the bar before him, he looked in vain for the jolly landlord to join him. Finally, the less than genial host appeared drying a glass with a grubby dishcloth. "Well then..." said John. "Well what?" retorted the landlord. "What about my friendly word?" said John. "I've got my pint and my pie and your sign outside says...". "Oh I see what you mean ...". the landlord interjected. Then he leaned over the bar towards John and in a low, conspiratorial whisper said, "Don't eat the pie".

10. Sponsors

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