

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

12th February 2009

1. Can You Credit It?

Credit reference agencies play an important role in helping companies assess risk and make a calculated judgment on prospective customers and the soundness of contracts offered. One professional services company in Herne Bay has had a bitter experience with such an agency when his credit worthiness was quite incorrectly downgraded to the extent that his business was put at risk. This Chamber is looking into the accountability of credit agencies and what measures should be taken to prevent this happening. With an ever-increasing amount of corporate and personal data being collected, it is not only important that it is stored securely, but essential that it is accurately recorded and subject to the appropriate controls and review. We will keep readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider fully informed.

2. Channel Dash

The primary purpose of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber is to represent, inform, service and generally meet the corporate needs of our members. If a little entertainment intrudes from time to time, it can only help to promote networking and make our products a little more palatable. The unemployment figures released this week give us little cause for mirth. But, we do have a duty to East Kent as a whole and to the people in the past who have protected our freedoms and fought for our way of life. The Channel Dash Association commemorates the actions of the 6 Fairey Swordfish aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm which took off from Manston exactly 67 years ago today led by Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde. The RAF Station Commander at the time said of Esmonde, "He knew what he was going into. But it was his duty." Unsurprisingly, all six aircraft were lost and Esmonde and all the pilots were killed. Just 5 of the 18 crew members survived. Esmonde was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, President Roosevelt contacted Winston Churchill to congratulate the British Prime Minister on the heroism of all those involved and the Daily Mail wrote of '18 men we shall never forget'. One of these 18 men, Edgar Lee, will be present at a commemorative dinner to be held by the Channel Dash Association at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich on 18 March 2009; for tickets contact Peter Nixon Tel: 01843 860242 / 07815121911. If Esmonde and his crews had been teachers at a school in Manston last week and had woken up to find a little snow on the ground, would they have turned up for work? What do you think?

3. Thanet Works

The Thanet Works programme is now up and running with over £4m available to support initiatives from the public and private sector. A fruit of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF), Thanet Works will be promoting a series of innovative approaches that tackle barriers to employment in Thanet. Applications are invited from interested parties in the private, public and voluntary sectors that can meet the primary objectives which are to reduce benefit claimants to Thanet residents of working age, to increase the proportion of the population aged over 19 years qualified to Level 2, to lower the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and to raise the number of adult learners reaching Level 1 in literacy. As the name suggests, Thanet Works is about bringing fresh solutions to inherited problems and offers a genuine opportunity to boost employment and raise the self-esteem of would be workers. This is a practical programme directed by practical people that offers long term benefits to the community. The Thanet Works Chairman, Cllr Jo Gideon, summed this up neatly when she described the programme as making "a real difference to local people and employers in Thanet". Upto £1m has been set aside for Phase 1. The deadline for applications is 3 April 2009. Details are available at http://www.thanet.gov.uk/business/thanet_works.aspx

4. Lies, Lies and Damned Statistics

So said Benjamin Disraeli, As far as we know, he was not talking about Kent employment statistics which make sorry reading this month. The ever-excellent KCC Analysis and Information team is now producing monthly updates on unemployment across Kent and includes ward statistics which tell you how your neighbourhood is faring. Sevenoaks recorded the highest rate of yearly increase in unemployment which more than doubled from January 2008 to January 2009. The overall percentage of Sevenoaks residents of working age without a job still remains low at 1.6% against a Kent-wide average of 2.7%. There are a few Bentleys and Porsches in the area available at bargain prices. The lowest increase in month on month unemployment in Kent is in Thanet where the benefits of large inward investment programmes are beginning to be felt, stimulated, without the shadow of a doubt, by a proactive Chamber of Commerce. A review of the full figures offers little comfort for any place in the county as the following results show:

	January 2009	Change Since last month	Change Since last year
Ashford	2.2%	12.3%	80.8%
Canterbury	2.2%	12.1%	65.4%
Dover	3.3%	11.0%	58.7%
Maidstone	2.0%	14.3%	81.7%
Shepway	3.8%	12.8%	49.4%
Thanet	4.7%	7.8%	59.3%
Kent	2.8%	12.7%	65.0%
South East	2.8%	10.1%	48.6%
Great Britain	3.4%	11.2%	54.1%

5. Cocktail Party

Sandy Ezekiel, leader of Thanet District Council, invites Chamber members to a cocktail party on Thursday 19th February at the Media Centre King Street, Margate CT9 1DA to celebrate the launch of Thanet's 2009 events programme. Entertainment and refreshments are sponsored by The Morris Agency. Margate's Big Event attracted 65,000 visitors last year and the expectation is that the success will continue with an even bigger event this year. If you would like to attend the launch, please confirm your place by calling Gill Shepherd, tel: 01843 577167, who will give you more details. Do also let her know if you would like an olive in your Martini.

6. Construction Industry

This Chamber is in talks with Skanska, one of the world's leading construction groups with extensive experience of residential, commercial and public/private developments. Skanska is looking to build long-term relationships with suppliers and property companies in the area so that it can source quality products and services locally from East Kent to meet its future commitments. Skanska has a reputation for being a friendly partner and we look forward to Chamber members taking part in a Meet Skanska event in the near future.

7. Manufacturing: Alive and Well in East Kent



The above picture shows the Minister for the South East, admiring the hand-made furniture produced by Chamber member Claridge Upholstery of Harold Road Margate. The Rt Hon Jonathan Shaw is on the far left in discussions with the company's Managing Director, Steve Claridge, while the workers look on. Claridge Upholstery exports over 90% of its production which is all made to the customer's individual needs. Bespoke quality furniture for export is an expanding sector boosted by the favourable exchange rate of the pound against major currencies. The Minister's visit last week was part of a concerted effort by the Thanet & East Kent Chamber to raise the profile of the area in order to promote inward investment into East Kent and encourage government support for Chamber members. We thank Multimedia Services, tel: 01843 598606, for the photograph.

8. Sponsors

We are grateful to Adecco Recruitment, tel: 01843 609292; Girlings Solicitors, tel: 01843 220274, Evans EasySpace, tel: 0800 039 3900 & 07753 799 333 and Express By Holiday Inn tel: 01843 820250 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@tekc.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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